



NFWF

ConocoPhillips



# SPIRIT of Conservation

## 2022 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: **Thursday, April 21, 2022 at 12 PM – 1 PM Eastern Time**

Pre-Proposal Due Date: **Wednesday, May 25, 2022 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

Full Proposal Due Date: **Wednesday, July 20, 2022 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

## OVERVIEW

The *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* program is inviting applications for competitive grant funding to be awarded through the 2022 funding cycle. The purpose of this funding is to help address the loss of 3 billion birds since 1970 by supporting projects that conserve, restore, or enhance grassland, wetland, sage-steppe, and coastal habitats for birds; or gather lacking bird population data with innovative methods, with an emphasis in focal geographies. The program is a partnership among ConocoPhillips, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Approximately \$1,100,000 is expected to be available for grant awards in 2022.

## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects must occur in a major migratory route ranging from the northern slope of Alaska to the north-south axis of the central United States, including the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast. Priority states include Alaska, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming.

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

To complete their annual life cycles, bird populations typically require a series of different seasonal or local habitats, for their breeding, stopover, and wintering periods. Loss, fragmentation, or degradation of these habitats can impede and negatively impact bird populations, highlighting the need to implement science-driven and strategic conservation.

With geographic focal areas that span major migratory routes in Alaska and along the north-south axis of the central United States, including the Gulf Coast, the *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* program focuses on improving habitat quality and quantity for both migratory and non-migratory bird populations. Within landscapes heavily dominated by working grasslands, wetlands, and sagebrush habitats, the program places a high priority on partnering with ranchers, farmers, and other private, tribal, and public land managers to help improve landscape connectivity and habitat quality for birds dependent on these habitats. Examples of species to benefit from projects include, but are not limited to, shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl along the coasts, sagebrush-dependent birds in the interior west, to grassland-dependent birds such as Baird's sparrow, Sprague's pipit, Chestnut-collared longspur, and thick-billed longspur found across the Great Plains. The program will primarily support projects that address the following strategies.

- ***Restore or improve grassland, sagebrush, wetland, and coastal habitats for birds:*** Restore or enhance existing bird habitat in priority geographies. The *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* program will support projects that conduct restoration activities to expand or improve habitat patch size, connectivity, and quality; remove encroaching woody vegetation that negatively impacts grassland-nesting or sage-steppe habitat nesting birds; reduce invasive species' impact on bird habitats; restore wetland function more beneficial to birds; and restore important breeding, wintering or stopover sites.
- ***Conserve key habitats for birds:*** Support fee title or conservation easement acquisitions for parcels with important habitat linkage/connectivity functions, or important breeding, wintering or stopover sites.
- ***Conduct identified priority bird population research or monitoring:*** Increase the quality or quantity of bird population data that can be used to fill gaps and inform current and future habitat management decisions. Data should be useful at specific sites or in assessing bird use of habitats across breeding, wintering, or stopover ranges. Key data gaps can be found in the following report: [Full Annual Cycle Conservation Strategy](#).

**Conservation Co-Benefits:** Habitat restoration, enhancement, or conservation projects that benefit birds while also storing or sequestering carbon are encouraged. NFWF intends to calculate the estimated carbon outcome associated with each proposal, as applicable and appropriate. These calculations will not be used for carbon credits, but rather to demonstrate the potential carbon value of any project and conservation practice(s) supported through this program. Applicants should carefully follow the metrics instructions in order to provide sufficient information for NFWF to generate carbon estimates.

**Community Impact and Engagement:** Applicants are encouraged to develop projects that incorporate outreach to communities, foster community engagement, and pursue collaboration with farmers, ranchers, tribal nations, or other land managers, as appropriate and applicable, to produce measurable conservation benefits. When possible, projects should be developed through community input and co-design processes ensuring traditional knowledge elevation. Additionally, projects should engage community-level partners (e.g., municipalities, tribal governments, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders), as appropriate and applicable, to help design, implement, and maintain projects to secure maximum benefits for communities, maintenance, and sustainability post-grant award.

## PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the *SPIRIT of Conservation* program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for applicants to choose from for future reporting. Applicants will select performance metrics at the Full Proposal stage only. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in Table 1 below). If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Bridget Collins at [bridget.collins@nfwf.org](mailto:bridget.collins@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Table 1. Standard metrics available for selection in the Full Proposal.

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Recommended Metric</b>	<b>Additional Guidance</b>
Project Footprint	Acreage of project footprint	Enter the total number of acres impacted by one or more project conservation activities. Only count an acre once, even if multiple activities or treatments will occur on that acre during the project.
Improved management practices	Acres with managed grazing	Enter the number of acres with managed grazing (i.e., promoting plant growth above and below ground, improving wildlife habitat, and maximizing soil carbon through grazing approaches that optimize stocking rates, livestock rotations, utilization rates, and plant rest and recovery, including development of associated grazing infrastructure). Please describe the grazing practices in the NOTES section.
BMP implementation for prescribed burns	Acres burned	Enter # acres with prescribed burning. In the NOTES, specify if private or public land, average frequency (in yrs) for future burning, dominant vegetation burned (forest, shrubland, grassland, cropland, Phragmites marsh). If forest, note if trees have been planted in past 10 yrs (Yes, No), and type of forest.
BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of fencing improved	Specify the number of miles of fencing improved. Report the fencing practice in the NOTES section.
Conservation easements	# Acres protected under easement	Enter the number of acres protected under long-term easement (permanent or >30-yr). Assuming the specific parcel(s) has been identified, in the NOTES indicate what % of natural land cover would have been cleared in the absence of the easement(s).
Land Acquisition	# Acres acquired in fee	Enter # acres acquired in fee. If the parcel has been identified, in the NOTES indicate whether there is a competing offer (Yes/No) or potential zoning change (Yes/No), and what % of natural land cover would be cleared in the absence of the acquisition.
Wetland Restoration	Acres Restored - Wetland	Enter # acres of WETLAND (not riparian or instream) habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to

		restoration (Marsh, Tidal marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp) and indicate % of vegetation on pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%).
Land Restoration	Acres Restored - Grassland	Enter the number of acres of GRASSLAND habitat restored. In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grassland, shrubland, herbaceous wetland, wet meadow) and indicate what species is benefitting.
Removal of invasives	Acres Restored	Enter the number of acres restored by removal of INVASIVE SPECIES. In the NOTES section, specify: the vegetation type being removed (Forest understory, Junipers, Shrubs, Kudzu/vines, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Swamp), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether the removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes, No).
Research	# studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management/ inform mgmt decisions	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management/ inform mgmt decisions.
Tool development for decision-making	# tools/ techniques implemented	Enter the # of innovative tools, techniques, methods implemented.

## ELIGIBILITY

### Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, U.S. Federal government agencies, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, tribal governments and organizations, educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include for-profit entities and unincorporated individuals.

### Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- **Equipment:** Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible and cost-effective or use matching funds to make those purchases. NFWF acknowledges,

however, that some projects may only be completed using NFWF funds to procure equipment. If this applies to your project, please contact the program staff listed in this RFP to discuss options.

- Federal funds and matching contributions may not be used to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems (including entering into or renewing a contract) that uses telecommunications equipment or services produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities) as a substantial or essential component, or as critical technology of any system. Refer to Public Law 115-232, section 889 for additional information.
- NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- NFWF funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

## **FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH**

Approximately \$1.1 million in grant funding is available under this funding opportunity in 2022. Grant awards will typically range from \$50,000 to \$250,000, with an estimated average grant size of approximately \$150,000. Funded projects should be completed within three years following finalization of a grant agreement.

All grant awards require a minimum 1:1 match of cash or contributed goods and services, of which at least 50% should be from non-federal sources. The ratio of matching funds offered by the applicant is one criterion considered during the review process. Matching contributions may include cash, in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. The cost of recent land acquisition or easement may also qualify as match for a project involving work at the acquired site. In addition, indirect costs that would not be paid with requested grant funding may be applied as match by an applicant with a federally approved indirect rate. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found [here](#).

To be eligible, matching contributions must be:

- raised for and dedicated specifically to the project;
- allowable costs based on the program and funding source guidelines;
- applied only to the *ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation* grant and not to any other matching program(s); and
- spent/applied within the period of performance.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria. A panel of ConocoPhillips, NFWF, and USFWS reviewers will use the criteria as a strong basis for project selections. However, selections will also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types. In addition, selections may be based on how proposed activities would advance goals of established regional, tribal, state and federal conservation plans, particularly Migratory Bird Joint Venture Implementation Plans. The priorities and goals of the NFWF's [Northern Great Plains](#), [Rocky Mountain Rangelands](#), and [Southwest Rivers](#) Business Plans are also of interest.

**Program Goals and Priorities** – Project contributes to the Program's overall habitat and species conservation goals, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities outlined in the Request for Proposal.

**Habitat Connectivity or Linkages** – Project creates connectivity or linkages between or among migratory (i.e., breeding, stopover, winter) or seasonal movement habitats.

**Technical Merit** – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design and implementation to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible.

**Partnership** – An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Identify proposed partners, if known (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant), the roles they will play in implementing the project, and how this project will build new or enhance existing partnerships.

**Community Impact** – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with diverse local community members, leaders, tribal governments, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, as applicable and appropriate, to develop and implement the proposed project. This ensures long-term sustainability and success of the project, integration into local programs and policies, and community acceptance of proposed restoration actions. Non-traditional partners or communities are enlisted to broaden the sustained impact from the project.

**Cost-Effectiveness** – Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation may include, but is not limited to, an assessment of either or both direct and indirect costs in the proposed budget. The federal government has determined that a *de minimis* 10% indirect rate is an acceptable minimum for organizations without a NICRA, as such NFWF reserves the right to scrutinize **ALL** proposals with indirect rates above 10% for cost-effectiveness.

**Scalability/Transferability** – Project has the potential and a plan to scale or transfer lessons learned to other communities or organizations.



**Communication** – Project includes a detailed plan to communicate information about the project to appropriate audiences.

**Funding Need** – Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

**Conservation Plan and Context** – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. Migratory Bird Joint Venture Implementation plans, activities, or priorities are of particular interest and can be located here: <https://mbjv.org/who-we-are/directory/>. The priorities and goals of the NFWF’s [Northern Great Plains](#), [Rocky Mountain Rangelands](#), and [Southwest Rivers](#) Business Plans are also of interest.

**Monitoring** – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

**Long-term Sustainability** – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This should include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

**Past Success** – Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing conservation practices with specific, measurable results.

## **OTHER**

**Applicant Demographic Information** – In an effort to better understand diversity in our grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic information on applicants and their communities via a **voluntary** survey form (available in Easygrants). This information will not be shared externally or with reviewers. For more details, please see the tip sheet and the Uploads section of Easygrants.

**Budget** – Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF’s [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.

**Matching Contributions** – Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the Project during the Period of Performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

**Procurement** – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF’s express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

**Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support** – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

**Receiving Award Funds** – Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

**Compliance Requirements** – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

**Permits** – Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state or local requirements. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

**Federal Funding** – The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

## **TIMELINE**

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the [program page](#) on the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar:	April 20, 2022 at 11 AM – 12 PM ET Register for the webinar using <a href="#">this link</a> .
Pre-Proposal Due Date:	May 25, 2022 by 11:59 PM ET
Invitations for Full Proposals Sent:	Week of June 20, 2022
Full Proposal Due Date:	July 20, 2022 by 11:59 PM ET
Review Period:	July – November 2022
Awards Announced:	Mid-November 2022



## HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through NFWF's Easygrants system.

1. Go to [easygrants.nfwf.org](https://easygrants.nfwf.org) to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information. Please disable the pop-up blocker on your internet browser prior to beginning the application process.
2. Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.
3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

## APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be downloaded [here](#).

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's [Applicant Information](#) page.

A video tutorial of how to start and complete a proposal in Easygrants can be viewed [here](#).

### **For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:**

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### **For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:**

Easygrants Helpdesk  
Email: [Easygrants@nfwf.org](mailto:Easygrants@nfwf.org)  
Voicemail: 202-595-2497  
Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.  
Include: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.