



NFWF



## Lower Great Lakes Forestry Technical Assistance *Sustain Our Great Lakes – Special Initiative* 2022 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: **Tuesday, April 12, 2022 11:00 AM -12:00 PM Eastern Time**  
Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, May 5, 2022 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

### OVERVIEW

The Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program is soliciting proposals in 2022 under a new special initiative to benefit fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality in the lower Great Lakes basin via stewardship and management of private woodlands. Grants will support technical assistance for natural resource professionals and private woodland owners to accelerate the voluntary planning and implementation of effective land stewardship practices for woodlands and forests of 10 acres or more within the lower Great Lakes region. The program will award approximately \$600,000 in grants in 2022. The program is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in partnership with the USDA Forest Service.

### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur within the lower Great Lakes basin (depicted in the map below) and only within the states of IN, MI, OH and NY. Priority will be given to projects that deliver technical assistance at the single or multi-state level. All applicants are expected to engage and coordinate with the state forestry agencies in developing and implementing their projects.



## **PROGRAM PRIORITIES**

The Lower Great Lakes Forestry Technical Assistance Special Initiative will fund projects that provide landowners with technical assistance for improving forest management, adopting multi-resource management plans, and implementing conservation practices on their forests to improve wildlife habitat and enhance water quality. This funding opportunity focuses on technical and planning assistance for woodland and forest parcels of 10 acres or more, but work on smaller acreages may be considered. Grant recipients can hire or otherwise support forestry professionals who will help landowners develop and implement economically sound approaches that achieve positive environmental outcomes.

As part of advancing woodland stewardship and restoration goals, applicants are encouraged to propose projects that improve wildlife habitat and engage historically underserved landowners.

Projects should seek to implement one or more of the following strategies:

- Increase forestry technical assistance capacity in the lower Great Lakes region through the hiring of staff or contractors who will work with landowners to develop and implement forest management plans, multi-resource management plans, or practice plans and assist with implementation of forest restoration and management treatments.
- Provide technical, planning and implementation assistance for forest landowners to protect, maintain, enhance, and preserve habitat for wildlife and fish species, including threatened and endangered species; and/or to achieve water quality and watershed health improvements, including efforts to improve forest health and resilience and restore riparian forests.
- Enhance collaborative and strategic outreach and technical assistance to increase the number of private landowners and/or producers engaged in woodland restoration and stewardship practices.
- Implement innovative methods to engage private landowners, potentially including smaller acreage landowners, expand on-the-ground restoration and stewardship activities on private lands, and to identify and better understand landowner motivations and barriers to sustainable woodland management.
- Feature demonstration areas that complement or accelerate technical assistance by both achieving on-the-ground accomplishments for a specific area and providing sites for conservation education and technology transfer particularly for the forest landowner audience.
- Support the development and implementation of agroforestry practices such as alley cropping, shelterbelts, riparian forest buffers, and windbreaks that provide nutritional, environmental, educational, and other benefits.
- Address barriers to landowner participation in forestry and conservation programs: historically underserved landowners and/or landowners that have not previously participated in programs are encouraged.

All proposals must estimate the number of acres to be restored, enhanced, or maintained as a result of proposed outreach and technical assistance activities and estimate how those improvements may improve water quality (e.g. lbs. sediment or nutrients eliminated from entering waterways). Projects should effectively align with and complement other existing private land initiatives, implementation plans or programs, such as USDA Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program and relevant state

programs as well as the 2020 State Forest Action Plans. Priority will be given to projects that include outreach and technical assistance to and enhanced participation of historically underserved landowners, including landowners and/or producers that identify as one or more of the federal underserved and/or special emphasis categories.

All proposals must specifically address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of program goals. Further information on the program goals can be found in NFWF’s [Great Lakes Business Plan](#).

## PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Easygrants application includes a list of standard metrics options for describing project impacts and reporting outcomes. **We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project** (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact *Aislinn Gauchay* [aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org](mailto:aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Strategy	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Capacity, Outreach, Incentives	# jobs sustained	Enter the number of jobs sustained. If applicable, in the NOTES section report the number of jobs sustained for people in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
	# jobs created	Enter the number of new jobs created. If applicable, in the NOTES section report the number of new jobs created for people in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories
	# people reached	Enter the number of people who responded to an offer of outreach, training, or technical assistance. In the NOTES, specify the percent of people reached out of the total targeted. If applicable, note the number of people in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
	# people (landowners) with changed behavior	Enter the number of people who developed and implemented conservation practices and/or forest management as the result of outreach, training, or technical assistance. In the NOTES, specify the percent of people reached out of the total targeted. If applicable, note the number of people in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
	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.
	Acres with BMPs applied to reduce	Enter the number of woodland/forest acres with enhanced nutrient management practices or forest

Habitat Management	nutrient or sediment loads	management activities that are intended to improve water quality. Please describe the nutrient management practices in the NOTES section.
	Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually	Enter the amount of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section.
	Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section.
	Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually	Enter the amount of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section.
	Acres burned	Enter the number of acres prescribed fire was applied. In the NOTES section, specify the average frequency (in years) at which prescribed burning is expected to occur in the future, the vegetation being burned and, if forest, whether trees have been planted in past 10 years (Yes, No).
	# BMPs implemented	Enter the number of BMPs implemented. In the NOTES section, specify the percentage of BMPs implemented out of the total recommendations developed.
	# conservation plans developed	Enter the number of conservation plans developed. In the NOTES section, specify the number of plans that were implemented out of the total number developed.
	# management plans with BMPs	Enter the number of forest management plans developed. In the NOTES section, specify the number of plans that were implemented out of the total number developed.
	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres that are being managed by or apply to forest management and/or conservation plans developed during this project. Only count an acre once, even if multiple plans exist or if implementation activities or treatments will occur on that acre during the project.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

### **Eligible and Ineligible Entities**

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions.

- Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and private for-profit businesses.

### **Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds**

- **Equipment:** Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible 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 \$600,000 is expected to be available for grant awards in 2022. Individual grant awards will range from \$150,000 to \$350,000 and applicants should request no more or no less than this funding range in the proposal. Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two or three years following finalization of a grant agreement.

The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The start date indicated in an application should not precede September 1, 2022.

The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects are required to include at least a 1:1 match ratio with contributions from non-federal sources. Applicants are also encouraged to indicate relevant federal contributions to demonstrate the scope of partner investment in the project. Matching contributions must be spent or applied between the start and end dates indicated in the application.

\*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 land acquisition or easement may also qualify as leverage for a project involving work at the protected site. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found by [clicking here](#).

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. The Sustain Our Great Lakes special initiative's advisory team of funders and a panel of state reviewers will use the following criteria as a strong basis for project selections. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic distribution of projects and balance among project types and grant size. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria:

- **Program Goals and Priorities** – Project aligns with program goals and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the funding categories and subsequent strategies. For more information about the strategies and investment objectives, see NFWF's [Great Lakes Business Plan](#).
- **Context** – Project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy, including the 2020 State Forest Action Plans. Project references documentation to support stated alignment with state or federal priorities.
- **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.
- **Scale** – At a minimum, project will implement woodland stewardship and management best practices habitat on the order of hundreds of acres and engage landowners accordingly.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Transferability** – Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Partnership** – An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and the project is supported by a strong local partnership that leverages additional funds 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. (Note: a project partner is any local community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state, and federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in the completion of the project.)
- **Community Impact** – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with diverse local community members, leaders, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders 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. Describe the community characteristics of the project area, identify any communities impacted, describe outreach and community engagement activities and how those will be monitored and measured. Use demographic data to support descriptions and submit letters of support from community partners and/or collaborators demonstrating their commitment to the project and engagement in project activities as proposed.

## 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 Acknowledgment of Support** – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF and the USDA Forest Service the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF and the USDA’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 of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information: [www.nfwf.org/greatlakes](http://www.nfwf.org/greatlakes).

Applicant Webinar	April 12, 11:00am to 12:00pm ET
Full Proposal Due Date	May 5, 11:59pm ET
Review Period	May-August
Awards Announced	August



## WEBINAR

Sustain Our Great Lakes partners will host the following webinar to share additional information pertinent to the funding opportunities offered by Sustain Our Great Lakes in 2022.

### **Funding Opportunity Webinar– Guidance for Applicants**

*April 12, 2022, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM Eastern Time*

This webinar will provide additional information on the funding opportunity including specific guidance on navigating the application process, specific guidance related to the funding offered, and answers to applicant questions. Participants can [register here](#).

## 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.

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

Aislinn Gauchay, NFWF Program Director, Great Lakes ([aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org](mailto:aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org); 612-564-7284)  
Traci Giefer, NFWF Senior Manager, Great Lakes ([traci.giefer@nfwf.org](mailto:traci.giefer@nfwf.org); 612-564-7296)

### **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.