



Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund

2023 Request For Proposals

Applicant Webinar ([Register Here](#)): **Monday, March 6, 2023 at 3:00 PM-4:30 PM Eastern Time**
Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, April 13, 2023 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals within the Cumberland Plateau region that will help accelerate the restoration and enhancement of critical forest, grassland, and freshwater habitats and increase the voluntary adoption of conservation practices on working agricultural lands in the region to benefit wildlife and improve soil health, water quantity and quality, and carbon sequestration. Funding is provided by the USDA’s Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Altria Group, Cargill and International Paper’s Forestland Stewards Partnership. Approximately \$2 million is expected to be available for grants this funding cycle.

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GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects within the Cumberland Plateau in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia are eligible with preference given to projects located within the identified focal areas. A PDF map of the Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund Program Area and NFWF focal areas can be viewed [here](#). An interactive map can be viewed here: [Interactive Map](#). Focal areas were selected by analyzing upland and riparian forest and freshwater systems, and represent locations with the greatest potential for restoration and benefit to priority species. These focal areas are based on resource mapping, interviews with the practitioners in the field, funding sources for this RFP, and capacity to carry out the work.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Projects should seek to implement one or more of the strategies below to restore forest and freshwater habitats and implement conservation practices on working agricultural lands, benefitting soil health, water quality, and populations of at-risk, listed and other wildlife species, such as northern bobwhite and prairie warbler, as well as fish, amphibians and other aquatic species. Conservation plans and other resources informing program priorities can be found [here](#).

- 1. Restoring Previously Mined Lands:** NFWF seeks projects that restore forest and native grassland habitat on previously mined state-owned or non-industrial private lands. Projects on Federally owned and tribal lands, including federal land held in trust for the benefit of tribes, are also eligible. Partnership/collaboration with state forestry agencies is encouraged.

Eligible activities include site preparation and planting, with an emphasis on planting native tree and grassland species to benefit wildlife, reduce erosion and runoff, and sequester carbon. Proposals may also include practices to enhance or maintain existing forests and grasslands on previously mined lands, such as thinning and invasive species removal, to improve wildlife habitat. Proposals for planting should describe all necessary site preparation, number of acres and seedlings that will be planted, timing of when planting is expected to be completed and summarize plans to manage planted stands.

Projects are encouraged to use the [Forestry Reclamation Approach](#) as outlined by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement and restore habitat in a landscape context that is complementary to other ongoing restoration (e.g., priority areas for shortleaf pine and/or oak restoration, etc.). Projects located in counties with persistent poverty and/or that engage underserved and socially disadvantaged landowners also are strongly encouraged.

- 2. Increasing Adoption of Conservation Practices on Agricultural Lands:** Includes projects that voluntarily implement agricultural best management practices on cropland and/or pastureland to improve soil health productivity and water quality and quantity, increase carbon sequestration, and enhance freshwater and/or terrestrial habitats benefitting pollinators and grassland birds and/or at-risk aquatic species. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Implement prescribed/rotational grazing and complementary conservation practices, such as using native warm season grass forage to augment non-native forages to improve or maintain the quantity and quality of food and/or cover. Preference for projects on beef cattle farms.
- Install fencing and alternative watering systems to exclude livestock from streams and/or support prescribed/rotational grazing. Preference for projects on beef cattle farms.
- Increase adoption of conservation cover, cover crops, reduced tillage, and diversified crop rotations.
- Promote responsible incorporation of crop residue, manures, and other sources of organic matter into soil management systems.
- Establish and enhance farmer-led education and outreach programs to drive increased adoption of soil health practices and to promote stream health.

- 3. Establishing, Enhancing and Maintaining Forest Habitats:** In addition to the forest restoration priorities and activities listed under the restoring previously mined lands priority above, NFWF seeks projects that establish new upland pine-oak and/or riparian forests and enhance and maintain existing upland pine-oak and/or riparian forest habitats on public and private lands (other than previously mined lands), with an emphasis on improving forest conditions to benefit wildlife, water quality and carbon sequestration. Eligible activities include:

Tree Planting

- Planting projects should describe all necessary site preparation for planting, number of acres and seedlings that will be planted, timing of when planting is expected to be completed and summarize plans to manage planted stands. Preference will be given to projects that plant shortleaf pine, white oak and/or other upland oak species and/or native riparian tree species.
- Projects that expect to plant a mix of tree species should include an estimate of the number of seedlings of each species that will be planted in their proposal.

Prescribed Burning

- Increase application of prescribed fire on private and public lands, including capacity, coordination and collaboration through fire teams, prescribed burn associations, and/or other strategies.
- Provide technical assistance, training and/or other incentives to increase prescribed burning on private lands, including, but not limited to assisting USDA service center staff in writing burn plans and implementing financial assistance contracts.
- Pursue innovations and address specific barriers or roadblocks to prescribed burning.

Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments

- Over-story treatments, including thinning and pre-commercial thinning, aimed at reducing over-story tree density, improving over-story structure, underplanting, release of shortleaf pine, white oak and/or other upland oak and/or riparian forest regeneration, or to implement uneven-aged or patch-cut treatments.
- Mid-story treatments including mechanical and chemical treatments to remove or control mid-story encroachment and improve forest habitat conditions.
- Planting native under-story and groundcover species to improve wildlife habitat and support the application of prescribed fire, where appropriate.
- Invasive species treatments including herbicide or mechanical treatments to control non-native, invasive plant and/or insect species, such as hemlock woolly adelgid, which threaten riparian forest health. Applicants should describe which invasive species will be treated and whether the invasive species are expected to require single or multiple treatments.
- Expand and conserve riparian buffers and/or forested streamside management zones to protect water quality and wildlife habitats.

4. Restoring Instream Habitats to Support Aquatic Species: Includes projects that restore instream habitats to improve watershed health, enhance freshwater habitat and support at-risk aquatic species. Eligible activities include:

- Restore wetland, streambank, and instream habitat that otherwise would not be addressed through agricultural or forestry best management practices to support watershed health and improve native aquatic species populations.
- Remove or retrofit stream barriers (low-head dams) and stream crossings (culverts, concrete fords) to improve aquatic habitat connectivity and reduce sedimentation. Preference will be given to projects within focal area watersheds.

5. Expanding and Coordinating Technical Assistance and Outreach: Includes projects that implement targeted outreach and assistance to measurably increase private landowner and/or producer voluntary participation in Farm Bill programs and implementation of conservation practices. Proposals must estimate the number of acres and/or miles to be restored or enhanced as a result of proposed technical assistance and outreach activities. Projects should effectively align with and complement other existing private land initiatives, implementation plans or programs. NFWF also seeks projects that include outreach and technical assistance to, and enhanced participation of underserved landowners, including

[USDA’s historically underserved farmers and ranchers](#). Coordination with USDA’s NRCS expected. Strategies may include:

- Increase capacity through the hiring of staff or contractors to provide technical assistance on private lands, develop forest management plans, prescribed burn plans, conservation grazing plans, and/or conservation plans, and assist with implementation of restoration and management treatments.
- Implement innovative methods to engage private landowners or producers and expand on-the-ground restoration and protection activities on private lands.
- Target outreach for private landowners and producers to prioritize, plan and deliver Farm Bill and other government financial assistance programs to improve habitat and support at-risk species.

In addition to the conservation priorities and strategies listed above, applicants are encouraged to describe how projects will achieve the following, if applicable:

Conservation Co-Benefits: Projects that will implement voluntary habitat restoration or improvement practices that benefit wildlife while also sequestering carbon and/or improving water quantity or quality are encouraged, with a particular interest in tree planting projects and/or projects that implement prescribed/rotational grazing and associated practices within cattle-producing counties within the region. Applicants should reach out to program staff prior to submitting a proposal to discuss projects that will address carbon and water outcomes. Note: NFWF intends to calculate the estimated carbon outcome associated with any given project. These calculations will not be used for marketable carbon credits, but rather for narrative and demonstration of the potential carbon value of any project and conservation practice(s) supported through this program.

Community Impact and Engagement: Projects that incorporate outreach to communities, foster community engagement, and pursue collaborative management leading to measurable conservation benefits are encouraged. Projects benefiting underserved communities are encouraged. Additionally, projects should engage community-level partners (e.g., municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders) to help design, implement, and maintain projects to secure maximum benefits for communities, maintenance, and sustainability post-grant award. When possible, projects should be developed through community input and co-design processes ensuring traditional knowledge elevation.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for future reporting. 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 and are ordered to correspond to the program priorities listed above). If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact Jon Scott (Jonathan.Scott@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Projects that may involve organizations or producers that identify as one or more of the federal Underserved/Special Emphasis Categories (described on page 12) are encouraged to apply and should report impact on such categories in the notes section of their selected metrics shown below.

Program Priority	Activity	Easygrants Metric (how the metrics will appear in Easygrants)	Instructions
1. Restoring Previously Mined Lands - Please use these metrics	Tree Planting – Previously Mined Lands – Upland and Riparian	CPF – Land, wetland restoration – Acres restored on private land	Enter the # of acres of forest planted on previously mined private land. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-

for forest restoration and management activities on previously mined lands only. Forest restoration and management activities that will occur on lands that were not previously mined should be included in the metrics listed under #3 below.			planting (broadleaf, conifer, grassland, shrubland).
	Tree Planting – Previously Mined Lands – Upland and Riparian	CPF – Land, wetland restoration – Acres restored on public land	Enter the # of acres of forest planted on previously mined public land. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-planting (broadleaf, conifer, grassland, shrubland).
	Tree Planting – Previously Mined Lands – Upland and Riparian	CPF – Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on private lands	Enter the # of tree seedlings planted on previously mined private land. Specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, swamp-- either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate. To the extent possible, please breakout the number of seedlings by tree species.
	Tree Planting – Previously Mined Lands – Upland and Riparian	CPF – Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on public lands	Enter the # of tree seedlings planted previously mined public land. Specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, swamp-- either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate. To the extent possible, please breakout the number of seedlings by tree species.
	Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments – Previously Mined Lands – Upland and Riparian	CPF – Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (private)	Enter the # of acres of existing forest on previously mined private land that will be improved through management treatments. An acre is to be reported on only one time, even if subjected to more than one treatment.
	Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments – Previously Mined Lands – Upland and Riparian	CPF – Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (public)	Enter the # of acres of existing forest on previously mined public land that will be improved through management treatments. An acre is to be reported on only one time, even if subjected to more than one treatment.
2. Increasing Adoption of Conservation Practices on Agricultural Lands - Metrics for landowner outreach and education activities are listed under #5 below.	Agricultural Best Management Practices	CPF – BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with BMPs	Enter the # of acres of best management practices implemented on agricultural lands. Please do not include acres of activities on forest land or acres of agricultural practices captured by other metrics.
	Livestock Fencing	CPF – BMP implementation for livestock fencing – Miles of fencing installed	Enter the # of miles of fencing installed to exclude livestock from waterways or to support prescribed or rotational grazing.
	Conservation Tillage	CPF – BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with conservation tillage	Enter the # of cropland acres with conservation tillage practices. Please describe conservation tillage practices in the NOTES section.

	Cover Crops	CPF – BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction – Acres with cover crops	Enter the # of cropland acres with cover crops practices. Please describe the cover crop practices in the NOTES section.
	Improved Grazing	CPF – Improved Management Practices – Acres with managed grazing	Enter the # of acres with managed grazing (i.e., grazing approaches to optimize stocking rates, livestock rotations, utilization rates, and plant rest and recovery, including development of associated grazing infrastructure). In the NOTES, describe the practice.
3. Establishing, Enhancing and Maintaining Forest Habitats	Tree Planting – Upland Forests	CPF – Shortleaf Pine - Land restoration - Acres restored on private land	Enter the # of acres of shortleaf pine and/or oak planted on private lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-planting (broadleaf, conifer, grassland, shrubland).
	Tree Planting – Upland Forests	CPF – Shortleaf Pine - Land restoration - Acres restored on public land	Enter the # of acres of shortleaf pine and/or oak planted on public lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-planting (broadleaf, conifer, grassland, shrubland).
	Tree Planting – Upland Forests	CPF – Shortleaf Pine - Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on private lands	Enter the # of shortleaf pine and/or oak seedlings planted on private lands. Specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, swamp--either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate. To the extent possible, please breakout the number of shortleaf pine and oak seedlings.
	Tree Planting – Upland Forests	CPF – Shortleaf Pine - Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on public lands	Enter the # of shortleaf pine and/or oak seedlings planted on public lands. Specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, swamp--either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate. To the extent possible, please breakout the number of shortleaf pine and oak seedlings.
	Tree Planting – Riparian Forests	CPF – Riparian habitat vegetation - Riparian restoration - Acres restored on private land	Enter the # of acres of riparian forest planted on private lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-planting (broadleaf, conifer, grassland, shrubland).
	Tree Planting – Riparian Forests	CPF – Riparian habitat vegetation - Riparian restoration - Acres restored on public land	Enter the # of acres of riparian forest planted on public lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-planting (broadleaf, conifer, grassland, shrubland).
	Tree Planting – Riparian Forests	CPF – Riparian habitat vegetation - Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on private lands	Enter the # of riparian tree seedlings planted on private lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, swamp--

			either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate.
Tree Planting – Riparian Forests	CPF – Riparian habitat vegetation - Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on public lands		Enter the # of riparian tree seedlings planted on public lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, swamp-- either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate.
Prescribed Burning	CPF – BMP implementation for prescribed burns - Acres private land burned		Enter # acres of private land burned. In the NOTES, specify average frequency (in yrs) for future burning, dominant vegetation burned (forest, shrubland, grassland, cropland). If forest, note if trees were planted in past 10 yrs (Yes/No) & type of forest (Loblolly-shortleaf pine, Loblolly-shortleaf pine with high productivity and management intensity, Maple-beech-birch, Mixed conifer, Oak-gum-cypress, Oak-hickory, Oak-pine).
Prescribed Burning	CPF – BMP implementation for prescribed burns - Acres public land burned		Enter # acres of public land burned. In the NOTES, specify average frequency (in yrs) for future burning, dominant vegetation burned (forest, shrubland, grassland, cropland). If forest, note if trees were planted in past 10 yrs (Yes/No) & type of forest (Loblolly-shortleaf pine, Loblolly-shortleaf pine with high productivity and management intensity, Maple-beech-birch, Mixed conifer, Oak-gum-cypress, Oak-hickory, Oak-pine).
Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments – Upland Forests	CPF – Shortleaf Pine - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (private)		Enter the # of acres of over-story treated, mid-story treated, and/or native under-story/groundcover established within existing shortleaf pine and/or oak habitat on private lands. Acres of prescribed fire and acres of invasive species treated should not be included in this total. Please report acres of prescribed fire and invasive species treated using the specific metrics for these activities. An acre is to be reported on only one time, even if subjected to more than one treatment.
Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments – Upland Forests	CPF – Shortleaf Pine - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (public)		Enter the # of acres of over-story treated, mid-story treated, and/or native under-story/groundcover established within existing shortleaf pine and/or oak habitat on public lands. Acres of prescribed fire and acres of invasive species treated should not be included in this total. An acre is to be reported on only one time, even if subjected to more than one treatment.
Other Forest Enhancement and Management	CPF – Removal of invasives – Acres		Enter the # acres of invasives removed from within existing forests on private lands. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed

	Treatments – Upland and Riparian Forests	restored on private lands	(Forest understory, Shrubs, Kudzu/vines, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No).
	Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments – Upland and Riparian	CPF – Removal of invasives – Acres restored on public lands	Enter the # acres of invasives removed from within existing forests on public lands. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Forest understory, Shrubs, Kudzu/vines, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No).
	Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments – Riparian Forests	CPF – Riparian habitat vegetation - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (private)	Enter the # of acres of existing riparian forest on private lands receiving enhancement or management treatments to improve habitat and/or acres of riparian forest conserved through buffers/streamside management zones. Please describe the specific treatments in the NOTES.
	Other Forest Enhancement and Management Treatments – Riparian Forests	CPF – Riparian habitat vegetation - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (public)	Enter the # of acres of existing riparian forest on public lands receiving enhancement or management treatments to improve habitat and/or acres of riparian forest conserved through buffers/streamside management zones.. Please describe the specific treatments in the NOTES.
4. Restoring In-Stream Habitats to Support Aquatic Species	Riparian Habitat Improvement	CPF - Improved management practices - Miles under improved mgmt (private)	Enter the # of miles of riparian or streambank habitat under improved management on private lands.
	Riparian Habitat Improvement	CPF - Improved management practices - Miles under improved mgmt (public)	Enter the # of miles of riparian or streambank habitat under improved management on public lands.
	Instream Habitat Restoration	CPF – Instream restoration – Miles restored	Enter the # of miles of instream habitat restored.
	Stream Barrier Removal	CPF – Fish passage improvements - # passage barriers rectified	Enter the # of stream barriers removed to improve aquatic species passage. In the NOTES section indicate what type(s) of barrier(s) are being removed or replaced (e.g., culvert, dam).
	Stream Barrier Removal	CPF - Fish passage improvements - Miles of stream opened	Enter total # of miles opened to improve aquatic organism passage. Only include the miles of main stem & smaller tributaries connected until the next barrier upstream (or headwaters), but NOT lakes, ponds, or distance downstream from the barrier removed.

5. Expanding and Coordinating Technical Assistance and Outreach	<p>Note: Projects that will engage private landowners and/or producers should select all three of the following metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # people targeted • # people reached • # people with changed behavior <p>Data for all three metrics will enable NFWF to better understand landowner/producer response to outreach, education and technical assistance efforts.</p>		
	Landowner Outreach and Technical Assistance	CPF - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people targeted	Enter the # of landowners and/or producers targeted by outreach activities. Examples include number of landowners you seek to contact through direct mailings and targeted media advertisements. If applicable, in the notes section, please report the number of people targeted in each underserved/special emphasis category.
	Landowner Outreach and Technical Assistance	CPF - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people reached	Enter the # of landowners and/or producers anticipated to be reached by attending educational meetings or trainings and/or receiving technical assistance. The target value for this metric should be a subset of the “# of people targeted” metric. If the target value includes landowners or producers reached through more than one activity, please break out in the notes section. If applicable, in the notes section, please report the number of people reached in each underserved/special emphasis category.
	Landowner Outreach and Technical Assistance	CPF - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people with changed behavior	Enter the # of landowners and/or producers reached who are expected to implement conservation actions. Examples include developing a conservation plan, enrolling in a financial assistance program, implementing a conservation practice. The target value for this metric should be a subset of the “# of people reached” metric. If applicable, in the notes section, please report the number of people with changed behavior in each underserved/special emphasis category.
	Management Plans	CPF - BMP development - # mgmt plans into which BMPs were incorporated	Enter the # of forest management, conservation and/or grazing management plans developed that include recommended treatments or practices for forest and/or agricultural lands. If applicable, please break out the number of management plans by type in the NOTES section.
	Landowner Financial Incentives	CPF - Incentives - # participants receiving government agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the # of landowners receiving government cost share or financial assistance. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP, CSP, etc.).

	Landowner Financial Incentives	CPF - Incentives - Dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the total dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance that landowners will receive. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP, CSP, etc.).
	Landowner Financial Incentives	CPF - Incentives - Acres covered by government agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the # of acres enrolled in government cost share or financial assistance programs. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP, CSP, etc.).
	Citizen Outreach and Engagement	CPF - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people demonstrating a minimum level of knowledge, attitudes, or skills	Enter the # of citizens engaged in education and outreach activities (example: number of individuals that attended a community event, such as a Fire Festival). Although landowners may be included, this metric is intended to capture project engagement with other individuals that may not be landowners.

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 U.S. Federal government agencies, businesses, unincorporated individuals, and international organizations. U.S. Federal agencies are encouraged to partner with applicants but are not eligible to submit an application.

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

The Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund anticipates awarding approximately \$2 million in grants in 2023. Grant awards are expected to range from \$250,000 to \$500,000. Applicants considering proposals outside of this funding range are encouraged to contact NFWF prior to submitting. This program has one annual application cycle and awards approximately 4-8 grants per year.

Project Period: Anticipated completion time for funded projects typically will be 24-36 months following finalization of a grant agreement. Significant progress with project implementation is expected to be achieved in year one, including interim deliverables. 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.

Matching Funds: Projects should have a minimum match of 1:1 non-federal cash or in-kind, but larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive. Projects unable to provide a 1:1 non-federal match are eligible, but applicants must contact NFWF to discuss match waiver options prior to submitting a proposal. Applicants are encouraged to describe federal partner contributions in the proposal narrative, although those contributions will not count toward the 1:1 match.

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.

Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund’s habitat and species goals and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics that will be tracked and measured to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities outlined in the request for proposals.

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

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, and design and implementation.

NRCS Coordination – Projects that will provide outreach and technical assistance to private landowners or that will be implementing work on private lands should be shared with the appropriate NRCS State Conservationist to ensure the project is in alignment with NRCS goals and priorities. A list of NRCS state contacts can be found [here](#).

Cost-Effectiveness – Cost-effectiveness analysis identifies the economically most efficient way to meet project objectives. Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of effective direct/indirect costs across all categories in the proposed budget according to the type, size and duration of project and project objectives. Project budgets will be compared to similar projects to ensure proposed costs across all budget categories are reasonable for the activities being performed and the outcomes proposed.

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.

Letters of Support

- Letter(s) from the appropriate [State forestry office\(s\)](#) highlighting how the proposed project is being coordinated with their office are recommended for projects that include work on state and/or private lands.

- Letter(s) from the appropriate [NRCS State conservationist\(s\)](#) acknowledging how the applicant is coordinating with NRCS are recommended for projects that include work on private lands.
- Letter(s) from the appropriate [State Department of Wildlife Conservation](#) and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acknowledging how the proposed project supports a State Wildlife Action Plan or conservation and recovery of at-risk or listed species.
- Letters documenting the support/contributions of all other project partners are strongly encouraged.

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.

Partnership and 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 demographic information on applicants and their organizations via a voluntary survey form (available in Easygrants). This information will not be shared externally or with reviewers and will not be considered when making grant decisions. 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.

Environmental Services – NFWF funds projects in pursuit of its mission to sustain, restore and enhance the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats for current and future generations. NFWF recognizes that some benefits from projects may be of value with regards to credits on an environmental services market (such as a carbon credit market). NFWF does not participate in, facilitate, or manage an environmental services market nor does NFWF assert any claim on such credits.

Intellectual Property – Intellectual property created using NFWF awards may be copyrighted or otherwise legally protected by award recipients. NFWF may reserve the right to use, publish, and copy materials created under awards, including posting such material on NFWF’s website and featuring it in publications. NFWF may use project metrics and spatial data from awards to estimate societal benefits that result and to report these results to funding partners. These may include but are not limited to: habitat and species response, species connectivity, water quality, water quantity, risk of detrimental events (e.g., wildfire, floods), carbon accounting (e.g., sequestration, avoided emissions), environmental justice, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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.

USDA Historically Underserved/Special Emphasis Categories – The [historically underserved farmer and rancher categories](#) include those with limited resources, beginning farmers/ranchers, socially disadvantaged (American Indians or Alaska Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics) and veterans. The [special emphasis categories](#) are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American, Black, Disability, Women, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Hispanic, and Veterans.

TIMELINE

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

Applicant Webinar [Register Here]	March 6, 2023 at 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM Eastern Time
Full Proposal Due Date	April 13, 2023, 11:59 PM, Eastern Time
Review Period	April 2023 – August 2023
Awards Announced	September 2023

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Easygrants system.

1. Go to 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:

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

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: 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.