

COLUMBIA BASIN WATER TRANSACTIONS PROGRAM

2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)] Tuesday, April 18 at 10:00 AM PST
Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday, May 11 by 8:59 PM PST

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is requesting proposals to enhance, restore, and protect stream flows for key fish habitat in the Columbia Basin. The Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program (CBWTP) funds water transactions development and implementation in the United States portion of the Columbia Basin and is the largest voluntary instream flow restoration program in the country. Since its inception in 2002, the CBWTP has implemented over 661 voluntary water transactions and secured over 12.5 million acre feet of water in flow-limited tributaries of the Columbia River Basin. The CBWTP works across portions of Oregon, Washington, Montana and Idaho, and its investments in water transactions have increased stream flows for the benefit of native fish species, including Pacific salmon, steelhead trout, and resident fish species.

Approximately \$1.8 million will be available for programmatic support allowing for staff time, limited travel, supplies/materials, and other associated costs of developing a water transaction(s). NFWF will only accept proposals for programmatic support to develop water transactions under this solicitation, not for water acquisitions. Applicants must show organizational history and competency of implementing water transactions and dedicating water instream in this region. Funding for this program will be primarily provided by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). A portion of the funding from BPA is dedicated to the areas of the Columbia River basin that are covered by the [Columbia Basin Fish Accords](#) with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Proposals in these geographies should be separate from proposals for other geographies.

Once an entity is selected through this Request for Proposals (RFP), they will be considered a Qualified Local Entity (QLE) and will be able to apply for funding to pay for individual water transactions during the term of their grant agreement through a competitive process. More information on the water transaction solicitation process can be found [here](#).

Qualification status will last **three years** from the time a full proposal is approved, pending satisfactory annual performance reviews. Existing QLEs will have the option to submit a budget amendment in lieu of a full proposal in the two subsequent years post initial selection.

GEOGRAPHIC & SPECIES FOCUS

Proposed activities must be located within the Columbia River Basin in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Priority will be given to areas listed in the [2020 National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's \(NOAA\) Biological Opinion \(BiOp\)](#) that benefit species listed threatened or endangered by the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). In collaboration with the Northwest

Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) and BPA requirements, NFWF will grant up to 70% of the funding to entities with a focus on anadromous species and 30% of the funding to those projects with a focus on resident fish species.



Figure 1. Columbia Basin with BiOp identified geographies

Proposed geographies must include tributaries that have identified flow as a priority limiting factor to survival of species in one or more of the below categories:

1. ESA listed species in [2020 BiOp](#) identified areas.
2. ESA listed anadromous species not specified above ([National Marine Fisheries Service](#) and [2020 BiOp](#)).
3. ESA listed resident [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) or state species of concern (by one or more of [OR](#), [WA](#), [ID](#), [MT](#)).
4. Other fish or wildlife not listed above where a benefit can be tied to increased flows in a specific location.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Competitive programmatic proposals will be sub-basin focused and will address species of concern and flow limitations, while also demonstrating innovation, and incorporating a monitoring plan.

1. **Species of concern**: Proposals must showcase how the applicant will work toward addressing the conservation needs of one or more species of concern through water transaction implementation.
2. **Flow limitations**: The proposals must articulate an organizational competency in securing water for in-stream tributary flows at a location(s) where low flows are a limiting factor to fish survival, productivity, and distribution and for the maximum reach of river legally and physically possible. The scale of the recovered instream flows should be measurable relative to the overall flow and the scale of habitat loss and other issues in the basin. Proposals should document the entity's intention of working in areas where significant seniority can be protected in-stream through state agency process or is contractually protectable instream at a time of year when needed to benefit fish and wildlife.
3. **Prioritization**: Proposals should clearly articulate the prioritization efforts for each subbasin both historic and future. Prioritization efforts should show the hierarchical planning that has gone into the selection of subbasins, streams, and water rights/properties/landowners. The efforts should articulate WHY the subbasin is important compared to other subbasins, WHY a particular stream is important compared to other streams in the subbasin, and WHY those particular transactions are being pursued. Proposals should show this logic path from the subbasin down to the transaction level to emphasize priorities and levels of importance for species.
 - a. **Existing plans**: If prioritization plans have been completed, describe how those are used in transaction development and planning. If a plan already exists, please define what the quantifiable objectives are for the priority basins or streams and how many previous transactions have contributed to meeting those goals.
 - b. **New plans**: If prioritization plans have not been developed, describe how you will utilize the budget to develop them.

Prioritization of projects within the CBWTP should be established locally but linked to broader subbasin and recovery plan efforts (NPCC subbasin plan, watershed assessment, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Recovery Plan). When applying for transactions, the applicant should be able to clearly explain why the particular transaction is important in the system compared to others and what impact it will have for the region.

4. **Adaptive management**: Demonstrate how your efforts are moving beyond preliminary practices and proof of concept methods. Transactions should strive towards permanent instream flow and work to build on previous efforts. Applicants should use monitoring results to show how experience with local systems has contributed to selection of the most impactful transactions.

5. **Innovation:** Where possible, proposals should demonstrate how the applicant plans to implement innovative methods to increase tributary flows during critical periods for targeted species. Innovative methods for securing water should also be cost-effective in terms of local and regional markets and build trust with water rights holders.
6. **Monitoring:** The proposal should document how compliance and implementation monitoring will be carried out and reported via the CBWTP's [Flow Restoration Accounting Framework \(FRAF\)](#) compliance monitoring forms (subject to change from previous years). The proposal should include a description of long-term monitoring of water flow, and how the benefits to habitat and species will be documented. All transactions will be required to have Tier 1 and Tier 2 monitoring unless otherwise approved by CBWTP staff.

Based on final award and grant funding decisions, some awardees may also be asked to report additional summary project information through NFWF's web-based Water Calculator tool. NFWF staff will work with those awardees to minimize duplicate data collection and reporting across FRAF and Water Calculator requirements.

7. **Watershed context:** The proposal should describe collaborative efforts with other entities and document how opportunities for cost-sharing, data sharing and collaboration were considered and developed.
8. **Organizational Breadth:** Applicants must show that their organization has experience building trust with landowners and implementing water transactions in the identified watersheds. In addition, they must be able to provide and input the requisite water transactions information and metrics into the program database. Finally, they should have the sophistication of providing financial and programmatic reporting required for the program. Recurring or previous applicants must show how many new water transactions were completed since they last applied to the program.
9. **Community Impact and Engagement:** Projects that incorporate outreach to communities, foster community engagement, and pursue collaborative management leading to measurable conservation benefits are encouraged. 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, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders) to help design, implement, and maintain projects to secure maximum benefits for communities, maintenance, and sustainability post-grant award.

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, conservation districts, watershed councils, and other local agencies.

- Ineligible applicants include businesses, unincorporated individuals, and international organizations.

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 CBWTP will award approximately \$1.8 million for Qualified Local Entity programmatic grants for the period of October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. See the below timeline for more details on when to expect an award.

Additional Funding Information:

- Match is not required but encouraged and may include both programmatic and expected transactional contributions anticipated during the grant period. Matching contributions will be considered as part of the evaluation criteria. Funding or in-kind contributions from another NFWF award or other BPA funding is not allowable match.
- Once an entity is considered qualified and receives a grant through this solicitation, they are then eligible to submit water transaction projects through CBWTP's closed water transaction solicitations. There is a separate review and evaluation process for those proposals.
- Applicants should budget for staff participation in one CBWTP annual meeting. Meeting will be held within the CBWTP geographic area and typically consist of two to three days of presentations, which discuss successes achieved, lessons learned, innovative concepts and future opportunities. The meeting also provides an opportunity to build capacity through information sharing and networking. Budget should include lodging and travel expenses for each staff person attending. NFWF typically invites up to two participants per organization. COVID travel restrictions may negate this.

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 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.

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 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.

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.

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. Project will incorporate water transaction monitoring plans in accordance with the Flow Restoration Accounting Framework regarding project compliance and implementation monitoring requirements. Project demonstrates how collaboration with partnering entities will leverage habitat and biological data.

Long-term Sustainability – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This includes future transaction projections, and how future funding will be secured to implement long-term deals, 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 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.

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 reimbursable only. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF.

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.

Quality Assurance – If a project involves significant monitoring, data collection or data use, grantees will be asked to prepare and submit quality assurance documentation (www.epa.gov/quality). Applicants should budget time and resources to complete this task.

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.

Standards of Conduct – Applicants must follow established conflict of interest and professional ethics policies at all times in order to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, favoritism, or other improper behavior. BPA has established conflict of interest policies for financial assistance awards. Applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest in accordance with applicable BPA policy.

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.

TIMELINE

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

Applicant Webinar [Register here]	April 18, 2023 at 10:00 AM PST
Full Proposal/Amendment Due Date	May 11, 2023 at 8:59 PM PST
Review Period	May – July
Awards Announced	Early August

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.

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.