



PECOS WATERSHED CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [\[Register Here\]](#): August 24th, 2023, at 1:00 pm MDT/ 2:00pm CT/3:00pm EST

Full Proposal Due Date: November 9, 2023, by 9:59pm MDT / 10:59pm CT / 11:59pm EST

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is announcing the seventh annual funding opportunity as part of the Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative. NFWF will award grants to restore and sustain healthy rivers, streams and grassland systems that provide important wildlife habitat in the Pecos watershed and adjacent areas of New Mexico and Texas. Up to **\$1.4 million** will be available. Major funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and five corporate partners: Apache Corporation, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Occidental, and XTO Energy, an ExxonMobil subsidiary.

In this Request for Proposals under the Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative, NFWF is seeking to support conservation projects that align with the priorities described below.

Grants will be awarded in four categories: Habitat Restoration, Species Intervention, and Species Information, and Capacity. Program priorities include implementing habitat restoration strategies and increasing baseline species information for species of interest within specific aquatic and grassland focal areas.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The Initiative will award grants in southeastern New Mexico and west Texas within the focal areas. The aquatic focal geographies map (Figure 1) identifies several aquatic focal areas along tributaries of the Pecos River and the river main stem which will be given priority. The Pecos grasslands focal geographies map (Figure 2) identifies the region in which projects targeting pronghorn and migratory grassland birds will be given priority.

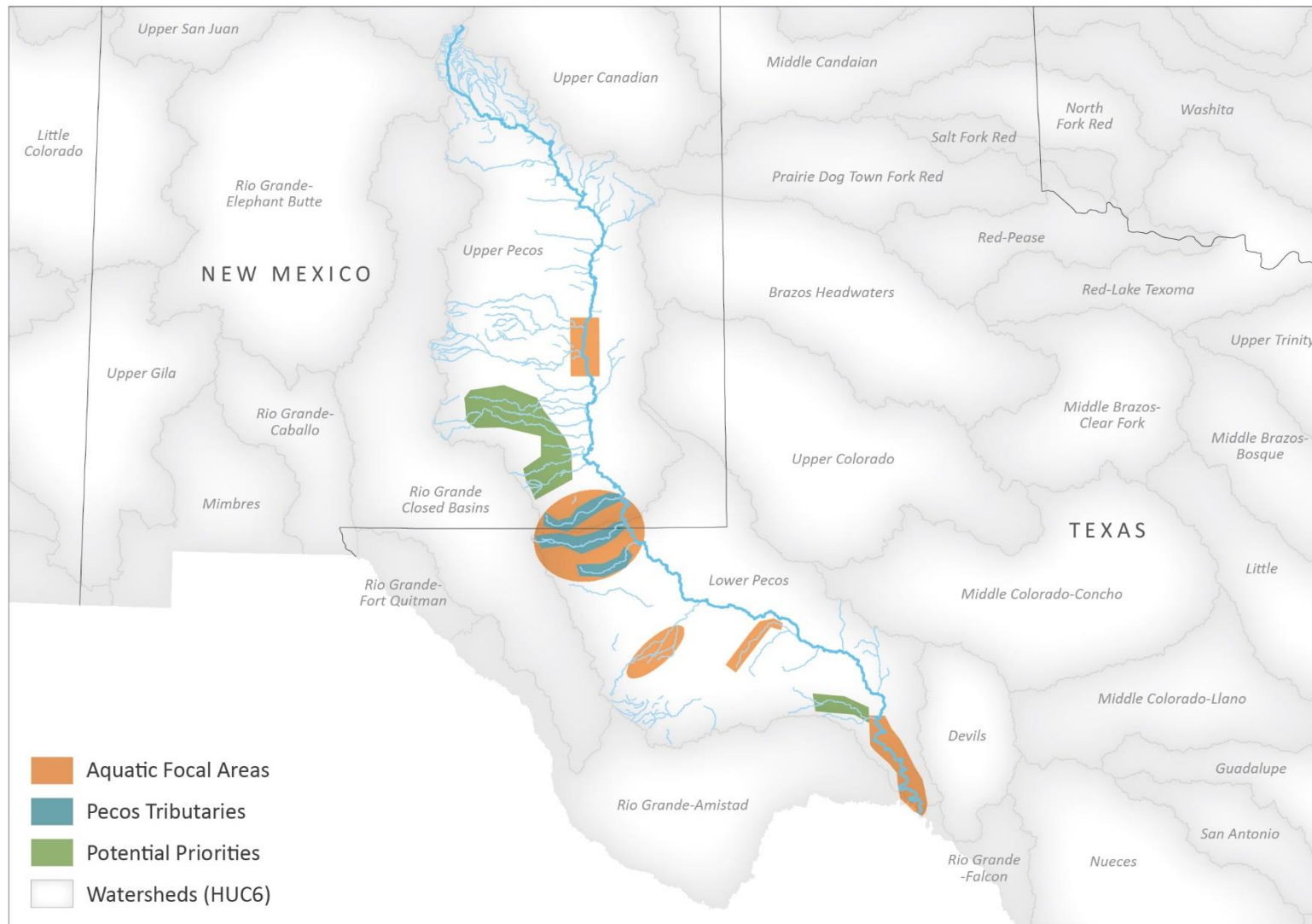


Figure 1. Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative Aquatic Focal Geographies

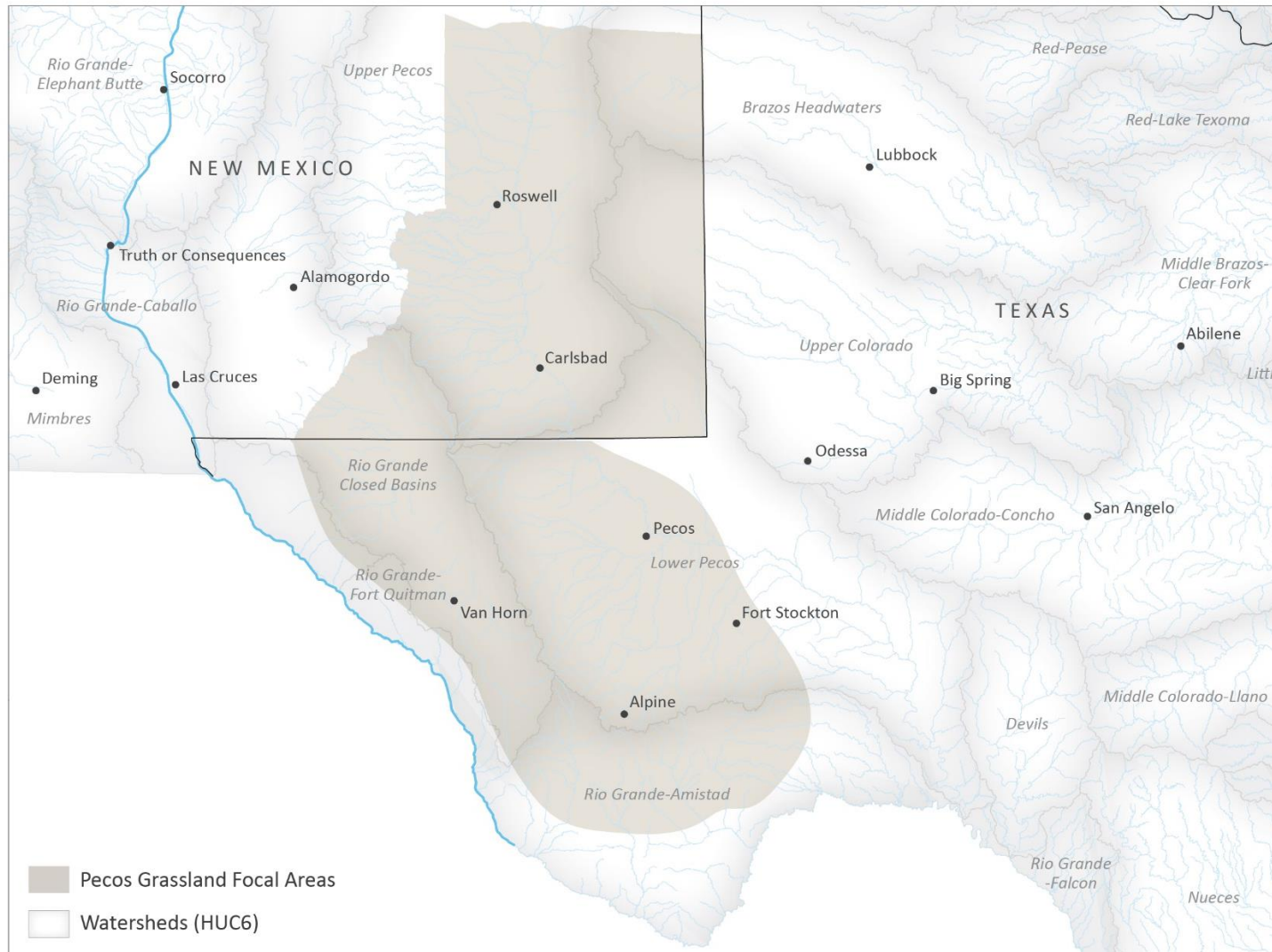


Figure 2. Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative Grasslands Focal Geographies



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

All proposals must specifically address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of one or more of the program priorities as identified in the [Southwest Rivers Program Business Plan](#).

Habitat Restoration and Management Grants

Grants will be awarded for projects that improve habitat for one or more of our target species:

- **Stream and Riparian Habitat Restoration:** Create and enhance riparian habitat in focal geographies to benefit target aquatic species listed below. This work may include flexible management prescriptions for upland grazing and restoration of native vegetation. Projects that restore the integrity and complexity of riparian areas to provide important edge habitat and wildlife corridors, protect the quality of freshwater systems, and demonstrate the benefits of aquatic connectivity projects to human communities through improved infrastructure, such as improved stream-road crossings, are encouraged. Projects addressing water availability for riparian habitat will also be considered. Projects should include long-term maintenance strategies for restored areas including invasive species, water availability and grazing management.
- **Grassland Habitat Restoration and Management:** Implement outcome based grassland restoration and grazing management projects that use a range of practices and prescriptions to create, sustain or improve large blocks of high quality Chihuahuan desert grasslands for the focal species listed below. Projects should address habitat quality, connectivity and management for grasslands that provide actual or potential habitat for pronghorn (including fence modification) and migratory grassland bird species. Projects that engage landowners with a range of property sizes and interests are strongly encouraged.
- **Outreach and Technical Assistance:** Improve the management of public and/or private lands that contain habitat or potential habitat for focal species. Projects may execute innovative outreach and marketing strategies to engage target audiences, especially private agricultural landowners and land managers, in adopting practices that enhance habitat conditions. Projects should attempt to leverage NRCS funding and cost-share programs when possible. Technical assistance to facilitate design of habitat restoration and infrastructure projects are also supported.

Species Intervention Grants

Grants will be awarded for projects that secure or establish populations of certain target aquatic species, including Pecos gambusia, Pecos pupfish and Texas hornshell:

- **Securing existing populations:** Implement strategies that protect target species from invasion and/or disease.

- **Establishing new populations:** For target species with limited range that are threatened by invasion, translocate individuals to suitable habitats that will increase redundancy and establish protected populations.

Species Information Grants

This RFP is seeking proposals that fill information gaps on the Rio Grande cooter, a species that inhabits the Pecos watershed but about which not enough is known to prioritize conservation strategies. Competitive proposals will include those that inform future habitat restoration priorities through improved species distribution maps and better understanding of habitat needs and stressors affecting those species.

Species Response Monitoring to Habitat Improvement Strategies

Develop and implement monitoring protocols to measure pronghorn, grassland bird or fish response to habitat restoration and enhancement. Where baseline data is not available, monitoring proposals should establish a baseline measurement. This baseline should then be used to measure change over time as restoration activities are undertaken. Monitoring projects may be paired with other monitoring work that federal and state agencies are performing. Preference will be given to monitoring proposals that include habitat restoration and/or enhancement activities or monitor species response to habitat restoration and/or enhancement work funded through another NFWF Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative project. Monitoring for focal species should track progress towards species outcomes included in Southwest Rivers Business plan. Applicants are encouraged to contact NFWF program staff prior to submitting a proposal to discuss projects that include species monitoring.

Capacity Grants

Increase capacity for implementation of priority conservation activities through partner positions. Applications are encouraged which support new full-time or part-time partner positions at applicant organizations such as foresters, wildlife biologists, rangeland specialists, and/or other natural resource professionals that will work in conjunction with NRCS personnel in New Mexico on a daily basis to carry out the provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Duties of IRA partner positions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Providing technical assistance in the development of conservation plans and checkouts of completed practices
- Preparing and/or monitoring various contract management reports.
- Preparing and issuing correspondence to participants such as annual practice reminders, deferral letters, preapproval letters, and eligibility letters.
- Providing assistance with the application process such as reviewing documents for completeness, verifying control of land, irrigation history, signature authority, required electronic registrations, and troubleshooting eligibility/vendor issues.
- Assisting with contract management by uploading and maintaining documents in electronic systems; removing expired contracts from active contract filing cabinets; and ensuring appropriate signatures on documents.
- Assisting with the completion of reviews and audits by compiling documentation needed to support audit samples.

Focal Species

Aquatic/Riparian Species

Pecos pupfish
Pecos gambusia
Rio Grande (Western) cooter
Texas hornshell

Grassland Species

Chestnut-collared longspur
Pronghorn
Sprague's pipit

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the *Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative* has a list of metrics in Easygrants to choose from for future reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project, and that each conservation action be measured by the 1-3 most relevant metrics. The number of proposed metrics will not have any bearing on the competitiveness of the proposal.

Project Activity	Easygrants Metric	Additional Guidance
Water acquisitions or leases	Acre feet of water leased	Enter the acre feet of water leased
Fish passage improvements	# passage barriers rectified	Enter the # of in-stream barriers removed or rectified as part of THIS grant to improve aquatic organism passage and/or flooding. If multiple barriers exist at one specific location, please list "1" and list each individual barrier in the notes.
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.
Texas Hornshell - Instream restoration	Miles restored	Enter instream miles restored for the benefit of Texas hornshell.
Land restoration	Acres restored	Enter the number of grassland acres that have been restored through treatments for woody shrub encroachment or other means. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to

		restoration (barren, cropland, shrub) and post-restoration (grassland). Do not include any riparian acres you recorded under the Riparian Restoration metric.
Removal of invasives	Acres restored	Enter the number of acres of riparian invasive plants that have been removed. This metric is for riparian zone invasives only. Acres of grasslands restored through removal of invasive brush should be recorded in the “Land restoration – Acres restored” metric. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Junipers, Shrubs), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Shrub), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No).
Restoring hydrology	# sites with restored hydrology	Enter the number of sites with a reduced risk of point-source water quality impairment.
Riparian restoration	Acres restored	Enter the number of riparian acres restored, including riparian buffers. In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), the dominant vegetation being planted (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Wet meadow), and the average width of the riparian buffer.
Pronghorn - BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of fencing improved	Enter the number of miles of fencing improved
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Acres with BMPs	Enter the number of cropland acres with enhanced nutrient management practices other than or in addition to conservation tillage or cover crops. Please describe the nutrient management practices in the NOTES section.
Improved management practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres on which resource management is actively improved through the implementation

		of grazing management plans or other means. Habitat restoration acres should not be included here unless management practices have also changed on the acres restored because of the project.
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# people reached	Enter the number of people reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# people with changed behavior	Enter the number of individuals demonstrating a minimum level of behavior change
Volunteer participation	# volunteers participating	Enter the number of volunteers participating in projects
Pecos Pupfish - Invasive animal or predator removal/ Fencing nests from predators	# barriers created	Enter the number of barriers created to protect populations of Pecos pupfish by preventing passage of non-native species
Pecos Gambusia - Translocation	# translocations and/or social attraction projects	Enter the number of translocations and/or social attraction projects initiated for Pecos gambusia.
Pecos Pupfish - Translocation	# translocations and/or social attraction projects	Enter the number of translocations and/or social attraction projects initiated for Pecos pupfish.
Monitoring	# sites being monitored	Enter the number sites being monitored
SW Rivers - Research - # studies reported to mgmt	# studies reported to mgmt	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are reported to management

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include: local, state, federal, and tribal governments and agencies (e.g., townships, cities, boroughs), special districts (e.g., conservation districts, planning districts, utility districts), non-profit 501(c) organizations, educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include: international organizations, businesses or unincorporated individuals.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- Funds from this program cannot support fee title land acquisition projects. However, funds may cover certain transaction costs associated with an acquisition (appraisals, title searches, surveys) and for conservation easements.
- 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.
- **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

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

The Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative will award up to ***\$1.4 million in the 2024 funding cycle***. NFWF expects to ***make 5-8 grant awards*** from this Request for Proposals. Projects should begin within six months of the award date and be completed within three years of the agreed start date. These grants require matching contributions (either cash or in-kind) valued at 50% of the total project costs (1:1 ratio). Matching funds may be federal or non-federal in origin, with that distinction made in the Matching Funds section of the application. If achieving the match requirement is an impediment, contact NFWF staff representatives to discuss.

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.

- **Project Need:** Describe the relevance of the project for conservation of the focal species, and its relationship to any prioritization process, species conservation plan

or watershed restoration plan. Proposals that effectively communicate the context for the project, in terms of how it fits into a broader restoration effort and why it addresses the most strategic need, will be the most competitive. Please provide this context within the proposal.

- **Activities/Methods:** Describe how each activity will be implemented and the anticipated timeline. Explain how these activities address the key limiting factors the focal species. Describe how these activities relate to established plans and conservation needs. Discuss how this project either initiates or fits into larger efforts in the watershed, or, if this is a stand-alone project, how it will succeed in and of itself in restoring, protecting, or enhancing the species population(s).
- **Long-Term Conservation Outcome(s):** Discuss the quantifiable/measurable long-term outcome(s) for habitat or populations that will be achieved, including how the project will enhance resilience to changing environmental conditions in native aquatic populations. Describe how the project helps achieve the goals described in the Rio Grande focal geography of the Southwest Rivers Business Plan.

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.

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 – 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.

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. Projects will be evaluated with respect to their potential to maintain themselves or minimize need for maintenance.

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.) *If the project has any nexus with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USFS, Bureau of Land Management, and/or tribal lands or trust resources, please discuss their involvement in the project and request a letter of support from the appropriate office.*

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.

TIMELINE

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

<i>Applicant Webinar</i> [Register Here] <i>EST</i>	<i>August 24th at 1:00pm MDT / 2:00pm CT / 3:00pm</i>
<i>Full Proposal Due Date</i> <i>11:59pm ET</i>	<i>November 9th by 9:59pm MDT / 10:59pm CT /</i>
<i>Review and Notification Period</i>	<i>November 2023 – March 2024</i>
<i>Awards Announced</i>	<i>March 2024</i>

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.
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 (www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/home.aspx).

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

Kirstin Neff
Manager, Southwest Rivers Program
Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org
(303) 222-6485

Gracie Broughton
Coordinator, Regional Program
Grace.Broughton@nfwf.org
(202) 595-2644

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.