



SOUTHWEST RIVERS HEADWATERS FUND

2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[View Recording Here](#)]: **September 12th at 10:00am MDT/12:00 pm EST**

Full Proposal Due Date: **November 9th, 2023, 11:59pm EDT/ 9:59pm MDT**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is requesting proposals to restore, protect and enhance aquatic and riparian species of conservation concern and their habitats in the headwaters of the Colorado River and Rio Grande watersheds. Up to \$2 million in funding is expected to be available through support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Walton Family Foundation, and the Trinchera Blanca Foundation, an affiliate of The Moore Charitable Foundation.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS/PROGRAM FUNDING PRIORITIES

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is part of NFWF's Southwest Rivers Program and will provide funding to projects that produce measurable outcomes for species of conservation concern in the riparian corridors of the headwaters of the Colorado River and Rio Grande. The Rio Grande Focal Area includes the main stem and headwater tributaries of the Rio Grande in Colorado and northern New Mexico, as well as the headwaters of the Rio Chama, Jemez River, and Rio Puerco. This year the Headwaters Fund focuses its priority watersheds in the Colorado River Area of Interest to include selected tributaries and headwaters of the Colorado River in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah (see Figure 1). Projects located in the Colorado River watershed on Colorado's Western Slope should be submitted to the concurrent RESTORE Colorado 2024 RFP. Priority projects will address the leading factors in aquatic and riparian species decline such as loss of natural processes and habitat, environmental change and invasive species through process-based methods of wetlands and riparian restoration. Maintaining healthy headwater wetlands and riparian areas provide security by improving the reliability of late season flows for water users, fish and wildlife downstream. Proposals in the Rio Grande Focal Area should strive to contribute to goals detailed in NFWF's [Southwest Rivers Business Plan](#), and specifically the strategies related to focal species (see below) conservation. Projects benefiting one or more of the following species and their habitats are priorities for funding.

- Business Plan focal species in the Rio Grande Focal Area include Rio Grande cutthroat trout, North American beaver and southwestern willow flycatcher. Additional species of interest include Rio Grande chub and sucker.
- Priority species in the Colorado River Area of Interest include Apache trout, bluehead sucker, Chiricahua leopard frog, Colorado River cutthroat trout,

desert sucker, flannelmouth sucker, Gila chub, Gila topminnow, Gila trout, Lewis's woodpecker, Little Colorado spinedace, loach minnow, narrow-headed garter snake, northern Mexican garter snake, New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, North American beaver, roundtail chub, Sonora sucker, southwestern willow flycatcher, speckled dace, spikedace, Virgin River chub, Virgin spinedace.



Figure 1. Southwest Rivers Headwaters Program Boundary

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

Priority restoration activities that address key limiting factors for focal species in the Colorado River and Rio Grande headwaters include:

Process-based wetland, riparian and instream habitat restoration and enhancement – Restore natural fluvial process that increase floodplain connectivity, dynamic channel processes and recruitment of native riparian vegetation. Activities may include beaver mimicry structures, livestock exclusion fencing and riparian vegetation planting, removal of channel stabilizing structures, and grants may support science-based design

and analysis for process-based restoration projects.

Increase water availability for species and their habitats and/or remove barriers to flow

– Make available more water for environmental flows that are necessary to drive process-based restoration and sustain species and their habitats through voluntary leasing or acquisition of water rights in the focal geographies. Remove or improve infrastructure at road crossings, culverts and check dams that act as barriers to the movement of aquatic species or promote natural dynamic processes to ensure habitat connectivity and fluvial development of the whole valley bottom.

Reintroduction and translocation of focal species– Translocation of priority aquatic species to stream reaches with improved habitat and protection from invasive species. Reintroduction of or attraction projects benefitting North American beaver in a manner compatible with ongoing agricultural use and irrigation and land management objectives, and which benefits other priority species dependent on the habitat created by beaver activity.

Increase capacity for low-tech process-based restoration implementation in and among conservation organizations working in the southwest region. Here we define increased capacity broadly, from new positions within an organization to funding for contracting with external partners that bring knowledge or manpower to extend the reach of low-tech process-based restoration techniques throughout the southwest. The Fund intends to provide opportunities for training and sharing best practices to support new hires and organizations interested in expanding their reach and impact using the techniques of low-tech process-based restoration.

Increase Capacity for Implementation of NRCS IRA conservation activities in New Mexico

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.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grant projects, the Southwest Rivers Program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for reporting (commonly used metrics are shown in the table below). We ask that you select the most relevant metrics from this list for your project. If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Kirstin Neff (Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Water acquisitions or leases	Habitat Conservation – Water acquisitions or leases – Acre feet of water leased	Enter the acre feet of water leased
Fish passage improvements	Habitat Restoration – 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	Habitat Restoration – 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.
Restore stream geomorphology to increase aquatic species habitat	Habitat Restoration – Instream restoration – Miles restored	Enter instream miles restored for priority species
Remove invasive species that threaten target fish species	Habitat Restoration – Removal of invasives – Miles restored	Enter stream miles from which invasive fish and other aquatic species threatening priority species through competition are removed.
Reconnect floodplain and reestablish native riparian vegetation	Habitat Restoration – 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.
Installation of livestock exclusion fencing to protect riparian habitat	Habitat Management – BMP implementation for livestock fencing – Miles of fencing installed	Enter miles of fencing installed to improve habitat for priority species
Engage landowners regarding beaver	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Outreach/Education/Technical	Enter the number of people reached by outreach, training, or technical

introduction or engage other stakeholders regarding conservation actions	Assistance – # people reached	assistance activities
Volunteer participation	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Volunteer participation – # volunteers participating	Enter the number of volunteers participating in projects
Installation of barriers to prevent the migration of invasive aquatic species	Species-specific Strategies – Invasive animal or predator removal/ Fencing nests from predators – # barriers created	Enter the number of barriers constructed to protect populations of priority species
Translocation of beaver for reintroduction and riparian habitat restoration	Species-specific Strategies – Translocation – # translocated/stocked	Enter the number of beaver translocated in the course of the project
Conduct translocation projects for target native fish species	Species-specific Strategies – Translocation – # translocations and/or social attraction projects	Enter the # translocations and/or social attraction projects initiated for focal and non-focal species
Expand species monitoring to new and additional sites	Planning, Research, Monitoring – Monitoring – # sites being monitored	Enter the # sites being monitored
Population	Population – Miles of habitat occupied by the species	Enter the number of miles of habitat occupied by beaver

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

Up to \$2 million in grant funds is available. We anticipate making 6-10 grant awards in this cycle.

Applicants are encouraged to provide at least \$1 in non-federal matching funds for every \$1 of NFWF grant funds requested. Eligible matching sources can include cash, in-kind donations, and/or volunteer labor which are directly related to the project proposed for funding. Applicants must distinguish between federal and non-federal matching fund sources. Applicants for projects implementing low-tech, process-based restoration are encouraged to bring federal IJA and IRA matching funds.

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 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 – 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. Projects awarded in the Colorado River Focal Area will be required to implement a pre-determined monitoring protocol for such projects that will be provided by NFWF. Applicants should plan to provide project access to a monitoring contractor supported by NFWF to allow execution of the monitoring protocol for their project.

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), Wilderness Act 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 [Southwest Rivers Program page](#) of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar [View Recording here]	September 12, 2023, 12:00pm-1:00pm EST/ 10:00am -11:00am MST
Full Proposal Due Date	November 9th, 2023, 11:59pm EST/ 9:59pm MST
Review Period	November 2023 – March 2024
Awards Announced	March 2024

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:

Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org, (303)-222-6485

or

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.