



NFWF



Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund

2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, March 21st, 2024, by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in partnership with the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service, is soliciting proposals through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF) to conserve, restore, and connect people with fish and wildlife habitat in the Delaware River watershed. The DWCF will award matching grants of \$75,000 to \$1,500,000 each to conserve, restore, and protect habitats on public and private land, across rural, urban, and Tribal areas, that contribute to the overall health of the Delaware River watershed—as well as benefit the quality of life and economic vitality of the communities in the Delaware River watershed. Up to \$14.4 million in grant funding is available, including approximately \$5 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. Major funding for the DWCF is provided by the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service with additional funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and AstraZeneca.

In 2024, NFWF will award DWCF grants in four grant categories including: Implementation Grants; Capacity Building Grants; Planning Grants; and Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Grants. These grants will be awarded to non-profit organizations; federal, state, interstate and local governments; Tribal governments and organizations; and educational institutions to implement voluntary, on-the-ground restoration, conservation, and community engagement projects that achieve the goals of the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program Framework to:

1. Sustain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat;
2. Improve and maintain water quality for fish, wildlife, and people;
3. Sustain and enhance water management to benefit fish and wildlife; and
4. Improve outdoor recreational opportunities.

To address these goals, projects may be located anywhere within the Delaware River watershed and must align with one or more of the Strategic Program Areas described in the Program Priorities section below. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to reference NFWF’s Delaware River Watershed Business Plan, updated in 2023, for opportunities to enhance project competitiveness by linking Business Plan strategies and work in focal areas for priority species with Framework Strategic Program Areas whenever possible. DWCF seeks to support projects which increase equitable access and community engagement, especially for underserved communities, with the goal of providing opportunities for all to experience the benefits of a healthy Delaware River Watershed. Applicants should include specific demographic information about the community or communities engaged with the project, such as age, race, ethnicity, poverty rates, unemployment or other factors that make a community disproportionately vulnerable to environmental hazards.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects must be implemented entirely within the Delaware River watershed, which includes portions of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Organizations located outside the watershed may apply if the project will be conducted entirely within the watershed.

Applicants should consult NFWF’s online [mapping portal](#) to determine appropriate geographic focus areas for their proposed project activities and alignment with NFWF’s Delaware Business Plan and Nature’s Network priorities. Applicants for DWCF funding are strongly encouraged to use the resources outlined in the Conservation Context section on page 9 and 10 of the RFP to help guide and refine proposals for project delivery.



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

All proposals must clearly address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of program priorities enumerated below. Priority will be given to projects that collaboratively address one or more of the following Strategic Program Areas.

Strategic Program Area 1: Sustain and Enhance Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration and Conservation Activities. The basin has diverse habitats that support an array of fish and wildlife, ranging from the densely forested headwater streams in the upper basin, past the highly urbanized waterfronts, to the bayshores of the estuary. The program will support projects that enhance ecological function and conserve and restore important habitats upon which fish and wildlife resources in the basin depend. Activities addressing this strategic program area include but are not limited to:

- Projects that conserve, restore, and establish ecological function of important habitats upon which the fish and wildlife (including migratory species) in the basin depend—upland forests, wetlands, riparian buffers, coastal marshes, riparian buffers, etc.
- Projects that support management, research, monitoring, habitat protection, and/or outreach activities that have direct conservation benefits or meet other priority needs of ESA-listed species, at-risk species, or NFWF business plan species (see Related Content section for additional guidance on priority species conservation). \$1 million dollars in program funding will be set aside for priority species conservation projects.
- Approximately \$400,000 in program funding will be set aside for projects that direct staff resources to help agricultural producers design and implement conservation practices benefitting select Working Lands for Wildlife target species, American Black Duck and Golden-winged warbler, within the watershed. Projects should Increase Farm Bill program participation and conservation practice implementation among agricultural producers,



especially farmers and ranchers in the [Historically Underserved](#) and [Special Emphasis](#) categories. See the NRCS section below for more information.

- Projects that benefit fish and wildlife species within the five focal areas outlined in NFWF's Delaware River Watershed [Business Plan](#).
- Conservation and restoration planning projects working with landowners to establish conservation easements on lands supporting high-value fish and wildlife habitats.
- Conservation and restoration planning projects that result in shovel-ready projects that improve habitats, restore aquatic connectivity, reduce runoff, etc.
- Projects increasing the delivery of best management practices and increasing fish and wildlife habitat on/adjacent to farmlands such as riparian buffer establishment, stream crossings, wetland restoration, and floodplain reconnection.
- Projects that remove barriers to aquatic organism passage to restore aquatic connectivity and improve public safety across the basin.
- Projects that reduce hazards for priority at-risk forest birds during migration, including projects that result in retrofitting of windows, lighting, and towers to reduce at-risk bird collisions.
- Projects stabilizing streambanks and reconnecting floodplains to improve ecological function, reestablish native plant communities, and support aquatic organisms.
- Invasive species management projects.
- Projects that build capacity for Tribal stewardship and management of fish and wildlife habitats on and adjacent to Tribal homelands.

Strategic Program Area 2: Improve and Maintain Water Quality to Support Fish and Wildlife, as well as Habitats for Fish and Wildlife and Drinking Water for People. Over 15 million people rely on the water from the Delaware River and tributaries for their drinking water needs. The river also supports a diverse suite of fish and wildlife that depends on high quality water. While projects should coordinate with existing regulatory activities, they should focus on non-regulatory efforts. Priority will be given to projects focusing on habitat protection and conservation activities with the objective to protect water quality for both drinking water and the health of the fish and wildlife resources. Activities addressing this strategic program area include but are not limited to:

- Water quality monitoring programs and outreach campaigns to promote clean water for fish and wildlife and empower local community scientists across rural, urban, and Tribal areas within the watershed.
- Instream restoration and streambank stabilization projects to enhance habitat, increase nutrient processing, reduce erosion and sedimentation, and increase equitable public access.
- Projects that install rain gardens and pollinator habitat, living shorelines, buffers along agricultural fields, etc. to filter stormwater and improve water quality for fish and wildlife.
- Projects that reconnect stream channels to historic floodplains and adjacent wetlands to promote nutrient removal and reduce erosion.



- Planning projects that result in shovel-ready designs for living shorelines, bioswales, and other designs that will improve water quality, mitigate pollution, and provide valuable habitats for fish and wildlife.
- On-farm practices that enhance fish and wildlife habitats on working landscapes such as riparian buffers, instream enhancements, or wetland restoration.
- Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and agriculture projects that are strategic and primarily benefit fish and wildlife habitat.

Strategic Program Area 3: Sustain and Enhance Water Resource Management for Volume and Flood Damage Mitigation Improvements to Benefit Fish and Wildlife Habitat. Municipal and industrial water supply, energy production, and agricultural uses place high demands on water resources in the Delaware River Basin. Fish and wildlife also depend on water availability in their habitats. Projects should strive to equitably manage water uses and enhance natural disaster tolerances for people as well as for fish and wildlife while adapting to a changing climate. While projects should focus on non-regulatory efforts to support demands on water resources of the basin, projects should coordinate with existing regulatory activities. Activities addressing this strategic program area include but are not limited to:

- Nature-based solutions projects that restore or expand natural features such as coastal marshes and wetlands, dune and beach systems, oyster reefs, forests, stream channels, floodplains, and buffers which minimize the impacts of storms and other naturally occurring events on nearby communities and maximize benefits to fish and wildlife.
- Projects that reconnect stream channels to historic floodplains and adjacent wetlands to enhance habitats and reduce the risk of flooding, particularly to vulnerable communities.
- Rain garden, native pollinator garden, and bioswale installation or planning projects that redirect and filter stormwater runoff and reduce flooding.
- Planning or construction projects that establish or enhance living shorelines and other natural habitats to mitigate flooding and improve habitats for fish and wildlife.
- Projects that replace or right-size culverts or otherwise improve road and stream crossings to reduce downstream erosion of nutrients and minimize flooding.
- Projects benefiting rural, urban, and Tribal communities by reducing nuisance flooding, decreasing stormwater runoff, and increasing resiliency.
- Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and agriculture projects that are strategic and primarily benefit fish and wildlife habitat.

RETURNING in 2024: Call for Tree Planting Projects

Through a partnership with AstraZeneca, NFWF is seeking DWCF projects that include a significant element of tree planting. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals with projects utilizing robust riparian buffer plantings, urban and suburban canopy expansion, reforestation and afforestation, and other tree planting practices for improved habitat and water quality. Applicants seeking to take advantage of these new funds should use the metric for number of trees planted in addition to other appropriate metrics. Please contact program staff with any questions.

Strategic Program Area 4: Improve Opportunities for Public Access and Recreation in the Basin Consistent with the Ecological Needs of Fish and Wildlife Habitat. Because of its location within a densely populated part of the country, the basin offers ample outdoor recreation opportunities to millions of people. The program will support projects that enable the recreational endeavors of communities through traditional and non-traditional outdoor experiences to improve people’s physical and mental health. Projects may include urban gardens, pollinator habitats, nature trails, kayaking, improved boating access and hunting and fishing opportunities, as well as wildlife viewing and birding, thus providing equitable access and economic benefits to the watershed. The program may also support projects which address the increasing pressures of public access on our fish, wildlife, and other natural resources. Activities addressing this strategic program area include but are not limited to:

- Upgrades to public access points like boat and kayak launches, walking trails, hunting and fishing access, birding boardwalks, etc. to withstand increasing use, improve deficient infrastructure, increase public safety, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- Projects that establish trail networks and infrastructure for other recreational activities, incorporating educational signage to increase public awareness.
- Innovative projects establishing public access and education for rural, urban and Tribal communities in non-traditional ways, such as pollinator and native species gardens in highly urbanized areas and community-based habitat improvement projects, to increase equitable access to nature and its benefits.
- Projects incorporating youth engagement programming, benefitting fish and wildlife, and fostering stewardship among participants.
- Projects benefiting Tribes, underserved communities, as well as fish and wildlife resources, through educational programming or direct community engagement that can deliver improved and equitable access to green and blue spaces for nature-deprived communities.
- Projects incorporating volunteer opportunities or leading to job creation.

Direct Community Engagement

DWCF seeks to support projects that increase equitable access and community engagement – especially for underserved communities – with the goal of providing opportunities for residents to experience the benefits of a healthy Delaware River Watershed.

The DWCF will prioritize proposals that directly and meaningfully engage communities throughout project development and implementation. Successful proposals will satisfy the evaluation criteria outlined in the “Partnership and Community Impact” section on page 10. Some examples of direct and meaningful community engagement include:

- Projects are community led or co-created with community members
- Project team includes members representing and/or a part of the target community
- Directly engaging in specific cultural activities with the community
- Empowering community members with knowledge or decision-making authority
- Active engagement strategies such as workshops, classroom activities, field trips and volunteer opportunities
- Creating jobs in the target community, performing job training, technical assistance and certifications

To support you in centering and integrating meaningful community engagement in your project, consider using the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed’s DEIJ Lens and Screening Tool:

<https://www.delriverwatershed.org/deij-lens-and-screening-tool>

Priority will be given to projects that were developed through community input and co-design processes.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

The DWCF will award up to \$14.4 million in grants ranging from no less than \$75,000 to no more than \$1,500,000 in 2024. Requested amount should align with the scope and scale of the project. Generally, grants of less than \$250,000 will be awarded for restoration at a single site and/or involving fewer partners. To address these program priorities, applicants may apply to one of the four funding categories outlined below. Applicants may not submit a project to multiple funding categories (e.g., an applicant cannot use the same project or components of the project to apply concurrently for a Planning Grant and an Implementation Grant). All proposals must:

1. Address one or more Delaware River Basin Restoration Program [Framework](#) Strategic Program Areas (listed above).
2. Incorporate one or more *Cross-Program Activities* outlined in the [Framework](#).

The ratio of matching contributions offered by an applicant compared to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process. All factors being equal, projects that offer a higher match ratio with contributions from non-federal sources will be more competitive. Voluntary additional match, beyond the minimum requirements detailed below, may be from either federal or non-federal sources. Match leniency may be available to high priority projects that directly engage communities and/or benefit an underserved community or Tribe but cannot meet the minimum match



requirement. Should an applicant experience significant challenges meeting the non-federal requirement, they are encouraged to contact NFWF or FWS program staff to discuss options.

One million dollars will be made available for proposals that support management, research, monitoring, and/or outreach activities that have direct conservation benefits or meet other priority needs of ESA-listed species, at-risk species, or NFWF business plan species (see the [DWCF Priority Species](#) document for a list of species and additional guidance on priority species conservation).

Approximately \$5 million dollars in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding will be made available for proposals that will accelerate conservation and restoration efforts by expanding support for innovative green-infrastructure and nature-based solution projects that contribute to the health and economic vitality of communities in the watershed. Proposals that engage community members in addressing issues such as flood mitigation, water quality, and safe access to nature in their neighborhoods will be prioritized.

DCWF Implementation Grants – Approximately \$8 million is available for shovel-ready conservation and restoration projects that result in quantifiable benefits for fish, wildlife, and people within the Delaware River Watershed. Implementation grants will range from \$75,000 to \$1,500,000 each. These grants require non-federal matching contributions equal to the NFWF grant request (i.e., 1:1 match ratio). Projects must be ready to begin implementation within six months of the grant award and completed within a three year period of performance. Capital investment projects, including the purchase or construction of large assets or infrastructure, are discouraged within this program. However, if such investments will enhance public accessibility to resources, opportunities for education and engagement, etc. applicants are encouraged to reach out to NFWF to discuss. Projects requesting more than \$1 million are strongly encouraged to sign up for a proposal lab, and will be subject to additional scrutiny, including considerations of past performance and timely completion of federal compliance, and scale of impact of project.

DWCF Capacity Building Grants – Up to \$2 million is available for projects with the intended purpose of building capacity among local grantees and partners working to improve fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature in the Delaware River watershed. Capacity-Building Grants may range from \$75,000 to \$500,000 each. The DWCF will fund both individual organizations and local/regional collaboratives to establish and enhance local networks to accomplish shared goals; support strategic planning and project development; improve direct community engagement; advance Tribal co-stewardship initiatives; implement diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in conservation; and undertake programmatic evaluations, assessments and monitoring. NFWF encourages applicants to work in partnership with other organizations interested in similar capacity-building efforts (e.g., “cohorts”) to submit proposals that will increase efficiency, have broader reach, and allow for increased knowledge transfer. Projects must result in improved delivery of conservation and applicants are strongly encouraged to sign up for a proposal lab to discuss with NFWF and FWS program staff before submitting an application for this category.

Note: If the proposed budget includes increased staffing, the budget narrative must outline a clear plan for sustaining staff without relying on DWCF grants in the future. Additionally, the applicant must clearly articulate the conservation benefits that additional staffing will yield.



These grants require non-federal matching contributions valued at 25% of the NFWF grant request. (For example, the required non-federal match for a \$100,000 request to NFWF would be \$25,000.) Projects must be ready to begin within six months of the grant award and be completed within a three-year period of performance.

DCWF Planning Grants –Up to \$2 million is available for proposals with the purpose of planning conservation and restoration projects. Planning grants could range from \$75,000 to \$500,000 each. Applicants may propose a range of project types including 1) engagement, planning and prioritization; 2) feasibility, suitability, or alternatives analyses; 3) site assessment and conceptual design; and 4) final design and permits. These funds may be used to set the stage for projects that can compete for larger, nationally competitive funding sources and/or have watershed wide impacts. These grants require non-federal matching contributions equal to the NFWF grant request (i.e., 1:1 match ratio). Projects must begin within six months of the grant award and be completed within a three-year period of performance.

DWCF Research, Monitoring, & Evaluation Grants – Up to \$2 million is available to support high-performing science that is inclusive, adaptive, innovative, and accountable. Research, Monitoring, & Evaluation Grants may range from \$75,000 to \$500,000 each. Projects should have significant potential to transform the Delaware River watershed's future in areas including conservation and restoration action, diversity and inclusion, Tribal co-stewardship, monitoring, research, evaluation, and public access. NFWF will prioritize projects that address cross cutting issues that are barriers to, or represent unique opportunities for, accelerating habitat improvement for fish, wildlife, and people in the Delaware River watershed. For example, grants may support innovative methods and new technologies to drive down implementation costs, ensure the effectiveness and continual improvement of conservation and restoration practices, invest in sustainable monitoring infrastructure or practices, support the refinement and application of data on ESA-listed species, at-risk species, or NFWF business plan species that call the watershed home, and enhance direct community engagement across rural, urban, and Tribal areas and increase nature based experiences. These grants require non-federal matching contributions equal to the NFWF grant request (i.e., 1:1 match ratio). Projects must be ready to begin within six months of the grant award and be completed within a three-year period of performance.

PROJECT METRICS

To assess project progress and ensure greater consistency of data provided by multiple grants, the Delaware River Program provides a list of metrics in Easygrants (also found in [Appendix A](#)). Applicants should select only the most relevant metrics for the project (all possible program metrics are shown in [Appendix A](#)). To increase consistency in the usage and calculations of metrics, the [2024 Metrics Guidance](#) document provides additional details and instructions about each metric. Please ensure that, upon choosing a metric to include in your proposal, the calculation of the target value accounts for the instructions listed in the Metrics Guidance. If you believe an applicable metric has not been provided or have metrics questions, please contact Erin Lewis (erin.lewis@nfwf.org).



ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- ✓ Eligible applicants include: non-profit 501(c) organizations; federal, state, interstate, local and municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions.
- ✗ Ineligible applicants include: unincorporated individuals, businesses, and international organizations.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- 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, compensatory mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon baseline legal and permit compliance efforts (e.g., Projects that go above and beyond minimum legal compliance benefitting both stormwater management and fish and wildlife habitat).
- 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 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.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with NFWF and funding source [policies](#). Proposals will then be evaluated by review teams representing program funders and technical experts based primarily on the extent to which they meet the following criteria:

Program Goals and Strategies – Reviewers will refer to the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program [Framework](#) to assess project relevance and alignment to Program goals and strategies. Proposed activities should substantially contribute to on-the-ground habitat restoration and/or species conservation goals and priorities outlined in the Framework. Competitive proposals will address one or more of the Strategic Program Areas and contain one or more Cross-Program Activities. Project proposals should clearly state which Strategic Program Area the project will address and provide context for the need, objectives, expected outcomes, and means to measure the success of proposed actions. Projects should include specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success.

Technical Merit – The project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical, and achievable work plan. The work plan should include clear activities, roles (including

partner roles), outcomes, a timeline, and a plan for monitoring project effectiveness and meeting proposed outcomes during and after the project period. The work plan should also note if and how the project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time including how future funding will be secured for necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities. The project should engage appropriate technical experts (or include expert staff) throughout project planning, design, and implementation. Project outcomes should be reasonable and measurable. Proposals should note a project's demonstration value and/or potential and plans to transfer lessons learned to other communities, practitioners or to be integrated into government programs and policies. For Capacity Building and Planning proposals, the applicant must clearly demonstrate how efforts will lead to project implementation.

Budget and Cost-Effectiveness – Costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. The budget includes sufficient detail, overall cost effectiveness, and matching contributions. The costs are reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed and commensurate with the proposed results and outcomes of the project. 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.

Conservation Context (connectivity) – The project is thoughtfully presented within its broader watershed and/or landscape context. Applicant clearly describes why this project should be implemented in this specific location at this time with these partners. Proposal clearly addresses the project's "institutional significance," i.e. how the project contributes to other plans and programs, including organizational, local, state, regional, recreational, resilience, etc. plans and programs (please refer to the [Framework Appendix II](#) for additional information on relevant plans). The proposal should identify any risk factors which may influence expected project outcomes. Proposals for distinct phases of a larger project should include outcomes and lessons learned from prior project phases. Applicants with existing active DWCF grants should be advised that cumulative awards and prior performance will be evaluated during the review.

There are a variety of tools and plans available that can be used for reference purposes for Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund proposals (see also this [Toolbox](#) for the DWCF). These should be used to inform and contextualize projects, but not be perceived as limiting prospective projects to only those species, habitats and ecological services identified therein. Proposals to address broader habitat needs and other important species, or other priorities identified in the [Framework](#), are eligible and encouraged.

- NFWF's Delaware River Watershed [Business Plan](#), which was developed with input from a wide range of watershed partners and stakeholders. The goals and strategies included in the Business Plan are the result of a watershed-wide fish and wildlife habitat prioritization process and geospatial analysis—and they provide a distinct avenue for achieving measurable impact on the ground for habitat and water quality. Proposals should describe in detail how the project addresses priority species and focal areas in the Business Plan.

- Applicants proposing projects that address the needs of priority at-risk species (ARS), Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species, or NFWF business plan priority species can apply to any of the four funding categories listed above. Proposals should focus on specific actions that have been identified as priorities and are listed in the [DWCF Priority Species](#) document. Application narratives should reference the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA), [Northeast Region State Wildlife Action Plan database](#) and/or species [recovery](#) or conservation plans listed in the [DWCF Priority Species](#) document and explain how the proposed conservation actions contribute to regional/range-wide conservation plans for the species. Letters of support from state wildlife agencies and prior coordination are highly encouraged.
- Applicants proposing projects on private, working lands, to help agricultural producers design and implement conservation practices should ensure the project is in alignment with NRCS goals and priorities by conferring with the NRCS State Conservationist and their staff in the state in which your project is located. A list of NRCS contacts can be found [here](#).

Partnership and Community Impact – A project partner is any community, non-profit organization, business, Tribe, and/or local, state, interstate, and federal government agency that contributes time and/or funding to support project planning, design, and/or implementation. Applicants should engage partners throughout project development and implementation. Collaborative partner engagement will ensure long-term sustainability and success of the project, integration into local programs and policies, leveraging of additional skills and resources, and community acceptance of proposed restoration actions. The proposal should describe how the project will be maintained after the period of performance ends. Proposed partners and roles—including short- and long-term—are clearly identified (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant). Non-traditional partners or communities should be directly engaged to broaden the sustained impact from the project and ensure that equity is carefully considered in project design. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit letters of support from their partners demonstrating their commitment to the project and engagement in project activities as proposed.

- Priority will be given to projects that benefit and engage underserved communities. Applicants should describe community characteristics of the project area, identify any communities impacted, and describe outreach and community engagement activities and how they will be monitored and measured.

OTHER

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.

Period of Performance – The Period of Performance is the time between the start and end date of a project for which all activities in the scope of work and requested budget must be included. Expenses incurred outside of the start and end dates cannot be reimbursed. Applicants may include match incurred between January 1, 2023 and the proposed end date, but the project period of performance should have a start date aligned with the start of project activities included in the NFWF funding request. This means match may be raised and spent prior to the project start date (though no earlier than January 1, 2023) but no later than the project end date. Match timing should be noted within the match description section of the proposal. Projects must be ready to begin within six months of the grant award and be completed within three years of award. It is up to the applicant to specify the period of performance for their project that is appropriate for the work they are proposing to complete. For this funding opportunity, a project cannot have a start date prior to July 1, 2024, or an end date after December 31, 2027.

Matching Contributions – Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the Project. We anticipate allowing match to be incurred between January 1, 2023, and the proposed project end date, pending confirmation of the match look back period in our funding agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Match timing should be noted within the match description section of the proposal. The value of land protection activities, including easements or acquired parcels is eligible. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review. Federal funding requires a 1:1 non-federal match (except for Capacity Building grants). Voluntary additional match beyond the 1:1 requirement may be from either federal or non-federal sources.

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 for 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 will be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to DWCF grantees initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). The compliance process should be executed in a timely manner and reimbursement for project activities, including non-construction activities, may be delayed until compliance requirements are complete. 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. NFWF has made [resources](#) available to assist grantees completing NEPA and other federal compliance. These resources include templates, contacts, and a NFWF-funded consultant available to review documentation and provide process guidance. Please see the [tip sheet](#) for more information. Current compliance standing for existing NFWF grants will be considered when reviewing and selecting new proposals.

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 the level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

NRCS Funding – In 2024, NFWF has additional, dedicated funding from NRCS to support projects working on private, working lands that provide technical assistance to interested farmers and ranchers to develop management plans, design and implement conservation practices, and participate in Farm Bill programs, especially the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). A particular emphasis should be placed on promoting, designing, and implementing [climate-smart agriculture and forestry \(CSAF\) conservation practices](#) that also deliver improved water quality outcomes, and reducing the Farm Bill practice contracting and implementation backlogs. Successful proposals under this special opportunity will also seek to increase conservation program participation and practice adoption among [Historically Underserved](#) and [Special Emphasis](#) farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners.

NRCS Historically Underserved Producers and Special Emphasis Program –

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. More information on the underserved categories can be found [here](#). The special emphasis categories are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American, Black, Disability, Women, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Hispanic, and Veterans. More information on the special emphasis categories can be found [here](#).



Applicant Demographic Information – In an effort to better understand diversity in our grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic information on applicants and their communities via a voluntary survey form (available in Easygrants). This information will not be shared externally or with reviewers. For more details, please see the [tip sheet](#) and the Uploads section of Easygrants.

TIMELINE

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

DWCF Proposal Labs (Register)	January through March 2024
DWCF Applicant Webinar (Register)	Tuesday, January 30, 2024, 10:00AM, ET
Proposal Tools Webinar (Register)	Friday, Feb. 2, 2024, 10:00AM, ET
Full Proposal Due Date	Thursday, March 21, 2024, 11:59pm, ET
Review Period	April – May 2024
Awards Announced	Mid-August 2024

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Easygrants system by Thursday, March 21st, 2024, 11:59PM, ET.

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 RFP document can be downloaded [here](#).

Guidance and best practice documents have been pulled together to assist grantees in building a strong proposal:

- [Metrics Guidance](#)
- [Letters of Support Best Practices](#)
- [DWCF Toolbox](#)
- [NEPA Compliance Guidance](#)

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:

Erin Lewis – Program Director, Delaware River
(202) 595-2413
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Ragan Smith – Coordinator, Northeast Regional Programs
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ragan.smith@nfwf.org

For one-on-one guidance, sign up for a virtual proposal lab:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in collaboration with NFWF, will be holding weekly virtual proposal labs for the 2024 RFP s from, January 23rd through March 12th. The labs will provide a space and time where partners can share proposal ideas and receive coaching and constructive feedback. To reserve some time in the lab, please complete this [lab appointment request form](#). We're excited to work hand-in-hand with our partners to make certain they get the support needed to develop competitive proposals, ensuring that the DWCF funds the most effective and innovative conservation activities in the Delaware River watershed.

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.