



MOJAVE DESERT TORTOISE RECOVERY PARTNERSHIP

2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: January 25th 2024
at 1:00pm-2:00pm Eastern / 1:00pm -2:00am Pacific

Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday March 7, 2024
by 11:59pm Eastern / 8:59pm Pacific

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is requesting proposals to restore, protect and enhance populations of Mojave desert tortoise and their habitat in California's western Mojave Desert. Up to \$2 million in funding is expected to be available through support from the U.S. Army, U.S. Marines Corps, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and BNSF Railway.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS/PROGRAM FUNDING PRIORITIES

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is part of NFWF's Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership, and will provide funding to projects that produce measurable outcomes for the threatened Mojave desert tortoise in California's western Mojave Desert. Priority will be given to projects that address desert tortoise conservation needs in one or more of six focal areas in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit (Figure 1). Highway exclusion fencing projects located in areas within the western Mojave Desert (Figure 1) will be prioritized for funding. Priority projects will address the leading factors in Mojave desert tortoise decline such as habitat alteration and fragmentation, environmental change and tortoise mortality. The primary goal of this program is to marshal resources in a coordinated manner to work to recover the species by protecting Mojave desert tortoises from threats and restoring critical habitat.

Conservation activities referenced in NFWF's [Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Plan](#) will be most competitive.

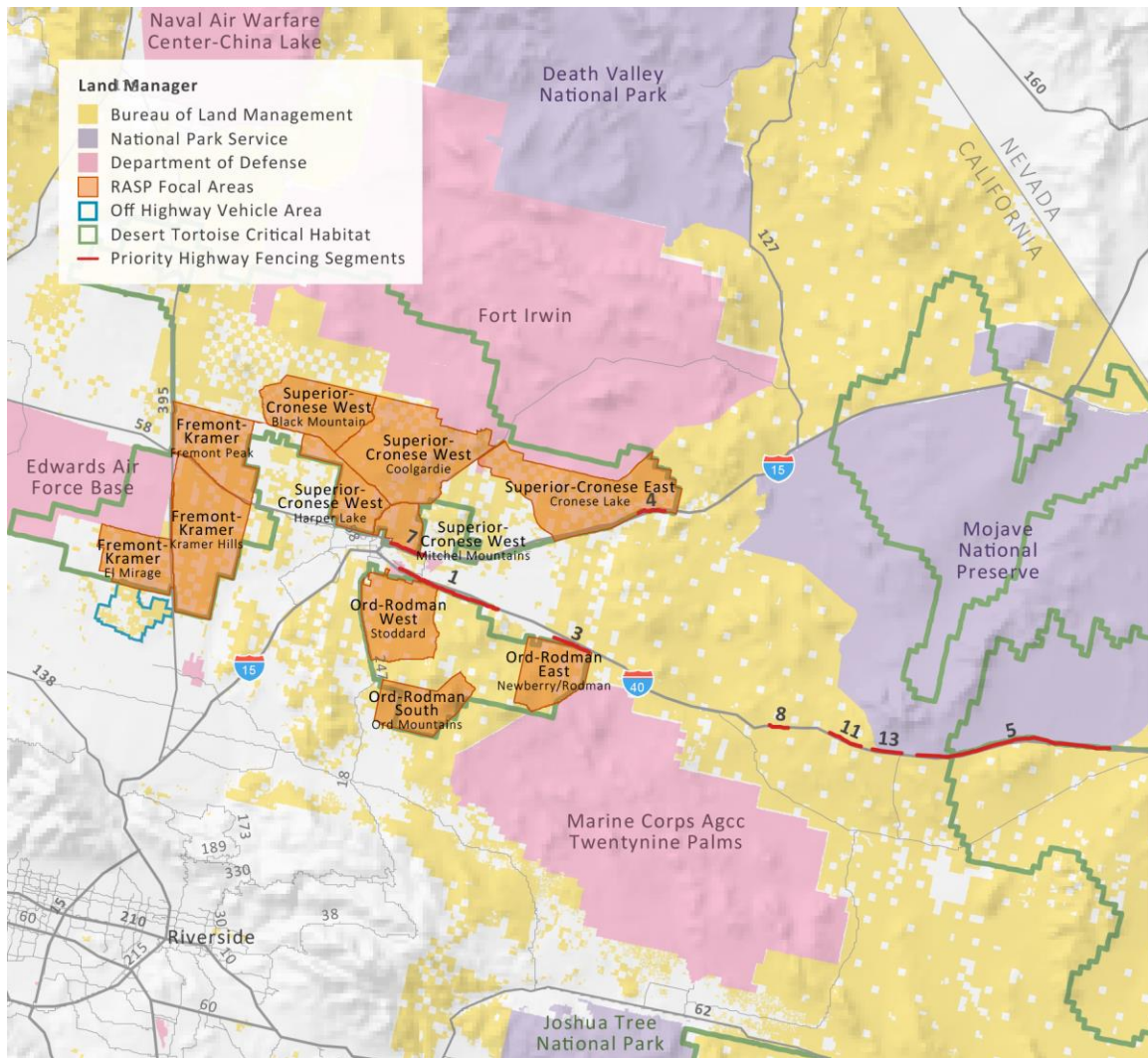


Figure 1. Mojave Desert Tortoise RASP Implementation Plan focal areas and priority highway fencing segments in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit. Priority fencing segments include: (1) I-40 Daggett to Newberry Springs, CA; (3) I-40 National Trails West of Pigsah, CA; (5) I-40 West of Van Winkle Wash to E of Essex Rd, CA; (7) I-15 North of Barstow, CA; (8) I-40 North of Black Ridge, CA; (11) I-40 Old Dad Mountains, CA; and (13) I-40 Kelbaker Rd, CA.

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

Priority recovery activities that address key limiting factors for Mojave desert tortoise in California’s western Mojave Desert include:

Improve tortoise road crossings – Install, repair, maintain or enhance tortoise exclusion fencing along highways to reduce tortoise highway mortality. Priority sections identified in Figure 1 are of special interest but all highway fencing projects in the West Mojave will be considered. Install, repair or enhance culverts or other underpass structures along barrier fencing to mitigate effects of habitat fragmentation and allow for safe tortoise

movement past highways.

Community outreach and education – Design and implement community outreach and education programs to promote Mojave desert tortoise awareness and reduce harmful human-tortoise interactions. Projects that include outreach to local education institutions and schools would be prioritized over signing and passive outreach. Projects that provide for field based education programs in the focal areas are of interest.

Species monitoring – Support ongoing and new Mojave desert tortoise monitoring and analysis, particularly for population demographics, to inform progress towards medium-term population objectives and inform conservation decisionmaking. Priority will be given to monitoring efforts that are proposed in association with habitat protection or restoration projects and include adaptive management plans.

Head-starting and reintroduction – Support efforts to obtain adult tortoises for progeny, captive-rearing of offspring, and reintroduction of tortoises to appropriate locations that are sufficiently protected, maintained, and monitored to augment existing populations.

Land acquisitions and conservation easements – Acquire land from willing land owners or conservation easements within the focal areas, with priority given to inholdings that are strategically important for advancing restoration actions, which would connect multiple existing conservation lands within critical habitat areas, or which are particularly cost-effective. A funding mechanism for long-term stewardship of acquired lands or conservation easements should be included in this strategy.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grant projects, the Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership 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@nwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

| Project Activity | Recommended Metric | Additional Guidance |
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| Protect existing habitat from conversion | Habitat Conservation – Conservation easements – Acres protected under long-term easement (permanent or >30-yr) | Enter the number of acres protected under long-term easement (permanent or greater than 30 years). |
| Protect existing habitat from conversion | Habitat Conservation – Land acquisitions – Acres acquired in fee | Enter the number of acres acquired in fee for Mojave desert tortoise habitat protection. |
| Establish defensible polygons of Mojave desert tortoise habitat | Habitat Conservation – Site protection – # of acres with enhanced protection | Enter the total number of acres protected within an estimated defensible polygon. |
| Restore or enhance Mojave desert tortoise habitat | Habitat Restoration – Land restoration – Acres restored | Enter the number of acres actively restored for Mojave desert tortoise habitat, and describe the restoration activities in the metric notes. |

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| Produce native plants for Mojave desert tortoise habitat restoration | Habitat Restoration – Plant cultivation – # seedlings propagated | Enter the number of seedlings propagated for Mojave desert tortoise habitat restoration. In the notes, indicate the number of seedlings of each species. |
| Collect native seeds for Mojave desert tortoise habitat restoration | Habitat Restoration – Seed harvesting – lbs harvested | Enter the number of pounds of seeds collected. |
| Improve infrastructure to reduce Mojave desert tortoise highway mortality | Habitat Management – BMP implementation for fencing improvements – Miles of fencing improved | Enter the number of miles of highway exclusion fencing repaired. In the notes, describe the location of the fencing segments. |
| Improve infrastructure to reduce Mojave desert tortoise highway mortality | Habitat Management – BMP implementation for fencing improvements – Miles of fencing installed | Enter the number of miles of new highway exclusion fencing installed. |
| Close unauthorized OHV routes to protect Mojave desert tortoise habitat | Habitat Management – BMP implementation to mitigate recreational disturbance – # of sites with BMPs | Enter the number of sites with vertical mulching conducted and/or physical barriers installed to discourage use of unauthorized OHV routes. |
| Establish defensible polygons of Mojave desert tortoise habitat | Habitat Management – Improved management practices – Number of sites under improved management | Enter the number of defensible restoration polygons established. In the notes, indicate the sizes of these polygons. The total area of the polygons should be reported in the metric “Habitat Conservation – Site protection - # of acres with enhanced protection.” |
| Close unauthorized OHV routes to protect Mojave desert tortoise habitat | Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance – # of educational signs installed | Enter the number of signs displaying permitted use installed on unauthorized OHV routes. |
| Engage public land users regarding Mojave desert tortoise conservation needs | Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance – # people reached | Enter the number of people who responded positively to outreach, training, or technical assistance activities, for example by signing up for an event, distribution list, or meeting with a conservation professional. This should be a subset of # people targeted to engage in conservation actions. |
| Engage public land users regarding Mojave desert tortoise conservation needs | Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance – # people targeted | Enter the number of people targeted to participate in a conservation action via social media, email, newsletters, in-person activities or other outreach, training, or technical assistance activities. |
| Augment depleted Mojave desert tortoise populations | Species-specific Strategies – Captive breeding/rearing/rehab facilities - # individuals released | Enter the number of individual tortoises reared in headstarting programs and released into tortoise habitat. |
| Improve infrastructure to reduce Mojave desert tortoise highway mortality | Species-specific Strategies – Improving migration corridors - # of road crossing improvements | Enter the number of highway underpasses such as culverts installed or improved. |

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| Expand species monitoring to new and additional sites | Planning, Research, Monitoring – Monitoring – # sites being monitored | Enter the number of new population monitoring sites for Mojave desert tortoise. Describe the type of population monitoring being conducted in the metric notes. |
| Comply with state and federal data collection and management standards | Planning, Research, Monitoring – Monitoring – # of studies whose findings are reported to management | Enter the number of datasets or monitoring reports produced and entered into relevant databases. Describe each reported dataset and/or study in the metric notes. |

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include: local, state, federal, and tribal governments and agencies (e.g., counties, cities, towns), 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

- 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 3-5 grant awards in this cycle.

Match is encouraged but not required. 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.

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. Priority will be given to integrated projects that address threats or landscape challenges with actions that promote tortoise occupancy and increased density. For example, projects that include or collaborate with projects that include the installation or repair of desert tortoise fencing (if appropriate) and the control of nonnative plants with head-starting or other population augmentation actions.

- **Project Need:** Describe the relevance of the project for conservation of the focal species, and its relationship to any prioritization process or species conservation 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 one or more key factors limiting 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 Recovery Unit, 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 Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation 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. Project includes a plan for securing appropriate environmental and cultural clearances.

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. In particular, the project fits within existing land use management plans for the region, including the [West Mojave Route Network Project Land Use Plan Amendment](#), [Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan](#), and the FWS’ [2011 Revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise](#). The applicant should indicate the context of their proposed projects within these or other relevant plans that promote Mojave desert tortoise conservation.

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.

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, U.S. Forest Service, 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 Acknowledgment 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 [Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership page](#) of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

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| Applicant Webinar [Register here] | January 17 th , 2024, 1:00pm-2:00pm EST / 10:00am -11:00am PST |
| Full Proposal Due Date | March 7 th , 2024, by 11:59 pm EST |
| Review Period | March – May 2024 |
| Awards Announced | May 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, 202-595-2417

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.