

America the Beautiful Challenge
**2024 LETTERS OF SUPPORT
BEST PRACTICES**



INTRODUCTION TO NFWF'S AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL CHALLENGE

Summary

The America the Beautiful Challenge is a public-private grant program for locally-led restoration and conservation projects that invest in restoring fish and wildlife habitat function, enhancing community and ecosystem resilience, ensuring equitable access, contributing to workforce development, expanding corridors and connectivity, and building collaborative conservation.

The America the Beautiful Challenge coordinates funding from multiple Federal agencies and private philanthropy into one competitive grant program. This streamlines the application process, enabling larger, more impactful cross-boundary projects, while making it easier for states, Tribes, territories, local groups, non-governmental organizations, and others to apply for multiple funds with one application. This one-stop-shop solicitation is the result of financial contributions from the Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Defense, as well as private philanthropy.

Program Goals

The America the Beautiful Challenge will seek to advance conservation and restoration projects that are consistent with the principles outlined in the [Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful report](#) and that focus on the following themes:

- Conserving and restoring rivers, coasts, wetlands, and watersheds
- Conserving and restoring forests, grasslands, and other important ecosystems that serve as carbon sinks
- Connecting and reconnecting wildlife corridors, large landscapes, watersheds, and seascapes
- Improving ecosystem and community resilience to coastal flooding, drought, and other climate-related threats
- Expanding access to the outdoors, particularly in underserved communities

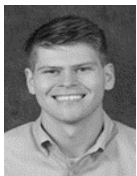
PROGRAM STAFF



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BEST PRACTICES FOR LETTERS OF SUPPORT

While Letters of Support (LOS) are not a required component or upload in NFWF's Easygrants system for the pre or full proposal, they are a great opportunity to demonstrate commitment from significant partners, full project impact beyond NFWF funding, and communicate project importance to reviewers. This document is intended to be a resource for building a strong and organized set of letters of support. If submitting multiple proposals, please indicate priorities if any. To ensure timely inclusion with a proposal package, letters of support should *not* be mailed directly to NFWF.

WHO SHOULD PROVIDE LETTERS OF SUPPORT

- Any organization providing in-kind or cash match contributions towards the match amount listed in the proposal
- Significant project partners
- Landowners or site managers if project location has been decided and implementation will occur on a site that the applicant does not own
- Community-level partners (municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders)
- Local, state or federal government agencies if involved in project design review or other participation

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A LETTER OF SUPPORT

All letters of support should include the Easygrants five-digit proposal number, the project title, and the name of the applicant organization. Letters should be written on the letterhead of the organization providing the LOS.

For LOS indicating matching contributions, the following should be included:

- Amount to be contributed
- Type of contribution (in-kind/cash)
 - If in-kind, an indication of how the in-kind amount was decided or calculated
 - If based on a fund-raising event or other future action, if that future action fails, will the contribution amount still be provided?
- When the contribution will be made
- Confirmation that the contribution has not been used to meet any other federal program match or cost share requirements

For LOS indicating significant partnership, commitment of location for implementation, agency involvement, etc. a variety of the following can be included:

- Integral connection between organization writing letter and the project goals and objectives
- Interest or commitment to implementation on land
- Additional benefits that the project will provide to organization's mission
- Commitment to maintenance after project end date if applicable

HOW TO BEST ORGANIZE AND UPLOAD LETTERS OF SUPPORT

SEND PARTNERS A TEMPLATE. One sure-fire way to ensure that all the information you need is included in a letter of support is to send a template with your request for the letter. Make sure to give partners a deadline, with some time built in for you to organize and upload the letters, of when you'll need the final copy.

COVER PAGE. Once all letters of support have been collected, a cover page listing all letters of support being submitted should be compiled. The cover page can be organized how you please, but the list should be in order of the letters of support to follow. Groupings/categorizing by partner role (match contribution letter, monitoring partners, partners who are part of formal collaborative, etc.) are encouraged. A sample of a cover page for letters of support be found in the examples section.

ONE DOCUMENT. Using Adobe Acrobat or another PDF-merging tool, combine the cover page and all letters of support into one, single PDF document. This way, you will only need to upload one document as "Letters of Support" into Easygrants under the Uploads page.

LETTER OF SUPPORT EXAMPLES – COVER PAGE



APPLICANT ORGANIZATION LETTERHEAD

The following letters of support have been provided for NFWF Proposal #12345, “Stream Restoration, Stormwater Management, and Agriculture Conservation in the River Basin.”

Matching Contributions

- Good Proposal University
- Center for Community Volunteer Events
- River Township
- State Department of Agriculture

Significant Partners

- Landowner – Elmer O’Shawn
- Stream Conservation Collaborative



**GOOD
PROPOSAL
UNIVERSITY**

March 9, 2024

Rachel Dawson
Program Director, National Programs
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 Fifteenth Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Dawson,

This letter is an acknowledgement of my commitment to participate in the project entitled “Stream Restoration, Stormwater Management, and Agricultural Conservation in the Calumet River Basin” (#12345).

My role as a project team leader will be to perform metabolism characterization of streams by placing sensors and supervising a graduate student and *Applicant Organization* staff in data downloading. I will also contribute to study design and data analysis, report and manuscript writing, and outreach. I will contribute an additional 80 hours to the project during the summers of 2024 and 2025, with an estimated total value of \$14,805 in-kind match (loaded personnel rate of \$185.06 per hour). Hours will be documented and provided to the *Applicant Organization* on a quarterly basis.

The Good Proposal University’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs have agreed to contribute an additional \$5,000 in match to this effort in hours of administrative time (40 hours of loaded personnel rate of \$125 per hour).

I will also be applying for one-fourth reassign time for one semester during this grant. Faculty may be given reassigned time, from their teaching workload, for research activity. If reassign time is granted, one-fourth of my salary and benefits for one semester will be applied as match (~\$18,000). This would bring the total Good Proposal University match to approximately \$38,000. This will be the only use of these funds as match.

I look forward working with the *Applicant Organization* team on this important study to advance our collective understanding of river resiliency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oiselle Bird".

Oiselle Bird, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Biological and Allied Health Sciences

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER EVENTS



March 8, 2024

Rachel Dawson, Program Director
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 Fifteenth St., NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Stream Restoration, Stormwater Management, and Agricultural Conservation in the Calumet River Basin, #12345

Dear Ms. Dawson:

The Center for Community Volunteer Events' Youth Conservation Corps Program (YCC) supports *Applicant Organization* proposal. The YCC Program is a high-quality summer job program for young people age 14-21, engaging approximately 80 young people statewide in meaningful outdoor conservation work and environmental education/awareness activities. Through their service, members gain skills, confidence, and see first-hand the benefit hard work makes in providing a lasting impact for public lands and communities.

The YCC is committed to helping *Applicant Organization* with this project by providing teams of local teens working within our Summer Internship Program to aid in the summer maintenance, and installation of some of the outdoor natural spaces and rain gardens. This assistance will provide an in-kind match value of \$3,600 (12 interns working 20 hours on the project between May and September 2022 at the internship rate of \$15/hour), used exclusively for this project's match requirement. The YCC has been a regular partner with *Applicant Organization* since 2015. Through our partnership, our program has assisted in the regular summer maintenance, and special project work for over seven project sites implemented by *Applicant Organization*.

The YCC Program and Center for Community Volunteer Events support *Applicant Organization's* efforts to bring meaningful experiences with the natural world to their audience. It is our belief that they are not only teaching youth the importance of outdoor natural areas, but they are also fostering the growth of the next generation of conservationists within the community. The YCC recommends NFWF fund *Applicant Organization's* proposal.

If you have any questions or need further information regarding our support, please contact Reign Storm, YCC Program Manager at reign.storm@ccve.com or (101) 202-0000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryn Hill', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Bryn Hill
Executive Director
Center for Community Volunteer Events



RIVER TOWNSHIP
Environmental Advisory Council

March 6, 2024

Ms. Rachel Dawson
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 15th Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20025

Dear Ms. Dawson,

It is our understanding that *Applicant Organization*, in partnership with River School District, is applying for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, America the Beautiful Challenge grant (#12345) including a project at the Tributary Elementary School in the Fast Run Watershed. The River Township Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) would like to express its support for this important community project, which will be accessible to so many young students and families. The EAC has previously coordinated with *Applicant Organization* to synergize our efforts for community outreach and education about stormwater runoff and water quality in the Fast Run Watershed across River Township. We are excited to continue this collaborative work.

The proposed riparian buffer planting, rain garden, and bioswale will provide much needed stormwater controls along Fast Run headwaters, which currently sees significant flash flooding. This project directly supports and enhances the local work of the River EAC.

During the implementation phase of this project (Summer 2024), the River EAC members will work with the project partners to support community outreach and education, as well as provide volunteer recruitment and promotion assistance for public planting days. We estimate this in-kind time to be valued at \$1,680 (80hrs. @ 21/hr.) and only counted for this project, if funded.

We believe the proposed project meets the criteria for funding eligibility established by NFWF and would enhance water quality and habitat in the Fast Run Watershed. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with *Applicant Organization* staff on this important community-based stormwater management project.

Sincerely,

Forrest Treeman, Chair
River Township
Environmental Advisory Council



Rachel Dawson
Program Director, National Programs
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 Fifteenth Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Dawson,

The State Department of Agriculture (DoA) supports *Applicant Organization's* 2023 application for funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America the Beautiful Challenge to assist landowners in implementing best management practices and enhancing wildlife habitat within Lake County. This letter of support is for project #12345, "Stream Restoration, Stormwater Management, and Agricultural Conservation in the Calumet River Basin."

Through the years, DoA and *Applicant Organization* have worked together closely to achieve the common goal of completing management plans and implementation of agriculture best management practices to further water quality objectives. Additionally, the DoA's Partners for Habitat Program (PHP) is a voluntary program that assists private landowners in restoring and enhancing their property for wildlife. PHP is actively collaborating with *Applicant Organization* at several work sites throughout Lake County, including private and public lands. *Applicant Organization* also had several cooperative agreements with PHP in the past as well, including eradicating non-native, invasive reed canary grass on private lands throughout the northern part of the state. Most significantly, the *Applicant Organization* received a Developing Chartreuser grant for state funds at the beginning of 2023 to complement this specific project. The grant awarded \$200,000 towards a conservation easement on which the *Applicant Organization* will complete buffer and stream restoration practices. We are committing to counting this Developing Chartreuser grant as match for this project and will not count it towards other federal or non-federal awards.

Additional funding through NFWF's America the Beautiful Challenge will be a welcome resource to achieve the shared goals of *Applicant Organization* and DoA by expanding the opportunities to achieve this work on the ground. We strongly encourage NFWF to support the 2023 grant proposal. Questions can be directed to Dove Pájaro via email at Dove_Pajaro@state-doa.gov.

Thank you for your consideration,

Garrett Garnet
Partners for Habitat Program Director
State Department of Agriculture

March 2, 2024

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 15th Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20025

To Whom It May Concern:

I own and operate a vegetable farm and forested property in Lake County. I am a third-generation farmer who has grown up coming to Lake County to visit my grandparents farm where they made quality brooms out of native switchgrass, among other things. My father was an avid birdwatcher and visited the *Applicant Organization's* Centers frequently; he enjoyed exploring the woodlands across the street for birds.

I first started speaking with *Applicant Organization* about farmland practices in 2016, when I challenged a speaker to taste my hottest pepper at an outreach event at the local brewery. From there, we met on the farm and discussed programs to put my fallow land into beneficial habitat for the bees. I recognize the importance of managing your land and got involved with NRCS programs for cover crops and forest management soon after that.

Though we never completed the pollinator habitat, due to difficulties with organic site preparation, I have always had the thought in mind. I intend to pursue *Applicant Organization's* Great Waters and Land Grant to put some of my fallow field acreage into native warm season grasses and wildflowers to benefit the native bees in the area and the bees that I keep on the farm. It is my understanding that this opportunity will be partially funded by the proposal 12345 for Stream Restoration, Stormwater Management, and Agricultural Conservation in the Calumet River Basin.

I encourage the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support this project as well, as it would bring much needed assistance to this small county for farmers like me, who just want to give back to the wildlife, but need some assistance to do so. Please accept this letter of support on my behalf.

ELMAR O'SHAWN



March 7, 2024

Rachel Dawson
National Programs Director
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 Fifteenth Street NW Suite 1100
Washington DC 20005

Dear Ms. Dawson,

Please accept this letter on behalf of Stream Conservation Collaborative (SCC) stating our support and intent to collaborate with *Applicant Organization* on their project "Stream Restoration, Stormwater Management, and Agriculture Conservation in the Calumet River Basin" (#12345) for which they are applying to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) America the Beautiful Challenge.

The *Applicant Organization* is a core member of the Stream Conservation Collaborative and, in coordination with other member organizations, the Collaborative have worked together for several years supporting the planning and implementation of stream conservation projects funded by the State's conservation programs. Throughout the Fast Run Watershed, SCC staff provides technical assistance to stream conservation planners and offers a diverse suite of publications detailing stream habitat assessment, planning, implementation, on-farm trails, and research efforts. SCC intends to support with *Applicant Organization* in addressing habitat enhancements in Lake County by providing technical assistance in instream and riparian restoration project planning.

This grant is essential for furthering the impact of SCC and increase on-the-ground stream conservation outcomes. The SCC will continue to conduct outreach to landowners, which will benefit this project's engagement goals. The SCC endorses this project as it will further our goals of restoring and protecting the Fast Run streams, as well as adding value to the investment from our SCC Fund. We hope that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will approve this grant application and support the work of our partners at the *Applicant Organization*. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marlin Minnow", written in a cursive style.

Marlin Minnow
Coordinator, Stream Conservation Collaborative