Chi–Cal Rivers Fund
2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [Register Here]: **June 25, 2025, 2:00 to 3:00 PM Central Time**
Workshop for Applicants [Register Here]: **July 9, 2025, 10 am-12:00 PM Central Time**
Full Proposal Due Date: **July 30, 2025, 11:59 PM Central Time**

NFWF is committed to operating in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. We continuously monitor legal and regulatory developments to ensure our policies, procedures, and operations align with current federal directives. We encourage all applicants to do the same.

The ability and extent to which NFWF is able to make awards is **contingent upon receipt of funds from federal agencies and/or other funding partners**. Final funding decisions will be made based on the applications received and the level and timing of funding received by NFWF.

OVERVIEW

The Chi–Cal Rivers Fund (Fund) is inviting applications for competitive grant funding. With a focus on the major waterways of the Chicago and Calumet region, the program will award grants to reduce stormwater runoff with nature-based infrastructure, enhance the quality and connectivity of fish and wildlife habitat, and activate restored habitats through public access improvements and community engagement. Proposals must be submitted online (easygrants.nfwf.org), **by July 30, 2025, 10:59 PM Central Time.**

BACKGROUND

A team of private and public organizations established the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund (the Fund) to help improve the ability of the region's natural systems and communities to withstand and absorb the impacts of environmental stressors and enhance the region's unique habitats and waterways through strategically coordinated investments. Administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the Fund is a partnership among BNSF Railway, Cleveland-Cliffs, Crown Family Philanthropies, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Joyce Foundation, Hunter Family Foundation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and the Walder Foundation. The Fund achieves its impact by supporting voluntary conservation projects focused on three goals: 1) enhancing fish and wildlife habitat; 2) reducing stormwater runoff with nature-based solutions; and 3) activating restored habitats to improve access to nature.
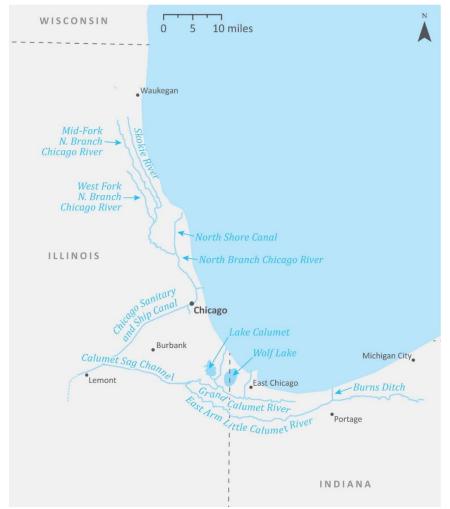
GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur in close proximity or otherwise demonstrate direct benefits to the major waterways of the system and their tributaries (depicted in the map below).

* Cities included for geographic orientation, but do not indicate funding preference

PROGRAM FUNDING CATEGORIES

The Fund will award grants in the following three categories.

1. *Improve Habitat Quality and Connectivity*
2. *Expand and Maintain Nature-Based Solutions to Improve Stormwater Storage*
3. *Activate Restored Habitats and Natural Areas*

Each applicant will need to identify one category that best describes the proposed project. If a project is expected to yield benefits in multiple categories, an applicant may also identify relevant

secondary categories. Projects should advance the goals of NFWF's [Great Lakes Business Plan.](#) The following sections provide more information on the three funding categories.

Funding Category 1: Improve Habitat Quality and Connectivity
Funding in this category will support riparian, in-stream, upland and wetland habitat improvements along or near the major waterways of the system listed under the Geographic Focus section. Competitive projects will achieve a range of ecological benefits, such as improving water quality, reducing erosion, and increasing the complexity, connectivity and quality of habitat. Priority will be given to projects that improve native/natural habitat, benefit species of concern, and increase biodiversity and maintain healthy native populations. Please list priority species and species of concern to benefit from the work in the proposal narrative. Invasive species control activities, including initial treatments, subsequent retreatments and early detection and rapid response (EDRR) are eligible for funding in this category as a component of a comprehensive habitat restoration project. Applicants demonstrating the capacity, experience, and resources needed to effectively manage invasive species and preserve habitat values following initial treatments will be most competitive.

Funding Category 2: Expand Nature-Based Solutions to Improve Stormwater Storage
Funding in this category will support nature-based solutions that improve stormwater capture and storage, reduce runoff, combined sewer overflows, basement backups and flooding. Competitive proposals will focus primarily on the installation and/or maintenance of nature-based practices (e.g. stormwater wetlands, rain gardens, riparian buffers etc.). If projects incorporate constructed elements, such as pervious surfaces, these elements will need to complement a suite of nature-based solutions and will not be eligible for funding as the primary focus of a project. Priority will be given to projects that are designed with a dual purpose, to increase stormwater storage capacity while also enhancing the quality of, access to, and/or use of natural areas. Eligible work includes:

1) Install nature-based solutions, such as stormwater wetlands, urban forests, rain gardens, bioswales, etc., to capture and infiltrate stormwater and reduce flooding risk.

2) Maintain and/or improve the function of existing nature-based solutions. Projects should maintain ecological function of nature-based solutions and support communities to secure long-term and *sustainable maintenance solutions* that increase community-level capacity and add jobs. All applicants proposing maintenance projects are **required** to discuss the project with NFWF prior to submitting an application.

Competitive projects will occur in close proximity to or otherwise demonstrate <u>direct benefits to priority waterways</u>, as indicated in the Geographic Focus section. Projects must add a minimum of 100,000 gallons of stormwater storage capacity annually to be competitive. Preference will be given to projects of sufficient size and scope to significantly reduce runoff

and contaminant discharge (i.e. reduction of nutrients, pollution, and sediment) and flooding at a regional or significant scale (gallons/year) either through a large single installation of a nature-based solution or via a strategic, connected suite of practices that collectively achieve their impact. Small, isolated projects (e.g., a single parking lot, rain barrels, cisterns, etc.) without a connection to a larger plan for nature-based solutions or suite of proposed installations will not be competitive. Proposals seeking funds for maintenance at multiple sites should outline the applicant's authority to maintain those sites as well as a long-term plan to maintain sites, including resources secured for these activities.

All applications must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage capacity added (design retention capacity) and estimate the volume of stormwater runoff captured and infiltrated per year (gallons/year). Applications proposing maintenance or enhancement of existing nature-based solutions must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage capacity preserved/maintained (design retention capacity) and report the volume of stormwater runoff captured and infiltrated per year (gallons/year) when nature-based solutions function optimally as a result of maintenance activities. Projects should incorporate planning for increasingly severe and more frequent storm events into their design, location, and/or function. Applicants must explain how the "gallons of stormwater storage capacity added annually" metric was calculated in the metric notes. Applicants are encouraged to use the EPA Stormwater Calculator, found by clicking here, to estimate design retention capacity. For tree planting projects, applicants are encouraged to use i-Tree, found by clicking here, to calculate gallons of stormwater taken up annually by tree planting projects (use a 10-year tree age for measuring stormwater benefits in i-Tree).

Funding Category 3: Activate Restored Habitats and Natural Areas
Funding in this category will support grants that activate restored habitats and natural areas, including those previously funded by GLRI or NFWF, by investing in long-term habitat stewardship, public access, engagement capacity and programs to help all people get out into nature. Projects should invest in needed on-the-ground stewardship or restoration to maintain habitat quality while also enhancing site access and stewardship capacity. All proposals should describe the rationale or plan for selecting the project location, the activation elements proposed and identify the user groups that will be served by the project and how they will be meaningfully engaged in the project. To do this work well, we see long-term sustained commitments to community and municipal engagement as critical. All applicants will be asked to provide, or develop with NFWF funding, a longer-term community and partnership framework that is already a part of the organization or partner org's strategic operations or current priorities (not just project level). Projects should support public-private partnership development – both with partners at the community level and with municipalities to support project sustainability and long-term impact through direct investments such as maintenance.

All applicants submitting a proposal under this funding category should reach out to NFWF staff to discuss project activities prior to submitting a proposal. Funding will support the strategies that encompass the following elements and directly prioritize multiple benefits.

- **Habitat stewardship:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations and implement stewardship activities to enhance long-term, sustainable habitat stewardship, including adaptive management, invasive species control and direct community engagement. Manage habitat or natural areas to improve and protect habitat quality and enhance resilience of restored project sites and public access infrastructure. This priority must enhance multiple benefits and will not be competitive as stand-alone investments.

- **Access to nature:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations to activate restored habitat and natural areas through strategic, direct engagement of communities and user groups that encourage public use, enhance public health, increase accessibility, and remove barriers for all people to get outside and into nature. These can include education opportunities in natural areas, programs and experiences, conservation-oriented workforce development programs, enhancing volunteerism and long-term stewardship of sites, training the next generation of conservationists and nature enthusiasts, increasing use of natural areas through supported activities, events, and programs.

- **Public access opportunities:** Add new or enhance existing infrastructure that improves public access, accessibility and engagement in previously restored habitat or natural areas. Public access improvements may include but are not limited to construction of trails, nature-based or nature-compatible recreation, public access points, and infrastructure enabling use of waterways and habitats, such as paddle craft launches, wildlife viewing areas, gathering spaces etc. This priority must complement other strategies and will not be competitive to stand alone. Activation is the key; this is not intended to fund park beautification such as boardwalks or pavilions *without* on-the-ground restoration or community engagement components.

Project should be designed to span up to 3 years or 3 field seasons to increase sustainability and long-term success. Proposed projects should be of sufficient size, scope, or unique ecological value to necessitate a strategic re-investment in the previously restored habitat. Projects should not request funding to support the following activities: long-term transportation to sites, stand-alone parking lots or other infrastructure that is not required for project success, planned or sustained site maintenance activities such as cleaning, mowing, annual repairs to existing infrastructure etc.

PRIORITIES FOR ALL FUNDING CATEGORIES

Monitoring and Long-Term Maintenance
To help ensure project benefits will be sustained through time, grantees will be required to present or develop plans that address project site operation and management needs for at least five (5) years after project completion. The plans should describe anticipated actions needed (maintenance schedules and tasks to be completed at scheduled intervals), access to or ownership of equipment needed to maintain project sites, cost estimates, sources of funding to

support long-term maintenance plan, long-term partners, parties responsible for implementation and oversight, training needs and the applicant's and partners' capacity for long-term stewardship of the project. If applicable, the plan should also describe long term invasive species management and early detection rapid response (EDRR) protocol. A portion of individual grant awards may be used to support plan development, and plans must be completed prior to the end dates specified in individual grant agreements.

Proposals should describe a monitoring plan to measure the outcomes and assess the success of the proposed project in the full proposal narrative portion of the application or provide a monitoring plan as an upload. At a minimum, the description should: 1) indicate the metrics that will be used to track progress and quantify outcomes; 2) outline the approach for establishing baseline conditions against which post-implementation conditions will be compared; and 3) demonstrate plans and resources for post-implementation monitoring and maintenance. Habitat proposals should focus monitoring on measuring benefits to water quality, habitat quality and priority species. Nature-based solutions (NbS) proposals should focus monitoring on measuring efficacy of NbS installed and, if relevant, public-use or other community benefits resulting from the NbS installations.

Applicants may use grant funding to support monitoring and maintenance/establishment activities associated with the proposed project within the proposed grant period. Applicants may direct up to 15 percent of the project budget toward this need.

METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund has a list of metrics in Easygrants for grantees to choose from for reporting (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). Only metrics relevant to the project being proposed should be selected in the application. Applicants will be required to report project accomplishments in terms of the metrics they select. If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Aislinn Gauchay (aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric *Required metric	Additional Guidance
Riparian Restoration	Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored. Include miles of invasive species control, bank stabilization, and native vegetation restoration. In NOTES section, specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species. Please also specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), dominant vegetation being planted (see list), and average width of riparian buffer. Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.

Floodplain Restoration	Acres Restored	Enter # of floodplain acres restored. In the NOTES, indicate % of vegetation on the pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%) and the dominant vegetation being restored (Broadleaf, Conifer, Redwood, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp). Specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species.
Instream Restoration	Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored. Miles of stream/channel restored or naturalized, INCLUDE installation of in-stream habitat structures and stream geomorphology restoration activities (impoundment removal, naturalize stream channel, etc.). Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.
Instream restoration	# structures installed	Enter the number of in-stream habitat structures installed, replaced, upgraded or repaired for improvement of in-stream habitat (if stream project). If the project is installing a water level control structure in a wetland context, please indicate in the NOTES.
Fish Passage Improvements	# passage barriers rectified	Enter the # of in-stream barriers removed/rectified in THIS grant. In the notes, provide the barrier's SARP ID--see SARP Natl. Aq. Barrier Inventory (aquaticbarriers.org). If the barrier(s) is not in SARP, provide its lat/long or its name and source. Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.
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. Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.
Wetland restoration	Acres restored	Enter # acres of WETLAND (Include acres of invasive species control, native vegetation restoration, and habitat structure/quality improvement, NOT riparian or instream) habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (Marsh, Tidal marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp) and indicate % of vegetation on pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%). This is a footprint metric intended to capture all wetland acres where on-the-ground interventions are occurring. Enter the total number of acres restored. Include acres of invasive species control. Specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species.

Removal of invasives	Acres restored	Enter # acres of invasives removed. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Forest understory, Junipers, Shrubs, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Swamp), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No). This can include new treatment or re-treatment.
Erosion control	lbs. sediment avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually. In the NOTES, please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	lbs. phosphorus avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of phosphorous prevented from entering system annually. In the notes, please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
BMP implementation for nutrient reduction	lbs. nitrogen avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually. In the notes, indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
Nature-based Infrastructure	*Volume stormwater storage added annually (Required for nature-based solution projects)	Enter the gallons of stormwater storage added annually. In the NOTES section, include the design retention capacity of the nature-based solution installed or maintained and indicate the method or model used to estimate annual stormwater storage added.
Nature-based Infrastructure	sq feet of nature-based infrastructure installed	Square feet of nature-based solution installed. Include details on plant species selected, seed mixes, etc.
Nature-based Infrastructure	Number of trees planted	Enter # trees planted. In the NOTES, include tree size, species selected, planting density and anticipated total acres of tree planting
Nature-based Infrastructure	miles trails developed/improved	Enter the number of miles of trails or riverwalks developed or improved.
Nature-based Infrastructure	access pts developed/improved	Enter the number of public access points developed or improved.
Volunteer participation	# of volunteer hours	Enter the # of volunteer hours in this project
Outreach/Technical Assistance	# people reached	Enter the number of people reached. # of people actively engaged via site activation opportunities, e.g. workshops, conservation actions, community events, etc
Economic Benefits	# jobs created	Enter the # of individuals hired to directly work on the project (non-volunteers). Jobs should be directly engaged in grant activities, funded by the grant, and shouldn't have existed prior to the grant. In the notes, provide the FTE for the jobs created.

Economic Benefits	# jobs sustained	Enter the # of paid jobs that are partially or fully sustained through this grant. Jobs should have existed prior to the grant, be funded by the grant, and be directly engaged in project activities. The starting value for this metric should be zero.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities
- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions. To be competitive, applicant organizations must demonstrate capacity and experience commensurate with the scale of the project being proposed and the funding being requested.

- Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and for-profit businesses.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- NFWF funds and matching contributions are strictly prohibited from being used for a number of reasons to include, for example, political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities, or in violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. See OMB Uniform Guidance for additional information.
- **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.
- 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.

PROJECT DURATION

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two (2) years or two field seasons following finalization of a grant agreement, with the exception of the third funding category, for which projects can span up to three (3) years. Projects may be a discrete part of a

longer-term project, provided there are definable outcomes for the proposed phase of the overall effort. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching contributions are spent or applied. The start date indicated in applications should not precede November 19, 2025.

MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS

Match is not required. The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process. Providing some match (non-federal and federal) is encouraged to demonstrate broad support for the project and overall impact of the work. Match can be any combination of in cash and/or in-kind goods and services (for example external/partner services, volunteers or grantee in-kind, materials and services donated, etc.) or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. No priority will be given to higher cash percentages versus other sources of match. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found by clicking here. Full information on how to document match, including a description of acceptable sources of match, is available at http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/faqs.aspx.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with organizational and funding source policies. Then, the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund advisory team and a panel of state and federal agency reviewers will use the following criteria for project selections. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic diversity and balance among project types and grant size.

Conservation Outcomes	Budget	Technical
• Alignment with program goals and priorities • Quantifiable performance metrics • Appropriate monitoring of activities and outcomes • Partnership & community engagement • Project long-term sustainability	• Allowable and reasonable costs • Matching contributions • Cost effective	• Technically sound and feasible • Logical and achievable work plan and timeline • Engages technical experts • Accurate spatial data • Sound compliance approach (permits, NEPA, QAQC) • Past grantee success • Transferable

Strategic Value

Fund partners will consider the following criteria, listed in order of relative importance, when reviewing proposals and determining which proposals will receive grant funding. Note that this list is not necessarily comprehensive of all factors that will be considered when reviewing proposals, and some criteria might be weighted more heavily than others on a case-by-case project basis.

- **Program goals:** Project aligns with program goals and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project directly advances the priorities of one or more of the funding categories.

- **Technical merit and budget**: Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan, timeline for implementation and budget. Budget is clear, detailed, cost-effective (see Implementation section below) and appropriate for work proposed. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design implementation and maintenance.

- **Spatial Data** – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF's online mapping tool must accurately represent the location(s) conservation activity(ies) at the time of proposal submission. Successful projects will be required to submit improved spatial data for each conservation activity within the period of performance as necessary.

- **Project location and context:** Project occurs in close proximity to or otherwise demonstrates benefits to the major waterways of the system, as listed under the Geographic Eligibility section. Nature-based solution is located in flood-prone areas identified as priorities by government units or approved land-use or watershed plans.

- **Partnership and Community Impact** – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with 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. 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 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.

- **Matching contributions:** Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised, spent, and acquired for the Project during the Period of Performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a range of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review. If you are concerned about match or wish to discuss potential matching contributions, please contact Traci Giefer at traci.giefer@nfwf.org.

- **Plan or strategy alignment**: Project advances an existing local, regional, tribal, state or federal plan or strategy. Applicants are encouraged to align their proposed projects with

regional and local efforts and demonstrate how they would complement and connect to other previous and ongoing work in the region in the proposal narrative. Types of relevant plans or strategies may include, but are not limited to, watershed plans, municipal or regional domestic action plans, sustainability plans, and nature-based infrastructure strategies.

Qualifications

- **Organizational capacity:** Applicant organization demonstrates capacity and experience commensurate with the scale of the project being proposed and the funding requested.

- **Funding need**: Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

- **Partnerships**: 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.)

- **Past success:** Project team has a proven track record of success in implementing practices with specific, measurable results.

Implementation

- **On-the-ground implementation:** Project will apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work, with the option of using the remaining funds for planning, permitting, final design, engineering, outreach, education, maintenance or monitoring.

- **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.

- **Timeliness:** Project has completed or nearly completed planning, design and engineering to the extent that on-the-ground implementation can begin shortly after the grant is awarded.

Evaluation and Maintenance
- **Monitoring**: Project includes plans to monitor progress during and after implementation to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities.

- **Long-term sustainability:** Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. Plans described in the proposal include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

Amplification
- **Communication:** Project includes a communication strategy for notifying relevant communities and audiences about the project after completion.

- **Scalability:** Project has the potential to catalyze additional efforts where they have not been broadly deployed.

- **Transferability**: Project has potential and plans to transfer lessons learned to other communities and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.

OTHER

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.

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), 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.

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).

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information (www.nfwf.org/chi-cal).

Applicant Webinar	June 25, 2025, 1:00 to 2:00 PM Central Time
Workshop for Applicants	July 9, 10:00am to 12:00 PM Central Time
Full Proposal Due Date	July 30, 2025, 10:59 PM Central Time

Proposal Review Period   August – September
Awards Announced   November

After project selection, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation staff will work with applicants to prepare grant agreements and other necessary paperwork, all of which will be completed electronically using the Easygrants system. Additional information about the grantee's organization and its finances may be solicited during this time. Please note the preparation of grant agreements will require approximately 4 to 6 weeks from the time the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation receives the additional required information from the grantee. Once grant agreements are finalized, funds will typically be paid to grantees on a reimbursable basis. Funds may be advanced to qualified grantees on an as-needed basis.

WEBINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to view **both** webinars prior to submitting an application.

2025 Funding Opportunity Webinar
Wednesday, June 25, 2025
2:00-3:00pm CT
Register Here.
The funding opportunity webinar provides important information about 2025 funding priorities, in-depth review of the proposal narrative and highlighting priority project elements, tips for submitting competitive proposals, and FAQs. A recording of this webinar will be uploaded at www.nfwf.org/chi-cal.

Workshop for Applicants
Wednesday, July 9, 2025
10:00am-12:00pm CT
Register Here.
This workshop will provide an opportunity for applicants to connect with NFWF and our field liaisons to discuss proposal concepts and troubleshoot issues prior to the end of the open RFP period. This workshop is not required, rather it should be viewed as an opportunity to receive technical assistance and support from NFWF should it be needed. Applicants should come prepared with a clear project idea, at minimum, and have specific questions or guidance to request from the NFWF team.

Easygrants Instructional Webinar
The pre-recorded Easygrants webinar found here covers in-depth instructions for navigating Easygrants.

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through NFWF's Easygrants system.

1. Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information.
2. Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.

3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be downloaded here.

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:

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Traci Giefer
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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.