



NFWF

## **STREAM MITIGATION FUND FOR TENNESSEE** **2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Proposal Due Date: **Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

### **OVERVIEW**

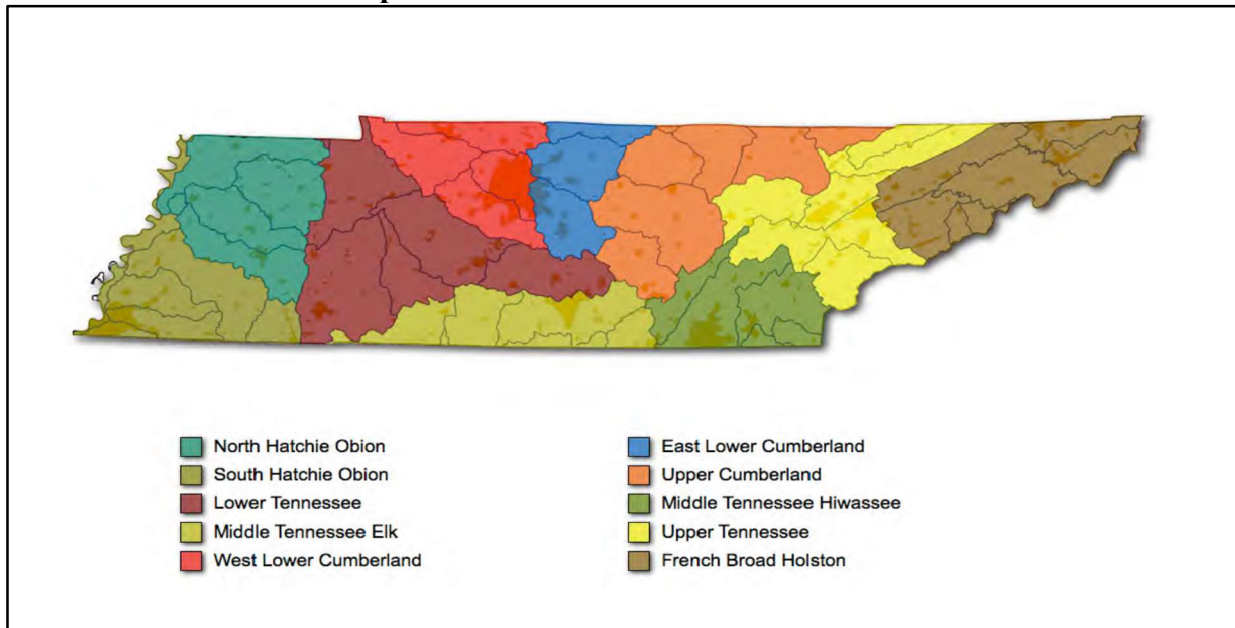
The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (“NFWF”) is soliciting proposals to provide compensatory mitigation through the restoration, establishment, enhancement, and preservation of streams and associated riparian buffers in the State of Tennessee. NFWF is committed to operating in full compliance with 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 Stream Mitigation Fund for Tennessee (“SMFT”) will award approximately \$36,600,000 during this first solicitation. NFWF established and administers the SMFT with monies it received in 2024 and 2025 from the now-defunct Tennessee Stream Mitigation Program (“TSMP”), which will be applied to appropriate compensatory mitigation projects, activities, and related expenses as approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville and Memphis Districts (“USACE”), in consultation with the Interagency Review Team, in accordance with the 2008 Final Rule on Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources (33 CFR Parts 325 and 332; 40 CFR Part 230) and the 2004 Stream Mitigation Guidelines for the State of Tennessee.

### **GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur within one of the Service Areas depicted in the map below. Projects that straddle multiple service areas will also be considered. See a list of the Tennessee Service Area 8 Digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) Watersheds in Appendix A.

#### **Tennessee Service Area Map**



Proposals for projects located in Service Areas with the largest mitigation deficits based on TSMP Credit liability, as noted in the chart below, will be given greater consideration.

<b>Geographic Service Areas</b>	<b>TSMP Credit Liability</b>
Upper Cumberland	29,238.50
South Hatchie Obion	23,886.00
Middle Tennessee Hiwassee	21,969.00
East Lower Cumberland (ELC)	14,729.70
West Lower Cumberland	13,573.00
Middle Tennessee Elk	13,414.00
Upper Tennessee	11,452.75
French Broad Holston (FBH)	7,786.25
Lower Tennessee	5,270.25
North Hatchie Obion	4,285.50

## **SMFT PRIORITIES**

All proposals must comply with the 2008 Mitigation Rule and specifically address how projects will provide compensatory mitigation through the restoration, establishment, and enhancement of degraded streams and associated riparian buffer areas, or preservation of high-quality streams and associated riparian buffers in the State of Tennessee, within a specific Service Area. Strong consideration will be given to projects that are lower in cost per credit and can be implemented quickly.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

### **Eligible and Ineligible Entities**

Eligible entities include non-profit 501(c) organizations, U.S. Federal government agencies, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal Governments and Organizations, and private businesses. Entities that do not fall within one of the previously described categories are ineligible for consideration.

### **Other Eligibility Criteria**

- Eligible applications must:
  - Provide proof of experience with stream restoration projects and/or experience executing site protection.
  - Be able to be bonded and acquire financial assurances for restoration projects.
  - Be able to submit the following documents: Certificate of Existence, Certificate of Insurance, Statement of Litigation, IRS Form 990, and GAAP Audited Financial Statement.

### **Ineligible Uses of SMFT Funds**

- Awards under the SMFT may not be used to support an applicant's ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, compensatory mitigation, and settlement agreements.
- Awards under the SMFT may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities, Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations, or other activities that conflict with Executive Orders and other current federal directives.
- Also see the "Other" section below.

## **FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

For this RFP, the total amount of funding available from the SMFT for stream mitigation projects is approximately Thirty-six Million Dollars (\$36,600,000).

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with the *Stream Mitigation Fund for Tennessee Request for Proposal Narrative Application* ("Narrative Application"), as well as NFWF and USACE policies. Failure to submit a complete and timely proposal that complies with all submission requirements will be deemed ineligible and will not be further evaluated.

Proposals will then be evaluated based on a combination of evaluation factors and significant subfactors. Evaluation factors include Technical, Past Performance, and Cost. The Technical evaluation factor is comprised of the Technical Approach, Technical Risk, and Personnel Qualifications subfactors. All non-cost evaluation factors and subfactors are of approximately equal importance to each other, and all non-cost evaluation factors, when combined, are of approximately equal importance to the Cost evaluation factor.

### **Non-Cost Evaluation Factors:**

#### Technical Factors

**Technical Approach Subfactor.** Proposal should demonstrate that the project is technically sound and feasible. Proposal should set forth a clear, logical, and achievable work plan and timeline. Proposal should present overall mitigation approach, or proposed levels of intervention, and appropriate credit ratios (Appendix B.). Proposal should explain how the proposed mitigation activities are appropriate for existing site conditions and watershed characteristics (e.g., adjacent land use/land cover), and are optimized to yield maximum functional gains.

The following proposal elements will be considered Significant Strengths during proposal evaluation:

- Proposals that target the Service Areas with the largest mitigation deficits based on TSMP Credit liability, as noted in the chart above.



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- Proposals that select a site related to known impacts in the area and use a watershed approach when project siting. Demonstrated support from agencies and/or the public through a watershed plan or other documentation that identifies the priority of the site for acquisition.
- Proposals that demonstrate the project can be initiated within six months after funds are awarded. Initiated means the site has been secured and/or acquired, and initial physical and biological improvements (e.g., grading and planting) have been started.

Additionally, the following proposal characteristics will be considered Strengths during the proposal evaluation:

- Streams or stream reaches with species listed as endangered or threatened or the stream reach is upstream/downstream of waters with State or Federal aquatic threatened, endangered, or rare species.
- Waters adjacent to other USACE approved mitigation sites/banks or other protected conservation lands.
- Critical headwater systems that protect source water.
- Priority areas identified in State Wildlife Action Plan or other watershed plan.
- Waters on the 303(d) list or known impairments.
- Areas of high habitat loss, historical aquatic impacts, or development trends.
- Areas with higher outstanding credit liability with limited mitigation sites.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service priority watersheds that are included in the Nutrient Reduction Strategy.
- Projects that propose riparian buffers wider than the 50-foot minimum.
- Priority for projects proposing the entire watershed.
- Streams identified as having high aquatic biodiversity, or the stream reach is upstream or downstream of waters with a diverse biological community (TDEC TMI 32 or greater that pass biocriteria).\*
- Exceptional Tennessee Waters and Outstanding National Resource Waters and their direct tributaries.\*
- Waters with species listed as rare or uncommon.

\* Indicates Strengths that apply to preservation-oriented projects only.

**Technical Risk Subfactor.** Proposal should address how the project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. Projects must be environmentally sustainable with a high likelihood of success, have the appropriate financial assurances, and long-term site protection. Please reference the Narrative Application Technical Risk Subfactor section for additional requirements.

**Personnel Qualifications Subfactor.** Proposal should identify qualified staff and technical experts that will be engaged throughout project planning, design, implementation, and perpetual site protection to ensure activities are technically sound, feasible, and have long-term viability.

### Past Performance Factor

Proposal should include a list of stream mitigation projects constructed and/or monitored in the last five years. Past projects should demonstrate success in stream mitigation with specific, measurable results, and/or executing site protection for preservation sites. Instances of non-compliance or default with past stream mitigation will be evaluated. Failure to provide past projects meeting relevancy, recency, and quality considerations may result in a neutral rating for this evaluation factor.

### **Cost Evaluation Factor:**

Projects will be evaluated on a cost per credit basis. To help ensure mitigation projects are distributed across service areas with larger deficits, the overall project cost will be considered. Cost information will be evaluated separately from non-cost factors. Submittals that are not accompanied by an itemized budget in accordance with the requirements specified in the Narrative Application will not be accepted or considered. See Appendix C for Credit Release and Payment Schedules.

### **OTHER**

Projects may be sited on public or private lands. SMFT funds are eligible for funding compensatory mitigation projects that produce credits on public land. However, the credit generation must be based solely on aquatic resource functions provided by the compensatory mitigation project, over and above those provided by public programs already planned or in place (33 C.F.R. § 332.3(a)(3)).

Except for compensatory mitigation projects undertaken by federal agencies, or where federal funding is specifically authorized to provide compensatory mitigation, federally-funded aquatic resource restoration or conservation projects undertaken for purposes other than compensatory mitigation, such as the Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, and Partners for Wildlife Program activities, cannot be used for the purpose of generating compensatory mitigation credits for activities authorized by Department of the Army permits. However, SMFT funds are eligible for funding compensatory mitigation credits generated by activities undertaken in conjunction with, but supplemental to, such programs in order to maximize the overall ecological benefits of the restoration or conservation project (33 C.F.R. §332.3(j)(ii)(2)).

SMFT funds are eligible for funding preservation-only projects that meet the following criteria (33 C.F.R. § 332.3(h)):

- The resources to be preserved provide important physical, chemical, or biological functions for the watershed;
- The resources to be preserved contribute significantly to the ecological sustainability of the watershed;
- Preservation is determined by the district engineer to be appropriate and practicable;
- The resources are under threat of destruction or adverse modifications; and
- The preserved site will be permanently protected through an appropriate real estate or other legal instrument.

## TIMELINE

*Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the SMFT page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.*

- SMFT RFP Released: **Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup>**
- Deadline to submit questions regarding SMFT RFP\*\*: **Friday, August 8<sup>th</sup>**
- Responses to submitted questions posted on NFWF's SMFT webpage: **Friday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>**
- Proposal Due Date: **Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>**
- IRT Review Period and Site Visits: **No later than March 2026**
- Award Announcements: **No later than April 2026**

\*\*All questions must be submitted via email to [SMFT@nfwf.org](mailto:SMFT@nfwf.org) no later than **Friday, August 8<sup>th</sup>**. We ask that submitted questions be general questions regarding the RFP, Narrative Application, submission process, or evaluation process. Applicants should be aware that both submitted questions and responses will be publicly releasable and should refrain from submitting project-specific questions that may reveal confidential business information. Generally, NFWF and USACE will not be responding to project specific technical questions.

## HOW TO APPLY

1. To submit a proposal, send an email to [SMFT@nfwf.org](mailto:SMFT@nfwf.org) indicating your intention to submit a proposal. Please include the proposed project's name in the subject line of the email.

*If your organization intends to submit multiple proposals, please send a separate email for each proposal.*

2. You will be emailed a link to a Sharefile folder in which you will upload the completed Narrative Application and all supporting documents for the proposal. Each link and associated Sharefile folder are unique and should be used for only the applicable proposal.
3. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all proposal documents are adequately labeled and correctly uploaded to the Sharefile folder by the Proposal RFP Due Date: **Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>**

# Appendix A: Tennessee Service Area 8 Digit HUC Watersheds

Service Area	8 Digit HUC Watersheds
North Hatchie - Obion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 08010205 South Fork Forked Deer River</li> <li>• 08010206 Forked Deer River</li> <li>• 08010204 North Fork Forked Deer River</li> <li>• 08010203 South Fork Obion River</li> <li>• 08010202 Obion River</li> </ul>
South Hatchie - Obion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 08010211 Nonconnah Creek</li> <li>• 08010210 Wolf River</li> <li>• 08010209 Loosahatchie River</li> <li>• 08010208 Hatchie River</li> <li>• 08010207 Little Hatchie River</li> <li>• 08010100 Mississippi River</li> </ul>
Lower Tennessee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 06040005 Tennessee River (NW TN)</li> <li>• 06040001 Tennessee River (SW TN)</li> <li>• 06040004 Buffalo River</li> <li>• 06040003 Lower Duck River</li> <li>• 06040002 Upper Duck River</li> </ul>
West Lower Cumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 05130205 Lake Barkley Reservoir</li> <li>• 05130206 Red River</li> <li>• 05130202 Cheatham Lake</li> <li>• 05130204 Harpeth River</li> </ul>
East Lower Cumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 05110002 Barren River</li> <li>• 05130201 Old Hickory</li> <li>• 05130203 Stones River</li> </ul>
Middle Tennessee Elk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 06030005 Pickwick Reservoir</li> <li>• 06030002 Lower Elk River</li> <li>• 06030004 Richland Creek</li> <li>• 06030003 Upper Elk River</li> <li>• 06030001 Battle Creek</li> </ul>
Upper Cumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 05130106 Cordell Hull</li> <li>• 05130105 Obey River</li> <li>• 05130104 Big South Fork</li> <li>• 05130101 Clear Fork / Cumberland River</li> <li>• 05130108 Caney Fork</li> <li>• 05130107 Collins River</li> </ul>
Middle Tennessee Hiwassee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 06020004 Sequatchie River</li> <li>• 06020001 Chickamauga Reservoir</li> <li>• 06020002 Hiwassee River</li> <li>• 03150101 Conasauga River</li> <li>• 06020003 Ocoee River</li> </ul>





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Upper Tennessee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 06010208 Emory River</li><li>• 06010201 Fort Loudoun Reservoir</li><li>• 06010207 Clinch River</li><li>• 06010204 Little Tennessee River</li><li>• 06010205 Upper Clinch River</li><li>• 06010206 Powell River</li></ul>
French Broad - Holston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 06010104 Holston River</li><li>• 06010107 Lower French Broad River</li><li>• 06010106 Pigeon River</li><li>• 06010105 Upper French Broad River</li><li>• 06010108 Nolichucky River</li><li>• 06010103 Watauga River</li><li>• 06010102 South Fork Holston River</li><li>• 06010101 North Fork Holston River</li></ul>



## Appendix B: Stream Mitigation Ratios

	Treatment				
	Replacement <sup>1</sup>	Restoration <sup>2</sup>	Enhancement II <sup>3</sup>	Enhancement I <sup>4</sup>	Preservation <sup>5</sup>
Mitigation Ratio*	1:1	1.5:1	3:1	4:1	10:1
<p><sup>1</sup>Replacement may be accomplished by removing existing culverts and/or concrete lined channels. The mitigated stream must be restored to a natural, stable channel based on reference conditions. The restoration of the stream will typically include rebuilding the appropriate channel pattern, profile, and dimensions, and riparian zone to the extent that watershed conditions will allow. See Restoration (below) where channel length increases may qualify as Replacement.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Restoration is the process of returning a significantly degraded, disturbed, or totally altered stream, including adjacent riparian zone and flood-prone area, to a natural stable condition based on reference conditions. Restoration will typically include rebuilding the appropriate channel pattern, profile, dimensions, and riparian zone to the extent that watershed conditions will allow. Where restoration includes increasing channel length, and that increase creates a condition consistent with natural reference conditions, then that channel length increase will be considered replacement.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>Enhancement II treatments generally include significant bank stabilization, introduction of in-stream habitat, and the re-establishment of native herbaceous and woody vegetation in the riparian zone along both banks of the stream.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>Enhancement I involves any partial combination of bank stabilization, livestock exclusion, introduction of in-stream habitat, and riparian zone restoration along both banks of the stream. Where the combination includes all of these measures, the mitigation qualifies as Enhancement II (see above).</p> <p><sup>5</sup>Preservation of a threatened, unique or ecologically significant aquatic resource may serve as compensatory mitigation, provided that it is a component of a replacement or restoration project. High quality, relatively undisturbed resources qualify for preservation credit only if the site lies adjacent and in the path of ongoing development, usually in urban settings, and/or within environments where endangered species dependent on the preserved watercourse are at risk. As with all compensatory mitigation, preservation projects require a perpetual conservation easement that restricts alterations to the watercourse and land use within the riparian area. The buffer width required for mitigation credit is typically greater than the riparian buffer required for restoration/enhancement projects. Preservation should be a component of a replacement or restoration project. Credit will not be allowed for preservation where the threat to the water resource is under the control of the applicant, or banker in the case of stream mitigation banks.</p>					

\*A Priority 3 approach can be credited as restoration at a 1.5:1 ratio provided that the subject stream is sufficiently degraded and restoration is warranted and will be achieved. Priority 3 consists of widening the floodplain at the existing bankfull elevation by excavating a floodplain bench on one or both sides of the existing stream channel at the elevation of the existing bankfull stage. The existing channel may be modified to enhance its dimension and profile based on reference-reach data. The resulting channel is typically a B or Bc (low slope) stream with bankfull stage located at the elevation of the newly widened floodplain.

## Appendix C: Credit Release and Payment Schedules

*[If the Project is Restoration and/or Enhancement, the format will be as follows:]*

<b>Project Milestone</b>	<b>Credit Release</b>	<b>Payment</b>
Final Instrument Approval, Execution of Site Protection and Construction Financial Assurances	20%	\$ [20% of total budget amount]
Post Construction, As-Built Report Submittal; USACE Approval in consultation with IRT; and Adaptive Management & Monitoring Financial Assurance fully funded	20%	\$ [20% of total budget amount]
Year 2 Monitoring Report Submittal; Written USACE concurrence that Project meets Year 2 monitoring and Ecological Performance Standards	15%	\$ [15% of total budget amount]
Year 4 Monitoring Report Submittal; Written USACE concurrence that Project meets Year 4 monitoring and Ecological Performance Standards	20%	\$ [20% of total budget amount]
Year 5 Monitoring Report Submittal; Written USACE concurrence that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any required adaptive management is completed,</li> <li>Final Ecological Performance Standards have been attained; and</li> <li>Long-term management fund is 100% funded</li> </ul>	25%	\$ [25% of total budget amount]
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ [TOTAL BUDGET AMOUNT]</b>

*[If the Project is Preservation, the format will be as follows:]*

<b>Project Milestone</b>	<b>Credit Release</b>	<b>Payment</b>
Final Instrument Approval, USACE Approval and Execution of Site Protection and Long-term management fund is 100% funded	100%	\$ [100% of total budget amount]
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ [TOTAL BUDGET AMOUNT]</b>

*[If the Project is Purchasing Approved/Released Mitigation Bank Credits, the format will be as follows:]*

<b>Project Milestone</b>	<b>Credit Release</b>	<b>Payment</b>
Execution of SMFT Funding Agreement and credit purchase receipt.	100%	\$ [100% of total budget amount]
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ [TOTAL BUDGET AMOUNT]</b>



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