



# PECOS WATERSHED CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

## 2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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.

### TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the [Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative](#) program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]

September 4th at 10:00am MDT /  
11:00am CDT / 12:00pm EDT

**Full Proposal Due Date**

**November 10th by 9:59pm MDT /  
10:59pm CDT / 11:59pm EDT**

Review Period

November 2025 – March 2026

Awards Announced

March 2026

### OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is announcing the ninth annual funding opportunity of the Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative. NFWF will award grants to voluntarily restore and sustain healthy rivers, streams and grassland systems that provide important wildlife habitat in the Pecos watershed and adjacent areas of New Mexico and Texas. Major funding is provided by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and five corporate partners: Apache Corporation, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Occidental, and ExxonMobil.

In this Request for Proposals under the Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative, NFWF is seeking to support voluntary conservation projects that align with the priorities described below.

Grants will be awarded in four categories: Habitat Restoration, Species Intervention, Species Response, and Capacity. Program priorities include implementing habitat restoration strategies and increasing baseline species information for species of interest within specific aquatic and grassland focal areas.

## GRANT AWARD INFORMATION

NFWF expects to make 5-8 grant awards from this Request for Proposals. Grant requests should be between \$100,000 and \$500,000, with larger grant requests being considered on a case-by-case basis. Proposals that address cross-jurisdictional, landscape-scale restoration activities across BLM lands in New Mexico are strongly encouraged. Projects should begin within six months of the award date and be completed within three years of the agreed start date.

Applicants are required to provide \$1 in matching funds for every \$1 of NFWF grant funds requested. Matching funds may be federal or non-federal in origin, with that distinction made in the Matching Funds section of the application.

## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The Initiative will award grants in southeastern New Mexico and west Texas within the Trans-Pecos Focal Area of NFWF's [Southwest Rivers Business Plan](#) (Figure 1). Applicants are encouraged to consult NFWF's Southwest Rivers Business Plan [mapping portal](#) in informing potential geographic focus.



Figure 1. Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative Program Boundary



## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

All proposals must specifically address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of one or more of the program priorities as identified in the [Southwest Rivers Program Business Plan](#).

### *Habitat Restoration and Management Grants*

Grants will be awarded for projects that improve habitat for one or more of our target species:

- **Stream and Riparian Habitat Restoration:** Create and enhance riparian habitat in focal geographies to benefit target aquatic species listed below. This work may include flexible management prescriptions for upland grazing and restoration of native vegetation. Projects that restore the integrity and complexity of riparian areas to provide important edge habitat and wildlife corridors, protect the quality of freshwater systems, and demonstrate the benefits of aquatic connectivity projects to human communities through improved infrastructure, such as improved stream-road crossings, are encouraged. Projects addressing water availability for riparian habitat will also be considered. Projects should include long-term maintenance strategies for restored areas including invasive species, water availability and grazing management.
- **Grassland Habitat Restoration and Management:** Implement outcome-based grassland restoration and grazing management projects that use a range of practices and prescriptions to create, sustain or improve large blocks of high quality Chihuahuan desert grasslands for the focal species listed below. Projects should address habitat quality, connectivity and management for grasslands that provide actual or potential habitat for pronghorn (including fence modification) and migratory grassland bird species. Projects that engage landowners with a range of property sizes and interests are strongly encouraged.
- **Outreach and Technical Assistance:** Improve the management of public and/or private lands that contain habitat or potential habitat for focal species. Projects may execute innovative outreach and marketing strategies to engage target audiences, especially private agricultural landowners and land managers, in adopting practices that enhance habitat conditions. Projects should attempt to leverage NRCS funding and cost-share programs when possible. Technical assistance to facilitate design of habitat restoration and infrastructure projects are also supported.

### *Species Intervention Grants*

Grants will be awarded for projects that secure or establish populations of certain target aquatic species, including Pecos gambusia, Pecos pupfish and Texas hornshell:

- **Securing existing populations:** Implement strategies that protect target species from invasion and/or disease.
- **Establishing new populations:** For target species with limited range that are threatened by invasion, translocate individuals to suitable habitats that will increase redundancy and establish protected populations.

### ***Species Response and Monitoring Grants***

This RFP is seeking proposals that implement strategies to conserve the Rio Grande cooter, a species that inhabits the Pecos watershed, but for which the conservation community is only beginning to prioritize conservation strategies. Competitive proposals will include those that implement habitat restoration activities and monitor the effect of conservation activities on the Rio Grande cooter to further our prioritization of activities to benefit the species.

This RFP also seeks proposals to develop and implement monitoring protocols to measure focal species response to habitat restoration and enhancement. Where baseline data is not available, monitoring proposals should establish a baseline measurement. This baseline should then be used to measure change over time as restoration activities are undertaken. Monitoring projects may be paired with other monitoring work that federal and state agencies are performing. Preference will be given to monitoring proposals that include habitat restoration and/or enhancement activities or monitor species response to habitat restoration and/or enhancement work funded through another NFWF Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative project. Monitoring for focal species should track progress towards species outcomes included in Southwest Rivers Business Plan. Applicants are encouraged to contact NFWF program staff prior to submitting a proposal to discuss projects that include species monitoring.

### ***Capacity Grants***

Increase capacity for implementation of priority conservation activities through NRCS partner positions and technical assistance. Capacity grants should address the following priorities:

- *Grant recipients will provide technical assistance to interested farmers, ranchers, and private forestland owners to develop management plans, design and implement conservation practices, share their experiences and lessons learned, and participate in Farm Bill programs, especially the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). A particular emphasis should be placed on promoting, designing, and implementing conservation practices that improve soil health, support grazing system resiliency, restore wetlands, develop perennial wildlife habitat, improve nutrient management, and enhance forest health.*
- *Increase Farm Bill program participation and conservation practice implementation among agricultural producers.*
- *Direct staff resources to help agricultural producers design and implement conservation practices.*

Applications are particularly encouraged which support new full-time or part-time partner positions at applicant organizations such as foresters, wildlife biologists, rangeland specialists, and/or other natural resource professionals that will work in conjunction with NRCS personnel in New Mexico on a daily basis. Duties of partner positions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Providing technical assistance in the development of conservation plans and checkouts of completed practices.
- Preparing and/or monitoring various contract management reports.

- Preparing and issuing correspondence to participants such as annual practice reminders, deferral letters, preapproval letters, and eligibility letters.
- Providing assistance with the application process such as reviewing documents for completeness, verifying control of land, irrigation history, signature authority, required electronic registrations, and troubleshooting eligibility/vendor issues.
- Assisting with contract management by uploading and maintaining documents in electronic systems; removing expired contracts from active contract filing cabinets; and ensuring appropriate signatures on documents.
- Assisting with the completion of reviews and audits by compiling documentation needed to support audit samples.

**NRCS Coordination:** *Please ensure the project aligns with NRCS goals, priorities, and capacity needs by conferring with the NRCS State Conservationist and their staff in the state in which your project is located. A list of NRCS contacts can be found [here](#).*

Please note that grantees applying for these capacity building funds may be required to report on additional performance metrics related to capacity building, conservation planning, and practice implementation to be negotiated between NFWF and the grantee after award decisions have been made. Outcomes proposed under this category should comply with [NRCS Conservation Practice Standards](#).

### ***Focal Species***

#### **Aquatic/Riparian Species**

Pecos pupfish  
Pecos gambusia  
Rio Grande (Western) cooter  
Texas hornshell

#### **Grassland Species**

Chestnut-collared longspur  
Pronghorn  
Sprague's pipit

## **PROJECT METRICS**

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative has a list of metrics in Easygrants to choose from for future reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). The number of metrics selected will not have any influence on proposal competitiveness. If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact Kirstin Neff to discuss acceptable alternatives.

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Easygrants Metric</b>	<b>Additional Guidance</b>
Water acquisitions or leases	Acre feet of water leased	Enter the acre feet of water leased.

Fish passage improvements	# passage barriers rectified	Enter the # of in-stream barriers removed or rectified as part of THIS grant to improve aquatic organism passage and/or flooding. 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. If multiple barriers exist at one specific location, please list "1" and list each individual barrier in the notes.
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.
Texas Hornshell - Instream restoration	Miles restored	Enter instream miles restored for the benefit of Texas hornshell.
Land restoration	Acres restored	Enter the number of grassland acres that have been restored through treatments for woody shrub encroachment or other means. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, shrub) and post-restoration (grassland). Do not include any riparian acres you recorded under the Riparian Restoration metric.
Removal of invasives	Acres restored	Enter the number of acres of riparian invasive plants that have been removed. This metric is for riparian zone invasives only. Acres of grasslands restored through removal of invasive brush should be recorded in the "Land restoration – Acres restored" metric. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Junipers, Shrubs), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Shrub), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No).

Restoring hydrology	# sites with restored hydrology	Enter the number of sites with a reduced risk of point-source water quality impairment.
Riparian restoration	Acres restored	Enter the number of riparian acres restored, including riparian buffers. In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), the dominant vegetation being planted (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Wet meadow), and the average width of the riparian buffer.
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Acres with BMPs	Enter the # of acres with BMPs. In the NOTES section, indicate the type of BMP(s) (e.g. manure storage) and the method of calculating reduction. DO NOT include cover crops, conservation tillage, enhanced cropland nutrient management, or managed grazing.
Pronghorn - BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of fencing improved	Enter the number of miles of fencing improved for pronghorn passage.
Improved management practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres on which resource management is actively improved through the implementation of grazing management plans or other means. Habitat restoration acres should not be included here unless management practices have also changed on the acres restored because of the project.
Outreach/ Technical Assistance	# people reached	Enter the number of people reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities.
Volunteer participation	# volunteers participating	Enter the number of volunteers participating in projects.
Pecos Pupfish - Invasive animal or predator removal/ Fencing nests from predators	# barriers created	Enter the number of barriers created to protect populations of Pecos pupfish by preventing passage of non-native species.
Pecos Gambusia - Translocation	# translocations and/or social attraction projects	Enter the number of translocations and/or social attraction projects initiated for Pecos gambusia.
Pecos Pupfish - Translocation	# translocations and/or social attraction projects	Enter the number of translocations and/or social attraction projects initiated for Pecos pupfish.
Monitoring	# sites being monitored	Enter the number sites being monitored.



SW Rivers - Research - # studies reported to mgmt	# studies reported to mgmt	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are reported to management.
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. The starting value for this metric should be zero and target value should be a whole number. In the NOTES section, 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. The starting value for this metric should be zero and target value should be a whole number. Jobs should have existed prior to the grant, be funded by the grant, and be directly engaged in project activities.
Incentives	# participants receiving gov't agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the number of participants enrolled in government cost share or financial assistance programs. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP), how you will track enrollment. This should be equal to or less than the “# people with changed behavior” metric.
Incentives	Dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the dollar value of federal, state, or local government agency cost share or financial assistance. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP) and how the value was estimated.
Incentives	Acres covered by government agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the number of acres enrolled in government agency cost share or financial assistance. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP). If applicable, number should be equal to or less than “Acreage of project footprint” metric.
Outreach/ Technical Assistance	# people with changed behavior	Enter the number of producers implementing new conservation practices with or without federal, state, local, or private financial assistance. This should



	<i>*to report # of farmers changing practices</i>	be equal to or greater than the “# of farmers receiving gov’t agency cost share or financial assistance” metric.
Project footprint	Acreage of project footprint	Enter the total number of unique acres where one or more conservation practices were implemented. Only count an acre once, even if multiple activities or treatments will occur on that acre during the project.
BMP development	# mgmt plans with BMPs	Enter the number of completed management plans into which Best Management Practices (BMPs) were incorporated.
BMP development	# acres covered by conservation plan	Enter the number of acres that are receiving conservation planning and other technical assistance to help producers meet eligibility requirements for USDA NRCS conservation programs and other Federal, State, and local conservation programs.

## ELIGIBILITY

### Eligible and Ineligible Entities

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

## 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.

Conservation Outcomes	Budget	Technical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment with program goals and priorities</li> <li>• Quantifiable performance metrics</li> <li>• Appropriate monitoring of activities and outcomes</li> <li>• Partnership &amp; community engagement</li> <li>• Project long-term sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowable and reasonable costs</li> <li>• Matching contributions</li> <li>• Cost effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technically sound and feasible</li> <li>• Logical and achievable work plan and timeline</li> <li>• Engages technical experts</li> <li>• Accurate spatial data</li> <li>• Sound compliance approach (permits, NEPA, QAQC)</li> <li>• Past grantee success</li> <li>• Transferable</li> </ul>

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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 the 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.

**Spatial Data** – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF’s online mapping tool accurately represent the location(s) of 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.

## **OTHER**

### **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.

**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), and carbon accounting (e.g., sequestration, avoided emissions).

**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 award recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

**Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support** – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF's financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

**Receiving Award Funds** – Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request 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. Requests for monthly advances will not be considered.

**Compliance Requirements** – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and the 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 sufficient 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.

## 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](https://easygrants.nfwf.org) to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information. Please disable the pop-up blocker on your internet browser prior to beginning the application process.
2. Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.
3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

## APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This 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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For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: [Easygrants@nfwf.org](mailto: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.