



## Coral Reef Conservation Fund 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 back to this page as needed for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar (recorded)	01/28/2026 1:00PM Eastern Time ( <a href="#">Click to register</a> )
<b>Pre-Proposal Due Date</b>	<b>02/18/2026 11:59PM Eastern Time</b>
Invitations for Full Proposals Sent	March 2026
<b>Full Proposal Due Date</b>	<b>04/16/2026 11:59PM Eastern Time</b>
Awards Announced	September 2026

### OVERVIEW

The Coral Reef Stewardship Fund provides funding for innovation in coral reef management and science, threat reduction to coral reef systems prioritized by NFWF Hawaii business plan and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, and capacity building for coral reef restoration and persistence.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will award grants to improve the health of coral reef systems. Grants will be awarded to reduce land-based sources of pollution, advance coral reef fisheries management, increase capacity for reef-scale restoration, and to support management in their efforts to increase the natural recovery and resiliency of coral reef systems.

The Coral Reef Stewardship Fund is a partnership with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act (16 U.S. Code § 6407) and receives additional funding support from Aramco Americas.



## ELIGIBILITY AND GRANT AWARD INFORMATION

Average grant awards will range from \$80,000 to \$300,000, depending on the specific project activities or overall scale of the project. The Program Priorities section below and/or the Budget section of the application may provide further guidance on competitive grant ranges based on activity. Applicants considering proposals outside of this funding range are encouraged to contact NFWF staff prior to submitting.

### Eligible applicants include:

U.S. For-Profit Entities, U.S. Non-Profit Entities, U.S. State or Local Governments, Tribal Governments, Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)

### Ineligible applicants include:

U.S. Federal Governments, Individuals, International

Project start and end dates define the period during which **all** proposed work is accomplished, and **all** requested and matching funds are spent or applied. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion.

Matching contributions are encouraged but not required for this funding opportunity. However, the amount of matching funds offered is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that offer match from Federal and Non-Federal sources will be more competitive.

## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects proposing coral conservation work in **any U.S. coral jurisdictions** (American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands) **are eligible and invited to apply**. Priority will be given to projects that conduct applicable land based and in-water conservation activities in locations prioritized by the US Coral Reef Task Force as found below. Applications for projects in international jurisdictions are not eligible.

### American Samoa

- Watersheds: Aua; Faga'alu
- In-water: Fagamalo Village MPA

### CNMI

- Watershed: Achugao
- In-water: Managaha Marine Conservation Area

### Florida - See Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuaries - [Iconic Reef Restoration Plan](#)

- Watershed: Government Cut
- In-water: Mission Iconic Reefs (7 reefs); Kristin Jacobs Coral Reef Aquatic Preserve



## Guam

- Watersheds: Piti-Asan
- In-water: Piti Bomb Holes Marine Preserve

## Hawaii - See [Hawaii's Coral Restoration Action Plan](#)

- Watersheds: Kihei; West Maui
- In-water: Kahekili Herbivore Fisheries Management Area, Kihei, Olowalu, Southeast Molokai (Kawela)

## Puerto Rico - See [Puerto Rico's Coral Restoration Action Plan](#)

- Watersheds: Culebra; Guanica
- In-water: NE Reserve

## USVI - See [USVI Coral Restoration Plan](#)

- Watersheds: St. Croix East End Marine Park; Salt River Bay
- In-water: St. Croix East End Marine Park

## **PROGRAM PRIORITIES**

Competitive applications under this funding opportunity will work directly with local coral reef managers to implement priority projects in the following conservation categories for reefs associated with the priority geographies and plans identified above. U.S. coral reef conservation projects that fall outside of or only indirectly address these priority categories or geographies are still eligible for funding but are considered a lower priority than those with a direct nexus.

As a starting point, NOAA has developed a [reference list](#) of contacts and curated U.S. jurisdictional priorities that support the program priorities in this RFP as a starting point. While it is not required to address one of the listed jurisdictional priorities, it may increase proposal competitiveness. Additionally, projects that directly implement specific strategies and goals under the [NFWF Hawaii Conservation business plan](#) and/or [NFWF Coral Reefs Strategy](#) will be most competitive for funding. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review these documents and highlight any areas of their proposed work that overlap with these specific strategies, geographies, and goals.

Applicants under this program are strongly encouraged to contact a local manager that they feel is most applicable to their project scope and/or the NOAA CRCP Regional Federal Program Officer for the jurisdiction where they plan to work (see contact list through the link above). It is helpful to list the name, title, and affiliation of the individual you have contacted in the pre-proposal but it is not required. A letter indicating their knowledge of the project may be required at the Full Proposal stage depending on the scope of work.

This engagement should serve as an opportunity to:



- Share the conservation objectives of your proposed project;
- Learn of any similar projects you might build upon or adjustments that would make your outcomes more useful to local needs;
- Discuss your intended scope of work to receive feedback on local permitting requirements or the local conservation context; and
- Share your intended products and communication, including how local managers would like to be engaged or informed during/after implementation, if your project is selected.

## 2026 PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

### Threat Reduction to Priority Reef Sites

Projects under this category will support the implementation of activities identified in watershed management plans or marine protected area plans, most notably at the geographic focus areas detailed above. Applicants should identify the specific plan, including the year it was finalized, how the threat/activity is listed in relative priority to other activities in the plan, the measurable goal/target for this activity in the plan, and the contribution to the target that the project seeks to achieve.

- **Reduce Land-based Pollution Inputs to Coral Reefs:** Projects should engage local industry, agriculture, community groups, landowners, land managers, and/or individuals in direct sediment and nutrient threat reduction activities prioritized in existing watershed management plans. Project activities may include, but are not limited to, stream restoration, planting of native vegetation, and installation of best management/conservation practices to reduce sediment and/or nutrient flow to reefs. Proposals should incorporate specific performance targets to monitor the effectiveness of project activities in reducing threats to nearshore coral reef ecosystems, including estimates of percent reductions for each threat as a result of specific project activities and how these reductions relate to established goals. The highest priority projects will reference established water quality targets for the target reef(s) and incorporate the evaluation of the effectiveness of threat reduction activities in meeting them.
- **Increase Fish Stocks of Key Species Along Priority Reefs:** Projects should identify activities that support local managers and communities in reef fish management within priority reef tracts including, but not limited to, citizen-science/community monitoring programs, technical assistance with place-based management planning efforts, performance evaluation of place-based marine managed areas, and capacity building efforts to improve enforcement and/or increase compliance. Proposals should incorporate specific performance metrics to monitor the effectiveness of project activities toward increasing biomass of fish with key functional roles over the long term. Priority taxa for this work include Parrotfish Family, Surgeonfish Family, and hogfish (*Lachnolaimus maximus*).

### Coral Reef Response and Restoration Capacity



Projects under this category will enhance a jurisdiction's ability to implement coral reef emergency response and restoration projects. The expected size of awards through the Coral Reef Stewardship Fund is unlikely to be sufficient to support large-scale restoration efforts, instead projects should focus on helping jurisdictions scale restoration efforts and increase their likelihood for success.

- **Disturbance Response:** Projects under this category will focus on preventing, preparing for, and testing response alternatives to existing marine disturbances that do, or have the potential to, significantly impact coral reef ecosystems. Projects should be scalable and take into consideration the history of the event type, the frequency of the event type at the location, and the available information on what has been done to date that would support the proposed pilot response activities. Projects should also consider the feasibility of implementing response techniques long-term and/or at scale, including capacity, regulatory, and permitting needs. Projects proposing novel response options for events that do not currently have viable interventions (i.e. thermal stress) are of highest priority. Projects should also include elements of local capacity that make activities feasible at scale and demonstrate a clear understanding of permitting hurdles if in-situ testing is proposed.
- **Support Coral Out-planting Success:** Projects under this category will focus on smaller scale out-planting case studies that seek to learn about the effects of predation, competition, water quality, disease resistance, novel genetic diversity, etc. on survival of outplants. Projects may also seek to streamline logistical hurdles, such as permitting, that can be used to increase the success of larger scale restoration efforts. Projects may coordinate with existing out-planting activities on larger scale projects to test approaches and refine techniques to increase success.
- **Increase the Scalability of Coral Restoration:** Projects under this category will work towards increasing the number and/or diversity of corals and associated reef species (i.e., reef-related herbivores) available for direct coral reef restoration efforts. Activities may include, but are not limited to, establishing efficiencies in coral propagation and restoration pipelines, reef-scale production, data analysis, training, and intervention techniques such as mechanization and automation of coral restoration or herbivore co-culture efforts. Projects should focus on increasing the cost-effectiveness of restoration projects at scale.
- **Friend Groups and Similar NGO Support:** Projects in this category will seek to stand up a friend's group or foundation that can provide direct support for an agency counterpart as well as fill gaps in grants writing and management, procurement, volunteer coordination, etc. as needed and appropriate. Projects must demonstrate a knowledge of the local challenges and their plan to work directly with the target agency representatives to address those challenges. Projects should also demonstrate a knowledge of the legal authorities for establishing a friend's group or agency foundation in this jurisdiction and include a plan for self-sustainment beyond the project period.

## PROJECT REQUIREMENTS



**Spatial data** - The application will also require project spatial data submitted to NFWF's online mapping tool that accurately represents the location(s) of conservation activity(ies) at the time of proposal submission. Awarded projects will be required to submit improved spatial data with site-specific specificity for each conservation activity within the period of performance.

**Uniform Guidance** - Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.

## APPLICATION 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. The application may provide further guidance as to areas of emphasis across these criteria that are specific to this program.

Conservation Outcomes	Technical	Partnership and Community Impact	Cost Effectiveness
<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>• Project long-term sustainability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technically sound and feasible</li><li>• Engages technical experts</li><li>• Logical and achievable work plan and timeline</li><li>• Compliance plan and status (permits, NEPA)</li><li>• Accurate spatial data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partners help sustain impact of project</li><li>• Proposal identifies target communities for engagement and collaboration</li><li>• Includes letters of support from community partners (if applicable)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct/indirect costs have high return for scope and impact</li><li>• Cost effective compared to similar projects across all budget categories</li><li>• Allowable and reasonable costs</li><li>• Matching contributions</li></ul>

## OTHER TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH A NFWF GRANT AWARD

Before applying, applicants will be asked to review and agree to several terms and conditions associated with standard NFWF grants found here: [NFWF Standard Grant Award Conditions](#). Topics covered in this document include but are not limited to:

- Ineligible Use of Grant Funds
- Environmental Services Markets (e.g. carbon credits)
- Intellectual Property
- Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support
- Requests for Advanced Funding
- List of Required Financial Documents

## CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the priorities and requirements listed in this RFP or the terms and conditions of a standard NFWF grant award, please reach out to Michelle Pico ([pico@nfwf.org](mailto:pico@nfwf.org)).





## 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](http://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 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.