

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation 2026 Lower MS Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund Applicant Webinar



Bottomland hardwood forest | Credit: Bruce Reid



Webinar Guidelines

- We may ask you to raise your “hand” in the webinar to confirm participants can hear us.
- To improve sound quality, all participants will be muted for the duration of the webinar. If you want to ask a question you have two options:
 - Enter your query where it says “Chat” and click send. We will type a response or read your question aloud when we pause for Q&A.
 - Write it down and contact us after the webinar. We have a lot of material to cover, so you may prefer to have a more in-depth discussion later.
- If you experience a technical glitch, please type it into the chat, since we can’t hear you. (We may not know about the glitch unless you say something!)
- **The Webinar is being recorded. We will post a copy of these slides and the recording on the NFWF website for this RFP.**



Today's Presenters



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Zack Bernstein

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Webinar Agenda

- **Program Overview**
 - 2026 Funding Opportunity
 - Geography
 - Lower MS Alluvial Valley business plan
- **Program Priorities**
- **How to Apply in Easygrants**
 - Resource Links
- **Timeline and Contact Information**



Program Overview

The **Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund** invests in on-the-ground projects to restore, enhance and conserve bottomland hardwood forests and wetlands, and promote aquatic connectivity on private and public lands to improve wildlife habitat and water quality.

Public-Private Partnership



Big Island | Credit: John Ruskey



2026 Funding Opportunity

- **Request for Proposals:** www.nfwf.org/lowermsvalley
- **Proposal due date:** April 23, 2026, by 11:59 PM ET
- **Grant size:** \$150,000 - \$750,000*
- **Eligible Applicants**:**
 - ✓ Non-profit 501(c)
 - ✓ State, tribal and local governments
 - ✓ Academic institutions
 - ✓ US Federal agencies



Mississippi River side channel | Credit: Bruce Reid

**Applicants considering proposals outside of this funding range are encouraged to contact NFWF prior to submitting.*

***For-profits and individual landowners cannot directly apply, but may be partners on projects*



Geography

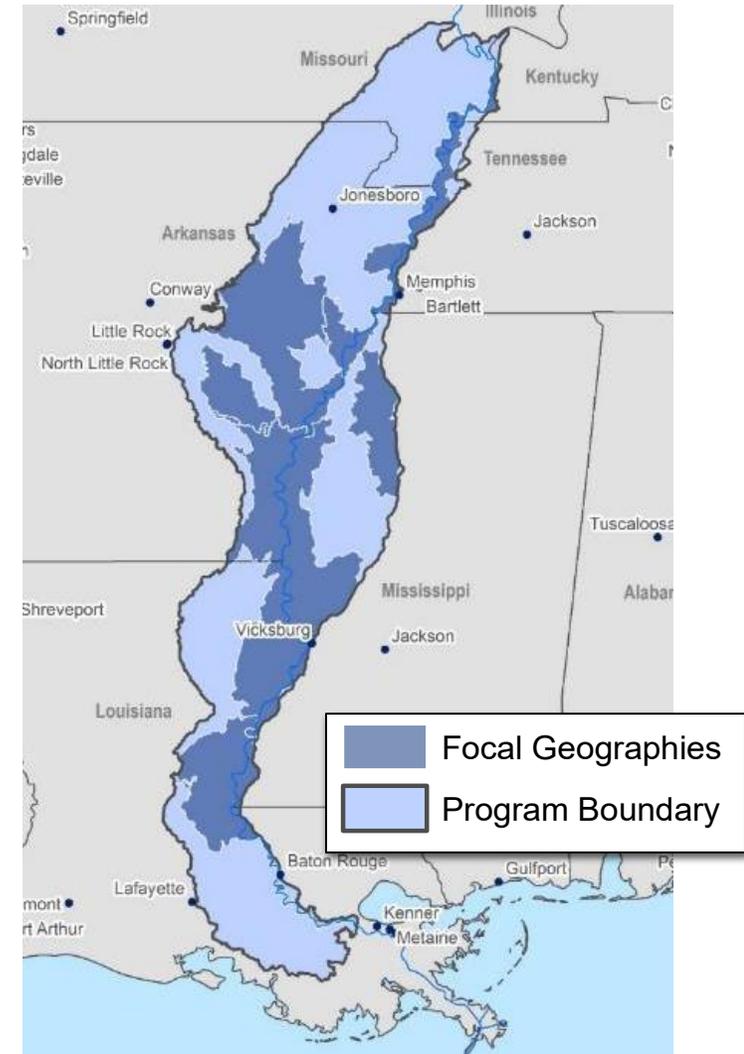
Projects must occur within the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley in the following states...

Arkansas	Illinois	Kentucky	Louisiana
Mississippi	Missouri	Tennessee	

***Preference given to projects within focal geographies**

Lands eligible for funding include:

- Privately-owned lands
- State and local government lands
- Federal lands (encouraged to be part of projects where state, local and/or private lands are also included)
 - **Special program focus this year on NWRs and WMAs**



Lower MS Alluvial Valley Program Landscape

Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Business Plan



National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Business Plan for Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley

November 2019



Louisiana black bear



Forest birds



Waterfowl



Swamp rabbit



Gar

<https://www.nfwf.org/lowermsvalley/Documents/lmav-business-plan.pdf>

Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Business Plan

10-Year Habitat Goals

Goal	Target
Enhance and Maintain Existing Bottomland Hardwood Forests	25,000 acres
Restore (Establish) New Bottomland Hardwood Forests	25,000 acres
Restore and enhance hydrologic function to wetland and floodplain habitats	15,000 acres
Protect Bottomland Hardwood Forests and Wetlands with Conservation Easements	30,000 acres
Improve Connectivity of Stream and River Habitats	35 miles
Improve connectivity and hydrologic function to oxbows, scar lakes and other surface water features	500 acres
Install agricultural best management practices to improve water quality	10,000 acres
Engage private landowners through outreach and technical assistance	5,000 landowners
Move landowners to conservation action	500 landowners

Program Priorities



Louisiana black bear | Credit: USFWS



Program Priorities

1. **Bottomland Hardwood Forest Enhancement and Maintenance**
2. **Bottomland Hardwood Forest Restoration**
3. **Restoration of Wetland and Floodplain Hydrology**
4. **Threatened and Endangered Mussel Recovery**
5. **Implement Conservation Practices on Working Agricultural Lands**
6. **Outreach and Technical Assistance to Private Landowners, Forest Practitioners and Other Key Constituencies**
7. **Bottomland Forest Habitat Conservation (Easements)**
8. **Improve Aquatic Connectivity**
9. **Restoration Response Monitoring**

We encourage projects that align with the following themes:

- Restore habitat and decrease communities' risk from environmental stressors and natural disasters
 - Emergency management officials are good sources of information
- Benefit National Wildlife Refuges/State Wildlife Management Areas

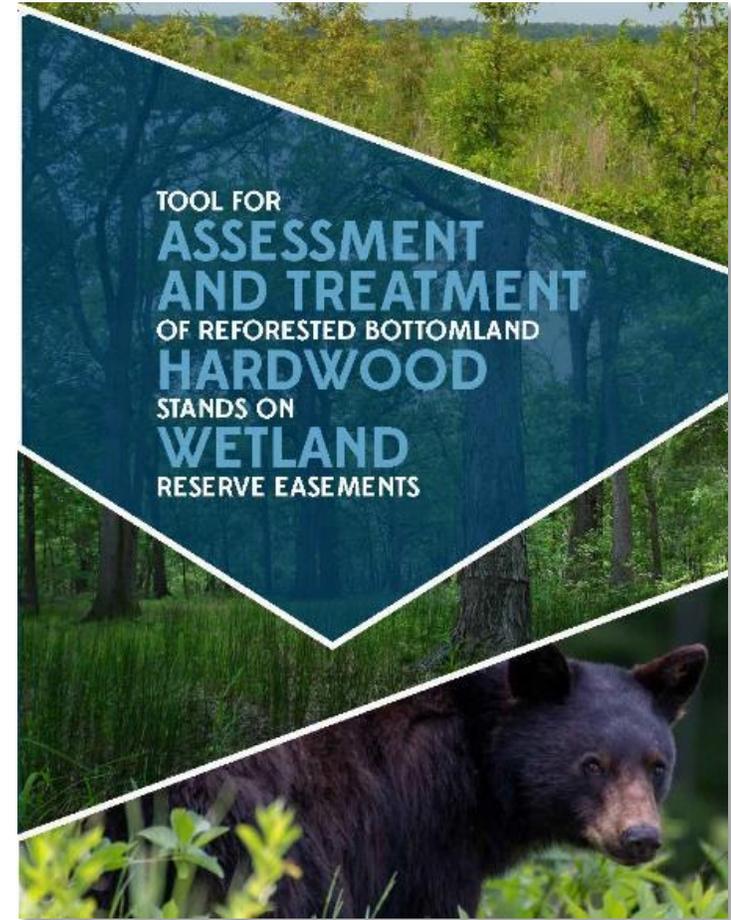


1. Bottomland Hardwood Forest Enhancement and Maintenance

Practices or forest treatments that improve wildlife habitat quality and health of existing bottomland hardwood forests, including:

- Thinning
- Crop tree release
- Invasive species control
- Residual stocking

Note: Projects that include work on lands enrolled in USDA Farm Bill programs should coordinate with the appropriate NRCS state office



2. Bottomland Hardwood Forest Restoration

- Reforestation and/or afforestation of cropland
 - Preference to projects that contribute to landscape-scale habitat connectivity to benefit wildlife
- Site preparation and planting of bottomland hardwoods
- Practices to promote natural regeneration of bottomland hardwood forest
- Addressing barriers to reforestation/afforestation



3. Restoration of Wetland and Floodplain Hydrology

- Connecting wetlands and water features between adjacent properties
- Vegetation management to improve wetland habitat and function
- Managing for moist soil plants
- Installation of low-maintenance water control structures, such as flashboard risers and wiers, for water management capabilities.



4. Threatened and Endangered Mussel Recovery

- Recovery of Endangered Species Act listed mussels (ex: fat pocketbook mussel)
 - Propagation
 - Reintroduction
 - Surveys
- Aquatic habitat restoration benefiting mussels



5. Implement Conservation Practices on Working Agricultural Lands

- Rerouting agricultural runoff to constructed or restored wetlands
- Rehabilitating or stabilizing ditches and/or gullies
- Integrating practices to conserve soil, reduce erosion, and protect water quality, such as:
 - cover crops
 - no-till
 - conservation crop rotation, and/or
 - establishing buffer strips



Photo credit: Tim McCabe, USDA NRCS

6. Targeted Outreach and Technical Assistance

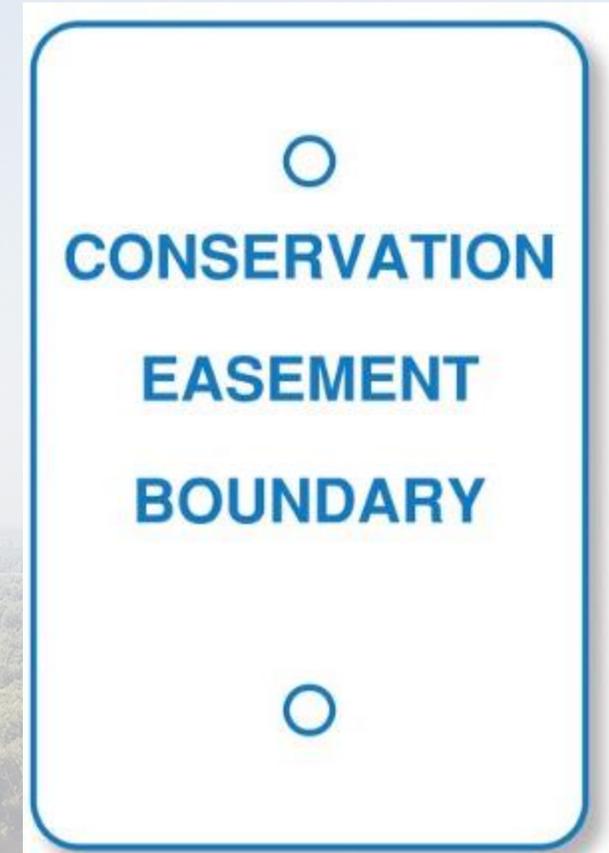
- Outreach and training opportunities for landowners and/or conservation practitioners
 - Support capacity to conduct outreach to landowners and practitioners
- Address landowner barriers to participation in forestry and conservation programs
- Demonstration sites
- Advance new market-based solutions or incentives

USDA NRCS Priorities

- Bolstering enrollment into the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE).
- Promoting, designing, and implementing **agriculture and forestry conservation practices** and reducing the Farm Bill practice contracting and implementation backlog.

7. Bottomland Hardwood Forest Habitat Conservation

- Support USDA ACEP-WRE projects
 - Technical assistance and restoration costs
- Capacity and due diligence costs (boundary surveys, appraisals, legal fees, etc.) to facilitate targeted conservation easement projects
- Funding for acquisition costs is limited
- Land conservation should be included as part of larger bottomland forest/wetland restoration proposal



8. Improve Aquatic Connectivity

- Restore or retrofit barriers, such as dikes, levees, culverts and other water conveyance and control structures, to improve flows and increase habitat connectivity.
- Preference for projects that will increase the frequency and duration of floodplain and/or oxbow connection to the Mississippi River main stem to improve rearing habitat for gar species.
- Proposals should detail the pre- and post-intervention freshwater fish monitoring at the site
- **We encourage you to contact NFWF staff if you are considering a proposal that includes aquatic connectivity work**



9. Restoration Response Monitoring

- Develop and implement monitoring protocols to measure Louisiana black bear, waterfowl, forest birds, swamp rabbit, and/or gar (fish) response to habitat restoration and enhancement projects funded through the grant program.
- Establish a baseline measurement if baseline data is not available.
- Should not be standalone project, rather part of a broader restoration project
- **Contact NFWF staff if submitting a proposal that includes species monitoring**



Pallid sturgeon | Credit: Bruce Reid

How to Apply in Easygrants



Prothonotary warbler | Credit: iStock



Signing in to Easygrants

[? Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Log In

[New User?](#)

Login ID / Email

Password

Remember Me [Forgot Password?](#)

Log In

For the optimal Easygrants experience, please:

- [Use a Supported Browser](#)
- [Enable Pop-ups](#)
- [Allow Cookies](#)
- [Only Use One Tab](#)
- [Get Adobe Reader](#)
- [Log Out and Close Browser for Security](#)

Register

First Name * Middle Name

Last Name *

Login ID / Email *

Confirm Login ID / Email *

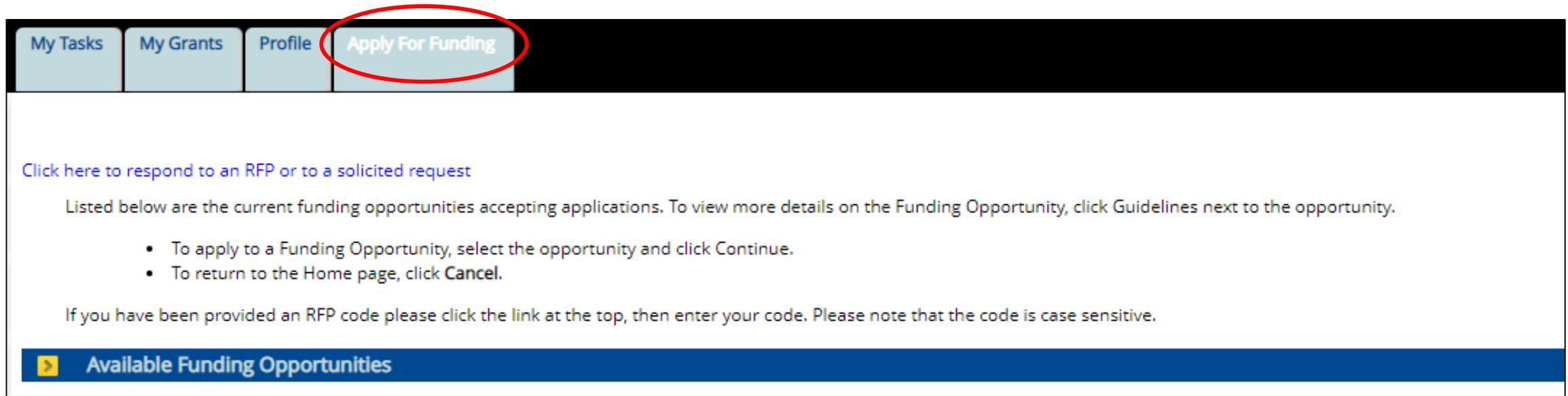
Password *

[Password Requirements](#)

Confirm Password *

Register **Back**

Applying in Easygrants



My Tasks My Grants Profile **Apply For Funding**

[Click here to respond to an RFP or to a solicited request](#)

Listed below are the current funding opportunities accepting applications. To view more details on the Funding Opportunity, click Guidelines next to the opportunity.

- To apply to a Funding Opportunity, select the opportunity and click Continue.
- To return to the Home page, click Cancel.

If you have been provided an RFP code please click the link at the top, then enter your code. Please note that the code is case sensitive.

 Available Funding Opportunities

Once you are on your Easygrants homepage, click on “Apply for Funding”

Choose the Funding Opportunity you’re applying to.

Proposal Main Page

The screenshot displays the 'Proposal Main Page' interface. On the left is a vertical navigation sidebar with buttons for: Home, Main, Contact Information, Organization Information, Project Information, Project Location, Map, Uploads, Metrics, Budget, Matching Contributions, Permits and Approvals, and Review and Submit. The 'Main' button is highlighted with a red border. The main content area features three blue header bars: 'Project Information', 'Instructions', and 'Validation Summary'. Below the 'Project Information' bar, the due date is '12/16/2021 11:59 PM ET' and the Easygrants ID is '74112'. The contact information is 'Bernstein, Zack | Grants | Lower MS Alluvial Valley Fund | Lower MS Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund 2022'. The 'Instructions' section contains a paragraph of text and a bulleted list of links: Home, FAQ, Help, and Log Out. The 'Validation Summary' section is a table with two columns: 'Page Name' and 'Status'.

Page Name	Status
Contact Information	✓ Complete
Organization Information	✗ Incomplete
Project Information	✗ Incomplete
Project Location	✗ Incomplete
Map	✗ Incomplete
Uploads	✗ Incomplete
Metrics	✗ Incomplete
Budget	✗ Incomplete
Matching Contributions	✓ Complete
Permits and Approvals	✓ Complete

Project Information

Title: Short, descriptive name indicating project purpose. (~100 characters)

Project start and end dates: Start within six months of the award announcement date and end within 24-48 months of the start date.

Description: Two sentences about primary project activities, location, outcome/metrics and relevance to conservation. (~500 characters)

- Clearly state the main activity and the method being used
- Address a specific habitat, location or species benefitted

Abstract: More detailed description including location, major activities, outcome/metrics, and partners. (~1,500 characters)

- State what your organization will do
- Provide context and background information
- Explain how the project outcomes will specifically address a conservation issue



Map



Map your project at the finest scale by any of the three options:

Upload Shapefile

- Select a Zip file(.zip) containing a shapefile(.shp,.dbf,.prj) from your local file system.
- The shapefile must be of POLYGON geometry type.
- The shapefile must not exceed 1 MB.

No file chosen

Select By Geography

Draw a Custom Area

My project area:

Submitted Project Locations

Pending Project Locations



I confirm that this project has been mapped as accurately as possible

Spatial Data

- Why is NFWF requiring spatial data?
 - Track progress toward habitat restoration goals and demonstrate impact on the landscape
 - To perform spatial analyses (ex. assess habitat change over time) and depict the generalized project location on maps
- What is required:
 - Polygons depicting the location and boundary of each project activity supported with grant funding and matching funds within the project period of performance (ex. areas planted in longleaf, prescribed burn footprints, etc.)*
 - Attribute field that includes the activity associated with each polygon (ex. planting, burning, etc.)
- What is **not** required:
 - Landowner identifying information
- Projects where the exact location of project activities are unknown at the proposal stage may submit approximate project boundaries but must submit accurate spatial data depicting project activity boundaries with the final report.

Uploads

Upload Checklist		
Upload Type	Required	Template
LMAV Full Proposal Narrative Template 2024	Yes	LMAV Full Proposal Narrative Template 2024
Project Map	Yes	
Letters of Support	Yes	
Conceptual Plans	No	
Engineered Plans	No	
Photos - Jpeg	No	
LMAV Applicant Demographic Information Form 2024	Yes	LMAV Applicant Demographic Information Form 2023
Statement of Litigation	Yes	Statement of Litigation
Board of Trustees, Directors, or equivalent	Yes	
Applicant Controls Questionnaire	Yes	Applicant Controls Questionnaire (Rev 7.31.23)
Applicant Demographic Information Form	Yes	Applicant Demographic Information Form
GAAP audited financial statements	Yes	
IRS Form 990	Yes	
Single Audit (Formerly A-133 Audit)	Yes	
Indirect Rate Agreement	No	
Other Documents	No	

The full list of required uploads for your organization type is available on the NFWF website here:
<https://www.nfwf.org/apply-grant/application-information/required-financial-documents>

Narrative

- **Project Overview:** 1-2 paragraph high level project summary.
- **Conservation Need:** Describe the threats and/or conservation needs that this project seeks to address.
- **Project Activities:** Elaborate on the primary activities that will be employed through the grant.
- **Tracking Metrics:** Indicate how the project will monitor/assess progress toward the outcome metrics selected in Easygrants.
- **Conservation Outcome(s):** Describe the conservation outcomes that will be achieved through project implementation with reference to the selected outcome metrics; discuss what makes the outcomes achievable and important.
- **Benefit to Species and Conservation Co-Benefits:** Please describe how the activities described in the proposal will contribute to improved populations of species that are representative of healthy forest and/or wetland systems. If applicable, please also describe any anticipated carbon sequestration and/or water quality or quantity benefits that may be achieved through the project.
- **Project Team:** List key individuals that will be directly involved in project implementation and describe their qualifications.
- **Community Impact:** Describe the community(ies) where the project will take place, who will benefit from the project, and how they were or will be engaged in project development and implementation.
- **Other (Optional):** Provide any further information important for the review of this proposal

Metrics

Select Metric [X]

Show: Search:

Add	Metric	Strategies	Required
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - Restoring hydrology - Acres with restored hydrology (private lands) ?	Habitat Restoration	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with BMPs (public lands) ?		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with BMPs (private lands) ?		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - Conservation easements - Acres protected under easement ?		
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people with changed behavior ?		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - Land, wetland restoration - Acres restored on private land ?	Habitat Restoration	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - Land, wetland restoration - Acres restored on public land ?	Habitat Restoration	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (public) ?	Habitat Management	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	LMAV - Restoring hydrology - Acres with restored hydrology (public lands) ?	Habitat Restoration	Recommended

Filter By:
 No rest
 Selec

Select All

Metric instruction: Enter the total acres of bottomland hardwood forest that will be established on private lands during the grant period of performance, or that will be established after the grant period of performance, as part of restoration associated with a WRE/WREP easement.

* If none of the available metrics apply to your project, please contact NFWF to discuss

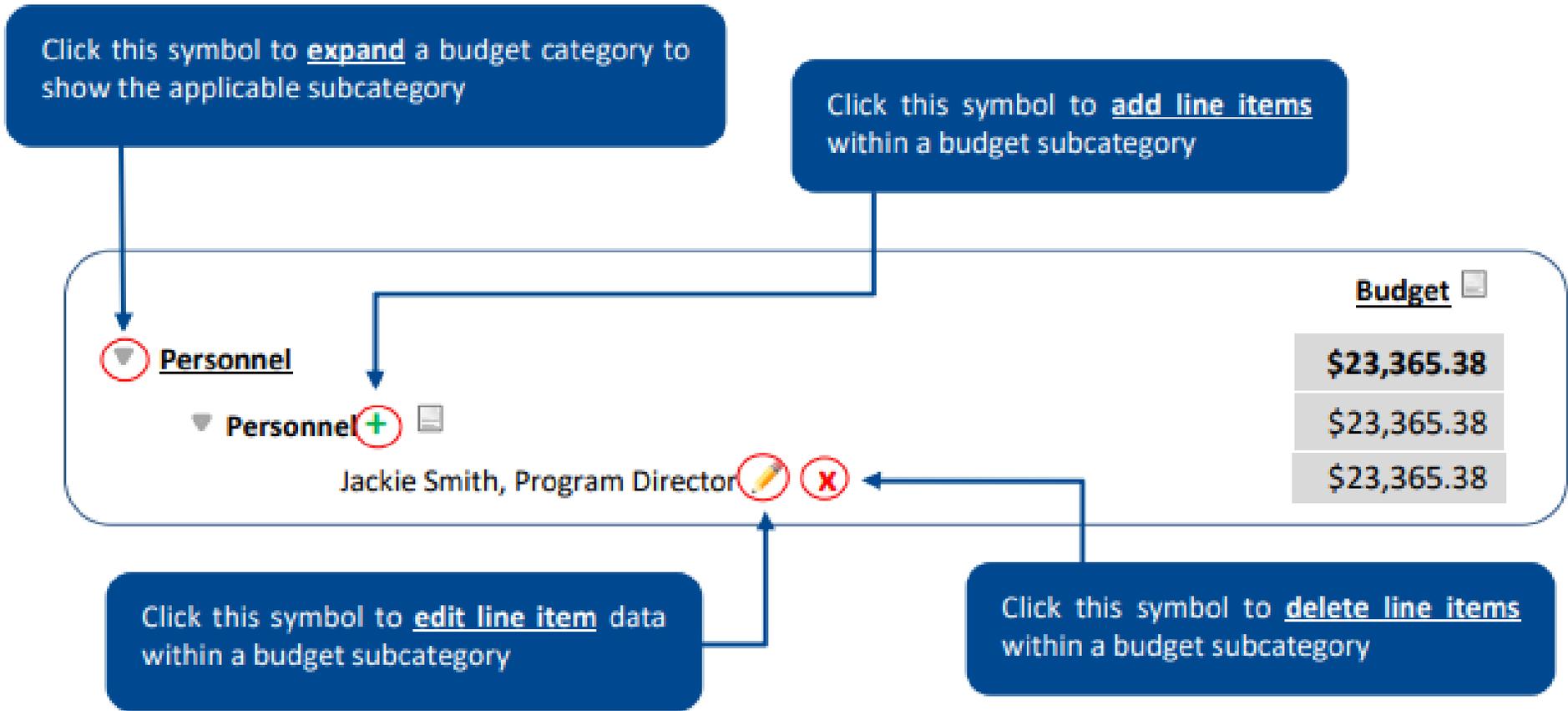
Budget

- In order to complete a budget for your proposal, you must expand the appropriate categories and provide the information requested.
- If you do not anticipate an expense for a particular category, skip that category- it is not necessary to enter a “0” value in the cost fields.
- Try to anticipate factors that may affect the budget when developing projections and provide an explanation of those factors.
- Matching contributions should not be included in the budget.

The screenshot shows a budget interface with a blue header bar labeled 'Budget'. Below the header is a button labeled 'Expand all'. The main content area displays a list of budget categories, each with a right-pointing chevron icon. The categories are: Personnel, Travel, Equipment, Materials and Supplies, Contractual Services, Other Direct Costs, Total Direct Costs, Total Indirect Costs, and Total Costs. To the right of the categories is a column labeled 'Budget' with a small icon. The values in this column are all \$0.00.

	Budget 
> <u>Personnel</u>	\$0.00
> <u>Travel</u>	\$0.00
> <u>Equipment</u>	\$0.00
> <u>Materials and Supplies</u>	\$0.00
> <u>Contractual Services</u>	\$0.00
> <u>Other Direct Costs</u>	\$0.00
<u>Total Direct Costs</u>	\$0.00
<u>Total Indirect Costs</u>	\$0.00
<u>Total Costs</u>	\$0.00

Navigating the Budget



Adding/Editing Budget Narratives

- Narratives are required for all budgeted categories.
 - Explain/justify the estimated costs including the unit cost and quantity requested
 - Explain how the costs associated with each line item supports the implementation of the project as outlined in the proposal
- Narratives should be written in such a way that someone not familiar with the project can conceptually understand the **rationale**, **purpose** and **calculation** of the anticipated costs identified by line item.
- Narratives should be concise and describe line items in 1-3 sentences.

Figures without narrative descriptions will be returned to the applicant for further details and clarification.

Click this symbol to add a narrative within a budget subcategory



	Budget
Personnel	\$23,365.38
Personnel + [icon]	\$23,365.38

Next, complete the narrative box as shown below:

Notes		
Line Item Budget	Personnel	
Budget	Jackie Smith will manage all aspects of the program which includes, surveys of the project site alongside field techs, landowner interviews and follow-ups, and supervision of volunteers during sponsored work days.	
Save	Save and Close	Cancel

Matching Contributions

Matching Contribution Editor

Instructions

Enter the required matching contribution details below. Click **Save** regularly to save your work. **The system will timeout and you will lose unsaved work if you do not save at least once every hour.** Click **Save and Close** to save and return to the Matching Contributions list page. Fields marked with a red asterisk (*) are required for final submission for most programs. Click **Help** for examples and instructions.

Status *

Source *
Enter the name of the person or Organization providing the Matching Contribution

Source Type *

Type *

Description *
Limit: 250 characters Remaining: 250

Amount *

Save and Close **Close**

Review and Submit

- Make sure to click the blue **“Submit”** button to submit your proposal.
- If correctly submitted, you will receive a confirmation e-mail and the task will disappear from your homepage.

NOTE: You must enable pop-ups to use this system. If a link does not open please try holding the Shift or Control (CTRL) key.

Project Location

Map

Uploads

Budget

Matching Contributions

Permits and Approvals

Review and Submit

FAQ

Help

Log Out

▶ View Full Submission

View PDF

▶ Submission

▶ Validation Status

Page Name	Status
Contact Information	✓ Complete
Organization Information	✗ Incomplete
✗ Primary Organization is required	
Project Information	✗ Incomplete
✗ Project Title is required.	
✗ Project Start Date is required.	
✗ Project End Date is required.	
✗ Description is required	
✗ Abstract is required.	
✗ Requested Amount is required.	
Project Location	✗ Incomplete
✗ Project Location Description is required.	
✗ Project Location Country(s) is required.	
Map	✗ Incomplete
✗ Please confirm your project has been accurately mapped.	
Uploads	✗ Incomplete
✗ GAAP audited financial statements is required and has not been uploaded.	
IRS Form 990 is required and has not been uploaded.	
A-133 Audit is required and has not been uploaded.	
Board of Trustees, Directors, or equivalent is required and has not been uploaded.	
Statement of Litigation is required and has not been uploaded.	
CBWTP Full Proposal 2021 is required and has not been uploaded.	
CBWTP 5 Year Transaction Projection 2021 is required and has not been uploaded.	
CBWTP Work Elements 2021 is required and has not been uploaded.	
Budget	✓ Complete
Matching Contributions	✓ Complete
Permits and Approvals	✓ Complete

Next Steps if Awarded a Grant

- Additional Proposal Review:
 - Programmatic
 - Financial, included organizational financial documents
- Once the proposal is approved, a grant agreement will be created
- Spatial data updates and refinement will be required at closure
- Funder acknowledgement

Resources

Tip Sheet

<https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/lower-mississippi-alluvial-valley-restoration-fund-2026-tip-sheet.pdf.pdf>

Required Financial Documents

<http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/required-financial-docs.aspx>

Budget Instructions

<http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/budget-instructions.aspx>

Detailed Budget and Narrative Guide

<https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/nfwf-detailed-budget-narrative-guide.pdf>

NFWF Indirect Policy

<http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/indirect-policy.aspx>

Mapping Tutorial

<http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/mapping-tool.aspx>

Lower MS Alluvial Valley business plan

37 <https://www.nfwf.org/lowermsvalley/Documents/lmav-business-plan.pdf>



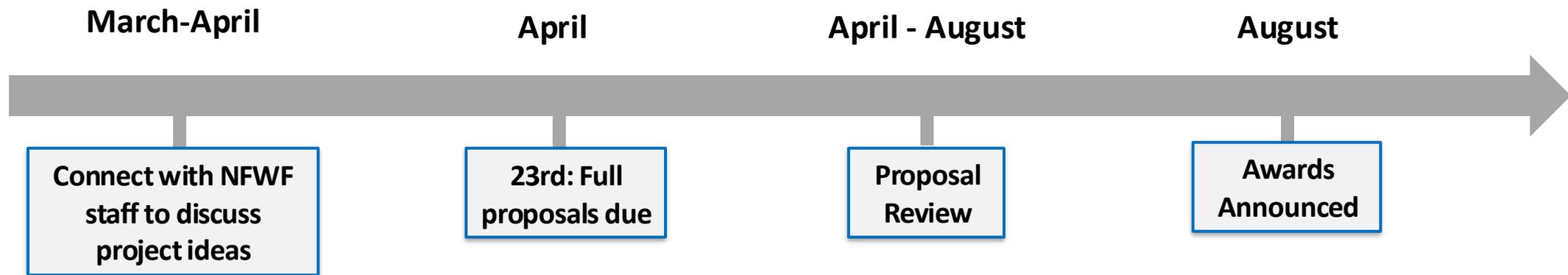
Timeline and Contact Information



Prothonotary warbler | Credit: iStock



Program Timeline



QUESTIONS or COMMENTS

Jay Jensen
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Kat Sanz
Coordinator, Regional Programs
kat.sanz@nfwf.org

Easygrants technical support:

Email helpdesk at Easygrants@nfwf.org or
leave a message at 202-595-2497