



Sustain Our Great Lakes 2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (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 program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information www.nfwf.org/greatlakes.

Applicant Webinar	May 1, 2026; 2:00PM ET
Applicant Workshop	May 7, 2026; 11-12:30 ET
Pre-Proposal Due Date	May 28, 2026; 11:59PM ET
Invitations for Full Proposals Sent	June 29, 2026 – July 3, 2026
Full Proposal Due Date	August 6, 2026; 11:59PM ET
Review Period	May – September 2026
Awards Announced	November 2026

OVERVIEW

The Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program is soliciting proposals to benefit fish, wildlife, habitat, and water quality in the Great Lakes basin. The program will award grants in 2026 to improve and enhance: 1) stream and riparian habitat to benefit species and improve water quality 2) nature-based infrastructure in the Great Lakes Communities 3) invasive species control to protect restored habitat and 4) activate restored habitats and natural areas. The program is administered by NFWF in partnership with the Caerus Foundation, Cleveland-Cliffs, the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA Forest Service.

GRANT AWARD INFORMATION

Significant program funding is provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a federal program designed to protect, restore, and enhance the Great Lakes ecosystem.

Approximately \$11 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2026. In the past three years, the program has awarded an average of 30 grants per year, representing an application success rate of 23%.





Individual grant awards will range from **\$200,000 to \$1,000,000**.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two to three years (or field seasons) following finalization of a grant agreement. The standard grant period may include up to a fourth year in cases with a demonstrated need for additional time to complete planning, permitting, final design, engineering, implementation, or monitoring. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished; all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The start date indicated in an application should not precede November 10, 2026.

Matching contributions are not required. However, the ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that offer a 1:1 match ratio with contributions from non-federal sources will be more competitive. Applicants are also encouraged to indicate relevant federal contributions to demonstrate the scope of partner investment in the project. Matching contributions must be spent or applied between the start and end dates indicated in the application.

All proposals must specifically address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of program goals. Further information on the program goals can be found in NFWF's [Great Lakes Business Plan](#) and the companion [Great Lakes Digital Business Plan](#). Eligible projects must occur within the United States portion of the Great Lakes basin. In 2026, grant funding will be awarded in the following categories:

1. Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality
2. Nature-Based Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities
3. Invasive Species Control to Protect and Enhance Restored Habitat
4. Activating Restored Habitats and Natural Areas

Category 1: Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality

This category will award projects that improve stream and riparian habitat to benefit priority fish and bird species, including those prioritized in [GLRI Action Plan IV](#) Focus Area 4 (page 38) and state or federally threatened and endangered species, and improve water quality. Funding will be awarded in support of the following habitat and species-based strategies. Applicants are encouraged to align their proposed project with one of the restoration strategies under category 1.

Strategy 1: Stream and Riparian Habitat Restoration to Benefit Species

Applicants proposing projects under the stream and riparian habitat strategy must demonstrate how project activities will deliver measurable benefits to brook trout or lake sturgeon populations. Additionally, projects must communicate the value of selected restoration sites based on existing regional or organizational strategies.

Projects will:

- **Restore aquatic connectivity:** barrier removal, bridge and culvert replacement, and passage structure installation to facilitate movements of brook trout or lake sturgeon

- **Naturalize stream channel configuration:** channel realignment and excavation to restore stream meander, floodplain connections, and other geomorphological processes
- **Improve in-stream habitat:** installation of in-stream structures to improve geomorphological processes and habitat complexity for brook trout or lake sturgeon
- **Improve riparian habitat:** bank stabilization, and native plant restoration along streambanks and floodplain to improve habitat and water quality

Applicants proposing work in streams must demonstrate value of selected stream sites based on existing regional or organizational strategies and indicate anticipated benefit to brook trout or lake sturgeon. Applicants proposing brook trout projects will be asked to utilize and reference the [Brook Trout Conservation Portfolio](#) web tool, created by Trout Unlimited with the support of NFWF, to identify the patch or patches within which habitat restoration or aquatic connectivity work will occur and discuss how the proposed project addresses or was informed by the conservation strategy, population status and/or other insights offered by the tool. In the case of aquatic connectivity proposals, please discuss how the work will improve connectivity between or within patches and the strategic importance of the barriers selected for remediation for brook trout or lake sturgeon.

In addition, applicants proposing aquatic barrier removals are encouraged to use either the Brook Trout Conservation Portfolio web tool and/or the FishWerks tool ([click here](#)) to help describe expected connectivity improvements relative to other potential barrier removal scenarios in the project watershed (see the Consultation with Sea Lamprey Control Program section below for more information pertinent to barrier removals). *Applicants proposing projects to benefit lake sturgeon are encouraged to indicate how the proposed scope of work relates to and builds upon existing lake sturgeon restoration efforts in the watershed, such as a supplementation program or population-based plan.*

Strategy 2: Stream and Riparian Restoration to Improve Water Quality

Applicants proposing projects under the stream restoration to improve water quality strategy must demonstrate how project activities will protect and enhance high quality and/or previously restored stream, wetland, or coastal habitat by improving adjacent or upstream riparian and stream habitat. Projects must propose actions that will primarily improve water quality by conducting restoration actions that reduce inputs of sediment and nutrients, increase protection and reduce degradation of restored or high-quality habitat, and provide meaningful secondary benefits to priority species such as native freshwater mussels, northern pike, migratory birds or other priority species identified by GLRI Action Plan 4, state conservation plans, habitat-based assessments, state or federal threatened and endangered species, etc.

Projects will:

- **Improve riparian and floodplain habitat:** bank stabilization and native plant restoration along streambanks and riparian wetlands and floodplains to improve water quality, protect or enhance high quality or previously restored habitat, and enhance habitat for priority species by reducing runoff of nutrients and sedimentation
- **Naturalize stream channel configuration:** channel realignment and excavation to restore stream meander, floodplain connections, and other geomorphological processes

- **Improve in-stream habitat:** installation of in-stream structures to enhance resilience, reduce flooding, and enhance habitat complexity for fish and other aquatic organisms.

All proposals must select and plan to report on the following required metrics: lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually, lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually, and lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually. Competitive projects must demonstrate how project activities will generate direct benefits to high quality and/or previously restored habitat – particularly if the high-quality habitat is downstream of the project site. Competitive projects will also indicate how proposed activities will address threats posed by a increasingly severe and more frequent storm events and associated impacts to habitat quality habitat and resilience.

Category 2: Nature-based Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities

The nature-based infrastructure (NbS) category will award infrastructure projects that improve stormwater capture and storage to mitigate the impacts of increasingly severe and more frequent storm events, including reducing runoff, combined sewer overflows, basement backups, and flooding through nature-based design. Much of the region is covered in impervious surfaces, and these threats pose significant risks to local communities. NbS projects should utilize natural design elements/nature-based solutions to reduce and treat stormwater where it falls while delivering environmental, social, and community benefits.

Projects must add a minimum of 100,000 gallons of stormwater storage capacity per year and directly benefit Great Lakes water quality. Competitive projects will occur in communities that are in close proximity to or otherwise demonstrate water-quality benefits to the Great Lakes or connecting channels. Preference will be given to projects of sufficient size and scope to significantly reduce runoff into downstream waterbodies (e.g., wetlands) and sewer systems and reduce contaminant discharge to local waterways. Priority will be given to projects that generate multiple benefits – including improving community natural areas and enhancing habitat for priority species. Priority will also be given to projects with strong operation and maintenance plans and established partners or resources allocated to support maintenance activities for a minimum of 10 years post project completion. Funding will primarily support the following three strategies.

- **Create and enhance stormwater wetlands:** create wetlands in or adjacent to communities to slow, store and filter stormwater and reduce flooding while improving habitat. This may include restoring wetland or floodplain hydrology, transitioning alternate land-use (e.g. drain tiles or vacant residential lots) areas to functioning stormwater wetlands, etc.
- **Install nature-based infrastructure:** installation of rain gardens, bioswales, and other nature-based infrastructure solutions to increase stormwater storage, reduce flooding and capture and enhance community natural areas
- **Restore community forests:** strategic planting of diverse native tree species along riparian zones and other flood-prone areas to slow and retain stormwater runoff, sequester carbon, reduce heat-island effects, moderate water temperatures, improve habitat, and increase ecosystem resilience

Competitive proposals will focus the majority of the on-the-ground work on installing and/or maintaining NbS practices that are predominantly vegetative or green, with an emphasis on nature-based solutions. If projects incorporate structural NbS elements, such as pervious pavement, cisterns, subsurface detention, green roofs, etc. these elements will need to compliment NbS practices that focus on natural vegetative solutions, such as rain gardens and should not be proposed as the focus of a project.

All applications must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage capacity added (design retention capacity) and provide a projection for the volume of stormwater runoff captured and infiltrated per year (gallons/year) due to project activities. Applicants proposing urban forestry or tree planting should report on the number of trees planted, planting density (where relevant), and estimate total acres of tree planting. Priority will be given to projects that propose planting a minimum of 500 trees.

Additional preference will be given to projects using native plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for native pollinators and migratory birds. Small, isolated projects (e.g., a single, small parking lot) without a connection to a larger nature-based infrastructure plan or other strategic plan will not be competitive. Projects that are legally required under existing consent decrees or regulations are not eligible for funding.

Applicants are encouraged to use the EPA stormwater calculator tool, found by [clicking here](#), to estimate stormwater retained by nature-based infrastructure projects and/or i-Tree, found by [clicking here](#), to calculate gallons of stormwater treated or intercepted by tree planting projects (utilize a 10-year tree age for measuring stormwater benefits in i-Tree). ***All applicants must include an operation and maintenance plan that details project site operation and management for at least ten (10) years after project completion.*** The plans should describe anticipated actions needed (maintenance schedules and tasks to be completed at scheduled intervals), access to or ownership of equipment needed to maintain project sites, tree maintenance (as relevant), cost estimates, sources of funding to support long-term maintenance plan, long-term partners, parties responsible for implementation and oversight, training needs, and the applicant's and partners' capacity for long-term stewardship of the project site.

Category 3: Invasive Species Control to Protect and Enhance Restored Habitat

The invasive species control category will direct funding to support invasive species control efforts needed to sustain or enhance the benefits of previous habitat restorations. Funding under this strategy will be limited to control efforts focused on terrestrial, coastal, and aquatic invasive plants. Projects should be designed to span a minimum of 3 years or 3 field seasons to increase sustainability and long-term success for retreatment. Proposed projects should be of sufficient size, scope, or unique ecological value to necessitate a strategic re-investment in invasive species control.

Projects proposing invasive control on a small acreage or on multiple isolated sites that lack strategic or geographic connection will not be competitive. Competitive projects must demonstrate how proposed invasive control work directly protects, reinforces, or enhances the value of habitat restoration projects previously funded by the GLRI or SOGL through retreatment. Competitive

projects will advance invasive control activities through a stewardship lens, contextualizing the work proposed for SOGL funding through a discussion of the history of invasive treatment and habitat restoration at the site(s) where re-treatment will occur, how SOGL funding will be utilized to retreat and protect those restored habitats, and ultimately how the work funded by SOGL will lay the foundation for a long-term commitment to stewardship through strategic EDRR and other targeted invasive control activities. Funding will primarily support the following two strategies.

- **Re-treat or manage acres to control invasive species:** retreatment of acres that have received initial treatment to further control primary invasive species target(s) and management of secondary invasives appearing post-initial treatment
- **Expand existing invasive control efforts:** treat or manage invasive species on new/previously untreated acres adjacent or strategically connected to existing control efforts to reduce the threat of future encroachment by invasive species and increase restored habitat quality and scope

All proposals should discuss why the site(s) where re-treatment will occur have been selected, considering the location(s) of projects, strategic purpose and need of the retreatment, and timeliness or need for this retreatment considering both on the ground realities of the habitat and other external factors, such as management responsibilities etc. Where relevant, applicants should identify local or regional plans/strategies that relate to the project and inform project plans and site selection. Projects will not be competitive if they propose: 1) new or untested technologies that have not passed the proof-of-concept phase; 2) exclusive focus on EDRR activities; 3) control of invasive fish or other animals; or 4) one-off efforts to treat new acres that are not connected to previously funded habitat restorations.

All applicants must include a stewardship and/or operation and maintenance plan that details project site operation and management for at least ten (10) years after project completion. The plans should describe anticipated actions needed (maintenance schedules and tasks to be completed at scheduled intervals), access to or ownership of equipment needed to maintain project sites, cost estimates, sources of funding to support long-term maintenance plan, long-term partners, parties responsible for implementation and oversight, training needs, and the applicant's and partners' capacity for long-term stewardship of the project site. If applicable, the plan should also describe long term invasive species management and EDRR protocol if applicable. If the proposed project includes phragmites control, applicants should demonstrate how the project will utilize the Phragmites Adaptive Management Framework (PAMF) to inform control practices and long-term operation and maintenance plans <http://www.greatlakesphragmites.net/pamf/>.

All applicants will be required to provide a description of the original habitat restoration project and associated primary invasive species control measures that will benefit from the proposed invasive species retreatment. This description must include information on the objectives of the original project and whether the completed project met those objectives in terms of acres restored and species or habitats benefitted. The description must also include total funds invested in the restoration (noting specifically GLRI and SOGL funds), and a description of the status of invasive species control and project maintenance. Other useful information includes potential impacts

associated with habitat threats and invasive species control efforts immediately beyond the project perimeter (e.g., invasive species buffer/seed zones that could repopulate invasives).

At the Full Proposal phase, all applications must include a breakdown of the acres of habitat types represented within the project area (e.g. dry mudflat, wet mudflat, shallow open water, etc.; please refer to additional grantee guidance document available by [clicking here](#)) and estimates for how restoration and enhancement activities will impact these habitat type acreages. These pre-condition acres and estimated change in acres/habitat type post-restoration will be used by NFWF to inform energetic accounting models to predict increases in bird use days for priority bird species as a result of restoration actions. If the proposed project includes phragmites control, applicants should demonstrate how the project will utilize the Phragmites Adaptive Management Framework (PAMF) to inform control practices and long-term operation and maintenance plans <http://www.greatlakesphragmites.net/pamf/>.

Funding Category 4: Activating Restored Habitats and Natural Areas

Funding in this category will support grants that activate habitats and natural areas, previously restored by GLRI or NFWF-funded projects, by investing in long-term habitat stewardship, public access, engagement capacity, and programs to help all people get out into nature. Projects should invest in needed on-the-ground stewardship or restoration to maintain habitat quality while also enhancing site access and stewardship capacity. All proposals should describe the rationale or plan for selecting the project location, the original GLRI or NFWF project and its restoration outcomes, the activation elements proposed and identify the user groups that will be served by the project and how they will be meaningfully engaged in the project.

To do this work well, we see long-term sustained commitments to community and municipal engagement as critical. All applicants will be asked to provide, or develop with NFWF funding, a longer-term community and partnership framework that is already a part of the organization or partner org's strategic operations or current priorities (not just project level). Projects should support public-private partnership development – both with partners at the community level and with municipalities to support project sustainability and long-term impact through direct investments such as maintenance.

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

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

accessibility, support a thriving outdoor economy, and remove barriers for all people to get outside and into nature. These can include education opportunities in natural areas, programs and experiences, conservation-oriented workforce development programs, enhancing volunteerism and long-term stewardship of sites, training the next generation of conservationists and nature enthusiasts, increasing use of natural areas through supported activities, events, and programs.

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

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

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Sustain Our Great Lakes program has a list of performance metrics in Easygrants for grantees to choose for reporting (all possible metrics are shown in the table below). All applicants will be required to select and report on metrics to monitor the progress of projects throughout the lifetime of the grant and quantify project impact and outcomes.

Applicants are encouraged to select only the metrics that best reflect the purpose and intended impact of the project. Applicants can select any metric relevant and are not limited to those aligned with the funding category they are applying for. ***Additional guidance to assist applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes is available at www.nfwf.org/greatlakes.*** All grantees should review this document when selecting metrics as part of their Easygrants application.

If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please **contact Aislinn Gauchay**, NFWF Great Lakes Program Director (aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org; 612-564-7284), to discuss acceptable alternatives.

In addition to the performance metrics below, applicants are encouraged to monitor biological outcomes, particularly improvements to brook trout, lake sturgeon, shorebirds, breeding marsh birds, and waterfowl populations.

Each proposal should describe a monitoring plan to measure outcomes and assess the success of the proposed project. At a minimum, the description should: 1) indicate the metrics that will be used to track progress and quantify outcomes; 2) outline the approach for establishing baseline conditions against which post-implementation conditions will be compared; and 3) demonstrate plans and resources for post-implementation monitoring.

Applicants may use grant funding to support monitoring associated with the proposed project. ***Applicants are encouraged to direct approximately 10 percent of the project budget toward this need.*** Some projects may warrant using a larger amount of the project budget for monitoring.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality	Instream restoration - # structures installed	Enter the number of in-stream habitat structures installed, replaced, upgraded or repaired for improvement of in-stream habitat (if stream project). If the project is installing a water level control structure in a wetland context, please indicate in the NOTES.
	Instream restoration - Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored. Miles of stream/channel restored or naturalized, INCLUDE installation of in-stream habitat structures and stream geomorphology restoration activities (impoundment removal, naturalize stream channel, etc.). Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.
	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, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp), and the average width of the riparian buffer.
	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. If multiple barriers exist at one specific location, please list "1" and list each individual barrier in the notes. Provide the barrier name(s) or ID(s) will be removed.
	Fish passage improvements - Miles of stream opened	Enter total # of miles opened to improve aquatic organism passage. Only include the miles of main stem & smaller tributaries connected until the next barrier upstream (or headwaters), but NOT lakes, ponds, or distance downstream from the barrier removed. Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.



Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality	Wetland restoration - Acres restored	Enter # acres of WETLAND (Include acres of invasive species control, native vegetation restoration, and habitat structure/quality improvement, NOT riparian or instream) habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (Marsh, Tidal marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp) and indicate % of vegetation on pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%). This is a footprint metric intended to capture all wetland acres where on-the-ground interventions are occurring. Enter the total number of acres restored. Include acres of invasive species control. Specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species.
	Floodplain restoration - Acres restored	Enter # of floodplain acres restored. In the NOTES, indicate % of vegetation on the pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%) and the dominant vegetation being restored (Broadleaf, Conifer, Redwood, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp).
	Acres with restored hydrology	Enter the total number of wetland acres with restored hydrology (newly accessible habitat).
	Beach habitat quality improvements - Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored. Refers to miles of beach or dune habitat on mainland or on islands to be restored.
	BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Lbs. N avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually. In the NOTES, please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
	Erosion control - Lbs. sediment avoided	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually. In the NOTES, please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
	BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Lbs. P avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of phosphorous prevented from entering system annually. In the NOTES, please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
Expand Nature-Based Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities	*Nature-based Infrastructure - Volume stormwater storage added	Enter the volume (in gallons) of stormwater storage added through nature-based infrastructure improvements.
	Nature-based Infrastructure - sq ft of nature-based infrastructure	Enter the square footage of nature-based infrastructure installed
	Nature-based Infrastructure - # trees planted	Enter the number of trees planted.
	*Required metric BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Lbs. N avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually. In the notes, indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.



	Erosion control - Lbs. sediment avoided	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually
	BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Lbs. P avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of phosphorous prevented from entering system annually. In the notes, indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
Invasive Species Control to Protect and Enhance Restored Habitat	Removal of invasives - Acres restored	Enter # acres of invasives removed. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (see list), desired dominant vegetation (see list), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No).
	Wetland restoration - Acres restored	Enter # acres of non-tidal freshwater WETLAND (not riparian or instream) habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover before restoration (Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp) and % of vegetation on pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%).
	Floodplain restoration - Acres restored	Enter # of floodplain acres restored. In the NOTES, indicate % of vegetation on the pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%) and the dominant vegetation being restored (Broadleaf, Conifer, Redwood, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp).
	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, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp), and the average width of the riparian buffer.
Additional Metrics (all funding categories encouraged to incorporate these metrics)	Economic benefits - # jobs created	Enter the # of individuals hired to directly work on the project (non-volunteers). Jobs should be directly engaged in grant activities, funded by the grant, and shouldn't have existed prior to the grant. In the notes, provide the FTE for the jobs created.
	Economic benefits - # jobs sustained	Enter the # of paid jobs that are partially or fully sustained through this grant. Jobs should have existed prior to the grant, be funded by the grant, and be directly engaged in project activities. The starting value for this metric should be zero.
	Access pts developed/improved	Enter the number of public access points created or improved to enable activation and use of natural areas/habitats.
	Acres of natural areas	Enter the number of acres of neighborhood natural areas created or improved.
	Outreach/ technical assistance - # people reached	Enter the number of people reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities.
	Volunteer participation - # of volunteer hours	Enter the # of volunteer hours in this project.



ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and for-profit businesses.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- 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 existing baseline compliance efforts.
- **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.
- Pursuant to the American Security Drone Act (ASDA), effective December 22, 2025, applicants proposing activities funded in whole or in part with federal funds may not use, operate, or purchase any drone or uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) included on the Covered Foreign Entities (CFE) List. This prohibition applies to both new purchases and continued use of existing UAS, including certain widely used commercial platforms, such as DJI and Autel. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all proposed and existing UAS used in connection with federally funded activities comply with applicable federal law and are not included on the CFE List. Noncompliance may affect eligibility for funding.

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

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 diversity 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.



CONSULTATION WITH SEA LAMPREY CONTROL PROGRAM

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) works in partnership with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to implement the Sea Lamprey Control Program (Program) in the Great Lakes. To help avoid adverse impacts related to sea lamprey passage, *applicants proposing removal or modification of aquatic barriers must include concurrence documentation from the Sea Lamprey Control Program or an indication that consultation with the Program has begun with the pre-proposal. Applicants must include concurrence documentation that proposed barriers have been reviewed and approved by the Program with the Full Proposal.* Project proposals and any other comments or questions regarding sea lamprey barriers can be directed to the Sea Lamprey Barrier Program (Kevin Mann: kevin_mann@fws.gov; Matt Symbal: matthew_symbal@fws.gov).

OTHER

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 grant activities. 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 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.

Aislinn Gauchay
Program Director, Great Lakes
612-564-7284
Aislinn.Gauchay@nfwf.org

Traci Giefer
Senior Program Manager, Great Lakes
612-564-7296
Traci.Giefer@nfwf.org



For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org

Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.

Include: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.