

SUSTAIN OUR GREAT LAKES

2017 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Tuesday, February 21, 2017 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**
(The pre-proposal stage included in past years has been eliminated for 2017)

OVERVIEW

The Sustain Our Great Lakes program is soliciting proposals to improve habitat and water quality in the Great Lakes basin. The program will award grants for: 1) stream habitat improvements; 2) coastal wetland habitat improvements; and 3) green storm water infrastructure in Great Lakes shoreline cities. Up to \$7.8 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2017. The program is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in partnership with ArcelorMittal, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Significant program funding is provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a federal program designed to protect, restore and enhance the Great Lakes ecosystem.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur in the current or historic Great Lakes basin. Most of the available funding will be directed to projects in the United States. Approximately \$100,000–200,000 may be directed to projects in Canada. Within Canada, preference will be given to projects in the western Lake Ontario region, particularly near Hamilton, Ontario.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

In 2017, grant funding will be awarded in three categories:

- Streams
- Coastal Wetlands
- Green Storm Water Infrastructure



Funding Category 1: Streams

This category will direct an estimated \$2–3 million to projects that improve the quality and connectivity of stream and riparian habitat. Preference will be given to projects designed to improve populations of species of conservation concern, with an emphasis on brook trout and lake sturgeon. Preference will also be given to projects that reduce sediment and nutrient loading to streams and other waters. Funding will primarily support the following four strategies.

- **Restore aquatic connectivity:** dam removal, bridge and culvert replacement, and fish passage structure installation to facilitate movements of fish and other aquatic organisms
- **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 fish and other aquatic organisms
- **Improve riparian habitat:** bank stabilization, invasive species control, and native plant restoration along streambanks and riparian wetlands to improve habitat and water quality

Applicants proposing work in coldwater streams are encouraged to align projects with the priority stream catchments visible by [clicking here](#). In addition, applicants proposing aquatic barrier removals are encouraged to use 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)

Funding Category 2: Coastal Wetlands

This category will direct an estimated \$3–4 million to projects that improve the quality and connectivity of coastal wetlands (defined as existing or historical wetlands with a current, previous or potential surface or subsurface hydrologic connection to a Great Lake or connecting channel such that wetland water levels are influenced by Great Lakes water levels). **Priority will be given to wetlands (on non-federal lands) monitored by the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program. More information on priority wetlands can be found by [clicking here](#).** Additional preference will be given to projects designed to improve populations of species of conservation concern, with an emphasis on shorebirds, waterfowl, and marsh-spawning fish such as northern pike. Funding will primarily support the following three strategies.

- **Restore aquatic connectivity:** installation of passage structures, and removal of sediment and hard structures to improve hydrology and access by fish and other aquatic organisms
- **Improve hydrology:** water control techniques to manage water levels, control invasive vegetation, and restore habitat for target species
- **Improve habitat structure:** invasive species control and native plant restoration to improve hydrology and habitat complexity

As applicable, applicants are encouraged to use new coastal wetland decision support tools (e.g., for [Saginaw Bay/western Lake Erie](#), [Green Bay](#)) and wetland restoration assessment decision support tools for projects located in the [Saginaw Bay/western Lake Erie](#) geography to help plan and demonstrate the value of proposed projects.

Funding Category 3: Green Storm Water Infrastructure

This category will direct an estimated \$1–2 million to green infrastructure projects that slow, store and filter storm water. **Priority will be given to green infrastructure projects in shoreline cities that reduce more than 100,000 gallons per year of untreated urban runoff and demonstrate water quality benefits to the Great Lakes.** (Applicants planning green storm water infrastructure work in the Chicago and Calumet regions are encouraged to apply to the [Chi-Cal Rivers Fund](#) during summer 2017.) Competitive projects will occur in close proximity 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 sewer systems and contaminant discharge to local waterways. Small, isolated projects (e.g., a single, small parking lot) without a connection to a larger green infrastructure plan or other forestry plan will not be competitive. Projects that are legally required under existing consent decrees or regulations are not eligible for funding. Additional preference will be given to projects using native plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for native pollinators and diversify the urban canopy. Funding will primarily support the following three strategies.

- **Install green infrastructure:** installation of rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, pervious surfaces, and other green infrastructure solutions to increase storm water storage and capture
- **Create and enhance urban wetlands:** construction/improvement of wetlands in urban areas to slow, store and filter storm water while improving habitat
- **Restore urban forests:** strategic planting of diverse native tree species along riparian zones and other flood-prone areas to slow and retain storm water runoff, moderate water temperatures, improve habitat, and increase ecosystem resiliency

All applications must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of storm water storage added. Applicants are encouraged to use the EPA storm water calculator tool, found by [clicking here](#), to estimate storm water to be retained by green infrastructure projects and/or i-Tree, found by [clicking here](#), to calculate gallons of storm water to be treated or intercepted by tree planting projects.

METRICS AND MONITORING

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). 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 target fish, shorebird and waterfowl populations. For information on the type of monitoring data requested by the Sustain Our Great Lakes program and for guidance on how to incorporate biological monitoring into a proposal, please **contact Aislinn Gauchay** using the preceding contact information.

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.

| Funding Category | Recommended Metrics |
|--|--|
| <i>Stream and Riparian Habitat</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miles of in-stream habitat restored • Miles of riparian habitat restored • Acres of riparian habitat restored • # passage barriers rectified • Miles of stream opened • Lbs of phosphorus inputs avoided annually • Lbs of sediment inputs avoided annually |
| <i>Coastal Wetlands</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acres of wetland habitat restored • # passage barriers rectified • Acres of wetland habitat opened • # structures installed |
| <i>Green Storm Water Infrastructure</i> <i>*Required metric</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Gallons of storm water runoff reduced annually (as estimated by the EPA storm water calculator tool or i-Tree) • Square feet of impervious surface retrofitted with green infrastructure • Square feet of bioretention installed • Square feet of green roof installed • Number of trees planted (single stem; not multi-stem shrubs) |

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

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

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- Grant funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- Grant 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.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

Up to \$7.8 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2017. Individual grant awards will range from **\$50,000 to \$1,500,000**. In the past three years, the program has awarded an average of 23 grants per year, representing an application success rate of 21%.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two years following finalization of a grant agreement. The grant period may include a third 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 May 11, 2017.

The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio will be more competitive. Matching contributions must be spent or applied between the start and end dates indicated in the application.

Matching contributions may include cash, in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. The cost of land acquisition or easement may also qualify as leverage for a project involving work at the protected site. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found by [clicking here](#).

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with organizational and funding source policies. The Sustain Our Great Lakes advisory team and a panel of state and provincial reviewers will use the following criteria as a strong basis for project selections. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types and grant size.

Conservation Merit

- **Program goals and priorities:** Project aligns with program goals and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the funding categories.
- **Context:** Project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. Project references documentation to support stated alignment with state or federal priorities (embedded links to referenced documents are encouraged).
- **Technical merit:** Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design and implementation.
- **Scale:** At a minimum, project will improve habitat on the order of tens of acres or hundreds of stream feet and/or add storm water storage on the order of hundreds of thousands of gallons.
- **Resilience:** Project will increase habitat resilience within the context of increased stress from a changing climate and other associated threats.
- **Species of conservation concern:** Habitat projects will benefit species of conservation concern, with a focus on brook trout, lake sturgeon, northern pike, shorebirds and waterfowl.
- **Efficacy of invasive species control:** Proposals for invasive species control demonstrate how: 1) the work relates to a comprehensive restoration plan; 2) native vegetation will be re-established, as appropriate; and 3) the project outcomes will be sustained through time.

Project Costs

- **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 ([OMB Uniform Guidance](#)).
- **Matching contributions:** Project offers matching contributions that will enhance and leverage the impact of a grant award. Projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio will be more competitive. Matching contributions are to be spent/applied between the start and end dates specified in the application.

Qualifications

- **Past success:** Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing relevant practices with specific, measurable results.
- **Partnerships:** Appropriate partnerships exist to implement the project and the project is supported by strong local partnerships that leverage additional funds and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Identify proposed partners, if known (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant), the roles they will play in implementing the project, and how this project will build new or enhance existing partnerships. (Note: a project partner is any local community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state, and federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in the completion of the project.)

Implementation

- **On-the-ground implementation:** Project will apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work, with the option of using the remaining funds for planning, permitting, final design, engineering, monitoring, outreach or education.
- **Timeliness:** Project has commenced planning, design and engineering to the extent that on-the-ground implementation can begin shortly after the grant is awarded.

Evaluation and Maintenance

- **Monitoring:** Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and address new challenges and opportunities.
- **Long-term sustainability:** Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time; proposal includes description of required maintenance activities, estimated maintenance costs, a list of long-term partners, and parties responsible for implementation and oversight, and plans to secure resources for long-term maintenance.

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. The Program uses multiple control methods to reduce sea lamprey populations in Great Lakes tributaries including barriers, dams and other existing structures that block spawning-phase sea lampreys from spawning and larval habitat. Annually, the Service inspects structures across the Great Lakes to determine their potential for preventing sea lampreys from migrating upstream. That information is maintained in a database and can be viewed using the [Great Lakes Fishery Commission Barrier Mapping Tool](#). The Service uses the database information to determine impacts to the Program when a structure (barrier, culvert, embankment, dike, water control structure, etc.) is proposed for removal or modification. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission requests that any removal or modification project proposed in the Great Lakes basin be reviewed by Program staff during the project planning process. 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.*** Project proposals and any other comments or questions regarding sea lamprey barriers can be directed to the Sea Lamprey Barrier Coordinator (Pete Hrodey: pete_hrodey@fws.gov).

OTHER

Grants may be supported with funding from multiple sources, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

Federal funding requirements: Projects selected to receive Federal funding may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, and 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 time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. Federally-funded projects must operate in compliance with the [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable to the applicant.

Quality assurance: If a project involves significant monitoring, data collection or data use, grantees will be asked to prepare and submit quality assurance documentation (www.epa.gov/quality/gapps.html). Applicants should budget time and resources to complete this task.

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.

Procurement: If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not necessarily constitute NFWF's express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF 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.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the [Sustain Our Great Lakes website](#) for the most current dates and information.

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|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ✓ Grant Application Webinar | January 10, 11:00 AM Eastern Time |
| ✓ Full Proposal Due Date | February 21, 11:59 PM Eastern Time |
| ✓ Review and Approval Period | February 22–May 10 |
| ✓ Awards Announced | ≥ May 11 |

WEBINARS

Sustain Our Great Lakes partners will host the following webinar to share additional information pertinent to this funding opportunity.

- **2017 Funding Opportunity – Guidance for Applicants**
January 10, 2017 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time/10:00 AM Central Time
This webinar will provide additional information on the current funding opportunity, provide additional guidance on the application process, and provide answers to participant questions. Webinar participants can **register** by [clicking here](#).

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.
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 by [clicking 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:

Aislinn Gauchay, NFWF Great Lakes Program Director (aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org; 612-564-7284)

Traci Giefer, NFWF Great Lakes Program Manager (traci.giefer@nfwf.org; 612-564-7296)

For assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact the Easygrants Helpdesk:

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org; Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM ET, Monday–Friday

Provide: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, grant program name, and a description of the issue.