



NEW ENGLAND FORESTS AND RIVERS FUND

2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Monday, April 12, 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time**

Applicant Webinar: **Thursday, March 11, 2021 [Register Now!](#)**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals for the New England Forests and Rivers Fund (NEFRF) to restore and sustain healthy forests and rivers that provide habitat for diverse bird populations, as well as freshwater and diadromous fish populations. The program will advance this goal by investing in projects that:

- Strengthen the health of forest systems by improving the management of public and private forestlands to create a mosaic of mixed-age forests in the region;
- Provide incentives to strengthen habitat conservation on working forests through flexible technical assistance that is appropriate for the forest stage(s) being targeted;
- Improve the quality of river and stream systems through targeted riparian and stream restoration;
- Reduce barriers to fish passage and increase fish access to high quality habitat; and
- Enhance biodiversity of forest and river systems and increase populations of species representative of system health

Approximately \$1.5 million is available this year. Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Avangrid Foundation.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects from *throughout* Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont are invited, as well as projects within the Lake Champlain and Upper Hudson watersheds in New York. See the map "2021 RFP Map" or visit <http://arcg.is/XGaeH> to view the map in more detail.

NOTE: Applicants seeking funding for fish passage projects in Connecticut and/or water quality projects in the Long Island Sound watershed are encouraged to also consider applying to the Long Island Sound Futures Fund ([LISFF](#)). Proposals to the LISFF must demonstrate and calculate prevention or reductions in nitrogen loading.

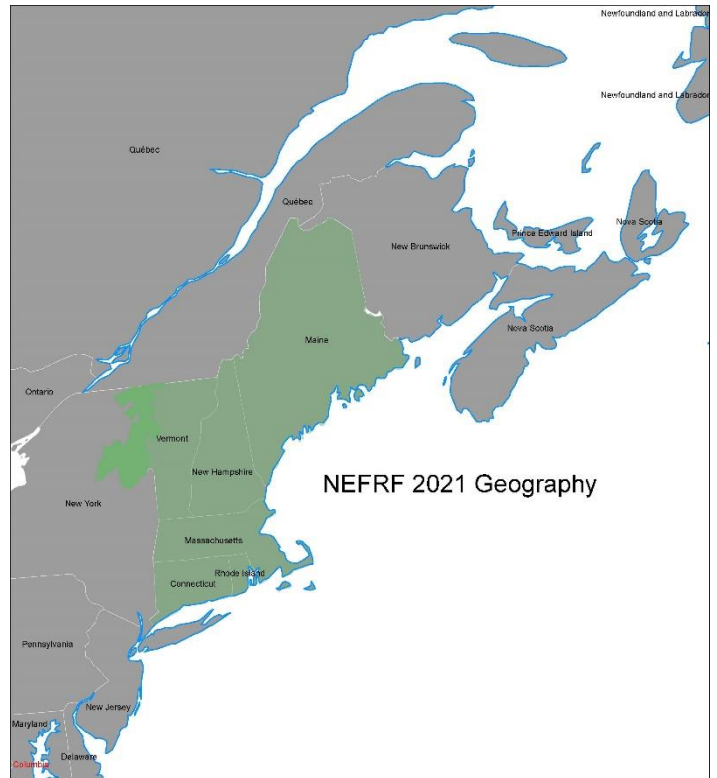
PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Priority will be given to projects that address at least one of the following strategies.

1. Restore and Manage Forest Blocks

NFWF will invest in the management of forest blocks to enhance age and structural diversity that demonstrates improved forest conditions for native bird species.

- **Assessment/Planning:** Provide forest management decision support tools that encourage landscape level planning to manage for an appropriate mix of age and structural diversity that is adaptable to meeting the needs and interests of public and private landowners at the parcel and forest block scale.
- **Forest Block Restoration:** Implement forest management projects that use a range of forest management practices and prescriptions to create a diversity of age and structure across contiguous forest blocks of at least 5,000 acres. Projects that engage landowners with a range of property sizes and interests are strongly encouraged, including public lands, family-owned woodlands, commercial forests, utility rights-of-way, etc. Project success should be measured by occupancy of target species, as well as acres under improved management for different forest age classes. Target species for early successional forest may include New England cottontail, American woodcock and golden-winged warbler. For mature and late successional forest, target species may include wood thrush, Canada warbler, bay-breasted warbler, black-throated blue warbler and northern long-eared bat. Projects are encouraged to use signage and other outreach methods to raise community awareness and support for the project's goals.
- **Pollinator Habitat:** Work with large public and private landowners to adopt pollinator-friendly practices, and create pollinator habitat on un-managed or under-utilized lands, including utility and transportation rights-of-way corridors. Projects may target specific species of bees, hummingbirds and butterflies (e.g., Karner blue and monarch butterflies).



- **Outreach and Technical Assistance:** Execute innovative outreach and marketing strategies to engage target audiences (e.g., family woodland owners, consulting foresters, loggers), in adopting forest management practices that enhance habitat conditions. Proposals should clearly describe how relationships with willing landowners will be managed, and by whom, in order to ensure landowners receive ongoing support for planning, financing and transition to on-the-ground implementation.

2. Healthy River Systems

NFWF will invest in projects that strive to restore river function, water quality, and enhance the long-term persistence of native aquatic species including eastern brook trout and diadromous fishes. For eastern brook trout-focused work, projects that reconnect and seek to expand existing allopatric brook trout populations will be considered highest priority.

- **Restore Connectivity:** Remove or replace under-sized or perched culverts and small dams that are barriers to fish passage and/or result in artificial impoundments and higher water temperatures in order to connect native fish to key spawning, rearing, and refuge habitats. Projects should include a monitoring plan to assess changes in run counts as a result of passage improvements for diadromous fish. Projects may support on-the-ground restoration and stream barrier surveys to determine priorities for future connectivity restoration. Projects are encouraged to demonstrate the benefits of aquatic connectivity projects to multiple species, as well as human communities (i.e., by reducing the risk of flooding and other infrastructure failures).
- **Restore Riparian Habitat, In-stream Habitat, and Water Quality:** Replant riparian areas with native vegetation to reduce stream temperature, improve water quality and enhance reciprocal exchanges between aquatic-terrestrial habitats. Projects should seek to increase coordination between forest management and stream habitat restoration to enhance habitat complexity through large wood additions and improving wood recruitment through upland and riparian forest restoration. Projects may also implement water quality improvement practices that reduce polluted runoff and/or soil erosion.
- **Provide Outreach and Technical Assistance:** Provide outreach and technical assistance to engage private landowners and local governments in restoration and conservation on their lands. Technical assistance may include design, permitting, oversight and geophysical investigations for: dam removals, streambank restorations, stream channel restorations, riparian buffer restorations, stream habitat enhancements, and fish passage solutions (e.g., culvert replacements, abutments, bridges).

Where appropriate, leverage funding through the Farm Bill to renew or enter into new cost-share contracts to restore and protect riparian buffers and wetlands on agricultural lands. Projects should identify imbalances in sign-up and available cost-share, and use grant funding to meet excess demand or to generate new demand, as needed. Proposals that seek to extend term easements into perpetual easements are encouraged.

Increase coordination across agencies and organizations and improve delivery of landowner technical assistance, as well as target outreach to private lands adjacent to or in close proximity to established heritage brook trout populations.

Provide training opportunities to restoration practitioners, municipalities, and agencies to disseminate state-of-the-art stream connectivity techniques, such as the US Forest Service’s Stream Simulation method and train practitioners on the installation of large woody material and log jams. Refer to the following for more information: [USFS Stream Simulation Method](#)

- **Conduct Native Trout Inventory and Assessments:** Conduct assessments to determine trout population status for rivers of the Northeast where eastern brook trout presence is qualitative or unknown.

3. Healthy Forests and Rivers

The health of forest and river systems is inextricably linked. Innovative projects that demonstrate the connection between these ecosystems are encouraged. For example,

- Demonstrate forest management prescriptions that minimize impacts on water through timing and site selection, and that maximize habitat benefits for both aquatic and upland species;
- Demonstrate synergistic restoration opportunities that use wood products from forest management activities to provide in-stream habitat structure; and
- Target opportunities to restore forested riparian and wetland buffers to maximize habitat benefits for both aquatic species (e.g., eastern brook trout, river herring) and riparian dwelling birds (e.g., Louisiana waterthrush, rusty blackbird).

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the *New England Forests and Rivers Fund* has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for future reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact john.wright@nfwf.org to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Program Priority		Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Restore and Manage Forest Blocks	Assessment/Planning	NEFR - Tool development for decision-making - # tools developed	Enter the number of forest management decision support tools that encourage landscape level planning to manage for an appropriate mix of age and structural diversity.
	Forest Block Restoration	NEFR - Improved management practices - Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres treated to create improved forest habitat. In NOTES section, indicate successional stage and any

			species that are specifically targeted by the project.	
	Provide Outreach and Technical Assistance	NEFR - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # of conservation demonstration sites	Indicate the number of demonstration areas created.	
		NEFR - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people reached	Enter the number of landowners who respond to outreach by requesting information, inquiring about how to get assistance, signing up for a workshop, etc. In NOTES section indicate the number of acres owned by the landowners reached.	
		NEFR - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people with changed behavior	Enter number of landowners who demonstrated changed behavior by applying land management recommendations from a professional	
Restore Healthy River Systems	Restore Connectivity	NEFR - Fish passage improvements - # passage barriers rectified	Enter the number of fish passage barriers rectified. In NOTES section, indicate any species that are specifically targeted by the project	
		NEFR – Fish passage improvements - # miles of stream opened	Enter the number of miles of stream opened. In NOTES section, indicate any species that are specifically targeted by the project	
		NEFR - Fish passage improvements - Acres of lake habitat opened	Enter the number of acres of lake/pond habitat opened. In NOTES section, indicate any species that are specifically targeted by the project.	
	Restore Riparian Habitat, In-stream Habitat, and Water Quality		NEFR - # of trees planted	Enter the number of trees planted. In the NOTES section state the density ((trees per acre) and expected mortality (%))
			NEFR - BMP implementation for road improvements - Miles of road improved	Enter the number of miles of road improved
			NEFR - BMP implementation for livestock fencing - Miles of fencing installed	Enter the number of miles of fencing installed
			NEFR - Riparian restoration - Miles restored	Enter the number of miles of riparian forest restored. In NOTES section, indicate any species that are specifically targeted by the project.
			NEFR - Instream restoration - Miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored in-stream (changes to stream channel such as raising/lowering the stream bed, changes in direction of stream flow, grading of stream banks, and adding in-stream structures such as woody debris). In NOTES section, indicate

			any species that are specifically targeted by the project.
	Provide Outreach and Technical Assistance	NEFR – Number of people reached	Enter the number of landowners and/or land managers who respond to outreach by requesting information, inquiring about how to get assistance, signing up for a workshop, etc.
		NEFR – Number of people with changed behavior. Number of landowners receiving land management recommendations from a professional.	Enter the number of landowners and/or land managers who demonstrated changed behavior by applying land management recommendations from a professional.
	Conduct Native Trout Inventory and Assessments	NEFR - Eastern Brook Trout - Research - # sites assessed	Enter the number of eastern brook trout population patches being assessed
	Monitor Native Trout and River Herring	NEFR - Monitoring - Miles being monitored	Enter the number of miles being monitored for eastern brook trout and/or river herring. In NOTES section, indicate whether it is eastern brook trout and/or river herring that is specifically monitored by the project
Restore Healthy Rivers and Forests	Habitat improvement projects	NEFR - Number of habitat units improved	
		NEFR - # trees planted	Enter the number of trees planted. In NOTES section state the density ((trees per acre) and expected mortality (%))
		NEFR - Acres occupied by the species	
		NEFR - Miles of habitat occupied by species	
	Wildlife population monitoring	NEFR - Acres monitored	In NOTES section, indicate the species being monitored.
Other Activities	Engaging volunteers in restoration activities	NEFR – Volunteer Participation -# volunteers participating	Enter the number of volunteers participating in projects
	Research	NEFR - # studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management/ inform management decisions	Enter # studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management/ inform management decisions

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 U.S. Federal government agencies, businesses, unincorporated individuals and international organizations.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- **Equipment:** Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible and cost-effective or use matching funds to make those purchases. NFWF acknowledges, however, that some projects may only be completed using NFWF funds to procure equipment. If this applies to your project, please contact the program staff listed in this RFP to discuss options.
- Federal funds and matching contributions may not be used to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems (including entering into or renewing a contract) that uses telecommunications equipment or services produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities) as a substantial or essential component, or as critical technology of any system. Refer to Public Law 115-232, section 889 for additional information.
- NFWF funds 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 upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

The New England Forests and Rivers Fund will award up to approximately \$1.5 million in grants this year. Grant requests must range from \$50,000 to \$200,000. Requests above or below that range will not be considered for funding. The program awards approximately 12 to 15 grants per year. Projects should begin within six months of the award date and be completed within three years of the agreed start date. These grants strongly encourage non-federal matching contributions valued at 50% or more of the total project costs (1:1 ratio).

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.

Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the Program’s overall habitat and species conservation goals, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities.

Technical Merit and Work Plan – 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 to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible.

Cost-Effectiveness – Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation may include, but is not limited to, an assessment of either or both direct and indirect costs in the proposed budget. The federal government has determined that a *de minimis* 10% indirect rate is an acceptable minimum for organizations without a NICRA, as such NFWF reserves the right to scrutinize **ALL** proposals with indirect rates above 10% for cost-effectiveness.

Monitoring – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

Long-term Sustainability – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This should include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

OTHER

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 non-federal cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent 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.

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 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.

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

Federal Funding – The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is 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 [New England Forests and Rivers Fund](#).

Applicant Webinar Register now!	Thursday, March 11, 2020 at 10:30 AM-12:00 PM EST
Full Proposal Due Date	Monday, April 12, 2021 by 11:59 PM EDT
Review Period	May through July
Awards Announced	Mid-August

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.

For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:
John.wright@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.