



## 2023 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar ([Register Here](#)): Thursday, January 19, 2023, 2:00 – 3:30 PM Eastern Time  
Pre-Proposal Due Date: Tuesday, February 14, 2023 by 11:59 PM ET  
Full Proposal Due Date: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 by 11:59 PM ET

### 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 up to \$18.7 million in grants in 2023 to improve and enhance: 1) stream, riparian and coastal habitats to benefit species; 2) water quality in the Great Lakes and its tributaries. The program is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in partnership with the Caerus Foundation, Cleveland-Cliffs, General Mills, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. 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.

### PROGRAM PRIORITIES

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](#). In 2023, grant funding will be awarded in four categories:

1. Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality
2. Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities
3. Invasive Species Control to Protect and Enhance Restored Habitat
4. Conservation Practices and Regenerative Agriculture on Working Lands

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

This category will direct up to \$4.9 million to projects that improve stream, riparian and coastal habitat to benefit priority fish and bird species, including those prioritized in [GLRI Action Plan III](#) Focus Area 4 (page 25) 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 three restoration strategies under category 1 unless the project is large in scope and will deliver significant outcomes to benefit more than one target species or species group.

#### ***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. *Approximately 32% of overall funding available for the Habitat and Species category will be awarded to support this strategy.* 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.

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. *Approximately 51% of overall funding available for the Habitat and Species category will be awarded to support this strategy.* 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

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 climate change related threats and associated impacts to habitat quality habitat and resilience.

### **Strategy 3: Coastal Habitat Restoration**

Applicants proposing projects under the coastal habitat strategy must demonstrate how project activities will deliver measurable benefit to migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, breeding marsh birds or marsh-spawning fish. *Approximately 17% of overall funding available for the Habitat and Species category will be awarded to support this strategy.* Projects will:

- **Improve coastal habitat structure:** restoration actions aimed at improving habitat function and quality to benefit shorebirds, waterfowl and/or breeding marsh birds. Projects should prioritize using native plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for native pollinators and migratory birds
  - **Invasive species control:** Invasive species control activities, particularly EDRR, initial treatments and subsequent retreatments, are eligible for funding in this category. Invasive species control must be included as a component of broader habitat restoration activities proposed. Applicants must demonstrate that proposed invasive control activities are necessary to ensure the success of the broader habitat restoration effort requesting funding. If the majority of project activities and budget are directed toward species control, see funding category 3.
- **Restore coastal aquatic connectivity and hydrology:** restoration actions that improve hydrological connectivity between Great Lakes waters and adjacent wetlands/streams including installation of passage structures, or removal of sediment and hard structures to improve access by fish and suitable habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl and breeding marsh birds

Projects proposing funding under this strategy will support the conservation and restoration of coastal habitats including but not limited to coastal wetlands, islands, dune and swale habitats and shoreline habitats. Projects that request funds to implement Farm-Bill and/or on-farm conservation practices, install or maintain jetties, breakwalls or other grey infrastructure will not be considered for funding. Projects may include species-specific management or monitoring actions, such as nesting platforms or exclusion fencing, but these actions must be incorporated into a broader restoration project as one component of the proposed grant request.

Priority will be given to projects that have been planned, designed or informed by shorebird, waterfowl and/or breeding marsh bird monitoring efforts including but not limited to applicant or partner monitoring, [International Shorebird Survey](#), [Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program](#), [Audubon Great Lakes' Marsh Bird Data Hub](#), etc. Applicants are encouraged to refer to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's [GLRI Migratory Bird Avian Radar Project](#) website and utilize

the Great Lakes Airspace Decision Support Tool to facilitate conservation of migratory bird stopover habitat along Great Lakes shorelines.

*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 data 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/>.

### **Category 2: Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities**

The green stormwater infrastructure category will direct up to \$9.5 million to green infrastructure projects that slow, store and filter stormwater. ***Priority will be given to green infrastructure projects that add more than 100,000 gallons of stormwater storage capacity per year and directly benefit Great Lakes water quality.*** A portion of available funding will be awarded to projects in the Great Lakes watershed of western New York, specifically the following counties: Allegany, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming.

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 directly engaging underserved communities, improving community greenspace, enhancing habitat for priority species and addressing the impact of climate change. 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 5 years post project completion. Funding will primarily support the following three strategies.

- **Create and enhance stormwater wetlands:** construction of wetlands in communities to slow, store and filter stormwater and reduce flooding while improving habitat
- **Install green infrastructure:** installation of rain gardens, bioswales, pervious surfaces, and other green infrastructure solutions to increase stormwater storage, reduce flooding and capture and enhance community green space
- **Restore urban and 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

***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 to plant 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 green 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 green 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 five (5) 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 up to \$3 million 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. 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

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 (EDRR activities may be incorporated into projects proposed under funding categories 1 and 2; 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. Projects that focus on initial invasive species control treatments only, on sites where habitat restoration has not yet occurred, or on a combination of habitat restoration and invasive control should apply via funding categories 1 or 2.

***All applicants must include a stewardship and/or operation and maintenance plan*** that details project site operation and management for at least five (5) 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 that will benefit from the proposed invasive species control activities.*** 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 current 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/>.

#### **Category 4: Conservation Practices and Regenerative Agriculture on Working Lands**

This category will direct up to \$1.3 million in funding to projects that improve water quality, soil health, biodiversity and working land resilience by providing technical assistance to landowners with a focus on accelerating the planning and adoption of regenerative agriculture (RA) principles. RA is a systems-approach to farming and ranching that integrates multiple principles of agricultural

management for improving ecosystem function and resilience (such as): 1) minimize chronic disturbances to the soil and biological community, 2) improve habitat and water quality to optimize diversity and/or use of working land-adjacent habitat for native plants and animals, 3) keep the soil covered, and 4) keep a living root in the ground at all times.

Grant funding will be used to hire field conservation professionals who will 1) work directly with landowners to develop and implement stewardship actions that generate multiple benefits for ecological services, habitat, diversity and inclusion and climate resilience through a systems approach to implementation of regenerative agriculture practice benefits and 2) work closely with relevant NRCS offices to implement contracted farm bill practices, reduce the backlog and decrease the time producers wait to implement farm bill practices after signing up.

Projects should be designed to offer technical assistance that is adaptable to each producer's unique goals, experience, tolerance to risk, and other factors that affect their path to a regenerative system. Competitive projects will prioritize designing projects that generate multiple benefits, with a special emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion. Applicants are encouraged to engage organizations and producers in one or more of the NRCS' [Historically Underserved](#) and [Special Emphasis](#) categories. Applicants are encouraged to use the metrics notes fields to indicate the extent that the overall values for the # jobs and # people metrics are expected to include people in the Historically Underserved/Special Emphasis categories.

Competitive proposals will encourage and support landowners in developing and advancing a comprehensive holistic approach to managing working lands that build back soil productivity and function and enhance the ecosystem. Competitive projects will facilitate programs that help farmers and producers at all stages of regenerative agriculture practice adoption and help them remove barriers to accelerating their regenerative agriculture objectives and initiating systems of practices throughout their lands. Competitive projects will also increase enrollment in and implementation (focusing on accelerating implementation of previously contracted practices) of Farm Bill practices.

Priority actions for technical assistance throughout the Great Lakes region include:

- **Improve Soil Health, Water Quality and Biodiversity:** provide technical assistance to landowners to strategically apply soil health and RA conservation practices, such as the use of cover crops in crop rotation, construction of on-farm riparian buffers and wetlands, drainage and tillage practices to reduce sediment and phosphorous losses and improve fish and wildlife habitat
- **Engage Landowners in Conservation and Regenerative Agriculture Planning and Peer to Peer Learning:** coordination of outreach and implementation of conservation systems and RA principles on agricultural land and adjacent riparian and buffer lands. Outreach and convening of farmer-led groups to engage in peer-to-peer learning, discussion and conservation planning (nutrient management plans, forest stewardship plans, etc.) to advance regional knowledge and adoption of RA principles.
- **Reduce Farm Bill Practice Contracting and Implementation Backlog:** coordinate with NRCS to accelerate the implementation of and completion of previously contracted Farm Bill practices and decrease the time enrolled and interested producers wait between Farm Bill enrollment to implementation.

At least \$800,000 of the funding available in this category will be directed to projects working to engage growers and support conventional and organic dairies in Michigan's lower peninsula, the Lake Michigan watershed of Indiana and the western Lake Erie watershed of Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. Proposals working in the "thumb" of Michigan are encouraged to propose technical assistance strategies incorporating small grain producers.

Priority will be given to projects recommending comprehensive technical assistance approaches that focus on a given geography (e.g., watershed, county(ies), region, etc.) or focus on a specific type of producer, such as dairies. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate plans to engage conventional and organic dairies and corn producers and equip agricultural producers with information and data management capabilities to access ecosystem service markets to compliment comprehensive technical assistance strategies. Additionally, priority will be given to applicants that build upon established relationships with landowners through previous local work, incorporate partnerships with local entities and/or connect to demonstration farms or other efforts that align with regenerative agriculture priorities in the region.

***All applications must report anticipated outcomes in terms of acres with best management practices (BMPs) applied to reduce nutrient or sediment loads (this encompasses RA principles or any meaningful on or off farm action to improve soil health, water quality and/or biodiversity) pounds of sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus inputs avoided annually, number of farm bill practices implemented, number of producers/farmers engaged, demographic information on producers engaged, and producers who implement practices as the result of TA (see required metrics indicated in the metrics table below).*** Where relevant, applicants should indicate how proposed grant activities will produce water quality outcomes that are consistent with state reporting of TMDL, watershed impairment and EPA 9 key element plans.

As part of interim and final performance reporting, grant recipients may be required to submit additional field-level implementation data using a template to be provided by NFWF. NFWF may use this information, as well as information in the proposal's Easygrants metrics, to estimate and track anticipated and actual project outcomes in terms of carbon and water benefits. These benefits will not be used as carbon or water credits, but rather for narrative purposes and demonstration of the values provided by various projects and conservation practices. Applicants are encouraged to use the metrics notes fields to indicate the extent that the overall values for the # people and # jobs metrics are expected to include people in the Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.

All applicants are encouraged to coordinate with the relevant NRCS State Conservationists during the pre-proposal development phase to socialize the project concept. If SOGL funds are being requested to support landowner cost share for conservation practices or direct implementation of practices, the rates for included in the application budget may not exceed the NRCS rates for the same practices. If you have additional questions, please contact Aislinn Gauchay [aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org](mailto:aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org).

If applicants wish for positions to be co-located with an NRCS office, concurrence documentation from the appropriate NRCS Area Conservationist should be provided as evidence of available space and resources to support these positions. Please ensure the project is in alignment with the goals/priorities of the respective state in which your project is located and, ideally, demonstrate



communication and/or collaboration with the State Conservationist’s office. A list of state contacts can be found [here](#).

## 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). 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. ***Additional guidance to assist applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes is available at [www.nfwf.org/greatlakes](http://www.nfwf.org/greatlakes).*** All grantees should review this document when selecting metrics as a 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](mailto: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, 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.

Funding Strategy	Recommended Metrics
<i>Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Miles of instream habitat restored</li> <li>● Miles of riparian habitat restored</li> <li>● # passage barriers rectified</li> <li>● # habitat or water control structures installed</li> <li>● Miles of stream opened</li> <li>● Acres of wetland habitat restored</li> <li>● Removal of invasives – acres restored</li> <li>● Miles of beach or dune habitat restored (includes shoreline)</li> <li>● Acres with restored hydrology</li> <li>● Acres floodplain restoration</li> <li>● Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually</li> </ul>

<p><i>Expand Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities</i> *Required metric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *Gallons of stormwater storage added (include projection of gallons of stormwater captured or infiltrated annually)</li> <li>● Square feet of impervious surface removed</li> <li>● Square feet of green infrastructure installed</li> <li>● Number of trees planted (include tree size, planting density and anticipated total acres of tree planting)</li> <li>● Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually</li> <li>● # volunteer hours</li> <li>● Acres of greenspace created or improved</li> </ul>
<p><i>Invasive Species Control to Protect and Enhance Habitat</i> *Required metric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *Acres restored (total area treated, re-treated or controlled for invasive species)</li> <li>● Acres of wetland habitat restored</li> </ul>
<p><i>Conservation Practices and Regenerative Agriculture on Working Lands</i> *Required metric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *# jobs created</li> <li>● *# jobs sustained</li> <li>● *# people reached</li> <li>● *# participants receiving gov't agency cost share or financial assistance</li> <li>● *Dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance</li> <li>● *Acres covered by government agency cost share or financial assistance</li> <li>● *Acreage of project footprint</li> <li>● Acres with conservation tillage</li> <li>● Acres with cover crops</li> <li>● Acres with enhanced nutrient mgt</li> <li>● Acres with managed grazing</li> <li>● Lbs N avoided (annually)</li> <li>● Lbs P avoided (annually)</li> <li>● Lbs sediment avoided (annually)</li> <li>● Acres burned</li> <li>● Acre feet of water conserved</li> <li>● # BMPs implemented</li> <li>● # Management plans with BMPs developed</li> <li>● Land restoration-Acres restored</li> <li>● Wetland restoration-Acres restored</li> <li>● Land restoration-Acres of field buffers created</li> <li>● Land restoration-Acres of trees planted</li> <li>● Land restoration-Removal of Invasives-Acres restored</li> <li>● Acres protected under long-term easement (permanent or &gt;30-yr)</li> <li>● Acres acquired in fee</li> <li>● # mgmt plans with BMPs</li> </ul>

## 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 upon 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.

## FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

Up to \$18.7 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2023. In the past three years, the program has awarded an average of 40 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 September 1, 2023.

Matching contributions are not required for funding categories 1, 2 and 3 (see funding category 4 for match requirement details). 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.

\*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](#).

#### SOGL Funding Category 4

Individual grant awards will range from **\$100,000 to \$350,000**.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two to three years following finalization of a grant agreement. 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 September 1, 2023.

Projects are required to provide at least a 1:1 match ratio with contributions from non-federal sources to be considered for funding. 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 distribution of projects 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 and subsequent strategies. For more information about the strategies and investment objectives, see NFWF's [Great Lakes Business Plan](#).

- **Context:** Project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. Project references documentation to support stated alignment with state or federal priorities.
- **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 stormwater storage on the order of hundreds of thousands of gallons.
- **Resilience:** Project will increase habitat resilience within the context of increased stress due to more frequent and intense wet weather events, variable lake levels for the Great Lakes and other associated threats.
- **Project Efficacy:** Proposal should indicate the long-term efficacy of project activities, including projected or anticipated performance over 5 to 10 years, anticipated useful life of project elements (construction, habitat restoration/management practices) and required maintenance over time to sustain function.
- **Species of Conservation Concern:** Habitat project will benefit species of conservation concern, with a focus on brook trout, lake sturgeon, marsh-spawning fish, breeding marsh birds, shorebirds and waterfowl. If applicable based on design and habitat type, habitat restoration projects should utilize native herbaceous, shrub and tree species that provide enhanced habitat for pollinators and/or stopover habitat for migratory birds and describe anticipated benefits to those target species.
- **Efficacy of Invasive Species Control:** Proposal for invasive species control should 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.
- **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 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.
- **Funding Need:** Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

### Qualifications

- **Past Success:** Applicant and/or key project partners have a proven track record of success in implementing relevant practices with specific, measurable results. Additionally, applicants with existing SOGL grant(s) are encouraged to provide a brief status update for active project(s) including the following elements: 1) overview of project activities conducted to date and progress toward outcomes/metrics; 2) identify how the proposed project does/does not intersect with or build upon previously funded SOGL work; 3) address any issue(s) that may impact project outcomes and how they are being addressed.
- **Partnerships:** Appropriate partnerships exist to implement the project and the project is supported by strong local and community 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:** For applications submitted under funding categories 1-4, 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.
- **Transferability:** Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.
- **Communication:** Project includes a detailed plan to communicate information about the project to appropriate audiences.
- **Community Engagement and Partnerships:** Project engages relevant communities and local stakeholders (e.g., municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders) project planning, co-design and post-implementation education and engagement to optimize the public use of and benefits to communities generated by the project. Project substantiates community partnerships and engagement through letters of support or shared investment in the project, demonstrated by including community partner entities as a match source in the proposal or sub-awarding grant funds requested in the proposal budget to community partners.

## 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 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](mailto:kevin_mann@fws.gov); Matt Symbal: [matthew\\_symbal@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_symbal@fws.gov)).

## OTHER

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

**Applicant Demographic Information** – In an effort to better understand diversity in our grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic demographic information on applicants and their organizations via a voluntary survey form (available in Easygrants). This information will not be shared externally or with reviewers and will not be considered when making grant decisions. For more details, please see the tip sheet and the Uploads section of Easygrants.

**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.

**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), carbon accounting (e.g., sequestration, avoided emissions), environmental justice, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Matching Contributions** – Matching Contributions consist of 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.



## 2023 TIMELINE

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

✓ Webinar for Applicants	January 19 from 2:00-3:30 PM Eastern Time
✓ Pre-Proposal Due Date	February 14 by 11:59 PM ET
✓ Invitations for Full Proposals	Late March
✓ Full Proposal Due Date	April 25 by 11:59 PM ET
✓ Proposal Review Period	May - August
✓ Awards Announced	September

## WEBINARS

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to view **all** webinars prior to submitting an application.

- **SOGL 2023 Funding Opportunity Applicant Webinar**
  - *January 19, 2023, from 2:00-3:30 PM Eastern Time*
  - This webinar will provide additional information on the 2023 funding opportunity including specific guidance related to funding categories offered, navigating the application process, and answering participant questions.
  - **Register Here:** <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3510914777961673558>
- **Easygrants Instructional Webinar**
  - The pre-recorded Easygrants webinar [found here](#) covers in-depth instructions for navigating Easygrants.

## HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through NFWF's Easygrants system.

1. Go to [easygrants.nfwf.org](https://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 [here](#).

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's [Applicant Information](#) page.

Additional guidance to assist *applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes* is available at [www.nfwf.org/greatlakes](http://www.nfwf.org/greatlakes). All grantees should review this document when selecting metrics as a part of their Easygrants application.

**For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:**

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

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: [Easygrants@nfwf.org](mailto:Easygrants@nfwf.org)

Voicemail: 202-595-2497

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

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