



## CONOCOPhillips SPIRIT OF CONSERVATION

### 2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: **Tuesday, June 18 at 3:00 PM Eastern Time**  
Full Proposal Due Date: **Wednesday July 31 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

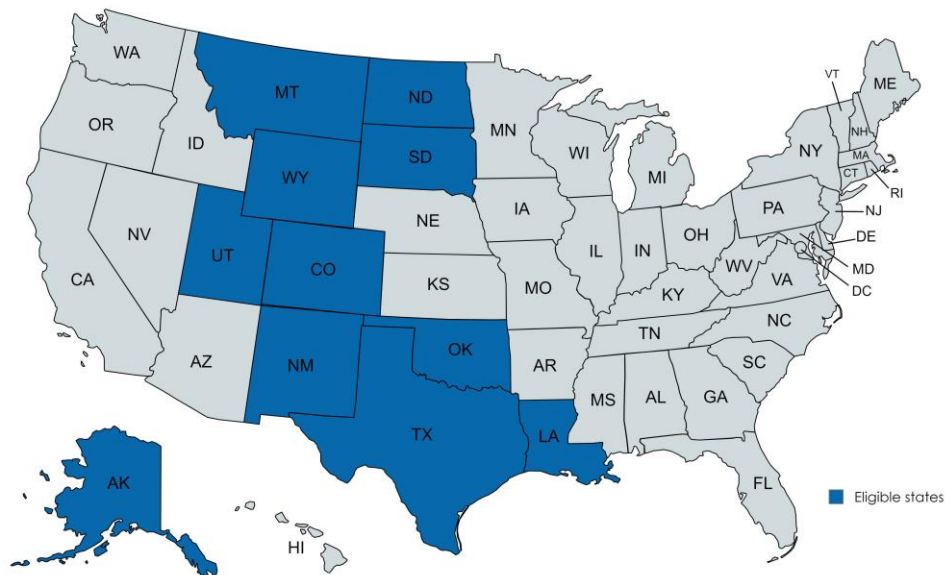
### OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting [ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation](#) program proposals to advance bird species and habitat conservation. The purpose of this program is to help address the loss of 3 billion birds since 1970 by supporting projects that conserve, restore, or enhance grassland, wetland, sage-steppe, and coastal habitats for birds, or gather lacking bird population data with innovative methods, with an emphasis in focal geographies.

The program will award up to \$1.1 million in grants in 2024. Funding is provided by ConocoPhillips and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects must occur in a major migratory route ranging from the northern slope of Alaska to the north-south axis of the central United States, including the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast. Funding is limited to the following states: Alaska, Colorado, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming.



Created with mapchart.net

**Figure 1 (above). Geographic Focus.** States eligible for this grant program are shown in blue.

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Bird populations typically require a series of different seasonal or local habitats for their breeding, stopover, and wintering periods. Degradation, fragmentation, and loss of habitat can negatively impact bird populations, highlighting the need to implement science-driven and strategic conservation.

With geographic focal areas that span major migratory routes in Alaska and along the north–south axis of the central United States, including the Gulf Coast, the program focuses on improving habitat quality and quantity for both migratory and non-migratory bird populations.

Within landscapes heavily dominated by working grasslands, wetlands, and sagebrush habitats, the program places a high priority on partnering with ranchers, farmers, and other private, tribal, and public land managers to help improve landscape connectivity and habitat quality for birds dependent on these habitats.

Examples of species to benefit from projects include, but are not limited to, shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl along the coasts, sagebrush-dependent birds in the Interior West, and grassland-dependent birds such as Baird’s sparrow, Sprague’s pipit, chestnut-collared longspur, and thick-billed longspur found across the Great Plains.

The program will primarily support projects that address the following strategies.

- ***Restore and/or improve grassland, sagebrush, wetland, or coastal habitats for birds:***  
Conduct restoration and/or enhancement activities for existing bird habitat that:
  - expand or improve habitat connectivity, quality, or patch size;
  - remove encroaching woody vegetation that negatively impacts grassland-nesting or sage-steppe nesting birds;
  - reduce invasive species’ impact on bird habitat;
  - restore wetland functions that benefit birds; and/or
  - restore important breeding, wintering, or stopover sites for birds.
  
- ***Conduct applied research or monitoring on priority bird population(s):*** Increase the quality or quantity of bird population data that can be used to fill gaps and inform current and future habitat management decisions. Data should be useful at specific sites or in assessing bird use of habitats across breeding, wintering, or stopover ranges. Key data gaps can be found in the following USFWS report: [Full Annual Cycle Conservation Strategy](#).

**Conservation Co-Benefits:** Habitat restoration or enhancement projects that benefit birds while also storing or sequestering carbon are encouraged. NFWF intends to calculate the estimated carbon outcome associated with each proposal, as applicable and appropriate. These calculations will not be used for carbon credits, but rather to demonstrate the potential carbon value of any project and conservation practice(s) supported through this program. Applicants should carefully follow the metrics instructions in order to provide sufficient information for NFWF to generate carbon estimates.

**Community Impact and Engagement:** The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with diverse local community members, leaders, tribal governments, community-

based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, as applicable and appropriate, to develop and implement the proposed project and deliver measurable conservation benefits and outcomes. This ensures long-term sustainability and success of the project, integration into local programs and policies, and community acceptance of proposed restoration actions. Non-traditional partners or communities are enlisted to broaden the sustained impact from the project.

## PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the program provides a list of metrics in Easygrants from which to choose for future reporting. Applicants should select the most relevant metrics from this list for their project. All possible program metrics are shown in the table below.

- **The starting value for all metrics must be entered as zero.**

Please contact Senior Program Manager Crystal Boyd ([crystal.boyd@nfwf.org](mailto:crystal.boyd@nfwf.org)) if you have questions about which metrics best apply to your project.

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Recommended Metric</b>	<b>Additional Guidance</b>
Project Footprint	Acreage of project footprint	Enter the total number of acres impacted by one or more project conservation activities. Only count an acre once, even if multiple activities or treatments will occur on that acre during the project.
Improved management practices	Acres with managed grazing	Enter the number of acres with managed grazing (i.e., grazing approaches to optimize stocking rates, livestock rotations, utilization rates, and plant rest and recovery, including development of grazing infrastructure). In the Notes, describe the practice.
Improved management practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres under improved management EXCLUDING acres improved through grazing, prescribed fire, and/or invasive species control.
BMP implementation for prescribed burns	Acres burned	Enter # acres with prescribed burning. In the NOTES, specify if private or public land, average frequency (in yrs) for future burning, dominant vegetation burned (forest, shrubland, grassland, cropland, Phragmites marsh). If forest, note if trees have been planted in past 10 yrs (Yes, No), and type of forest (Alder-maple, Aspen-birch, Douglas-fir, Douglas-fir with high productivity and high management intensity, Elm-ash-cottonwood, Fir-spruce-mountain hemlock, Hemlock-Sitka spruce, Hemlock-Sitka spruce with high productivity, Loblolly-shortleaf pine, Loblolly-shortleaf pine with high productivity and management intensity, Lodgepole pine, Longleaf-slash pine,

		Longleaf-slash pine with high productivity and management intensity, Maple-beech-birch, Mixed conifer, Oak-gum-cypress, Oak-hickory, Oak-pine, Ponderosa pine, Redwood, Spruce-balsam fir, Western oak, White-red-jack pine).
BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of fencing improved	Specify the number of miles of fencing improved. Report the fencing practice in the NOTES section.
Wetland Restoration	Acres Restored - Wetland	Enter # acres of WETLAND (not riparian or instream) habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (Marsh, Tidal marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp) and indicate % of vegetation on pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%).
Land Restoration	Acres Restored	Enter # acres of habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-restoration (broadleaf, conifer, redwood, grassland, shrubland, marsh, wet meadow, tidal marsh, swamp, seagrass, kelp forest).
Removal of invasives	Acres Restored	Enter # acres of invasives removed. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Forest understory, Junipers, Shrubs, Kudzu/vines, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Swamp), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No).
Research	# studies used to inform management	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management / inform management decisions.
Tool development for decision-making	# tools / techniques implemented	Enter the # of tools, techniques, methods implemented.

Definitions related to metrics:

- Broadleaf: upland deciduous forest
- Conifer: upland coniferous forest
- Grass: upland grassland
- Marsh: herbaceous (grass-dominated) wetland
- Redwood: redwood upland forest
- Riparian buffer: shrubs or forest adjacent to a stream channel
- Shrub: upland shrublands
- Swamp: wooded (tree- or shrub-dominated) wetland

- Tidal marsh: herbaceous (grass-dominated) wetland that floods and drains through tidal movement from a nearby estuary, sea, or ocean
- Wet meadow: high elevation grass-dominated wetlands that are at least seasonally flooded by rain or snow melt from nearby stream channels

## **ELIGIBILITY**

### **Eligible and Ineligible Entities**

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

### **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**

Approximately \$1.1 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2024. Grant awards will typically range from \$100,000 to \$275,000. Funded projects should be completed within two years following finalization of a grant agreement.

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 project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for completion. The start date indicated in the proposal should not precede January 1, 2025.

Matching contributions are not required. However, the ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that offer higher match ratios with contributions from non-federal sources may be more competitive.

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 recent 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 [here](#). NFWF will not consider the portion of landowner expenses required as cost share to obtain funding on Farm Bill projects as partner contributions to match.

To be eligible, matching contributions must be:

- raised for and dedicated specifically to the project;
- allowable costs based on the program and funding source guidelines;
- applied only to this project and not to any other matching program(s); and
- spent/applied within the period of performance.

## 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. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types and grant sizes.

In addition, selections may be based on how proposed activities would advance goals of established regional, tribal, state, and federal conservation plans, particularly the [Migratory Bird Joint Venture Implementation Plans](#). The priorities and goals of the NFWF's [Northern Great Plains](#), [Rocky Mountain Rangelands](#), and [Southwest Rivers](#) Business Plans, and [State Wildlife Action Plans](#) are also of interest.

### Conservation Merit and Implementation

- **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.
- **Habitat Connectivity or Linkages** – Project creates connectivity or linkages between or among migratory (i.e., breeding, stopover, winter) or seasonal movement habitats.
- **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 to ensure activities are technically sound and feasible.



- **Partnership and Community Impact** – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with diverse local community members, leaders, tribal governments, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, as applicable and appropriate, to develop and implement the proposed project and deliver measurable conservation benefits and outcomes. This ensures long-term sustainability and success of the project, integration into local programs and policies, and community acceptance of proposed restoration actions. Non-traditional partners or communities are enlisted to broaden the sustained impact from the project.
- **Scalability/Transferability** – Project has the potential and a plan to scale or transfer lessons learned to other communities or organizations 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.
- **Conservation Plan and Context** – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. Migratory Bird Joint Venture Implementation plans, activities, or priorities are of particular interest and can be located [here](#). The priorities and goals of the NFWF’s [Northern Great Plains](#), [Rocky Mountain Rangelands](#), and [Southwest Rivers](#) Business Plans and [State Wildlife Action Plans](#) are also of interest.
- **Complementarity** – Project complements and builds on the work of others rather than duplicating efforts.
- **Timeliness** – Project has commenced planning, design, and engineering to the extent that on-the-ground implementation can begin shortly after the grant is awarded.

### **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** – Proposal establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

- **Matching Contributions** – Matching contributions are to be spent/applied between the start and end dates specified in the proposal. 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.
- **Efficiency** – Costs are fitting for the activities proposed.

### Qualifications

- **Past Success** – Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing conservation practices with specific, measurable results.
- **Partnership** – An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project, and the project is supported by a strong local partnership that leverages additional funds and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Proposal identifies proposed partners (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.)
- **Letters of Support** – Proposal includes letters of support from landowners where the proposed work would occur and from other significant partners, especially those providing match or contributing to the project in a significant way. Letters of support should be signed by the partner, reference the specific proposal under review, and state the partner’s commitment to achieving specific project goals and supporting monitoring efforts.

### Evaluation and Maintenance

- **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. Proposal indicates how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

### OTHER

**Monitoring** – NFWF may implement independent monitoring efforts in the future to measure the environmental outcomes from projects funded under this solicitation. Award recipients may be asked to facilitate granting of access to project sites for NFWF or its designees for future environmental monitoring purposes.

**Applicant Demographic Information** – In an effort to better understand diversity in grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic demographic information on applicants and their organizations through 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.

**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.

**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 that 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 webpage](#) on the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

<a href="#">Applicant Webinar</a>	June 18 at 3:00 PM, Eastern Time
Full Proposal Due Date	July 31 by 11:59 PM, Eastern Time
Review Period	July to December
Awards Announced	Mid-December

## **HOW TO APPLY**

All application materials must be submitted online through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Easygrants system.

1. Go to [easygrants.nfwf.org](http://easygrants.nfwf.org) to register in the 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 NFWF’s website at the [Applicant Information](#) page.

For more information about this RFP, please contact:

Crystal Boyd  
Senior Manager, Pollinator Programs  
crystal.boyd@nfwf.org

For issues or assistance with the 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 to which you are applying (ConocoPhillips SPIRIT), and a description of the issue.