



Killer Whale Conservation Program 2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar (Register Here):	August 7, 2024 1:00PM PT / 4:00PM ET
Pre-Proposal Due Date:	September 5, 2024 by 8:59PM PT / 11:59PM ET
Full Proposal Webinar (Upon Invitation):	October 1, 2024 1:00PM PT / 4:00PM ET
Full Proposal Due Date (Upon Invitation):	November 6, 2024 by 8:59PM PT / 11:59PM ET

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, BNSF Railway and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are pleased to announce up to \$2,500,000 in funding this year for projects that aid in the recovery of the Southern Resident killer whale (SRKW) Distinct Population Segment.

Conservation strategies for this program include:

- **Restore the food chain:** support projects that increase the availability of Chinook salmon in runs that are a critical part of the Southern Resident population's diet and the forage fish they rely on.
- **Restore habitat quality:** support projects that reduce threats to priority killer whale habitat from pollution and contaminants, vessel traffic and noise.
- **Bolster management efforts:** support capacity and applied research prioritized in SRKW management plans.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Most awarded projects will focus on the habitats used by the SRKW population or its prey in or surrounding the Salish Sea. Proposals that work in other locations such as the Columbia River Basin, coastal Washington, or on other killer whale populations are eligible for funding, however priority will be given to projects with a strong nexus to SRKW recovery. Some geographic priorities are specific to the priority strategies and are referenced below for further guidance.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The most competitive projects under the 2025 cycle of the Killer Whale Conservation Program will directly implement projects under the following priority topic areas. **Applicants should list which priority area(s) they are targeting in their proposal narrative.** Projects outside of these priority areas or that indirectly influence these topics are still eligible for funding provided they support the goals and Priority 1 activities outlined in the [Implementation Schedule from the Recovery Plan for Southern Resident Killer Whales](#) or recommendations from the [Southern](#)

Resident Orca Task Force Report.

Restore the food chain: Projects under this priority will seek to increase Chinook salmon populations to the size and numbers that can support SRKW nutritional needs. These activities can include both hatchery and habitat related actions as well as actions to support forage fish restoration when that is seen as a limiting factor for priority runs. **Priority Geographies:** Nooksack, Skagit (nearshore)/Samish, Snohomish and Puyallup.

- Support for habitat restoration from the headwaters to the nearshore for priority Chinook runs. Large woody debris placement, riparian plantings along denuded agricultural and urban corridors, floodplain restoration and shoreline hardening alternatives in estuarine areas are of particular interest. Projects proposing barrier removal should present data on the current density of Chinook below the barrier and the state of habitat above the barrier. Projects under this priority should reference the relative priority of these actions in existing conservation or restoration planning documents (such as an ESA recovery plan, Save our Watersheds report, etc.). **Priority geographies:** Nooksack, Skagit (nearshore), Snohomish and Puyallup.
- Special priority for projects working to meet the objectives of this RFP through engagement and work on agricultural lands or projects that have potential to increase Farm Bill program participation and conservation practice implementation among agricultural producers, especially farmers, ranchers and forestland owners in the [Historically Underserved](#) and [Special Emphasis](#) categories. This priority is targeting land-use and land-use change, nutrient and sediment runoff, sewage treatment, streambank stabilization, buffer improvements, and improved sediment and erosion control.
 - *Projects working on private, working lands should provide technical assistance to interested farmers and ranchers to develop management plans, design and implement conservation practices, and participate in Farm Bill programs, (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Projects that promote, design, and implement [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry](#) (CSAF) [conservation practices](#) are of particular interest.*
 - *Applicants are encouraged to discuss NRCS goals and priorities with the NRCS State Conservationist and their staff in the state in which your project is located prior to submitting a proposal. A list of NRCS state contacts can be found [here](#).*
 - *Support for NRCS's [Western Water and Working Lands Framework for Conservation Action](#). This framework identifies the need for conservation on vulnerable agricultural landscapes and highlights a number of response strategies, including: improve soil moisture and irrigation water management; restore and protect streams and wetlands; manage and restore rangelands and forestlands; and more.*
- Building capacity for implementation (trained workforce) or to increase opportunities to access funding for larger projects i.e. planning/design work, coordinate landowners, streamline permitting, site prep. Narratives should be specific on the characterization of the capacity needed and what watersheds and salmon runs would benefit.

- Explore a variety of opportunities to generate/protect forage fish (sand lance and herring) and smolt migration habitat. Restoration of sediment transport through feeder bluffs, armor removal and nourishment are of interest as well as restoration of shoreline vegetation for key sand lance habitats. Reduction of pollutants and shading through creosote piling removal may also be considered as a priority in herring habitats. Efforts to reduce predation of forage fish and fry throughout these migration corridors (i.e. removal of pinniped haul-out structures, differing release times of fry), will also be considered and should include monitoring efforts to demonstrate the relative success of these efforts.
Priority geographies: Sand lance and herring habitats in the San Juans and Whidbey Island Basin and more broadly as noted in the [WDFW forage fish mapper](#).

Improve Habitat Quality: Projects under this priority will work to identify and reduce tangible land-based and in-water threats to the SRKW population. There is particular interest in projects that partner and coordinate with existing programs that may not have a SRKW focus but bring other resources and expertise on habitat quality issues to the needs of the population. The highest priority for the 2025 cycle is for:

- Projects that seek to increase awareness and compliance of the recreational boating sector with vessel regulations around whales through activities such as signage at marinas and licensing programs and targeting specific audiences like charters and rental boaters that may be unfamiliar with local regulations. Competitive projects will include a monitoring component to evaluate the success of outreach efforts on the targeted audience in both awareness and compliance.
- Projects that work to implement priority action items in the [Puget Sound Partnership 2022-2026 Action Agenda](#) that can lead to improved water quality in known killer whale habitat. Competitive projects under this category will build partnerships with existing efforts to address threats of run-off, contaminants and other pollutants that have been identified as a health risk to the SRKW population.

Bolster Management Efforts: Projects under this priority seek to fill critical gaps in capacity or knowledge that prevent effective mitigative action of key threats to killer whale populations as presented in the two previous categories. All projects under this category should be of the highest priority to population recovery and have a direct applied relevance to management needs. The most competitive proposals will have a representative of the intended management authority as part of their project team for consultation on what capacity or information is needed and in what form.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grant projects, the Killer Whale Conservation Program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for applicants to choose from for future reporting (see below). For projects that are invited to submit a Full Proposal, we ask that you select the most relevant metrics from this list for your project. Most projects will have at least one metric that will apply but few will have more than two. If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Michelle Pico (pico@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# individuals reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities	Enter the number of people reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities. Metric notes should clearly state the 'target audience' for which you are trying to train or change behavior through outreach and limit the value to just that audience (not anyone who might see a sign, etc.). Applicants need to build into their project SOW and budget how this metric will be measured (via surveys, etc.) for the target audience. If applicable, report the number of individuals reached in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
Volunteer Participation	# of volunteer hours	Enter the # of volunteer hours in this project. If your project is directly engaging volunteers, please enter the # of volunteer hours and provide further information regarding any specific community sectors you may have targeted in the notes field. If applicable, report the number of individuals reached in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
BMP implementation for storm water runoff	Acres with BMPs to reduce storm water runoff	Enter the number of acres with Best Management Practices (BMPs) referenced in the <i>Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda</i> to reduce pollution in killer whale or Chinook salmon habitats. Please clearly state the pollutants/negative impacts you are seeking to address.
Fish passage improvements	# fish passage barriers rectified	Enter the # of in-stream barriers removed or rectified as part of THIS grant to improve aquatic organism passage and/or flooding. If multiple barriers exist at one specific location, please list "1" and list each individual barrier in the notes. Enter the number of barriers to Chinook salmon passage that have been removed or modified to allow fish passage. Please provide the barrier name(s) or ID(s) that will be removed in NOTES.

<p>Land/Floodplain restoration</p>	<p>Acres restored</p>	<p>Enter # of floodplain acres restored. Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE restoration work called for in management plans to increase the recovery potential of specific salmon runs referenced. Work along a riverbank should be captured here OR under Riparian restoration – DO NOT DOUBLE COUNT.</p> <p>Projects focused on agricultural lands should include efforts to implement <u>Conservation Cover</u> best practices by establishing and maintaining perennial vegetative cover to protect soil and water resources on lands needing permanent protective cover that will not be used for forage production. Or establishing a <u>Filter Strip</u> - Area of vegetation established for removing sediment, organic material, and other pollutants from runoff and wastewater. In NOTES, indicate % of vegetation on the pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%) and the dominant vegetation being restored (Broadleaf, Conifer, Redwood, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp).</p>
<p>Riparian restoration</p>	<p>Miles restored</p>	<p>Enter the number of miles restored. Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE restoration work called for in management plans to increase the recovery potential of specific salmon runs referenced. Work along a riverbank should be captured here OR under Floodplain restoration – DO NOT DOUBLE COUNT.</p> <p>Projects focused on agricultural lands should include efforts to implement Riparian best practices such as establishing <u>Riparian Herbaceous Cover</u> - Establishment and maintenance of grasses, grass-like plants, and forbs that are tolerant of intermittent flooding or saturated soils and that are established or managed in the transitional zone between terrestrial and aquatic habitat and/or <u>Riparian Forest Buffer</u> - An area predominantly covered by trees and/or shrubs located adjacent to and up-gradient from a watercourse or water body. In NOTES section, specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), dominant vegetation being planted (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp), and average width of riparian buffer.</p>

Management or Governance Planning	# management plan activities being implemented	Enter the number of management plan activities being implemented. Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE 'listed actions' and priorities that the project will complete from any of the management or recovery planning documents referenced in the RFP. Please specifically list the plan and the action in the 'Notes.'
Research	# studies completed whose findings are reported to management	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are reported to management. Metric value should ONLY INCLUDE research that is 1) is completed within the project period to a point where useful information is available for management decision making; and 2) will be disseminated to management in a way that actively facilitates uptake into the decision-making process (not just published in a journal). Targeted management office(s) should be identified in the notes field and a letter from the office on the proposed relevance of the work is encouraged.
Population	# of returning individuals	Enter the number of returning individuals. Metric should ONLY be used for projects targeting increased survivorship of Chinook salmon with full monitoring programs. Usually this will be hatchery based.
Captive breeding/ rearing/ rehab facilities	# individuals released	Enter the number of individuals released. Metric should ONLY be used by hatchery programs to help calculate survivorship of Chinook salmon.

ELIGIBILITY

- **Eligible Entities:** Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state and federal government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Indian tribes, educational institutions, 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

The Killer Whale Conservation Program anticipates awarding up to \$2,500,000 in funding for grants this year. The majority of awards under this program will fall in the range of \$50,000 to \$500,000; however upper or lower limits to award size are not specified. A 1:1 match of cash and/or in-kind services is strongly encouraged (federal and non-federal funds can apply as match to this program) to demonstrate partner support. Project period of performance may extend from one to three years and should reflect the full requested budget. Selected projects may be required to submit data funded by this program to a public forum and/or present their results through NFWF-sponsored forums.

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.

Spatial Data – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF’s online mapping tool accurately represent the location(s) conservation activity(ies) at the time of proposal submission. Successful projects will be required to submit improved spatial data for each conservation activity within the period of performance as necessary.

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.

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.

Partnership and Community Impact – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with diverse local community members, leaders, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the proposed project. This ensures

long-term sustainability and success of the project, integration into local programs and policies, and community acceptance of proposed restoration actions. Non-traditional partners or communities are enlisted to broaden the sustained impact from the project. Describe the community characteristics of the project area, identify any communities impacted, describe outreach and community engagement activities and how those will be monitored and measured. Use demographic data to support descriptions and submit letters of support from community partners and/or collaborators demonstrating their commitment to the project and engagement in project activities as proposed.

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.

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. 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.)

OTHER

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. 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.

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 the 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 [[Killer Whale Conservation Program](#)].

Applicant Webinar (Register Here):	August 7, 2024 1:00PM PT / 4:00PM ET
Pre-Proposal Due Date:	September 5, 2024 by 8:59PM PT / 11:59PM ET
Invitations for Full Proposals Sent	September 24, 2024
Full Proposal Webinar (Upon Invitation):	October 1, 2024 1:00PM PT / 4:00PM ET
Full Proposal Due Date (Upon Invitation):	November 6, 2024 by 8:59PM PT / 11:59PM ET
Review Period	November – January 2024
Awards Announced	March 2025

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 later 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:

Michelle Pico
pico@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.