



MOJAVE DESERT TORTOISE RECOVERY PARTNERSHIP

2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: December 12th, 2024 at 10:00am – 11:00am PST / 1:00pm – 2:00pm EST

Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025, by 8:59pm PST / 11:59pm EST

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is requesting proposals to restore, protect and enhance populations of Mojave desert tortoise and their habitat in California's western Mojave Desert. Up to \$1 million in funding is expected to be available through support from the U.S. Marine Corps.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS/PROGRAM FUNDING PRIORITIES

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is part of NFWF's Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership, and will provide funding to projects that produce measurable outcomes for the threatened Mojave desert tortoise in California's Western Mojave Desert Recovery Unit focal areas (Figure 1). Priority projects will address the leading factors in Mojave desert tortoise decline such as habitat alteration and fragmentation, environmental change and direct tortoise mortality. The primary goal of this program is to marshal resources in a coordinated manner to work to recover the species by protecting Mojave desert tortoises from reducing or eliminating threats to the tortoise and restoring critical habitat. Conservation activities referenced in NFWF's [Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Plan](#) will be most competitive. Projects that address desert tortoise conservation needs should be located in one or more of six focal areas in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit (Figure 1). However, highway exclusion fencing projects will be prioritized along priority road sections within the Western Mojave Desert identified in Figure 1.

In FY25, the Partnership is specifically soliciting projects in areas where contemporary linear disturbance density is less than or equal to 0.6 km/km², the approximate and best available maximum linear disturbance density threshold for positive tortoise population expansion.¹ The FY25 Recovery and Sustainment Partnership (RASP) Priority Project Areas comprise tortoise habitats with a minimum linear disturbance density of less than or equal to 0.6 km/km² and are intended to further direct project proposals within existing focal areas (Figure 2). This strategy intends to make the greatest impact with existing resources in the near term.

¹ Averill-Murray, R.C. and Allison, L.J., 2023. Travel management planning for wildlife with a case study on the Mojave desert tortoise. *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management*, 14(1), pp.269-281.

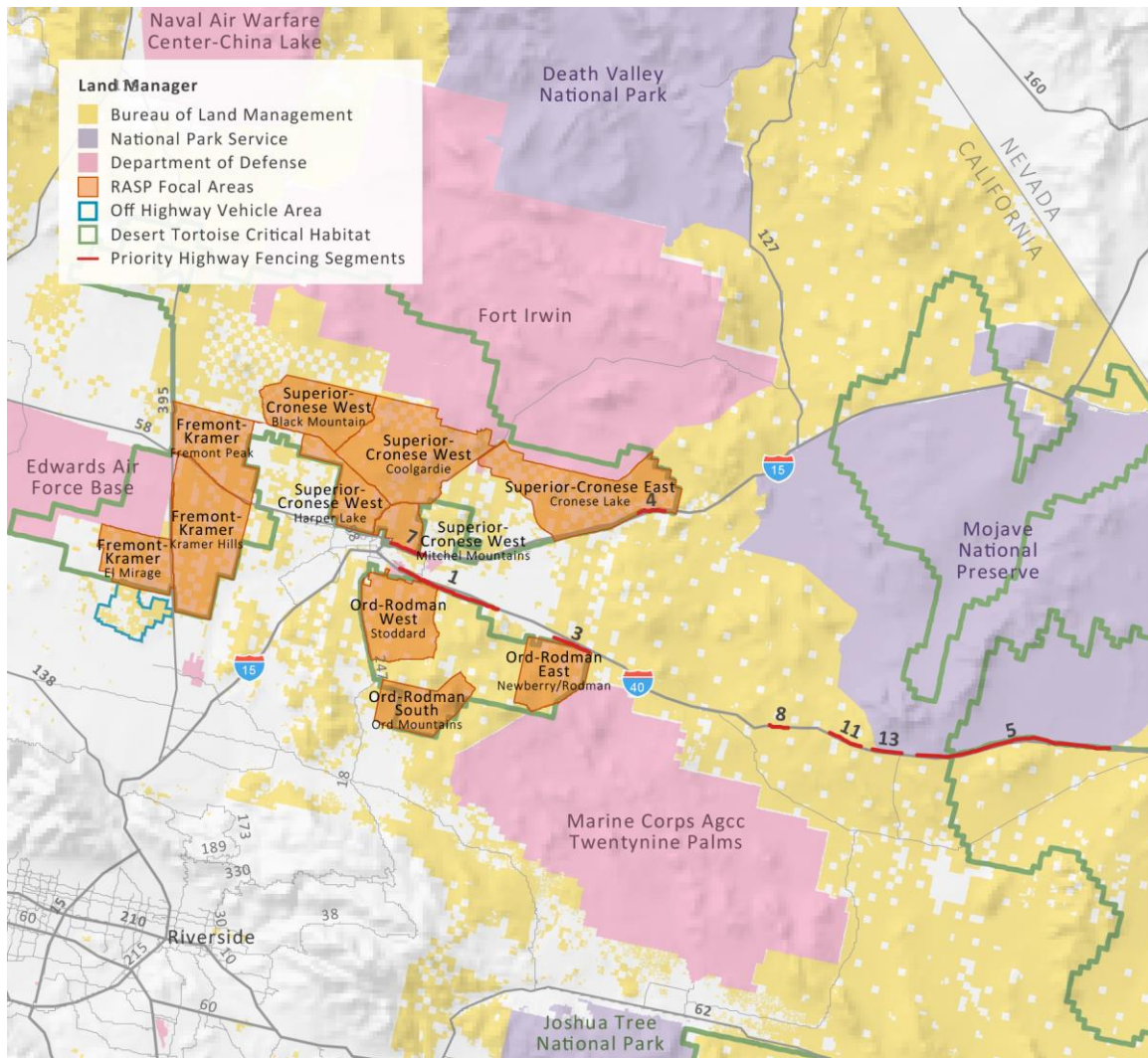


Figure 1. Mojave Desert Tortoise RASP Implementation Plan focal areas and priority highway fencing segments in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit. Priority fencing segments include: (1) I-40 Daggett to Newberry Springs, CA; (3) I-40 National Trails West of Pigsah, CA; (5) I-40 West of Van Winkle Wash to E of Essex Rd, CA; (7) I-15 North of Barstow, CA; (8) I-40 North of Black Ridge, CA; (11) I-40 Old Dad Mountains, CA; and (13) I-40 Kelbaker Rd, CA.

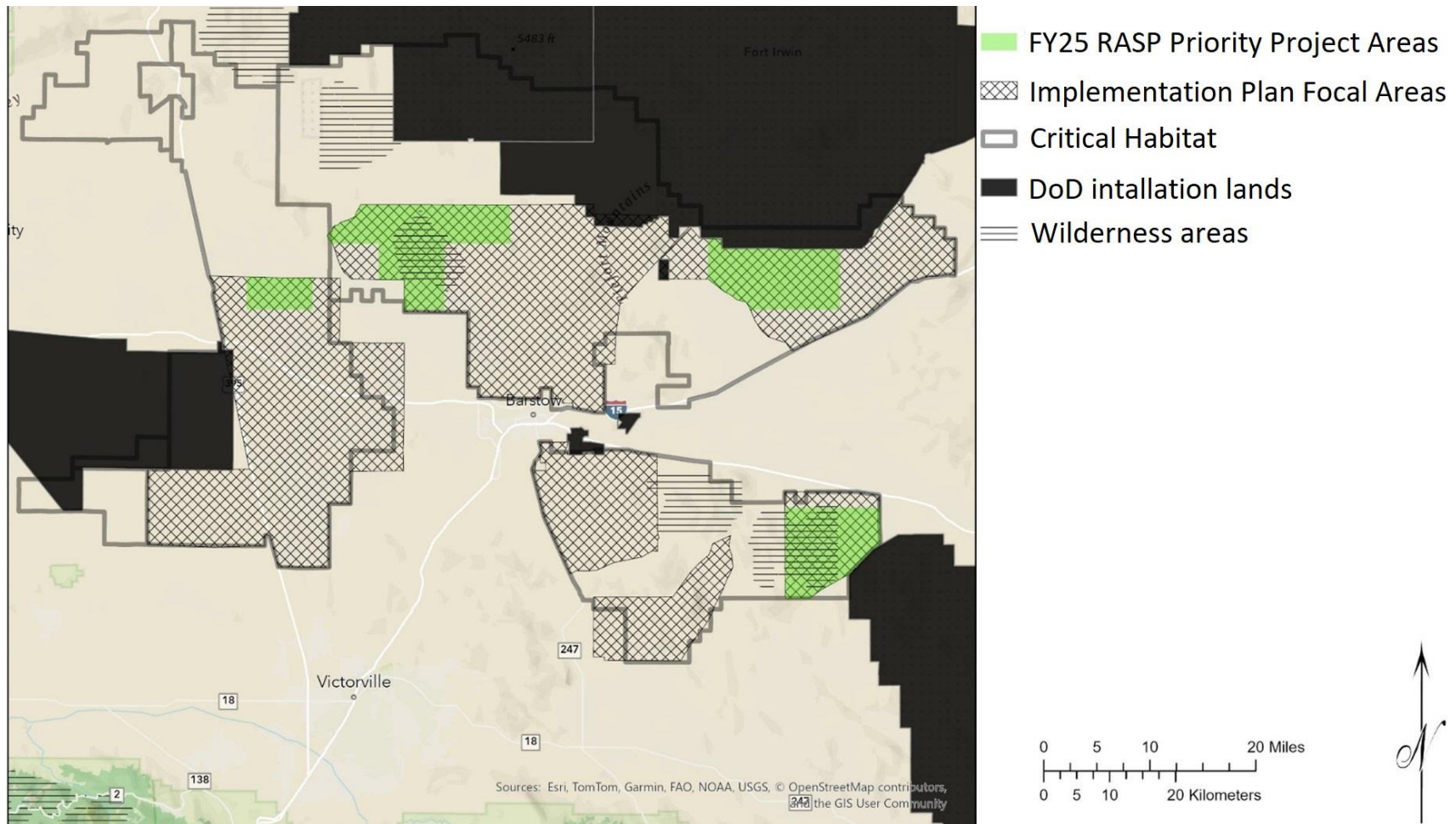


Figure 2. The FY25 RASP Top Priority Project Areas (in green) comprise tortoise habitats with a minimum linear disturbance density of less than or equal to 0.6 km/km². Proposals for projects within these areas will be prioritized for funding, as these areas do not require open route closures to achieve a route density suitable for tortoise conservation. FY25 Priority Project Areas overlap with the following RASP Focal Areas: Superior-Cronese West, Superior-Cronese East, Fremont Kramer (Fremont Peak), and Ord-Rodman East (Newberry/Rodman).

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

Priority recovery activities that address key limiting factors for Mojave desert tortoise in California's western Mojave Desert are listed in order of priority below. Projects should include at least one of the following activities, but the most successful projects will incorporate multiple approaches to maximize impact for tortoise populations. Requests for funding for planning and compliance to enable project implementation will be considered.

Closure of unauthorized routes and habitat restoration – Install signs or physical barriers on unauthorized routes to indicate route closures. Restore habitat along unauthorized routes through vertical mulching, invasive species control, native seeding and outplanting, and other restoration activities in order to establish defensible polygons of tortoise habitat. Projects should be geographically aligned with one or more of the FY25 Priority Project Areas identified in Figure 2.

Improve tortoise road crossings – Install, repair, maintain or enhance tortoise exclusion fencing along highways to reduce tortoise highway mortality. Priority sections identified in Figure 1 are of special interest but all highway fencing projects in the West Mojave will be considered. Install, repair or enhance culverts or other underpass structures along barrier fencing to mitigate effects of habitat fragmentation and allow for safe tortoise movement past highways.

Species monitoring – Support ongoing and new Mojave desert tortoise monitoring and analysis, particularly for population demographics, to inform progress towards medium-term population objectives and inform conservation decision making. Priority will be given to monitoring efforts that are proposed in association with habitat protection or restoration projects and include adaptive management plans.

Head-starting and reintroduction – Support efforts to obtain adult tortoises for progeny, captive-rearing of offspring, and reintroduction of tortoises to appropriate locations that are sufficiently protected, maintained, and monitored to augment existing populations. Reintroduction efforts should be done in areas of high quality, protected habitat.

Land acquisitions and conservation easements – Acquire land from willing landowners or conservation easements within the focal areas, with priority given to inholdings that are strategically important for advancing restoration actions, which would connect multiple existing conservation lands within critical habitat areas, or which are particularly cost-effective. A funding mechanism for long-term stewardship of acquired lands or conservation easements should be included in this strategy.

Community outreach and education – Design and implement community outreach and education programs to promote Mojave desert tortoise awareness and reduce harmful human-tortoise interactions. Projects that include outreach to local education institutions and schools would be prioritized over signage and passive outreach. Projects that provide for field-based education programs in the focal areas are of interest.

Demonstration projects for watershed-scale landscape resilience – Specific funding may be available for demonstration projects that improve landscape resilience at a watershed-scale throughout the new [Mojave Desert Sentinel Landscape](#), not limited to the RASP focal areas. Projects should positively impact stormwater infiltration,

groundwater recharge, soil health, habitat/biodiversity, wildland fire risk reduction, and heat mitigation. Contact program personnel below to discuss projects of this type before preparing an application to confirm funding availability and priorities.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grant projects, the Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for reporting (commonly used metrics are shown in the table below). We ask that you select the most relevant metrics from this list for your project. If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Kirstin Neff (Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Protect existing habitat from conversion	Habitat Conservation – Conservation easements – Acres protected under long-term easement (permanent or >30-yr)	Enter the number of acres protected under long-term easement (permanent or greater than 30 years).
Protect existing habitat from conversion	Habitat Conservation – Land acquisitions – Acres acquired in fee	Enter the number of acres acquired in fee for Mojave desert tortoise habitat protection.
Establish defensible polygons of Mojave desert tortoise habitat	Habitat Conservation – Site protection – # of acres with enhanced protection	Enter the total number of acres protected within an estimated defensible polygon.
Restore or enhance Mojave desert tortoise habitat	Habitat Restoration – Land restoration – Acres restored	Enter the number of acres actively restored for Mojave desert tortoise habitat, and describe the restoration activities in the metric notes.
Produce native plants for Mojave desert tortoise habitat restoration	Habitat Restoration – Plant cultivation – # seedlings propagated	Enter the number of seedlings propagated for Mojave desert tortoise habitat restoration. In the notes, indicate the number of seedlings of each species.
Collect native seeds for Mojave desert tortoise habitat restoration	Habitat Restoration – Seed harvesting – lbs harvested	Enter the number of pounds of seeds collected.
Improve infrastructure to reduce Mojave desert tortoise highway mortality	Habitat Management – BMP implementation for fencing improvements – Miles of fencing improved	Enter the number of miles of highway exclusion fencing repaired. In the notes, describe the location of the fencing segments.
Improve infrastructure to reduce Mojave desert tortoise highway mortality	Habitat Management – BMP implementation for fencing improvements – Miles of fencing installed	Enter the number of miles of new highway exclusion fencing installed.
Close unauthorized OHV routes to protect Mojave desert tortoise habitat	Habitat Management – BMP implementation to mitigate recreational disturbance – # of sites with BMPs	Enter the number of sites with vertical mulching conducted and/or physical barriers installed to discourage use of unauthorized OHV routes.

Establish defensible polygons of Mojave desert tortoise habitat	Habitat Management – Improved management practices – Number of sites under improved management	Enter the number of defensible restoration polygons established. In the notes, indicate the sizes of these polygons. The total area of the polygons should be reported in the metric “Habitat Conservation – Site protection - # of acres with enhanced protection.”
Close unauthorized OHV routes to protect Mojave desert tortoise habitat	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance – # of educational signs installed	Enter the number of signs displaying permitted use installed on unauthorized OHV routes.
Engage public land users regarding Mojave desert tortoise conservation needs	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance – # people reached	Enter the number of people who responded positively to outreach, training, or technical assistance activities, for example by signing up for an event, distribution list, or meeting with a conservation professional. This should be a subset of # people targeted to engage in conservation actions.
Engage public land users regarding Mojave desert tortoise conservation needs	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives – Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance – # people targeted	Enter the number of people targeted to participate in a conservation action via social media, email, newsletters, in-person activities or other outreach, training, or technical assistance activities.
Augment depleted Mojave desert tortoise populations	Species-specific Strategies – Captive breeding/rearing/rehab facilities - # individuals released	Enter the number of individual tortoises reared in headstarting programs and released into tortoise habitat.
Improve infrastructure to reduce Mojave desert tortoise highway mortality	Species-specific Strategies – Improving migration corridors - # of road crossing improvements	Enter the number of highway underpasses such as culverts installed or improved.
Expand species monitoring to new and additional sites	Planning, Research, Monitoring – Monitoring – # sites being monitored	Enter the number of new population monitoring sites for Mojave desert tortoise. Describe the type of population monitoring being conducted in the metric notes.
Comply with state and federal data collection and management standards	Planning, Research, Monitoring – Monitoring – # of studies whose findings are reported to management	Enter the number of datasets or monitoring reports produced and entered into relevant databases. Describe each reported dataset and/or study in the metric notes.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include: local, state, federal, and tribal governments and agencies (e.g., counties, cities, towns), special districts (e.g., conservation districts, planning districts, utility districts), non-profit 501(c) organizations, educational institutions, and commercial (for-profit) organizations.

- For-profit applicants: please note that this is a request for grant proposals, not a procurement of goods and services; see the Budget section below for specific cost considerations.
- Ineligible applicants include: international organizations or unincorporated individuals.

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 \$1 million in grant funds is available. We anticipate making 1-3 grant awards in this cycle.

Match is encouraged but not required. Eligible matching sources can include cash, in-kind donations, and/or volunteer labor which are directly related to the project proposed for funding. Applicants must distinguish between federal and non-federal matching fund sources.

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. Priority will be given to integrated projects that address threats or landscape challenges with actions that promote tortoise occupancy and increased density. For example, projects that include or collaborate with projects that include the installation or repair of desert tortoise fencing (if appropriate) and the control of nonnative plants with head-starting or other population augmentation actions.

- **Project Need:** Describe the relevance of the project for conservation of the focal species, and its relationship to any prioritization process or species conservation plan. Proposals that effectively communicate the context for the project, in terms of how it fits into a broader restoration effort and why it addresses the most strategic need, will be the most competitive. Please provide this context within the proposal.
- **Activities/Methods:** Describe how each activity will be implemented and the anticipated timeline. Explain how these activities address one or more key factors limiting the focal species. Describe how these activities relate to established plans and conservation needs. Discuss how this project either initiates or fits into larger efforts in the Recovery Unit, or, if this is a stand-alone project, how it will succeed in and of itself in restoring, protecting, or enhancing the species population(s).
- **Long-Term Conservation Outcome(s):** Discuss the quantifiable/measurable long-term outcome(s) for habitat or populations that will be achieved, including how the project will enhance resilience to changing environmental conditions in native aquatic populations. Describe how the project helps achieve the goals described in the Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Plan.

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. Project includes a plan for securing appropriate environmental and cultural clearances.

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.

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.

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.

Funding Need – Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested, and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

Conservation Plan and Context – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. In particular, the project fits within existing land use management plans for the region, including the [West Mojave Route Network Project Land Use Plan Amendment](#), [Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan](#), and the FWS’ [2011 Revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise](#). The applicant should indicate the context of their proposed projects within these or other relevant plans that promote Mojave desert tortoise conservation.

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.

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. 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.) *If the project has any nexus with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and/or tribal lands or trust resources, please discuss their involvement in the project and request a letter of support from the appropriate office.*

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 Acknowledgment 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), Wilderness Act and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. 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 [Desert Tortoise Recovery Partnership page](#) of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar [Register Here]	December 12 th , 2024, 10:00am – 11:00am PST / 1:00pm – 2:00pm EST
Full Proposal Due Date	February 27 th , 2025, by 8:59pm PST / 11:59 pm EST
Review Period	February – May 2025
Awards Announced	May 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 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.

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:

For general program questions:

Kirstin Neff
Senior Manager, Southwest Rivers Program
Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org
(303) 222-6485

Ramsey Raslan
Manager, Rocky Mountain Regional Programs
Ramsey.Raslan@nfwf.org
(771) 208-2102

For application questions and to schedule a pre-application meeting:

Emma Wigger
Coordinator, Regional Programs
Emma.Wigger@nfwf.org
(202) 888-1680

To discuss project ideas and geographic priority areas:

Clay Noss
RASP Coordinator
Mojave Desert Land Trust
Clay.Noss@mdlt.org
(760) 366-5440 ext. 261

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.