



2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

[Applicant Webinar](#): January 23, 2025 3:00 PM Eastern Time

Pre-Proposal Due Date: February 11, 2025 by 11:59 PM ET

Full Proposal Due Date: April 11, 2025 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 \$8.7 million in grants in 2025 to improve and enhance: 1) stream and riparian habitat to benefit species and improve water quality 2) green stormwater infrastructure in the Great Lakes communities 3) invasive species control to protect restored habitat and 4) activating restored habitats and greenspace. The program is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in partnership with the Caerus Foundation, Cleveland-Cliffs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA Forest 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](#). Eligible projects must occur within the United States portion of the Great Lakes basin. In 2025, 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. Activating Restored Habitats and Greenspace

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

This category will direct up to \$3.3 million to projects that improve stream and riparian 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 restoration strategies under category 1.

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.

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 identified by GLRI Action Plan 4, state conservation plans, habitat-based assessments, state or federal threatened and endangered species, etc.

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

All proposals must select and plan to report on the following required metrics: lbs of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually, lbs of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually, and lbs of sediment prevented from entering system annually. 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.

Category 2: Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities

The green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) category will direct up to \$2.6 million to green infrastructure projects that improve stormwater capture and storage to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including reducing runoff, combined sewer overflows, basement backups, and flooding through nature-based design. Much of the region is covered in impervious surfaces and these threats pose significant risks to communities, with disproportionately severe impacts to low-income communities and communities of color. GSI projects should utilize natural design elements/nature-based solutions to reduce and treat stormwater where it falls while delivering environmental, social and community benefits.

Projects must add more than 100,000 gallons of stormwater storage capacity per year and directly benefit Great Lakes water quality. 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:** create wetlands in or adjacent to communities to slow, store and filter stormwater and reduce flooding while improving habitat. This may include restoring wetland or floodplain hydrology, transitioning alternate land-use (e.g. drain tiles or vacant residential lots) areas to functioning stormwater wetlands, etc.
- **Install green infrastructure:** installation of rain gardens, bioswales, 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

Competitive proposals will focus the majority of the on-the-ground work on installing and/or maintaining GSI practices that are predominantly vegetative or green, with an emphasis on nature-based solutions. If projects incorporate structural GSI elements, such as pervious pavement, cisterns, subsurface detention, green roofs, etc. these elements will need to compliment GSI practices that focus on natural vegetative solutions, such as rain gardens and should not be proposed as the focus of a project. ***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 ten (10) 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 \$1.8 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 through retreatment. 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

All proposals should discuss why the site(s) where re-treatment will occur have been selected, considering the location(s) of projects, strategic purpose and need of the retreatment, and timeliness or need for this retreatment considering both on the ground realities of the habitat and other external factors, such as management responsibilities etc. Where relevant, applicants should identify local or regional plans/strategies that relate to the project and inform project plans and site selection. 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; 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.

All applicants must include a stewardship and/or operation and maintenance plan that details project site operation and management for at least ten (10) 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 and associated primary invasive species control measures that will benefit from the proposed invasive species retreatment. 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/>.

Funding Category 4: Activating Restored Habitats and Greenspace

Funding in this category will support up to \$1 million in grants that activate sites that have been previously restored, including those previously funded by GLRI or NFWF. Sites should be activated by increasing community engagement, public access to natural areas/greenspace, community participation, ownership and long-term stewardship of previously restored sites to maintain high quality habitat. Projects should strategically advance multiple priorities including enhancing community engagement and participation while also conducting needed on-the-ground stewardship or restoration. All proposals should describe the rationale or plan for selecting the project location, the public access or greenspace elements proposed, and identify the communities and/or target audiences that will be served by the project and how they will be meaningfully and actively engaged to encourage public use of the site.

To do this work well, we see long-term sustained commitments to community and municipal engagement as critical. All applicants will be asked to provide, or develop with NFWF funding, a longer-term community and partnership framework that is a part of the organization or partner org's strategic operations or current priorities. Projects should support public-private partnership development – both with partners at the community level and with municipalities to support project sustainability and long-term impact through direct investments such as maintenance.

All applicants submitting a proposal under this funding category should reach out to NFWF staff to discuss project ideas prior to submitting a proposal. Funding will support projects that encompass the following elements and advance multiple benefits for communities, habitat, and public-access.

- **Engage communities and enhance participation in nature:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations to activate restored habitat and greenspace through strategic, direct engagement of communities and user groups that encourage public use, enhance community health, increase accessibility, empower communities and enhance ownership and agency in natural spaces, and remove barriers for communities. These can include: public education opportunities in natural areas, programs and experiences in natural areas, conservation-oriented workforce development programs, enhancing volunteerism and long-term stewardship of sites, training the next generation of conservationists and nature enthusiasts, increasing active use of natural areas by removing barriers for community access through supported activities, events, and programs.

Category 4 projects may also include the following components as complementary activities to community engagement.

- **Create new or enhance existing public-access infrastructure:** Add new or enhance existing infrastructure that improves public access, accessibility and engagement in previously restored natural areas or greenspace. Funding is not intended for spaces that already have high quality infrastructure and visitorship. Public access improvements may include but are not limited to construction of trails, green space, nature-based or nature compatible recreation, public access points, and infrastructure enabling use of waterways and habitats, such as paddle craft launches, wildlife viewing areas, gathering spaces etc. This priority must complement other strategies and will not be competitive to stand alone.

Activation is the key; this is not intended to fund park beautification such as boardwalks or pavilions *without* on-the-ground restoration or community engagement components.

- **Improve habitat stewardship:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations and implement stewardship activities to enhance long-term, sustainable habitat stewardship, including adaptive management, invasive species control and direct community engagement. Manage habitat or greenspace to improve and protect habitat quality and enhance resilience of restored project sites and public access infrastructure. This priority must enhance multiple benefits and will not be competitive as stand-alone investments.

Successful projects will select metrics from any of the funding categories relevant to the project scope (e.g. acres restored, gallons of stormwater storage added, etc.) and pair those ecological metrics with engagement and access metrics. Category 4 projects should be designed to span up to 3 years or 3 field seasons to increase sustainability and long-term success. Proposed projects should be of sufficient size, scope, or unique ecological value to necessitate a strategic re-investment in the previously restored habitat or greenspace. Projects should not request funding to supplement municipal parks budgets or associated activities. Activities not supported by this opportunity include: long-term transportation to sites, stand-alone parking lots or other infrastructure that is not required for project success, planned or sustained site maintenance activities such as cleaning, mowing, permanent restrooms or other park facilities, annual repairs to existing infrastructure etc.

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.

Applicants are encouraged to select only the metrics that best reflect the purpose and intended impact of the project. Applicants can select any metric relevant and are not limited to those aligned with the funding category they are applying for. ***Additional guidance to assist applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes is available at 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; 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
<p><i>Habitat Restoration to Conserve Species and Improve Water Quality</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Miles of instream habitat restored ● Miles of riparian habitat restored ● # passage barriers rectified ● # habitat structures installed, replaced, upgraded, or repaired ● Miles of stream opened ● Acres of wetland habitat restored ● Removal of invasives – acres restored (initial treatment) ● Miles of beach or dune habitat restored (includes shoreline) ● Acres with restored hydrology ● Acres floodplain restoration ● *Lbs. of phosphorus prevented from entering system annually (required for strategy 2) ● *Lbs. of sediment prevented from entering system annually (required for strategy 2) ● *Lbs. of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually (required for strategy 2)
<p><i>Expand Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Great Lakes Communities</i> *Required metric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● *Gallons of stormwater storage added (include projection of gallons of stormwater captured or infiltrated annually) ● Square feet of impervious surface removed ● Square feet of green infrastructure installed (include details on plant species selected, seed mixes, etc.) ● # trees planted (include tree size, species selected, planting density and anticipated total acres of tree planting) ● Lbs. P avoided (annually) ● *Lbs. of sediment avoided (annually) ● Lbs N avoided (annually)
<p><i>Invasive Species Control to Protect and Enhance Restored Habitat</i> *Required metric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Removal of invasives – acres restored (# acres of invasives removed or treated. Specify # of acres receiving retreatment (previously treated acres), initial treatment, as well as the total project footprint (total acres receiving treatment)) ● Acres of wetland habitat restored (specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species, species of plants to be installed and/or seed mixes to be used) ● Miles of riparian habitat restored (specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species, species of plants/trees/shrubs to be installed and/or seed mixes to be used) ● Acres floodplain restoration (specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species, species of plants/trees/shrubs to be installed and/or seed mixes to be used)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land restoration – acres restored (specify acres of upland habitat re-treated for invasive species, species of plants/trees/shrubs to be installed and/or seed mixes to be used)
<p><i>Activating Restored Habitats and Greenspace (all funding categories encouraged to incorporate these metrics)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● # jobs created ● # jobs sustained ● # internships or fellowships (enter number of people employed as interns or fellows) ● # people reached (enter # of people actively engaged via site activation opportunities, e.g. workshops, conservation actions, community events, etc.) ● # volunteer hours (hours of volunteers participating in restoration activities. Include total # of volunteers engaged.) ● # acres of neighborhood green space created or improved ● Access points developed/improved (public access points enabling activation and use of natural areas/habitats) ● # miles trails developed or improved

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 \$8.7 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2025. 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 October 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 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](#).

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.

- ***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.
- ***Scale:*** At a minimum, the 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 a minimum of 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.
 - ***Pollinator Habitat:*** If proposal is restoring habitat to benefit pollinators, plantings proposed must include at least one species of regionally appropriate milkweed. To help meet the nutritional needs of a broad range of pollinator species, plantings must also provide at least three native blooming nectar species (in addition to milkweed) during each of the following periods: spring, summer, and fall.
- ***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 most economically 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 1-3 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 plans 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. 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; Matt Symbal: 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 the level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

2025 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 23, 2025 3:00 PM Eastern Time
✓ Pre-Proposal Due Date	February 11, 2025 11:59 PM ET
✓ Invitations for Full Proposals	March 14, 2025
✓ Full Proposal Due Date	April 11, 2025 11:59 PM ET
✓ Proposal Review Period	May - August
✓ Awards Announced	September/October

WEBINARS

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

- **SOGL 2025 Funding Opportunity Applicant Webinar**
 - *January 23, 3:00 PM Eastern Time*
This webinar will provide additional information on the 2025 funding opportunity including specific guidance related to funding categories offered, navigating the application process, and answering participant questions.
[Register Here](#)
- **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 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. 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

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.