# Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund

## 2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

NFWF is committed to operating in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. We continuously monitor legal and regulatory developments to ensure our policies, procedures, and operations align with current federal directives. We encourage all applicants to do the same.

The ability and extent to which NFWF is able to make awards is contingent upon receipt of funds from federal agencies and/or other funding partners. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

## TIMELINE
Dates of activities are subject to change.  Please check the program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information regarding the *Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund*.

Applicant Webinar: **Recording to come; email sarah.vest@nfwf.org to be notified when the recording is posted**
Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, April 24, 2025, by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**
Review Period: May- August 2025
Awards Announced: August 2025

## OVERVIEW
The Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund (Fund) seeks to award grants to:
- Restore, enhance and maintain bottomland hardwood forests and wetlands,
- Implement voluntary conservation practices on working agricultural lands to improve soil health, wildlife habitat, and water quality,
- Promote aquatic connectivity to improve wildlife habitat and water quality, and
- Improve community resilience for people and wildlife.

Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), International Paper's Forestland Stewards Partnership, the Walton Family Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## GRANT AWARD INFORMATION
Grant awards are expected to range from $150,000 to $1,000,000, depending on the overall scale of the project. Applicants considering proposals outside of this funding range are encouraged to contact NFWF prior to submitting. This program has one annual application cycle.

**Project Period:** Anticipated completion time for funded projects typically will be 24-48 months following finalization of a grant agreement. Significant progress with project implementation is expected to be achieved in year one, including interim deliverables. 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.

**Matching Funds:** Projects should have a minimum match of 1:1 non-federal cash or in-kind, but larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a variety of partners are encouraged and will be more

competitive.[1] Projects unable to provide a 1:1 non-federal match are eligible, but applicants must contact NFWF to discuss match waiver options prior to submitting a proposal. Applicants are encouraged to describe federal partner contributions in the proposal narrative, although those contributions will not count toward the minimum match requirement.
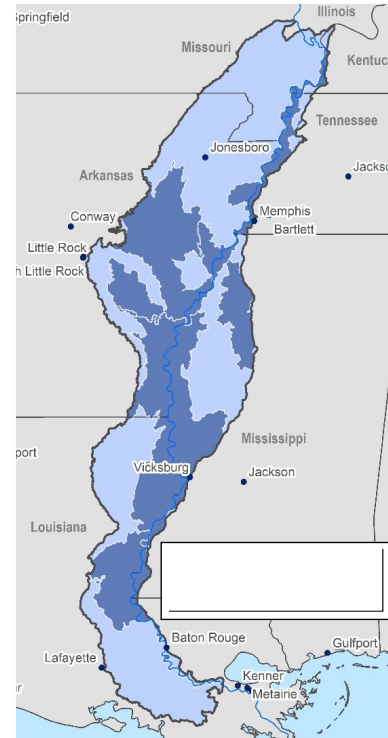
## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The Fund will award grants within the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley (LMAV) region of Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. Preference will be given to projects that are:

- Located within focal geographies as depicted in Map 1 (an interactive map can be viewed here: **Interactive Map**.)
- On or proximate to National Wildlife Refuges or state Wildlife Management Areas, such that the work benefits the Refuge/Wildlife Management Area

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Fund is guided by NFWF's Business Plan for Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley. The Business Plan identifies Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus)* and swamp rabbit (*Sylvilagus aquaticus*) as focal species that serve as indicators of healthy bottomland hardwood forest and aquatic habitat, representing the habitat needs of a broader suite of species dependent upon these systems. The Plan also identifies strategic priorities for voluntary restoration and enhancement of those habitats to benefit these species. Projects should consider the habitat goals for these species and address the priorities identified in the Business Plan. Additional species that are indicators of healthy bottomland hardwood wetlands and improved aquatic connectivity will also be



**Map 1. Geographic Focus**

considered in a proposal, including: forest birds waterfowl, and freshwater fish such as gar. Work that benefits these species is important to private landowners and will improve habitat for a suite of other species including white-tailed deer and wild turkeys. Projects should seek to benefit at least one of these species or groups. Proposals should also draw linkages to how project activities will advance specific goals and objectives of any other relevant conservation plans.

In pursuit of habitat and species restoration goals, applicants are encouraged to develop projects that also help create jobs, address conservation co-benefits, and benefit local communities including new and veteran farmers and ranchers.

- **Community Impact and Engagement**: Projects that incorporate outreach to communities, foster community engagement, facilitate job development, and pursue collaborative management are encouraged. Applicants are also encouraged to incorporate relevant traditional ecological knowledge. Applicants are encouraged to meaningfully engage and partner with community-level groups such as municipalities, non-governmental organizations, community organizations, community leaders, tribes, and private landowners.

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[1] Note that landowner contributions being used as match for a Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund grant must be outside of the amount already written into any agency financial assistance contract as a financial assistance contribution.

- **Conservation Co-Benefits:** Habitat restoration and other practices that benefit wildlife while also sequestering carbon and/or protecting and improving water quantity or quality are encouraged. Applicants should reach out to program staff prior to submitting a proposal to discuss projects that will explicitly address carbon and water outcomes.
  - **Note**: NFWF may calculate the estimated carbon benefits associated with any given project. These calculations will not be used for carbon credits, but rather for narrative and demonstration of the potential carbon value of any project and conservation practice(s) supported through this program.

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### New This Year

- **Nature Based Solutions:** Projects should consider nature-based solutions that restore habitat and decrease communities' risk to climatic and other environmental impacts and natural disasters. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)[2] and state emergency management agencies are good sources for more information. Examples include:
  - Improving community resilience to flooding by restoring wetland hydrology
  - Reduce demands on groundwater and improve aquifer recharge, such as by restoring marginal cropland to forested habitat
  - Improve water quality by restoring wetlands
- **Benefit to National Wildlife Refuges/State Wildlife Management Areas:** Projects that are on or proximate to National Wildlife Refuges or State Wildlife Management Areas such that they provide benefit to those areas are encouraged. Particular interest in projects that pursue bottomland hardwood, wetland, and aquatic habitat restoration projects to benefit forest resilience, hydrologic restoration.

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**Funding Categories:** Projects should seek to address one or more of the following categories to address the earlier mentioned program habitat priorities and populations of at-risk, listed and other wildlife species, with preference given to projects that benefit Business Plan focal and prospective species such as the Louisiana black bear, swamp rabbit, forest birds, waterfowl and/or freshwater fish.

1. **Bottomland Hardwood Forest Enhancement and Maintenance (Management):** Manage and enhance existing bottomland hardwood forests to improve wildlife habitat[3] and water quality, including, but not limited to National Wildlife Refuges, state Wildlife Management areas, and lands enrolled in the NRCS Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)/Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and/or Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

   Examples of eligible enhancement and maintenance treatments include:
   - Forest thinning
   - Pre-commercial thinning
   - Invasive species control
   - Crop tree release

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[2] https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities

[3] Resources to inform and guide bottomland forest management may be found on the Lower MS Valley Joint Venture website: https://www.lmvjv.org/

Treatments should improve forest stand structure and composition ([desired forest conditions](#)) to benefit wildlife. Projects that include treatments on properties enrolled in WRP/WRE, CSP, and/or EQIP must coordinate with the appropriate NRCS state office to ensure compatibility with those programs and should reference the [Tool for Assessment and Treatment of Reforested Bottomland Hardwood Stands on Wetland Reserve Easements](#).

2. **Bottomland Hardwood Forest Restoration (Planting):** Restore bottomland hardwood forests in targeted areas that expand existing bottomland hardwood forests and create corridors between existing blocks of bottomland hardwood forest to promote wildlife dispersal and expansion. For the purposes of the Fund, "restoration" refers to the establishment of new bottomland hardwood forests, including reforestation of harvested sites and afforestation of cropland. Specific strategies may include:

   - Bottomland Hardwood Plantings: Establish new bottomland hardwood stands through site preparation and planting of bottomland hardwood seedlings, including residual stocking/plantings within existing stands.

   - Natural Regeneration: Implement practices that promote natural regeneration of bottomland hardwood forests.

   - Addressing Barriers to Reforestation: Implement strategies that increase seedling availability and address other potential barriers to bottomland hardwood reforestation, including but not limited to, seed collection and storage and expanding seedling nursery capacity. Applicants requesting funds to address reforestation barriers should contact NFWF staff prior to submitting.

3. **Restore, Wetland and Floodplain Hydrology:** Improve water quality, natural hydrological function, and wildlife habitat through implementation of practices including, but not limited to:

   - Connecting wetlands and water features between adjacent properties
   - Improving wetland habitat and function through vegetation management
   - Managing for moist soil plants
   - Installation of low-maintenance water control structures, such as flashboard risers, for water management capability

4. **Implement Conservation Practices on Working Agricultural Lands:** For the benefit of wildlife, support practices that reduce runoff and sedimentation, improve soil health, and enhance wildlife habitat through the implementation of conservation practices on working agricultural lands, including, but not limited to:

   - Rerouting agricultural runoff to constructed or restored wetlands,
   - Rehabilitating or stabilizing ditches and/or gullies, and/or
   - Integrating sustainable agricultural practices such as cover crops, no-till, conservation crop rotation, and establishing buffer strips.

5. **Outreach and Technical Assistance to Private Landowners, Forest Practitioners and Other Key Constituencies:** Funding is available this year from NRCS to support technical assistance and outreach to private landowners/producers. The Fund desires to support projects that direct staff resources to help agricultural producers design and implement conservation practices and increase Farm Bill program participation and conservation practice implementation among agricultural producers.

   - **Eligible funding strategies**:
     - Landowner/producer outreach and assistance: Targeting outreach and assistance to landowners/producers to increase landowner implementation of conservation

practices. Where applicable, applicants should describe how they are coordinating with or plan to collaborate with NRCS to prioritize, plan, and deliver NRCS financial assistance.

- Landowner/producer technical assistance: Grant recipients will provide technical assistance to interested farmers, ranchers, and private forestland owners to develop management plans, design and implement conservation practices, and participate in Farm Bill programs, especially the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE). A particular emphasis should be placed on promoting, designing, and implementing conservation practices that improve soil health, support grazing system resiliency, restore wetlands, develop perennial wildlife habitat, improve nutrient management, and enhance forest health.

  - NRCS Coordination – Please ensure the project aligns with NRCS goals, priorities, and capacity needs by conferring with the NRCS State Conservationist and their staff in the state in which your project is located. A list of NRCS contacts can be found here.

- Increase forest practitioner technical capacity: Investments to improve forest practitioners' technical knowledge of management treatments that will achieve desired forest conditions for wildlife through peer-to-peer learning, workshops, and field days.

- Public engagement to minimize human-bear conflicts: Capacity for outreach, education, training, technical assistance, and implementation of practices to promote human-bear coexistence and improve perceptions towards Louisiana black bears in the LMAV. Projects may also include engagement with the public to increase awareness of and support for Louisiana black bear recovery, such as workshops and outreach events that reduce opposition to Louisiana black bear recolonization.

- Projects should effectively align with other existing private landowner initiatives or programs, such as US Fish & Wildlife Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program and USDA's Working Lands for Wildlife.

- **Targeted Areas:** Projects providing outreach and technical assistance to private landowners and producers are eligible within the entire program boundary. However, there is also additional designated funding this year for projects providing direct technical assistance to private landowners and producers in the **Arkansas** and **Mississippi** portions of the LMAV that must be awarded to projects within these states. Please reach out to NFWF staff if you are considering a project providing technical assistance in either of these states.

- **Advance new market-based solutions or incentives:** Projects may also pilot innovative, market-oriented nature-based solutions, or incentives that stimulate landowner participation in restoration, enhancement, and protection practices of bottomland forests and wetland; and/or conservation practices on agricultural lands.

- **Increase participation in third-party forest certification:** Increase participation in third-party forest certification programs to encourage third-party verification of sustainable forest management practices for bottomland hardwood forests and associated wildlife.

6. **Bottomland Hardwood Forest Habitat Conservation (Easements):** Facilitate voluntary conservation easements that protect existing, high quality bottomland hardwood habitat, or sites targeted for

bottomland hardwood restoration and/or enhancement. Conservation easement projects will be most competitive when included as part of a broader restoration proposal. Funding is available for staff capacity and/or due diligence/transaction costs. However, in limited instances, high leverage projects may be considered for conservation easement acquisition costs. **Please contact NFWF program staff to discuss specific land conservation projects.**

7. **Improve Aquatic Connectivity:** Remove or retrofit water conveyance structures, such as dikes and levees, to improve flows between rivers and side channels to increase habitat connectivity for fish and other aquatic species. Projects that benefit gar (fish) and increase the frequency and duration of floodplain and/or oxbow connection to the Mississippi River main stem for gar are of interest.

    To be competitive, each aquatic connectivity proposal and/or aquatic habitat improvement proposal should include a section detailing the pre- and post-intervention freshwater fish monitoring at the site to be conducted either by the applicant or a named partner/subcontractor.

8. **Restoration Response Monitoring:** Develop and implement monitoring protocols to measure Louisiana black bear, swamp rabbit, forest bird, waterfowl and gar (fish) response to habitat restoration and enhancement. Where baseline data are not available, monitoring proposals should establish a baseline measurement. This baseline should then be used to measure change over time as restoration activities are undertaken. Monitoring projects may be paired with other monitoring work that federal and state agencies or other partners are performing. Preference will be given to monitoring proposals that include habitat restoration and/or enhancement activities or monitor species response to habitat restoration and/or enhancement work funded through another NFWF Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund project. Monitoring for Louisiana black bear and swamp rabbit should track progress towards species outcomes included in Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley business plan. Monitoring for gar should focus on measuring gar response to floodplain and aquatic connectivity restoration projects that improve rearing habitat for a suite of gar species found within the Lower Mississippi River system, including longnose, shortnose, spotted and alligator gar. Applicants are encouraged to contact NFWF program staff prior to submitting a proposal to discuss projects that include species monitoring.

## PROJECT METRICS
To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for future reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact Zack Bernstein (zachary.bernstein@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

| Strategy | Recommended Metric | Additional Guidance |
|---|---|---|
| **Bottomland Hardwood Forest Enhancement and Maintenance** | LMAV – Improved management practices - Acres under improved management (private) | Enter the # of acres that will be treated to enhance or maintain existing bottomland hardwoods on private lands. Examples of treatments to be tracked under this metric include thinning, pre-commercial thinning and crop tree release to improve forest stand structure, and tree and understory species composition. Please do not include acres of invasive species treatments in this metric as this activity is tracked through a separate metric. |
| | LMAV – Improved management practices - Acres under improved management (public) | Enter the # of acres that will be treated to enhance or maintain existing bottomland hardwoods on public lands. Examples of treatments to be tracked under this metric include thinning, pre-commercial thinning and crop tree release to improve forest stand structure, and tree and understory species composition. Please do not include acres of invasive |

| | | species treatments in this metric as this activity is tracked through a separate metric. |
|---|---|---|
| | LMAV – Removal of invasives – Acres restored on private lands | Enter the # of acres of invasives removed on private lands. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Forest understory, Shrubs, Kudzu/vines, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Swamp), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No). |
| | LMAV – Removal of invasives – Acres restored on public lands | Enter the # of acres of invasives removed on public lands. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Forest understory, Shrubs, Kudzu/vines, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Swamp), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No). |
| | LMAV – Land, wetland restoration - # acres returned to desired forest condition | Enter the acres of existing bottomland forests that meet minimum desired forest stand conditions (Table 2) as defined by the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture resulting from the forest enhancement or maintenance treatments implemented through this project. |
| | LMAV - Project footprint - Acreage of project footprint | Enter the total number of unique acres where one or more conservation practices were implemented. Only count an acre once, even if multiple activities or treatments will occur on that acre during the project. For crop management projects involving wheat, please indicate the total project acres in active wheat rotation in the NOTES section. |
| **Restore, Wetland and Floodplain Hydrology** | LMAV – Restoring hydrology - Acres with restored hydrology (private lands) | Enter the # of acres of wetlands and/or floodplain habitat to which hydrological function will be restored on private lands. |
| | LMAV – Restoring hydrology - Acres with restored hydrology (public lands) | Enter the # of acres of wetlands and/or floodplain habitat to which hydrological function will be restored on public lands. |
| **Implement Conservation Practices on Working Agricultural Lands** | LMAV - BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with conservation tillage | Enter the # of cropland acres with conservation tillage practices. Please describe conservation tillage practices in the NOTES section. |
| | LMAV - BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with cover crops | Enter the # of cropland acres with cover crops practices. Please describe the cover crop practices in the NOTES section. |
| | LMAV - BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - Acres with enhanced nutrient mgt | Enter the # of cropland acres with enhanced nutrient management practices other than or in addition to conservation tillage or cover crops. Please describe the nutrient management practices in the NOTES section. |
| | LMAV – BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction - lbs of sediment prevented from entering system annually | Enter the # of pounds of sediment that are estimated to be prevented from entering surface waters resulting from conservation practices implemented. In the notes, indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric. |
| | LMAV- Habitat management- Improved management practices- Acres of moist-soil units managed | Enter the # of acres of moist-soil units that are managed for wintering waterfowl foraging habitat. Please refer to *Moist-soil guidelines for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Region* (Strader and Stinson 2005) and *Wetland Management for Waterfowl Handbook* (Nelms 2007) for additional information. |
| **Bottomland Hardwood** | LMAV – Land, wetland restoration - Acres restored on private lands | Enter the # of acres of bottomland hardwood forest that will be established on private lands during the grant period of performance. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Forest Restoration** | | grass, shrub) and post-restoration (upland-- either broadleaf or conifer, swamp/bottomland--either broadleaf or conifer). Please also specify if the forest will be established through planting or natural regeneration. If planting, please also include the LMAV – Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on private lands metric to track the number of seedlings that will be planted. |
| | LMAV – Land, wetland restoration - Acres restored on public lands | Enter the # of acres of bottomland hardwood forest that will be established on public lands during the grant period of performance. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-restoration (upland-- either broadleaf or conifer, swamp/bottomland--either broadleaf or conifer). Please also specify if the forest will be established through planting or natural regeneration. If planting, please also include the LMAV – Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on public lands metric to track the number of seedlings that will be planted. |
| | LMAV – Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on private lands | Enter the # of seedlings that will be planted on private lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland, shrubland), average # of trees per acre planted, and forest type (upland-- either broadleaf or conifer, swamp/bottomland--either broadleaf or conifer). |
| | LMAV – Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on public lands | Enter the # of seedlings that will be planted on public lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland, shrubland), average # of trees per acre planted, and forest type (upland-- either broadleaf or conifer, swamp/bottomland--either broadleaf or conifer). |
| **Target Outreach, Education and Assistance to Private Landowners, Forest Practitioners and Other Key Constituencies** | **Note: Projects that will engage private landowners should select all three of the following metrics listed below for both general landowner engagement, as well as landowner engagement specifically targeted to reducing human-black bear conflict:** <ul><li>**# people targeted**</li><li>**# people reached**</li><li>**# people with changed behavior**</li></ul> **Data for all three metrics will enable NFWF to better understand landowner response to outreach and technical assistance efforts.** | |
| | LMAV - Outreach / Technical Assistance - # of conservation demonstration sites | Enter the # of demonstration sites that will be established to inform landowners and land managers on bottomland hardwood restoration and enhancement practices that benefit wildlife. |
| | LMAV - BMP development - # mgmt plans with BMPs | Enter the # of management plans that will be developed. For projects that will develop both forest restoration/management plans and conservation plans on agricultural lands, please break out the number of plans by type in the metrics notes section. |
| | LMAV – Outreach/Technical Assistance - # people targeted | Enter the # of landowners and practitioners that will be targeted by outreach activities, such as direct mail, email, or social media. Outcomes related to reducing human-black bear conflict should be included in the black bear specific metrics. |
| | LMAV - Outreach/Technical Assistance - # people reached | Enter the # of landowners and practitioners anticipated to be reached through training or technical assistance activities. The target value for this metric should be a subset of the "# of people targeted" metric. Outcomes related to reducing human-black bear conflict should be included in the black bear specific metrics. |
| | LMAV - Outreach/Technical Assistance - # people with changed behavior | Enter the # of private landowners reached who are expected to implement conservation actions. The target value for this metric should be a subset of the "# of people reached" metric. Outcomes related to reducing human-black bear conflict should be included in the black bear specific metrics. |

| | LMAV - Incentives - # participants receiving government agency cost share or financial assistance | Enter the # of participants receiving government cost share or financial assistance. Please do not include the number of participants receiving cost share from NFWF grant funds or private funding sources when reporting this metric. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP, WRE, state program, etc.). |
|---|---|---|
| | LMAV – Incentives - Dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance | Enter the dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP, WRE, etc.). |
| | LMAV – Incentives - Acres covered by government agency cost share or financial assistance | Enter the # of acres enrolled in government cost share or financial assistance programs. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP, WRE, etc.). |
| | LMAV - Building institutional capacity - # FTE with sufficient training | Enter the # of existing full-time employees that will be provided with training to improve technical knowledge. |
| | LMAV - Louisiana Black Bear - Outreach/ Technical Assistance - # people targeted | Enter the # of people that will be targeted to receive education on methods to reduce human-black bear conflict. Examples include people targeted through direct mailings, email and other communications efforts. |
| | LMAV - Louisiana Black Bear - Outreach/Technical Assistance - # people reached | Enter the # of people expected to be reached through efforts to reduce human-black bear conflict. The target value for this metric should be a subset of the "# of people targeted" metric. Examples include participation in workshops and other educational events. |
| | LMAV - Louisiana Black Bear - Outreach/Technical Assistance - # people with changed behavior | Enter the # of people expected to change their behavior regarding human-black bear conflict as a result of outreach efforts. The target value for this metric should be a subset of the "# of people reached" metric. |
| | LMAV - BMP development - # Acres covered by conservation plans | Enter the number of acres that are receiving conservation planning and other technical assistance to help producers meet eligibility requirements for USDA NRCS conservation programs and other Federal, State, and local conservation programs. |
| | LMAV - Economic benefits - # jobs sustained | Enter the # of paid jobs that are partially or fully sustained through this grant. The starting value for this metric should be zero and target value should be a whole number. Jobs should have existed prior to the grant, be funded by the grant, and be directly engaged in project activities. |
| | LMAV - Economic benefits - # jobs created | Enter the # of individuals hired to directly work on the project (non-volunteers). Jobs should be directly engaged in grant activities, funded by the grant, and shouldn't have existed prior to the grant. The starting value for this metric should be zero and target value should be a whole number. In the NOTES section, provide the FTE for the jobs created. |
| **Bottomland Hardwood Forest Habitat Conservation** | LMAV - Conservation easements - Acres protected under easement | Enter the # of acres of bottomland hardwood forest and/or wetland habitat that will be protected under long-term easement (permanent or >30-yr). Assuming the specific parcel(s) has been identified, in the NOTES indicate what % of natural land cover would have been cleared in the absence of the easement(s). |
| **Improve Aquatic Connectivity and Water Quality** | LMAV - Fish passage improvements - Acres of lake habitat opened | Enter the # of acres of aquatic habitat (stream, river, lake, etc.) that will be reconnected or opened. Examples: improving connectivity and natural flow regimes between the Mississippi River main stem and floodplain and oxbow lakes. |
| | LMAV - Fish passage improvements - Miles of stream opened | Enter the # of miles of aquatic habitat reconnected or opened. Examples: secondary channel, oxbow or other water features opened due to barrier removal or improvement. Mile opened is defined as # of |

| | | new miles that restoration makes accessible for aquatic species. For oxbow lake restoration, record # of miles connecting from main stem to oxbow lake. For dike notching, record # of miles of secondary channel. In map tool, include polygon of open stream, dike to be notched and/or accessible secondary stream as appropriate. Only include the miles of main stem and smaller tributaries connected until the next barrier upstream (or headwaters), but NOT lakes, ponds, or distance downstream from the barrier removed. Please use the Acres of lake habitat opened metric to track restoration or improvements to oxbows or scar lake habitats. |
| | LMAV - Fish passage improvements - # passage barriers rectified | Enter the # of in-stream barriers removed or retrofitted to increase aquatics habitat connectivity in THIS grant. In the notes, provide the barrier's SARP ID--see SARP Natl. Aq. Barrier Inventory (aquaticbarriers.org). If the barrier(s) is not in SARP, provide its lat/long or its name and source. |
| **Restoration Response Monitoring** | LMAV - Louisiana Black Bear - Monitoring - # of populations monitored | Enter the # of Louisiana black bear populations that will be monitored. |

# ELIGIBILITY

## Eligible and Ineligible Entities
- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, U.S. Federal agencies, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal Governments and Organizations, and educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include businesses, unincorporated individuals and international organizations.

## Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds
- 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.
- **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.

# 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.

| Conservation Outcomes | Budget | Technical |
|---|---|---|
| • Alignment with program goals and priorities<br>• Quantifiable performance metrics<br>• Appropriate monitoring of activities and outcomes<br>• Partnership & community engagement<br>• Project long-term sustainability | • Allowable and reasonable costs<br>• Matching contributions<br>• Cost effective | • Technically sound and feasible<br>• Logical and achievable work plan and timeline<br>• Engages technical experts<br>• Accurate spatial data<br>• Sound compliance approach (permits, NEPA, QAQC)<br>• Past grantee success<br>• Transferable |

**Partnership and Community Impact** – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with 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. 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 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Spatial Data** – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF's online mapping tool accurately represent the location(s) of 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.

**Conservation Plan and Context** – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy, as outlined in the "Program Priorities" section above. The proposal should describe how the project will advance the species goals and strategies outlined in the Business Plan for Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley.

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

**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.

## OTHER

**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), and carbon accounting (e.g., sequestration, avoided emissions).

**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. Requests for monthly advances will not be considered.

**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.

## 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 of the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login).  Enter your applicant information. Please disable the pop-up blocker on your internet browser prior to beginning the application process.

2.  Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.

3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

## APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be downloaded here.

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's Applicant Information page.

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

| **Jay Jensen** | **Zack Bernstein** | **Sarah Vest** |
|---|---|---|
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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.