



Community Grants Program Request for Proposals

The *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Program invites proposals for competitive funding through its Community Grants Program. To be considered for funding, applications must be submitted online (www.nfwf.org/easygrants) by **October 15, 2009** prior to midnight.

Program Overview

The *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Program is a public-private partnership among ArcelorMittal, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. The program is designed to support the implementation of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (www.epa.gov/glnpo/glri/index.html), an outcomes-focused initiative designed to protect, maintain and restore the chemical, biological and physical integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

The purpose of the Community Grants Program is to support community organizations, State and local governments and others working at the local level to protect and improve watershed health in the Great Lakes basin while building local stewardship capacity. The program supports habitat restoration, water quality improvement, and watershed planning and management. Projects that include an education, training or community outreach component linked to the preceding activities are encouraged.

Funding Availability

It is anticipated that approximately \$1.6 million will be available for grant awards through the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Community Grants Program during the current funding cycle.

Grant Size

Grant awards will range from \$25,000 to \$150,000.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, tribes, State and local governments, and educational institutions. Individuals, Federal agencies, and private for-profit firms are not eligible for grants through the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Community Grants Program.

Project Eligibility

To be eligible for consideration, projects must be located within the Great Lakes watershed. For the purposes of this program, the Great Lakes watershed is defined by the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement: Article 1. (h) "Great Lakes System" means all of the streams, rivers, lakes and other

bodies of water that are within the drainage basin of the St. Lawrence River at or upstream from the point at which this river becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States.

Projects must also directly address at least one of the following priority actions:

- Restore, enhance and protect near-shore and off-shore habitats (including habitats near islands).
- Restore, enhance and protect wetlands.
- Restore, enhance and protect tributaries and riparian corridors (with an emphasis on restoring fish passage).
- Restore, enhance and protect shoreline and upland habitats (including forested, savanna and prairie habitats).
- Reduce the threat from terrestrial and aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes basin.
- Promote individual stewardship and assist individuals, community-based organizations, businesses, local governments, and schools to undertake initiatives, including watershed planning, while addressing the preceding priorities.

Projects that seek funding for land or easement acquisition, political advocacy, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities, fundraising, legally mandated mitigation projects, general administrative overhead, or indirect expenses are not eligible.

Projects in the Lake Ontario watershed or the St. Lawrence River basin are eligible for funding through the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Program and the Fish Enhancement, Mitigation and Research Fund (FEMRF). Applications to the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Program for projects in these areas will be considered for funding under both programs; no further application to the FEMRF is required. More information can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/fwc/femrf.htm>.

Matching Contributions

There is not a match requirement for the Community Grants program; however, the ratio of matching funds offered is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio will tend to be more competitive than others. Applicants having difficulty securing match are encouraged to contact Todd Hogrefe (todd.hogrefe@nfwf.org; 612-713-5185) at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for information on potential sources of matching funds.

Matching funds may include cash, in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. The cost of recent land acquisition or easement may also qualify as match for a project involving work at the acquired site. To be eligible, matching contributions must be:

- non-Federal in origin (federally appropriated or managed funds are ineligible);
- raised and dedicated specifically for the project;
- spent between the project start and end dates designated in the grant application;
- voluntary in nature (mitigation, restitution, or other permit or court-ordered settlements are ineligible); and
- applied only to the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Community grant and not to any other matching program(s).

Project Duration

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be 18 months following finalization of a grant agreement. Projects may be a discrete part of a longer-term project, provided there are definable outcomes for the proposed phase of the overall effort. 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. The project start date may be back-dated up to 1 year prior to the proposal deadline to allow recent work directed to the project to be applied as match.

Evaluation Criteria

A panel of State, Tribal and Provincial reviewers and the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* advisory team will use the following criteria to help them evaluate proposals. Proposals that meet these criteria to a large extent are more likely to be competitive. The percentages assigned below indicate how reviewers will weight each category. The weighted criteria will provide a strong basis for project selections; however, project selections will also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types.

- Overall conservation merit (20%)

To what extent:

- will the project address an important conservation target?
- will the project have a significant positive impact on the conservation target?
- will project activities advance the goals of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other established watershed, regional, Tribal, State or Federal conservation plans?
- will the project yield enduring benefits, as indicated by provisions for long-term protection, maintenance or management as appropriate?

- Defined outputs and outcomes* (15%)

Outputs are activities that will be implemented as part of the project (i.e., what will be done). Outcomes are the results of a project (i.e., what will be achieved).

To what extent:

- are project outputs clearly defined in quantifiable terms? (e.g., invasive species control methods on X acres, removal/remediation of X number of fish barriers)
- are expected project outcomes clearly defined in quantifiable terms? (e.g., connectivity restored to X number of stream miles, projected target fish population increases of X%)

- Technical merit (10%)

Please do not send technical plans and drawings. Rather, provide details about how technical plans have been developed and which partners have been involved in technical oversight.

To what extent:

- is project implementation likely to be completed within the specified time frame?
- is the project likely to succeed, based on the implementation strategy outlined in the proposal?
- will necessary permits and approvals be obtained to allow work to begin soon after the proposed start date?
- does the application assess the risk of facilitating the spread of sea lamprey and other invasive species and include measures for minimizing that risk as appropriate? (relevant to stream connectivity/fish passage projects)

- Project costs (10%)

To what extent:

- is the project cost-effective?
- will the proposed budget be adequate to complete the proposed actions?
- does the project meet or exceed a 1:1 matching contribution ratio?

- Quality and quantity of partnerships (10%)

To what extent:

- will the project benefit from partnerships reflecting a broad range of community and government support?
- will the project partners make significant contributions, in the form of funding, time, or other resources?
- does the application include letters documenting the support/contributions of project partners?

- Qualifications of applicants (10%)

To what extent:

- does the applicant possess the education and expertise necessary to implement the project successfully?
- will the applicant have sufficient staff, facilities and other resources, as appropriate, to complete the project successfully?
- has the applicant successfully completed other projects similar to that being proposed?

- Education, training and outreach (10%)

Any proposed education, training or outreach activities must be linked to habitat work or invasive species control that will occur as part of the project. Projects that do not include either a habitat work component or an invasive species control component will not be considered for funding.

To what extent:

- will the project include stewardship, education, training and outreach components linked to on-the-ground restoration that will occur as part of the project?
- will the project use existing curricula or other existing educational resources? (Use of existing, proven curricula/resources is preferred.)
- will any proposed education efforts include an outdoor component? (Projects that involve only classroom sessions will not be considered for funding.)

- Monitoring and evaluation (15%)

Any proposed monitoring must be linked to habitat work or invasive species control that will occur as part of the project. Projects that include only monitoring/data collection will not be considered for funding.

To what extent:

- will the project include a pre- and post-implementation monitoring component appropriate to the scope and scale of the project?
- will the project include an effective mechanism to evaluate project outcomes?

*Special emphasis is placed on the need to state project outputs and outcomes in terms of quantifiable metrics. Such metrics will provide a primary basis for evaluating the ecological and environmental benefits of proposed projects. For additional guidance on this criterion, please contact Todd Hogrefe (todd.hogrefe@nfwf.org; 612-713-5185) at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Online Application Process

All application materials must be submitted online through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Easygrants system. Hard-copy applications will not be considered for funding.

To start an application, please click on the following link: <http://www.nfwf.org/easygrants>. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting their application. Once you have started an application, you may save it and return at a later time to complete and submit it, up until the application deadline. Please be sure to disable the pop-up blocker on your Internet browser prior to beginning the application process.

Also, please use the following link to access other useful information for applicants, including videos that demonstrate the Easygrants online system: <http://www.nfwf.org/applicantinfo>.

Guidance for Completing Proposals in Easygrants

The following headings refer to the sequence of specific sections and fields in the Easygrants application.

Project Information

- *Grant Amount Being Requested from NFWF:* Funding requests must be between \$25,000 and \$150,000.
- *Matching Contributions Proposed:* Match is not required but projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio using non-Federal funds will tend to be more competitive.
- *Projected Grant Start Date:* Projects generally should begin between May and September 2010, but project start dates may be back-dated up to 1 year prior to the proposal deadline to allow recent work directed to the project to be applied as match.
- *Projected Grant End Date:* Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be 18 months following finalization of a grant agreement (i.e., 18 months from May – September 2010).
- *Project Title/Name:* The project title/name should be descriptive in a way that helps distinguish it from the competition. (60 character limit)
- *Project Description:* The first sentence should describe the proposed activities and the second sentence should describe the ecological/environmental benefits of the project. (200 character limit)
- *Project Abstract:* The abstract should provide a more-detailed description of the project, including proposed activities, outcomes and partners. (1500 character limit)
- *Keyword(s):* The "Help" feature in Easygrants provides information on selection of Keywords. Among others, most projects' Keywords will include: Conservation Action, Conservation Threat, and Major Habitat Type.
- *Sub-keyword(s):* The "Help" feature in Easygrants provides information on selection of Keywords. The definitions of these categories may not be apparent from their titles.

Project Location

- *Project Location Country(ies)*: All projects must occur within “North America – United States” and/or “North America – Canada.”
- *Project Location State/Province*: Projects must take place within the Great Lakes basin. Therefore, selected States and Provinces may include Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Quebec and Wisconsin.
- *Project Location U.S. Congressional District(s)*: All U.S. Congressional Districts in which the proposed project will take place should be selected.
- *Project Location Description*: This description should include the relevant county(ies), general area of the relevant State(s)/Province(s) (e.g., northwestern, south-central), and major drainage basin(s) (e.g., Lake Michigan, Lake Superior) where the project will occur (200 character limit)

Outcomes and Indicators

The information provided in the fields of this section should describe the long-term conservation outcome(s) of the project, the major threats and/or opportunities associated with the project, and the activities that will address those threats and opportunities.

Permits and Approvals

If permits and/or approvals are required for the project, please list all permits and/or approvals required, their status (e.g., received, application submitted, intend to apply), and anticipated submittal/approval date.

Budget

The total of the budget line items must be equal to the “*Grant Amount Being Requested from NFWF*” entered in the Project Information section. It should not include matching funds. No part of the budget (neither NFWF funds nor matching contributions) may include: general administrative overhead or indirect costs, contingencies or miscellaneous costs; advocacy/lobbying; fundraising; litigation; terrorist activities; or activities in violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Matching Contributions

The total of these line items must equal the “*Matching Contributions Proposed*” entered in the Project Information section. Each source of matching contributions should be listed separately in the space provided. Matching contributions may include both cash and in-kind contributions. Please note the restrictions on use of matching funds above.

Uploads

In addition to entering the preceding information, applicants will need to upload several files into Easygrants. Required and optional files are described in the following table.

File	Required or Optional	Notes
Full proposal narrative	Required	Template provided in Easygrants; completed narrative not to exceed 7 pages in length
Board of Trustees	Required	Provide a list of members of Board of Trustees, Directors or equivalent. If your organization does not have a Board, upload a document stating that none exists.
A-133 Audit	Required	If your organization has not expended more than \$500,000 in Federal funds in the past year, upload a statement stating that an A-133 Audit is not required.
GAAP audited financial statements	Required	If your organization does not have GAAP audited financial statements, you may upload a balance sheet and profit/loss statement instead.
IRS Form 990	Required	If your organization is not a non-profit organization, upload a document stating that a 990 Form is not required.
Statement of Litigation	Required	Template provided in Easygrants
Map of project location	Required	Map should show the project location with respect to major landmarks (e.g., cities, rivers). A Google map is sufficient.
Map of project site/restoration design	Optional	To provide finer resolution than map of project location.
Letters of Support	Optional	Letters from significant partners, especially those providing matching contributions, are recommended.
Other relevant documents, figures and photos	Optional	10 page limit

Grant Application Workshops and Webinars

Sustain Our Great Lakes Program partners will host a series of workshops and a webinar to help prospective applicants develop high-quality project proposals that align well with the program's funding priorities. The events will provide additional information on the grants program, provide additional guidance on the application process, and provide answers to participant questions.

The event schedule is as follows.

- September 1: 9 – 11 a.m. CDT; Ameristar Casino Hotel, 777 Ameristar Blvd., East Chicago, IN
- September 2: 10 a.m. – 12 noon EDT; Ford Motor Company World Headquarters, The American Road, Dearborn, MI
- September 3: 10 a.m. – 12 noon CDT; Discovery World, 500 North Harbor Drive, Milwaukee, WI
- September 3: 10 a.m. – 12 noon CDT; Webinar; Login details to be provided to those who register.
- September 16: 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. EDT, ArcelorMittal Dofasco, 1330 Burlington Street E., Hamilton, Ontario
- September 16: 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. EDT, Victor Town Hall, 85 East Main Street, Victor, NY

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to participate. To register, please email your name, affiliation, and event location to info@sustainourgreatlakes.org.

Please call Todd Hogrefe, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, at 612-713-5185, or visit www.sustainourgreatlakes.org for more information.

Application and Review Timeline

To be considered for funding, applications must be submitted online by **October 15, 2009** prior to midnight.

- Thursday, Oct 15, 2009: Full proposals due
- Oct 15 – Dec 15, 2009: Proposals reviewed by a panel of State, Provincial and Tribal reviewers
- Dec 15, 2009 – Feb 15, 2010: Proposals reviewed by the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* advisory team
- Feb 15 – March 30, 2010: Congressional notification of intent to award grants
- March 30 – April 15, 2010: Anticipated announcement of awards
- April – May 2010: Grant agreements developed with successful applicants

General Procedures for Grant Recipients

After project selection, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation staff will work with applicants to prepare grant agreements and other necessary paperwork, all of which will be completed electronically using the Easygrants system. Additional information about the grantee's organization and its finances may be solicited during this time. Please note that preparation of grant agreements will require approximately 4 to 8 weeks after the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation receives the additional required information from the grantee. Once grants agreements are finalized, funds will be advanced to qualified grantees based on cash needs of the project; some awards may be made on a reimbursable basis. Grantees will be expected to submit interim and final financial and programmatic reports. Additional information on the grant process will be provided to successful applicants after project selection.

Quality Assurance Project Plans and Regulatory Compliance

If their projects involve significant environmental monitoring or data collection/generation, successful applicants will be asked to develop Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) as part of their grants. Applicants should budget time and resources to complete this task if appropriate. Please refer to <http://www.epa.gov/quality/qapps.html> for additional information about Quality Assurance Project Plans.

As applicable, successful applicants will be required to document that their projects have received or will receive all necessary permits and clearances to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, and other Federal, State and local regulations.

Technical Assistance and Additional Information

For more information about the grants program or for assistance with the application process, please contact Todd Hogrefe (todd.hogrefe@nfwf.org; 612-713-5185) at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Additional information can also be found on the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* website at: www.sustainourgreatlakes.org.

Partner Information

For additional information on the partners involved in the *Sustain Our Great Lakes* Program and their work in the Great Lakes basin, please click on the following links:

- ArcelorMittal: www.arcelormittal.com/usacr
- Fish Enhancement, Mitigation and Research Fund: www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/fwc/femrf.htm
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation: www.nfwf.org
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: www.glerl.noaa.gov
- Natural Resources Conservation Service: www.nrcs.usda.gov
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/glnpo/fund/qlf.html
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: www.fws.gov/midwest/greatlakes/glcoastal.htm
- U.S. Forest Service: www.fs.fed.us