

SUSTAIN^{OUR} GREATLAKES

2016 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Pre-Proposal Due Date: **Wednesday, February 17, 2016 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, April 21, 2016 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The Sustain Our Great Lakes program is soliciting pre-proposals to restore and enhance habitat in the Great Lakes basin. The program will award grants for on-the-ground habitat work, with a focus on improving the quality and connectivity of streams, riparian zones and coastal wetlands. Up to \$5 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2016. The program is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) with funding and other support from ArcelorMittal, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Significant program funding is provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a federal program designed to protect, restore and enhance the Great Lakes ecosystem.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur in the current or historic Great Lakes basin. Most of the available funding will be directed to projects in the United States. Approximately \$200,000–400,000 may be directed to projects in Canada. Within Canada, preference will be given to projects: 1) in the western Lake Ontario region, particularly near Hamilton and Toronto; and 2) along the St. Lawrence Seaway, particularly near Bécancour, Deschambault and Montreal.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

In 2016, grant funding will be awarded in two categories:

- Stream and Riparian Habitat
- Coastal Wetlands



Funding Category 1: Stream and Riparian Habitat

This category will direct an estimated \$1–2 million to projects that improve the quality and connectivity of stream and riparian habitat. Preference will be given to projects designed to improve populations of species of conservation concern, with an emphasis on native migratory fish, such as brook trout and lake sturgeon. Preference will also be given to projects that reduce sediment and nutrient loading to streams and other waters. Funding will primarily support the following four strategies.

- **Restore aquatic connectivity:** dam removal, bridge and culvert replacement, and fish passage structure installation to facilitate movements of fish and other aquatic organisms
- **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 fish and other aquatic organisms
- **Improve riparian habitat:** bank stabilization, invasive species control, and native plant restoration along streambanks and riparian wetlands to improve habitat and water quality

Applicants proposing work in coldwater streams are encouraged to align projects with the priority stream catchments visible by [clicking here](#). In addition, applicants proposing aquatic barrier removals are encouraged to use the new Fishworks tool ([click here](#)) to help describe expected connectivity improvements relative to other potential barrier removal scenarios in the project watershed. A webinar on how to use Fishworks is scheduled for January 28, 2016; see the *Webinar* section below for more information. (Also see the *Consultation with Sea Lamprey Control Program* section below for more information pertinent to barrier removals)

Funding Category 2: Coastal Wetlands

This category will direct an estimated \$2–3 million to projects that improve the quality and connectivity of coastal wetlands (defined as existing or historical wetlands with a current, previous or potential surface or subsurface hydrologic connection to a Great Lake or connecting channel such that wetland water levels are influenced by Great Lakes water levels). **Priority will be given to wetlands (on non-federal lands) monitored by the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Monitoring Program. More information on priority wetlands can be found by [clicking here](#).** Additional preference will be given to projects designed to improve populations of species of conservation concern, with an emphasis on shorebirds, waterfowl, and marsh-spawning fish such as northern pike. Funding will primarily support the following three strategies.

- **Restore aquatic connectivity:** installation of passage structures, and removal of sediment and hard structures to improve hydrology and access by fish and other aquatic organisms
- **Improve hydrology:** water control techniques to manage water levels, control invasive vegetation, and restore habitat for target species

- **Improve habitat structure:** invasive species control and native plant restoration to improve hydrology and habitat complexity

METRICS AND MONITORING

To help gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency between the monitoring data provided by multiple grant projects, applicants will be asked at the full proposal stage to describe proposed project activities and outcomes in terms of standardized metrics, shown in the following table. Applicants are encouraged to use the metrics listed, but they may also specify other metrics as needed. Only metrics relevant to the project being proposed should be selected in the application.

Funding Category	Recommended Metrics
<i>Stream and Riparian Habitat</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miles of in-stream habitat restored • Miles of riparian habitat restored • Acres of riparian habitat restored • # passage barriers rectified • Miles of stream opened • Lbs of phosphorus inputs avoided (annually) • Lbs of sediment inputs avoided (annually)
<i>Coastal Wetlands</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acres of wetland habitat restored • # passage barriers rectified • Acres of wetland habitat opened • # structures installed

In addition to the metrics above, applicants are encouraged to monitor biological outcomes, particularly improvements to target fish, shorebird and waterfowl populations. For information on the type of monitoring data requested by the Sustain Our Great Lakes program and for guidance on how to incorporate biological monitoring into a proposal, please contact Todd Hogrefe, NFWF Great Lakes Program Director (todd.hogrefe@nfwf.org; 612-564-7286).

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.

ELIGIBILITY

- ***Eligible and Ineligible Entities***

- ✓ Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Indian tribes, and educational institutions.
- ✗ Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and private for-profit businesses.

- ***Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds***

- ✗ Grant funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- ✗ Grant 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.
- ✗ Grant funds may not be used for rain barrels, rain gardens, green roofs, or research.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Up to \$5 million is expected to be available for grant awards in 2016. Individual grant awards will range from **\$50,000 to \$1,500,000**. In the past three years, the program has awarded an average of 27 grants per year, representing an application success rate of 22%.

PROJECT DURATION

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two years following finalization of a grant agreement. The grant period may include a third 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 August 1, 2016.

MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS

The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio will be more competitive. Matching contributions must be spent or applied between the start and end dates indicated in the application, and the application start date should not precede August 1, 2016.

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 match 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 first be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with organizational and funding source policies. Then, 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 balance, 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 program priorities outlined in the Request for Proposals.
- **Context:** Project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy. Some examples include Lakewide Action and Management Plans, lake biodiversity conservation strategies, watershed management plans, and climate adaptation plans. Project references documentation to support stated alignment with state or federal priorities (embedded links to referenced documents are encouraged).
- **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.
- **Scale:** Project will restore habitat on the order of tens of acres or hundreds of stream feet at a minimum.
- **Resilience and climate change:** Project will increase habitat resilience within the context of increased stress from a changing climate and other associated threats.
- **Species of conservation concern:** Project will benefit species of conservation concern, such as animals and plants identified as threatened, endangered or special concern at the state, provincial or federal level.
- **Efficacy of invasive species control:** Proposals for invasive species control 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 ([OMB Uniform Guidance](#)).
- **Matching contributions:** Project offers matching contributions that will enhance and leverage the impact of a grant award. Projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio will be more competitive. Matching contributions are to be spent/applied between the start and end dates specified in the application.

Qualifications

- **Past success:** Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing conservation practices with specific, measurable results.
- **Partnerships:** Project is supported by strong partnerships that leverage additional resources and expertise.

Implementation

- **On-the-ground implementation:** Project will apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground habitat 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.

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; plans described in the proposal include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

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. The Program uses multiple control methods to reduce sea lamprey populations in Great Lakes tributaries including barriers, dams and other existing structures that block spawning-phase sea lampreys from spawning and larval habitat. Annually, the Service inspects structures across the Great Lakes to determine their potential for preventing sea lampreys from migrating upstream. That information is maintained in a database and can be viewed using the [Great Lakes Fishery Commission Barrier Mapping Tool](#). The Service uses the database information to determine impacts to the Program when a structure (barrier, culvert, embankment, dike, water control structure, etc.) is proposed for removal or modification. The Great Lakes Fishery

Commission requests that any removal or modification project proposed in the Great Lakes basin be reviewed by Program staff during the project planning process. Project proposals and any other comments or questions regarding sea lamprey barriers can be directed to the Sea Lamprey Barrier Coordinator (Jessica Barber: jessica_barber@fws.gov).

At the pre-proposal phase of this funding opportunity, applicants proposing aquatic barrier removal(s) are asked to include concurrence documentation from the Sea Lamprey Control Program or an indication that consultation with the Program has begun.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Grants will be supported variously with funding from multiple sources, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Projects selected to receive GLRI funding will be subject to requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) prior to initiating work under the grant. Grantees shall provide the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with the documentation needed to obtain Service approval. In addition, if a project involves monitoring, data collection or data use, the grantee will be asked to prepare and submit [quality assurance documentation](#). Applicants should budget time and resources to complete these tasks.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the [Sustain Our Great Lakes website](#) for the most current dates and information.

✓ Grant Application Webinar	January 13, 11 AM Eastern Time
✓ Pre-Proposal Due Date	February 17, 11:59 PM Eastern Time
✓ Invitations for Full Proposals Sent	March 17
✓ Full Proposal Due Date	April 21, 11:59 Eastern Time
✓ Review Period	April 22–July 17
✓ Awards Announced	July 18–July 31

WEBINARS

Sustain Our Great Lakes partners will host the following two webinars to share additional information pertinent to this funding opportunity.

- **2016 Funding Opportunity – Guidance for Applicants**
January 13, 2016 at 11 AM Eastern Time/10 AM Central Time
This webinar will provide additional information on the current funding opportunity, provide additional guidance on the application process, and provide answers to participant questions. Webinar participants can **register** by [clicking here](#).

- **Navigating the Fishworks Tool**

January 28, 2016 at 11 AM Eastern Time/10 AM Central Time

This webinar will provide an overview of the online [Fishworks](#) tool, demonstrate how it can help prioritize aquatic passage barriers for removal, and explain how to incorporate this information into project proposals. Webinar participants can **register** by [clicking here](#).

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Easygrants system.

1. Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information.
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.

In addition to providing other information at the **pre-proposal stage**, applicants must upload a three-page Pre-proposal Narrative. The narrative template that must be used is available for downloading in Easygrants once an application has been initiated. The pre-proposal narrative template is available for viewing only by [clicking here](#).

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

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

Todd Hogrefe, NFWF Great Lakes Program Director (todd.hogrefe@nfwf.org; 612-564-7286)
Caroline Oswald, NFWF Great Lakes Program Manager (caroline.oswald@nfwf.org; 612-564-7253)

For assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact the Easygrants Helpdesk:

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org; Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM ET, Monday–Friday

Provide: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, grant program name, and a description of the issue.