Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund

Request for Proposals
Proposal Due Date: Thursday, May 15th, 2014 (midnight)

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to restore the habitats and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams. The Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) will award approximately **$8 million - $10 million in grants** in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Program. Major funding for the Stewardship Fund comes from the Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service, Altria Group, CSX, Shell, and Alcoa Foundation.

Grants will be awarded in two categories:

Small Watershed Grants (SWGs) of $20,000 to $200,000 each will be awarded to nonprofit organizations and local governments working to protect and improve local waters that contribute to the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay, while building citizen-based resource stewardship. These grants require minimum matching contributions valued at 25% of total project costs or 50% of the grant request. ***All 2014 SWG grants must be completed on or before March 30, 2016.***

Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants (INSRGs) of $200,000 to $500,000 each will be awarded to nonprofit organizations, local governments, universities and state agencies to demonstrate innovative approaches to accelerate adoption of the most cost effective and sustainable nutrient and sediment pollution load reductions to the Chesapeake Bay. These grants encourage non-Federal matching contributions valued at 50% of total project costs (i.e., 1:1 ratio). ***All 2014 INSR grants must be completed on or before September 30, 2016.***

CBSF CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Restore and protect vital habitats
- ✓ Restore forests (esp., riparian forested buffers) to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.
- ✓ Restore eroding streambanks to reduce sediment pollution and improve in-stream fish habitat.
- ✓ Restore and enhance wetlands to maximize benefits for wildlife habitat and water quality.
- ✓ Preserve forests, riparian corridors, wetlands and farmland that are vital for protecting water quality and wildlife habitat.
- ✓ Create fish passages to provide access to up-stream habitat for fish target species (esp., river herring, American shad, American eel).
- ✓ Restore sustainable populations of native oysters.

Improve conservation on private lands
- ✓ Reduce nutrient and sediment runoff and restore wetlands, streams, and riparian forested buffers on working forests and farms.
- ✓ Reduce nutrient and sediment runoff from residential and commercial properties.

Improve urban stormwater management
- ✓ Store, treat and infiltrate stormwater runoff through management practices such as bioretention and rain water harvesting.

All grant proposals MUST address at least one of the **CBSF Conservation Objectives** (see box.) In addition, INSRG proposals MUST accelerate reductions of nutrient and sediment pollution to the Chesapeake Bay.

NFWF will host a webinar for applicants on ***Wednesday, April 2nd*** to review this Request for Proposals and respond to questions. Applicants are strongly encouraged to participate, and can register for the webinar by following this link: https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/170358872

Priority Funding Strategies. Priority for both SWG and INSRG will be given to projects that successfully address at least one of the following three strategies.

1. **Targeted River and Watershed Restoration.** NFWF will invest in 17 targeted watersheds where opportunities exist to simultaneously achieve measurable water quality, habitat restoration and species recovery goals (see "Targeted Rivers" map). Targeted species include Eastern Brook Trout, river herring and native oysters. Targeted River Restoration proposals must achieve the "CBSF Conservation Objectives" in regions shown on the map and that implement the following strategies:

    - Improve adoption of riparian complex management that restores and protects headwater systems, including the floodplain, wetlands, and springs that provide baseline flows and water quality critical for Eastern Brook Trout and habitat.
    - Improve and retrofit of fish passages in areas that are under increasing pressure for forest and habitat fragmentation, e.g. headwater systems in the Marcellus shale- or AMD area of the Chesapeake Bay basin.
    - Leverage funding through land conservation and retirement programs, including USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and Wetland's Reserve Program (WRP), by providing outreach and technical assistance to landowners to renew or enter into new contracts to retire riparian forested buffers and wetlands from agricultural production. Projects should identify imbalances in sign-up and available cost-share, and use grant funding to meet excess demand or to generate new demand, as needed. Wherever practicable, proposals should seek to extend term contracts into perpetual easements. Opportunities to leverage land conservation or retirement efforts with the implementation of new conservation practices, such as the establishment or expansion of riparian forested buffers under CREP, are encouraged.
    - Provide enhanced technical assistance in farm communities where targeted environmental compliance activities may generate increased interest in conservation practices.
    - Identify and implement opportunities to accelerate nutrient and sediment reductions on working lands protected under Federal, state and local agricultural land preservation programs.

In addition, NFWF is seeking proposals that implement the following watershed-specific strategies:

- **Choptank and Nanticoke River Basins:** Demonstrate and deploy innovative market-based opportunities for alternative uses of poultry litter, incorporating evaluation of environmental performance monitoring and economic assessment where appropriate. Projects that address whole farm or watershed-scale nutrient balance and that support improved and integrated infrastructure for farms and local communities that result in improved water quality and/or additional revenue generating potential are encouraged. Restore native oyster populations and oyster reef ecosystems in Cox Creek and the Little Choptank and Tred Avon Rivers and restore fish passage in the upper Nanticoke watershed. Projects that successfully integrate multiple conservation objectives for watershed-scale improvements in water quality and habitat restoration and protection are encouraged.
- **Juniata River Basin:** Apply new models for the delivery of technical assistance to Plain Sect and other underserved agricultural producers in the region. Examples include the use of shared staffing and collaboration on program delivery and improving coordinated teams of technical assistance providers that include private- and nongovernmental sectors. Leverage in-stream, riparian, and floodplain habitat enhancements (including livestock exclusion and riparian forested buffers) with uplands nutrient and sediment load reductions, including manure injection, precision rotational grazing, and barnyard improvements.

- **Shenandoah River Valley and Upper Potomac Basins:** Accelerate the pace of livestock exclusion fencing in conjunction with more comprehensive grazing management systems including precision rotational grazing with the goal to approach 100% livestock exclusion paired with riparian forested buffers. Accelerate adoption of dairy manure injection technology while fostering sustained conservation tillage practices, especially through collaboration with custom operators and through innovations in cost-share and financing approaches. Projects that document and demonstrate improvements in stream health are encouraged.
- **Virginia's Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck:** Improve flood risk mitigation and water quality through the application of innovative approaches to retrofit existing stormwater ditch networks and install new stormwater management infrastructure. Accelerate the protection of coastlines vulnerable to erosion through the creation and protection of living shorelines. Projects should seek to engage local governments and elected officials in communicating restoration needs, defining project objects, and broadcasting project benefits to local communities.

All Targeted River Restoration projects should support the implementation of existing watershed management plans that have a clear baseline for water quality, habitat and species conditions and specific restoration goals. Applicants also should have a track record of implementation success and the local capacity to implement projects on a scale that will result in measureable and observable improvements to local rivers, streams and their habitats.

2. **Green Infrastructure in Urban Landscapes.** NFWF will invest in projects that build local government capacity for green infrastructure and accelerate adoption of green infrastructure practices on private lands.

- **Local Government Capacity: MS4 Communities.** Help local governments and community organizations integrate "green" solutions into capital programs for parks, schools, transportation and community redevelopment. Projects should demonstrate how local governments can integrate green infrastructure restoration, protection and maintenance into existing budgets and programs across multiple departments (e.g., public works, parks and recreation, emergency management, education, transportation). Grants will fund local governments and communities to review budgets, permitting processes, work flows and program delivery to systematically incorporate strategies to store, infiltrate and filter stormwater, and/or to restore floodplains and streambanks into capital improvement and maintenance programs. Examples include:

What is Green Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure is an approach to wet weather management that is cost-effective, sustainable, and environmentally friendly. Green Infrastructure management approaches and technologies infiltrate, evapotranspire, capture and reuse stormwater to maintain or restore natural hydrologies.

The preservation and restoration of natural landscape features (such as forests, floodplains and wetlands) are critical components of green stormwater infrastructure. By protecting these ecologically sensitive areas, communities can improve water quality while providing wildlife habitat and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

On a smaller scale, green infrastructure practices include rain gardens, porous pavements, green roofs, infiltration planters, trees and tree boxes, and rainwater harvesting for non-potable uses such as toilet flushing and landscape irrigation.

  - Train facilities managers and grounds maintenance crews in how to use urban nutrient management, subsoiling and other beneficial landscaping techniques;
  - When maintenance is planned for sewer lines and other utilities, create opportunities to stabilize streambanks and restore floodplains;
  - During road and sidewalk resurfacing projects, install bioretention cells in tree boxes and medians, and replace impervious surfaces with porous concrete;

- During construction and redevelopment of affordable housing, maximize beneficial landscaping (trees, native plants, rain gardens); and/or
- Incorporate innovative stormwater technologies (bioretention, green roofs, rainwater harvesting) into modernization plans for public facilities such as schools, parks and recreation facilities, fire houses and police departments.

- **Local Government Capacity: Non-MS4 Communities.** Assist local governments in the demonstration and development of projects and programs that mitigate stormwater impacts in high-growth, non-MS4 communities. Proposals should specifically address barriers to stormwater management in communities not experiencing regulatory or compliance pressures, including education for local decision-makers, developing appropriate staffing and resource strategies (i.e. shared staffing, cross-municipality delivery models), and moderate and large-scale demonstration sites for communicating benefits of improved stormwater that provide a "proof of concept" for green infrastructure.
- **Residential and Commercial Properties.** Increase adoption of green infrastructure practices on residential and commercial properties in targeted communities. Projects should strategically target audiences that move beyond the "early adopters" and may include:
  - Partnerships between local watershed restoration groups and local governments to design and deliver homeowner green infrastructure programs supported by long-term, sustainable sources of public and/or private financing.
  - Programs to promote **urban nutrient management** to reduce runoff from lawns and landscaping, delivered in coordination with established urban nutrient management guidelines (http://chesapeakestormwater.net/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/06/CBP-APPROVED-FINAL-UNM-EXPERT-PANEL-REPORT-062413.pdf). Where applicable, programs should also be delivered in coordination with the primary state urban nutrient management agency.
  - Efforts to re-forest urban and suburban lands by converting **"turf to trees"**; and/or
  - Incentive programs for landowners to implement practices that **retain stormwater on-site** through stormwater management practices such as bioretention and rain water harvesting.
- **Anacostia River Revitalization:** NFWF is seeking proposals for a special initiative to promote green infrastructure and urban stream restoration in the Anacostia River watershed. Preference will be given to projects that are prioritized in restoration and watershed plans approved and adopted by the D.C. government, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, the state of Maryland, and their stakeholders. Anacostia River projects should seek to
  - Improve water quality and restore habitat in the Anacostia River watershed and its tributaries;
  - Emphasize the neighborhood benefits of watershed restoration to local economic development, public health, livability and as a community asset;
  - Engage, employ and educate local residents and businesses; and,
  - Connect the public to the Anacostia and its tributaries through enhanced outdoor recreation and volunteer opportunities.

All Green Infrastructure projects must result in quantifiable reductions in the volume of stormwater runoff, and nutrient and sediment loads delivered to the Chesapeake Bay. Projects also should be able to characterize any cost savings realized from this approach, including from economies of scale, from changing project designs to perform multiple functions, and from leveraging investments by others (e.g., utilities, department of transportation, developers, etc.).

3. **Innovation on Crosscutting Issues.** NFWF will invest in innovative methods and new technologies that hold the promise to drive down costs, expand the effectiveness of restoration practices and accelerate the pace of recovery. NFWF is seeking the following innovative proposals:

   - Implement innovative strategies to: drive down the cost of wetland, forest buffer and stream restoration; increase performance in delivering water quality results; and/or accelerate implementation of high-impact restoration activities. Competitive projects will document existing barriers to accelerated implementation and discuss how the project directly addresses those barriers. Priority will be given to restoration on lands that are permanently or semi-permanently protected.
   - Find market-based solutions to resolve challenges associated with managing manure in regions with phosphorous-saturated soils. Increase adoption of under-utilized manure management practices at the farm scale and especially in agricultural communities where farm-to-farm adoption will be enhanced through proof of concept and economic and technical support (e.g. custom operators).
   - Support intergovernmental collaboration among local governments and partners to realize efficiencies in achieving water quality targets. Projects may included shared staffing and collaboration on program delivery, as well as joint restoration strategies to implement larger-scale restoration that benefits multiple downstream jurisdictions.
   - Create processes and infrastructure to support new or evolving trading and offset programs that effectively engage the private sector in restoration activities that reduce costs and accelerate the pace of recovery. Strategies and programs that attract private capital investment to finance the up-front costs of restoration are encouraged.
   - Implement under-utilized and/or innovative practices that, according to the updated Chesapeake Conservation Effects Assessment Project (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/nra/ceap/?cid=stelprdb1240074), constitute "under-treated" regions, and will increase the number of participants in Farm Bill programs and significantly increase the number of cropland acres that have conservation treatments.
   - Identify new stormwater management technologies that can drive down urban restoration costs and help communities achieve water quality standards. For proven stormwater management technologies, demonstrate innovative implementation approaches, that will significantly increase adoption and drive down per unit cost, including workforce development, outreach approaches, and engagement of underserved communities. Priority will be assigned to projects that include baseline data on practice adoption and seek to achieve aggressive implementation targets, as measured by a minimum 50% of landowners engaging in best management practices at the community or small watershed scale.
   - Demonstrate and deploy new techniques and technologies to improve the speed and accuracy of residential stormwater best management practice verification systems.
   - Apply new tools and models for assessing behavior changes and adoption conservation measures, including the use of community-based social marketing and community-based participatory research to identify the local barriers to adoption and develop delivery programs that specifically address those barriers.

Innovation projects should seek to affirm the proof of concept and are encouraged to include all environmental and economic monitoring, assessment, and evaluation to draw meaningful conclusions about program or technology effectiveness, and to include written case studies documenting the results.

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GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

- Projects must be implemented entirely within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which includes portions of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and all of the District of Columbia. Organizations located outside the Chesapeake Bay watershed may apply if their projects will be conducted entirely within the watershed.

- All proposals MUST address at least one of the CBSF Conservation Objectives, and be able to demonstrate significant, measurable outputs and outcomes that will help to achieve the objectives of the *Chesapeake Bay Executive Order: Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*. For more information about the Executive Order, visit: http://executiveorder.chesapeakebay.net/

- INSRG proposals MUST be able to demonstrate reductions of nutrient and sediment pollution to the Chesapeake Bay. Proposals should include scientifically credible estimates of both short-term and long-term nutrient and/or sediment reductions expected as a result of the project, as well as interim measures used to calculate nutrient reductions such as: acres of wetlands enhanced, acres of forest restored, miles of riparian forested buffer or stream bank restored, acres treated by stormwater BMPs, etc.

- Successful applicants should ensure that BMPs implemented as a result of the project support applicable WIP goals and milestones for restoring the Chesapeake Bay to the greatest extent possible (http://www.chesapeakebay.net/about/programs/watershed) and will be required to report applicable BMPs to the appropriate state reporting entity. At the time of award, NFWF will provide successful applicants with guidance on the appropriate reporting contacts in each jurisdiction, format for BMP reporting, and timelines for reporting project-level accomplishments.

- For stream restoration projects, significant, measurable outputs and monitoring performance standards should be tied to stream functions following guidelines presented in *"A Function-based Framework for Stream Assessment and Restoration Projects"* (Harman et al, 2012). A copy of this document can be downloaded from: http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/streampub.html. The functions to be assessed will be based on the project goals and objectives. However, the minimum functions that should be assessed include: floodplain connectivity, lateral stability, riparian vegetation, and sediment transport. It is strongly encouraged that documentation of stream functions follow Table 11.1 Functional Lift Determination example in the *Framework Document*.

- Due to accelerated timelines project completion, applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state or local requirements at the time of project application. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF requires that grantees provide certification from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and appropriate state agency representatives that the project has received all necessary permits.

- If projects involve significant environmental monitoring or data collection/generation, applicants will be asked to develop Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) as part of their grant. Applicants should budget time and resources to complete this task if appropriate. For more information about NFWF's Quality Assurance process, visit www.nfwf.org/chesapeake/qualityassurance

- Eligible applicants include: non-profit 501(c) organizations (e.g., watershed organizations, homeowners associations, environmental organizations, private schools, etc.), local governments and agencies (e.g., counties, townships, cities, boroughs, conservation districts, planning districts, utility districts, public schools), state government agencies and academic institutions.

- Individuals, federal government agencies and for-profit firms are ***not*** eligible for implementation grants.

- Projects must engage local partners to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project, as well as its integration into local programs and policies. In most cases these partners will include: local government agencies (e.g., departments of planning, zoning, public works, environment, conservation districts, school districts, etc.), local watershed groups, and community leaders.

- Projects must be technically sound and feasible and carried out by qualified individuals and organizations. Applicants are encouraged to provide documentation of technical assistance either received or committed to by appropriate state and federal agencies, academics and consultants. (Technical assistance is available through the Stewardship Fund. For more information, visit www.nfwf.org/chesapeake/technicalassistance.)

- Grantees must contribute **non-Federal matching funds and in-kind services** valued at a minimum of 25 percent of total project costs. For INSRG, preference will be given to proposals that have matching contributions valued at 50 percent of total project costs or greater (i.e., 1:1 ratio). Applicants are encouraged to show federal partner contributions as well, although these contributions may not count toward the minimum match. Match should be calculated as a percentage of the total project costs, where the grant request plus the match equals the total project costs.

- Grantees may only use grant funds for indirect costs if 1) the grantee organization has a federally-approved indirect rate; AND, indirect costs do not exceed 15 percent of the total direct costs as defined in the Federally Negotiated Indirect Rate Agreement (even when the federally-approved rate is greater than 15 percent).

- Projects must be ready to begin implementation within six months of the grant award.
- SWGs must be completed within 18 months of grant award, and INSRGs must be completed within two years of grant award.
- All applicants with active grants from NFWF must be in good standing in terms of reporting requirements, expenditure of funds, and QAPPs (if required).

INELIGIBLE USES OF GRANT FUNDS

× Neither grant funds nor matching contributions may be used to support political advocacy, lobbying or litigation.

× Grantees may not use grant funds 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 also may be used to develop or inform the development of cost-effective programs to implement MS4 permit requirements.

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

Proposals will be reviewed, evaluated, and scored based on ***the extent to which*** they meet the following criteria:

- **Environmental Results (25 points) -** Project restores and/or protects the water quality and living resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and contributes toward meeting water quality targets expressed in Chesapeake Bay TMDL Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs).
- **Priority Strategies (15 points) -** Project addresses one or more of the Priority Funding Strategies.
- **Partnership (15 points) -** An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and the project is supported by a strong local partnership that will sustain it after the life of the grant.

- **Transferability (15 points) -** Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities within the Chesapeake Bay region and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies (e.g., state and Federal cost share, MS4 program delivery, etc.).
- **Work Plan (15 points)** Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan.
- **Budget (15 points)** - The budget is cost-effective, reasonable, and leverages other partner contributions.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A GRANT

1. Go to www.nfwf.org/easygrants to register in our Easygrants online system. (If you already are a registered user, use your existing login.) Enter your applicant information.

2. Select a "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options. Use the following guidance to determine whether you should select "Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants 2014" or "Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction 2014".

   - Will your project accelerate reductions of nutrient and sediment pollution to the Chesapeake Bay during over the life of the grant?
   - Are you seeking more than $200,000 in grant funds?
   - Do you have matching contributions from your organization and project partners roughly equal to the amount of grant funds you are seeking?

   If you can answer "yes" to each of these questions, then select "Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction 2014". If the answer to any one of these questions is "no", then select "Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants 2014".

3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once you get started, you may save your application in progress and return another time to complete and submit it.

4. Refer to the *Chesapeake Implementation Grant Tip Sheet* for quick reference while you are working through your application. It may be downloaded at www.nfwf.org/chesapeake. For Easygrants technical support please contact our helpdesk at Easygrants@nfwf.org or call 202-595-2497. Please include your name, login ID, e-mail address, phone number, and a description of the issue. Helpdesk hours are 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM EST, Monday through Friday.

Proposals are due on Thursday, May 15th and must be submitted through NFWF's online application at www.nfwf.org/easygrants.

IMPORTANT DATES

✓ Wednesday, April 2nd	Webinar for Potential Applicants
✓ Thursday, May 15th	All Proposals Due
✓ Early August	Anticipated announcement of awards*

**Please do not contact the Foundation regarding the status of your proposal until after the announcement date.*

For additional information, please contact Jake Reilly (jake.reilly@nfwf.org), Elizabeth Nellums (elizabeth.nellums@nfwf.org), or Mark Melino (mark.melino@nfwf.org) via e-mail or by phone at (202) 857-0166.