



National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in Partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces an Opportunity for Matching Grants for Conservation on Private Lands for 2005

Background

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation) is working to expand and strengthen our partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to support innovative and effective conservation and stewardship of our country's private lands. The goal of the partnership is to support high quality projects that engage private landowners, primarily farmers and ranchers, in the conservation and enhancement of fish and wildlife and natural resources on their lands. A new focus added for this year's program is on grassland nesting birds, particularly sage grouse, and their associated habitats.

The Foundation has received \$3 million from the NRCS in support of this partnership. The Foundation will devote 100% of these dollars to a matching grant program to support conservation projects. Matching grants will be awarded through a competitive process to eligible grant recipients including state and local governments, education institutions, and nonprofit organizations. Grants to, or in partnership with, the NRCS, Resource Conservation and Development Areas, and local conservation districts will be given special consideration. Grants typically range from \$10,000-\$150,000, based upon need.

What Are Matching Grants?

The Foundation awards matching grants - each dollar awarded by the Foundation must be matched with one non-federal dollar or goods and services of equal value. However, the Foundation strives to increase resources directed to conservation and encourages applicants to achieve at least a 2:1 ratio - two dollars raised in non-federal funds, goods, or services for every one dollar awarded by the Foundation.

The Foundation refers to funds raised by the grantee as *matching funds*. Matching funds must be:

- Non-federal in origin: federally appropriated or managed funds cannot be used to match a Foundation grant;
- Voluntary in nature - permit or court-ordered settlements are generally ineligible;
- Raised and dedicated specifically for the project in question; and
- Applied only to the Foundation grant and not to any other federal matching programs.

The funds awarded by the Foundation are the *awarded funds*. In the case of this program, the Foundation's awarded funds are federal funds provided to the Foundation through an agreement with the NRCS.

Grant Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria. Qualified projects that meet the criteria described below will be considered and funded based upon grant money available and the level of competition.

- *Conservation on Working Landscapes:* The Foundation seeks innovative fish, wildlife, and coral reef ecosystem projects that integrate conservation practices in ongoing agriculture, ranching, and forestry operations. Where possible, projects should demonstrate a link to other NRCS programs and activities.
- *Demonstrated Value for Fish and Wildlife:* Project proponents must clearly define the conservation problem they are seeking to address and explain how their project will provide measurable benefits for fish, wildlife, and/or coral reefs. Projects that enhance or protect habitat for species of conservation concern including reptiles, amphibians, and all candidate, threatened, or endangered species are encouraged.
- *Sage Grouse and Other Grassland Nesting Birds:* Projects that restore, conserve, and manage habitat for sage grouse and other grassland nesting birds and associated wildlife species on private lands, are eligible, including restoration of sage brush, native prairie, and riparian habitats.

- *Conservation Practices Benefiting Water Quality:* Projects that improve water quality, particularly in watersheds upstream from or adjacent to coral reef habitats, are requested.
- *Partnerships:* Successful projects will demonstrate diverse partnerships among a variety of stakeholders. Special consideration will be given to projects which unite conservation and agricultural interests and develop true "win-win" solutions.
- *Leverage:* Projects must provide match to the Foundation's federal grant award of at least 1:1, with 2:1 or greater strongly encouraged. Projects which bring matching contributions from third parties will be favorably considered.
- *On-The-Ground:* In general, only those proposals with a strong on-the-ground component will be considered, although capacity building, community development, education, and other goals may be included in the projects.
- *Landscape Scale:* Preference will be given to those proposals that address agricultural conservation at the watershed or landscape scale.
- *Immediacy of Need:* Proposals must demonstrate a clear need for funding and should define a time-line for project implementation. We expect our grants to be completed roughly one year after they are contracted.

Geographic and Programmatic Focus Areas

This program aims to support a diverse array of projects from across the entire country, including the Pacific Area Basin and the Caribbean. The Foundation has not established geographic and programmatic priorities; however, we are especially interested in innovative demonstration projects, projects which seek to engage limited resource farmers in efforts to promote conservation practices that benefit fish, wildlife and coral reef ecosystems, and projects that address conservation needs while improving the economic sustainability of working farms and ranches.

Restrictions

NRCS funds cannot be used for land acquisition, fundraising, political advocacy, or litigation purposes.

How to Apply for a Matching Grant

Submit a pre-proposal via the Foundation's [website](#). Upon receipt and evaluation of the pre-proposal, the Foundation will invite successful applicants to submit a full proposal. Access to the Foundation's general matching grant application form will be provided to successful applicants at that time. Conservation needs and benefits of proposed action(s);

- Conservation need and benefit of proposed action(s);
- Opportunities for substantive multi-sector involvement and coordination;
- Staff qualifications and organization's track record;
- Integration of program monitoring and evaluation; and
- Ability to use Foundation grant to leverage additional non-federal resources.

When Are Proposals Due?

The upcoming deadlines for this grant program are listed below. Please note that pre-proposals must be received electronically. Full proposals will only be accepted by invitation based upon initial review of the applicant's pre-proposal.

Pre-Proposal Due

Monday, May 16, 2005

Fall Date TBD

Foundation Board of Director's Decision

Wednesday, November 30, 2005

Spring 2006

Additional Questions

Applicants will need to work with the appropriate Foundation regional office to solicit a project review from a local NRCS employee or State Conservationist to be submitted along with the full proposal. If, after careful review of these guidelines, you have additional questions, please contact the appropriate Foundation regional office. A list of regional offices can be found on the Foundation's [website](#).