



Fisheries
& Habitat
Conservation

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program



Since 1990, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working with coastal States to acquire, restore, manage or enhance coastal wetlands through a matching grant program. To date, \$183 million have been awarded to 25 coastal States and 1 U.S. Territory, and more than 240,000 acres of coastal wetlands have, or will be acquired, protected or restored.

Why Protect Coastal Wetlands?

Coastal wetlands are valuable resources. They protect against flooding, help maintain water quality, and provide vital habitat for wildlife. Coastal environments are important economically, generating billions of dollars annually through such industries as tourism and commercial fisheries.

Why Are Coastal Wetlands in Trouble?

Hundreds of acres of coastal wetlands have already been lost, and additional acres have been degraded by pollution. The concentration of the U.S. population along the coast is a continuing source of development pressure. Threats to coastal resources include agricultural and urban run-off, residential and commercial development, shoreline modification, invasive species, oil spills, municipal waste disposal, and over-harvesting of fish and shell fish.

What Is the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program?

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (Coastal Grants Program) was established by the *Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Act) of 1990*. Under this program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides matching grants for acquisition, restoration, management or enhancement of coastal wetlands.

Typically, between \$13 million and \$17 million in grants are awarded annually through a nationwide competitive process. Funding for the program comes from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels.

Who Can Apply for Grants?

Coastal States which border the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, Pacific and Great Lakes are eligible. The only exception is the State of Louisiana, which has its own coastal wetlands program under the Act. Also eligible are the Trust Territories and Commonwealths of the United States.

How Does Cost-Sharing Work?

States provide 50 percent of the total costs of the project. If the State has established and maintains a special fund for acquiring coastal wetlands, other natural areas or open spaces, the Federal share can be increased to 75 percent. Territories and Commonwealths are not required to provide a cost-share except for Puerto Rico. Federal grants awarded under the Coastal Grants Program cannot exceed \$1 million for an individual project.

How Do States Apply?

Eligible State agencies should submit a complete grant proposal by the deadline specified in the annual announcement. To be eligible, proposals must be substantial and must address the ranking criteria contained in the guidance, Title 50 of



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the Code of Regulations, Part 84.32. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Regional Program Coordinators in developing their proposals.

How Are Projects Selected?

The Service's role has been to review, rank, and select projects based on their national importance and to assist States in the planning and proposal process. Due to limited funding and considerable demand, projects are selected on a competitive basis. The Act calls for projects to be given priority if they are:

- Consistent with the criteria and considerations outlined in the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan.
- Located in States with dedicated funding for programs to acquire coastal wetlands, natural areas and open spaces.
- Located in maritime forests on coastal barrier islands.

Additional ranking factors that have been developed by the Service include giving credit to projects that benefit threatened and endangered species, encourage cooperative efforts, and support other ongoing projects.

What Is Being Accomplished?

The Coastal Grants Program is an effective approach that assists States to acquire, restore, manage, and enhance their coastal wetland resources. The program's emphasis on encouraging partnerships, supporting watershed planning and leveraging on-going projects ensures that the use of limited funds produces in maximum benefits. Three examples of funded projects illustrate its accomplishments (see box below). The lasting results of the program will be the protection and restoration of thousands of acres of coastal wetland ecosystems nationwide. Hundreds of species of fish and wildlife and resource-based industries, like tourism and commercial fisheries, will directly benefit.



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Examples of Funded Projects

Pee Dee River Conservation

Initiative: Woodbury Tract. South Carolina's Department of Natural Resources is partnering with The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy to acquire 26,000 acres from International Paper. The tract is adjacent to Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge. This acquisition will protect approximately 20,000 acres of wetlands, including 38 miles of river frontage. This acquisition would benefit four endangered species, 10 State species of concern, and numerous migratory birds and fish.

Guadalupe River Delta Conservation.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will use its 2007 grant to acquire 689 acres of coastal habitat in the San Antonio Bay system. The project area is 93 percent wetlands and includes 4 miles of riparian streams which serve as the winter home for the last wild population of Whooping cranes. Completion of this project will help create a corridor of protected lands, which includes Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and the Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Areas. The diversity of habitats and its proximity to the coast, make the Delta a key breeding, stop-over and wintering habitat for migratory birds.

Afognak Coastal Protection-Portage Drainage.

The State of Alaska along with the American Land Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the American Land Conservancy will purchase 960 acres of wetland and coastal upland habitat on Afognak Island in the Gulf of Alaska. This acquisition is a portion of 18,000 acres of privately owned land that Alaska is seeking to permanently protect. This acquisition will link together over 4,000 acres of protected lands and form a solid block of over 100 miles of protected coastline. This area is important breeding, nesting, feeding and rearing habitat for an array of wildlife species.

For more information about the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration, Branch of Habitat Restoration at (703/358 2236) or the Division of Federal Assistance (703/358 1748), or visit us on the Internet at: http://www.ecos.fws.gov/coastal/coastal_grants/

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
800/344 Wild
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