

## State Wildlife Grants Competitive Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2015  
Notice of Funding Availability and Application Instructions

Program Overview Information

### Federal Agency Name:

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR)

### Funding Opportunity Title:

State Wildlife Grants Competitive Grant Program

### Announcement Type:

Announcement of availability of grants for fiscal year (FY) 2015 and request for applications.

**Funding Opportunity Number:** F15AS00030

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 15.634

**Dates:** Applications for Competitive State Wildlife Grants must be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Applications will be accepted through February 27, 2015, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. **We strongly recommend that you submit applications in advance of the deadline** to allow for any unforeseen technical complications or system delays.

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

Since 2001, the Service has awarded State Wildlife Grants (SWG) for “the development and implementation of programs for the benefit of wildlife and their habitat, including species that are not hunted or fished...” To participate in the SWG program, as directed by Congress, the fish and wildlife agencies of each State, Commonwealth, territory, and the District of Columbia (hereafter referred to as a State) developed a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan (later referred to as a State Wildlife Action Plan or SWAP) for review and approval by the Service. All the SWAPs were submitted to the Service and approved by early 2006.

Each SWAP identifies species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) that occur in a State, and the habitats needed to conserve them. In addition, the SWAPs provide detailed information on issues affecting SGCN and their habitats, and conservation actions and strategies to address these issues. Congress annually appropriates funds for the SWG program to support

implementation and updating of the SWAPs. The majority of these funds are non-competitively apportioned by the Service to State fish and wildlife agencies through a formula based on population and geographic area. More information about the SWG Program is available at: <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/SWG/SWG.htm>.

Congress established the SWG Competitive Grant Program (SWG-C) in 2008 through Public Law 110-161. This nationally competitive program, the focus of this announcement, also provides a resource to implement or enhance the SWAPs, with a special focus on promoting and advancing cooperative partnerships that result in large-scale landscape conservation.

SWG Competitive Grant Program applications must address either: (a) eligible actions identified in Service-approved SWAPs, (b) emerging issues (such as climate change effects on SGCN) that are adequately documented in the grant application and that propose to improve the status of SGCN and their habitats, or (c) planning activities resulting in improvements to SWAPs that address one or more of the themes described in Section IV.F. of this announcement.

In administration of SWG-C, the Service adopts policies described in the Service's policy manual for the non-competitive apportioned State Wildlife Grants (for more information see <http://www.fws.gov/policy/517fw10.pdf>), except where such policies may conflict with information contained in this announcement.

Priority will be given to SWG-C proposals that identify measurable performance results and outcomes. Funds will be awarded to the highest-scoring applications using the scoring criteria contained in this announcement, at the discretion of the Service Director.

Please read this announcement carefully prior to applying for SWG Competitive Grant Program funds. **Applications that are incomplete or that contain ineligible activities will not be considered for funding.** We encourage States to coordinate closely with Service Regional WSFR staff in the development of applications to ensure that applications are complete and that proposed activities are eligible for funding. Contact information is included in Section IV, below. However, due to limited resources, the Service cannot guarantee that applicants seeking pre-deadline technical assistance will be served in a timely fashion. Responsibility for submission of complete proposals describing eligible activities by the specified dates remains with the applicant.

#### **Items to note in FY 2015:**

- The Federal regulations applicable to FY2015 SWG-C awards are located in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200, available on the Internet at <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/ECFR?page=browse>. We will post a new version of the Service's award terms and conditions incorporating the new regulations at <http://www.fws.gov/grants/> on or before December 26, 2014.

- A special fund with updated themes has been designated for States seeking to make specific improvements to their SWAP (Section IV.F). We will rank applications for these funds according to the criteria given in Section V.B.
- Project Statements submitted as part of a SWAP Enhancement proposal may not exceed 20 pages.
- Additional requirements are given for regional fish and wildlife associations (Associations) seeking reimbursement of indirect costs (see Sections IV.B.10 and VI.D.).

## **II. Award Information**

The SWG Competitive Grant Program is funded through annual appropriations of Congress. There is no assurance that it will be funded this fiscal year or in subsequent fiscal years. Congress may appropriate an estimated \$5.4 million for the Fiscal Year 2015 SWG Competitive Grant Program; however, funds have not been appropriated to date. In anticipation of potential funding, the Service requests applications for this program.

For SWG-C applications involving two or more States, the minimum Federal award is \$150,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$500,000. For Hawaii, Alaska, and the U.S. insular jurisdictions applying for competitive SWG as single States, the minimum Federal award is \$75,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$250,000. Single States applying to the SWAP Enhancement Fund (Section IV.F.) may apply for a minimum Federal award of \$25,000 and a maximum Federal award of \$100,000. Partnerships of two or more States applying to the SWAP Enhancement Fund may apply for a minimum Federal award of \$50,000 and a maximum Federal award of \$200,000.

For Associations applying for SWG-C implementation funds on behalf of two or more States, the minimum Federal award is \$150,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$500,000. For Associations applying to the SWAP Enhancement Fund on behalf of two or more States, the minimum Federal award is \$50,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$200,000. Associations are not eligible to receive funds on behalf of a single State.

For a summary of this award information, please see Attachment A (Q2).

Awards are expected to be announced by July 2015, subject to the availability of funds.

## **III. Eligibility Information**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Eligibility to apply for Competitive State Wildlife Grants is restricted to State agencies with primary responsibility for fish and wildlife management and conservation and to the following regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies:

1. Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

2. Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
3. Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
4. Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

For each of the 48 contiguous United States and the District of Columbia, at least two States (or an Association applying on behalf of at least two States) must propose actions that are identified in their approved State Wildlife Action Plan or be documented as an emerging issue as described in this notification, and partnering States must be active participants in these proposed conservation actions. Active participation is defined as a significant contribution of resources that are dedicated to completion of project objectives, such as cash, equipment, or staff time. These contributions must be described in detail.

Alaska, Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and America Samoa are eligible to apply as single States. Single States, or partnerships of multiple States, are eligible to apply for SWAP Enhancement funds (Section IV).

Federal law (2 CFR Part 200.32) mandates that all entities applying for Federal financial assistance must have a valid Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM).

**DUNS Registration:** Request a DUNS number online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. U.S.-based entities may also request a DUNS number by telephone by calling the Dun & Bradstreet Government Customer Response Center, Monday – Friday, 7 AM to 8 PM CST at the following numbers:

U.S. and U.S Virgin Islands: 1-866-705-5711

Alaska and Puerto Rico: 1-800-234-3867 (Select Option 2, then Option 1)

For Hearing Impaired Customers Only call: 1-877-807-1679 (TTY Line)

Once assigned a DUNS number, entities are responsible for maintaining up-to-date information with Dun & Bradstreet.

**Registration in SAM:** Register in SAM online at <http://www.sam.gov/>. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly urged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure that their information is up to date and corresponds with changes that may have been made to DUNS and IRS information.

**Excluded Entities:** Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable.

## B. Letters of Commitment and Match Documentation

For the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the maximum Federal cost share for SWG Competitive Grant Program funds is 75 percent of total project costs. The Service will waive the 25 percent non-Federal matching requirement of the total project cost for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands up to \$200,000 (48 U.S.C. 1469a (d)).

The overall non-Federal cost share is a factor used in scoring applications. Applicants are encouraged to provide more than the minimum (25%) required non-Federal cost share. Match sources and attributed values must be documented in a letter of commitment, signed by the director of the eligible State agency or individual with the authority to commit agency funds. All letters of match commitment from a non-State partner (for example, a non-governmental organization or university) must be signed by the chief financial officer, or other individual with authority to commit funds on behalf of the entity.

The applicant must include letter(s) of commitment in the application package and must detail the amount of cost sharing funds and/or the value of staff time, donated services, equipment, or materials. Letters of commitment must be complete and contain all required information as described in this announcement. Matching funds or other resources referenced in a letter of commitment that are not explicitly valued may be deemed ineligible and may negatively impact scoring of the proposal, or may cause the proposal to be rejected. Letters of commitment are considered part of a proposal and will not be accepted after the deadline. You may obtain a copy of an example commitment letter meeting this requirement by contacting your Service Regional WSFR Office (see Section IV.A for contact information).

**NOTE:** The State or Association applicant identified as the designated lead for a multi-State project is accountable for the full amount of non-Federal cost share as detailed in the Form SF-424 for all States and other partners involved in the proposed project.

### C. Letters Authorizing Associations to Apply

Associations applying on behalf of two or more States must provide a statement from each participating State authorizing the Association to apply for SWG-C (including SWAP Enhancement funds) on its behalf. This statement must appear in either: 1) a separate letter signed by the director of the eligible State fish and wildlife agency, or 2) within the letter of commitment as described in part B. above.

A State may authorize an Association to apply on its behalf in the current Fiscal Year, in all future Fiscal Years, or both. If a State authorizes an Association to apply on its behalf in all future Fiscal Years, this signed statement must be attached to future applications affecting the State(s) on behalf of which it will apply.

Authorizing letters must be part of the application and received by the application deadline. Proposals which do not include written documentation from all participating States authorizing the Association to apply on their behalf may be deemed ineligible.

#### D. Eligible Activities and Project Partners

The Service will not review or score any proposal that contains a part or portion of a proposed project that is ineligible for funding. This includes proposals for multi-State projects where an ineligible activity is included as a planned action for only one of the partnering States or other project partners. Other partners may include Tribes, Federal agencies, other State agencies (in or out of State), local governments/jurisdictions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions (e.g., universities), private landowners, industry groups, and other countries. See Sections 10.13 and 10.14 of the Service’s SWG policy chapter for more information on eligible activities (<http://www.fws.gov/policy/517fw10.pdf>).

#### IV. Application and Submission Instructions

##### A. Address to Request and/or Submit Application Package

Application forms are available through the Grants.gov website and the WSFR toolkit (<http://fawiki.fws.gov/display/WTK/Toolkit+Homepage>).

Applications must be submitted online at Grants.gov. The application package can be found by using CFDA number 15.634 on the “Search Grants” tab. The applicant is responsible to ensure that the application has been properly and completely submitted at Grants.gov by the deadline. You may also send a complete copy of your application(s) to the “Electronic Documents” email address below, as a backup in case you experience technical issues with Grants.gov. However, this submission method is not a substitute for submission via Grants.gov.

<b>States, Commonwealths, the District of Columbia, and Territories by U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Region</b>	<b>Regional Contact Information</b>
<b>Region 1:</b> American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington	<b>Electronic Documents to:</b> r1fa_grants@fws.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> Karla Drewsen 503-231-2389 <a href="mailto:karla_drewsen@fws.gov">karla_drewsen@fws.gov</a>
<b>Region 2:</b> Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas	<b>Electronic Documents to:</b> fw2fa@fws.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> LeAnne Bonner 505-248-7459 <a href="mailto:leanne_bonner@fws.gov">leanne_bonner@fws.gov</a>

<p><b>Region 3:</b> Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> R3fedaid@fws.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> Jessica Piispanen 612-713-5142 <a href="mailto:jessica_piispanen@fws.gov">jessica_piispanen@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 4:</b> Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the U.S. Virgin Islands</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> r4federalassistance@fws.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> Diana Swan 404-679-7058 <a href="mailto:diana_swan@fws.gov">diana_swan@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 5:</b> Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> fw5fareports@fws.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> Dee Blanton 413-253-8513 <a href="mailto:dee_blanton@fws.gov">dee_blanton@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 6:</b> Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> FW6_FAGrants@fws.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> Amanda Horvath 303-236-4414 <a href="mailto:amanda_horvath@fws.gov">amanda_horvath@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 7:</b> Alaska</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> ak_fa@fws.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> Steve Klein 907-786-3322 <a href="mailto:steve_klein@fws.gov">steve_klein@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 8:</b> California and Nevada</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> R8FA_Grants@FWS.gov <b>Contact Person:</b> Bart Prose 916-414-6558 <a href="mailto:bart_prose@fws.gov">bart_prose@fws.gov</a></p>

**B. Content and Form of Final Application**

Applications for standard SWG competitive and SWAP Enhancement Fund projects must be submitted via Grants.gov separately and include the following, except where noted in this Section. No exceptions will be given for applications that are not complete and submitted by the required date. If the narrative project statement section of the application (See 4., below) exceeds the maximum page limit, the Service will not consider the information beyond the page limit when reviewing and/or scoring the application.

**Note:** The Service encourages States to coordinate closely with Service Regional WSFR staff in the development and submission of applications to help ensure they are complete and all proposed activities are eligible for funding, although pre-deadline review for eligibility cannot be guaranteed. Applications that are incomplete or that contain ineligible activities will not be considered for funding. We suggest that the entire application package not exceed 30 pages, including all forms, maps, photographs, drawings, and letters. See Attachment A, Q16, for more information.

Applications must be formatted to fit 8.5" X 11" paper, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides, and page numbers at the bottom of the page (starting with the project statement). Fonts should be Times New Roman and must be no less than 12 point.

To be considered for funding under this funding opportunity, an application must contain:

1. A single Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424) reflecting the funding request in its entirety. Please submit a scanned version of the SF-424 which has been manually signed and dated by the individual designated in your State with signatory authority for submission of applications to the Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR). Each Service Regional WSFR Office maintains a list of State-authorized signatories. If you are unsure who in your State is authorized to sign the SF-424, please contact your Service Regional WSFR Office. Proposals may be rejected if they are not signed by the authorized signatory on file in the Service Regional WSFR Office. Applications for Federal Assistance submitted by Associations must be signed by the individual with signatory authority for the organization. See Attachment A, Q8 for more information.
2. Budget Information, i.e., estimated costs to achieve the project objectives. The various activities or components of each project should be clearly identified and broken down by cost, partner(s), and annual funding period in table format. The budget table must also show donated matching funds, services, equipment, or materials broken down by cost, partner, and funding period. Applicants proposing multi-State projects must detail the Federal and non-Federal share for which each State will be responsible. A narrative budget justification may help Service reviewers understand and evaluate your application. (Note: letters of commitment from partnering States must also be included in the application package, as described in this Section).
3. Statement of Assurances of compliance with applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Applicants should use either Standard Form 424B, Statement of Assurances – Non-construction Projects or Standard Form 424D, Statement of Assurances – Construction Projects. This form may be waived if your State agency has a valid approved Statement of Assurances on file with the Service Regional WSFR Office.
4. A project statement of no more than 20 pages. Project statements must include the following:
  - a. Statement of need for the proposed project;



- b. Discrete, quantifiable, and verifiable objectives to be accomplished during a specific time period. We recommend that objectives meet SMART criteria: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound;
  - c. Expected results or benefits from accomplishing the objectives;
  - d. The approach to be used in meeting the objectives, including specific procedures, schedules, key personnel, and cooperators;
  - e. Description of the expected compliance needs for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Sections 7 and 9 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); and
  - f. A project location and map. The applicant should include two maps: a map of the State showing the general location(s) of the project and a map of the project site(s). Other geographic aids, such as aerial photographs, may be attached. Maps and geographic aids will not be counted as part of the 20-page narrative limitation. (Applications for SWAP Enhancement Fund projects may omit maps).
  - g. Statement Regarding Single Audit Reporting. As required by 2 CFR 200 Subpart F, all U.S. States and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a single audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System. These entities must provide a statement regarding whether your organization was or was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the organization's most recently closed fiscal year and, if so, state if that report is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse Single Audit Database website (<http://harvester.census.gov/sac/>). Include these statements at the end of the Project Narrative in a section titled "Single Audit Reporting Statements".
5. We suggest you include a "roadmap" specifying where the scoring criteria are addressed in the narrative. Please do not score your own application against the criteria, as this information will be disregarded.
  6. Letters of commitment must be provided from each partner proposing to contribute funds or other resources to the project. For multi-State SWG-C projects, the letter of commitment from the partnering State(s) or other partner(s) should also demonstrate that the activities to which they will contribute are included in their State's SWAP or are an emerging issue in their State, as appropriate. If they will address an emerging issue, it must be documented as described in this Section. Since eligibility may require a partnership of two or more States (see Section III.A), those States subject to this requirement must demonstrate that at least one other State is an active participant in proposed project actions. **Active participation is defined as a significant contribution of resources which are dedicated to completion of project objectives, such as cash, equipment, staff time, etc. These contributions must be described in detail.**
  7. The following requirements for documenting emerging issues must be met if applicant(s) propose to address an emerging issue:
    - a. Describe the emerging issue fully by identifying the species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) or habitats that would benefit from the proposed action(s);
    - b. Explain why it is an emerging issue; and

- c. Commit the State to monitoring the effectiveness of the completed action(s) so the State can adaptively manage future activities. The application must include a commitment letter that the director of the State fish and wildlife agency has signed stating that the next version of the SWAP will include the emerging issue if it remains a priority. The Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs, or a Service official in a similar position associated with WSFR, must review the grant application or any future amendments that include emerging issues not in the SWAP before the application is sent to the national review panel for scoring. The Assistant Regional Director of the Service must concur that the issue is an emerging issue, or the application will not be considered for funding. WSFR must retain the original paper copy, or an electronic copy of the concurrence or non-concurrence document.
8. Associations applying for SWG-C funds must submit evidence of their Section 501(c)(3) or (4) status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.
9. Associations must provide a statement from each participating State which authorizes the Association to apply for SWG-C funds on its behalf (Section III.C). This statement must appear in either an authorizing letter signed by the agency director or within a letter of commitment as described in this Section. Applications which do not include this documentation may be deemed ineligible.
10. Applications from Associations specified in Section III.A or applications that include non-State subgrantees that will charge indirect costs must also include one of the following statements as applicable and must include required documentation as detailed below (See Section VI.D. for more information on obtaining a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA):
  - a. Our organization does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate and will charge all costs directly.
  - b. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]%. We have a current NICRA. A copy of our NICRA is attached.
  - c. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]%. We have [insert one of these statements, as applicable: “established a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement [NICRA] in the past, but it has expired. A copy of our latest NICRA is attached” or “never established a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)”. In the event an award is made we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency immediately and no later than 90 calendar days after the date the award is made. We understand that:
    - Although the Service may approve a budget that includes an estimate of indirect costs based on our stated rate, that approval is contingent on our establishing a NICRA.
    - Recipients without a NICRA are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award.
    - Failure to establish a NICRA during the award period will make all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs under the award unallowable.

- We will not be authorized to transfer any unallowable indirect costs to the amount budgeted for direct costs or to satisfy cost-sharing or matching requirements without the prior written approval of the Service.
  - We must not shift unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized by legislation.
- d. We have never established a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and in the event an award is made we agree as a condition of award to charge a flat indirect cost rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) for the life of the award, including any future extensions of time, regardless of any NICRA we may establish during the award period. We understand that MTDC is defined as all salaries and wages, fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and subgrants and subcontracts up to the first \$25,000 of each subgrant or subcontract (regardless of the period covered by the subgrant or subcontract). We understand that equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, participant support costs (includes registration fees, travel allowances, manuals and supplies, tuition, and stipends), rental costs, tuition, and the portion of subcontracts and subgrants in excess of \$25,000 are excluded from MTDC.

We request you arrange the application package in the following order:

- a. SF-424 (Please include a scanned version of the SF 424 which has been signed by an authorized signatory)
- b. Budget Table with any justification
- c. SF-424B or D (as applicable)
- d. Project Statement (including Single Audit Reporting Statement)
- e. Scoring criteria “roadmap”
- f. Maps, drawings, schematics and/or photos
- g. Letters of commitment/Letters authorizing Associations to apply on behalf of States
- h. Other information, resumes or vitae, or literature cited sections.

#### C. Submission Dates and Times

All applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by February 27, 2015, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. We will not consider incomplete packages, or packages received after the specified deadline. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application package is complete, and is submitted successfully. We suggest coordinating with your Service Region WSFR point of contact to ensure submission of a complete application by or before the deadline.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

The SWG Competitive Grant Program is not subject to EO 12372 “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.”

## E. Funding Restrictions

For Competitive SWG projects, the Service will only award funds for projects proposing to: (a) implement eligible actions or strategies identified in Service-approved SWAPs; (b) address emerging issues (e.g., climate change effects on wildlife) documented in the grant application that will improve the status of SGCN or their habitats; or (c) address one or more of the SWAP Enhancement themes described in Section IV.F of this announcement.

The SWG Competitive Grant Program is funded through annual appropriations of Congress. There is no assurance that it will be authorized this fiscal year or in subsequent fiscal years.

## F. SWAP Enhancement Fund

The Service designates a special fund for use by single States or groups of States seeking to make specific improvements to their SWAP. The intent of this fund is to support more strategic, accountable, relevant and/or collaborative SWAPs. Proposals must clearly identify how the proposed actions will benefit the State(s)' SWAP.

Criteria used to rank and score applications to the SWAP Enhancement Fund are different from those used to score and rank regular competitive SWG projects (See Section V). A State may or may not choose to utilize these funds as part of a scheduled or required minor or major SWAP revision or comprehensive review.

The Service may award up to \$500,000 for SWAP Enhancement Fund projects. The Service reserves the right to distribute any portion of the designated funds contingent upon receipt of complete and eligible applications which describe projects that will address one or more of the themes described in this Section. We recommend that you focus on one of the following themes in detail, rather than on multiple themes, and explicitly identify which theme you will address. No additional points are given to proposals which address multiple themes.

Eligibility for these funds is open to single State fish and wildlife agencies, or to partnerships of two or more State fish and wildlife agencies and/or other non-State partners, regardless of the status of current SWAP review or revision efforts. Associations may also apply on behalf of two or more States, with written authorization from those States as described in Section III.C. For more information, see Attachment A, Q8.

The minimum and maximum Federal SWAP Enhancement awards are given in Section II. For a summary of this award information, please see Attachment A (Q2).

The standard Competitive State Wildlife Grant required match ratio applies (maximum federal award of 75% of total project costs). States and Associations may apply for one or more SWAP Enhancement Fund awards and standard competitive SWG awards concurrently; however, a complete application for each project must be submitted separately.

To apply, submit items listed in Section IV. B of this announcement. Note that you may omit the project location and maps. Applications must be submitted by the dates and times specified in Section IV.C.

Themes include:

**Landscape-Scale Planning:** The Service supports projects that will result in better alignment of conservation goals and objectives of two or more State Wildlife Action Plans. Examples include development of modeling analyses or other tools that aid in selection of common biological objectives across States, or adoption of a unified inter-State nomenclature for identification and classification of threats and conservation actions. In accomplishing the work, applicants are encouraged to establish collaborative partnerships with other entities engaged in landscape-scale conservation planning and design.

**Climate Change:** The Service supports development and inclusion of climate change adaptation strategies for wildlife into SWAPs. Such activities may include (but are not limited to): identification of best management practices that address key climate change threats to SGCN, their habitats and/or ecological processes that affect them; identification of climate-resilient conservation priority areas (or 'climate refugia') for species of greatest conservation need; or, conducting climate change vulnerability assessments for multiple SGCN. Additionally, we encourage applications that seek to integrate and align SWAP strategies with the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy ([www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov](http://www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov)), or with another regional climate change planning effort.

**Mapping Enhancements:** The Service supports State efforts to identify and map geographic areas of the State that present the best opportunities for SGCN conservation (focal areas or conservation opportunity areas), especially in those States that have not done so to date. Mapping efforts should utilize advanced digital mapping technology to geospatially delineate priority areas for conservation on a Statewide basis within a single State. Partnerships of two or more States may also utilize funds to align and unify existing State maps which delineate these areas.

**Prioritization and Goal Setting:** Prioritization efforts should focus on strategic and systematic identification of a State's highest priority SGCN, their habitats, and associated conservation actions, on a statewide basis. For example, States may utilize funds to establish and apply criteria for ranking SGCN resulting in development of a tiered classification system, for adoption of an existing prioritization methodology (e.g., NatureServe), or for collaboration among multiple States resulting in adoption of a unified ranking procedure. Results of this work should include articulation of biological outcomes to be achieved within a defined period.

**Development and Land Use Planning:** The Service encourages applications that identify wildlife adaptation strategies for planned infrastructure development, including but not limited to energy or transportation. Examples include geospatially identifying areas where specific industry development should be avoided, or identifying wildlife

connectivity needs and opportunities arising from planned development, on a Statewide basis. States may also utilize funds to repackage and deliver SWAP data to local or regional entities engaged in land use planning, so that data is more accessible and relevant to towns, counties, or other entities.

**Pollinator Conservation:** The Service supports State efforts to plan for conservation of pollinators on a Statewide basis. States may address pollinators at any of the major taxonomic ranks; however, the express purpose of this theme is to enable a State to conduct planning, coordination, research, monitoring, or other actions leading to appropriate identification of pollinators (including monarch butterflies and other pollinators) as SGCN, so that future SWG funds may be used to actively address their needs. For guidance, see [Pollinators and the State Wildlife Action Plans](#) (The Heinz Center, 2013).

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Scoring Criteria for Competitive SWG Projects

This set of criteria assesses proposed SWG-C projects on their contributions to collaborative, landscape-scale conservation, their direct and immediate benefit to SGCN and their habitats, and the overall technical merit of the proposed work. The grant application must provide a clear description of how the proposed actions will implement an applicant's SWAP. Note that criteria used to assess proposals for SWAP Enhancement Fund projects are separate and are given in Section V.B.

1. Proposed conservation actions contribute to a regional, collaborative landscape conservation strategy or plan (other than a SWAP) with clearly-identified imperiled species population objectives (0-4 points).
2. The Project Approach describes consistent and cohesive conservation actions (up to 2 points), methods for data sharing (up to 2 points), and methods for pre- and post-action species monitoring (up to 2 points) among all States, federal agencies, and other partners (maximum 6 points).
3. Proposed conservation actions directly target an urgent threat to SGCN identified in an approved SWAP, or an identified and documented emerging issue (0-3 points).
4. Proposed project(s) target an SGCN amphibian, reptile, invertebrate or non-game fish (0 or 3 points).
5. Proposed conservation actions include on-the-ground actions specific to targeted SGCN, such as habitat management and/or species reintroduction, translocation, or other augmentation (0 to 5 points).

6. Application briefly describes a monitoring plan that each participating State or partner will use to determine the local population response of targeted SGCN, to assess long-term outcomes of conservation actions and to provide for adaptive management (0 to 5 points). One point for describing each of the following items clearly and in sufficient detail:
  - a. Method of establishing baseline SGCN status (1 point);
  - b. Procedures and protocols described (1 point);
  - c. Clearly-defined performance indicators (1 point);
  - d. Entity or entities responsible for each action (1 point);
  - e. Timeline of monitoring activities (1 point);
7. Application identifies SMART biological objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound. (0 to 4 points).
8. Proposed conservation actions are provided in adequate detail to understand how the State(s) and partner(s) will implement the project (0-6 points). The following information should be provided for all proposed conservation actions:
  - a. Consistent methods/procedures used in conservation actions proposed by all project partners (4 points); and
  - b. A description of who will implement the actions, and their qualifications (1 point); and
  - c. Schedule of work (1 point).
9. Proposed conservation actions will impact both public and private lands (0-4 points):
  - a. Actions are accomplished on private lands, including lands owned by individuals, private academic institutions, or nongovernmental organizations (0 or 2 points).
  - b. Actions are conducted on lands owned or managed by other State or local agencies (including academic institutions owned or managed by the State), Federal agencies, or Tribes (0 or 2 points).
10. Application describes compliance and consultation requirements (if applicable) and how they will be addressed, including but not limited to NEPA, NHPA, ESA, Clean Water Act, Tribes, State and local permits, etc. (0-2 points).
11. Application documents non-Federal match in addition to the required 25% (0-4 points total).
  - a. Non-Federal match is 26 to 30 % (>0 to 5 % for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (1 point); or
  - b. Non-Federal match is > 30 to 35 % (>6 to 10 % for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (2 points); or

- c. Non-Federal match is > 35 to 40 % (>11 to 15 % for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (3 points).
- d. Non-Federal match is > 40 % (>16 % for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (4 points).

**Total Score Possible = 46**

**B. Scoring Criteria for SWAP Enhancement Fund Projects**

The following criteria assess proposed SWAP Enhancement Fund projects on their contributions to collaborative, landscape-scale conservation through specific enhancements to a SWAP, and on the overall technical merit of the proposed work. For the following criteria, reviewers will use a scale of 1 to 5, as follows:

- 1- Minimal; not at all; poor; none; very unlikely: 1 point*
- 2- Somewhat; barely; fair; to a small degree; unlikely: 2 points*
- 3- Medium; moderately; average; adequately; neutral: 3 points*
- 4- Mostly; largely; good; to a large degree; likely: 4 points*
- 5- Fully; completely; excellent; significantly; very likely: 5 points*

1. To what extent will the project provide the specific products, results, or benefits to a State's SWAP, as identified within the relevant theme (Section IV.F)?
2. To what extent does the proposed activity represent a significant advancement in the quality or utility of the applicant's SWAP?
3. How appropriate, clearly stated, and achievable are the project objectives?
4. How sound are the technical approach, project design, and methods?
5. How well does the applicant demonstrate a clear understanding of the problem being addressed, and an awareness of best practices and/or models used successfully to address the problem?
6. How reasonable and realistic (high probability of being met) is the proposed timeline?
7. How effective and sufficient is the applicant's plan for tracking and measuring progress and ensuring that stated outputs and outcomes are achieved?
8. How justifiable, realistic, and reasonable is the budget, considering the work proposed and the expected results and benefits?
9. To what extent does the application demonstrate the inclusion of match or the leveraging of additional resources to carry out the proposed project?



## **Total Score Possible = 45**

### **C. Review and Selection Process**

Award selection is a three-step process: application acceptance, application scoring, and application selection.

1. Application acceptance - The Service Regional WSFR Offices determine that applications are complete and include eligible projects that are substantial in character and design.
2. Application scoring – Once an application is accepted, the Service Regional WSFR Office sends the application to the Service WSFR Headquarters, which coordinates the review and scoring of the applications. A national review team will review and rank the applications and provide award recommendations to the Assistant Director, WSFR.
3. Application selection - Funding awards will be subject to the final approval of the Service Director.

### **D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

Awards are expected to be announced by July 2015.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### **A. Award Notices**

Service Regional WSFR Office will notify successful applicants that they have been selected for award and of the remaining process needed to complete the grant award. The Service will also publish a press release announcing the awards.

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Compliance with all applicable Federal laws, policies, and regulations must be addressed before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can approve an award. In accepting Federal funds, applicants must comply with Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200, available on the Internet at <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/ECFR?page=browse>. We will post a new version of the Service's award terms and conditions incorporating the new regulations at <http://www.fws.gov/grants/> on or before December 26, 2014. Applicants must supply evidence of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and any other relevant Federal laws.

### **C. Reporting**

Reporting requirements, including general records retention and access requirements, are specified in 2 CFR 200. Additional details regarding requirements, guidance, etc. are available in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual chapter 516 FW 2 *Performance Reporting for Grant and Cooperative Agreement Awards* located at <http://fawiki.fws.gov/display/WTK/Toolkit+Homepage>.

#### D. Obtaining a NICRA

For organizations without a NICRA, you must have an open, active Federal award to submit an indirect cost rate proposal to your cognizant agency. The Federal awarding agency that provides the predominant amount of direct funding to your organization is your cognizant agency (unless otherwise assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget). If the Department of the Interior is your cognizant agency, your indirect cost rate will be negotiated by the Interior Business Center (IBC). For more information, contact the IBC directly at:

Indirect Cost Services  
Acquisition Services Directorate, Interior Business Center  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
2180 Harvard Street, Suite 430  
Sacramento, CA 95815  
Phone: 916-566-7111  
Email: [ics@nbc.gov](mailto:ics@nbc.gov)  
Internet address: <http://www.agd.nbc.gov/Services/ICS.aspx>

**Note:** The approved indirect cost rate may only be charged to the first \$25,000 of a subgrant or subcontract, when the base is modified total direct costs (MTDC). Approved indirect cost rates may not be charged to pass-through funds such as subgrants and subcontracts when the base includes direct costs such as salaries, fringe, equipment and supplies. For additional guidance on regulation affecting non-profit organizations, see [http://www.doi.gov/ibc/services/indirect\\_cost\\_services/nonprofit\\_orgs.cfm](http://www.doi.gov/ibc/services/indirect_cost_services/nonprofit_orgs.cfm)

#### VII. Agency Contact

The SWG Competitive Grant Program is administered by the Service through the WSFR Program. National-level program information can be obtained by contacting:

Paul Van Ryzin  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program  
Mailstop: WSFR  
5275 Leesburg Pike  
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803  
(703) 358-1849  
[paul\\_vanryzin@fws.gov](mailto:paul_vanryzin@fws.gov)

#### VIII. Other Information

The Federal government is not bound to financially support any selected project until a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service authorized representative has approved the award. The Service reserves

the right to award a portion of requested funds based on availability, at the discretion of the Director.

OMB Control Number 1018-0109 - PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT: The Paperwork Reduction Act requires us to tell you why we are collecting this information, how we will use it, and whether or not you have to respond. We will use the information that we collect to evaluate applications submitted for SWG-C funds. Your response is required to receive funding. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. We estimate that it will take an average of 40 hours to complete the application. The average estimated annual burden associated with writing and submitting required performance reports is 6 hours. You may send comments concerning the burden estimates or any aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS 2042-PDM, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203. (Expires: 9/30/2015)

**Attachment A** provides additional information for the FY2015 SWG Competitive Grant Program.

## Attachment A: Fiscal Year 2015 State Wildlife Grants (SWG) Competitive Grant Program Questions and Answers

### Q1. Will grant applications from a single State be considered for funding?

- A. Yes, State fish and wildlife agencies of Alaska, Hawaii, and the other insular U.S. jurisdictions may apply for SWG Competitive Grant Program funds as a single State. For SWAP Enhancement Fund projects, any single State fish and wildlife agency may apply. However, wherever appropriate, we encourage partnering with other State agencies, Tribes, Federal agencies, academic institutions, organizations, businesses, or individuals (e.g., private landowners), etc.

### Q2. What are the minimum and maximum Federal awards?

A.

	Competitive SWG		SWAP Enhancement	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Single State	\$75,000	\$250,000	\$25,000	\$100,000
Two or More States	\$150,000	\$500,000	\$50,000	\$200,000
Associations	\$150,000	\$500,000	\$50,000	\$200,000

### Q3. What are the Federal cost-sharing requirements for this competitive program?

- A. The Federal share for SWG Competitive Grant Program grants may not exceed 75 percent of the total grant cost. Matching requirements up to \$200,000 are waived for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (48 U.S.C. 1469a. (d)).

### Q4. Will the SWG Competitive Grant Program continue in future years?

- A. The SWG Competitive Grant Program is appropriated annually by Congress; there is no assurance that it will be funded in Fiscal Year 2015 or in subsequent years.

### Q5. How long are funds available for obligation?

- A. Funds awarded to selected applicants should be obligated with an approved Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) within six months of the notice of selection (as determined by date of publication of the Service press release). All of the entities directly receiving funds under a single grant application must have their funds obligated within this timeframe, or the entire award will be disqualified and all funds returned to the Service. Unobligated funds and unused balances on awarded grants will revert to the Service and be added to available funds for the next cycle of awards through this competitive program. These unobligated funds may be used for other purposes approved by Congress if competitive program funds are not authorized for the subsequent fiscal year(s).

In addition, this is a competitive grant program and each grant application will need to be judged to be complete, including all costs associated with the project. Any changes made to the overall percentage of the Federal share of the total costs of a successful application will not be allowed unless approved by the WSFR Regional office. Similarly, project objectives found in the original grant application should not be removed or diminished by the entities submitting individual grant applications for obligation, once selected. The Service will have discretion to determine if proposed changes that add to the Objectives (without increasing the Federal share), or changes to the Approach that accomplish the original Objectives, will be approved.

**Q6. Is there a maximum grant period?**

- A. Yes. The maximum period for grants is three years from the effective date of grant award obligation. If approved by the Service Regional Director or his/her designee, an extension may be approved through an amendment; however, the grant may be extended no more than an additional two years.

**Q7. How must a project statement document an emerging issue?**

- A. We consider emerging issues relevant to species of greatest conservation need or their habitats although they are not included in the SWAP.

A project statement must:

- (1) Describe the emerging issue fully by identifying the wildlife species or habitats that would benefit from the proposed action;
- (2) Explain why it is an emerging issue; and
- (3) Commit the State to monitoring the effectiveness of the completed action so the State can adaptively manage future activities.

The project statement must include a commitment letter that the director of the State fish and wildlife agency has signed stating that the next version of the Plan will include the issue if it remains a priority.

**Q8. For multi-state projects, should one State be the project lead and does each State need to contribute a 25% match?**

- A. Partnerships of multiple States may designate a lead State, which administers funds to partnering States, non-State entities such as universities, and other non-governmental organizations through sub-awards. In this case, the lead State must prepare and submit financial status and performance reports on behalf of all partners for the entire project.

Alternatively, each State in a multi-State project may choose to directly receive grant funds from the Service. In this case, after the Service Director approves an award, each participating State must submit an Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) to the

Service Regional Office (see Section IV.A) to obligate its portion of awarded funds. In addition, each State must prepare and submit individual financial status and performance reports for its portion of the overall project.

Associations must administer funds to partnering States, non-State entities, and other non-governmental organizations through sub-awards, and must submit financial status and performance reports on behalf of all partners for the entire project.

For multi-State projects, the overall match must be at least 25%; however, each State may provide more or less than 25%. For States that provide less than a 25% match, the designated lead State or Association must document at least 25% match on the SF 424 (regardless of the source). The non-Federal share may not include Federal funds or Federal in-kind match unless specifically allowed by law.

**Q9. What activities are eligible for funding under this program?**

- A. The SWG Program was created to meet the needs of species of greatest conservation need or their habitats through activities that are identified in a State's SWAP, with the SWG Competitive Grant Program focusing on large-scale conservation projects yielding measurable results for these imperiled species. Activities eligible for funding are described in detail in Table 10-1 of the FWS Manual chapter 517 FW 10, *State Wildlife Grants – Mandatory Subprogram* which is located at <http://fawiki.fws.gov/display/WTK/Toolkit+Homepage>.

**Q10. What are the compliance requirements for activities funded under this program?**

- A. States must comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations as a condition of acceptance of Federal funds. In addition to the authorizing legislation, compliance requirements for the SWG Competitive Grant Program include 2 CFR 200 and following (<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/ECFR?page=browse>), ESA, NEPA, NHPA, and other applicable State and Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Applicants must provide assurance that they will comply with applicable provisions. [Appendix 2, 522 FW 1](#) of the Service Manual provides an assurances checklist for construction grants (SF 424D) and for non-construction grants (SF 424B) that States may use to develop a grant application (Service Manual [522 FW 1.3B and C](#) and [523 FW 1](#)).

The Service, in cooperation with grantees, must address Federal compliance issues relating to the ESA, NEPA, and NHPA prior to obligating awarded grant funds. Service Regional WSFR staff can assist grantees in explaining the procedures and documentation necessary for meeting Federal requirements prior to approval of the Application for Federal Assistance to obligate funds.

**Q11. Are there additional formatting criteria?**

- A. Formatting criteria are included in the Notice of Funding Availability and Application Instructions. Formatting requirements for document submission at Grants.gov can be found at <http://www.grants.gov/>.

**Q12. Where should an applicant submit SWG Competitive Grant Program applications?**

- A. All application must be submitted through Grants.gov, CFDA 15.634.

**Q13. Who announces the awards, and what additional documentation is required of selected applicants?**

- A. The Service Director makes selections for awards based on scored ranking of the criteria. The Service WSFR Regional Office will notify successful applicants of the selections and provide any additional information requirements.

**Q14. What must be done during the grant period if a change in objectives or approach is needed?**

- A. This is a competitive program. Therefore, each grant application is judged to be complete with all costs needed to accomplish the objectives of the application. The Service will have discretion to determine if proposed changes can be accepted if the original objectives still will be met and the resulting benefits will be equivalent to those previously described. Otherwise, no changes to costs, objectives, benefits, or approach will be allowed.

If the State(s) cannot complete the grant as approved, the grant may be terminated; all remaining unexpended funds would revert to the Service, and the State would be required to submit a final report within 90 days of the termination date. The Service may require that the State(s) repay all expended funds if the final financial status report and the final performance report indicate that no substantive accomplishments were made. In addition, the Service will not accept applications from the grantee to participate in the next two award cycles following the termination date.

**Q15. Who has the authority to terminate a grant?**

- A. Grants may be terminated by the Service Director or by mutual agreement between the State Director and the Service Regional WSFR Chief. A termination decision by the Service Director is not subject to appeal.

**Q16. What is included within the page limits for the narrative, and what is not?**

A.

Included in page requirement	Not included in page requirement
Narrative describing needs, objectives, Results	Forms (e.g., SF424, assurances, pdf of the SF

and benefits, approach (methods)	424 with authorized signature)
Location description	Budgets
Project leader information (i.e., name, address)	Maps
Graphs and tables inserted within the narrative	Photos
Roadmap to scoring criteria responses.	Drawings
Addenda that explain or provide additional information to supplement the narrative	Schematics
	Literature cited
	Resume/vitae
	Letters of commitment
	Letters of support
	Photographs

**Q17. What resources are available to help with project design and application development?**

- A.** States seeking to submit competitive SWG applications may benefit from information contained in the document, “Measuring the Effectiveness of State Wildlife Grants,” available at: [http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/Effectiveness-Measures-Report\\_2011.pdf](http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/Effectiveness-Measures-Report_2011.pdf). Applicants submitting applications to the SWAP Enhancement Fund may benefit from information provided in the document, “Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans,” available at: <http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/SWAPBestPractices.pdf>.

**Q18. Are land values eligible for match?**

- A.** Although land value is allowable for use as match, we generally discourage this source of match in the SWG-C program. In order for the value of land to qualify for match, you must show that the expenses associated with acquisition of a specific parcel, appraised and reviewed properly following Federal standards, are necessary for the achievement of project objectives. This justification should address why acquisition of the subject parcel was necessary, and could not be accomplished through another less expensive action such as an easement. Value of lands acquired in previous years or lands that have not yet been acquired may be deemed ineligible if they are not shown to be necessary for achieving project objectives.



**Q18. Ranking criteria provide extra points for certain classes such as amphibians. Are projects targeting birds, mammals, and fish projects still eligible?**

**A.** Yes, any project targeting a designated SGCN (or a species impacted by an emerging issue) may be considered for funding under this program.