



NEW ENGLAND FORESTS AND RIVERS FUND

2019 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, April 25th, 2019 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals for the New England Forests and Rivers Fund (NEFRF) to restore and sustain healthy forests and rivers that provide habitat for diverse bird populations, as well as freshwater and diadromous fish populations. The program will advance this goal by investing in projects that:

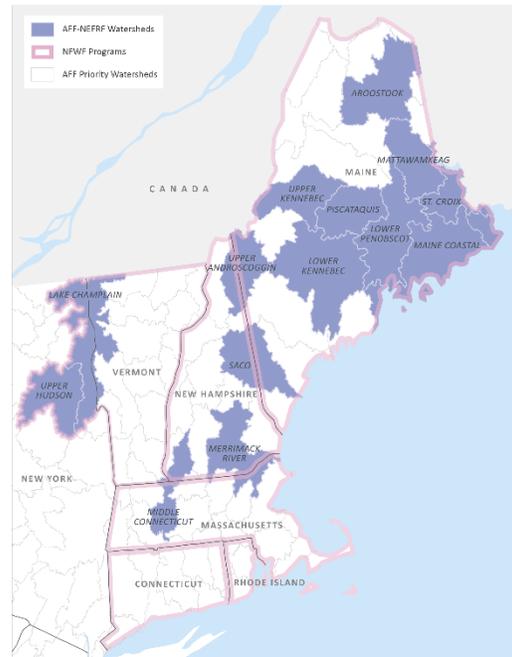
- Strengthen the health of forest systems by improving the management of public and private forestlands to create a mosaic of mixed-age forests in the region;
- Provide incentives to strengthen habitat conservation on working forests through flexible technical assistance that is appropriate for the forest stage(s) being targeted;
- Improve the quality of river and stream systems through targeted riparian and stream restoration;
- Reduce barriers to fish passage and increase fish access to high quality habitat, thereby increasing overall aquatic connectivity; and
- Enhance biodiversity of forest and river systems and increase populations of species representative of system health, such as New England cottontail, American woodcock, golden-winged warbler, wood thrush, Bicknell's thrush, river herring and eastern brook trout.

Approximately \$1.6 million is available this year. Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Eversource, the American Forest Foundation, and the Avangrid Foundation.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects from *throughout* Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont are invited, as well as projects within the Lake Champlain and Upper Hudson targeted watersheds.

In addition, projects that involve stewardship of family-owned woodlands are encouraged to target efforts in the following fifteen watersheds: the Upper Adroscoggin, Saco, Merrimack and Middle Connecticut watersheds; the Maine Coastal, Piscataquis, Lower Kennebec, Upper Kennebec, Mattawamkeag, Lower Penobscot, Pssamaquoddy Bay-Bay of Fundy, Aroostook, St. Croix, Lake Champlain, and the Upper Hudson watersheds. These watersheds have been identified by the American Forest Foundation (AFF) as the greatest opportunities to work with family woodland owners to protect and improve wildlife habitats. See the map “NEFRF Boundary with AFF Priority Watersheds” or visit <http://arcg.is/1Gi5mq> to view the map in more detail. For more information refer to AFF’s report [*Hidden in Plain Sight*](#).



NEFRF Boundary with AFF Priority Watersheds

For projects within the Long Island Sound and Connecticut River watersheds, applicants are encouraged to refer to the Long Island Sound Futures Fund as well ([LISFF](#)).

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Priority will be given to projects that address at least one of the following strategies.

1. Healthy Forest Systems

We seek projects that implement forest management practices on both public and private lands.

- **Assessment/Planning:** Develop forest management plans that focus on implementation with a corresponding measurable benefit to priority avian species.
- **Early Successional Forest Habitat:** Create and enhance early successional forest habitat as part of a landscape effort to restore forest age and structural diversity. This work may include flexible management prescriptions for forest stands on public and private lands that are un-managed or under-utilized, and/or improvement of fallow or un-managed habitat through planting and selective treatment to facilitate appropriate habitat conditions for early successional species including New England cottontail, American woodcock and golden-winged warbler.
- **Mature Forest and Late Successional Forest Habitat:** Implement forest management strategies and practices that enhance age and structural diversity for mature and late successional forest habitat, and maximize habitat quality for target species, such as wood

thrush, Canada warbler, bay-breasted, black-throated blue, Cape May warblers, and northern long-eared bat. This may include prescriptions to manage understory or canopy, or to create gaps within mature stands. Demonstration projects should include plans for conveying lessons learned to foresters and conservation professionals throughout the region.

- **Pollinator Habitat:** Work with large public and private landowners to adopt pollinator-friendly practices, and create pollinator habitat on un-managed or under-utilized lands, including rights-of-way corridors. Projects may target specific species of bees, hummingbirds and butterflies (e.g., Karner blue and monarch butterflies).
- **Provide Technical Assistance:** Provide outreach and technical assistance to engage private landowners and local governments in restoration and conservation on their lands. Technical assistance must be appropriate to the forest stage(s) being targeted, e.g., early successional, intermediate or mature. Provide incentives to recruit additional technical services providers and/or forestry consultants who can write forest management plans and implement recommended practices.

Projects that promote forest management to enhance habitat are encouraged to use signage and other outreach methods to raise community awareness and support for the project's goals and objectives.

2. Healthy River Systems

We seek projects that represent the best opportunities to restore river function, water quality, and enhance the long-term persistence of native species in aquatic systems in New England, including eastern brook trout and diadromous fishes. For eastern brook trout-focused work, projects that reconnect and seek to expand existing allopatric brook trout populations will be considered highest priority.

- **Restore Connectivity:** Remove or replace under-sized or perched culverts and small dams that are barriers to fish passage and/or result in artificial impoundments and stream warming in order to connect native fish to key spawning, rearing, and refuge habitats. Projects should include a monitoring plan to assess changes in run counts as a result of passage improvements for diadromous fish and where appropriate, may include the development and implementation of sustainable fisheries plans. Projects may support on-the-ground restoration and stream barrier surveys to determine priorities for future connectivity restoration. Projects are encouraged to demonstrate the benefits of aquatic connectivity projects to multiple species, as well as human communities (i.e., through reduced flooding and other infrastructure failures).
- **Restore Riparian Habitat, In-stream Habitat, and Water Quality:** Replant riparian areas with native vegetation to reduce stream temperature and enhance reciprocal exchanges between aquatic-terrestrial habitats. Projects should seek to increase coordination between forest management and stream habitat restoration to enhance habitat complexity through large boulder addition, log jam creation, and improve wood recruitment to streams through upland and riparian forest management. Projects may improve instream habitat through

hydrologic or floodplain restoration, or seek to reduce sediment delivery through bank stabilization, livestock exclusion, and other upland conservation practices.

- **Provide Technical Assistance:** Provide outreach and technical assistance to engage private landowners and local governments in restoration and conservation on their lands. Where appropriate, leverage funding through the Farm Bill to renew or enter into new cost-share contracts to restore and protect riparian buffers and wetlands on agricultural lands. 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. Proposals that seek to extend term contracts into perpetual easements are encouraged.

Increase coordination across agencies and organizations and improve delivery of landowner technical assistance, as well as target outreach to private lands adjacent to or in close proximity to established heritage brook trout populations.

Provide training opportunities to restoration practitioners, municipalities, and agencies to disseminate state-of-the-art stream connectivity techniques, such as the US Forest Service's Stream Simulation method and train practitioners on the installation of large woody debris and log jams.

- **Conduct Native Trout Inventory and Assessments:** Conduct assessments to determine trout population status for rivers of the Northeast where eastern brook trout presence is qualitative or unknown.

3. Healthy Forests and Rivers

The health of forest and river systems is inextricably linked. Innovative projects that demonstrate the connection between these ecosystems are encouraged. For example,

- Demonstrate forest management prescriptions that minimize impacts on water through timing and site selection, and that maximize habitat benefits for both aquatic and upland species;
- Demonstrate synergistic restoration opportunities that use wood products from forest management activities to provide in-stream habitat structure; and
- Target opportunities to restore forested riparian and wetland buffers to maximize habitat benefits for both aquatic species (e.g., eastern brook trout, river herring) and riparian dwelling birds (e.g., Louisiana waterthrush, rusty blackbird).

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the *New England Forests and Rivers Fund* has a list of metrics in Easygrants for grantees to choose from for reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact John Wright (john.wright@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Culvert replacement, dam removal and other fish passage projects	Number of passage barriers rectified	In NOTES section, indicate what type of barrier is being removed and/or installed (i.e. dam, culvert, bridge etc.)
	Miles of stream opened	
Wetland restoration	Acres restored	
Instream habitat restoration	Miles restored	In NOTES section, indicate types of changes to stream channel (e.g., raising/lowering stream bed, changes in direction of stream flow, grading stream banks, adding in-stream structures such as woody material).
Forest management activities	Acres under improved management	In NOTES section, indicate the type of forest habitat and target species (e.g., early successional for New England cottontail, mature forest for black-throated blue warbler)
Riparian forest restoration	Miles restored	In NOTES section, indicate the buffer width (e.g., 35', 100').
Installation of livestock exclusion fencing	Miles of fencing installed	
Road improvement BMPs	Miles of road improved	
Practices to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff	Acres with BMPs	In NOTES section, indicate the type of BMP(s) (e.g., continuous no-till, enhanced nutrient management, rain garden/bioretention).
	Lbs sediment avoided (annually)	
Fee acquisition and/or conservation easement	Acres protected	In NOTES section, indicate the type of habitat(s) protected.
	Miles protected	
Habitat improvement projects	Number of habitat units improved	In NOTES section, indicate target species and type of habitat.
	Acres occupied by the species	
	Miles of habitat occupied by species	
Wildlife population monitoring	Acres monitored	In NOTES section, indicate the species being monitored.
Outreach, education, technical assistance	Number of people reached	Enter the number of people who respond to outreach by requesting information, inquiring about how to get assistance, signing up for a workshop, etc. Please indicate the number of acres owned by the landowner reached.

Behavior change programs and campaigns	Number of people with changed behavior. Number of landowners receiving land management recommendations from a professional.	Enter number of landowners who demonstrated changed behavior by applying land management recommendations from a professional.
Engaging volunteers in restoration activities	Number of volunteers participating	

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Indian tribes and educational institutions
- Ineligible applicants include U.S. Federal government agencies, businesses, unincorporated individuals and international organizations.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- NFWF funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

The New England Forests and Rivers Fund will award approximately \$1.6 million in grants this year. Grants will range from \$50,000 to \$200,000 each. The program awards approximately 12 to 15 grants per year. Projects should begin within six months of the award date and be completed within three years of the agreed start date. These grants require non-federal matching contributions valued at 50% of the total project costs (1:1 ratio).

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria.

Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the Program’s overall habitat and species conservation goals, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities.

Technical Merit and Work Plan – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design and implementation to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible.

Conservation Plan and Context – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy.

Monitoring – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

Long-term Sustainability – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This should include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

Budget – Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF’s [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.

Matching Contributions – Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the Project during the Period of Performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

OTHER

Procurement – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF’s express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

Receiving Award Funds – Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

Compliance Requirements – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful

applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

Permits – Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state or local requirements. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

Federal Funding – The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

Landowner Outreach – Successful applicants with projects that involve stewardship of family-owned woodlands will be asked to use the Landowner Outreach Database developed by the American Forest Foundation to identify, and track landowner outreach and behavior change. The American Forest Foundation will provide technical assistance in using the database, as well as other technical assistance for proven marketing and communications strategies to improve effectiveness. Please reach out to AFF as soon as possible to help with the development and implementation of projects that engage family landowners (Christine Cadigan: ccadigan@forestfoundation.org).

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information [New England Forests and Rivers Fund](#).

Applicant Webinar	Wednesday, March 27th, 2019 1:00-2:00 PM Register Here
Full Proposal Due Date	Thursday, April 25th, 2019 11:59 PM
Review Period	May through July
Awards Announced	Mid-August

HOW TO APPLY

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

1. Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information. Please disable the pop-up blocker on your internet browser prior to beginning the application process.
2. Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.
3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A PDF version of this RFP can be downloaded [here](#).

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be downloaded [here](#).

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's [Applicant Information](#) page.

For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:

John Wright, Manager, Northeastern Regional Office

John.wright@nfwf.org

(202) 595-2478

Projects that involve stewardship of family-owned woodlands, applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to the American Forest Foundation for assistance in developing project strategy and competitive applications. Please contact:

Christine Cadigan

Director, Northeastern Woodland Conservation

American Forest Foundation

ccadigan@forestfoundation.org

For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org

Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.

Include: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.