

North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative Priority Science Program

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NALCC) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for grants under the 2013 NALCC Priority Science Program. The Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) coordinates and administers the NALCC Priority Science Program on behalf of the NALCC.

Please Read This Entire RFP, Including the Frequently-Asked-Questions Section, Before Submitting An Application for NALCC Grant Funds.

Background

The Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have developed a coordinated network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives to provide the science necessary to undertake strategic conservation efforts across large geographic areas, in part to address major environmental and human-related factors that limit fish and wildlife populations at the broadest of scales.

To protect the natural and cultural resources of the Northeast, natural resource managers and partners have formed the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC). The North Atlantic LCC partnership includes: States, Tribes, Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other species-specific partnerships like migratory bird joint ventures and fish habitat partnerships.

The North Atlantic LCC partners work together to identify common science needs, shared scientific capacity and information and coordinate natural resource conservation actions across the region. The objective of the NALCC Priority Science Program is to address landscape-scale conservation issues by combining resources, leveraging funds, and prioritizing conservation actions identified by the best available science.

2013 North Atlantic LCC Priority Science Need

Collaboratively Restoring Aquatic Connectivity while Increasing Resiliency for Culverts and Road Stream Crossings to Future Floods

Introduction:

Aquatic systems in the Northeast are extremely fragmented as many dams and stream crossings provide little or no aquatic organism passage (AOP). Habitat fragmentation is an important factor contributing to population declines of many aquatic species and reestablishing connectivity is key

to restoring many federal and state aquatic trust species. Reconnecting coastal, riverine and wetland habitats by removing barriers restores ecosystem functions through the improved movement of fish, floodwater, and materials including sediment and wood. Beyond their in-stream benefits, fish-friendly culverts increase natural ecosystem resilience in wetlands and floodplains while they nourish coastal beaches with sediment. Additionally, because properly-sized culverts better handle storm flows, road infrastructure and property are protected and human health and safety are preserved. The failure of roads, bridges and other infrastructure by flooding from Tropical Storm Irene, Hurricane Sandy and other recent major storms due to poorly designed or undersized bridges and culverts highlights the importance of identifying and replacing vulnerable crossings. In the long-term, properly sized and constructed culverts are more durable and cost-effective solutions.

A number of efforts are completed or underway in the Northeast Region to survey, compile, and map information on barriers to aquatic connectivity. The Northeast States and The Nature Conservancy developed a Northeast Aquatic Connectivity Assessment project (<http://rcngrants.org/content/northeast-aquatic-connectivity>) that addresses connectivity relating to dams. This dataset of over 28,000 dams combines the National Inventory of Dams (dams over 6 ft high or storing 50 acre-feet) with state-based inventories of smaller dams. The University of Massachusetts and North Atlantic LCC have adapted that data to a finer scale hydrography (1:24,000) and developed a model to prioritize aquatic connectivity (<http://www.umass.edu/landeco/research/nalcc/nalcc.html>). The Nature Conservancy has also adapted this information for prioritizing connectivity in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Geospatial Fisheries Information Network (GeoFIN, <http://ecos.fws.gov/geofin/>) also has compiled nationwide data on stream barriers.

Several Northeast states have also inventoried stream crossings and used that information to prioritize removal and replacement. For example, Massachusetts has developed a River and Stream Continuity Project (<http://www.streamcontinuity.org>), Maine has a Stream Connectivity Work Group and Stream Habitat Viewer (<http://mapserver.maine.gov/streamviewer/streamdocHome.html>), and Vermont has an online Bridge and Culvert Inventory Tool and Aquatic Organism Passage program (http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/fisheries_AOP.cfm). However, there is no region-wide compilation of culverts and road stream crossings comparable to what has been compiled for dams.

Overall project description and need:

This project will be the first phase of developing a science and partner-driven approach to identify and prioritize stream crossing removals and replacements across the Northeast Region to improve AOP and increase resilience to future flood events. The lack of a regionally-consistent spatial database of stream crossings, and consistent survey protocols, hinder the ability of partners in the Northeast to prioritize and collectively address the most critical barriers to AOP. Regionally-consistent data will also allow for a better understanding of how aquatic populations will be impacted by combined effects of fragmentation, climate change and land use change. The information is intended to be used for prioritizing restoration actions at regional and large-watershed scales by the conservation and transportation communities in both planning and implementation.

This first phase is intended to identify and assemble existing data on stream crossings, develop a database and online mapping application of road stream crossings based on existing data and models, prioritize additional surveys of stream crossings, and recommend field survey protocols. If funding allows, it will also support initial field surveys of potential barriers and road-stream crossings based on the prioritization. Future phases would provide additional support for surveys, for predicting storm discharge levels and risk of stream-crossing failures, for prioritizing crossing improvements and assessing ecological risks, and for training and capacity to work with local and state users.

A proposal to prioritize stream crossings in the area impacted by Hurricane Sandy for increasing resilience to future floods, while improving aquatic connectivity for fish passage, was submitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Department of the Interior for consideration for hurricane mitigation funds. If that Hurricane Sandy project is funded, this project will need to coordinate with and complement that project by focusing on states and areas not directly impacted by the hurricane and utilizing consistent approaches.

Tasks and Deliverables:

1. Assemble and coordinate a team of Northeast partners associated with aquatic connectivity initiatives to guide the project;
2. Assemble existing spatial data and maps (e.g., by states) on stream crossings and natural barriers to aquatic organism passage;
3. Compile a comprehensive online GIS database of existing data that is designed to incorporate additional data from other sources across the region;
4. Assess existing approaches and field protocols for characterizing stream crossings and assessing aquatic organism passage and geomorphic compatibility (to identify stream crossing structures at risk for failure due to incompatibility with natural stream processes and future floods);
5. Based on the assessment of current approaches and partner input, recommend standardized protocols and standard data fields for assessing stream crossings for regional use;
6. Identify existing data gaps and prioritize areas for new field surveys to fill data gaps based on the expected value of information on barriers for benefitting aquatic connectivity and resilience to future floods;
7. To the extent that funding allows, conduct surveys in priority areas using recommended protocols, complementing the Hurricane Sandy project if funded;
8. Complete report of results and recommendations of next steps.

Compiled data are to be provided to the North Atlantic LCC (including appropriate documentation and metadata) for public access to the extent permitted by original data sources. Applicants should explain how the project can be sustained after the period of the grant.

References

Anderson, M.G. and A. Olivero Sheldon. 2011. Conservation Status of Fish, Wildlife, and Natural Habitats in the Northeast Landscape: Implementation of the Northeast Monitoring Framework.

The Nature Conservancy, Eastern Conservation Science. 289 pp.

Clarkin, K., A. Connor, M. Furniss, B. Gubernick, M. Love, K. Moynan, and S. Wilson Musser. National Inventory and Assessment Procedure for Identifying Barriers to Aquatic Organism Passage at Road-Stream Crossings. U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service National Technology and Development Program San Dimas, CA. 75 pp.

Martin, E. H. and Apse, C.D. 2013. Chesapeake Fish Passage Prioritization: An Assessment of Dams in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Nature Conservancy, Eastern Division Conservation Science. http://maps.tnc.org/erof_ChesapeakeFPP

Martin, E. H. and C. D. Apse. 2011. Northeast Aquatic Connectivity: An Assessment of Dams on Northeastern Rivers. The Nature Conservancy, Eastern Freshwater Program.

Funding:

A maximum of \$150,000 is available (in total) to fund projects in response to this RFP. There is no minimum funding request.

Proposal Deadline: **October 4, 2013**

Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered.

Instructions on Submittal of Proposals

Please read carefully and follow all of the guidance listed in the below instructions. You can also access these instructions on the NALCC [website](#).

1. Proposals must be submitted as email attachments in MS Word to [Scot Williamson](#) (wmisw@together.net) no later than October 4, 2013 at 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.
2. The proposal is limited to a total of 6 pages:
 - Page 1 is a single cover page with contact information (see details in section #3 below) and a concise description of the proposed project.
 - Pages 2-5 are four pages of text about the proposed project, including budget (see details in section #4).
 - Page 6 is a single page outlining the qualifications of the individuals and organizations involved.
3. The cover page should provide the following information:
 - Title of Project
 - Name of Project Director and Job Title
 - Name of Institution

- Email Address
- Physical Mailing Address
- Telephone and Fax Numbers
- Other Principal Investigators Involved (name, title, institution, email address)
- NALCC Funds Requested
- A Concise Description of the Proposed Project. The description should not exceed 250 words and include primary objectives, a brief summary of methods, expected outcomes and a timeline. **This abstract will be widely distributed so please follow the instructions provided on content carefully.**

4. Four pages of explanatory text are the principal component of the proposal and should be written as clearly and concisely as possible, address the following questions, and provide the following information (note that tables, graphs and photos can be included in the proposal but they must be contained within the four pages of text):

- What is the geographic scope of your project?
- What is the start date of the project and the projected end date?
- What is the goal of your project and what major objectives or tasks will you undertake to achieve that goal?
- What are the methods by which you propose to carry out your work?
- What measurable products or outcomes will result from your project?
- What is the schedule for key events and tasks?
- What is the proposed total budget of your project? Separate the budget into the following categories: Personnel Service, Fringe Benefits, Indirect Overhead, Supplies and Materials, Travel, Contractual Service, and In-kind Services. **Please note that indirect overhead (F&A) cannot exceed 15% of direct costs.** Clearly indicate which activities will be supported by NALCC grant funds and which will be supported by other funds. For any matching funds or contributed partner funds committed to the project, specify whether those funds are direct or indirect and clearly designate the source of the funds.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does the grant proposal process work?

The NALCC Steering Committee annually establishes priority science needs within the NALCC region. Proposals are solicited for projects that deliver science products that contribute to the understanding of, resolution of, or advancement of conservation actions addressing highest priority conservation science needs.

Who developed the Priority Project Topics?

Priority science needs were developed by federal, state and NGO scientists within NALCC Technical Committees.

Who may apply?

Eligible applicants include individuals, non-governmental organizations, state and federal agency employees, members of academia, and for-profit corporations.

What is the schedule of review and approval of proposals?

Proposals are due by September 20, 2013. Proposals will be reviewed by WMI for scientific merit, clarity and completeness. WMI may contact applicants for clarification or to allow for amendments to remove disqualifying elements. Eligible applications will be forwarded to Technical Review Committees by September 27, 2013. Highest ranking proposals will be submitted by the Technical Committee to the NALCC Steering Committee. Funding decisions will be made by the NALCC Steering Committee at their November meeting and funds will be available no earlier than December 1, 2013.

What is the duration of a project?

Projects must be completed within 18 months of the award date. Significant milestones/deliverables must be achieved within 12 months of the award date.

How will applications be evaluated?

All applications received by the due date will be reviewed by WMI for scientific merit, completeness and eligibility. All projects that are deemed complete and eligible by WMI will be forwarded to the NALCC science staff who will coordinate evaluation by a NALCC Technical Review Team, using the following criteria:

1. Degree to which the project addresses the priority themes and products described previously.
2. Scientific and technical merit.
3. Programmatic capability and feasibility. Are project objectives/goals clearly defined, measurable, and connected to specific milestones/deliverables and timelines? Will/can proposed methods accomplish/produce the project's objectives/goals, deliverables, and timelines?
4. Engagement of partners.
5. Demonstration that products will be accessible and useful in conservation and resource management decision-making.
6. Degree to which project builds upon and incorporates, rather than duplicates, existing efforts.
7. Geographic scope.
8. Leveraging of other resources (not required but encouraged).

What is the source of funding for NALCC grants?

The primary source of funding for NALCC grants is from federal funds apportioned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other partner funds may be pooled in the grant award.

Are matching funds required?

No, but matching funds are encouraged. In-kind match is allowed.

How will I receive payments?

The NALCC Grants Program is a reimbursement program. Applicants must be prepared to fully fund their projects in the first instance and submit payment requests to WMI for reimbursement. Grant recipients will be required to enter into a grant agreement with WMI in order to receive payment. Payment requests may be submitted to WMI on a quarterly basis. No advance payments will be provided. WMI will retain 20% of the grant amount pending receipt of all grant agreement deliverables. Upon the NALCC's approval of said deliverables, the final 20% retainage will be released to the grantee.

Where should proposals be submitted?

Proposals should be emailed in MS Word format to **Scot Williamson** (wmisw@together.net).

Are partnerships encouraged?

Yes, partnerships in funding and/or delivery of project products are encouraged.

What are some applicant responsibilities?

Grantees must meet federal eligibility requirements under this grant program. All funds awarded through this RFP are contingent upon the applicant meeting all federal permitting requirements. The NALCC reserves the right to reallocate grant awards in the event that the project applicant cannot meet the federal or state grant and/or permitting requirements. Applicants selected to receive a grant may also have their proposed budgets revised pending federal review of eligibility of costs and matching funds. It is the applicant's responsibility to investigate the permits that may be required to carry out their proposal, and obtain all applicable federal or state permits, data use agreements, or similar permissions.

What are eligible costs?

Grant reimbursement payments will be based on actual expenditures incurred by the grantee that are necessary and reasonable to the accomplishment of the work. Grantees will be required to provide documentation of project-related costs, including submission of copies of invoices and cancelled checks, with each payment request. Applicant budgets may include billable expenses related to the project in the following categories:

- **Personal services:** includes salary of project staff employed by the applicant organization.
- **Fringe Benefits:** The fringe benefits such as health care and retirement provided to permanent employees of the applicant organization. State employees must use the approved federal rates for their agency. Fringe benefits are normally calculated as a percentage of an employee's salary.
- **Indirect/Overhead:** The costs of maintaining the offices for project personnel such as utilities, support services, rent, etc. This is normally calculated as a percentage added to the salary and fringe benefits of an employee. Indirect/Overhead cannot exceed 15% of direct

costs.

- **Travel and Equipment Usage:** Vehicle mileage at the federal rate, fuel costs, commercial carrier costs, and other similar expenses. Equipment usage covers the equivalent cost of the use of equipment such as tractors, brush clearing equipment, research vessels, etc.
- **Supplies and Materials:** Office supplies, consumable field gear such as flagging tape and stakes, non-retrievable animal tags, nets, software, etc.
- **Contractual Services:** If you are a not-for-profit organization and you subcontract out for services such as data entry or laboratory analysis, you must be able to provide proof that those costs are necessary and reasonable to the accomplishment of the work.

What are some ineligible costs?

Costs related to the preparation of this application or any other costs incurred prior to notification from the NALCC acknowledging final approval of the grant award, are NOT eligible for reimbursement and cannot be used as match. Costs related to land acquisition, purchase of development rights, and purchases of easements are not eligible for reimbursement under this program. These costs are not eligible as matching costs, either. Generally speaking, education and law enforcement activities are not eligible for funding or match under this program. Funds cannot be used to support political lobbying or capacity building of organizations. Indirect costs in excess of 15% of direct costs are ineligible.

How will I be notified of an award?

Applications that score high enough to be selected to receive an award will receive written notification from WMI.

When may I start work?

You may begin work once federal compliance is met, and you have received written notification from WMI of your final grant award. However, WMI advises grantees NOT to begin work until all required and necessary permits are obtained for the activities identified in their project proposal. Please note that grantees may not request or receive any reimbursement payments prior to completion of federal compliance.

What are the requirements for sharing and managing data related to this project?

The NALCC is committed to distributing information needed by managers and scientists to make informed decisions and of interest to a wide variety of partners. Raw data, derived data products, and other supporting information created or gathered in the course of LCC-sponsored projects will be made available to the NALCC, and data are expected to be made publicly available except where protected by state or federal laws. Principal investigators must preserve and transfer data according to commonly accepted standards, including standards for metadata.

To Apply, Submit Proposals via Email to:

Scot Williamson

Wildlife Management Institute

wmisw@together.net

For Technical Questions, Contact:

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