

WHOLE WATERSHED RESTORATION INITIATIVE

2014 Request for Proposals for Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects in Oregon and Washington

Proposal Deadline – January 9, 2014 at 5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time

Funding Recommendations Announced March 2014

Download Grant Application at www.ecotrust.org/wwri

Ecotrust is pleased to request project proposals for the 2014 cycle of the Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative (WWRI). In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Ecotrust has the opportunity to continue supporting community-based habitat restoration projects through the WWRI.

Background

Ecotrust's mission is to inspire fresh thinking that creates social equity, economic opportunity and environmental well-being. For over two decades, Ecotrust has created, capitalized and catalyzed innovative ways to restore environmental conditions while fostering economic opportunities in the Pacific salmon region from Alaska to California.

The goal of the Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative is to restore major ecological functions of whole watersheds in Oregon and Washington by investing in community-based groups to carry out on-the-ground restoration. Funding is focused on Pacific salmon and steelhead ecosystems, but activities benefit other important fish species such as Pacific lamprey, bull trout and cutthroat trout.

Available Funding

We anticipate total WWRI funds available in the 2014 funding round may be up to \$1.2 million. Successful applicants should expect the majority of project funding to be federal.

Applicants must request between \$20,000 and \$100,000 per project. Proposals requesting less than \$20,000 or more than \$100,000 will not be considered for funding through the WWRI. Applicants whose project(s) will be implemented in 2014 may be given priority, and project activities must be completed within 24 months of the award start date.

Eligible Project Types

The WWRI funds projects that aim to restore in-stream anadromous fish habitat or help recover stream, riparian, floodplain, or upland ecosystem processes. Activities that may be considered for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Culvert removal and traditional culvert replacement with stream-bed simulation type culverts or bridges;
- Removal of dams or other large obstructions to rivers and streams;
- Breaching or removal of levees; *(continued on next page)*

- Road decommissioning or modification for habitat restoration purposes;
- Re-establishing river flow patterns, meanders and channels that have been altered;
- Restoring stream complexity and roughness;
- Restoring and enhancing connections between lakes, sloughs, side channels, floodplains, and main channels; and
- Restoring riverbanks and floodplains, including riparian restoration.

Projects should focus on implementing on-the-ground habitat restoration activities for the benefit of anadromous fish habitat but they may include other activities such as feasibility analysis, design, outreach, education, and monitoring. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit projects which are part of a recognized restoration action plan, salmon recovery plan, or other publicly-vetted prioritization document.

Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, tribal or federal law will not be considered. The WWRI is not able to fund land acquisition or easements.

Eligible Types of Applicants

Eligible applicants include tribal and local governments, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, such as watershed councils and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other community groups and organizations. Federal agencies may apply, but are ineligible for NOAA funds. Federal and state agencies are therefore encouraged to partner with non-federal, local organizations to develop applications for projects on federal land. In this way, WWRI funds can support restoration work on federal land.

Geographic Eligibility

Projects outside WWRI Priority Basins are not eligible; only projects located in Priority Basins will be considered for WWRI funding. Projects located within Focus Watersheds and Emphasis Areas will be given further scoring priority. Please see page 4 of this RFP for a map of WWRI geographic priorities.

About the WWRI Geography

Since 2007, the WWRI has targeted restoration funds to Priority Basins and Focus Watersheds. Identified using a conservation planning priorities tool combined with outputs from the river basin-scale prioritization by the Forest Service (Basin-scale Restoration Prioritization Process, PNW Region, USDA Forest Service) and priorities identified in ESA salmon recovery plans, these river basins and watersheds were chosen for their high ecological value to salmon and potential responsiveness to habitat restoration.

Over the next few years, the WWRI anticipates making strategic changes to its geographic priorities so as to increase its impact. The first changes are reflected in this 2014 RFP and include further prioritization of a subset of Focus Watersheds. Projects within these new “Emphasis Areas” are eligible for maximum points in the “Geography” section of the application. Geographic priorities are listed on the map of page 4 of this document, and a description of scoring is described on page 6.

Each Emphasis Area was selected because it meets two or more of the following criteria:

- Two or more WWRI funding partners have established funding commitments in this place.
- There are one or more well-documented plans of clear, measurable, high priority restoration activities for the watershed. These plans list specific projects by rank order, may describe a timeline for completion, and may include cost estimates. Plans are unambiguous about the import of specific activities in relation to other activities.
- A prioritized list of sub-watersheds further guides project selection. For example, each of the sixth-field Hydrologic Unit Codes within a fifth-field Focus Watershed has been ranked by importance of restoration priority.
- Local partners have demonstrated capacity to successfully implement restoration.

Nestucca River Focus Watershed Special Opportunity

For those proposing projects in the Nestucca River watershed that include private non-industrial forestland or agricultural land improvements, additional funds are available through NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Priority for these funds will be given to projects that complement work underway or completed through the WWRI, though additional projects are also eligible for funding. Conservation activities may include culvert replacement, bridges, road decommissioning, riparian restoration, and off-channel watering. Coordination for these complementary projects will occur directly with NRCS. Funding may also be available for projects in associated watersheds including the Little Nestucca River and Sand Lake. For details, contact Mitch Cummings, NRCS, at (503) 812-5229.

Map of Priority Basins, Focus Watersheds and Emphasis Areas



Partnerships and Match

Diversity of partners and degree of leveraged funding are important considerations in project selection. Applicants are encouraged to show non-federal match of at least 50% of the requested amount, though projects with less than 50% non-federal match are eligible for funding. Projects with more than 50% non-federal match may be given priority consideration. Successful applicants will be required to formally demonstrate match and landowner consent have been secured during WWRI grant contracting. Please note that should a project receive funding from both WWRI and OWEB, you may not claim the OWEB portion of your WWRI grant as match on your OWEB Regular Grant Program grant.

Compliance with NEPA and Other State and Federal Regulations

Successful applicants are very likely to receive federal funds, and therefore will be required to satisfy applicable financial and programmatic requirements and meet all applicable local, state, and tribal environmental laws and federal consistency requirements before project implementation, including but not limited to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Clean Water Act (CWA). Grantees are expected to work with WWRI staff and agency partners to provide information necessary to complete federal compliance requirements. Applicants should be able to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and environmental concerns that may exist in order for the federal agency to make a NEPA determination on each proposal. If environmental compliance requirements have not already been completed, applicants are encouraged to incorporate necessary funding in the budget section of the application.

Application Process

Applicants are required to use the official WWRI application form, available for download from www.ecotrust.org/wwri. Applications and all other required documentation must be submitted electronically to WWRI@ecotrust.org by 5:00 PM PST on January 9, 2014.

The application consists of three sections:

- I. Project Overview (sponsor organization, contacts, basic project information and maps);
- II. Narrative Questions (see "Proposal Evaluation" below); and
- III. Appendix (up to five pages of additional relevant materials).

Proposal Evaluation

Each proposal will be reviewed by an evaluation committee on a scale from zero to 100 points and awarded funding based on how well it meets the following criteria:

- A. Geographic Focus** (10 points)
- B. Project Justification, Goals and Benefits** (40 points)
- C. Partnerships and Experience** (10 points)
- D. Timeline and Readiness** (10 points)
- E. Monitoring** (10 points)
- F. Community Outreach** (5 points)
- G. Budget** (15 points)

A. Geographic Focus (10 points)

Only projects located in WWRI Priority Basins will be considered for funding; applicants receive no points for meeting the minimum eligibility requirement of question 1. (See “Geographic Eligibility” on page 2 and the map on page 4 of this document.) During review and evaluation, projects entirely within Focus Watersheds are eligible to receive a maximum of 5 points in this category. Projects entirely within Emphasis Areas are eligible to receive a maximum of 10 points.

B. Project Justification, Goals and Benefits (40 points)

What is the problem that the project aims to address, what project activities and methods are proposed, and what are the expected outcomes? Have proposed activities been identified in an existing salmon recovery plan or a watershed action plan, and do they address key limiting factors? Cite specific watershed analyses, salmon recovery plans, watershed action plans, water quality restoration plans, etc.

The description of project benefits should include benefits to target species (Pacific salmon and steelhead). Benefits include the number of acres and miles of habitat improved, the magnitude of the improvements, and economic and social effects. The description should also address the degree to which actions will improve watershed conditions and contribute to completion of whole watershed processes and functions.

C. Partnerships and Experience (10 points)

Developing partnerships among communities, organizations, individuals and agencies is an important element to long-term restoration success. Diversity of partnership is measured by the number and level of confirmed partner contributions. Projects must show some contributions matched by other non-federal sources.

Applicants must also show capacity to implement the scope and scale of the proposed work and the ability to successfully complete the project within the proposed budget and timeline. Organizations previously participating in similar projects with a proven record of project completion and qualified staff members may be ranked higher during the evaluation process.

D. Timeline and Readiness (10 points)

The project timeline should be feasible, appropriate and connected to project goals and budget. Readiness is the degree to which the project is ready for implementation in terms of landowner willingness, NEPA standing, design, permits and contract preparation. Projects that are ready to implement may rank higher during evaluation than those that are in the planning phase.

E. Monitoring (10 points)

Implementation monitoring is required and should help evaluate whether or not the project met the stated goals and objectives; this is also known as compliance or post-project status reporting. Effectiveness monitoring, also known as performance monitoring, is highly encouraged as it helps evaluate whether the project, including its design and techniques, produced the desired outcomes in terms of habitat improvement or fish population response.

Project monitoring plans must include before and after photo points that illustrate the effects of the project activities as clearly as possible. Guidance for developing monitoring plans is available at: http://www.ecotrust.org/wwri/downloads/Monitoring_Plan_Guidance.pdf. To learn what monitoring protocols and methods are being used by others in the Pacific Northwest, visit the Monitoring Methods site at: <http://www.monitoringmethods.org/>.

You are encouraged to describe regular monitoring being conducted in your watershed by organizations such as a state Department of Fish and Wildlife, or if the project is located in an Intensively Monitored Watershed.

F. Community Outreach (5 points)

Ideal projects will demonstrate a high degree of community involvement in and benefit from project development, implementation, and monitoring. Proposals that include complementary public outreach and awareness-building components contributing to their watershed restoration effort may be ranked higher than those without outreach activities.

G. Budget (15 points)

The budget description should detail all funds requested, as well as all matching funds and in-kind contributions. Budgets submitted should follow the budget format provided. Please also specify whether matching funds and other contributions are pending or secured.

Questions? Contact:
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(503) 467-0814

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