



Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects

The new WaterSMART Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program (AERP) provides funding to support projects that restore or protect aquatic ecosystems. Through the AERP, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) leverages Federal and non-Federal funding to work with states, Tribes, and other entities as they study, design, and construct aquatic ecosystem restoration projects that are collaboratively developed, have widespread regional benefits, and result in the improvement of the health of fisheries, wildlife, and aquatic habitat through restoration and improved fish passage.

Eligible Projects

Eligible projects include, *but are not limited to*, the study and design (Task A) or construction (Task B) of a project that:

- Removes or modifies a barrier to fish passage (including dams or diversion structures)
- Restores or protects connectivity
- Restores or protects aquatic habitat
- Improves water availability, quality, or temperature

Eligible Applicants

Applicants eligible to receive an award under this funding opportunity are described below. All applicants must be located in the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming, or American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands.

Category A Applicants:

- States, Tribes, irrigation districts, or water districts;
- State, regional, or local authorities, the members of which include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority;
- Agencies established under State law for the joint exercise of powers;
- Other entities or organizations that own a facility that is eligible for upgrade, modification, or removal.

Category B Applicants:

- Nonprofit conservation organizations that are acting in partnership with, and with the agreement of an entity described in Category A, with respect to a project involving land or infrastructure owned by the Category A entity.

Funding Levels

Program funding is allocated through a competitive process. Applicants for Task A: Study and Design Projects may request between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000. Applicants for Task B: Construction Projects may request between \$3,000,000 and \$20,000,000. All applicants must cost share 35 percent (35%) or more of the total project cost. **Note: this cost-sharing requirement is not applicable to American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Virgin Islands.**

Featured Project

Because this program is new, we are featuring an example project that was funded through a similar program.

In 2022, Rogue Valley Council of Governments was selected to receive funding to restore natural channel hydrology and fish passage to a highly disturbed reach of Bear Creek near the City of Medford, Oregon. Bear Creek, a tributary to the Rogue River, provides important spawning and rearing habitat for Southern Oregon and Northern California Coasts coho salmon, which are impacted by poor water quality, low flow, and restrictions to fish passage and listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and are a culturally significant species for local tribes. This project will remove three existing barriers and install large wood and gravel to increase suitable habitat for salmon spawning. These actions will improve access to 8 miles of potential spawning and rearing habitat for several native fish species and improve water quality by reducing polluted sediment, increasing oxygenation and decreasing water temperatures. Other project benefits include reducing bank erosion, stream-bed improvements to improve stream functions, and improved aesthetic value of the recreational Bear Creek Greenway multi-use trail. The trail also follows an ancient travel route used by the Shasta and Takelma Indians and restoration of seasonal flow to the ancestral lands provides important benefits to culturally significant species. The project is supported by the Rogue Basin Action Plan and multiple partners, including the Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Rogue River Valley Irrigation District, the City of Medford, and the Rogue River Watershed Council.

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