WaterSMART
Environmental Water Resource Projects

FY 2024/2025 Funding Opportunity
April 25th, 2023
Getting Started

• To watch the recording, use the same link: **Join live event**
• Attendees' cameras and microphones are muted
• A copy of the slides will be available on our website: https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/

• Questions and comments can be posted in the Q&A icon on the bottom of the menu bar
Today’s Agenda:

• Overview of the *Environmental Water Resource Projects* Funding Opportunity
• Program Information, Applicant and Project Eligibility, and Evaluation Criteria
  • Which WaterSMART program is right for my project?
• Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding
• Overview of Reclamation’s WaterSMART Selection Process
• Application Tips
• Financial Assistance Requirements
• Other Tools and Resources
WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects provides funding to support collaboratively developed projects that provide significant ecological benefits, including water conservation and efficiency projects, water management and infrastructure improvements, river and watershed restoration projects, and nature-based solutions implementation.
Funding Opportunity is Currently Open!

This Notice of Funding Opportunity will have two draw downs

First Closing: Tuesday June 18th, 2024 4:00pm MDT
Second Closing: Tuesday March 11th, 2025 4:00pm MDT
EWRP Applicant Eligibility

**Eligible Applicants**

Applicants must be located in the 17 Western States, Alaska, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, or Puerto Rico.

**Category A**
- States, Indian Tribes, irrigation districts, and water districts;
- State, regional, or local authorities, whose members include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority; and
- Other organizations with water or power delivery authority.

**Category B**
- Nonprofit conservation organizations, including watershed groups, that are acting in partnership with and with the agreement of an entity described in Category A. Category B applicants must include with their application a letter from the Category A partner, stating that they are acting in partnership with the applicant and agree to the submittal and content of the proposal.

**Category C**
- Non-profit conservation organizations submitting an application for a project to implement a nature-based solution on Federal land may submit an application without a Category A partner, if they demonstrate that entities described in Category A from the applicable service area have been notified and do not object to the project. All Category C applicants must be in the United States or one of the Territories identified above.
EWRP Funding Guidelines

General Applicants: Up to $3 million for projects with a total cost of $6 million or less to be completed within three years

New for FY24! Watershed Groups: Up to $5 million for projects to be completed within 5 years.

A 25% Non-Federal Cost Share is required for all projects. Example: An applicant requesting $3 million should have a non-Federal cost share of at least $1 million dollars. Note: this cost-sharing requirement is not applicable to American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or the Virgin Islands.

Cost-Share MUST be Non-Federal in nature. This means you can not typically include funding from NOAA, US Fish and Wildlife, USDOT, or BPA, among other sources.
Watershed Groups: Definition and Provisions

A watershed group, as defined in Section 6001(6) of the Cooperative Watershed Management Act (see Section A.1. Authority for full citation):

- Is a grassroots, non-regulatory entity that addresses water availability and quality issues within the relevant watershed.
- Is capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources in the watershed.
- Makes decisions on a consensus basis.
- Represents a diverse group of stakeholders representing different water use sectors, including hydroelectric producers; livestock grazing; timber production; land development; recreation or tourism; irrigated agriculture; the environment; municipal water supplies; private property owners; Federal, state and local governments; Tribes; and disadvantaged communities.

Applications from watershed groups will be ranked separately from other applicants. Applicants applying as a watershed group must have a letter of partnership from an eligible Category A entity to be eligible for the 75% Federal cost share. Watershed groups that apply without a Category A partner are eligible to receive 50% cost share.

We highly recommend you do not attempt to apply as a watershed group if you do not ORGANICALLY meet this definition.
EWRP Project Eligibility

• Task A: *Ecologically Focused Water Conservation and Efficiency Projects*

• Task B: *Ecologically Focused Water Management and Infrastructure Improvements*

• Task C: *Restoration and Nature-Based Solutions*

Applicants may apply for a project that has project components from one or more of the Task Areas
Task A: Ecologically Focused Water Conservation and Efficiency Projects

A primary purpose of the project must be to provide more reliable water supplies for ecological benefits. Some means of ensuring that the conserved water will be made available for ecological benefits is required. This could include a formal mechanism to commit conserved water to instream flows (e.g., instream water right) or other types of assurances (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding between applicable water right holders and stakeholders).

Eligible activities include:

- Canal lining or piping
- Irrigation flow measurements
- Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) automation
Task B: Ecologically Focused Water Management and Infrastructure Improvements

To be eligible under this task area, a primary project purpose must be to provide ecological benefits.

Eligible activities include:

- Improving fish passage, including installation and/or modification of fish screens, ladders, bypasses, or removing small barriers to fish passage (e.g., diversion dams).

- Improving fish hatcheries (e.g., chillers, holding pens, transport, disease control, or prevention).

- Water management changes or infrastructure improvements that will improve water supply reliability and provide ecological benefits.
To be eligible under this task area, projects must have a clear nexus to water resources or water resources management. Eligible activities include:

- Restoration of Aquatic and Riparian Habitat
- Restoration of Connectivity
- Nature-Based Solutions
- Water Quality and Temperature
- Fisheries Projects
- Invasive Species Projects (With a Clear Nexus to Water Resources)
- Forest Management Projects (With a Clear Nexus to Water Resources)

Projects that provide benefits to multiple sectors, including projects that benefit ecological values or watershed health and agricultural, municipal, tribal, or recreational water uses, are encouraged and prioritized.
Construction Start Date

“For the June 18, 2024, deadline, proposed projects should NOT have an estimated construction start date that is prior to January 1, 2025.”
Featured EWRP Project:
Sun River Watershed, Muddy Creek Restoration and Resilience Project, Phase I

- SRW will restore the flow regime and channel in a 3-mile stretch of Muddy Creek, a tributary to the Sun River in central Montana. The restoration will improve water quality, enhance fish and wildlife habitats, and restore hydrologic processes.

- Unnaturally high streamflow events due to irrigation returns have damaged stream banks, resulting in massive erosion that contributes sediment and nutrients into the creek.

- Sun River received around $1.75 million in Reclamation funding to carry out the restoration project
The project will expand the capacity of an existing reservoir to allow for attenuation and improved management of excess irrigation water and conserve up to 8,000 acre-feet of water annually.

Project partners will also restore the stream channel with riffle grade control, floodplain expansion, and low-impact bank treatments.

These combined projects were identified as the top priorities in a Master Plan for Muddy Creek, developed under a 2020 WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1 grant, supported by diverse stakeholders.
## EWRP Evaluation Criteria Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Criteria Scoring Summary</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Project Benefits</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Collaborative Planning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Stakeholder Support for Proposed Project</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Readiness to Proceed</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Performance measures</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Presidential and Department of the Interior priorities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation Criterion A: Project Benefits (35 Points)

• **Subcriterion A.1: Ecological Project Benefits**
  • Address Ecological Project Benefits
  • Provide descriptive examples of benefits, quantification, and citations to appropriate references

• **Subcriterion A.2: Multiple Benefits**
  • Explain how and to what extent the project will provide multiple benefits
Evaluation Criterion B: Collaborative Planning (15 Points)

- **Plan Description and Objective:** Is your proposed project supported by a specific planning document? If so, identify the planning document by name and address the following questions.

- **Plan Development:** Was the plan developed through a collaborative process?

- **Plan Support for Project:** Describe how the plan provides support for your proposed project.
Evaluation Criterion C: Stakeholder Support for Proposed Project (10 Points)

• Points will be awarded based on the level of stakeholder support for the proposed project. Applications that demonstrate support for the project from a diverse array of stakeholders will receive the most points under this criterion.

• Letters of support for the project are considered here
Evaluation Criterion D: Readiness to Proceed (20 Points)

• Points will be awarded based upon the extent to which the proposed project is capable of proceeding upon entering into a financial assistance agreement.

• Project with a clear and detailed implementation plan and budget and a high level of design and engineering complete at the time of application will be prioritized under this evaluation criterion.
Evaluation Criterion E: Performance Measures (5 Points)

• Points will be awarded based on the extent to which the application describes a plan to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the project during and after the proposed project period to track success and adaptively address new challenges as they arise.
Evaluation Criterion F: Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities (15 Points)

- Points will be awarded based on the extent that the project demonstrates support for the Biden-Harris Administration’s priorities, including E.O. 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad and the President’s memorandum, Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships.
- Climate Change
- Benefits to Disadvantaged and Tribal Communities

Note: Applicants should utilize the White House Council on Environmental Quality’s Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool to identify how communities in their project area may be classified as disadvantaged or underserved. [Explore the map - Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (geoplatform.gov)]
Which Funding Opportunity is Right For You?

| Total Project Cost (for implementation projects) (COST SHARE + BOR FUNDING) | Environmental Water Resource Projects (EWRP) | Up to $6 Million | Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (AERP) | Between $6 million and $20 million. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Federal Cost Share | 75% | 65% |
| Does the funding opportunity cover restoration planning projects? | No, but interested applicants looking to fund the design of an EWRP project are welcome to apply for the WaterSMART Planning and project Design Funding Opportunity, or the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program if they are a watershed group. | Yes - Applicants may apply under Task A: Study and Design to receive between $500,000 and $2 million for the study and design of a large-scale aquatic ecosystem restoration project! |
| Funding for projects in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico? | Yes! | - |
| Funding for fish passage improvements? | Yes! | Yes! |
| Funding for complete dam removal? | Small diversion dam removals | Yes! |
| Funding for ecologically beneficial water conservation or infrastructure improvements without other actions? | Yes! | - |
| Funding for large-scale, multi-basin, comprehensive restoration portfolios? | - | Yes! |
### Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding for WaterSMART Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>Funding Amount (Over Five Years)</th>
<th>Activities Funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WaterSMART Grants (for Nature-Based Features)</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>Water conservation and efficiency, renewable energy, natural and nature-based features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Watershed Management Program</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>Watershed planning and restoration projects for watershed groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration and Protection Projects</td>
<td>$250 million</td>
<td>Aquatic ecosystem restoration and protection projects to improve habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Benefit Projects to Improve Watershed Health</td>
<td>$100 million</td>
<td>Restoration projects to improve watershed health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of Reclamation’s WaterSMART Process

From NOFO to Selection
WaterSMART Selection Process
Sample schedule

From NOFO Posting to Award of Funding = 12 - 14 Months
General Application Tips

• The most successful projects are those that fit well with the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

• Review the objective of the NOFO, the eligible project types and the evaluation criteria carefully to choose the right NOFO.

• **Suggested Pre-Application Actions:**
  
  • Contact the Program Coordinator to discuss which NOFO your project fits best under.
  
  • Look at past successful applications at [www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART](http://www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART)
Application Tips

General Considerations

• **Important**: Read *everything* in the NOFO!
  - Ask questions if something does not make sense.

• **Give yourself plenty of time to write and submit the proposal.**

• **Do not assume the Application Review Committee knows you.**
  - Paint the reviewers a picture- and back it up with data!
  - Committee is comprised of Reclamation staff from throughout the Western states.

• **If your application is not awarded, ask for a debriefing to help prepare better proposal next year.**
Application Tips

**Evaluation Criteria**

- Make sure you respond to every criterion and every sub-criterion

- Your responses should:
  - Directly respond to the criterion – We recommend you copy and paste the criteria directly into your proposal and place your response immediately below each criterion/sub-criterion
  - Provide support in the form of quantification or citations to reference documents
  - Make the case for how your project meets the criterion – general statements without explanation or support will not score well

- **Application Tip:** Well-supported responses to the evaluation criteria are the key to writing a competitive proposal
Application Tips

Other Considerations

• Project scope and budget should align! Reviewers will consider whether the budget is reasonable to complete the scope described in the technical project description.

• Consider inflation when developing your budget.
WaterSMART
Financial Assistance
Requirements
Register in SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

- **SAM.gov | Entity Registrations**

- If you have difficulties – document communications with help desk.

- Include communications with your application

---

WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects
For Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025
Funding Opportunity No. R24AS00299
Find all Required Documentation and Register and Apply for Federal Grants

- www.grants.gov

- If you have difficulties, document communications with help desk.

- Include communications with your application
Grants.gov provides many different guidance opportunities, regardless of the applicant’s experience level.

Info webinar available at www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART
Application Tips

Where to Start

Search Grants

WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects
For Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025
Funding Opportunity No. R24AS00299
WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects
For Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025
Funding Opportunity No. R24AS00299

Search for Opportunity
Number  R24AS00299

Opportunity Number  R24AS00299
Opportunity Title  WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects 2024
Agency  DOI-BOR
Opportunity Status  Posted
Posted Date  04/16/2024
Close Date  06/18/2024
Application Tips

Where to Start

WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects
For Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025
Funding Opportunity No. R24AS00299
Application Tips
Where to Start

WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects
For Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025
Funding Opportunity No. R24AS00299

Mandatory Components:
SF-424, SF424A, SF-424D, Technical Proposal, Budget Narrative
Preparing your budget

- Budget should align with technical proposal
- Budget costs represent total project costs (Federal and Non-Federal)
- Recommend using Attachment A-Budget Narrative Guidance & Attachment B-Budget Detail
  - No required format, but required information listed in the NOFO must be included
- Application Tip: Write budget narrative while preparing the budget estimate
Verify you have a completed mandatory forms:

- SF-424
- SF-424A
- SF-424D

Technical Proposal (use Project Narrative form to upload in Grants.gov)

Budget Narrative (use Budget Narrative form to upload in Grants.gov)
Financial Assistance Staff

- Answer questions about financial assistance requirements during the application process

- Conduct Initial Screening and remove applications that do not meet the completeness, eligibility and timeliness requirements of the NOFO.

- Notify Applicants of Application status based on the contact information provided on the SF-424 Form
All application packages will be screened to ensure:

• The applicant meets the completeness, eligibility, and timeliness requirements
• The applicant meets the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and SAM registration requirements
• The application meets the content requirements
• The application contains completed mandatory forms
Financial Assistance Selection Notification

After Initial screening:

• Ineligible applicants will be notified by Grants Officer
• Eligible applicants will move on to the Merit Review
• All successful and unsuccessful applications will be notified by Grants Officer.
• The Financial Assistance Office will reach out to the successful applicant regarding next steps for entering into a Financial Assistance award.
Financial Assistance Questions?

Please email the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Team directly at:

bor-sha-fafoa@usbr.gov

**Please include the NOFO number in the subject of your email.**
Additional Opportunities, Tools and Resources
Cooperative Watershed Management Program

Phase I – Watershed Group Formation and Restoration Planning

Eligible Project Activities

• Watershed group development
• Conducting outreach activities
• Gathering data about the watershed
• Watershed restoration plans
• Project design

Funding

• 0% Non-Federal cost share required
• Up to $300,000 in Reclamation funding over 3 years
• Sufficiency review required for second year funding

Eligible Applicants:

Existing OR proposed watershed groups, states, Indian Tribes, local and special districts (e.g., irrigation and water districts), local governmental entities, interstate organizations, and non-profit organizations.

Funding Opportunity Open: Applications due September 3rd, 2024
View Successful Applications Online
Helpful Tools

WaterSMART Program Data Portal
➢ On the portal, you can find information about recently awarded projects, BIL Funding, useful data visualizations, and interactive maps.

WaterSMART Data Portal:
https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/bf5c5357e7044e0c80d5a55788d1db34/

WaterSMART Data Visualization Tool:
http://arcg.is/1TcT68S
WaterSMART Program Resources

For General Information and for help using grants.gov: https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/

For information about upcoming WaterSMART Funding Opportunities, you may sign up for our mailing list.

To find and apply for Funding Opportunities: www.grants.gov

Additional Resources
Climate Mapping and Resilience and Adaptation: https://resilience.climate.gov/

Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5