



Community-based Restoration Matching Grants Program

TNC Global Marine Team & NOAA Restoration Center

Request for Proposals – March 2009

TNC-NOAA Community-based Habitat Restoration Grants

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are pleased to request proposals for their restoration matching grants program. This program is part of a national cooperative agreement between TNC's Global Marine Team and the NOAA Restoration Center.

The objectives of TNC and NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) are to bring together interested groups, public, private, tribal and non-profit organizations to implement habitat restoration projects to benefit NOAA trust resources (anadromous, estuarine, and marine species and their habitats). This innovative program recognizes the significant role that partnerships can play in making habitat restoration happen within communities, and acknowledges that habitat restoration is often best implemented through technical and monetary support provided at a community level. (For more information visit:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/index.html or <http://www.nature.org/initiatives/marine/strategies/community.html>).

Focus areas: We will support any innovative restoration project nationwide that supports NOAA trust resources, and particularly those projects that have a multi-species benefit or emphasize Ecosystem-Based Management. A focal area of particular interest, though not exclusive or limiting, is native shellfish (bivalve) restoration projects nationwide that emphasize ecosystem services (e.g., water filtration, shoreline protection, provision of fish habitat).

Projects throughout all USA states and territories are eligible to compete for these grants to restore or enhance estuarine, marine, and anadromous species and their habitats. Preference will be given to projects at priority sites identified through Marine Ecoregional Assessments (available at the following web site: <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/MECA/>) and other TNC priority setting approaches at the state and territory level (contact TNC state chapter or NOAA/TNC Partnership Coordinator, Boze Hancock, see below).

Match Requirements: The NOAA-TNC national partnership provides seed money to individual projects that leverage funds and other contributions from the public and private sector to implement locally important habitat restoration that benefits living marine resources.

Non-federal match is required at the rate of 1:1. The 1:1 match can come from a variety of (non-federal) public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services from project partners. Approved projects may use any unrecovered indirect costs as match (see budget section below). Note however that neither Federal funds nor Federal funds passed through state agencies are eligible to be used as matching funds.

Global Marine Team Technical Support: As part of TNC's increased focus on restoration, The Global Marine Team will work with project sites and regional programs to leverage the impact of individual restoration projects through information exchange and coordination across projects. We can offer site and regional practitioners our expertise to assist with developing (i) projects aimed at shellfish restoration and the restoration of nursery habitats nationwide, (ii) linking projects towards achieving regional restoration success, and (iii) improving the measuring and monitoring of ecosystem services.

NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) Technical Support: Through NOAA's Restoration Center, CRP staff provides technical support to assist project proponents in the development and implementation of sound coastal restoration projects. Located strategically throughout the country, CRP field staff are available as needed to provide site-specific guidance on activities including project design and engineering, environmental compliance, and scientific-based project monitoring. In addition, CRP field staff work to enhance community engagement and collaboration among local entities to increase restoration success at the local and regional level and coordinate and gain public recognition for restoration efforts.

Administrative and Reporting Requirements: Awards are expected to be announced by July 2009; anticipated awards are contingent on notification of federal funding to The Nature Conservancy. Upon notification of an award, projects will be assigned a TNC Global Marine Team budget center number to use for project expenses, and will also be informed as to required financial and programmatic reporting requirements. This information will assist TNC in meeting Federal guidelines for reporting expenses and project status on a semi-annual basis.

Proposal Requirements and Submission: Specifications for TNC-NOAA Community-based Habitat Restoration Grants are detailed in the following pages. Proposals are due by April 24, 2009 by e-mail (preferred), or by hard copy (if you submit a hard copy, please also submit an electronic copy on CD) to:

Boze Hancock, TNC-NOAA National Partnership Coordinator
bhancock@tnc.org (electronic submission is preferred)

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For questions about the grants program or proposals please contact Boze Hancock, TNC-NOAA National Partnership Coordinator at 401-874-6121 (phone), or bhancock@tnc.org (email).

If proposals are greater than 5MB please contact Boze Hancock regarding safe receipt of large email files.

COMMUNITY-BASED HABITAT RESTORATION GRANTS 2009

Proposal Requirements

NOAA-TNC Partnership

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) mission is to protect representative biodiversity and the lands and waters that native plants and animals need to survive. Our greatest strength lies in our effectiveness at conserving biodiversity at the local level. Our "conservation process" consists of four fundamental components: setting *priorities* through ecoregional planning; developing *strategies* to abate threats at both single and multiple conservation areas; taking direct conservation *action*; and measuring conservation *success* (*Conservation by Design* 2000).

In the past, TNC focused primarily on terrestrial conservation. To achieve its global mission, however, TNC has increasingly focused its efforts on marine and estuarine conservation. These efforts are growing rapidly with support and leadership from the Global Marine Team, and are essential because our mission requires that we address conservation of biodiversity in all environments. Additionally, *Conservation by Design* requires us to explicitly consider and sustain the ecological linkages among terrestrial, freshwater, and marine systems.

TNC's conservation process has brought heightened awareness of coastal and marine ecosystems and the many species that require these habitats during part of their lives. This process has also highlighted the fact that many coastal and marine sites require restoration (see Appendix III) to function properly. As a result, TNC's Global Marine Team has been vigorously promoting aquatic conservation practices, including habitat restoration under the TNC/NOAA partnership.

Grants: Focus Areas & Amounts

This year, typical grants will be in the range of \$25,000-\$85,000. This will be a competitive process. The merits of each proposal will be weighed based on how closely the project aligns with the national partnership's evaluation criteria (see below).

We are soliciting a wide array of proposed projects for community-based restoration of habitats. We will support innovative restoration projects nationwide that address NOAA trust resources, and particularly projects that have a multi-species benefit or emphasize Ecosystem-Based Management. A focal area of particular interest, though not exclusive or limiting, is native shellfish (bivalve) restoration projects nationwide that emphasize ecosystem services (e.g., water filtration, shoreline protection, provision of fish habitat).

We always encourage applicants to note multiple benefits to many species, habitat, and ecosystems of any proposed project.

Elements of Successful Project Proposals

Applicants should strive to meet as many of the following elements as possible:

- Project is fully aligned with *Conservation by Design*
<http://nature.org/aboutus/howwework/cbd/> and follow to the section titled 'Go Deeper'
This means:
 - It is part of a priority conservation area as identified through TNC's ecoregional planning process (<http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/MECA/>). If a marine ecoregional assessment has not yet been completed, the project must be identified as a high priority by the state or territorial chapter of TNC.

- It is included as part of a site conservation action plan, or conservation area, that identifies restoration as a primary strategy for achieving conservation success.
 - It should identify, or is prepared to address, short and long-term measures of success (see Monitoring below).
- Project implementation will result in tangible and measurable restoration of living marine resources.
 - Project involves significant community engagement and support that is tied to the restoration activities. This should be done to ensure the community is aware of restoration activities, feels ownership in specific projects and can voice any concerns there may be.
 - Project concept involves substantial interaction with the NOAA Restoration Center regional representative throughout its development; a list of the NOAA local contacts is provided in Appendix 1.
 - Project involves partners.
 - Project must provide a minimum 1:1 non-federal match. Match above the required 1:1 level increases the competitiveness of proposed projects.
 - Project demonstrates a reasonable assurance that the appropriate permits can be obtained in a timely manner.
 - Project demonstrates a reasonable assurance that there is ongoing protection for the restoration, e.g. fishery closures, conservation easements, or other habitat protection.

Proposal Contents

If the project qualifies, a proposal should be submitted to Boze Hancock in TNC's Global Marine Team no later than April 24, 2009. *Proposals should be no longer than five pages (not including attachments). You are also strongly encouraged to consult with a member of NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program regional staff early-on in the proposal preparation process (see appendix 1), and Boze Hancock at TNC.*

Recommended format and minimum information to be provided in a project proposal includes:

BASIC APPLICATION INFORMATION

- Project Name
- Contact Person (address, phone, fax, email)
- Congressional District(s) and Representative(s)
- Regional NOAA Contact Staff Person

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 1-2 paragraph Project Abstract.
- Project location (include project zip code, and lat-long if possible).
- Reference to Ecoregional Assessment or supporting document from TNC state chapter.
- Relevant Maps or Photos (may be included as appendices) with site location(s) indicated.
- Land Ownership (public or private).
- Anticipated Benefits to Species and Habitat(s).
- Desired Future Conditions (in measurable terms)

- Partners Involved (include partner contributions, if applicable, even if not used as match).
- A list of federal, state, tribal and local permits (e.g. see Permit Requirements and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements sections below).

WORK PLAN

- Start and End Date (1 year projects are preferred, but projects up to 2 years are acceptable, particularly if the longer time enables post-restoration monitoring).
- Restoration Methodology and Design Considerations.
- Timeline for Anticipated Actions (e.g., design and permitting phase, pre-restoration monitoring, implementation, post-restoration monitoring).
- Identification of the mechanism that will be used, by TNC or a partner, to ensure that necessary environmental permits and consultations will be secured prior to the use of Federal funds.
- Identification of Goals and Description of Long-Term Measures of Success.
- Identification of Measurable Objectives / Project-specific Benchmarks for Measuring Short-Term Success (see Monitoring below).
- Community Engagement (may include: hands-on training and restoration activities undertaken by volunteers; sponsorship from local entities, either through in-kind goods and services or cash contributions; public education and outreach; and/or support from state and local governments).
- A description of the anticipated outreach for the project, e.g., fact sheets, workshops and trainings, presentations, papers, publications, if applicable.

PROJECTED BUDGET AND NARRATIVE (see Appendix II)

- Completed *Projected Budget Template*.
- Grant Amount requested.
- Match Amount being provided (non-federal is required).
- Identify source(s) of Match and indicate whether match is confirmed or pending.
- Justification For Fund Use (as listed in projected budget) and a budget narrative.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Clear restoration objectives, with measurable outcomes supported by a well-crafted monitoring plan that meets NOAA's minimum monitoring requirements (see Monitoring below);
- Technical merit and project feasibility;
- Extent to which project benefits living marine resources and will persist over the long-term;
- A long-term maintenance plan for ensuring long-term sustainability of the site;
- Community involvement, education, and stewardship;
- Budget justification with sufficient detail to evaluate cost-effectiveness and availability of match;
- Whether NEPA, ESA, or other regulatory compliance issues may reasonably be raised, and how likely they are to be expeditiously resolved to allow project implementation to begin shortly after receipt of funding;
- Degree of support from and involvement with, the regional NOAA contact person.
- The extent of present and future involvement of TNC staff at these sites.

Preference will be given to projects containing:

- Projects in areas where marine ecoregional plans have been completed and habitat restoration has been identified as a regional priority;
- Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as identified by NOAA Fisheries, and areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern;

- Areas identified as critical habitat for federally or state listed estuarine and marine species;
- Areas identified as important habitat for marine mammals and turtles;
- Areas identified as important nursery habitats;
- Watersheds or other areas under special management by state coastal management programs;
- Other important commercial or recreational fish habitat; and
- Habitat supporting native bivalve shellfish and associated species.

Project Evaluation and Selection

Together, NOAA and TNC select projects that will receive support from this innovative national partnership. This selection process will take place in two steps. In the first step, TNC's Global Marine Team performs a preliminary review and narrows the project proposals submitted to those that most closely meet the qualifications and evaluation criteria. In the second step, NOAA Headquarters, the NOAA regional staff, and TNC will then review, evaluate, and select final projects with the goal of funding 8-12 projects.

Reporting Requirements for Selected Proposals

After the selection process, the Grantees that are awarded funding shall be required to file quarterly financial reports (for projects managed external to TNC), semi-annual progress reports, and a comprehensive final report. An initial and final fact sheet will also be required with the first progress report and final report for posting on TNC's web site (see: <http://www.nature.org/initiatives/marine/strategies/community.html>).

Monitoring:

Proposals should describe at least one structural and one functional parameter that will be monitored during the project period. For each selected parameter (minimum of two), a baseline value, reference value, and a proposed target value must be identified prior to the implementation of restoration efforts. The Conservancy and NOAA will work together with the grantee to determine monitoring parameters and targets for successful applicants based on the NOAA restoration monitoring guidelines.

(see: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/project_reports.html).

Applicant's Permit Requirements

Applicants must provide where relevant a list and status (obtained, application filed, when anticipate obtaining approval, or have not applied) of all necessary federal, state, tribal and local permits required to complete the project and the appropriate regulatory agency contact (name, title, phone) for each permitting agency. TNC will require copies of permit and compliance documentation once the documentation is secured.

Grantees will be required to satisfy all financial and programmatic requirements and meet all local, state and tribal environmental laws and Federal consistency requirements before project implementation.

National Environmental Policy Act Requirements

All proposals will be reviewed for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance by NOAA. All projects must comply with NEPA before TNC will release funds. For more information on NEPA, please visit NOAA's website at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>.

Applicants will be required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of

hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, the presence of historic structures, and impacts to coral reef systems) in order for NOAA to make a NEPA determination on each proposal. For additional information on the NOAA Restoration Center NEPA process, please visit: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/S-PEA%20June%202006%20final%206-23-06.pdf

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal.

Once awards are approved, we will also need to ensure that for projects involving volunteers each project manager has a management plan for them (e.g., liability waivers & procedures for conveying safety information to volunteers prior to conducting field work).

Due Diligence

Successful non-profit applicants external to TNC will be asked to provide copies of documents to ensure that the Awardee meets the criteria of a non-profit conservation organization and that the Awardee meets appropriate standards of capacity, competence, and financial accountability. These documents include but are not limited to the following: a certificate of good standing, a list of the names of all of its board members and principal officers, copies of Awardee's bylaws and articles of incorporation. Awardee agrees to notify TNC immediately of any change in Awardee's corporate or tax status or operations, or if any official judicial, legislative, or administrative proceeding is instituted against Awardee that may affect the commitments and obligations agreed to in the award.

SCUBA Safety

For any Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) diving activities described in the proposal, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that SCUBA divers are certified to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any SCUBA diving activities under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of SCUBA diving being undertaken.

Appendix I

NOAA Community-based Restoration Program Field Contacts

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APPENDIX II

**PROJECTED BUDGET TEMPLATE
COMMUNITY-BASED HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT**

BUDGET CATEGORIES	REQUESTED NOAA FUNDS	APPLICANT MATCH**	THIRD PARTY MATCH**	TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	DESCRIPTION (elaborate in narrative)
Salaries					
Fringe Benefits					
Travel					
Supplies					
Contractual					
Other: (Specify)*					
Other: (Specify)					
Other: (Specify)					
Total Direct Costs					
Indirect Costs (see note 3 below)					
TOTAL*					

* Equipment purchases over \$5,000 per item are not allowable under this RFP.

** Please indicate whether confirmed or pending.

NARRATIVE. Provide detail (by budget category) on how the funds requested, or provided as match, will be used to meet the goals of this project. Please include the following:

- 1) Specify where possible the sources of confirmed match or potential sources of match.
- 2) Please identify Fringe Benefits rates used in Narrative.
- 3) This RFP allows for reimbursement of up to 12.5% in indirect costs. Indirect costs must be based upon a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the U.S. government or upon an audited indirect cost rate. Unrecovered indirect costs over 12.5% may be used as match.

APPENDIX III

DEFINITION OF RESTORATION & REPRESENTATIVE ACTIVITIES

TNC's definition of "restoration" closely mirrors that published by the National Research Council in their book on Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems:

"Restoration is defined as the return of an ecosystem to a close approximation of its condition prior to disturbance. In restoration, ecological damage to the resource is repaired. Both the structure and the functions of the ecosystem are recreated. Merely recreating the form without the functions, or the functions in an artificial configuration bearing little resemblance to a natural resource, does not constitute restoration. The goal is to emulate a natural, functioning, self-regulating system that is integrated with the ecological landscape in which it occurs. Often, natural resource restoration requires one or more of the following processes: reconstruction of antecedent physical hydrologic and morphologic conditions; chemical cleanup or adjustment of the environment; and biological manipulation, including revegetation and the reintroduction of absent or currently nonviable native species."

An illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of possible restoration activities to be funded under this national partnership might include:

- Restoring marsh, wetland, seagrass, or riparian communities through revegetation, invasive plant control, natural recontouring of the landscape, removing levees and artificial drainage systems, and related activities.
- Restoring natural shellfish beds in estuarine areas through seeding juvenile shellfish, creating adult spawner sanctuaries, and/or introducing appropriate substrate for shellfish settlement and growth.
- Restoring native populations of aquatic organisms through re-introductions and control of invasive plant and animal species.
- Working with landowners or managers to restore water clarity, quality, and natural flow of fresh and saltwater.
- Working with water managers to restore natural volumes and timing of freshwater flows through rivers and into estuarine and coastal areas, and to remove or reduce the impacts of barriers to the movement of aquatic organisms in rivers and estuaries.
- Working with coastal and freshwater management authorities to effect ecologically compatible dredging, channelization, shoreline protection, and related activities.