

FY2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

Deadline for Proposal Submission: February 15, 2023

Introduction: The Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) is pleased to request proposals for partial funding of reservoir fisheries habitat enhancement projects. The RFHP is a national partnership established to promote and facilitate the conservation of habitat for fish and other aquatic species in reservoir systems through collaborative actions that contribute to:

- *Protect, restore and enhance fish habitat in reservoir systems to support productive fisheries and healthy aquatic ecosystems including techniques to account for climate change effects on reservoir fisheries habitat;*
- *Continue to develop/refine the science behind reservoir habitat conservation/restoration, including development and communication of Best Management Practices;*
- *Manage reservoir systems to provide, protect and enrich quality of life for the American people;*
- *Develop and foster partnerships that implement landscape-scale approaches to the conservation of fish habitat in reservoir systems;*
- *Develop and sustain institutional arrangements and sources of funding to support the long-term conservation of fish habitat in reservoir systems;*
- *Support education and outreach initiatives that advance public awareness and understanding of the value of healthy reservoir systems.*

Proposed projects can be focused on habitat issues in the reservoir proper and/or in watersheds above the reservoir and/or tailwaters below. We suggest that you review the Reservoir Partnership's Best Management Practices manual "Reservoir Habitat Management" that can be found at <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/science/best-management-practices-manual/> for assistance in project planning.

America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) was passed by Congress and signed by the President in fall 2021. The legislation made significant changes to project priorities and requirements. ACE places an emphasis on restoration efforts that will enhance sport fish populations that will improve recreational fishing opportunities and public use of the resource. Improvements in public access as a component of the project are encouraged. Some specific requirements include:

- **Grant funds must be matched 1:1 with nonfederal funds.** Nonfederal match can include cash and/or in-kind labor, materials, equipment if there are no federal ties to those funds. State agency funds can be used for the nonfederal match if labor and/or materials are not being charged to another federal grant. State agency funds that are used to match other federal grants would not be eligible as match. Once the grant funds (up to \$75,000) are matched with nonfederal funds/in-kind, an unlimited amount of federal contributions to the project are allowed.

- **Monitoring and evaluation measures must be included as part of the project.** We suggest that these measures focus on the habitat restoration work accomplished rather than fish response to the restoration because that is of a longer duration and more difficult to measure.
 - Suggested monitoring and evaluation measures include:
 - Number/acres of brush piles or other types of physical structural habitat added
 - Fish use of the restored site prior to structure addition and for a period thereafter, i.e., increased species diversity and/or catch per unit effort
 - Increased angler use of restored site
 - Number of native aquatic vegetation units (pots) planted and/or ft² planted
 - Monitoring of plant expansion outside of herbivore enclosures
 - Length of shoreline (ft²) stabilized
 - Monitoring of reduced bank sluffing, local improvements in water clarity, etc.
 - Acres of wetlands restored/constructed
 - Measures of changes in sediment and nutrient input
- **Must include an outreach or education component that includes the local or regional community**

Eligible applicants include: state and federal governmental agencies; non-governmental organizations (e.g., sportsman's groups, community associations, watershed user groups, cooperatives, civic groups), municipalities, universities, schools, state and tribal governments. Projects must be on public reservoirs. Projects on reservoirs with no or limited public access are not eligible. **Proposals must include "on-the-ground" habitat restoration objectives. Projects that develop and/or evaluate reservoir fisheries habitat restoration techniques are encouraged.**

Project Duration: Project objectives must be met within the project timeline. Projects with a timeline of two years or less are encouraged but large-scale projects may require a longer timeline. Funding for FY2024 projects will not be appropriated until after January 2024 and will likely not be available to project leaders until March 2024 or later. Actual project start date will be the date funding documents are signed. We suggest April 1, 2024 as a reasonable start date and June 30, 2026 as a project end date.

Funding: RFHP anticipates approximately \$250,000 in funding for "on-the-ground" projects in FY2024. Grants will be capped at \$75,000 but grants for lesser amounts will be considered. Bear in mind that the grant request must be matched by a minimum of 1:1 nonfederal funds. RFHP anticipates funding 4-6 projects @ \$10,000-\$75,000 each. Given the limited amount of funding available at this time, RFHP grants should be considered as a partial funding source for projects with multiple funding sources and partners. All contributions (cash and/or in-kind) must be expended during the project period. Special consideration will be given to projects with more than the minimum match. Eligible costs will be paid for work done no earlier than contract approval. Grant funds may **NOT** be used to support overhead, political advocacy, deficit reduction activities, projects that

have already been completed, or for activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law. Salaries of full-time employees may be part of the grant request as long as they are for only time spent directly on planning, administration and/or “on the ground” work on the project. Applicants are urged to not make “salaries” a major part of the funding request. Applicants are strongly urged to discuss project ideas with the Coordinator prior to submitting proposals if questions about eligibility exist.

For questions relative to project development and submission contact: Doug Nygren, Coordinator, Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership; 316-213-1975; doug.nygren@gmail.com.

Proposal Requirements: Proposals must be submitted using the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership on-line submission form. Go to <http://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/grants/submit-a-project/large-grant/>

Timelines may use an April 1, 2024 starting date, but the actual start date will be determined by completion of the contract document (funding is not likely to be available prior to March 2024 and may be several months later). Congress must appropriate funds for the program annually and is not expected to begin that process until after January of the respective fiscal year.

Proposal Selection Process: Final projects will be selected for funding following review by the Regional Working Groups. Members of each Regional Working Group (geographically aligned with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Association regions) will review and score project proposals based on the criteria listed below. Each of the Regional Working Groups will submit their prioritized list of projects to the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership Executive Committee for final approval. Applicants will be made aware of their proposal’s ranking shortly thereafter, but final approval of projects is based on funding availability. Given that funding is from federal sources, environmental compliance documents (Federal Assistance Biological Assistance/ ESA Evaluation Form, NEPA Exclusion and National Historic Preservation Act Form) are required. Successful applicants will be advised on how to fill out these documents. The RFHP Coordinator is available to assist in this process.

Previously Funded Projects: The RFHP Executive Committee is concerned that high ranking proposals from previously funded projects will limit our ability to fund new high-quality proposals. However, we are also cognizant of the need for our partners to continue the high-quality habitat restoration work that is ongoing on previously funded projects. To address these concerns, we will continue to accept proposals from previously funded proposals but will only accept proposals at 50% of the original funding request. A 3rd proposal with similar objectives will only be accepted at 25% of the original proposal funding request. Hopefully the pool of local project partners has grown to offset a reduced level of funding from RFHP. However, if objectives of the new proposal are significantly different than those of previously funded projects (different project on the same reservoir), the proposal will be treated as a “first-time” proposal.

Evaluation criteria: Projects will be scored according to criteria in three categories:

- **Category I: Aquatic Habitat Restoration/Protection (155 possible points)**

- Priority Regional Reservoir Habitat Impairments
 - RFHP completed a nationwide reservoir habitat impairment assessment in 2013
 - Impairments were prioritized by region of the country (see map and table in Appendix B)
 - Proposals will score more points if addressing the higher regional habitat impairments (table in Appendix B);
 - Clearly state the impairment(s) that the project is focusing on and state how project will address the impairment(s);
 - Cite a management plan that identifies the impairment (if available and include a link if published on the web) Note: contact the management agency to see if a written plan addressing habitat impairments exists and state clearly in the proposal whether or not you are addressing habitat issues identified in a management plan.
- Clearly state the objective(s) of the project. Objectives need to be **specific, measurable, achievable within the grant period, and realistic**. Objectives should include how the project will address the impairment and what deliverables will be used to determine if the objectives are met. **See Appendix C for assistance in developing high-quality objectives.**
 - Examples of objectives include:
 - To triple the area covered by artificial structure in three coves of Lake ABC by June 30, 2025
 - To install at least five nutrient retention wetlands in the watershed of Lake DEF by June 30, 2026
 - To increase angler catch rates of crappie above 1.5 fish/angler-hour during ice fishing season, in treated areas, by June 30, 2026
- Deliverables are the tangible things that the project will produce to enable the objectives to be achieved.
 - Be sure that project deliverables align with the objectives stated above.
 - Examples of deliverables include:
 - Siltation/turbidity and excessive nutrients
 - Amount (area or length) of riparian area stabilized;
 - Amount of sedimentation reduced (rate, tons/ac etc.);
 - Number of sediment retention structures installed or % base load treated;
 - Number of watershed BMP's implemented (sewer pump-outs, farming practice improvements, pet waste policies, removal of impervious surfaces etc.);

- Amount (area) of wetlands created, protected or re-stored for nutrient removal;
 - Amount of nutrients removed (could include deactivation with alum or physical removal by excavation).
- Degraded shorelines and/or loss of sensitive habitats
 - Amount (length or linear ft²) of shoreline wetlands or submergent/emergent vegetation protected, created or restored;
 - Amount (length or linear ft²) of shoreline habitat protected, created or restored;
 - Amount (area) of cove habitat protected, created or restored.
- Structural habitat
 - Amount of structure added;
 - Number and size of brush piles, rock piles, etc.
 - Number of native plants planted along with number and size of structures built to protect plants from herbivory;
 - Acres of nuisance/invasive plants treated/removed
 - Changes in water quality parameters;
 - Changes in fish sampling catch rates in affected area,
 - Changes in rates of recruitment, or population size structure;
 - Changes in angler catch rates, harvest rates, and measures of directed fishing effort;
 - Measures of recreational use or economic benefit.
- Water Regime
 - Negotiations held with water management agencies;
 - Fisheries-favorable water level management plan/water release schedule secured;
 - Water rights secured;
 - Fish loss barriers installed.
- Connectivity
 - Acres of cove/backwater habitat reconnected to main body of reservoir;
 - Miles of stream/river reconnected to body of reservoir;
 - Barriers to upstream migration removed.
- Describe the type and duration of monitoring/evaluation following completion of the restoration efforts. Given the preferred project duration (2-3 years), some aspects of project monitoring may be beyond the scope of project funding but will be the responsibility of project partners. (**Project monitoring and evaluation is a major component of the proposal scoring process and should be an integral part of proposal development.**)
 - Include duration of monitoring program;
 - Include a brief description of what, if any, baseline information is available.
 - Scoring will be based on:

- assessing the biological, ecological, or other results of the habitat protection, restoration, or enhancement activities
 - reflect appropriate changes to the fish habitat conservation project if the assessment substantiates that the fish habitat conservation project objectives are not being met;
 - identify improvements to existing fish populations, recreational fishing opportunities, and the overall economic benefits for the local community of the fish habitat conservation project.
- Will project deliverables impact potential climate impacts on reservoir habitat conditions?
 - Examples of deliverables include water level management adaptations to offset increasing drought conditions, littoral habitat restoration methods aimed at “chasing the shoreline” as water recedes, native aquatic plant restoration.
- **Category II: Quality of Life (50 pts)**
 - Would the habitat project in question help the RFHP achieve its objectives to provide, protect and enrich quality of life for all Americans?
 - Maintain or restore water quality in reservoir systems;
 - Promote enhanced access, environmental amenities and nature experiences and opportunities on and adjacent to reservoir to enhance public awareness of the value of reservoirs;
 - Promote conservation of fish and aquatic resources to boaters and other water-based recreationists;
 - Support recreational industries and related economic activities that advance watershed health and contribute to conservation of fisheries and aquatic habitats in reservoir systems.
 - See Appendix C for examples of criteria for quality objectives.
 - Would the project restore/enhance habitat that would directly support an economically important or high-use fishery (as documented in past studies or the published literature) or other types of fisheries within the project area? Provide any socioeconomic data [dollar value of the fishery and/or the recreational value (in dollars) of the reservoir to the local/regional/state area] that are available. Creel data (angler use) or visitor data (traffic counters), if available, should be included. **List the targeted sport fishes that the project is intended to affect in order of priority**
 - Would project outcomes lead to improvements in water quality for human health, recreational use, or ecological health of the reservoir system? Be specific in how this project directly or indirectly will positively affect water quality.
 - Would the project outcomes help to mitigate the effects of climate change, i.e, increased water temperature, decreased water storage due to more frequent and more intense drought.

Check out <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/science/best-management-practices-manual/chapter-13-climate-change/> for additional information on climate impacts on reservoir habitat.

Category III: Partnerships, Fund Leveraging, and Promotion (90 pts)

- Would the habitat project in question help the RFHP achieve its objectives to establish partnerships between management agencies and reservoir stakeholders; leverage outside sources of funding; and advance public awareness and understanding of the value of healthy reservoir systems?
 - Expand the partnership base of Friends of Reservoirs to include additional States, relevant federal and tribal agencies, non-profit and NGO's, recreational industries and industry associations, reservoir and power generation authorities, reservoir homeowner associations, municipalities and local businesses, local watershed associations and conservation groups, irrigators, and others affected by reservoirs.
 - Promote or add to the information on the "Science" page on www.friendsofreservoirs.com as a tool for reservoir management agencies to prioritize habitat management efforts.
 - Support and participate in watershed planning initiatives to promote implementation of best management practices for conservation of fisheries and fish habitat in reservoir systems.
- List all partners involved in the project
 - Include type of partner, i.e., state, federal, non-governmental agency (NGO), municipality, user-groups (bass clubs, conservation organization, lake associations), private company.
 - To be considered a partner they must appear in the budget table and provide either cash or in-kind contributions to the project.
 - Identify the degree of involvement that the state fish and wildlife management agency has with the project (**letter of support from state fish and wildlife agency must accompany the proposal**).
- Develop a budget and include funds leveraged from all partners (list all partners and the amount of cash and/or in-kind contribution from each partner separately in the budget table included in Appendix A). Cash and in-kind contributions must be identified as "federal" or "federal funds".

Appendix A

Proposal Format

A. Applicant Information:

Name and address of applicant organization

Name, title, and contact information (address, phone number and e-mail) of principal investigator or project leader

Name of Friends of Reservoirs member organization involved in the project (if applicable)

B. Friends of Reservoirs (FOR) Group that is active in the project:

FOR membership provides bonus points that have been critical for project selection over the past several grant cycles. FOR members typically are local fishing/conservation clubs, municipalities, regional conservation organizations, etc. Contact the RFHP Coordinator or go to the Members Page on the RFHP website <http://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/members/> to see if any local group is a current member of Friends of Reservoirs. If not, joining is easy! Visit <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/members/join-today/> for more information.

C. Project Information:

Title

Location – Reservoir name; GPS coordinates if possible; map of project location is required

U.S. Congressional District (available on the web)

Target species (listed in priority order)

Region reservoir is located in (see map in Appendix B);

Project objective(s) **(See Appendix C)**

Estimated on-the-ground start and end dates (not award date)

Amount of grant and estimated total cost of project - Add details under section D. below.

List of partners **(to be considered a partner they must appear in the budget table and provide either cash or in-kind contributions to the project)**

D. Project Description (largest portion of proposal):

1. **Project overview** to include the existing relevant habitat conditions and the desired or targeted conditions (project outcomes expected i.e., size of area to be restored, number of habitat structures to be installed, species that will benefit from the restoration activity and the specific restoration methods and techniques that will be used). **The project overview is a critical part of the application** that should provide reviewers with sufficient detail to fully understand the proposed project. Please review the Evaluation Criteria above to ensure that all relevant information has been included.
2. **Monitoring plan overview**, including project goals, monitoring parameters, monitoring methods and schedule, and target and reference values.

3. **Outreach plan overview** summarizing critical activities for stakeholder/ community involvement.
4. **Project deliverables** should state the amount of habitat created/restored. Examples include amount (number, acres) of natural or artificial habitat added/restored, acres of native vegetation planted/established; linear feet of shoreline restored/stabilized, acres of wetlands established.
5. **List of required permits** and any other environmental compliance issues to be considered (Federal, state, local), indicating any that have already been secured or addressed. Projects will not have final approval for funding until all permits/compliance documents have been submitted and approved by the proper authorities (typically the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).
6. **Project timeline.** Projects should be designed to begin in April 2024 and have a 24-36 month duration (extensions are available due to extenuating circumstances such as weather delays or unusual water levels).

Note: Monitoring, outreach and protection and maintenance of the project site may be outside the scope of the funding request. If so, clearly state that these activities will be funded and conducted by project partners in most cases after the end date of the proposal.

E. Budget:

1. **Amount requested** through Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership.
2. **Amount of in-kind** contributions (specify amounts and sources, both in kind and cash for each partner). **Partner Contributions must be listed separately in table. Add more lines to table if needed.**
3. The timeline should be an approximation of when the funds under each funding category will be spent, i.e., June 2024 through December 2026.

Categories	Partner Contribution Amount	Cash or In-Kind	Federal	Non-federal	Timeline (anticipated date of expenditures)
Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership		Cash	x		
Administrative /Technical Services					
Construction Costs/Materials					
Labor (paid)					
Labor (volunteer)					
Miscellaneous (out-reach materials)					
Partner B (name)					
Administrative/ Technical Services					
Construction Costs/Materials					
Labor (paid)					
Labor (volunteer)					
Miscellaneous (out-reach materials)					
Partner C (name)					
Administrative/ Technical Services					
Construction Costs/Materials					
Labor (paid)					
Labor (volunteer)					
Miscellaneous (out-reach materials)					
Total Direct Costs					

*** Volunteer labor should be calculated at \$28.54/hr. The latest value is calculated by the Do Good Institute, based on hourly earnings released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.**

4. **Budget narrative:** A budget justification should be included to further explain how the funds will be used. Please explain expenditures in detail. Major equipment purchases, types of supplies, and specific contracts should be identified. An explanation of each line item in the Reservoir Partnership portion of the project must be included.

5. Map(s) of the proposed project location and site in addition to the described location under B above.

Optional supporting materials

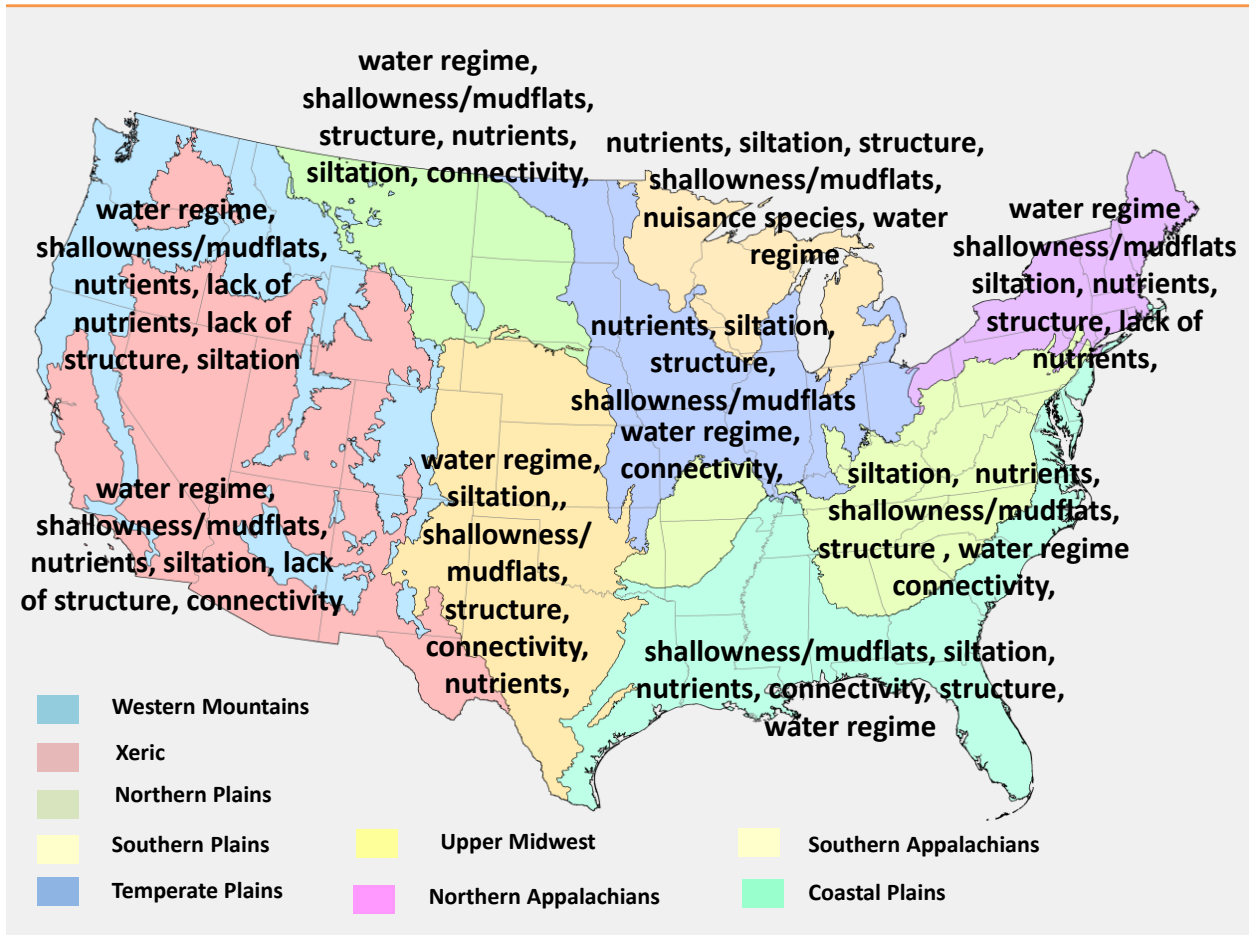
1. Aerial or on-the-ground photos of the proposed project site. Though not required, these visual aids will help to support the proposal. Photos taken from the ground should show the current condition of the site. All photos should be identified with date of photo and location.

2. Letters of Support-Besides letters in support of the project from community leaders, stakeholders, or others, documentation may include support letter(s) from those owning land upon which project will be undertaken, such as private landowners or appropriate public land owners agency resource personnel. Lake management plans and/or habitat plans that recommend the type of habitat work proposed by this project, though not required, are helpful and receive added points in the review process. **Letter of support from state fisheries management agency staff member is required.**

Proposals must be submitted via the electronic submission form at: <http://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/grants/submit-a-project/large-grant/> by 15 February 2023.

APPENDIX B

Priority Impairments by Region



- Regions above were used to differentiate priority impairments in the assessment.
- Lists of impairments are based on the percent of reservoirs in each region that were moderately to high or highly impaired for individual impairments.
- Lists of impairments for each region are in priority order (see table on next page).

PRIORITIZED REGIONAL IMPAIRMENTS

(Top 2 Impairments in each Region-50 pts; 3rd and 4th-25 pts; 5th and 6th-10 pts)

REGION	IMPAIRMENT	POINTS
Western Mountain	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	50
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	
	Excessive Nutrients (algae blooms)	25
	Limited nutrients	
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	10
	Siltation/Turbidity	
Xeric	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	50
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	
	Excessive Nutrients (algae blooms)	25
	Siltation/Turbidity	
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	10
	Connectivity (lack of connection with embayments/backwaters, tributaries)	
Northern Plains	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	50
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	25
	Excessive Nutrients (algae blooms)	
	Siltation/Turbidity	10
	Connectivity	
Upper Midwest	Excessive Nutrients (algae blooms)	50
	Siltation/Turbidity	
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	25
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	
	Excessive Vegetation (typically invasive/non-native plants)	10
	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	
Southern Plains	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	50
	Siltation/Turbidity	
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	25
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	
	Connectivity	10
	Excessive Nutrients (algae blooms)	
Temperate Plains	Excessive Nutrients	50
	Siltation/Turbidity	
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	25
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	
	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	10
	Connectivity	

Coastal Plains	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	50
	Siltation/Turbidity	
	Excessive Nutrients	25
	Connectivity	
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	10
	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	
Northern Appalachians	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	50
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	
	Siltation/Turbidity	25
	Excessive Nutrients (algae blooms)	
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	10
Limited Nutrients		
Southern Appalachians	Siltation/Turbidity	50
	Excessive Nutrients (algae blooms)	
	Excessive mudflats/shallowness (little deep water refuge)	25
	Limited littoral structure (lack of woody structure and vegetation, shoreline erosion)	
	Water Regime (extreme and/or mistimed fluctuations, low retention)	10
	Connectivity	

APPENDIX C: Characteristics of quality objectives as determined by the SMART system.

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	REALISTIC	TIMEBOUND
Work outcomes should specify what needs to be achieved.	The work outcomes need to be measured as to whether or not they have been met.	The work outcomes must be able to be met with the resources available.	The work outcomes are important to the agency's goals and the specific job function.	The work outcomes need to have a time limit for completion.
Is the outcome is concrete, detailed, focused and well defined? It must be straightforward and emphasize action and the required outcome. The work outcome must communicate what you want to see happen.	A work outcome must be measurable so that its progress can be determined.	The work outcome must be accomplished based on the skills, knowledge and resources available.	The work outcomes must relate to the overall agency strategic and/or operational goals.	The work outcome must have a begin date and an end date. Interim dates for assessment may also be included. Agreed timeframes create the necessary urgency and prompts action.
What exactly is to be done, with and for whom?	It's important to have measures that will encourage and motivate and will allow one to determine when the work outcome has been achieved or not.	The work outcome can be challenging, but not so much as to cause constant frustration.	Can the people to whom the work outcome is assigned make and impact on the situation?	Is the start and finished date/time for the work outcome clearly set?
What strategies will be used?	Is there a reliable system in place to measure progress towards the achievement of the work outcome?	Can the work outcome be met within the proposed timeframe?	Do those tasked with the work outcome have the necessary knowledge, authority and skill to accomplish the work outcome?	Is the date/time within the capacity of those to whom the work outcome is assigned?
Is the work outcome well understood?		Can the work outcome be met with the available resources?	Will this work outcome help the agency reach its strategic and/or operational goal?	Is the date/time for accomplishment reasonable?
Is the work outcome described with action verbs?		Is the work outcome possible?		
Is it clear who is involved?				
Is the outcome clear?				
Will this work outcome lead to the desired results?				