



FY2025 LARGE GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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The [Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership](#) (RFHP) is proud to announce our Request for Proposals for federal FY2025 funding of fish habitat enhancement projects in reservoirs. The RFHP is a nationwide partnership established to promote and facilitate the conservation of habitat for fish and other aquatic species in reservoirs and is one of 20 federally recognized [National Fish Habitat Partnerships](#) in the U.S. It is the only one dedicated to manmade reservoirs, which are products of society's need for water and its many uses. Many habitat impairments come along with reservoirs, and RFHP seeks projects that address large-scale habitat issues, implement best practices, foster partnerships across the landscape, and enrich quality of life through fishing and reservoir improvement.

AVAILABLE FUNDING

RFHP anticipates approximately \$250,000 in funding for "on-the-ground" projects in FY2025. 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 non-federal funds. RFHP anticipates funding 4-6 projects @ \$10,000-\$75,000 each. Given the 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, and special consideration will be given to projects with more than the minimum match. All contributions (cash and/or in-kind) must be expended during the project period. Eligible costs will be paid for work done no earlier than contract approval.

RFHP AND NFHP CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

FY2025 project proposals must fall under at least one of the [NFHP National Conservation Priorities](#). In addition, the RFHP prioritizes [habitat impairments](#) and subsequent work based on a nationwide survey of fish habitat in reservoirs. Region-specific impairments should be addressed, with emphasis on ultimate causes of impairment such as sedimentation and eutrophication. Likewise, RFHP prioritizes work that benefits important sport fish, and a [region-specific list is available for your reference](#). Finally, RFHP emphasizes projects that not only improve fish habitat, but also enhance public access and knowledge of that habitat. Projects that engage the community through partnerships and outreach will receive special consideration.

[Full detail of RFHP's priorities and strategic approach is provided here.](#)

Briefly, RFHP's priorities include:

- 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.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

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. Applicants must demonstrate an ability to utilize SAMS, ASAP, and Grant Solutions.

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 FY2025 projects will not be appropriated until after January 2025 and will likely not be available to project leaders until March 2025 or later. Actual project start date will be the date funding documents are signed. We suggest April 1, 2025 as a reasonable start date and June 30, 2027 as a project end date.

Eligible Activities: Types of eligible activities may include 1) time spent for project planning, directing project activities, site assessments, travel to and from project, and project oversight, 2) equipment, 3) earthwork and materials, 4) short-term monitoring/evaluation, 5) outreach to advance conservation, and f) easements with an operations and maintenance plan. Projects should meet the RFHP criteria described in more detail in the RFP documentation. NFHP funds can only be used for on-the-ground habitat projects and related design and monitoring activities; funds may not be used for research or solely to support personnel and staff salaries or benefits. 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. 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. Applicants are strongly urged to discuss project ideas with the Coordinator prior to submitting proposals if questions about eligibility exist.

Projects that develop and/or evaluate reservoir fisheries habitat restoration techniques are encouraged. 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.

All proposed projects must meet the following criteria:

1. 1:1 non-federal financial match - matching funds may be in the form of in-kind support from non-federal sources and must be spent during the project period.
2. Identifies biological, ecological, or other benefits of the project.
3. Provides measurable project goals and objectives
4. Describe the capabilities and experience of project sponsor to successfully implement the project.
5. 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.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND 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:

- Aquatic habitat restoration principles and priorities
- Clarity and feasibility of objectives and methods
- Impact on quality of life and community
- Leveraging of partnerships and additional funding

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: To maximize our ability to fund new high-quality proposals while also supporting the high-quality habitat restoration work that is ongoing on previously funded projects, 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 new project.

Applications are due by 11:59pm Central time on February 10, 2024.

All applications for the RFHP are submitted through RFHP's online application portal at <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/grants/submit-a-project/large-grant/>. A guide for completing the form is provided [here](#), and all applicants are encouraged to contact the Coordinator if they have any questions about the process. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

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