

Transcript from:
Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Forest Restoration grants
2021 Request for Applications Webinar
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To accompany webinar recording at: <https://usfs.adobeconnect.com/p570iw3lcclu/>

Transcript from real-time captions follows:

Hello. I am Sheela Johnson with U.S. Forest Service . On the Great Lakes watershed specialist and Great Lakes restoration initiative point of contact. Thank you for joining today.

Sorry to interrupt. Go ahead and push play on your camera. There we go.

Thank you for speaking up. We also have Brian with us from Midwest watershed forestry specialist with U.S. Forest Service state and private forestry. He will be helping us with questions and answers today and facilitating that. Thank you, Ryan and thank you to Sherry. I will get it started. As a reminder, feel free to type questions in the chat while you have them. As I mentioned we will talk about the GLRI 2021 forest restoration request for applications . Today in the presentation we will go over the purpose of the request for application, eligibility and minimum requirements, evaluation criteria, then we will pause for questions on that before moving onto the three program areas included in this RFA. How to apply through grants.gov and closing with another question-and-answer session. This request for application for RFA is offered under the great lakes restoration initiative with funding through an agreement through the EPA. Specifically each program area if the intent of the invasive species focused area or reducing pollution impacts or the habitats and species focused area. You will find more information in GLRI action plan three . The purpose of this particular grant program is to restore, protect, maintain the Great Lakes ecosystem through three program areas which will talk about in depth today. Those are mitigating invasive disease impact through reforestation and treatment activities. Reducing stormwater runoff through green infrastructure that includes trees and restoring and connecting forest habitats. We anticipate approximately \$4.5 million will be awarded through this RFA split among the three program areas. For those who have participated in this grant program in the past, I will highlight a few changes that you may see. First, we have combined the coastal and riparian forest areas into a single one that addresses both of those habitat. The evaluation criteria has been updated and we will be sure to highlight those including the general criteria and emphasis areas you will find within each program. The narrative form has been revised including the addition of a budget [Indiscernible] you may have noticed in the announcement that we are also offering our cooperative weight management area request for application at the same time this year. It is a separate opportunity in grants.gov so we will not go over that in depth but we can refer you to a recorded webinar that we had last week if you would like to learn more about it. The timeline is all applications are due by July 8, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. Eastern. After review we plan to notify applicants about whether they are selected or not in late September 2021. After that we will proceed as quickly as possible to review all of the paperwork and finalize awards for funded projects. We expect that to occur between October 2021 but some awards may not be finalized until January or February 2022. In general, we expect project timelines to be two years and we discourage timelines that are much shorter or much longer than that. Given the award timeline it is often practical to specify a start date early in calendar year 2022. To be eligible to apply for these grants, you must be an organization, not an individual and eligible applicants include state agencies, sovereign tribal nations, local governments, nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status and educational institutions. It is important to note that all projects must be located in the Great Lakes basin of the United States. To assist you in determining whether your location is eligible and if you are near the boundary we have a map included in appendix a of the instructions which you can download at the end of the webinar. We also have an interactive project mapper. I will mention that you can download these slides as a PDF at the end of the webinar as well. These will be active. For those in Indiana and Illinois, we also include a detailed map of the boundary for those states. This includes the historic Lake Michigan basin which includes the Chicago North Shore channel and Calumet rivers in that area. I will say that this is a catchall for regional counties and areas. Public entities are generally eligible moving into the authorities these must fall into the authority under the catalog of Federal domestic CFDA number 10.664. Eligible activities include tree planting and canopy improvements, forest health improvements including site preparation activities like soil improvement or the removal of competing vegetation needed to make the project successful. Forest restoration activities may include other vegetation such as shrubs or non-native plants that complement the project. Of course, we encourage site maintenance monitoring any necessary protection to sustain healthy vegetation. In addition to being within the watershed, we require that projects meet the purpose of one of the program areas and that each unique project applies under only one program area. Note that an organization may submit more than one application so long as the

projects submitted are distinct from one another. There is a minimum 20% cost share requirement and we will talk more about that. All cost must be allowable and budgeted in accordance with on the smart guidance and the requesting and matching funds must not include construction of improvements to real property. Projects must take place on nonfederal land with one narrow exception under program area one that we will discuss where some eligible activities may occur on federal land. You can see RFA instructions on page 2 for more details and considerations for minimum requirements. Talking a little bit more about the matching requirement. The match is a 20% cost share of the total project cost. So think of it as a 20/80 cost share if you are only looking at the federal amount of funds you need to multiply that by .25 to know what your 20% cost share is. As an example, if your federal request is 100,000, your minimum match is actually \$25,000 in nonfederal funds and then total cost would actually be 125,000. All of it must be documented within the grant and match as well as federal request must fall within program authority. For more information, you can look at the guidelines for matching funds documents which is linked within the RFA instructions and also on our website. We typically get a lot of questions about what can Canada's match. I will note that it can be cash or in-kind. It must occur during the grant but it can be contributed either by the applicant directly or by nonfederal third-party partners. Some examples that we typically see of match can be volunteer services, maintenance services by the applicant or partners, use of equipment and those guidelines can offer further guidance on what can constitute a match. Moving along, I mentioned that we had some changes to evaluation criteria this year. I've included an abbreviated version of the criteria on the following slides. You can look at page 3 for the full text that can help you understand the criteria better. We have tried to expand them a little bit to help our reviewers and applicants understand what we are looking for. To start, what was formerly known as priority landscape is now purpose and need which is 20% of the projects. We are looking for projects that are strategically selected to benefit Great Lakes water quality and watershed health. These projects will link to the regional and local plans to show a strategic focus. It will investigate environmental need using appropriate information and will also show attention to equity and environmental justice. We do provide some links to resources within the RFA effect can help you identify the equity impact of your project, opportunity areas in the area that you work in and other resources to help you.. This second section of the criteria is technical merit and sustainability big we want to be sure that your scope of work demonstrates the capacity and ability to create environmental benefits and a technically sound manner. We ask for additional information about treeplanting pack says as well as about any forest [Indiscernible] treatments if that is the focus of the project. We look at the qualifications of the applicant and partners and need to see clear plans for long-term maintenance of the site to ensure benefit. Finally, we want to be sure that they are resilient to the impact of climate change and other ecosystem [Indiscernible]. Next section of criteria is measurable results and outcomes. We will look at the quantitative outcomes and for this RFA, depending on the program area, the key outcome will be measured in acres treated or in balance of [Indiscernible] intercepted. Make sure that you describe those measurable outcomes. We will also look at how your application addresses priority issues, practices, or locations that are identified in the program area description. Cost effectiveness is important and you will want to be sure that the budget information is clear and consistent. The final criteria are partnerships and engagement and sharing outcome and knowledge. For partnerships we look at the number and quality of involvement of the partners to be sure that representation is included. We also look for engagement of local residents in project planning implementation and maintenance. Sharing outcomes and knowledge includes both general communication about the project outcomes, educational information provided to the benefit of the community and any innovative tools or methods that may be shared and applied in future projects. With that, I have seen some questions coming in so we will pause and take a look at the questions in the chat. A reminder, if you wanted to speak up on the phone you can also raise your hand and I have Ryan to help with keeping an eye out for anybody with their hand raised.

We have a good question from John Paulson from the North Shore collaborative about whether projects can occur on private lands or not.

That is a great question. Yes. For projects that have a private land element that is allowed, but we look for the public benefits that may come from those private land projects. For example, if it's an environmental benefit or habitat connection that has values beyond that individual property and will help the broader public in terms of the environment or human benefits. I will also mention that one of the links in the RFA and on the website is the guidance for landscape treeplanting. That has a few considerations for private projects as well. We want to ensure that it is an access agreement or landowner agreement. That it is an allowable activity.

To follow up. You sort of address this question so are you engaging local residents now. It is good to see that the commitment [Indiscernible] but I will let you speak to it. You are right on track. Now is a great time, if you have had past engagements be sure to discuss that in your project as well. For example, community

projects, design or public. That can also include things that are happening now or steps you will take in the future to engage the public as the project progresses. I think we have a question and the presenter chat that I will look at. Is maintenance for trees planted through previous grants eligible? Okay. I believe the question is asking whether Pentecost could be maintaining trees that have been planted in the past through other grants. It is an eligible activity so I will put the caveat on that that it would not count as new acres treated but we have funded projects that maintain these areas.

Then we have a good question from Christine who is looking to remove a large amount of debt ash trees on the state park trail. Does replanting have to take place as part of the project for to be considered?

Similar to maintenance, ash removal can be allowed if it is under forest insects or disease and it is an essential part of the project. However, it does not count as new acres treated. We are really looking at an increase in canopy cover. There would need to be some replanting or some sort of treatment and protection of tree canopies for the project to really compete. I will see before we get to the raised hands the next question. Do we have specific locations down to the parcel or can we be planning on the subwatershed level? It can be either/or. In some cases we know specific parcels. If you are planning on a broader scale of the project it is helpful to identify which criteria you will use in set priorities. You can understand what it is that will happen and what the benefits will be.

We did have a raised hand as well but I do not see the name attached anymore. You can unmute yourself and ask a question.

I do not see the hand raised anymore either. We will take a couple more in the chat. Please speak up so this RFA is only for projects in this area of Illinois and Indiana. Yes, that is correct. It does need to be within the Great Lakes basin. Large portions of Illinois and Indiana will not be eligible. If you have questions about whether your area is eligible you are welcome to follow up with us. It is a really tough line and we can help with that. That are nonstate municipalities eligible. I am not exactly sure what nonstate municipalities means at this moment. As I mentioned, municipalities, so local government units whether it is public works planning department, parks department, whether it is a city or town County conservation districts all are eligible.. So what portions of the St. Lawrence watershed eligible? I will look set up so that I can quote you. It is the St. Lawrence winter west of where the boundary line leaves the river. The easiest way to determine that is probably looking at the interactive map if you are not sure because then you can actually pull up that area online. We will be sure to put that in the chat. We will take a couple more and then we probably want to move on and the presentation and save some time at the end. So there is a common about regional development commission's helping with jurisdictions. For regional collaboration, we do want one organization identified as the key fiduciary and applicant. Your registration information will be on the grant and he will be the grant recipient. However, we allow subgrant partners at various points in collaboration within that grant since we are on the topic of eligible areas, can volunteers live outside the watershed but to the forest work inside the watershed. Absolutely. Volunteers can come from anywhere. Even if an organization is based outside of the of the work is taking place inside that is perfectly fine. Keep the questions coming. Do you want to go through the rest of the slides so that we have time but we can come back to questions at the end. The next section will talk about as we dive into specifics of the program areas. Starting with program area one insect and disease medication. This covers urban, community, and rural forest settings where there is a need to address nonnative and invasive forest insects. That can occur through reforestation through anticipated insect and disease. Preparedness planning, survey and monitoring and eradication activities or biological control are well established and also fill the cultural practices. Something new for this year in this program area is that certain insect and disease activities survey monitoring evaluation prevention and suppression can occur on federal as well as nonfederal land. This is detailed under this program area one description with a link to the authorities that that activity would need to meet but we do recognize the need to include some treatments a class land ownership and we do have some authority to do that. This addressing the greatest watershed risk aligning with broader initiative and increasing environmental justice particularly for urban and community treeplanting and medication. The range of federal workers from 50,000 to 200,000. We anticipate just over 1.5 million in funding for the program. Moving to the next program area, reduced runoff the tree infrastructure and developed areas. It is part of the local stormwater management strategy. For this program area we continue to emphasize erosion, sedimentation and loading. In addition to planting trees and vegetation, we have these increased maintenance capacity particularly in underserved communities. Leveraging existing modeling, planning and infiltration. The oil improvement in addition to the treeplanting that occurs. A new added emphasis in certain GLR I priority water ships. This includes the [Indiscernible], Saginaw River, and Genesee River. The key measure of progress or outcomes associated with the project are the, since it is somewhat new and different from last year. We asked applicants to estimate the runoff using the table and RFA instructions. Realizing that this is not a perfect testament we ask that they update that number using tools and taking into account the species

and location of planting. The range of federal rewards for this program area is 100,000 to 300,000. We anticipate about \$1.8 million in funding for this program. Area three is coastal and riparian habitat. This is both an postal and ecosystems in the great Lake area. And connecting to this coastal ecosystem connecting them through downstream benefit from the riparian areas. This is the coastal wetlands with the forest and coastal buffers and as I mentioned critical areas. Products that are emphasized will leverage or protect previous GLRI coastal investments by any agency. They will continue priority identified and management plans and the important water bird and waterfall and we provide references to the RFA. Those priority habitats. So it is also acres treated. You can specify wetlands versus upland and Shoreland acreage. With the minimum grants for the program area is \$50,000 with the maximum being \$200,000. \$1.1 million will be available overall for the program. Understanding the important habitats and how your activities may relate we offer a few resources and instructions with the mapping tool in the interactive grant mapper. In summary, you can look at page 1 of the RFA for anticipated funding. On page 5 you will find the minimum and maximum of the funds. Here we have the limits of the program you are applying to make sure you fall within those guidelines. Before we go back into questions, I will do a quick overview of how to apply. This is important information for everybody. A reminder that all applications must be submitted through grants.gov by July 8. You can find it in grants.gov by searching for the opportunity number USDA-FS-Tran06-ever 21. I will say that searching comes up with just a handful of opportunities so it is not difficult to find them. So for these support questions there is a separate 24/7 support as well as an email address that you can consult. Important information on this slide for those of you that are new to grants.gov in particular be aware that you will need certain registrations in place before you can apply. Employer identification number, DUNS number, system and award management registration. These can take several weeks so I encourage you to check as soon as possible to make sure that you have this in place and that they are all up-to-date. You will also need a grants.gov account after your registration. You can designate somebody and that person will be eligible to submit an application on behalf of your organization once again note that these registration that there is no fee and the best approach is to all of the links in the appendix of the RFA instructions. As I mentioned, it is not too hard to find the grant opportunity. You can search using the full opportunity number or GLRI. Note that the registration and CW MA will come up because they are opportunities but look for forest restoration and you will find the correct one you can see on this slide that you can search right on the home page. Once you find the opportunity you will see the opportunity page with some important information for you. You can see forest restoration 2021 you will know that you are in the right place. If you are interested in updates you can subscribe for future update. Here I show some of the tabs with different information about a grants. This is the FDA number. The related documents tab is very useful. It is agency specific forms and other resources for applicants and that is where the webinar recording will be posted. The package allows you to preview the form and the instructions. Once you have your registration in place and log into Grants.gov you can hit the apply button and that will take you to the next step to actually start creating your application. Once you hit the apply button it will prompt you to create a name for your workspace which is simply a working application. Want to create the workspace you can save your work, though out of it and potentially share with other people who are working on the application as long as they have a grants.gov account. You don't need to do everything in one sitting it is also a good idea to start soon. You can learn more about the workspace on the applicant training page. This is just an example of a general site to create that workspace and that will be populated in the forms that we will discuss today. As I mentioned, within your workspace there will be some form that are already there available to you. The required forms are listed on the page for the application for federal assistance. That information will actually carry over into some of the other forms and that will save you a lot of time. The budget information is required that is the 1047 certification regarding debarment and suspension. The attachments form is the last document and will come back to that in a moment. You will also see some forms listed as optional. Grants.gov terms some of optional but some of them are required they are applicable to you. This includes lobbying forms, drug-free workplace certifications, representations for corporate applicants which include incorporated nonprofits. That encourages you to speed up the award process by completing any form that are applicable within Grants.gov and then if you grant is funded we don't have to come back and ask for that later. I mentioned the attachments form. This is one of those mandatory forms in Grants.gov and it allows you to attach any other agency specific forms or any other information needed for your application. Importantly, this is where you attach the project narrative form if you have a treeplanting project you will attach that here. There is another form that you can attach your. Other information that you can add is the map, statement of experience if you need to and any letters of support that you want to include. You will see that there is quite a bit of space so if there is other supporting information to share as long as it is relevant to your application. We will talk a little bit more about the project narrative form. This does include instructions and a reference to the criteria for each section. I will not reiterate all of that in detail but I will go

through the section. The first pages where you have project information and the project overview. Again this has changed to purpose and need and they remind you to attach a map. The scope of work is obviously very important and we are ready to attach that form depending on the project type. There are measurable results and you can include details in the scope of work as well. This is a budget table that looks like the screenshot on the flight. You can do your best to get things to attach supplemental information as needed. If it does not get into that space you can attach something to show that that is not required. I will let you know that on the website we have some planning tools there are the planning assessments some of these guidance documents [Indiscernible] when you know that you can contact Grants.gov support and you start working on the application you can contact me on the email address here. You can also look for that pick a few key points before we go back to questions you can engage parents and community members establish and update your registration and your roles in Grants.gov early so that you can get started. Feel free to contact us with any lessons. The webinar recording will be available and then we will get it posted on the restoration website. We look forward to talking about your questions as you. Application by July 8. With that, I will let Ryan help us through the questions.

Thank you. We have a lot of good questions and I have been responding to quite a few of them. What I will do is walk through some of them that I think should be spoken so that everybody can hear with that. There's a couple that I missed because I did not think I could answer them well in the chat so the first question for the disease and insect medication to these alignments with the initiative or is it specific initiatives of the forest service

I would say both Jack this is for the local plans of the insect and disease medication and is slightly broader plan. For regional initiatives, we provide some links in the RFP specifically to these highlights for forest health. I think that the state initiative is a key linkage unless there is something in the management plan for the region that you are in.

The next question we can address is, of the copy of the presentation will be available. Is that available currently in the file box.

Great timing. If you look in the upper left we have the narrative form and instructions and number three is the RFA slide and as I mentioned the recording will be posted quickly and the related documents tab on Grants.gov.

Great. Tiffany also asked the question so for the removal of impervious surface and planting trees in the category that I responded most likely but not necessarily they do have to apply to one program area and you can speak with us individually or the field representative to determine maybe which would be the best program area. I don't know if there is anything else you would like to add to that.

Particularly in 2020 we began doing some impervious surface although I think that we actually had one in the coastal habitats for the habitat project to replace impervious lands.

The next question is, the RFA says that project for the forest health program authorities for these activities should be supported by a biological evaluation that substantiates the need for the project and the strategies proposed. Do you recommend a specific type of biological evaluation?

Yes those authorities are, they apply a little bit differently perhaps under GLRI. I think that that is a pretty flexible requirement in the program. We do have the forest treatments form. The intent is that you will document the need and in the evaluations that were done, biological evaluation and y letters on that format if you have a formal evaluation you can also attach that.

Great. The next question is, this is from John. If an underserved community group is acting as a partner in the installation and maintenance of practices, does it matter if they are based in the watershed area?

If I understand correctly, this is referring to the people participating in the program or organizations. Again, location does not really matter, where they are coming from. What matters is where the work on the ground is occurring. That work on the ground needs to be in the Great Lakes region.

Okay. We have a few more questions here. I guess we can walk through them. This is from Jamie. Focusing on underserved urban areas and environmental justice, Kemp lighted and dead trees be removed with grant funds and can the grant funds go toward that tree removal?

The authorities do allow removal of dead trees and primarily urban and community forestry. In an urban or underserved area that is more likely to be an option and more likely to be competitive. Again, we always let people know that products compete based on canopy restored. It is important to balance any tree removal component with the trees that you are able to add for the project. We do and the language about underserved communities, acknowledging that it is a huge need and there is a lot of tree mortality springing from these insects and disease.

We have a few more restaurants that I have not gotten to. Is there a higher match wired for contract tree removal and replacement planting as opposed to performing treatment with our own staff?

Higher match removal, if you contract, no. The match is 20% across-the-board. They may be referring to different requirements under different agreement authorities, 20% match of the total project cost, regardless of the method of accomplishing it.

Okay. Another question. Aerial planting of trees be considered an eligible activity?

Aerial planting of trees? That is a new one, probably encourage you to contact a field representative listed in the RFA instruction so you can do a technical consultation on that because it is an unusual activity that we have not necessarily seen under the RFA.

The last question that I see in the chat box is , when calculating gallons of stormwater to use the size of the tree sure about the time that it wasn't stalled or the size of the tree and shrub at maturity?

For the purposes of the RFA specify the size at the time installed based on the diameter to account for the different trajectory of growth and time to reach maturity.

Great. That is the second of Christine's questions. This is one that I missed in the noise. Can grant funds be used to remove trees, purchase tree planting and watering equipment but with the match in the form of the trees themselves?

Okay. For tree removal which is a common theme today, I guess that grant funds could be used for tree removal so that is allowable. Particularly in urban community forestry type of setting. To purchase tree planting and watering equipment. It is important to note that the supplies which are under \$5000 unit cost are certainly allowable. When you get to equipment which would be like machinery with over \$5000 unit cost, I encourage you to contact myself or a field representative so that you are aware of the potential approval needed and the process for purchasing equipment under the grant. We do see projects where the match is the trees provided under the grant and the request is for associated activities to get the trees in the ground to be sure that they survive.

I will scroll back through just to make sure that we do not have any other questions that were missed but I think we have addressed the mail in the chat or verbally. If you have more please feel free to type in the chat or raise your hand and unmute.

Great. I am not seeing hands raised. Please let us know if we missed anything. As people think about whether they have questions before we wrap up, I will paste the website in there one more time for folks to have handy.

Grates. You probably so the question must cost share occur after the grant is awarded?

Yes. Generally yes. It must occur after the grant start date the start date should be no earlier than October 1, 2021. We realize that the award process can take some time so so long as the cost is incurred after the start date, we do typically allow preaward cost but they will have to be within the official grant period of time but there are some caveats because there are also always expenses occurred before the grant is awarded. For cost that occurred previously before October 1 of this year will not be eligible and would not fall in the grant. I see a few more questions. Size recommendations for new trees. If you look at the guidance for landscape tree planting, there is a recommendation generally not to go over a certain diameter at planting due to the survival cost effect the best and some other maturation. Otherwise it is not a hard and fast requirement. And that it does appear that there is some information about eligibility so that is a general description of eligible entities. If you are not sure whether you fall into those general categories feel free to follow up with us and we will let you know. Okay so just waiting for some folks to type. Thank you to Ryan for helping with all of these questions coming in and helping us to manage that. Thank you again to the Captioner for providing captions and Sherri for the text of . Hopefully you are downloading the informational materials and you can feel free to refer back to that and you will have all of the contacts that you need to follow up with any questions that come up after the webinar. Smacked the recording of the webinar will be posted and you will be able to download the files from the recording as well if you missed them today.

Thank you for mentioning that. Not seeing any more questions, I will close up the webinar. For those who wish to leave. You can download this files if you are wrapping up and thank you for all of the appreciation. Have a great day and good luck with your application.

[event concluded]