



North American Wetlands Conservation Act

United States Small and Standard Grant Proposal

2026 Eligibility Criteria & Processes
Updated July 2026

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INTRODUCTION

This document contains the factors used to determine whether a proposal is eligible or ineligible for a US Small and Standard North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant proposal, including format and various schedules and processes involved in the submission, review, and approval of a proposal. For Proposal Instructions, Proposal Outline Template, and other information visit:

- US Small: <https://www.fws.gov/service/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-nawca-grants-us-small>
- US Standard: <https://fws.gov/service/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-nawca-grants-us-standard>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Program Office (FWS Program Office), formerly known as the Division of Bird Habitat Conservation (DBHC), will evaluate proposals for compliance with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, 2 CFR § 200, U.S. NAWCA Grant Administration Standards, and other relevant regulations.

NAWCA U.S. PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All costs must be directly linked to eligible acquired, restored, enhanced, or established acres that are completed DURING the project period.

Before writing a proposal, we recommend you read the Proposal Instructions:

- US Small: <https://www.fws.gov/media/north-american-wetlands-conservation-aca-small-grants-program-proposal-application>
- US Standard: <https://www.fws.gov/media/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-united-states-standard-grants-proposal-instructions>

What is a proposal?

1. A plan of action supported by a NAWCA grant and matching partner funds to conserve wetlands and wetland-dependent fish and wildlife through acquisition (including easements and land title donations), restoration, enhancement, and/or wetland establishment, and contains a grant request between \$1 and \$3,000,000. Applicants requesting \$250,000 or less should apply for a NAWCA Small Grant. Applicants requesting between \$250,001 and \$3,000,000 should apply for a NAWCA Standard Grant. Match must be no more than 2 years old, non-Federal in origin and equal to, or exceed, the grant request (referred to as a 1:1 match).
2. Includes monies and partners involved in wetlands conservation.
3. May include non-match partner contributions in each section of the proposal except Technical Assessment Questions. The non-match contributions and source (monetary and acres) must be clearly identified whenever they are included and must be used on a project tract with Grant and/or match contributions.
4. Contains adequate wetlands-associated uplands to buffer and protect wetlands and meet the needs of wetland-associated wildlife.

5. Contains consistent dollar and acre figures across all parts of the proposal, Technical Assessment/Evaluation Questions, partner letters and the Standard Form 424s. All figures must be rounded off and consistent throughout the proposal.
6. Has a specifically defined boundary that includes tracts in a geographic area (such as a watershed) affected by grant and partner funds. The boundary can include sites that are part of a wetlands conservation plan, sites in the same wetlands system, sites that are managed to meet the same wetlands objectives, sites that are in proximity, and/or sites that provide direct benefits to each other.
7. Contains all required sections as described in the Proposal Instructions and outline template:
 - US Small: <https://www.fws.gov/service/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-nawca-grants-us-small>
 - US Standard: <https://www.fws.gov/service/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-nawca-grants-us-standard>
8. Contains work that:
 - shows a clear connection between money spent and long-term wetland benefits
 - demonstrates that grant funds will be spent in the most cost-effective manner possible
 - is complementary among match and grant-funded actions
 - may have been completed within the past two years and work that can be completed within the proposed period of performance
 - includes minimal administrative costs directly involved with completing acquisition, restoration, enhancement, or establishment of wetlands
9. Does not contain extra or unsolicited material, such as photographs, pamphlets, engineering plans, business cards, appraisals, general lists of fauna and flora, or letters from supporters who are not partners in the proposal. Extra material will not be sent to reviewers.
10. If the proposal involves multiple sites that are not specifically identified, an explanation of the method that will be used for selecting these sites must be provided.
11. For US Standard proposals, if an Optional Matching Contributions Plan (MCP) (see page 5) is submitted or a proposal includes funding from a previously approved MCP, only the partner's match applied to the current proposal is shown throughout the Summary, and acreage is shown only in the initial phase, per instructions.
12. Includes Partner Contribution Statements signed and dated by each partner (including non-match partners). The statements should document the same amount of funding as listed in the proposal for that partner. **The Partner Contribution Statement for donations shall come from the entity or individual donating the property.** Partner Contribution Statements received separate from the proposal or after the deadline are not eligible. The type of partnership is defined by the source of the funds. For example, if state grant funds for a specific project activity are channeled through various partner organizations, the partner is the state only, not the various organizations.
13. Includes a description of (calculations for) how match amounts were calculated.
14. Technical Assessment/Evaluation Questions are answered for the proposal's grant or match sites and NOT the general project area or prior projects or phases.
15. Includes public access on acquired lands to the extent that it is compatible with long-term conservation of fish and wildlife dependent on the area. It may be appropriate to limit the number of people permitted access or the season of access.
16. Any agreements with landowners will be considered part of the proposal; the agreements must include clauses to allow the Federal government, specifically the FWS Program Office, to recoup the costs of property and habitat development if the agreements are broken.
17. A proposal becomes ineligible if it is substantially changed after it is submitted. A substantial change includes anything that changes answers to the Technical Assessment/Evaluation Questions.

However, at any time and for any reason, a proposal may be withdrawn by the applicant and resubmitted for a future proposal cycle.

18. Complies with policies described in US [Grant Administration Standards](#).

Who is an eligible Principal Investigator and what are the Principal Investigator responsibilities?

(Note: Principal investigator is formerly known as the Project Officer)

1. The Principal Investigator must be affiliated with the grant recipient's organization and must be knowledgeable about the biological, partnership, and administrative aspects of the proposal.
1. The Principal Investigator is responsible for obtaining prior approval for any grant administration activities, if required.
2. The Principal Investigator may be, but does not necessarily have to be, the grant recipient organization's Authorized Representative who signs the required SF-424 forms, which makes the recipient ultimately responsible for complying with the Federal regulations and policies described in the US Grant Administration Standards.
3. The Principal Investigator is responsible for all correspondence regarding a proposal and award, including annual and final reporting. There can only be one Principal Investigator. The FWS Program Office may only discuss grant administrative matters with the Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator must have a GrantSolutions' account and will be listed as the Principal Investigator/Program Director (PI/PD).
4. The Principal Investigator serves as the point of contact for the grant, and must be actively involved in the proposal/grant process and be available to provide information:
 - immediately after the proposal is submitted if there are questions about eligibility,
 - within a few weeks after the proposal is submitted, the Principal Investigator may be asked to respond to comments and questions about the proposal and provide possible site visit dates, and
 - if the proposal is funded, during implementation of the Assistance Award (Grant Agreement).

What is an eligible Optional Matching Contributions Plan (MCP)? U.S. Standard Grants only

A Matching Contributions Plan (MCP) is defined as eligible old match (acquisition only) that was obtained within the past two years and is in excess of what will be used for the current proposal. The purpose of an MCP is to maintain the eligibility of this old match beyond two years for the current proposal and future proposal phases. MCPs may be utilized for U.S. Standard projects only and are valid for 5 years from the date of Council approval. The following criteria apply to MCPs:

1. Match for a newly submitted MCP can only come from the acquisition of a real property interest.
2. May only be submitted with a proposal.
3. May only contain match that meets eligibility requirements. For example, a conservation easement in which one of the retained rights is to pursue wetland or wildlife mitigation/credits would be deemed ineligible.
4. A new MCP may not be approved even if the proposal is funded.
5. Approved MCP match may only be used to meet match to grant ratio in the same or similar project area described in the original proposal. At minimum, the original MCP tract must be within the future phase's project area.
6. Identification by tract name and location must be consistent through all phases.
7. Must show use of the match over a period no greater than five years. The beginning date for the five-year period is the date that Council approves the plan.
8. Must use a portion of the MCP total match in the proposal with which it is submitted.
9. Future proposals may utilize the MCP account until the account is depleted or the five-year deadline

is reached.

10. Funds from only one MCP are allowed in any given proposal, including in the first proposal associated with an MCP. Match associated with an existing MCP must be completely expended before another MCP for the same project area can be approved.
11. Reduction in MCPs requires the FWS Program Office approval. Substitution of an MCP tract is not allowed. Other modifications will require Council approval.
12. Should not exceed one page in length.
13. Should contain the following sections: Match Plan Amount and Purpose; Match Intent; Match Need; Identified Property Interest and Tract Title Holder; and a Chart identifying the proposed expenditure of MCP funds by phase. See the MCP section of the US Standard Instructions for more information.
14. Acres are listed in the initial phase of the MCP only.
15. Match may only be derived from a single old match tract with an appraised value in excess of what will be used in the initial proposal. A tract is defined as a discrete piece of land as described in a recorded deed.
16. The applicant must ensure that the match associated with the MCP tract has not been used to satisfy the match or cost-share requirements of any other Federal grant program.
17. Tract acquisition documentation must be included as part of the proposal. Documentation includes a Yellow Book or Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA) appraisal, a closing statement, a bargain sale letter (if applicable) and a recorded deed or conservation easement. If funded, NAWCA requires that the interest holder record a Notice of Grant Requirements (NOGR) on the MCP tract and submission of an appraisal review supporting the MCP value. Tract documentation must be received, reviewed, and approved by the FWS Program Office before the MCP can be used on subsequent phases.
18. The grantee that submitted the original proposal and accompanying MCP is responsible for maintaining the MCP use records throughout the life of the MCP. That organization/agency must provide a partner letter with each MCP phase (regardless of the phase applicant) stating the amount of MCP funds used and the remaining MCP balance.
19. MCP must be referenced in the proposal Summary Page, Financial Plan, and Work Plan.

What is an eligible proposal financial plan section?

The financial plan section must include a financial plan table and financial plan justification section including the required information as explained in the Proposal Instructions. Justifications must be calculated correctly and consistent with other sections of the proposal, such as the Proposal Summary.

What are non-match funds?

Except as noted, when funds that do not qualify as NAWCA match, including money from other Federal agencies, are used to accomplish mutual and/or complementary objectives, these funds may be included in the final proposal but must be noted throughout the proposal as non-match funds. The source of non-matching funds must be identified. Funds associated with mitigation activities required under the Water Resources Development Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, or other related statutes (see “Ineligible Grant and Match Costs”) are mitigation funds and may NOT be included in the proposal or otherwise combined with grant or match funds and activities. Such funds include, but are not limited to, direct mitigation payments, payments to an “in-lieu-fee” fund, off-site mitigation, and mitigation banks.

Can grant and match dollars be used in combination with non-match funds?

Grant and match dollars can also be combined, or “pooled,” with other non-match funds, provided that the actual uses of the funds are otherwise eligible (see sections below concerning eligible costs).

However, NAWCA funds cannot be used for salaries, travel expenses, and other associated costs necessary for the delivery of another Federal program funded with non-match. Mitigation funds, as noted above, cannot be pooled with grant or match funds. Grant/match funds in a pooled project must demonstrate a discrete project with a defined, specific (identifiable) conservation result to be achieved.

Neither matching funds nor the accomplishment can be used in a NAWCA project if they have already been committed or predicated to another Federal Program, such as, but not limited to, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, NRCS programs and/or Land and Water Conservation Fund. The intent to pool NAWCA funds must be described in the proposal. The proposal shall indicate the Federal program(s) providing non-matching funds and the total percent of NAWCA's interest.

When NAWCA match and grant funds are pooled with non-matching funds to acquire a real property interest, the non-matching Federal program(s) must be notified of the intent to pool funds with a NAWCA project. In these cases, NAWCA's percent interest in the acquisition must be reflected in the real property documentation and reviewed/approved by the FWS Program Office prior to the acquisition.

ELIGIBLE GRANT COSTS

All eligible costs must be directly linked to eligible acquired, restored, enhanced, or established acres that are completed during the project period.

What are direct and indirect costs?

Direct costs can be identified with a specific service or activity. Indirect costs are all other costs that have been incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be readily identified with a particular service or activity and are calculated using a negotiated indirect cost rate or using the 15% *de minimis* method described below. [Note: As of October 1, 2024, de minimis rate change up to 15 percent of modified total direct costs.](#) Indirect costs are eligible only if an organization:

- has a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with an agency of the Federal government, or
- will obtain a rate after the grant agreement is awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), or
- does not have a NICRA and will follow the 15% *de minimis* rule. In this circumstance, any non-Federal entity, except for those non-Federal entities described in Appendix VII to Part 200—States and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, paragraph D.1.b, may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described in §200.414, factors affecting allowability of costs, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

The use of *de minimis* rates does not require the review and approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs. Therefore, Indirect Cost Services does not provide approval of *de minimis* rates. For more information, visit: <https://www.doi.gov/ibc/services/finance/indirect-cost-contract-audit>.

Indirect costs may only be charged at the rate specified and during the period specified in the NICRA

submitted to the FWS Program Office. Grantees must submit renegotiated rates during the project period if the NICRA submitted with the proposal expires during the project period.

Only with written approval, direct and indirect costs for goods, services, salaries and labor associated with long-term migratory bird and wetlands conservation work are eligible grant costs when conducted in the periods:

- between when the Service receives the proposal and the Notice of Award is issued if pre-award costs are approved (if the proposal is not approved for funding, the Federal government is under no obligation to pay for any costs incurred). For additional pre-award information, see page 7 of the [US Grant Administration Standards](#).
- after the Notice of Award is signed by the Service (during the project period); in all cases, you may not obligate more grant funds than you are awarded.

What are eligible costs?

All expenses must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable and must meet the following criteria:

- A.** Verifiable from the grant recipient's and sub-grant recipient's records
- B.** Fair market value (in the case of acquisitions, the appraised value)
- C.** Must be an expense in the approved budget and necessary for the accomplishment of the proposal.

Specific examples of costs that are eligible to be paid with NAWCA grants funds follow:

I. Acquisition

This category includes fee-title acquisition and donation (transfer of title), conservation easement and lease acquisition and donation; appraisal fees; acquisition legal costs; boundary surveys; travel and transportation, and annual payments for 10-year conservation agreements (or the maximum duration allowed by State law). In situations when NAWCA grant and match funds are being pooled with non-matching funds to acquire a real property interest, a portion of the NAWCA funds must be applied directly to the property interest being acquired.

- A.** An easement should not include the right to pursue mitigation credits required by Federal, State or local wetland regulations, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended, the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers related to development or management of water resources (such as, but not limited to, Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act), actions to benefit fish and wildlife resources that are required as part of a settlement or relicensing of an energy project under the Federal Power Act, compensation required under the Federal Water Projects Recreation Act, etc. Organizations and agencies are encouraged to adopt and implement the practices and procedures described in the Land Trust Alliance's Land Trust Standards and Practices (available at www.lta.org). Easement and lease conditions should address the following points:
 1. Specifically ensure long-term wetlands and associated upland protection.
 2. List all restrictions, allowed activities (e.g., building envelopes/areas, agricultural practices, recreation), and reserved rights and clearly demonstrate how those rights will complement long-term wetlands and associated uplands protection.
 3. Be legally enforceable by organizations that can demonstrate ability or experience in enforcing easement terms.
 4. Be recorded pursuant to state law.
 5. Be held by or transferred to a conservation organization (e.g. State or Federal conservation agency, or non-governmental conservation organization); and
 6. Be described in the NAWCA proposal.

- B. The acquisition must be completed before the end of the project period.
- C. A Notice of Grant Requirements (NOGR) will be recorded for tracts unless the tracts are in an established Federal land management system with a habitat protection focus. See example of NOGR. For more NOGR information: <https://www.fws.gov/media/united-states-grant-administration-standards-north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-and>. Property acquisition costs are incurred at the time of transfer of title, not when signing a purchase agreement. Therefore, a contractual obligation to purchase real property (purchase agreement, etc.) may be made at any time and as long as the title is transferred after the proposal is received, the costs associated with the purchase can be reimbursed (if required compliance documents are completed) with grant funds.
- D. All real property acquisitions must be from willing sellers. Prior to making an offer for the property, the buyer must inform the seller via a Willing Seller Letter that the buyer will be unable to acquire the property in the event negotiations fail to result in an amicable agreement and must inform the seller what the buyer believes to be the market value of the property. If the buyer is an agency that has eminent domain authority, then additional assurances will be required to be in the notice (see appropriate standards and regulations).
- E. The number of acquired acres must be verifiable and supported with legal documentation.
- F. For lease acquisitions, payments must be valued by a state-certified appraiser and reviewer using the approved methodology (Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA or the “Yellow Book”). Lease acquisitions are held to the same real property requirements as other types of acquisition ([49 CFR.102](#), [2 CFR 200](#), and [2 CFR Part 1402](#), and the US Grant Administration Standards).
- G. Donations must have a statement from the landowner donating the value to the project.

II. Wetland Restoration

The manipulation of the physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a site with the goal of returning natural/historic functions to a former or degraded wetland. Restoration can further be defined as either re-establishment (returning natural/historic functions to a former wetland resulting in a gain in wetland acres) or rehabilitation (repairing natural/historic functions of a highly degraded wetland resulting in no gain in wetland acres). Rehabilitation is considered a one-time action. This category includes engineering and design costs that lead to restoration activities occurring during the project period or allowed as old match, travel and transportation, material and supply costs, and equipment (including all-terrain vehicles) with a current value of \$10,000 or more secured by the most cost-effective and feasible method. See the applicable CFR and the following decision tree for equipment valuation. This category does not include periodic repair/maintenance activity. This category does include restoration work on upland associated habitat.

- A. If equipment is rented or leased, use the cost of renting or leasing.
- B. If equipment is purchased more than 2 years before the year that the proposal is submitted (i.e., equipment on hand), use either the depreciation or use-allowance method, but not a combination of the 2 methods.
- C. If equipment to be used solely for the NAWCA project is purchased within the project period, use the full purchase price.
- D. If equipment will be used outside of the NAWCA project, calculate and use the cost relative to NAWCA only.

III. Wetland Enhancement

The manipulation of the physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a wetland site to improve specific functions of the wetland. The result produces no gain in wetland acres.

This category includes the same eligible costs as restoration above, plus habitat islands; plantings and initial land management costs caused by the proposal (i.e., fencing). This category does not include periodic repair/maintenance activity such as replacement of same type of water control structures and reinforcement of existing berms. This category does include enhancement work on upland associated habitat.

IV. Wetland Establishment

The manipulation of the physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics present to develop a wetland that did not previously exist. The result produces a gain in wetland acres. This category includes the same eligible costs as restoration above.

V. Other Direct Long-Term Wetland Conservation Work

Administration of the NAWCA grant agreement that is not specific to one or more tracts; conducting required State and Federal compliance activities (e.g., permits, National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act compliance, and contaminants surveys); and conducting work that cannot easily be assigned to other activity categories.

VI. Indirect Costs

These costs are different from directly attributable administrative costs and must be supported by a NICRA approved by the Federal government for the applicable period, or by using the 15% *de minimis* rate. [As of October 1, 2024, de minimis rate changed to 15% as per CFR 200.414.](#)

VII. Accomplishment of Work

Work to be accomplished must be done in the project area(s) defined in the proposal. The project area may be defined as:

- A. area that is part of a wetlands conservation plan;
- B. areas in the same wetlands system (e.g., watershed or river basin);
- C. areas that are managed to meet the same wetlands objectives;
- D. areas that are in close proximity;
- E. areas that provide direct benefits to each other; or
- F. areas that are part of a pooled project with non-match funds, if the NAWCA portion is distinctly identified as an undivided interest of the total acres involved.

VIII. Work Prior to Submission Date

For all activities, grant funds cannot be used for work completed prior to submission. Only approved pre-award costs can be spent prior to the period of performance.

IX. Federal Salary Costs

Associated with Service Term/Temporary/Seasonal/Intermittent Employees actively working on NAWCA projects are allowable.

X. Prescribed Burn Activities

Will be considered eligible depending on the qualifications of the grantee, following the USFWS fire policy:

- A. Certified Agency: Partner must comply with NWCG (National Wildfire Coordinating Group) policies and qualifications regarding prescribed burning.
- B. Non-Certified Agency: Grant Agreements with a non-certified state agency are for the purpose of general habitat restoration activities only.

XI. Infrastructure

Repair and/or rehabilitation of previously funded infrastructure at the end of its useful design life may be considered eligible. The previously funded grant, tract and work must be identified in the proposal. The repair and/or rehabilitation of infrastructure that fails due to improper design, neglect or mismanagement is not eligible for funding or to be used as match.

ELIGIBLE MATCH COSTS

Generally, all items listed above as Eligible Grant Costs are also eligible as match costs. The following list describes certain additional conditions for costs to be eligible as NAWCA match. In some cases, these conditions allow certain costs to be eligible as match when the costs would not be eligible to be paid with grant funds. In all cases, the costs must be associated with an eligible activity. The match costs:

- I.** Must be at least equal or greater than the grant request.
- II.** Must be non-Federal. Even if funds pass through a non-Federal entity, they retain their federal nature. For possible exceptions, see XI and XII, below.
- III.** Must be documented by the following:
 - A.** signed and dated Partner Contribution Statements sent with the proposal and
 - B.** a copy of easements and/or leases if the easements or leases are offered as match and are signed at the time the proposal is submitted.
 - 1. The FWS Program Office will not review draft easements
- IV.** Must be or have been contributed:
 - A.** no earlier than 2 years prior to the year the proposal is submitted unless supported by a Council-approved Matching Contributions Plan. Anticipated funds must be guaranteed by the contributing organization (for example, future fundraising efforts or grant applications are only eligible if the partner organization agrees to provide the full funding amount even if the fundraising effort or grant application is unsuccessful).
 - B.** between the time when the Service receives the proposal, and the Notice of Award is signed; or
 - C.** during the project period after receipt of the Notice of Award
- V.** May have as its source as the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act, P.L. 93-638, of 1975.
- VI.** Must not be reimbursed by NAWCA or by another organization claiming the expense as a match for the project, but instead must be permanently dedicated to a project proposal and committed by the proposal due date. For example, if an organization funds an acquisition but is later reimbursed by a different organization, the value of the acquisition can be counted as match only once (that is, only one of the two organizations counts as contributing the match).
- VII.** May include monitoring and evaluation costs, only if results will be used to improve wetlands conservation activities at project sites during the project period. If monitoring and evaluation covers areas outside of project sites, only the portion of those costs related to work on project sites is eligible unless the work outside of the sites comprises a *de minimis* portion of the costs.
- VIII.** May be donated title to real property where the donation increases resource values of the proposal or protection or management of wetlands and migratory bird values.
- IX.** May be the fair rental value of loaned equipment.
- X.** May be easement stewardship or endowment costs, if the funds are in an account dedicated solely to easement stewardship and are for activities such as easement defense as opposed to management of fee title properties.

XI. May be Department of the Interior (DOI) Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) Fund (Fund) monies:

- A.** if wetlands mitigation required under Water Resources Development Act (including Clean Water Act, Rivers and Harbors Act, etc.) or Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act is not part of the NRDAR-funded work,
- B.** if the work significantly contributes to the wetland protection objectives of the proposal,
- C.** if the monies have been or will be deposited pursuant to a joint and indivisible recovery by the DOI and non-Federal trustees under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and the Oil Pollution Act (OPA),
- D.** if the monies were or will be transferred to a non-Federal trustee who has joint and binding control over the funds (the non-Federal trustee may transfer it to another entity, but that could affect whether it's an eligible match based on such considerations as: Did the trustee's transfer of the money comply with the trustee's own laws and regulations regarding any State or tribal grant, cooperative agreement, or contracting statute or regulations?),
- E.** if the co-trustees agree that monies from the Fund should be made available to the non-Federal trustee and allowed to be proffered as a non-Federal match to accomplish an appropriate project consistent with the settlement agreement and the provisions of CERCLA and OPA, and
- F.** if the factors above are addressed in a letter submitted with the proposal from the non-Federal trustee; if a letter is not included, the match will be ineligible.

XII. May be congressionally appropriated funds if legislative language specifically characterizes the appropriated funds as "non-Federal" for certain designated purposes that would include NAWCA objectives. The grant applicant should provide ample evidence in the proposal regarding the non-Federal nature of the match. For example, P.L. 103-434, the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, provides an exception that allows Bonneville Power Administration rate payer funds to be used as non-Federal funds for purposes of matching Federal dollars to fund projects that promote conservation of wildlife and fisheries resources, including wetlands, while improving water quality and availability in the Yakima River Basin.

XIII. Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) and RESTORE Act funds may be considered as eligible Federal match funds if the associated acquisition documents clearly identify subordination to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

NOTE: unless a grant or match cost is explicitly allowed, the cost should be assumed to be ineligible unless otherwise informed in writing by the Service/FWS Program Office. Contact FWS Program Office staff to discuss allowability of grant and/or match funds, policy requirements, and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) explanations.

INELIGIBLE GRANT COSTS

The following grant costs/activities are ineligible to be paid with NAWCA grant funds (these activities may be eligible as match under certain circumstances; see Eligible Match Costs):

- A.** stewardship costs;
- B.** monitoring or evaluation costs;
- C.** proposal planning and development costs, including experiments, studies, or other investigations to document resource values;
- D.** interest on a loan;
- E.** administrative salary costs incurred prior to grant execution (including for proposal development) and after the project period; and

- F. costs related to enrollment of participants in other Federal conservation programs;

INELIGIBLE GRANT AND MATCH COSTS

The following costs/activities are ineligible to be paid with NAWCA grant funds or to be used as match:

- A. actions that will put credits into wetlands mitigation banks;
- B. mitigation activity required by Federal, State or local wetland regulations. Federal mitigation activity includes compliance under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended, or the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, as amended. This includes mitigation required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers related to development or management of water resources (such as, but not limited to, Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act), actions to benefit fish and wildlife resources that are required as part of a settlement or relicensing of an energy project under the Federal Power Act, compensation required under the Federal Water Projects Recreation Act, etc.;
- C. unless your approved NICRA specifically allows it, indirect costs calculated on a base that include the following are ineligible:
 - 1. subgrants (subawards), the portion of contracts and subcontracts above \$25,000, any in-kind match provided by a party other than the applicant;
 - 2. non-match, in-kind match from partners other than the partner with the NICRA, and contributions from Federal agencies and other items that “distort” the cost base;
 - 3. the purchase price of interests in real property and the cost to put it into place, including legal and administrative fees associated directly with the transfer of the property;
 - 4. the purchase price of equipment with an acquisition cost of \$10,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year (consistent with recipient policy, lower limits may be established);
- D. law enforcement;
- E. research;
- F. the value of existing residences, structures, and buildings unnecessary for wetlands conservation purposes and the cost to construct, remove or repair; in the case of allowable development envelopes, the acres and costs associated with the envelopes should not be included as part of the proposal;
- G. boat ramps, parking lots, roads, and other public access work;
- H. observation towers and blinds;
- I. routine operations and maintenance salaries and costs;
- J. acquisition of tractors and other equipment if it would be more cost effective to rent, lease, or use equipment on hand;
- K. acquisition of vehicles (note that all-terrain vehicles are considered equipment if the acquisition cost is more than \$5,000 per unit);
- L. loss of income (e.g., lost grazing revenue);
- M. contingencies;
- N. non-proposal specific communications products;
- O. salaries and travel expenses for permanent, full-time Federal employees;
- P. an easement that is subordinate to a mortgage or lien;
- Q. costs over the appraised value for lease, fee-title and easement acquisitions;
- R. short-term annual conservation activities, such as annual predator management;
- S. materials or salaries related to conservation education, including signage;

- T. land-owner incentive payments;
- U. maintenance or habitat management costs other than qualified restoration/enhancement/establishment actions;
- V. acquisition costs, salaries, travel expenses, and other costs that are associated with non-matching acquisitions;
- W. procurement, repair, or service of Designated Unmanned Aircraft Systems.
- X. Costs not part of the approved budget

NOTE: unless a grant or match cost is explicitly allowed, the cost should be assumed to be ineligible unless otherwise informed in writing by the Service/Program Office. Contact the FWS Program Office staff to discuss allowability of grant and/or match funds, policy requirements, and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) explanations.

INELIGIBLE MATCH COSTS

In addition to those costs listed under Ineligible Grant and Match Costs, the following costs/activities are ineligible as match:

- A. Funds and accomplishments that have been successfully committed or reported as match or cost-share for other Federal financial assistance programs, even if the cost-share was more than what was statutorily required by that program. This restriction includes Federal Aid to States (i.e. State Wildlife Grants); Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act grants; Endangered Species Act grants; Partners for Fish and Wildlife (private lands); USDA (WRE, ACEP-Ale and RCPP), and other Federal financial assistance programs.
- B. Funds that are designated for wetland or wildlife mitigation.
- C. Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) funds.
- D. Monitoring and inventory activities not specifically related to wetland conservation actions during the project period.
- E. Proposal planning and development costs, including experiments, studies, or other investigations to document resource values.

NAWCA GRANT PROPOSAL PROCESSES

What are the submission deadlines?

- **US Standard Proposal Deadline:** No later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on submission deadline date.
- **US Small Proposal Deadline:** No later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on submission deadline date.

Can I submit a proposal early or what if I submit a proposal after a submission deadline?

Yes, proposals may be submitted at any time before the submission deadline.

Proposal Deadlines

The U.S. Standard Program operates on two submission cycles. Please note that as of **December 12, 2024**, these cycles have been swapped. The upcoming deadlines are:

- **Cycle 1:** September 25, 2026 (11:59 PM ET)

- **Cycle 2:** Pending (11:59 PM ET)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit proposals well in advance of these dates to avoid technical issues or unforeseen delays. Proposals may be submitted at any time prior to the deadlines.

Late Submission Policy:

- Any proposals submitted after the September 2026 deadline will be reviewed during the second cycle of 2027.
- Proposals received after the 2027-1 deadline will be ineligible unless clearly labeled as an **early FY2027-2 submission** (subject to future guideline modifications).
- **US Small:** Posals received after the deadline will be processed but will be considered for funding as an early submission for the next Fiscal Year.

Will I get comments on the proposal? When will I know if a site visit is needed (US Standard Proposals only)?

The FWS Program Office will communicate with the Principal Investigator after:

1. has completed its initial eligibility review of the proposal. Approximately three weeks after the submission deadline, we will send the Principal Investigator comments via email requesting clarification and/or more information regarding the application. The FWS Program Office will typically request that you respond via email within 72 hours of receiving it to ensure that the scoring of your proposal will not be impacted due to insufficient information or that the proposal is determined to be ineligible for further review.
2. The proposal has been scored. Site visits will be scheduled, if needed.
3. Each Council Staff, Council, and Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) meeting, the Principal Investigator must be available to respond to questions about the proposal.

How do I communicate with the FWS Program Office on my application, eligibility review, and if awarded, where do I request modifications, extensions for my project, etc.?

The Service has officially migrated to GrantSolutions. GrantSolutions is a federally shared service for grant and management programs to support Federal agencies throughout the entire grant lifecycle. If selected and approved for a grant, all external NAWCA grantees are required to be registered within GrantSolutions. Grantees must first properly set up your Grant Solutions account, including obtaining the correct user roles within the system. The FWS Program Office recommends all entities to review all the training videos and FAQ section on GrantSolutions website, <https://www.grantsolutions.gov/>.

Every entity will need to have the following roles within Grant Solutions

1. "GRANTEE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR" (PI/PD) (Principal Investigator)
2. "GRANTEE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER" (ADO)

Any questions regarding role creation or grant solutions in general should be directed to the Grant Solutions Help Desk: (202) 401-5282 or (866) 577-0771.

Internal (Service) awards are not administered through GrantSolutions. The FWS Program Office will communicate directly with Service applicants and award recipients regarding their NAWCA proposal and award.

What do I need to do after the Council selects the proposal?

Hopefully, you have already contacted your Migratory Bird Joint Venture Coordinator so you know whether the FWS Program Office needs additional information to complete eligibility/compliance review. There are only a few months between the Council and MBCC meetings, so you should be prepared to provide additional information quickly, if needed. **The proposal will not be presented to the MBCC for final funding approval unless the Service can ensure that environmental compliance reviews are likely to be completed (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and with Service contaminants survey requirements (if applicable)).** Before funds can be electronically distributed to your organization via the ASAP payment system, your organization must send final compliance documentation to the FWS Program Office for each tract (excluding those exclusively funded with old match), establish a UEI (Unique Entity Identifier) and SAM.gov profile, and register for a GrantSolutions' account. For UEI and SAM information, visit: <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>

When will I know if the proposal has been approved for funding?

- **US Standard:** The Migratory Bird Conservation Commissions usually meets in April and September to give final funding approval to NAWCA proposals. Special due date circumstance for these April proposals will be presented to the MBCC for the upcoming Fall and July 2026 proposals will be presented to the MBCC the following Spring 2027. **Note: 2027-2 US Standard cycle is pending DOI approval process so due date is pending.** After each MBCC meeting, you will be notified of the results and will be asked to establish or renew an ASAP account. Additionally, Principal Investigator and proposal summary information will be posted on the NAWCA website. Please share the approval news with elected officials and the general public via a news release and send us a copy. For information on MBCC visit: <https://fws.gov/program/land-acquisition-and-realty/migratory-bird-conservation-commission>.
- **US Small:** The Council usually meets in late February to make project selections. **Note: For this FY2026 US Small cycle, Council meeting will take place in Fall 2026, but applicants will be notified once that date is scheduled.** After the Council meeting, you will be notified of the results and asked to establish or renew an ASAP Account. Additionally, Principal Investigator and proposal summary information will be posted on the NAWCA website. Please share the approval news with elected officials and the general public via a news release and send us a copy. Selected US Small projects will be presented to the September MBCC meeting as a report of funded projects.

When will I receive the grant funds?

The Notice of Award (NOA) incorporates the proposal by reference and is developed by the Service when funding is available to issue grant award. An FWS Program Office Program Officer will review the proposal and assemble the pertinent documents. If the Program Officer finds any problem related to compliance with law, policy, or administrative procedures, they will contact the Principal Investigator to seek a resolution. If there are no problems, or the problems have been resolved, the NOA will be sent through Grant Solutions. The period of performance will be indicated on the Notice of Award. Recipient signature is not required.

The recipient may decline the award or request a delay of the execution date by written notice to the Program Officer within 30 days of receipt of the award. The Program Officer may terminate the award in whole or part if the recipient materially fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the award. The Program Officer may also terminate the award with the consent of the recipient, in which case the two parties must agree upon the termination conditions, including the effective date and, in the case of

partial termination, the portion to be terminated. The recipient may terminate the award upon sending to the Program Officer written notification setting forth the reasons for termination, the effective date and, in the case of partial termination, the portion to be terminated. However, in the case of partial termination, if the Program Officer determines that the reduced or modified portion of the grant agreement will not accomplish the purposes for which the award was made, the Program Officer may terminate the award in its entirety. In any partial termination situations, the Program Officer must consider the recipient's responsibilities for property management (if any) and the submission of financial, performance, and other reports required by the grant agreement.

Remember that you will be expected to conduct work and meet acreage objectives as described in the proposal. Annually appropriated funds are not available until the beginning of the Federal fiscal year, October 1. Grant funds are "no-year dollars" and, therefore, do not have to be spent within a Federal fiscal year, but do need to be spent within the award's period of performance.

US Standard table and diagram below show the processes described above:

PROPOSAL IS SUBMITTED IN	MAY BE CONSIDERED BY COUNCIL IN	AND MAY BE APPROVED FOR FUNDING BY MBCC IN
Cycle 1: September 2026	Fall/Winter 2026	Spring 2027
Cycle 2: *Pending	*Pending	*Pending

US Small table and diagram below show the processes described above:

PROPOSAL IS SUBMITTED IN	MAY BE CONSIDERED AND APPROVED BY COUNCIL IN	REPORT FUNDING TO MBCC IN
June 2026	Fall/Winter 2026	Spring 2027

*FY2027-2 US Standard dates pending DOI approval.

How will I receive grant funds?

The Service is using the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP). Once approved you will be prompted to set up an ASAP account before the FWS Program Office can release the award.

If you have questions about whether you can comply with any stipulations in any of these documents, please contact the program coordinator associated with the program you are applying for before you submit a proposal:

US Standard Program: Stacy Sanchez, (703)358-2017, Stacy_Sanchez@fws.gov

US Small Grants Program: Anya Rushing, (703)358-2032, Anya_Rushing@fws.gov

Appendix A: Example of Notice of Federal Participation(NOFP)

(Required on all acquired real property interests, including those that are 100% match funded)

Notice of Federal Participation

[PARTNER] is the owner of a (certain piece or parcel of land/conservation easement) located in [TOWN, COUNTY, STATE, PROVINCE] more particularly described in Exhibit A attached hereto and made part hereof (the "Property"). [PARTNER] acquired the Property [with] [as match for] North American Wetlands Conservation Act funds pursuant to a Grant Agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and [Grant Recipient] ("NAME OF PROJECT"), dated _____, Agreement Number: _____, a copy of which is kept at the Division of Bird Habitat Conservation (DBHC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240 and at the office of [GRANT RECIPIENT] at [address].

This property was conserved in order to [STATE PURPOSE OF PROJECT]. [PARTNER] hereby agrees to be bound by the terms of the Grant Agreement as they relate to the Property, including the obligation to ensure the long-term conservation of the Property and to obtain prior written approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service DBHC prior to the conveyance or encumbrance of the [LIST THE REAL PROPERTY INTEREST THAT WAS ACQUIRED BY THE PROJECT (I.E. FEE, EASEMENT, LEASE)] acquired as part of this project. If the [LIST THE REAL PROPERTY INTEREST THAT WAS ACQUIRED BY THE PROJECT (I.E. FEE, EASEMENT, LEASE)] is converted, sold, conveyed, or otherwise encumbered, an attributable share may be owed to DBHC.

The terms of this Notice shall be binding upon [PARTNER] and its designees and successors, unless released by DBHC, upon payment of the attributable share as agreed to by DBHC.

In witness whereof the [PARTNER] has set its hand and seal this ____ day of _____, 20____

By: Its: DULY AUTHORIZED STATE OF () COUNTY OF () On this ____ day of _____, 20____, before me personally appeared _____, to me personally known, who, being by my duly sworn did state that _____ is the _____ of the corporation named in the foregoing instrument; that the seal affixed to said instrument is the corporation seal of said corporation; and acknowledged said instrument to be the free act and deed of said corporation. _____

Notary Public My Commission expires: