

# Conservation Grants Program

FY 2017

## Funding Guidelines

**22 November 2016**



Guidelines, requirements and review criteria for conservation support grants administered through the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture. All grant requests to the JV must adhere to these guidelines for consideration.

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Introduction**

The Northern Great Plains Joint Venture (NGPJV) is a diverse, self-directed partnership that works across portions of four states to deliver strategic habitat conservation for migratory birds and other priority wildlife. We bring people and organizations together to leverage technical and financial resources, building our collective capacity to achieve conservation at meaningful scales. We do this with a commitment to sustainable natural and human communities.

The NGPJV is committed to:

1. Biological planning and conservation design (determining what needs to be done, and where, to maintain bird populations at desired levels);
2. Habitat delivery (assisting our partners with on-the-ground habitat conservation); and
3. Monitoring, evaluation, and applied research (testing assumptions; monitoring and evaluating effectiveness and response to management; and providing feedback to better inform future efforts).

Activities are carried out in accordance with the goals and objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), the U. S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP), the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP), the Partners In Flight (PIF) Landbird Conservation Plan, the NGPJV 2006 Implementation Plan, NGPJV 2020 Action Plan (in prep.), and the State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming.

### **Intent of the Program**

The intent of the NGPJV Conservation Grants program is to accelerate delivery or improve the effectiveness of conservation program and practices, to support sustainable habitats and bird populations within the boundaries of the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture. Successful grants are meant to build capacity, catalyze partnerships, improve science to inform conservation design, or deliver projects contributing measurably to the protection, restoration or enhancement of prairie (grassland, shrub-steppe, wetland and riparian) habitats. We strongly suggest that you contact the NGPJV Coordinator to discuss your project before beginning to develop a proposal. We will provide feedback, answer questions, and make suggestions for making the proposal stronger. Contact Daniel Casey at [dcasey@ducks.org](mailto:dcasey@ducks.org), 406-702-1944 (office); 406-270-5941 (mobile).

### **Funding Availability**

The maximum grant award per proposal is \$25,000. The number and financial amount of grants awarded will be based on our review process and on funding availability, which may be limited. In FY16 we funded five projects with \$96,508 in NGPJV funds, which leveraged an additional \$379,964 in partner funds.

The NGPJV recognizes that the establishment of capacity to effectively deliver habitat conservation requires a certain level of continuity. Multiple-year projects will be considered, but funding must

be requested in one-year increments, with additional funding possible through subsequent grant requests. When used to fund new positions (capacity), our intent is to have NGPJV funds used as “start-up” or “bridge” funding to stimulate long-term partnerships.

## **Who Should Apply**

Applications will be considered from a broad range of entities, but grant agreements will be most easily facilitated with 501(c)3 non-profit organizations and government agencies. If your group is unincorporated, please contact the NGPJV for guidance on acquiring a fiscal sponsor or agent.

## **Grant Agreement**

Successful grantees will be required to execute a grant agreement. Funding will be granted to your organization based on the terms and conditions defined in the grant agreement, which will reference the conservation grant proposal as the scope of work for the project. In the event the grantee identifies a need to make substantial changes with respect to the timeline, scope, or purpose of the project, after notification of the grant award and before execution of the grant agreement, the grantee may be asked to withdraw their proposal and re-apply for funding in the next cycle.

Conservation grant funds provided through this process must be expended within the period of performance identified in the grant agreement. The period of performance is typically one year, but may be extended upon mutual agreement of the grantee and NGPJV. Grantees awarded second- or third-year funding for a project will be asked to close out their current agreement and meet reporting requirements prior to initiation of a new grant agreement.

## **Reporting Requirements**

The grant agreement requires submission of an Interim (typically 6-mo.) Progress Report and a Final Report. Report deadlines and payment schedules will be stipulated in the grant agreement; payment will be on a (typically quarterly) cost-reimbursable basis, with 20% of the grant award withheld until the Final Report is submitted. Failure to submit reports as stipulated in the grant agreement may result in delayed payments or loss of funding.

## **Timeline**

The following provides an overview of the timing of the 2016 Conservation Grants Cycle:

- A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued by the NGPJV on 30 November 2016.
- Proposals must be submitted by 20 January 2017, to be considered in the current cycle.
- The NGPJV staff and Conservation Grants Committee will review and rank proposals, and present funding recommendations to the NGPJV Management Board by 10 February, 2017. The NGPJV Management Board will make funding decisions via conference call no later than 24 February 2017.

- The NGPJV will notify applicants of funding decisions by 10 March 2017.
- Grant agreements will be developed no later than 1 April, 2017.

## REQUIRED PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Project proponents are encouraged to contact the NGPJV Coordinator early in the process of proposal preparation with any questions regarding the eligibility of project activities. Daniel Casey [dcasey@ducks.org](mailto:dcasey@ducks.org) 406-270-5941

### Eligible Proposals

The critical question to be addressed by Conservation Grants Program applicants is as follows:  
***How will the proposal accelerate delivery or improve the effectiveness of conservation program and practices, to support sustainable populations of birds in the Northern Great Plains?***

Actions that accelerate delivery or improve program effectiveness include those that strengthen human and financial resources, technology, and/or scientific information, and specific habitat management actions that serve as catalysts or demonstrations for broader application. Proposed projects will be evaluated using Technical Scoring Criteria (see pages 6-7).

The following project types are eligible for funding:

- Partner positions and/or staff support to build partnerships, develop action/conservation plans, generate funding, provide technical expertise, and/or implement prairie habitat conservation. Proposals for position support must include a description of how positions will be funded in subsequent years.
- Communications and outreach (e.g., websites, brochures, landowner visits, tours, etc.) directly linked to prairie ecosystem conservation.
- Training, workshops or demonstration area projects that target private landowners and directly impact the partnership's ability to transfer and deliver grassland, shrub-steppe, wetland or riparian habitat conservation.
- Habitat projects, with an emphasis on those that serve as a catalyst for broader application, by providing a crucial element in a larger habitat project, demonstrating innovative approaches, or engaging a partner or partners that will implement similar measures more broadly.
- Science-based projects (research, monitoring and/or evaluation) to increase strategic conservation of grasslands, sagebrush steppe, riparian areas, or wetlands. A science-based project must address information gaps in a priority area, priority bird habitat, or focus on a priority bird species AND demonstrate that the information is crucial to advancing on-the-ground habitat conservation.

## Ineligible Proposals

The following projects are ineligible for funding:

- Stand-alone habitat projects that do not specifically serve the purpose of either catalyzing additional actions or partner engagement, or demonstrating innovative management techniques that could be applied more widely.
- Certain activities associated with on-the-ground habitat projects, including but not limited to site-specific National Environmental Policy Act or archaeological clearance support, permitting, engineering or design, construction materials, labor, or equipment (such categories may be included as match for Conservation Grants).
- Lobbying efforts or endowments.

## Partnerships

Partners are defined as those who contribute tangibly toward a conservation grant project, either in direct cash or in-kind services to establish capacity, or through habitat project funding. Partnerships should be broadly based, with a diversity of partner categories. A mix of state and federal agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, and other conservation groups working toward focused habitat conservation delivery is considered optimal.

## Fund Leveraging

One goal of the NGPJV Conservation Grants Program is to accelerate conservation delivery through empowering partnerships to acquire and utilize funding that might otherwise be unobtainable. There is no bottom line “match” requirement or cost-share obligation to receive a Conservation Grant. Nevertheless, funding leveraged by these grants does increase their value to the bird habitat conservation enterprise in the NGPJV geography, and all other things being equal, projects with higher leverage will be considered more favorably. The NGPJV defines leverage as:

- **Capacity Fund Leveraging:** The direct cash or in-kind services committed by other partners to project capacity.
- **Habitat Project Fund Leveraging:** Additional funds devoted or likely to be devoted to habitat conservation projects as a result of the grant. The habitat project fund leveraging should be estimated in the context of being above “baseline” or standard allocations for bird habitat conservation in the project area.

## Technical Scoring Criteria and Point Values

The development of scores is meant to serve as a tool for the objective consideration of proposals by individuals on the NGPJV Conservation Grants Committee, which is comprised of a subset of Technical Committee and Management Board members. The scores will be tallied and ranked for presentation to the NGPJV Management Board, along with recommendations for funding. The Board will be solely responsible for deciding which proposal(s) to fund; scores provide objective guidance, but don't necessarily dictate final decisions by the Board. Board members will recuse themselves when proposals from the organization they represent are being reviewed.

**A. Builds Capacity:**

**Maximum 6 points**

- How will the proposed increase in capacity impact your ability to deliver bird habitat conservation in the Northern Great Plains?
- How will the funding help achieve strategic bird conservation goals and objectives that would not happen otherwise?
- Define any unique or special aspects of the capacity-building effort in terms of scale.
- What strategy will be used to maintain additional capacity over time?

**B. Catalyzes Partnerships:**

**Maximum 4 points**

- Provide a list of project partners as well as their roles and commitments to this project.
- Define any unique or special aspects of the partnership (e.g. diversity, scope, scale) that will contribute to the long-term success of the project.
- How will the increased capacity strengthen the NGPJV's broader partnership efforts to implement bird habitat conservation? Consider any potential opportunities for information or project transfer to a larger NGPJV constituency.
- How much direct funding ("capacity fund leveraging") is committed by other partners to the project?
- How much habitat conservation project funding ("habitat project fund leveraging") will be leveraged by partners?

**For Section C: All traditional conservation grant projects (i.e., partner positions, habitat projects, communications, or training/workshops) should address C.1; science projects (including research, monitoring and evaluation) should address C.2.**

**C.1 Delivers Bird Habitat Conservation:**

**Maximum 8 points**

- How will the increase in capacity support prairie habitat conservation actions?
- Describe the anticipated benefits to one or more NGPJV priority habitats (grasslands, sagebrush steppe, riparian areas, wetlands). Additionally, describe anticipated benefits to habitat priorities defined by the 2006 NGPJV Implementation Plan (Appendix A), or the appropriate SWAP(s).
- Describe the anticipated benefits to NGPJV priority bird species (see Appendix A). Focus on one or more species that the project will substantially benefit, in contrast to those species that are casual or accidental in occurrence. How will the project address limiting factors for the species and/or meet annual life cycle requirements?
- Describe how the habitat project(s), if any, offer innovation that will catalyze additional action or serve as a demonstration for broader application.

- Describe how the project will measure success in terms of conservation outcomes. Please refer to Appendix B for a list of conservation outcomes.

**C.2 Science to Facilitate Habitat Conservation:**

**Maximum 8 points**

- Describe how this funding will address information gaps or key uncertainties (e.g. quantifying species-habitat relationships) relative to management or conservation actions for priority habitats and bird species. (Please make linkages to the NGPJV Implementation Plan and opportunities to address information gaps.)
- How will data/analyses/products promote or refine conservation actions for priority habitats and bird species?
- Describe linkages to existing conservation partnership networks and the anticipated application of science product(s).
- Describe how science product(s)(research, monitoring or evaluation data) will be disseminated to habitat delivery partners or practitioners and applied to on-the-ground conservation actions.

**D. Special Circumstances**

**Maximum 2 points**

- Describe any special project circumstances not articulated above (e.g. significance of landscape, transferability, capitalizing on timing of funding or initiatives, innovative conservation approaches, unique outcomes, enduring solutions, ability to produce measurable outcomes, etc.).

**PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SUBMISSION**

Applicants are required to follow the format below. Maximum page limit is six pages, excluding the project map, partner contribution statements, letters of support, and photos. Please use 11 or 12 point font.

**Cover Page (1 page)**

**IWJV 2016 Conservation Grants Program**

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Requested: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Project County(ies): \_\_\_\_\_

Project State(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Type: (capacity, outreach, research, and/or habitat) \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Project Purpose and Goals (**125 words maximum**):

**General Project Description (2 pages maximum)**

1. Clearly state the context and need for the project, particularly how it will translate to on-the-ground habitat conservation achievements. Include:
  - a. Why the project is needed at this time;
  - b. Who will be engaged in and by project activities;
  - c. Where the primary project activities will take place;
  - d. Target audience for project activities and products.
  
2. Identify the purpose, goals and objectives of the project. (Objectives expressed in quantitative terms will result in a higher rating.) Identify, for example:
  - a. How many partners will be actively engaged (e.g. producers, practitioners);
  - b. How many acres of what priority habitats do you hope to influence;
  - c. What key uncertainties you are addressing.
  
3. Describe the project activities, the duration of the project and expected results. Results should be quantitative to the degree possible, e.g.:

- a. Number of grassland, shrub-steppe, wetland or riparian habitat acres protected, enhanced or restored;
  - b. Priority species expected to benefit (see Appendix A);
  - c. Number of increased pairs or individuals of priority bird species (when feasible);
  - d. Resource issues addressed; and/or
  - e. Target audiences reached.
4. Include a timetable for accomplishment of grant activities and who will be responsible for completing the work. Explain if this is a one-time request, or if you anticipate requesting additional funds in subsequent years. If you have received NGPJV funding in the past, explain why additional funds are needed at this time.

**Specific Project Criteria (2 pages maximum)**

Please address, in narrative form, how your project meets each of the following Technical Scoring Criteria and the sub-elements listed under each in the **Technical Scoring Criteria and Point Values** section above:

- A. Builds Capacity
- B. Catalyzes Partnerships
- C. Delivers Habitat Conservation or Science to Facilitate Habitat Conservation
- D. Special Circumstances

**Budget Tables**

Please provide detailed information on capacity/planning/outreach funding leveraged by partners, in addition to the proposed total for habitat project funding leveraged (see Appendix B for definitions).

Total funds requested cannot exceed \$25,000, with no more than 10% of the requested amount applied to overhead or administrative charges.

Table A. Capacity (including planning, technical assistance, science support, outreach funding leverage).

Project Detail:						
	NGPJV Request (\$)	Non-Federal Partner (name)	Non-Federal Partner (\$)	Federal Partner (name)	Federal Partner (\$)	Total \$\$
Total Capacity Funds Leveraged						

Table B. Habitat Conservation funding (Funding Assistance) leverage

Project Detail:						
	NGPJV Request (\$)	Non-Federal Partner (name)	Non-Federal Partner (\$)	Federal Partner (name)	Federal Partner (\$)	Total \$\$
Total Habitat Funds Leveraged						

## **Project Map, Partner Contribution Statements, Letters of Support and Photos**

- A project map is required and should include the project title and location of the entire project area.
- Partner contribution statements are required from all partners contributing project funding, excluding the organization submitting the request (see Appendix C for preferred format).
- Letters of support can also be submitted. There is not a required number of letters, but enough should be provided to demonstrate partner and/or general support of the project.
- Photos are optional.

## **Proposal Submission**

Applicants must submit an electronic copy and a single hard copy by mail, postmarked by 20 January, 2017:

- The electronic version of the proposal must be saved into one Microsoft Word or PDF file.
- Maximum electronic file size is 5MB.
- File name should read as follows: Applicant\_ProposalTitle\_2017.
- Please email the proposal to Dan Casey at [dcasey@ducks.org](mailto:dcasey@ducks.org)
- Mail a single hard copy to the NGPJV, 3302 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. N., Suite 115, Billings, MT 59101

## Appendix A Priority habitats and bird species, NGPJV

### Priority Habitats:

**Grassland:** Especially native mixed-grass prairie, dominated by wheatgrasses, needlegrasses, prairie sandreed, blue grama, and/or buffalograss.

**Sagebrush Steppe:** Especially sites dominated by big sage, but including silver sage, greasewood and saltbush where interspersed with grassland elements.

**Wetlands:** Riverine channels and off-channel sloughs; ephemeral prairie wetlands dominated by sedges; marshes and pothole lakes; reservoirs; playas.

**Riparian:** Cottonwood gallery forests, riparian shrublands, woody draws.

### Priority Bird Species:

Highest Priority in **Bold** (Priority Bird Species. NGPJV Technical Committee, 2012)

Additional Priority (NGPJV Implementation Plan; Poole and Austin 2006)

#### **Waterfowl:**

**Mallard**  
**Northern Pintail**  
American Wigeon  
Blue-winged Teal  
Canvasback  
Redhead

#### **Waterbirds:**

American Bittern  
Black-crowned Night-Heron  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Eared Grebe  
Western Grebe  
(Interior) Least Tern  
Black Tern

#### **Shorebirds:**

**Mountain Plover**  
**Long-billed Curlew**  
**Upland Sandpiper**  
**Marbled Godwit**  
**Wilson's Phalarope**  
Piping Plover  
American Avocet  
Willet

#### **Landbirds:**

**Swainson's Hawk**  
**Ferruginous Hawk**  
**Greater Sage-Grouse**  
**Sharp-tailed Grouse**  
**Wild Turkey**  
**Black-billed Cuckoo**  
**Short-eared Owl**  
**Burrowing Owl**  
**Red-headed Woodpecker**  
**Loggerhead Shrike**  
**Grasshopper Sparrow**  
**Baird's Sparrow**  
**Brewer's Sparrow**  
**Lark Bunting**  
Spotted Towhee  
**Chestnut-collared Longspur**  
**McCown's Longspur**

## APPENDIX B – Outcomes

Definitions:

**Protected**=Acres acquired by fee title or conservation easement;

**Restored**=The manipulation of physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a site with the goal of returning natural/historic functions to a habitat that has been degraded;

**Enhanced**=The manipulation of physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics of a site to improve specific functions.

### **Desired/Potential Outcomes:**

(anticipated quantity of each appropriate measure should be specified in proposals, and those achieved in project reports)

- Partner Biologist Positions Established
- Total Acres Protected
  - Wetlands
  - Riparian
  - Grassland
  - Shrub-steppe
- Total Acres Restored
  - Wetlands
  - Riparian
  - Grassland
  - Shrub-steppe
- Total Acres Enhanced
  - Wetlands
  - Riparian
  - Grassland
  - Shrub-steppe
- Conservation Easements Acquired
- Conservation Plans/Contracts Developed
- Landowner Visits
- Partnering Organizations Involved
- Meetings/Work Groups Facilitated
- Field Tours Hosted
- Grant Proposals Written & Funded
- Key Uncertainties Addressed
- Assumptions Tested
- Management Effects Evaluated
- Other (be specific)

## APPENDIX C-Partner Contribution Statement Format

Contribution statements are required for all partner contributions to conservation grant funding (Table A). Please submit the following information on the partner's formal letterhead:

### NGPJV Capacity Grants Program – Partner Contribution Statement

Date:

Name (printed), Title, Organization:

Title of the proposal you are contributing to:

What is the amount of your contribution to the capacity grant?

When will you make the contribution?

Please briefly describe why you are contributing to the project:

Do you have any additional comments?

Signature: