



## NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION MATCHING AWARDS PROGRAM *Request for Proposals*

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### **Introduction**

The National Forest Foundation (NFF), a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, chartered by Congress, engages America in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System, and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the National Forests. The NFF believes that communities should play a significant role in determining the future of National Forests and Grasslands. By matching federal funds provided through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Forest Service to non-federal dollars, the NFF Matching Awards Program (MAP) is able to effectively double the resources available to nonprofit partners to implement projects that directly benefit our National Forests and Grasslands.

A common thread connecting the NFF program areas is an interest in action-oriented projects that enhance the viability of natural resources while considering benefits to, and the involvement of, surrounding communities. The NFF will accept applications from non-governmental, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and Native American tribes working on or adjacent to National Forests and Grasslands throughout the United States. Through the MAP, organizations completing on-the-ground conservation work can apply for matching funds twice a year, though only one MAP award may be active at any time. Final project reports must be received before new funds may be disbursed under another MAP Award.

All MAP awards require at least a 1:1 match of non-federal funds. Federal funds and in-kind contributions may be noted to show leverage for a project, but cannot be matched by MAP funds. No NFF funds may be directed to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal entity. Projects must be completed within one year from the project award date.

### ***Programmatic Emphasis:***

The NFF encourages organizations to position their proposed projects into at least one of our areas of programmatic emphasis. These areas are Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Recreation, Community-Based Forestry, and Watershed Health and Restoration. Each is briefly described below. Weighted emphasis will be given to projects affecting Wildlife Habitat Improvement and Recreation.

#### Wildlife Habitat Improvement:

The diverse habitats found within the National Forests and Grasslands support more than 3,000 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, and amphibians. For many Americans, engaging in wildlife viewing, fishing, and hunting within these habitats often serves as the primary means of connection to the outdoors, and provides important revenue for state and local economies.

The continuing growth of population centers in the western and southern United States has had a negative impact on the overall habitat of many species. The NFF is working to safeguard these threatened species and the forest lands on which they depend for survival. The NFF will make

strategic investments in projects that improve conditions for maintaining viable populations of native plants and animals, while meeting public demand for wildlife viewing and appreciation, hunting and fishing, through collaborative project activities such as:

- Juniper removal to help restore sagebrush ecosystems and improve quail habitat;
- Treatments for noxious weeds and plant succession to protect crucial habitat for rare species.

#### Recreation:

Recreation is the fastest growing use of National Forests and Grasslands. The increase in visitor usage and encroaching development result in increased human impacts to ecosystems. Maintaining the integrity of these forest and grassland resources is vital for both ecosystem viability and quality recreational experiences. Through support of local restoration activities and citizen involvement, the NFF can help to ameliorate these pressures and ease their effects on resources on and adjacent to public lands, while still providing economic benefits to the surrounding communities.

The NFF is interested in collaborative projects that address the rising demand for outdoor recreation in National Forests and Grasslands through projects activities such as:

- Restoration of impacts of excessive or inappropriate use in sensitive areas;
- Improvement of recreational resources through trail restoration and maintenance.

#### Watershed Health & Restoration:

National Forest lands are the largest single source of fresh water in the United States. Waters originating on National Forest lands bring life to agricultural lands and provide clean drinking water to communities, and are conservatively estimated to be worth at least \$3.7 billion per year. Protecting these watersheds is one of the primary reasons the U.S. Forest Service was established, and maintaining and restoring these watersheds is of vital importance. The patchwork of federal and non-federal lands in many watersheds makes public-private partnerships even more crucial to ensuring clean water and vibrant ecosystems.

The NFF will support watershed restoration and enhancement projects, especially those initiatives that include diverse perspectives and address critical issues such as non-point source pollution and fish habitat enhancement through project activities such as:

- Sediment reduction through slope stabilization and contouring;
- Planting of native species in damaged riparian areas;
- Removal of invasive exotic species;
- Culvert replacement to improve fish passage.

#### Community-based Forestry:

The NFF believes that communities can work to improve natural resources, while providing local economic and social benefits. The aim of community-based forestry is to empower those who work, live and recreate in the woods to work together and strive towards a common set of goals.

The NFF will make strategic investments in community-based forestry projects, particularly those that focus on forest health and restoration. Projects should address the need for greater collaboration in community-based forestry projects. Local constituencies should be included in the decision-making process through ecological restoration activities and action-oriented training, conservation and restoration projects that support economically sustainable natural resource use, and address wildfire risk reduction and response through project activities such as:

- Collaboratively developed and implemented fuel reduction projects;
- Fire recovery efforts, involving re-seeding, erosion control, and/or riparian restoration;
- Citizen-based monitoring and/or fuels reduction efforts, especially in the wildland/urban interface.

### ***Who Should Apply?***

Applications will be considered from non-federal partners, community-based organizations, Native American tribes and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations implementing action-oriented on-the-ground conservation or citizen-based monitoring projects on or around National Forests or Grasslands.

### ***Who Should Not Apply?***

Applications will not be considered from:

- Federal agencies;
- Regional, state or local governmental entities;
- For-profit organizations;
- Consultants;
- Educational and research organizations proposing projects that do not show tangible, on-the-ground benefit;
- Organizations seeking general operating support;
- Organizations seeking funding for litigation or advocacy;
- Organizations that cannot produce a 1:1 cash match of non-federal, project-directed funds.
- Organizations considering submitting a proposal for a project that cannot be completed within one year.

### ***Selection Criteria:***

Successful projects will support the major strategic initiatives and current priorities of the NFF and the U.S. Forest Service. Priority will be given to action-oriented collaborative projects that pro-actively address at least one of the programmatic emphasis areas through on-the-ground conservation projects or citizen-based monitoring. Additional weight will be given to wildlife habitat improvement and recreation issues. Environmental education, kiosks and signage are not program priorities and will only be considered as minor, critical components of larger projects.

Evaluation will be based on the extent to which a proposed project:

1. Improves the conditions of National Forests and Grasslands in a measurable, hands-on way.
2. Obtains funding from non-federal sources greater than or equal to the amount being requested from the NFF. If applicable, in-kind contributions and other federal funds should be noted in the total project budget to demonstrate additional leverage.
3. Benefits National Forests and Grasslands. Projects may occur on or around National Forest Service lands, but must show direct or indirect benefit to U.S. Forest Service lands.
4. Has multiple benefits to the resource base and involvement of surrounding communities, and the demonstrable means by which to measure project success.
5. Has an effective method to share project information and results.
6. Demonstrates a commitment to, and a detailed plan for, community involvement/participation in the development and implementation of the project.
7. Provides sufficient detail to enable the NFF and the Forest Service to evaluate the following:
  - Project design;
  - Specific project activities;
  - Anticipated results of the project;
  - Methods for evaluation;
  - Qualifications of the project manager;
  - The ability of the organization to complete the project and match and expend funds as described and within one year of the award date.

***Federal Matching Funds Requirements:***

NFF funds awarded through this program can be disbursed only as a match to cash contributions from a non-federal source. These federal matching funds:

- Must be used for completing conservation projects on or around National Forest System lands.
- Cannot be used for general administrative purposes.
- Cannot be used for litigation or advocacy.
- Cannot be used for any federal expenses, including salary. Neither NFF funds nor the non-federal match may be directed back to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal agency.

All non-federal matching funds and documentation of contributed goods and services to the project must be sent directly to the NFF. Matching non-federal funds for a project can be submitted incrementally; however, NFF funds will only be released on a 1:1 basis, as the non-federal match is received. Once the non-federal funds, documentation and a cash request form have been received by the NFF, matching funds will be released for receipt within about two weeks of the date invoices are processed. Invoices are processed on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, and additionally as necessary.

***Application Process:***

Proposals for the Matching Awards Program (MAP) are selected for funding through a two-stage process. Applicants must first submit a pre-proposal to the NFF. The pre-proposals are evaluated, and a subset of the organizations submitting pre-proposals is invited to submit full proposals. The process from pre-proposal submission to notification of funding of full proposals generally takes about four months.

Pre-proposals must include:

1. Pre-proposal cover sheet available from [http://www.natlforests.org/word/MAP\\_coversheet.doc](http://www.natlforests.org/word/MAP_coversheet.doc)
2. 1-2 page brief project summary describing:
  - What the project would accomplish and the demonstrable benefits the project would have on National Forests or Grasslands and the surrounding community. List specific project objectives and how each will be accomplished.
  - The relevance of the proposed project to the goals and priorities of the NFF and the U.S. Forest Service (visit [http://www.natlforests.org/conservation\\_issues.html](http://www.natlforests.org/conservation_issues.html) for more information).
  - How you plan to gain community support, input and/or involvement.
  - How the project will be monitored and evaluated.
  - Your organization's mission and a brief outline of past project accomplishments.
3. Projected budget that indicates how NFF matching funds and non-federal funds will be used. If applicable, anticipated in-kind and additional federal funds may also be shown.

Please include the project title and name of your organization as a header at the top of each page.

If applying for funding to implement a portion or phase of a larger project, ensure that your NFF pre-proposal highlights the work you are seeking funding for, and that portion is distinguishable from the rest of the project.

Applicants will be notified via email when the pre-proposal has been received and processed. If you do not receive a confirmation email within 3 days, please contact the NFF. The NFF will review the pre-proposals and contact selected candidates to submit full proposals within one month. Full proposals will require written support from the Forest Supervisor on the National Forest(s) or Grassland within which the project will take place. If selected for funding, project activities must be completed, and all funds must be requested and have been fully expended within one year of the award date.

***To Apply:***

To apply, please complete the MAP Cover Sheet and project summary, and email both to [aliljeblad@natlforests.org](mailto:aliljeblad@natlforests.org). Please put the phrase “**MAP pre-proposal submission**” in the subject line.

If you do not receive an email confirmation of the receipt of your pre-proposal by the NFF within three days of submitting it, please contact Adam Liljeblad, Conservation Programs Officer at (406) 542-2805 ext. 12 or [aliljeblad@natlforests.org](mailto:aliljeblad@natlforests.org).

You are also welcome to submit your application by mail to:

**MAP Pre-Proposal  
National Forest Foundation  
Building 27, Suite 3  
Fort Missoula Road  
Missoula, MT 59804**

**All pre-proposals must be received prior to the stated deadline.**

***Deadlines***

The submission dates for the 2008 Matching Awards Program are as follows:

**Round 1:**

Pre-proposals for receipt by the NFF: **Friday, December 15, 2007**

Pre-proposal decisions and invitations for full proposals will be made within 6 weeks.

Final selection decisions: **Late March, 2008**

**Round 2:**

Pre-proposals for receipt by the NFF: **June 6, 2008**

Pre-proposal decisions and invitations for full proposals will be made within 6 weeks.

Final selection decisions: **Late September, 2008.**