Request for Partnership Proposals/Letters of Interest for the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program FY 2021

NOTE:
This is a call-for preproposals for projects who would like to partner with the California State Coastal Conservancy in order to apply for US Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Coastal Wetlands Conservation (NCWC) Program funding.

a) This is NOT the official NCWC call for applications.
b) Projects hoping to receive NCWC funding are NOT required to apply through the Coastal Conservancy. As stated below, there are six other state agencies who are also designated to apply for these funds for the projects in California. However, should a project wish to work with the Coastal Conservancy to manage and administer a potential future grant, please read the following announcement, and if you feel your project fits the NCWC criteria, please submit a brief (~2-4 page) letter of interest via email to avra.heller@scc.ca.gov by 5 PM PST on March 2nd, 2020 (see further details below).

The California State Coastal Conservancy (Conservancy) seeks partners for joint applications to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 round of the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) National Coastal Wetlands Conservation (NCWC) Grant Program for coastal wetlands acquisition and/or restoration projects on the California coast or along the San Francisco Bay shoreline. Only seven designated state agencies, including the Conservancy, are eligible to apply for NCWC grants in California. However, the Conservancy can work in partnership with state and local agencies, tribes, and certain non-profits to develop and submit NCWC proposals. The Conservancy can pass through NCWC grant funds to its partners to implement projects. While federal agencies can’t receive NCWC grant funds, NCWC-funded projects can be implemented on federal lands.

If your project is selected by the Conservancy during this initial proposal phase, the Conservancy will work with you to prepare a NCWC grant proposal, which may or may not be awarded funding by the USFWS. The Conservancy will not award state funding grants directly through this solicitation. The USFWS selects proposals for award through a merit-based, national competitive review process. The deadline to submit NCWC proposals to the USFWS for FY 2021 has not been set, but is expected to be in late June 2020. If projects are awarded a NCWC grant, funding will be available for implementation as early as Spring 2021. USFWS will need to meet its project-related environmental compliance requirements before making funding available. A full description of the NCWC program can be found here: https://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants/

NCWC provides grants of up to $1,000,000 for the protection and/or restoration of coastal wetlands. Grants are for project implementation, although it is permissible to utilize a small amount (~15%) of the grant for biological surveys or monitoring, planning and permitting if
those activities are closely tied to implementation. Projects should be ready for implementation in Summer 2021 or 2022. Projects will be more competitive if the project area is primarily made up of jurisdictional wetlands. The NCWC grant program requires a non-federal match of at least 25% of the total project cost, consisting of either cash or in-kind contributions, and additional points are awarded for match of up to 33% of the total project cost. The Conservancy may be able to provide some or all of the required match, but project partners providing their own match will increase the Conservancy’s capacity to carry out more projects. The NCWC program also prioritizes projects that involve multiple partners providing a cash or in-kind contribution. All projects must ensure long-term (at least 20 years) conservation of coastal resources.

**Eligible Activities** include:

1. Acquisition of a real property interest (e.g., conservation easement or fee title) in coastal lands or waters (coastal wetlands ecosystems) from willing sellers or partners for long-term conservation;

2. Restoration, enhancement, or management of coastal wetlands ecosystems; or

3. A combination of acquisition, restoration, and management.

**Ineligible Activities** include, but are not limited to:

1. Projects that primarily benefit navigation, irrigation, flood control, or mariculture;

2. Acquisition, restoration, enhancement or management of lands required as the result of a regulatory or decision-making process to mitigate habitat losses;

3. Creation of wetlands where wetlands did not previously exist;

4. Enforcement of fish and wildlife laws and regulations, except when necessary for the accomplishment of approved project purposes;

5. Research;

6. Planning as a primary project focus;

7. Operations and maintenance, including long-term invasive species management;

8. Acquisition and/or restoration of upper portions of watersheds where benefits to the coastal wetlands ecosystem are not significant and direct; and

9. Projects providing less than 20 years of conservation benefits.
More information about NCWC grants, including last year’s FY 2020 Notice of Funding Opportunity, is available here: [https://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants/](https://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants/). Please again note that the FY 2021 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the NCWC program has not yet been released, but it is anticipated to be very similar to last year’s document.

**Letter of Interest Submittal:**
To indicate your interest in partnering with the Conservancy on a NCWC proposal, please submit a brief (~2-4 page) letter of interest via email to avra.heller@scc.ca.gov. The letter should include the following information:

1) 1-2 sentence summary of proposed project,
2) description of the need for the project,
3) description of the proposed project and how it addresses the need,
4) estimated project cost and description of potential match,
5) approximate timeline for project implementation (include information of the status of project design and environmental review for restoration projects),
6) indicate whether you have a willing seller for acquisition projects, and
7) list of potential project partners and their roles in the project. Include a map showing the project area and providing the approximate acreage of the project area and acreage of coastal wetlands within the project area.

**Letters of Interest must be received by 5 PM PST on March 2nd, 2020.**

**Eligible Applicants:** Non-federal public agencies, tribes, and certain nonprofit organizations are eligible for funding. To be eligible, a nonprofit organization must qualify under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**Questions?** Questions about the application process and potential projects may be directed to Avra Heller, External Grants Manager, 510-286-1212, [avra.heller@scc.ca.gov](mailto:avra.heller@scc.ca.gov)
NATIONAL COASTAL WETLANDS

Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

**Governing Guidance**

- 50 CFR 84
- 2 CFR 200

**DISTRIBUTION METHOD**

Nationally competitive to only coastal States

**ELIGIBLE GRANTEEES:** ANY AGENCY OR AGENCIES OF A COASTAL STATE DESIGNATED BY THE GOVERNOR AS HAVING RESPONSIBILITY FOR COASTAL WETLANDS

**Purpose**

Provide funding for long-term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems by helping States to protect, restore and enhance coastal habitats

**ELIGIBLE PROJECTS**

- Acquisition of real property interest in coastal land or waters providing that terms and conditions ensure property will be administered for long-term conservation
- Restoration, enhancement, or management of coastal wetlands ecosystems, providing restoration, enhancement, or management will be administered for long-term conservation

**SOURCE OF FUNDS**

15% annually of the 18.7% distributed to Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act from the Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund

Includes revenues from:

- Import duties on fishing tackle, yachts and pleasure craft
- Excise taxes on sport fishing equipment and electric motors
- Portion of gasoline tax attributable to motorboats and small engines

**MATCHING REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS**

- Provides up to 50% federal funding, remaining 50% of costs must be from non-federal source (funds increased to 75% federal share for coastal States that have and are using a fund for acquiring coastal wetlands or other natural areas or open spaces)
- Matching funds under $200,000 shall be waived for American Samoa, Guam, Virgin Islands, and Northern Mariana Islands.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS OR REQUIREMENTS**

- Recipients must provide non-federal matching funds

For More Information: http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/CW/CW.htm