

North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Program

Purpose of NAWCA

The purposes of this Act are to encourage partnership among public agencies and other interests:

- (1) to protect, enhance, restore, and manage an appropriate distribution and diversity of wetland ecosystems and habitats associated with wetland ecosystems and other fish and wildlife in North America;
- (2) to maintain current or improved distributions of wetland associated migratory bird populations; and
- (3) to sustain an abundance of waterfowl and other wetland associated migratory birds consistent with the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, the Partners In Flight Conservation Plans, and the international obligations contained in the migratory bird treaties and conventions and other agreements with Canada, Mexico, and other countries.

Requirements for Proposed Projects (Standard Grants)

A North American Wetlands Conservation Act standard grant proposal is a 4-year plan of action supported by a NAWCA grant and partner funds to conserve wetlands and wetlands-dependent fish and wildlife through acquisition (including easements and land title donations), restoration and/or enhancement, with a grant request between \$51,000 and \$1,000,000. Small grants (up to \$50,000) are administered separately. Match must be non-Federal and at least equal the grant request (referred to as a 1:1 match). Match is eligible up to 2 years prior to the year the proposal is submitted and grant and match funds are eligible after the proposal is submitted and through the project period.

- (1) Partners must match their grants request at no less than a 1-to-1 ratio. For example, partners requesting a \$1 million grant would need to also contribute at least \$1 million in partner funds (from nonfederal sources) towards the project.
- (2) There is no difference in grant and match for grant administration purposes. Generally, laws and requirements that apply to activities funded with NAWCA dollars also apply to items funded with match dollars or provided as in-kind match (i.e., real property interests)
- (3) Each grant and match dollar, except for indirect costs, must be linked to an acre acquired, restored, enhanced, and/or established.

Grantees are held accountable for both match dollars and acres, as defined in the proposal and grant agreement. Without prior approval and agreement modification, accomplishing

less than 100 percent of match dollars and acres will result in a reduction of the award amount.

Initial Screening Criteria

Screening criteria are extensive. For a comprehensive overview, see the following:

1. Proposal instructions:

<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/Standard/US/files/ProposalInstructions.pdf>

2. Eligibility Criteria and Processes:

<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/Standard/US/files/EligibilityCriteria.pdf>

3. Grant Administration Standards

<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/files/GrantStandards.pdf>

Project Prioritization and Funding Process

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Bird Habitat Conservation (Division) is responsible for facilitating the Act's Grants Program.

Standard Grants Program: The process for receiving and preliminarily reviewing project proposals is handled slightly differently for each country and enjoys the active participation of each federal government.

Once a slate of eligible proposals has been determined per each country-program's process, the proposals are further reviewed and ranked by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, a nine-member council established by the Act. The Council then recommends projects to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, a seven-member commission authorized by the Act to give final funding approval to projects. The Division administers the grants for all approved Standard Grants Program projects.

Proposals are solicited in March and July.

NAWCA Small Grants

Purpose

The Small Grants Program is a competitive, matching grants program that supports public-private partnerships carrying out projects in the United States that further the goals of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (Act). These projects must involve

long-term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated uplands habitats for the benefit of all wetlands-associated migratory birds.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Council created the Small Grants Program in 1996 to encourage new grantees and partners to carry out smaller-scale, long-term wetlands conservation projects that may otherwise not be able to compete in the U.S. Standard Grants Program. The Small Grants Program has also become an important catalyst in developing a pool of new grantees and/or partners for the Standard Grants Program. In recent years, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved \$2 million in funding for the Small Grants Program annually.

Requirements for Proposed Projects and Initial Screening Criteria

This program supports the same type of projects and adheres to the same selection criteria and administrative guidelines as the U.S. Standard Grants Program. However, project activities are usually smaller in scope and involve fewer project dollars. Grant requests may not exceed \$75,000, and funding priority is given to grantees or partners new to the Act's Grants Program.

Project Prioritization and Funding Process

Each year, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (Commission) approves the total amount of funding to be distributed to projects under the Small Grants Program in the following fiscal year. Applicants submit project proposals to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Bird Habitat Conservation (Division) for the program's one funding cycle per year. After a preliminary review by Division staff, Joint Venture Coordinators, and North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Council) staff, eligible proposals are presented to the Council for further review and ranking. The Council, which has been delegated final approval authority by the Commission, then selects the slate of projects to be funded and informs the Commission on its decision. The Division is responsible for administering the grants for the approved projects.