



Request for Proposals

NORTHEAST REGIONAL CONSERVATION NEEDS GRANT PROGRAM

The Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for grants under the 2013 Northeast Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) Grant Program.

Please Read This Entire RFP, Including the Frequently-Asked-Questions Section, Before Submitting An Application for RCN Grant Funds.

ABSTRACT OF GUIDELINES

- 1. RCN PROPOSALS SHOULD SERVE ALL OR A CLEAR MAJORITY OF STATES THAT BELONG TO NEAFWA, INCLUDING CT, DE, DC, MA, ME, MD, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT, AND WV**
- 2. YOU MAY REQUEST UP TO \$100,000 OF RCN FUNDS IN ANY ONE PROPOSAL.**
- 3. YOU MUST PROVIDE NON-FEDERAL MATCH THAT IS EQUAL TO OR GREATER THAN THE RCN FUND REQUEST. FEDERAL FUNDS WILL ONLY BE DISBURSED IN AMOUNTS EQUAL TO APPROVED NON FEDERAL MATCH.**
- 4. PROJECTS MUST BE COMPLETED IN TWO YEARS OR LESS.**

5. PRESENTATIONS TO REPORT ON PRELIMINARY AND FINAL RESULTS ARE REQUIRED.

The Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) Coordinates and Administers the Northeast RCN Grant Program on Behalf of the NEAFWA.

Background:

State fish and wildlife agencies have developed State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) that assess the condition of each state's wildlife and habitats, identify the problems they face, and outline the actions that are needed to conserve them over the long term. The SWAPs identify a variety of actions aimed at preventing wildlife from declining to the point of becoming endangered. By focusing on conserving the natural lands and clean waters that provide habitat for wildlife, the plans have important benefits for wildlife and people.

Many of the conservation needs identified in the SWAPs are best addressed at a landscape-scale – a scale that does not conform to state boundaries. In addition, many conservation actions can be developed or implemented in one area of the Northeast with the results applicable and of benefit to the entire region. By combining financial resources, the Northeast states have created an efficient and effective mechanism to address landscape scale or regionally applicable issues. The objective of the Northeast RCN Grant Program is to address landscape-scale, regional wildlife conservation issues by combining resources, leveraging funds, and prioritizing conservation actions identified in SWAPs.

2013 Priority RCN Topic Areas

Of the 7 RCN Topic Areas, 5 will be active during the 2013 grant cycle. Proposals will not be accepted for topic areas that are inactive.

RCN Topic 1: Develop Regional Base Maps for Analyses of NE SGCN Data

Topic Area 1 is Inactive in 2013.

RCN Topic 2: Identify High Priority NE Species of Greatest Conservation

Need:

- I. **Background:** Previous work by the Northeast Partners in Reptile Conservation (NEPARC) has developed methodology useful for the identification of high priority reptile Species of Greatest Conservation Need within the Northeast. A matrix that compares and contrasts measures of regional vulnerability with measures of regional responsibility for each reptile species in the Northeast provides states with an important tool to identify highest priority Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Using the NEPARC matrix, state agencies are advancing identification of highest priority fish, mammals and birds. Desired proposals within this RCN will similarly identify highest priority species among invertebrate groups. Previous work within a similar RCN topic resulted in the development of an online invertebrate database and proposals under this topic shall coordinate wherever possible with work conducted to date.
- II. **Potential products from the current RFP** will be a list of highest priority species among invertebrate groups expressed within a classification system similar to the NEPARC-matrix model. Projects within the RFP may also support state agency workgroups tasked with identification of highest priority fish, birds and mammals.
- III. Technical Coordinator responsible for project oversight and for more information contact: John Kanter, New Hampshire Fish and Game, 3 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301. Phone: 603/271-2462. Email: John.Kanter@wildlife.nh.gov

RCN Topic 3: Identify NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need Data Gaps, Design Data Collection Protocols, and Collect Data

- I. **Background:** State Wildlife Action Plans have identified gaps in the state's knowledge of Species of Greatest Conservation Need or guilds of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Data gaps include documentation of current condition or trends in distribution and occurrence of Species of Greatest Conservation Need within the Northeast. In addition, data gaps may include documentation of current condition or trends in environmental factors, including distribution, occurrence, chemical properties or physical condition of terrestrial and aquatic habitat, weather, air or water.
- II. **Potential products from the current RFP** will document current condition or expected trends in distribution or occurrence of reptiles and amphibians, invertebrate (especially aquatic invertebrates) and rare fish.
- III. Technical Coordinator responsible for project oversight and for more information contact: Jen Stone, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035 Phone: 413/253-8269, Fax: 413/253-8487 Email: Jen_Stone@fws.gov
- IV. Administrative Coordinator responsible for fiscal oversight: Jenny Dickson, Supervising Wildlife Biologist, CT DEP Wildlife Division, 79 Elm Street, 6th Floor, Hartford, CT 06106. Phone: 860-424-3011. Email: Jenny.Dickson@ct.gov.

RCN Topic 4: Identification of Regional Focal Areas and Corridors for the Conservation of Species of Great Conservation Need in the Northeast

Topic Area 4 is Inactive in 2013.

RCN Topic 5: Design and Implement Conservation Strategies for NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need

- I. **Background:** Many Northeastern states share priorities for habitat conservation to benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need with multiple-state distributions. The

states recognize that habitat protection, restoration, and management are necessary to mitigate habitat loss and degradation and to reverse negative population trends for Species of Greatest Conservation Need identified in SWAPs. We also recognize that the collective habitat requirements of many Species of Greatest Conservation Need are overlapping and subject to similar patterns of loss and degradation on the regional landscape.

II. Potential products will include:

- i. Development and implementation of multi-partner conservation initiatives that focus on the conservation, management, and/or protection of focal habitats of Species of Greatest Conservation Need best addressed on a landscape or regional level. Examples of focal habitats and focal Species of Greatest Conservation Need for habitat conservation include: pine barrens and shrub-dominated habitats. Proposals are sought that result in or support conservation initiatives for the following list of species or for projects that address multiple Species of Greatest Conservation Need that may or may not be listed below:

- i. Allegheny Woodrat
- ii. Bicknell's Thrush
- iii. Golden-Winged Warbler
- iv. Least Tern
- v. Loggerhead Shrike
- vi. Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake
- vii. Spotted Turtle
- viii. Timber Rattlesnake
- ix. Eastern Spadefoot Toad
- x. Hellbender
- xi. Eastern Sand Darter
- xii. Gilt Darter
- xiii. Lake Sturgeon
- xiv. Spotted Darter
- xv. Tippecanoe Darter
- xvi. Brook Floater
- xvii. Green Floater
- xviii. Snuffbox

- ii. For the list of species above, development of spatially explicit plans that identify and prioritize locations for management, prescribe specific

conservation actions (e.g. Farm Bill), and develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) that apply across the range-wide variation in conditions of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.

- iii. The products of this RCN must expedite tangible results on the ground. Preference will be given to proposals that name conservation partners and describe a strategic initiative for implementation of conservation actions. Preferential treatment will be awarded to proposals submitted under this RCN that cover multiple states within a species range or the entire species range falling within the Northeast regardless of the number of states included within that range.

III. **Technical Coordinator** responsible for project oversight and for more information contact: Dave Jenkins, Chief, Endangered and Non-game Species Program, NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, PO Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400. Phone: 609/292-9101. Email: dave.jenkins@dep.state.nj.us

RCN Topic 6: Design and Implement Monitoring Protocols, Measures, and Indicators for NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need:

- I. **Background:** To inform adaptive management and revision of SWAPs, states need collaborative mechanisms for implementing monitoring programs, tracking progress, and reporting performance, particularly for those Species of Greatest Conservation Need, habitats, and actions that are better served and more cost-effective to address at the regional scale. With the recent completion of the *Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework for the Northeast*, states have a collective approach to documenting the status of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats. Previous work funded under this RCN includes determining the conservation status of key habitats and Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Northeast, and developing avian indicators and measures for monitoring threats and effectiveness of conservation actions in the Northeast. New proposals under this RCN should address coordinated monitoring protocols for aquatic, estuarine, and marine Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.

II. Potential products will include:

- i. Compiling and evaluating current monitoring protocols for regionally important aquatic, estuarine and marine Species of Greatest Conservation Need populations, and developing standardized protocols for multi-state application in the Northeast.
- ii. Implementing monitoring programs for regionally important Species of Greatest Conservation Need populations to determine effectiveness of management actions and impacts of threats, with preference to proposals addressing nongame (rare) fish, invertebrates (especially aquatic invertebrates), amphibians, and reptiles.
- iii. Developing new indicators and measures for monitoring regionally important aquatic and marine Species of Greatest Conservation Need populations to determine effectiveness of management actions and impacts of threats.

III. Technical Coordinator responsible for project oversight and for more information contact: Dan Rosenblatt, Wildlife Diversity Section Head, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754 Phone: 518/402-8884 Fax: 518/402-8925 Email: dlrosenb@gw.dec.state.ny.us

RCN Topic 7: Identify and Assess Threats to NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need

- I. **Background:** Some SCGN have experienced sudden and dramatic declines at the regional level. This topic seeks proposals that would address these declines by either identifying factors yet unknown and/or developing or implementing methodologies to address these factors once identified. Two examples of such recent sudden declines would be: 1) river herring (alewife and blueback herring) where several Northeast states have instituted complete harvest moratoria and restored passage at barriers to migration, yet river herring populations in those states still remain at historically low levels due to unknown factors; 2) White Nose Syndrome in bats is causing precipitous and spreading declines in multiple species of bats. In addition, as of yet unidentified or unquantified threats may cause future declines in Species of

Greatest Conservation Need and this RCN topic additionally seeks proposals that would assess potential future threats. Examples of projects suitable for the RCN include wind power, Marcellus shale development, biomass harvesting, and hydropower.

II. Potential products will include:

- i. A report that provides data to support or refute the assertion that listed factors are contributing to a sudden dramatic and widespread decline of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Studies must go beyond individual states and investigate factors that may be impacting the species throughout the Northeast. Collaboration among investigators from different states is encouraged. It is expected that reports identifying contributing factors will include recommendations for reversing the population decline caused by the identified factor(s) and recommendations for monitoring approaches.
- ii. A report that develops new and innovative research methodologies that are cost effective and widely applicable to support investigations that would provide reports such as those referenced in item i).
- iii. A report on tests of research methodologies or recommendations as described above in i) and ii).

III. Technical Coordinators responsible for project oversight and for more information contact: Alison Whitlock (Tel: 413 253-8536) and Ron Essig (Tel: 413 253-8504), USFWS Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035. Fax: 413 253-8487, Email: alison_whitlock@fws.gov or ron_essig@fws.gov

IV. Administrative Coordinator responsible for fiscal oversight: Karen Bennett, Program Manager, DE Division of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Heritage, Endangered Species and Private Lands, 89 Kings Highway, Dover, DE 19977. Phone: 302-739-9124; Email: Karen.bennett@state.de.us

Proposal Deadline: March 1, 2013. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered. The complete program funding schedule is available at www.RCNgrants.org.

Funding: Proposals for the 2013 funding cycle for the Northeast RCN Grant program of the NEAFWA are now being solicited. The total amount of funding available for new projects within the Northeast RCN Grant program is estimated at \$250,000. Funding for approved projects will be available no earlier than January 1, 2014.

Submission Procedures: Please read carefully and follow all of the guidance listed in the “Instructions on Submittal of Proposals” included herein. Instructions are also available at www.RCNgrants.org.

Instructions on Submittal of Proposals:

Please read these instructions carefully as well as all of the information provided above.

1. Proposals must be submitted as either MS Word or Adobe PDF documents to <http://rcngrants.org/proposals> no later than March 1, 2013 at 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

All applicants will be prompted to apply for a username and password during their first visit to <http://rcngrants.org/proposals>. Upon approval by the administrator, applicants will receive a confirmation email with a link directing them to the proposal upload page. Once on the page, applicants will be asked to enter their proposal title, upload the proposal, select the RCN topic area that their proposal addresses, and save. Applicants may then submit additional proposals if applicable.

For questions regarding the online submittal process, please contact Meghan Gilbert at meghangilbart@hotmail.com.

2. The proposal is limited to a total of 6 pages:
 - Page 1 is a single cover page with contact information (see details in section #3 below) and a concise description of the proposed project.
 - Pages 2-5 are four pages of text about the proposed project, including budget (see details in section #4, #5 and #6 below).
 - Page 6 is a single page outlining the qualifications of the individuals and organizations involved.

3. The cover page should provide the following information:

- Title of Project
- Name of Project Director and Job Title
- Name of Institution
- Email Address
- Physical Mailing Address
- Telephone and Fax Numbers
- Other Principal Investigators Involved (name, title, institution, email address)
- RCN Funds Requested
- A Concise Description of the Proposed Project. The description should not exceed 250 words and include primary objectives, a brief summary of methods, expected outcomes and a timeline. **THIS ABSTRACT WILL BE WIDELY DISTRIBUTED SO PLEASE FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED ON CONTENT CAREFULLY.**

4. Four pages of explanatory text are the principal component of the proposal and should be written as clearly and concisely as possible, address the following questions, and provide the following information (note that tables, graphs and photos can be included in the proposal but they must be contained within the four pages of text):

- a. Which of the Priority RCN Topics does your proposal address?
 - b. In what area or state(s) will your project be conducted?
 - c. What is the start date of the project and the projected end date.
 - d. What is the goal of your project and what major objectives or tasks will you undertake to achieve that goal?
 - e. What are the methods by which you propose to carry out your work?
 - f. What measurable products or outcomes will result from your project?
 - g. What is the proposed total budget of your project? Separate the budget into the following categories: Personal Service, Fringe Benefits, Indirect Overhead, Supplies and Materials, Travel, Contractual Service, and In-kind Services. Clearly indicate which activities will be supported by Northeast RCN grant funds and which will be supported by non-federal match. For non-federal matching funds committed to the project, specify whether those funds are direct or indirect and clearly designate the source of the non-federal funds.
5. Applicant budgets must be complete and document suitable matching funds for their proposal. Suitable non-federal match funds must be an amount equal or greater than the request for federal RCN funds. Eligible matching funds include any non-federal source of funds including cash, supplies and materials, waived costs, or in-kind services. These may include volunteer labor, donation of professional services, reduced charges for fringe and indirect benefits, and others. Applicants are strongly urged to review the Federal guidance on in-kind services and the documentation requirements therein. All costs, including match, must be incurred during the term of the award, defined as the period beginning with the date of a final grant award letter to the expiration date of the service contract executed as a result of the grant application.

6. All grants require non-federal matching funds of at least 50% of the total budget. For each dollar of RCN funds requested, an equal or greater number of non-federal dollars must be pledged. All applicants are required to certify matching funds from non-federal sources at the time of application. A pending grant application from another potential funding source cannot be considered as certified match until such grant application is officially awarded by the Grantor to the applicant. If a grant is awarded, federal funds will be disbursed on a quarterly basis, and in an amount not to exceed the amount of approved non-federal match.
7. Grant applications may not request greater than \$100,000 in RCN funds.
8. Grant applications must propose to complete work in two years or less.
9. Grant recipients will be required to present preliminary results to the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Committee and final results at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How does the grant proposal process work?

Each U.S. jurisdiction in the NEAFWA has dedicated 4% of their annual State Wildlife Grant apportionment to RCN projects. Proposals for projects addressing Priority Project Topics will be accepted until March 1, 2013. Proposals will be reviewed by the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Committee, Northeast Habitat Technical Committee, Northeast Wildlife Administrators and the Northeast Fisheries Administrators. Final project awards will be decided by the Directors of the NEAFWA.

Who developed the Priority Project Topics?

Priority Project Topics were developed by agency technical staff familiar with the development and implementation of SWAPs.

Who may apply?

Eligible applicants include individuals, non-governmental organizations, state and federal agency employees, members of academia, and for-profit corporations.

What is the schedule of review and approval of proposals?

Proposals are due by March 1, 2013. Proposals will be reviewed by WMI and by the USFWS to certify match and multi-state requirements. WMI may contact applicants for clarification or to allow for amendments to remove disqualifying elements. Eligible applications will be forwarded to Technical Review

Committees by April 1. Highest ranking proposals will be submitted by the Technical Committee to the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee for review and ranking. Funding decisions will be made by the NEAFWA Directors at their fall meeting and funds will be available in early January.

How will proposals and proposals be graded?

Funding priority will be placed upon projects that are feasible and practical in 1-2 year time periods, are designed to address priority topics, and that leverage other sources of non-federal matching funds. Funds cannot be used to support political lobbying or capacity building of organizations.

What is the source of funding for Northeast RCN grants?

The source of funding for Northeast RCN grants is from federal funds apportioned to the states through the State Wildlife Grant program.

Are matching funds required?

Yes. A minimum of 50% of the total project budget must be generated through certified non-federal match. In-kind match is allowed.

How will I receive payments?

The RCN Grants Program is a reimbursement program. Applicants must be prepared to fully fund their projects in the first instance and submit payment requests to WMI for reimbursement. All reimbursement requests must show expenditure of non-federal funds at least as great as the amount being requested in federal funds. Grant recipients will be required to enter into a service contract with WMI in order to receive payment. Payment requests may be submitted to WMI on a quarterly basis. No advance payments will be provided. WMI will retain 10% of the grant amount pending receipt of all contract deliverables. Upon NEAFWA's approval of said deliverables, the final 10% retainage will be released to the grantee.

Where should proposals be submitted?

Proposals must be submitted as either MS Word or Adobe PDF documents to <http://rcngrants.org/proposals> no later than March 1, 2013 at 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

All applicants will be prompted to apply for a username and password during their first visit to <http://rcngrants.org/proposals>. Upon approval by the administrator, applicants will receive a confirmation email with a link directing them to the proposal upload page. Once on the page, applicants will be asked to

enter their proposal title, upload the proposal, select the RCN topic area that their proposal addresses, and save. Applicants may then submit additional proposals if applicable.

For questions regarding the online submittal process, please contact Meghan Gilbert at meghangilbart@hotmail.com.

Can a single organization submit multiple proposals?

Yes, single organizations can submit multiple proposals within one priority topic area, or may submit proposals to more than one priority topic area.

Are partnerships encouraged?

Yes, partnerships in funding and/or delivery of project products are encouraged.

What are some applicant responsibilities?

Grantees must meet federal eligibility requirements under this grant program. All funds awarded through this RFP are contingent upon the applicant meeting all federal permitting requirements. NEAFWA reserves the right to reallocate grant awards in the event that the project applicant cannot meet the federal or state grant and/or permitting requirements. Applicants are encouraged to contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for technical assistance on projects that may impact federally listed species. NEAFWA reserves the right to require minor revisions to selected applicant's scope of work pending federal compliance review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff. Modifications will not result in any increase in the award amount. Applicants selected to receive a grant may also have their proposed budgets revised pending federal review of eligibility of costs and matching funds. These revisions will not result in any increase in the award amount. Award amounts may be decreased as a result of disqualification of matching costs through the federal review process. It is the applicant's responsibility to investigate the permits that may be required to carry out their proposal, and obtain all applicable federal or state permits.

What are eligible costs?

Grant reimbursement payments will be based on actual expenditures incurred by the grantee that are necessary and reasonable to the accomplishment of the work. Grantees will be required to provide documentation of project-related costs, including submission of copies of invoices and cancelled checks, with each payment request. Grantees will be required to certify appropriate matching expenses from non-federal funding sources, including volunteer labor. Applicants are advised to review 2CFR225 "Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87)" or 2CFR230 "Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122)". Applicant budgets may

include billable expenses and matching costs related to the project in the following categories:

- Personal services: includes salary of project staff employed by the applicant organization.
- Fringe Benefits: The fringe benefits such as health care and retirement provided to permanent employees of the applicant organization. State employees must use the approved federal rates for their agency. Fringe benefits are normally calculated as a percentage of an employee's salary.
- Indirect/Overhead: The costs of maintaining the offices for project personnel such as utilities, support services, rent, etc. This is normally calculated as a percentage added to the salary and fringe benefits of an employee.
- Travel and Equipment Usage: Vehicle mileage at the federal rate, fuel costs, commercial carrier costs, and other similar expenses. Equipment usage covers the equivalent cost of the use of equipment such as tractors, brush clearing equipment, research vessels, etc.
- Supplies and Materials: Office supplies, consumable field gear such as flagging tape and stakes, non-retrievable animal tags, nets, software, etc.
- Contractual Services: If you are a not-for-profit organization and you subcontract out for services such as data entry or laboratory analysis, you must be able to provide proof that those costs are necessary and reasonable to the accomplishment of the work.

What are some ineligible costs?

Costs related to the preparation of this application or any other costs incurred prior to notification from NEAFWA acknowledging final approval of the grant award, are NOT eligible for reimbursement and cannot be used as match. Costs related to land acquisition, purchase of development rights, and purchases of easements are not eligible for reimbursement under this program. These costs are not eligible as matching costs, either. Generally speaking, education and law enforcement activities are not eligible for funding or match under this program.

How will applications be evaluated?

All applications received by the due date will be reviewed by WMI for completeness and eligibility. All projects that are deemed complete and eligible by WMI will be forwarded to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for federal compliance screening. Projects reviewed by the USFWS that are deemed unable to pass federal compliance requirements will be disqualified. Applications that are deemed by the USFWS to pass federal compliance screening will be evaluated by Northeast RCN Technical Coordinators and Northeast RCN Review Teams based using the General Scoring Criteria provided below.

How will my proposal be scored?

RCN proposals will be graded according to the degree that the proposal meets the following criteria:

1. Does project address the desired products described in the RCN?
2. Are project objectives/goals clearly defined, measurable, and connected to specific milestones/deliverables and timelines?
3. Will/can proposed methods accomplish/produce the project's objectives/goals, deliverables, and timelines?
4. Does project have major, public opposition or require permits that are difficult or impossible to obtain?

How will I be notified of an award?

Applications that score high enough to be selected to receive an award will receive written notification from WMI acknowledging a “conditional” grant award. Conditional grant awards will be subject to federal State Wildlife Grants Program compliance as administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Once federal compliance is met, grantees will receive written notification from WMI acknowledging final approval of the grant award.

When may I start work?

You may begin work once federal compliance is met, and you have received written notification from WMI of your final grant award. However, WMI advises grantees NOT to begin work until all required and necessary permits are obtained for the activities identified in their project proposal. Please note that grantees may not request or receive any reimbursement payments prior to completion of federal compliance.



For More Information, Contact:

**Scot J. Williamson, Coordinator
Northeast Regional Conservation Needs Grant Program
Wildlife Management Institute
4426 VT Route 215 N
Cabot, VT 05647**

Phone: 802/563-2087

Fax: 802/563-2157

info@rcngrants.org

www.RCNgrants.org