

Fishers & Farmers Partnership Seeks Aquatic Habitat Project Proposals for 2025 funding cycle

Deadline January 15, 2024

Fishers & Farmers Partnership (FFP) for the Upper Mississippi River Basin, a fish habitat partnership, is seeking project proposals to benefit aquatic habitat in Mississippi River basin streams. Federal funding may be available under the National Fish Habitat Partnership through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to fund the top ranked proposals.

About the Program:

[Fishers & Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin](#) is a self-directed group of non-governmental agricultural and conservation organizations, tribal organizations and state and federal agencies united to add value to farms while protecting, restoring, and enhancing the 30,700 miles of streams and rivers of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. It is a partnership of the [National Fish Habitat Partnership](#).

We Support the National Fish Habitat Partnership's Goals:

- Reconnect fragmented fish habitats
- Conserve water quality for fish
- Conserve hydrologic conditions for fish
- Support structure & function of Fish Habitat Partnerships
- Conserve physical, living habitats & features supporting viable, sustainable species, impacted populations or at-risk systems
- Conserve waters & habitats where processes & functions are operating within expected range or natural variation
- *Enhance recreational, commercial, subsistence, & traditional fishing opportunities when conducting projects that conserve fish habitat

Fishers & Farmers Partnership's Goals:

- Engage Farmers & Ranchers in Conservation
- Support Fish Habitat Conservation Projects
- Continue Development of Long-Term Basin Scale Strategies
- Strengthen Organization for Long-Term Action

Fishers and Farmers Partnership's Vision:

The Partnership's vision of the future is one in which landowners work together with conservationists and scientists to address the needs of their own farms, local streams, and the fishes of the basin. Lessons learned are shared with neighbors, participating organizations, and others outside of the basin. Fish populations and habitats are monitored at project sites and downstream. The Partnership helps landowners showcase successful practices to neighbors and others. With a focus on mutual respect, dialog is cultivated between agricultural and environmental organizations throughout the Upper Mississippi River Basin. This leads to better use of resources, less duplication of effort, and measurable progress toward common goals.

Our Mission:

The mission of the Fishers & Farmers Partnership is to support locally-led conservation projects that add value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations.

Priorities for FFP:

- Increase native fish/mussel populations – Focal fish/mussel species: smallmouth bass, Topeka shiner, American brook lamprey, blacknose dace, black redhorse, blackside darter, brook/brown trout, channel catfish, hornyhead chub, southern redbelly dace, Higgins’ eye mussel, pink mucket, scaleshell, spectaclecase.
- Improve in-stream habitat by reducing sedimentation, phosphorus and nitrogen runoff.
- Work with farmers/landowners to protect/maintain healthy aquatic systems, or prevent further degradation by promoting best management practices across the landscape.
- Increase landowner engagement/farmer-led committees that drive conservation.
- Improve connectivity, floodplain habitat, and enhance flow regimes.
- Monitor effectiveness of conservation projects, then share our stories through outreach.
- Increase public access to land or water for recreational opportunities.

Funding Amount:

Funding floor \$15,000
Funding ceiling \$100,000
FFP receives approximately \$200-\$300K, split into 4-7 projects.

Cost sharing by partners:

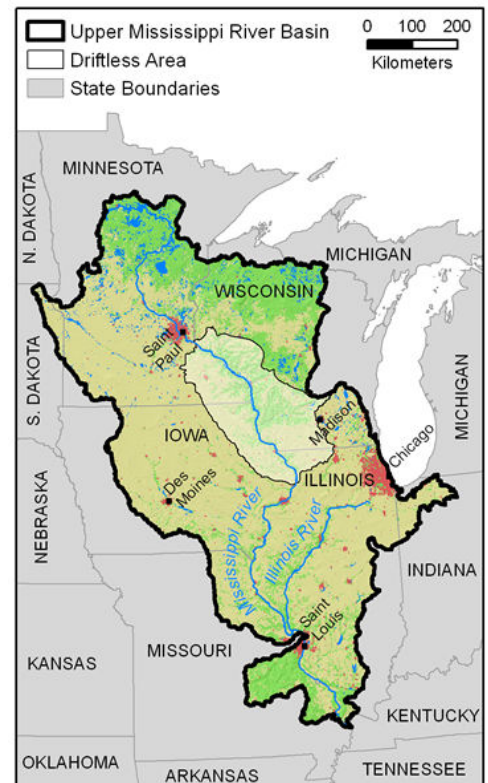
USFWS requires at least a 1:1 non-Federal cost share, and a 3:1 match will improve chances of funding. Cost share can be in-kind services such as time or cash. Cost share may include planning, design, monitoring, farmer’s time with project maintenance, field day planning, etc.

Applicant Eligibility:

Applicants can be federal, state, county, and non-government organizations in either natural resources or agriculture with the ultimate goal of adding value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations. Managers and supervisors responsible for implementing fish habitat projects must document compliance with all applicable Federal laws and regulations (e.g. National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Rivers and Harbors Act). Fish habitat projects must also comply with any applicable State, local and tribal laws and regulations that do not conflict with, or are not preempted by, Federal laws and regulations.

Eligible expenditures. Expenditures of NFHP funds are appropriate for the following actions/activities:

- (a) Time spent for project planning, directing project activities (e.g., earthwork, fence installation), site assessments, travel to and from project, and project oversight.
- (b) Equipment (e.g. monitoring equipment, not farming equipment).
- (c) Earthwork (e.g., contracts for earth moving, planting, structure installation, other site preparation), materials (e.g. rock, gravel, plants and planting supplies, materials to construct habitat structures).
- (d) Short-term monitoring/evaluation. Funds may be used for pre-post project monitoring of NFHP projects to evaluate biological and/or physical response to project activities.
- (e) Outreach to advance conservation. Engaging farmers/landowners in farmer-led efforts, workshops/training.
- (f) Easements with an operations and maintenance plan.



Ineligible expenditures. The following activities are **not** eligible for NFHP funding:

(a) Actions required by existing Federal or State regulatory programs. Fish habitat expenditures shall be in addition to, not in lieu of, other expenditures authorized or required from other entities under other agreements or provisions of law.

(b) Realty costs (e.g. lease or purchase interests in real property, or to make rental or other land use incentive payments to landowners).

(c) Pre-award costs such as preliminary design, surveys, and appraisals.

(d) Operation, maintenance of facilities, structures, other construction.

Timeline Requirements:

Project Duration: Work is to be completed within 18 months

Terms of Funding: Funding must be spent within 24 months

Application Method/Submittal:

Project Proposals required to be submitted to: Heidi_Keuler@fws.gov

Timeline:

Oct/Nov 2023 Develop project proposals for National Fish Habitat Partnership funding consideration

Jan 15 2024 Application/Proposal Deadline

Jan-Sep 2024 Projects will be evaluated, ranked, approved by FFP Steering Committee, National Fish Habitat Partnership, Department of Interior

Jan 2025 Announcement of awards to recipients

Jun-Aug 2025 **Agreements/Funding awarded 2025**

Ranking Criteria: [See FFP Strategic Plan](#)

Measurable Goals/Priorities: FWS, NFHP, FFP, Partners, State Wildlife Action Plans.

Fish species: see list in Strategic Plan.

Priority areas – watersheds, COAs, etc.

Habitat issues: connectivity, climate change, sediment/nutrients.

Addresses root cause of problem within watershed.

Conservation actions produce outcomes, goals, objectives.

Project follows design, collaborates with partners in watershed.

Outlines anticipated benefits to larger restoration focus area.

Explains pre/post project evaluation/monitoring **(required)**.

Life expectancy – goals sustainable.

Improves farms and fish habitat.

Leverages maximum matching funds, cost-sharing.

Reasonable budget.

Has attended a [Watershed Leaders Network Workshop](#).

Priority Watersheds

Minnesota River, MN

Cannon River Watershed, MN

Root River, MN

Bad Axe, WI

Kickapoo River, WI

Red Cedar, WI

Boone Watershed, IA

Rock Creek, IA

Galena River Watershed, IL

Indian Creek – Vermilion River, IL

Hutchins Creek, IL

Bourbeuse-Meramec, MO

Peno Creek – Salt River, MO

Spring Creek – Chariton River, MO

These watersheds receive priority, but other watersheds will be considered

Please address questions to:

Heidi Keuler

US Fish and Wildlife Service

555 Lester Avenue

Onalaska, WI 54650

608-769-1687



The National Fish Habitat Partnership's mission is to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.