



NFWF's Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund

Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction (INSR) – OPEN RFP:
[PRE-proposals were received February 12, 2026]

Small Watershed Grants (SWG) – OPEN RFP: Proposals due: April 2, 2026 at NOON

Chesapeake WILD (CWILD) – Proposals due: April 9, 2026 at NOON



NFWF Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Primary Goals and Objectives



Chesapeake Bay Business Plan
NFWF's blueprint for what it funds & why



National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Chesapeake Bay Business Plan

August 2012 (Revised August 2018)

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund | 1

1. Improve **water quality**
 - sediment & nutrient reductions
2. Restore and protect **key species** and their **habitats**
3. Direct and meaningful engagement, co-creation of projects with community members
4. NextGen Business Planning launching in 2026 – with a species and habitat focus expected

NFWF Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Three RFPs Open Now

1. Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction – [link here](#)
2. Small Watershed Grant Program – [link here](#)
3. Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (C-WILD) – [link here](#)

NFWF Grant Comparison - Quick Reference Guide

	Program					
	INSR	SWG-PTA	SWG-Implementation	WILD-PTA	WILD-Collaborative Conservation	WILD-Implementation
Project Award Range	up to \$1 million with potential for up to \$2 million total over 5-year period	up to \$150,000	\$150,000-\$750,000	up to \$75,000	up to \$200,000	\$75,000 to \$500,000
Match Requirement	Encouraged - ideally equal to or greater than 5-year funding request	Encouraged but not required	Encouraged but not required	Encouraged, but not required	Preferred, but not required	1 to 1
Timeframe	Begin no later than 3/31/27 and end no later than 12/31/31	Begin on or after 9/1/26; Completed within 18 months of award	Begin on or after 9/1/26; Completed within 2 years of the award	Begin on or after 9/1/26; Completed within 18 months of award	Begin on or after 9/1/26; Completed within 2 years of the award	Begin on or after 9/1/26; Completed within 3 years of the award

ELIGIBLE Applicants By Program

Applicant	INSR	SWG-I	SWG-PTA	C-WILD I	C-WILD CC	C-WILD PTA
Non-Profit 501(c) orgs, Community Organizations	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
State Government	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Local Government, Municipalities	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Tribal Governments	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Educational Institutions	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Federal Government	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Business, Individuals, International Organizations	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants – Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction (INSR)

Objective: Securing ambitious and aspirational five-year collaborative plans to accelerate on-the-ground watershed restoration and related collaborative capacity building outcomes

- Grant agreements of **up to five years** and up to \$2 million each
- Awards will be made to eligible entities representing, acting on behalf of, or in support of one or more qualifying **established watershed restoration collaboratives**
- All projects are expected to begin no later than March 31, 2027 and end no later than December 31, 2031

2026 RFP OVERVIEW AND GRANT AWARD INFORMATION

- NFWF will provide a partial award of up to \$1 million in late 2026 for an initial period of performance up to three years
- 2026 awardees will be eligible, beginning in 2028, for award increases, extended periods of performance, and scope adjustments to complete five-year collaborative watershed restoration plans
 - Additional funding is not guaranteed
- Ongoing performance, adaptive management needs, and available funding will all be considered in determining potential award increases
- Awarded funds will be made available on a reimbursable basis

Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) Program Priorities

Priority 1: Accelerating and Scaling Implementation of Watershed Restoration Practices and Approaches

- **Strategy 1:** Accelerating implementation of priority upland practices
- **Strategy 2:** Accelerating implementation of riparian forest buffers, livestock exclusion fencing, and supporting practices
- **Strategy 3:** Supporting place-based watershed restoration approaches that aggregate implementation efforts in specific catchments or subwatersheds in order to produce more immediate community benefits
- **Strategy 4:** Expanding adoption of watershed restoration practice and approaches that also benefit habitat and inland and coastal resilience
- **Strategy 5:** Piloting new or novel nonpoint source pollution runoff technologies and approaches that will further accelerate cost-effective water quality improvement outcomes at local and regional scales

Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) Program Priorities

Priority 2: Enhancing the Ability of Watershed Restoration Collaboratives to Sustain and Expand Implementation, including investments in:

- Coordination capacity
- Shared purpose and goals
- Shared strategy and priorities
- Collaborative practices, skills, and tools
- Systems and infrastructure
- Governance and decision-making structures

INSR PROGRAM TIMELINE

RFP Released:	Monday, December 15, 2025
Pre-Proposal Webinar:	Wednesday, January 7, 2026
Evaluation Briefing and Workshop:	Friday, January 9, 2026
Pre-Proposals Due:	Thursday, February 12, 2026
Full Proposal Invitations:	March 2026 (TBD)
Full Proposal Due Date:	May 2026 (TBD)
Award Announcement:	August 2026 (TBD)

All applicants must complete a pre-proposal consultation with NFWF staff prior to **January 29, 2026**

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants – Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction (INSR)

Key QUESTIONS:

- What is your collaborative?
- How will the collaborative's work reduce loads, achieve pollution goals, and restore habitat?
- What do you need the funding for?

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF)

Side-by-Side Look at Small Watershed Grant Program (SWG)

<i>Grant Program</i>	SWG: IMPLEMENTATION Grant	SWG: PLANNING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE Grant
<i>Project Focus:</i>	<u>On-the-ground actions</u> to protect and restore water quality, species, and and habitats in the Bay watershed. All necessary preliminary designs should be completed by the time of application	<u>Enhance local capacity to advance future on-the-ground actions</u> through community-based assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities.
<i>Award Size:</i>	Up to \$150K - \$750K	Up to \$150K
<i>Match Required</i>	Encouraged, but not required	Encouraged, but not required
<i>Deadline</i>	April 2, 2026 at NOON	April 2, 2026 at NOON

Small Watershed Grant (SWG): Program Priorities

Priority 1: Managing Agricultural and Urban Runoff

- Farm-Scale Conservation systems
- Green Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements
- Accelerating Innovation in Watershed Management

Priority 2: Improving Water Quality and Stream Health through Riparian Restoration and Conservation

- Restoring riparian and freshwater habitats through forested buffers, livestock exclusion, and stream and floodplain restoration
- Conserving high-quality riparian corridors

Priority 3: Enhancing and Protecting Freshwater Habitat for Brook Trout

- Increasing brook trout habitat integrity and population viability
- Conservation upland and riparian forests in brook trout strongholds

Small Watershed Grant (SWG): Program Priorities cont.

Priority 4: Enhancing and Protecting Tidal and Estuarine Habitat

- Restoring and conservating wetland and tidal marsh habitat for American Black Duck
- Managing shoreline erosion and marsh loss
- Restoring large-scale oyster reefs
- Restoring river herring habitat connectivity

Priority 5: Enhancing Nature-Based Resilience for Human Communities

- Protecting and enhancing natural and nature-based solutions to improve community resilience

Small Watershed Grant (SWG): Program Priorities cont.

Priority 6: Building Capacity for Landscape-Scale Watershed and Habitat Planning, Design, and Implementation:

- Regional-scale partnership development
- Improving delivery of outreach and technical assistance
- Assessing local watershed and habitat restoration needs and opportunities
- Designing and permitting watershed and habitat improvements
- Leveraging social science to advance behavior change

Small Watershed Grant: Key Program Dates

Applicant Webinar (Register here)	AVAIL ONLINE (from 2/2/2026)
FieldDoc Webinar (Register here)	AVAIL ONLINE (from 2/4/2026)
Proposal Due Date	Thursday, April 2, 12:00 PM
Proposal Review Period	April - August, 2026
Awards Announced	September 2026 (anticipated)

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants

Side-by-Side: Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD)

<i>Grant Program</i>	Chesapeake WILD: IMPLEMENTATION Grant	Chesapeake WILD: COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION Grant	Chesapeake WILD: <i>PLANNING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE</i> Grant
<i>Project Focus:</i>	<u>On-the-ground actions</u> to conserve, restore and connect fish and wildlife habitats.	<u>Enhance capacity</u> of partnerships, networks, and other collaborative models working to advance place-based, landscape-scale, and cross-jurisdictional habitat restoration, conservation, and connectivity outcomes.	<u>Enhance future on-the-ground actions</u> to restore, conserve, and connect fish and wildlife habitats and related conservation benefits through community-based assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities.
<i>Award Size:</i>	Up to \$75K - \$500K	Up to \$200K	Up to \$75K
<i>Match Required</i>	1:1	Preferred, but not required.	Encouraged, but not required.
<i>Deadline</i>	April 9, 2026 at NOON	April 9, 2026 at NOON	April 9, 2026 at NOON

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants: Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD)

All proposals must clearly address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of one or more **Chesapeake WILD Program Pillars** described below. At a minimum, **all proposals must address Pillar 1: Fish and Wildlife Habitat.**



Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants – Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD)

IMPERILED SPECIES include fish, wildlife, invertebrate, and plant species of concern that are dependent on important habitats located in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This include:

- Species identified as At-Risk by the FWS
- Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SCGN) designed in State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs)
- Regional SGCNs identified by the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
- Species identified in tribal stewardship or fish and wildlife plans

PROPOSAL NARRATIVES SHOULD REFERENCE AND INCORPORATE:

- Actions recommended by and consistent with federal, state and/or tribal habitat conservation or species recover plans
- State Wildlife Action Plans
- NFWF's Chesapeake Bay Business Plan
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (revised)

PRIOR COORDINATION WITH AND LETTERS OF SUPPORT from federal, state, and or tribal fish and wildlife representatives are highly encouraged.

Chesapeake WILD: Key Program Dates

WILD Proposal Labs (Register)	January 12 - April 3, 2026
Applicant Webinar (Register here)	Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 1:00 PM
FieldDoc Webinar (Register here)	February 4, 2026, 11:00 AM
Proposal Due Date	Thursday, April 9, 12:00 PM
Proposal Review Period	April - August, 2026
Awards Announced	September 2026 (anticipated)

Field Liaison Tips ☺

- Community engagement is important
- Collaborative grants should reflect collaboration in the budget
- Restoration projects (e.g. stream, infrastructure) should address the question of “why here” and show how they fit in the context of whole watershed restoration efforts
- Farm-based conservation – consult with NRCS. Expectation that grantees will use NRCS conservation practice standards or good explanation why this is not possible

Final Tips

- Funding for equipment? Not directly, but there are ways to get this done...
- Remember funding is reimbursable – need to incur expense first
- Quality Assurance Project Plans needed for data collection (EPA) or NEPA (WILD)
- FieldDoc has changed over the last year – don't wait till the last minute!
- Consult with NFWF and Field Liaisons – In support of better proposals that are best aligned with funding criteria.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Program Staff

QUESTIONS?

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National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Field Liaison Support

Liaison Contact	Email	Phone	Primary Focus
Kristen Saacke Blunk	kristen@headwaters-llc.org	(814) 360-9766	Watershed-, stream-, and wetland restoration and protection, land protection
Sarah Clark	sarah@icl.org	(240) 472-1772	Collaboration and partnership development
Kristen Hughes Evans	kristen@susches.org	(804) 554-3403	Agriculture, collaborative project development
David Hirschman	dave@hirschmanwater.com	(434) 409-0993	Stormwater, green infrastructure, stream corridor restoration
Katie Ombalski	katie@woodswaters.com	(814) 574-7281	Watershed restoration, agriculture, forest and aquatic habitat restoration, and land conservation
Mariah Davis	davisstrategies1@gmail.com	(757) 291-8785	Community engagement, urban and suburban stormwater, urban and suburban agriculture
Bryan Hofmann	bryan.hofmann@riverfriends.org	(540) 693-0443	Green infrastructure, forestry, living shorelines, stream restoration, education, collaborative project development