

## ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM SFY 2016 Grant Program – Round 1 Application Guidelines

### Background and Purpose:

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is pleased to announce the state fiscal year (SFY) 2016 Request for Proposals (RFP) for grants under the Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP). These grants are supported by capital construction funds contained in the fiscal year 2016 state budget. The ERP's goals in awarding these grants are to restore and protect rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands from unregulated nonpoint source runoff and erosion containing nutrient (phosphorus and nitrogen) and sediment pollution.

### Summary of What's New (See following sections for details):

1. The deadline for submitting grant applications for Round One of the SFY16 grant program is: April 13, 2015.
2. Applicants may submit up to three applications, each containing one project.
3. The project budget cap has been increased for this round to \$250,000.
4. All municipalities in the state, including Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) municipalities, are eligible to apply for ERP funds for nonpoint source pollution abatement projects. MS4s may apply for ERP funding but will be required to provide match.
5. Applicants submitting large project proposals (requesting \$100,000 or more in state funds) may be interested in obtaining a low interest loan from DEC. We ask that the applicant also submit an application to the DEC Facilities Engineering Division no later than **May 8, 2015**: [[Excel spreadsheet application](#)]
6. There are now four separate project categories: (a) project scoping, (b) project planning, feasibility or design, (c) project implementation, and (d) easements. Category (c) proposals – project implementation remains the favored option, followed by Category (b) proposals – project planning, feasibility or design.
7. Pursuant to Act 186 (2014), ERP has adopted a results-based system to ensure that grant awards specify outcomes to be achieved as a result of state support. Merit of proposals and the extent to which proposals will result in tangible benefits or improvements with measurable outcomes will be favored. Applicants are encouraged to use the Performance Standards guidance document ([performance standards](#)) for assistance.

### Eligibility and Conflict of Interest:

Vermont municipalities, regional organizations, non-profit associations, citizen groups, and state agencies are eligible to receive Ecosystem Restoration Program grants. Individuals, for-profit entities, and federal agencies are not eligible to receive funds directly, but may be a specified partner to collaborate in a proposed project.

Please note that a single organization or municipality, as the primary applicant, may submit up to **three** applications (each containing **one project**). Organizations or municipalities may be sub-applicants in

other applications and multiple towns in one watershed participating under one application is encouraged. For example, a municipality, private contractor and local organization may partner together to propose implementation of a restoration action.

If the grant applicant plans to work with a partner organization(s), this relationship should be stated in the grant application (E.5 Collaboration and Support). All pre-selected subcontractors (not subject to competitive bidding), who will assist in work under the grant, should be listed as project partners in this section. Note that federal procurement requirements may apply if a municipality is applying for a loan to be used as part of its match.

Grant applicants should also disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including subcontractor staff serving on their Board. All other subcontracts generated from competitive bidding during the course of the grant award must be approved by the State.

Respondents to this RFP should be aware that they will need to agree to the State of Vermont Customary Provisions in order to execute a contract for this project. These provisions, which include insurance requirements, are included with this RFP for reference. All applicants, if chosen, will also be required to complete a risk assessment questionnaire prior issuing the grant award.

#### **Tactical Basin Planning:**

ERP strongly favors eligible projects that are identified in VTDEC Tactical Basin Plans and associated river corridor plans or stormwater master plan by awarding more points during the grant application review process. A map of Vermont river basins with links to contact information for the Watershed Coordinators in each basin is available at: [www.vtwaterquality.org/planning/html/pl\\_basins.htm](http://www.vtwaterquality.org/planning/html/pl_basins.htm).

Applicants are required to contact their respective DEC Watershed Coordinator during the preparation of their application. The Watershed Coordinators will help to ensure that projects target major problem areas that are contributing to surface water pollution. River projects that are in municipalities that have taken the active step of adopting river corridor and floodplain protection bylaws to reduce flood hazards will be favored, consistent with Act 110 (2010).

#### **Project Amounts and Time Periods:**

The project budget cap has been increased for this round to \$250,000. Award notification is expected by late May. Due to a greater emphasis on the timeliness of expenditures, priority will be given to eligible projects that will be completed within a one or two year time period from the grant date. We will award more points during the grant application review process for such projects. If your project is anticipated to be longer than two years, we recommend that you use a phased approach to your grant request. All grant funding through this round will be available on July 1, 2015. All projects must anticipate a start date of no earlier than July 1, 2015. Applications will be evaluated on a competitive basis. Funding for projects is contingent upon availability of funds.

#### **Application Submittal:**

Proposals should be submitted in electronic format and emailed to David Pasco ([david.pasco@state.vt.us](mailto:david.pasco@state.vt.us)). Please do not use substitute form or alter the format of this application. Additional materials supporting the application may be attached as separate documents. All materials are due on Monday, April 13, 2015 by 4:30 pm, late applications will not be accepted.

## Application Questions:

All questions pertaining to the RFP should be submitted to David Pasco no later than Friday, March 27, 2015 by 4:30pm. All questions received during this period and their answers will be posted to the Vermont Business Registry Bid System along with this RFP on Tuesday, March 31, 2015 by 4:30 pm.

### A. ERP Grant Application Cover Page

1. **Project Title:**
2. **Project Location:**  
Town:  
County:
3. **Watershed ([List of Watersheds](#)):**
4. **Project Category:**  
Stormwater Treatment  
Agricultural Runoff Mitigation  
River or Floodplain Restoration  
Lake Shoreland Restoration  
Wetland Restoration  
Riparian Buffer Restoration  
Road-related Runoff or Erosion Mitigation
5. **VTDEC Watershed Coordinator Contact:**  
Which [Regional Watershed Coordinator](#) did you contact prior to submitting this application?
6. **Applicant Information:**
  - a. Organization Name:
  - b. Organization Address:
7. **Point of Contact:**
  - a. Name:
  - b. Title:
  - c. Phone:
  - d. Email:
8. **Type of Organization:**
9. **Funding Requested:**

### B. ERP Grant Funding Guidelines

All municipalities in the state, including Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) municipalities, are eligible to apply for ERP funds for nonpoint source pollution abatement to cover project costs. MS4 municipalities with large stormwater treatment projects may apply for ERP funding, but will be required to provide a 50% match for stormwater treatment projects (see Section E.9 for match calculation details). All other proposals that provide match will be favored in the ranking process. Match can be: (a) in-kind, (b) cash, (c) a low interest loan from the Vermont Pollution Control State Revolving Fund (VTPCSRF), (d) a low interest loan from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), or (e) other source.

Large stormwater treatment project proposals are those that request a minimum of \$100,000 in state support.

## Funding Categories

Review each grouping below for your project and location and then select the appropriate funding category within the group. Only one group should be selected.

1. For applications that are either: (a) *non-stormwater treatment projects*, including those from MS4 municipalities; or (b) *stormwater treatment projects for non-MS4 municipalities* (including large projects), select the most appropriate funding category. Project proposals that offer match will be favored:

**Project Scoping** - Involves river corridor planning, stormwater master planning, agricultural critical area scoping (10% of grant funds will be targeted for this category).

**Project Planning, Feasibility or Design** – Involves project engineering design (20% of grant funds will be targeted for this category).

**Implementation** – Involves construction, installation, application, or implementation of the project (60% of grant funds will be targeted for this category).

**Easements** – Involves easement scoping or implementation to accomplish permanent protection where no existing protection or regulations exist (10% of grant funds will be targeted for this category).

2. For MS4 municipalities submitting a *large stormwater treatment project proposal*, select the most appropriate funding category:

**Project Planning, Feasibility or Design** – Involves project engineering design; ERP will support up to 50% of project planning and design of the project, requiring 50% match. This project must result in construction within 5 years; if no project is constructed in this time frame, then the award must be paid back over 5 years at 0% interest.

**Implementation** – Involves construction, installation, application, or implementation of the project. ERP will support up to 50% of the project construction costs, requiring 50% match; municipalities can provide match via: (a) inkind, (b) cash, or (c) low interest loans from the VTPCSRF, (d) a low interest loan from CWSRF, or (e) other source (See Section C below for more information). This is a one year pilot project, the match requirement will likely increase if the project does not start by two years from the date of the award.

3. For MS4 municipalities submitting a *smaller stormwater treatment project proposal*, select the most appropriate funding category:

**Project Planning, Feasibility or Design** – Involves project engineering design; ERP will support up to 50% of project planning and design of the project, requiring 50% match, provided that it results in the construction of the project. This project must result in construction within 5 years; if no project is constructed in this time frame, then the award must be paid back over 5 years at 0% interest.

**Implementation** – Involves construction, installation, application, or implementation of the project. ERP will support up to 50% of the project construction costs, requiring 50% match; municipalities can provide match via: (a) inkind, (b) cash.

## C. Additional Grant Funding Guidelines to Support Large (equal to or greater than \$100,000) Stormwater Management Projects:

DEC is offering a new financing plan for large stormwater management projects. Beginning in 2015, if an applicant wishes to secure a low interest loan from DEC, to be used towards its local match to

help finance large stormwater projects, we ask that the applicant also submit an application to [the VTDEC Facilities Engineering Division Vermont Clean Water State Revolving Fund \(VCWSRF\) - State Fiscal Year 2016 Pollution Control Projects Priority List and Planning List for 2017 to 2025](#). Please submit your application to the VTDEC Facilities Engineering Division no later than **May 8, 2015**. Projects selected for priority funding through both the Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) and the CWSRF will be funded jointly through the ERP and FED programs and administered by the FED program. ([Pollution Control SRF Priority list application](#))

## D. Grant Eligibility Checklist

### 1. Eligibility:

These funds are available to address existing or future Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements, but are not available for any other state permit requirements. A proposed project is considered eligible for funding if it meets all the following requirements.

**Reduces Nutrient and Sediment Pollution** – Designed to improve or protect water quality from runoff and erosion (e.g. stormwater runoff)

**Eligible for Capital Construction Funds** - Focused on implementation of nonpoint source pollution reduction projects that have only a minor, if any, emphasis on education and outreach, monitoring, and long-term maintenance. Projects focused solely on education or outreach are not eligible for funding.

**Provides Stewardship Commitment** - Assures that the project will meet or exceeds its functional life. Describes a commitment, to be included within the grant agreement, to develop and implement a stewardship agreement or maintenance contract for the design life of the project. Includes the entity responsible for carrying out that stewardship agreement or maintenance contract.

**Project Timeline** - Project will be completed within a two-year timeframe, as directed by Vermont statute.

## **A. ERP Grant Application**

Application scoring is based on points for each section as indicated next to each question. Do not assume any prior knowledge of any previous work or other information about the proposed project. Please provide references where appropriate.

### **1. Relationship to Tactical Basin Planning (15 points):**

Briefly explain how the proposed project is consistent with an activity or action specified as a priority in a Tactical Basin Plan or other State-sanctioned plan (such as a River Corridor Plan or Stormwater Master Plan). Use direct references to plans where appropriate. Projects that are not directly referenced in Tactical Basin Plans as priority projects or involve improvements to stream crossings, hard stabilization of streambanks and shorelands, and land protection are eligible for funding but are lower priority. See the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document for more information.

### **2. Project Description (10 points):**

Provide a detailed description of your project. Include the location of the project, the water quality issues/threat being addressed, how the project addresses those issues, and why the work is necessary. Please indicate whether this proposal is a continuation of an existing project.

### **3. Targeting to Achieve Environmental Benefits (10 points):**

Briefly explain how the project targets identified critical pollution sources – sources that are causing impacts to a specific water body.

**4. Stewardship Commitment (5 points):**

Describe the project’s stewardship commitment (see Grant Application Eligibility Checklist above). Note that a stewardship commitment is required for all projects.

**5. Collaboration and Support (10 points):**

Explain the extent to which you have identified and secured local support for the project including commitments from municipalities and landowner(s). Include letters of commitment where appropriate as additional attachments.

**6. Measurable Outcomes Described Using Specific Performance Measures and Milestones (20 points):**

Using the [Performance Standards guidance document](#), select the top two performance measures and provide quantitative values as they relate to your proposed project.

Performance Measure 1:

Performance Measure 2:

**Milestones and Completion Date:**

Provide a table of anticipated task-based milestones, associated project deliverables, cost per unit (based on your performance measures – see [Performance Standards document](#) for reference) and payment per deliverable for your project. Please include as deliverables: a press release upon grant award and a final performance report at closeout.

Milestone	Deliverable	Cost/Unit	Payment
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
	<b>TOTAL</b>		

**7. Project Readiness (5 points):**

Is the applicant prepared to implement the specific milestones within six months of receiving the grant award?

Due to greater emphasis on the timeliness of expenditures, projects that can be completed within a one to two year time frame will be favored and no-cost time extensions will be discouraged. Can the applicant complete the project within that timeframe?

**Anticipated Completion Date:**

**8. Itemized Budget and Narrative (10 points):**

Provide the itemized budget of the project including estimated labor and material costs planned to complete the project. Any work to be contracted to a third party/project partner should be included in the “contractual” line item, while the “construction” line item should be used for contracted construction work. Please provide additional budget detail for any amounts in the contractual or construction lines as an attachment to this application. All match information provided in the itemized budget will be required to be documented at the close of the project if awarded.

**Itemized Budget:**

Category	Requested Funds	Match	Total Project Budget
Personnel			
Fringe Benefits			
Travel			
Equipment			
Supplies			
Contractual			
Construction			
Other			
Indirect			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

**Budget Narrative:**

Please describe all costs listed in the itemized budget (including all hourly rates, numbers of hours anticipated, etc.). This should include details about your match items and calculations as well.



**9. Project Match (10 points):**

Match is the incorporation of additional funding sources, cash donations, in-kind contributions, or other resources that substantially expand the project's scope and environmental benefits. Match can be: (a) in-kind, (b) cash, (c) a low interest loan from the VTPCSRF, (d) a low interest loan from CWSRF, or (e) other source. Please indicate the percentage range of match your project proposal includes. If awarded, all match information provided will require documentation at the close the project. [Calculate match by dividing the total matching funds by the total project costs (requested ERP funds plus the matching funds).]

**Choose your match level:**

**10. Past Performance (5 points):**

Briefly describe other projects targeting nonpoint source pollution problems that your organization performed within the last five years. Describe whether the project was successful, your history meeting reporting requirements, and how you documented success.