

2024 Aquatic Nuisance Control - Environmental Stewardship Program

Release Date: February 2, 2024

Proposals Due: March 4, 2024 5:00 pm

Meeting Minutes - Microsoft Teams Meeting

February 21, 2024 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Presented by Kim Jensen (VTDEC Lakes and Ponds Technical Service Provider) and Beth Touchette (Grant Management Specialist)

Meeting Minutes:

Kim Jensen introduced the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program team, Olin Reed, and Elizabeth (Lizzy) Gallagher, the new full-time AIS Environmental Scientist, and Beth Touchette, Grant Management Specialist. Kim welcomed the participants and provided a brief overview of the conference agenda items. Minutes will be posted to the AIS Program Grant webpage.

Aquatic Invasive Species Program Overview

The Aquatic Nuisance Control Grant in Aid Program is administered by the Aquatic Invasive Species Program, information about the program can be found on the [VTDEC AIS Program webpage](#). There is extensive information on the site including: laws and regulations, statutes, permits, early detection and spread prevention efforts, VT Public Access Greeter information, how to report an invasive species, methods of control, and the information for the [Aquatic Nuisance Control \(ANC\) Grant in Aid Program](#). Please see the Application Manual for any details not covered specifically during this meeting.

Last year, with the new hiring of Olin, the AIS Program has taken on the Aquatic Nuisance Control Permitting Program and therefore the team is tasked with all the responsibilities under the [Aquatic Nuisance Control Statute 10 V.S.A. § 1454](#). Olin is the Aquatic Nuisance Control permitting lead and coordinates the VT Public Access Greeter Program. He will be reaching out about Greeter Projects and please reach out to him about any questions for permit applications or renewals.

Elizabeth (Lizzy) Gallagher, hired in January 2024, will be working on AIS grant administration, AIS surveying, and cyanobacteria efforts throughout the state.

This year, available funding for the Grant in Aid program is estimated at \$850,000. Funding sources include the State General Fund, a portion of annual revenues from motorboat registration fees, and supplemental federal funds provided by the Army Corps of Engineers. We anticipate \$500,000 will go to Greeter Program Projects, \$250,000 will go to Management Projects, and \$100,000 will go to Education, Outreach, and Survey Projects. Based on previous years, we anticipate approximately 70 applicants.

It is important to note that due to the increase in funding this year, we anticipate the ability to fund projects in the Education, Outreach and Survey category but would like to remind all that this funding can only be used for AIS scientifically related projects. It cannot be used for other monitoring programs such as general water quality or cyanobacteria monitoring. Education, Outreach, or Survey Projects include those that assist the State in its early detection, monitoring and surveying projects, and will continue to receive funds as appropriate. Projects that might include an aquatic plant survey should not be proposed in this category but should be folded and included into a Greeter or Management Project.

As applications are received, a notification will be sent upon receipt of the application, please double check that you have received this notification. We are unable to process applications submitted after the proposal due date. Please email Kim Jensen for technical aspects, and Beth Touchette if you have financial questions.

Aquatic Nuisance Overview

An [Aquatic Nuisance](#) is defined in the Vermont State Statute. While most aquatic nuisance control programs are non-native invasive species, some projects while rare, may be for an aggressive native species. Native species management projects usually score very low because these types of projects are ranked as a low priority of the state. The priority is to address the invasive species causing ecological, recreational, and economic harm.

Eligibility

Municipalities or agencies of the state are eligible. Applicants are strongly suggested to apply through Regional Partners. No private ponds or private applicants are accepted. As in the past year, there will be only one payment instead of two, unless applicants go through a Regional Partner. Only Regional Partners will get split funding (40% in July/August, and 60% upon approval of the final report.)

Funding Priorities and Criteria

First Priority: Projects designed to manage new introductions of aquatic nuisances.

Second Priority: Projects that prevent or control the spread (Ex. Greeter Programs, with first year greeter programs receiving high priority)

Third Priority: Maintenance/management projects (Ex. handpulling, bottom barriers, mechanical harvesting, herbicide projects)

Additional priorities and criteria include whether there is local interest and support, public access and recreational interests, whether there is high probability of achieving the goal, and how necessary the project is at reducing the threat of spread of the invasive species. Developmental programs get priority over long-term maintenance programs. If all the criteria are met, then an award will likely be granted.

Application Proposals and Reporting

The applications are fillable forms, and we find it is best to use Adobe Acrobat to complete the application, along with avoiding mac-based products. The application fillable forms do limit the number of words that can be included in descriptions, which some find challenging. It's requested that applicants be concise with descriptions using bullet points if necessary, so that the Grant Management Team can read the applications quickly and thoroughly.

Project Category Types

[Greeter Projects](#): Supports hiring public access greeters at access areas. These projects prevent the spread of invasive species through education, and equipment inspections designed to catch invasive species "hitching a ride" from one waterbody to another. Historically, these projects are provided 35%-40% of the total project cost. This year we hope to fund up to 75% of the total project costs (dependent on the number of applications received).

Aquatic Invasive Plant Surveys (Point Intercept Surveys) that are completed by accredited contractors should be included in this category. Funding for annual plant surveys is not a feasible request. It would be best to develop a Vermont Invasive Patroller Program for annual surveys, or to request funding after three-to-five years.

VTDEC loaner iPads are available for applicants, given the completion of the [Temporary Equipment Use Request Form](#). If applicants would rather purchase their own iPad, they can include it in their grant proposal.

Be sure to use the official access area name (if it is at a Vermont Fish and Wildlife Fishing Access Area) when filling out the Greeter Project Sheet. In the Project Budget Sheet, total Greeter hours include only hired staff and should be noted in Column A. Volunteer Greeter hours should be noted in Column B; volunteer hours can be estimated and included in the budget. Reminder that volunteer hours are required to be recorded for final reports in the case of an audit (in a spreadsheet for example but are not required to be sent in with the final report).

[Education, Outreach, and Survey Project](#): This category is specifically for scientific studies, surveys, or early detection projects that assist the AIS Program to complete its mission. (Ex. Lake Champlain Committee's study looking at the impacts of Zebra mussels on native mussels.)

Website/aquatic plant survey only does not fall under this category unless it meets the scientific need. If you need these types of materials include it under the other project category. Typically, educational handouts or publications are not funded as the AIS Program provides these to Greeter Projects.

[Management Projects](#): This category is for early detection rapid response projects to eradicate a new infestation, to long term maintenance projects. Generally, high priority projects, those that are managing new introductions or new infestations, and those that manage public locations are provided a higher score, and therefore are awarded at a higher percentage than long-term management projects. Projects that have a high budget (and may score well) are capped at \$10,000.

Aquatic Invasive Plant Surveys (Point Intercept Surveys) or long-term management plans that are completed by accredited contractors will now be included in this category. A list of accredited contractors can be found on pages 9 & 10 from the [Resource Guide for Vermont Lake Managers](#), and by contacting Lake Associations who have made use of contractors.

General

Be sure to accurately describe the work that goes into the management project, rather than describing general information about the impacts of invasive species which is already known by the Grant Review Team. Rather speak to the details of the specific project. Also include any other local efforts (Question 3). All the questions refer to scoreable items that are considered by the Grant Review Team. These projects also are required to provide a map with information on the map about the locations included in the application that can be from the ANC Permit (please do not send a Permit Application or Report). A link to the Vermont ANR Atlas is [here](#) and orientation video is available on the website. *(A screen shot of a Google Map marked up is ok to submit)*. Greeter Projects do not need a map.

New Required Trainings this Year

With the anticipated increase in award funds that Greeter projects will receive, the AIS program is requiring that New Greeters, returning Greeters and Greeter coordinators take an additional state training offered by the Lakes and Ponds Program. This may include a Lakewise training, VIP/VIPA training, Cyanobacteria Volunteer Monitoring training, or Wakeboat training. This will be in addition to the 5-hour (new Greeter) or 3-hour (returning or refresher) trainings, totaling to approximately 10 hours of training. **You should include these training hours within the total Greeter hours anticipated.**

Invoices and Final Reports

All invoices and final reports are required to be submitted online (or through a Regional Partner) rather than via email in the [ANR Online System](#).

Completing the Application

In an effort to reduce paperwork, many documents are no longer necessary to submit for the application or will be for the reports. However, grantees are still required to maintain documentation for all aspects of the grant project for auditing purposes. One major category that may need attention by grantees is **documenting and all non-cash contributions** including logging volunteer hours, invoices for any “service” that was donated (i.e., dock rental space, harvester hours, etc.). The documents are not necessary to submit with final reports but are required to be maintained.

Grant in Aid Awards

ANC 2024 Maximum award amounts are configured based on ***proposed total project costs (cash and non-cash expenses)***, and therefore it’s required to complete the entire project as was proposed. If the final total project cost is reduced (by more than 10%), then the final award may be reduced. This procedure ensures grant distribution is more equitable overall. This year the maximum award amount will be granted, and then provided based on the final total project cost.

ANC 2024 Final Awards will be based on the final total project costs (cash and non-cash expenses). An award cannot be provided that covers non-cash expenses. For example, a maximum award amount is \$4,000 based on the proposed total project cost of \$10,000 that included \$5,000 in cash and \$5,000 in non-cash expenses. During the season, the total project costs cash expenses changed to include \$2,500 cash and \$7,500 non-cash expenses. Only \$2,500 of the award of the \$4,000 maximum award may be provided.

If applicants do more than proposed, unfortunately, they are unable to receive more than the maximum award amount.

When completing the Cover Page, it is very important applicants include all the requested information, **especially the project contact information**. Phone numbers and emails are particularly important to include as these are used for the email distribution list and to contact partners if necessary. Note, if applying through a Regional Partner, the Applicant would still be the town if the town provides any assistance in the form of insurance to the lake association. Ex. Lake Bomoseen folks receive insurance through the town of Hubbardton so they apply as Hubbardton. Please include the official name of the access to the waterbody if there is one.

The applicant should include any municipal zoning bylaws (check with towns) as these are scored higher. Special Use Permits (SUP) are required if the Greeter Project is at a VT Fish and Wildlife Fishing Access Area (and may be required for a management project), be sure to check that box. These boxes are in section nine of the Cover Page.

If an Aquatic Nuisance Control (ANC) Permit is required for Management Projects (bottom barriers, diver operation suction harvesting, mechanical harvesting, and herbicide) applicants should already have secured or applied for an Aquatic Nuisance Control Permit and are required to meet the permit conditions. Please include the permit specifics, this enables us to make sure that your permit is up to date. The ANC Permit contact is Olin Reed, olin.reed@vermont.gov.

For each project, applicants need to fill out a Project Sheet (different depending on if it's a Greeter Project, Education/Outreach/Survey Project, or Management Project) AND a project Budget Sheet for each project. Please do not combine multiple projects on the Budget Sheet. This allows the Grant Review Team to fairly compare the different types of projects.

Any direct cash expenses should go into Column A (Ex. Municipal staff, Greeters, Contractors being paid to do work). Equipment and supplies (Ex. masks for Greeters, a new shed) also belongs in Column A. Anything that's non-cash should go in column B (i.e., volunteers, donated services, donated materials etc.). Totals from Column A and Column B equals Column C and Total Project Cost, which will automatically display in the yellow cell. The maximum award amount cannot be more than the total cash expenses. The applicant should include if they're getting funds from any other sources. Cash donations do not negate the maximum award that may be provided (if reasonable) and is noted so that the Grant Management Team is aware of the capacity for the project to succeed. Please ensure that no duplicate expenses are listed if you have two Project Budget Sheets. The Total Project Cost is what the award is based on- please keep in mind these need to be realistic and reasonable costs.

Please use the suggested rates when configuring **volunteer** services rates and do not inflate rates based on prior professional experiences that are not utilized for the purposes of the project. For paid Greeters, it is encouraged to use a higher rate than the suggested volunteer service rates if possible. Ineligible expenses include things like hosting events, time taken to apply for the grant or a permit, food, fundraising, office supplies, etc. Total Fringe can include workers comp, social security, etc. Boating can be included in the mileage section. All donations and donated services are required to be documented in case of an audit.

All required materials are found on the AIS Program [Grant in Aid webpage](#). Completed applications are to be submitted (as a PDF) to beth.touchette@vermont.gov. Do not email them to Kim. Kim is happy to review invoices and final reports but is unable to review applications nor proposals. It's important to keep a thorough record of expenses that goes into

your project, in the case of an audit. Form 430 M is no longer required to submit with the application but can still be used to document volunteer work and would be a helpful document to review if the grantee is audited. Assurances/Attestation sheet needs to be included with application.

Meeting Questions:

For Management Projects that require an ANC Permit, Olin clarified that permittees are required to annually send a notification with a map of harvested locations, the application or map included in the ANC Grant in Aid Application will not suffice.

Ineligible expenses:

Fundraising events, working on fundraising events, working on the grant applications, hosting general meetings, office supplies that will not be directly used by Greeters.

Eligible expenses:

Chairs, security camera, battery pack, VIP tool pack, cleaning supplies for decontamination, webpages (if specifically related to the project, you CANNOT overhaul an entire lake association website using these funds).

What is the percentage or support for Greeter Project costs?

Up to 75%

What is the percentage or support for Management Project costs?

Management projects are scored and funded accordingly in the past between 10%-25%. The cap is \$10,000 even if this is less than 75%.

Are aquatic viewing tubes considered materials?

Yes, note under the Greeter Project Budget Project Sheet line item for supplies.

Differences between office supplies and greeter supplies? Can we buy pens?

If for the Greeters, then yes. If for the lake association no.

When notification is given, who does it go to?

It will only go to the Applicant. We don't have a way to send to sub-applicants.

Can the applicant be the person organizing the greeter program, but the town clerk or UTG be the fiscal agent?

The applicant does need to be an agent of the state or regional partner.

What are the effective dates for the grant the in-kind purposes?

Eligible project work can begin three months prior to the award notification and end when the final report is due November 30, 2024. January (2024) – November (2024).

Trouble with filling out info on the form. Suggestions?

Mac products are not compatible. Try to fill it in on a windows based computer if possible, also using Adobe Acrobat.

Can a contractor survey be included for a EWM project?

Yes, it can be considered.

When will the New Training Sessions be Posted?

The training sessions will be listed on the Greeter Program webpage once scheduled. These hours should be captured in your estimate for project costs.

Is servicing equipment an eligible expense?

Depending on timing, needs to be within the eligible timeline.

Can two launch sites be listed on one Greeter Project application?

Yes, in this case the two launches can be put onto the single application.

Where can we find survey or harvest contractors?

See [Managing Aquatic Invasive Species Guide](#) on website and reach out to other lake associations.

Will trainings be online or recorded?

In person and online but not recorded. (VIP, VIPA, Cyanobacteria, Wakeboat, etc. 10 hrs max training total estimated).

Why are the text boxes character limited?

Most of the text boxes are limited to 1200 characters so that applicants are concise in their information. If you need to include a separate sheet you can but this shouldn't be necessary.

ER FICA goes where in the Project Budget Sheet?

In Fringe Costs line item.

We pay greeter milage because they travel a far distance, how can we capture that cost?

Generally, not an acceptable line item, however we could allow it in this case.

For non-cash coordination expense, when does this start? If we are spending time hiring, moving greeter shack does this count?

Three months prior to award notification, so if hiring now that could be allowed.

Can we give a bonus for extra effort to a greeter?

Put it in your “other” category and we will consider it.

Where do we find Form 430 Invoice?

Will come with the grant notification once you receive it.

Are Subcontractor approval forms required?

No

How do you note differences between personnel rates of pay (returning vs new Greeters)?

Put this in the other category to show the different rate. OR you can put in the total amount in Column A without filling out the rate.

Do you still want total hours for Greeters in the application?

Yes, note in the application Greeter Project Sheet and the Project Budget Sheet.

Greeter safety: concerns about drug activity around the lake and greeter safety.

Send Olin and Kim emails.

Can you add lines to the Project Budget Sheet form?

No, try to capture everything in the line items or “other”.

Can we put the expense for a year end party for Greeters?

No, we can't pay for this unfortunately because it falls under an event.

Suggestions for attracting Greeter applicants?

Social media, colleges, general stores, etc. Olin will also be reaching out with info for HireAbility program.

Who signs the Attestations page?

The fiscal agent dealing with the funds.

Application submittal, do these get sent as a pdf?

Correct. These will all go to Beth.

iPad Model or other Survey 123 Questions:

Contact Olin for details on model, gps/wifi not needed at the access area.

Diver surveys an eligible cost?

Yes, as long as they are accredited. Do this through the Greeter or Management Projects rather than Survey, Education and Outreach project type.

Can VIP Survey time be included in non-cash expenditures?

VIP surveys must be submitted to the AIS Program if they are to be used as non-cash.

Is the cost of ANC Permit application for ProcellaCOR eligible?

The permit application cost nor developing an application are eligible items.

Wakeboat Information:

Wakeboat Information will be included in the Greeter Program training and likely an additional training will be developed to include more info.

Mileage Reimbursement:

We can reimburse for mileage to/from required trainings.

Tracking Greeters Volunteers:

You need to track and record Greeter volunteer, their names, dates, and times but we do not need it submitted with the application nor the final report. If audited, it is required to have this information within INTERNAL documents.

Can we update a lake association website?

You can update the webpage having to do with the AIS Projects, but not the entire lake association site.

If we haven't used VIP submitted hours in the past, can we start?

Yes, but you must submit current hours and the VIP Surveys.

Do we have a list of approved decontamination sites that we can give to boat owners?

We will update the aquatic invasive species map to show these sites.

What should be included in funds from other sources?

Municipal, lake associations donations, any non-state sources. \$150,000 project, you might be getting \$100,000 from your membership costs etc.

Meeting adjourned at 11:51 am.