

Springs Restoration Funding - Guidelines



PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The state of Florida recognizes the importance of freshwater springs and has established a long-term funding source for the restoration, recovery, protection, and management of these unique natural resources. Since 2013, more than \$72 million has been awarded for springs restoration projects in northwest Florida. In cooperation with local governments, agricultural producers, landowners and stakeholders, this funding has leveraged more than \$105 million invested in communities across northwest Florida.

STATE AND DISTRICT PRIORITIES

Per Chapter 373, Water Resources, Florida Statutes (F.S.), protecting and improving the quality and quantity of water resources and natural systems across northwest Florida are among the core missions of the District: www.nwfwater.com/about/mission.

Florida is estimated to contain more than 1,000 springs, and the state has a long history of acknowledging the importance of these systems to our environment, as well as the social and recreational benefits springs provide for our communities. In recent years, substantial investments have been made to address growing water quality and water quantity issues with many Florida springs and to preserve less impacted springs. In 2016, the Florida Legislature enacted the [Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act](#), giving special status and protection to first magnitude springs and other springs of significance. The legislature also outlined the connection between healthy springs and healthy groundwater, the diverse functions of spring aquatic ecosystems, and the “immeasurable natural, recreational, economic and inherent value” of springs.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Projects eligible for springs restoration funding are limited to projects that protect the quality and quantity of water that flow from springs. Funding may be awarded to **Eligible Applicants** for the following types of projects:

- Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Land acquisition
- Stormwater treatment
- Septic-to-Central Sewer
- Advanced Septic Systems
- Other water quality or water quantity projects

Additional project requirements include:

- Projects that can be accomplished within 24-36 months or less.
- For capital projects: facilities that will be constructed, owned, operated, and maintained by the cooperator in accordance with state, federal, and local regulations.

- Projects that have a minimum of 50 percent match in total funds expended as part of the project. Eligible match funding includes local sources, in-kind contributions, legislative funding, companion projects or other funding sources specific to the project. Previous springs restoration funding or match claimed toward previous spring funding may not count toward these requirements. Rural or financially disadvantaged small communities as defined in sections [288.0656](#) and [403.1838](#), F.S., can request a reduction or waiver of match in their applications. See ***Evaluation Criteria*** for more information.

Eligible projects may encompass multiple segments or phases. Please describe any multi-phased projects in the appropriate section of the application form. The District may work with applicants and award partial funding for one or more segments or phases.

Exclusions: funding is only available to ***Eligible Applicants*** for springs projects within the District's 16-county region, which includes the western portion of Jefferson County. Feasibility studies, data collection, or environmental reviews are not eligible for funding.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include local governments, public utilities, registered nonprofit utilities, landowners, agricultural producers, and nonprofits.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A notice of funding availability is announced through email, advertisement on the District's website (www.nwfwater.com), and in the Florida Administrative Register (www.flrules.org). Interested parties may obtain the application form from the District's website or by calling or emailing the District. Applicants with multi-phase projects are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the District prior to submitting their applications. Project applications must be submitted to the District on or before the due date as noted in in the ***Funding Cycle Schedule***.

WAYS TO SUBMIT OR APPLY

Submittals may be sent by email or mail. It is recommended that applications be sent with read receipt enabled (if submitted via email) or with return receipt required (if sent by mail). Please note the maximum electronic mail size that can be received is 15 MB. If sending a submittal approaching this size, it is recommended that successful transmission and receipt be separately verified. Email to: grants@nwfwater.com or by mail to:

Northwest Florida Water Management District
Attention: FY 2020-2021 Springs Funding
81 Water Management Drive, Havana, FL 32333

All applications for funding must be received on or before the due date noted in the ***Funding Cycle Schedule***.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on the criteria noted below.

Criterion	Explanation and Guidelines
1. Statewide and District Priorities	Whether the proposed project: (1) will improve water quality or water quantity of northwest Florida springs; (2) is within a Basin Management Action Plan area, Surface Water Management and Improvement (SWIM) or other water quality plan; (3) is a project in a District Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP) and/or contributes to the sustainability of regional water supplies; (4) will implement statutory priorities in water conservation, reuse of reclaimed water or other alternative water supply; and (5) will the project provide future recharge potential, recreation, or land management opportunities.
2. Projected environmental and/or socio-economic outcome, results, benefits	(1) The projected outcomes, results, or benefits appear to be a substantial and significant level of improvement over existing conditions; (2) The probability or likelihood, given stated capacity and abilities, the proposed project will achieve the stated outcomes, results, and benefits; (3) Consideration of anticipated costs/benefits.
3. Funding need and resource strategies	(1) Whether the project is part of a capital improvement plan or budget; (2) The degree to which the project could be funded by other revenue sources; (3) The degree to which applicant has considered and/or leveraged additional funding sources to complete the project; (4) Community need and capacity appropriately balanced with local match* (\$ and/or in-kind), as applicable; (5) Applicant has developed, or has taken steps to develop, necessary fiscal resources for long-term operation and maintenance upon project completion.
4. Applicant capacity, abilities, and readiness for implementation	Applicant has: (1) qualifications and capacity to implement and complete the proposed project; (2) anticipated potential obstacles or challenges, and has a plan or strategies to overcome; (3) committed to complete project within 24-36 months or less; (4) strategies in place for long-term operation and maintenance upon project completion; (5) reviewed regulatory or compliance questions or issues; and (6) provided details about current project status and quantity of past funding awards to the applicant (where applicable).

*Economically distressed county or community is defined in section [288.0656](#), F.S., under the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI). An economically distressed, or "financially disadvantaged small community" is also defined in section [403.1838\(2\)](#), F.S. For more information, visit www.floridajobs.org/business-growth-and-partnerships/rural-and-economic-development-initiative/rural-definition/rural-communities or call (850) 717-8520.

FUNDING CYCLE SCHEDULE

Event	Date
Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Posted	January 13, 2020
District meets with project applicants (if requested)	January –March 2020
Application Due Date*	March 13, 2020
Evaluation of project applications and funding recommendations	March-April 2020
Staff funding recommendations presented to the District Governing Board for approval	April 2020
Projects evaluated by DEP	May-July 2020
Notice of funding status to applicants/development of contracts	September 2020

*Funding applications received via email must be received no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST). Documents sent hard copy in the mail must be post-dated on or before the due date.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Springs restoration is provided by the Florida Legislature and Governor via the General Appropriations Act. DEP facilitates funding to the water management districts. All funding for this program is subject to the availability of funds in the state's FY 2020-2021 adopted budget, the District's Governing Board approval of the projects and the District FY 2020-2021 Budget, as well as project approval by DEP.

Note that due to the multi-year implementation requirements of many projects, it is recommended that larger projects be developed in phases that can achieve tangible results while also utilizing cost efficiencies.

PROJECT SELECTION

Upon receipt of project applications, District staff will review for eligibility and conduct an evaluation of each project based on the ***Evaluation Criteria***. Staff will then make recommendations to the Governing Board for final selection. Recommendations may include partial funding of specific segments of project submittals.

Note that communications between District staff and an applicant about a particular project do not imply funding for that project. No funding decisions are final until 1) approved by the District Governing Board and 2) approved by DEP.

NOTIFICATION OF AWARDS

All applicants will be notified of final project funding decisions and applicants will be notified according to the ***Funding Cycle Schedule***. A list of funded projects and a location map of awarded projects will also be posted on the District's website.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information or assistance, please contact:

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