

Springs Restoration Funding - Guidelines



PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Florida is estimated to contain more than 1,000 freshwater springs. In 2016, the Florida Legislature enacted the [Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act](#), giving special status and protection to first magnitude and other springs of significance, and established a long-term funding source for the restoration, recovery, protection, and management of these unique and valuable natural resources. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) partners with water management districts to identify springs projects that will help improve water quality, increase water flow, and protect habitat in these extraordinary and iconic spring systems.

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. Chapter 373 also underpins the Governor's 2019 Executive Order and [Protecting Florida Together](#) initiative. In addition to springs restoration, Protecting Florida Together [water protection grant programs](#) are available for alternative water supply, innovative technologies, coastal partnerships and resilient coastlines, and reducing nonpoint source pollution and other water quality projects.

Since 2013, a total of \$81.6 million averaging \$10.2 million per year has been awarded for springs restoration projects in northwest Florida. In cooperation with local governments, agricultural producers, landowners and other stakeholders, this funding has leveraged more than \$33 million in local match resulting in \$114.7 million invested in communities and springs for land acquisitions and capital projects across northwest Florida. The District supports and complements these efforts with a minimum flows and minimum levels (MFLs) program, Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) plans, and collaborates with DEP and other partners on Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs).

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND REQUIREMENTS

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

- Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Water Conservation
- Hydrologic Restoration
- Land Acquisition
- Reuse
- Wastewater Collection and Treatment, such as:
 - Septic-to-Central Sewer
 - Advanced Septic Systems
- Stormwater
- Other water quality or water quantity projects

The list above is not intended to be exhaustive. Within each type may be multiple sub-types.

Feasibility studies, data collection, or environmental reviews are not eligible for funding.

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.
- Quantification of project benefits, e.g., nutrients reduced (lbs./yr.), recharge potential (MGD), or the amount of water to be made available, offset, and/or saved in average flow of gallons per day (gpd) or million gallons per day (mgd).
- Financially matched a minimum of 100 percent of the state funding provided as set forth in section 373.707, F.S.

Eligible match funding includes local sources, in-kind contributions, and companion projects. Previous funding or match claimed toward a previous project 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 ***Quick Match Guide*** for more information.

Eligible projects may encompass multiple segments or phases. Multi-phased projects must be described in the application form with phases that can achieve tangible results and specific deliverables by the end of each phase. Also, a Multi-Year Plan should be submitted. The District may work with applicants and award partial funding for one or more segments or phases.

See ***Quick Multi-Year Guide*** for more information.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants and grant recipients are governmental entities as described in section 287.012(14), F.S., and public and nonprofit water supply and wastewater utilities within the District's 16-county region. See ***General Conditions for Receiving Funds*** for more information.

Additionally, the District may sponsor landowners for land acquisition projects and agricultural producers to implement springs restoration projects. See the [Jackson Blue Spring Grant Funding Programs](#) webpage or contact the District for more information.

SPRINGS AND OTHER WATER RESOURCES INFORMATION

Information to assist in completing applications is provided on the District's and on DEP's websites. Detailed [guidance to water management districts](#) submitting requests for funding springs projects is in the [DEP Springs Funding Guidance](#) document. Applicants may refer to Guidance appendices for help in estimating project benefits, e.g., nitrogen load reductions, quantity of water to be made available, land acreage, and recharge potential.

Additional links are below. See also **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** and **Quick Reference Guides** and consult with District staff if further information or assistance is needed.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) <https://floridadep.gov/>:

[Springs](#) and [Springs Restoration Funding](#)

DEP [Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration](#):

- [Total Maximum Daily Loads](#)
- [Basin Management Action Plans](#)
- [Reasonable Assurance Plans](#)
- [Water Quality Assessments, TMDLs, and BMAPs](#) interactive map

Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) <https://www.nfwfwater.com/>:

[Springs](#) and [Restoration and Protection Funding](#)

NFWFMD [Water Resources](#):

- [Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels](#)
- [Agriculture](#)
- [Surface Water Improvement and Management](#)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

Evaluation Criteria	Explanation and Guidelines – The Proposed Project/Applicant:
1. State and District Priorities	(1) Will benefit springs with a BMAP, particularly if located in a Priority Focus Areas; (2) Will benefit springs with adopted MFLs, particularly those that are in recovery or prevention; (3) Addresses specific water quality issues as noted in a Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP) or Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL); (4) Implements other District plans or priorities, such as a SWIM Plan.
2. Projected water quality, quantity, and other outcomes, results, benefits	(1) Nutrient (nitrogen, sediment) reductions or measurable improvements in water quality; (2) Measurable water savings or increases in water quantity. For Land Acquisition Projects: (1) Proximity to spring Priority Focus Area or groundwater contribution area; (2) Location in a BMAP area or other identified priority areas; (3) Recharge potential; (4) Current land use; (5) Manageability; (6) Acres acquired.
3. Cost sharing and leveraging, and resource strategies	(1) Demonstrates cost effectiveness, such as capital cost per pound of nutrient reductions or cost per acres; (2) Project is part of a local sponsors' long-term strategy to address water quality or water supply issues; (3) Is part of a local capital improvement plan or budget; (4) The degree to which applicant has leveraged additional funding sources to complete the project.
4. Applicant capacity, local commitment, past performance, and readiness for implementation	(1) Is ready to proceed and can be implemented in a timely manner; (2) Has demonstrated local commitment to the project, e.g., match funding and public support; (3) Is committed to complete project within 24-36 months or less; (4) If previous DEP/District grant recipient, projects and project activities have been on schedule and on budget; (5) Has anticipated potential obstacles or challenges and has a plan or strategies in place to overcome them.

ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED / FINANCIALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

An 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.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A notice of funding availability is announced through email, 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 call or virtual meeting with the District prior to submitting their applications. Project applications must be submitted on or before the due date as noted in in the **Funding Cycle Schedule**.

Multi-Year Projects. Multi-year projects are not required to complete and re-submit an application form each year, however, because past performance is a factor in project evaluations and selections, regular progress reports demonstrating all tasks and deliverables on schedule and on budget is essential. Depending on the size and scope of the project, the District may have other questions or deliverable requirements if funding opportunities continue and when assembling and submitting project recommendations to DEP annually in May.

FUNDING CYCLE SCHEDULE

Activities or Event	Date(s)
Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Posted	December 8, 2020
District communications with project applicants (if requested)	Between NOFA and Application Due Date
Application Due Date*	February 23, 2021
Evaluation of project applications	February-March 2021
List of projects and funding recommendations presented to the District Governing Board for approval	April 2021
Projects evaluated by DEP	Summer 2021
Notice of funding status to applicants	Fall 2021

**Funding applications received via email must be received no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Time (ET).*

TO SUBMIT OR APPLY

Applications with supporting materials shall be transmitted by email to: grants@nwfwater.com. It is recommended that applications be sent with read receipt enabled. 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. All applications for funding must be received on or before the due date noted in the **Funding Cycle Schedule**.

PROJECT SELECTION AND AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

The District will review all applications for basic minimum requirements, conduct initial screenings, then evaluate and short-list projects according to the ***Application Guidelines, Evaluation Criteria***. Final selections and formal recommendations will be presented to the District's Governing Board for approval, and upon approval, the recommended projects will be forwarded to DEP in May 2021 for funding consideration. Recommendations may include partial funding of specific segments of project submittals.

Funding for springs restoration is provided by the Florida Legislature and Governor via General Appropriations. DEP facilitates funding to the water management districts.

Note that communication between District staff and an applicant about a particular project does not imply funding for that project. No funding decisions are final until 1) approved by the District Governing Board, 2) approved by DEP, and 3) projects are approved in state and District FY 2021-2022 Adopted Budgets.

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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