



The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

What Is the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program?

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (Coastal Grants Program) was established by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Act) of 1990. Under this program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides matching grants for acquisition, restoration, management or enhancement of coastal wetlands.

Typically, between \$18 million and \$21 million in grants are awarded annually through a nationwide competitive process. Funding for the program comes from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels.

Who Can Apply for Grants?

Coastal States which border the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, Pacific and Great Lakes are eligible. The only exception is the State of Louisiana, which has its own coastal wetlands program under the Act. Also eligible are the Trust Territories and Commonwealths of the United States.

How Does Cost-Sharing Work?

States provide 50 percent of the total costs of the project. If the State has established and maintains a special fund for acquiring coastal wetlands, other natural areas or open spaces, the Federal share can be increased to 75 percent. Territories and Commonwealths are not required to provide a cost-share except for Puerto Rico. Federal grants awarded under the Coastal Grants Program cannot exceed \$1 million for an individual project.

How Do States Apply?

Eligible State agencies should submit a complete grant proposal by the deadline specified in the annual announcement. To be eligible, proposals must be substantial and must address the ranking criteria contained in the guidance, Title 50 of the Code of Regulations, Part 84.32. Applicants are encouraged to consult



Since 1990, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working with coastal States to acquire, restore, manage or enhance coastal wetlands through a matching grant program. To date, over \$202 million have been awarded to 26 coastal States and 1 U.S. Territory, and more than 246,000 acres of coastal wetlands have, or will be acquired, protected or restored.

Why Protect Coastal Wetlands?

Coastal wetlands are valuable resources. They protect against flooding, help maintain water quality, and provide vital habitat for wildlife. Coastal environments are important economically, generating billions of dollars annually through such industries as tourism and commercial fisheries.

Why Are Coastal Wetlands in Trouble?

Hundreds of acres of coastal wetlands have already been lost, and additional acres have been degraded by pollution. The concentration of the U.S. population along the coast is a continuing source of development pressure. Threats to coastal resources include agricultural and urban run-off, residential and commercial development, shoreline modification, invasive species, oil spills, municipal waste disposal, and over-harvesting of fish and shell fish.



Photo by USFWS

with the Regional Program Coordinators in developing their proposals. Photo by USFWS

How Are Projects Selected?

The Service's role has been to review, rank, and select projects based on their national importance and to assist States in the planning and proposal process. Due to limited funding and considerable demand, projects are selected on a competitive basis. The Act calls for projects to be given priority if they are:

- Consistent with the criteria and considerations outlined in the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan.
- Located in States with dedicated funding for programs to acquire coastal wetlands, natural areas and open spaces.
- Located in maritime forests on coastal barrier islands.

Additional ranking factors that have been developed by the Service include giving credit to projects that benefit threatened and endangered species, encourage cooperative efforts, and support other ongoing projects.

What is Being Accomplished?

The Coastal Grants Program is an effective approach that assists States to acquire, restore, manage, and enhance their coastal wetland resources. The program's emphasis on encouraging partnerships, supporting watershed planning and leveraging on-going projects ensures that the use of limited funds produces in maximum benefits. Three examples of funded projects illustrate its accomplishments (see box below). The lasting results of the program will be the protection and restoration of thousands of acres of coastal wetland ecosystems nationwide. Hundreds of species of fish and wildlife and resource-based industries, like tourism and commercial fisheries, will directly benefit.



"Seasonally flooded Coquille Valley Wetlands near Bandon Oregon." Credit: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Examples of Funded Projects

Sisters of Notre Dame Conservation Easement – The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, partnering with the Essex County Greenbelt Association, the Great Marsh Land Protection Team, and the Town of Ipswich were awarded a \$1 million grant to permanently protect approximately 78.05 acres of coastal salt marsh, freshwater marsh and ponds, and associated upland buffer. The Great Marsh is the largest salt marsh in New England covering over 25,000 acres. The project area is located at the mouth of Eagle Hill River, which drains into Plum Island Sound and Ipswich Bay. It is part of a 7,000-acre conservation corridor that includes Parker River NWR four miles to the north. The barrier beaches of the Great Marsh support large breeding populations of water birds, including the Federally-threatened Piping plovers. The property also lies within the USFWS's Atlantic Coast Joint Venture North Shore Waterfowl Focus Area and the Massachusetts Bays Program National Estuary Program.

Brown's Island Project – The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, along with the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust were awarded a \$387,400 grant to acquire a 45-acre parcel on Brown's Island located near Cape Lookout National Seashore in Cataret County, North Carolina. Brown's Island is a 600-acre undeveloped island. The parcel contains a diversity of wildlife habitats including 31.5 acres of salt and brackish marsh, pocosin, and 13.5 acres of maritime live oak and longleaf pine forest. The project would protect habitat for eight Federally listed species, 10 State listed species, 18 coastal dependent and/or migratory bird species, and conserve four priority habitat types: forested wetlands, estuarine emergent wetlands, longleaf pine habitat, and maritime forest. The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program considers the island to be a state significant natural heritage area. The island has been under threat of development in recent years and the applicants hope that the acquisition will be a catalyst for additional conservation efforts.

Riverside Ranch Restoration Project - The California Coastal Conservancy was awarded a \$1 million grant to restore the natural ecosystem functions of the Salt River Delta in the Eel River estuary. Located just south of Humboldt Bay, the Eel River estuary is the second largest estuary in California. The 446-acre Riverside Ranch sits at the confluence of the Salt and Eel Rivers was acquired with a 2007 National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant. The Salt River watershed has been degraded by a century of diking and gating. This project will restore and enhance a total of 334 acres of estuarine tidal marsh, riparian forest, and other estuarine habitats, and 112 acres of associated uplands for numerous Federal and State listed and other wetland-dependent fish and wildlife species. It will restore a functional tidal ecosystem, restore habitat for special status species, and reduce flooding by restoring tidal prism, sediment transport, and floodplain connectivity. The project area will be managed by the California Department of Fish and Game as part of the Eel River Wildlife Area.

For more information about the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, contact the Division of Habitat and Resource Conservation, Branch of Habitat Restoration at (703/358 2236) or the Division of Federal Assistance (703/358 1748), or visit us on the Internet at: http://www.ecos.fws.gov/coastal/coastal_grants/

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
800/344 Wild
<http://www.fws.gov>

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