

FAQs

2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity for NAWCA Projects in Canada

This FAQ document is a living document that will be updated as additional questions are received to ensure all applicants have access to the same information. New updates will be posted to the program website frequently; therefore, we recommend checking the website for updates on a weekly basis.

1. What is the Grant Cycle for NAWCA Projects in Canada?

The NAWCA grant cycle for projects in Canada typically opens once each year, although the timing may vary. Each new cycle is announced through a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on grants.gov, which signals that applications may be submitted for review, scoring and selection.

2. How will the 2026 grant announcement and application process work?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced the new request for proposals through a NOFO on grants.gov. The NOFO contains all necessary information, including deadlines, application instructions, required application format / information, eligibility criteria, grant administration standards, etc.). USFWS will also post information and relevant updates on the program website.

Applicants must submit a complete application package to USFWS through the GrantSolutions website (grantsolutions.com) by the deadline listed in the NOFO.

3. What does an open and competitive process mean?

An open and competitive process ensures a fair, transparent, and publicly accessible opportunity for all eligible applicants that seek federal grant funding. This means the funding opportunity must be available to anyone who qualifies and must clearly state eligibility criteria, evaluation factors, deadlines, and required documentation. All applicants must be treated equally, and the selection process must be transparent.

Under this process, each eligible application submitted to USFWS is evaluated individually by the North American Wetland Conservation Act Council (Council) through Council Staff during the merit review process. Applicants do not need to coordinate their requested amounts with one another or any agency or organization to align them with the anticipated budget for the grant cycle. Instead, each applicant can independently develop and submit proposals requesting the level of funding needed to carry out their proposed scope of work.

4. How are projects reviewed, scored, and selected?

After the application deadline, USFWS reviews each submission to determine eligibility, following U.S. federal grant review requirements. Applicants should ensure their proposals include sufficient detail on activities, costs, timelines, and other key information so USFWS can complete an accurate eligibility review. Due to the compressed eligibility review period this year, applicants may have an opportunity to make revisions if requested, but it may be brief.

Eligible applications are reviewed by the North American Wetland Conservation Council (Council) for the merit review process. The North American Wetland Conservation Act established the Council to review proposals and make recommendations to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The Council uses scoring criteria published in the NOFO to evaluate and rank proposals. Although the Council may consider external input (such as Joint Ventures for U.S. projects or the Mexican government for projects in Mexico), it has not yet decided how such input will factor into the merit review process for Canadian applications. Once this is determined, details will be included in future NOFOs and will apply to those grant cycles.

5. Will proposals be pre-screened by organizations or partners in Canada?

No. The Council as described above was established under the Act and is the only body responsible for reviewing proposals and providing recommendations to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

6. Can proposal requests be scalable or adjusted later based on adjustments to the NAWCA budget in Canada?

No. Applications should request the amount of funding and time needed to meet the proposed objectives. Grant requests cannot be increased later, even if additional funds become available. Historically, any unallocated funds are retained by the program for the Council to consider in future grant cycles.

7. Where should applicants go when they have questions about eligibility, the standards, the deadline, or the application requirements?

Applicants should contact NAWCA program staff at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for questions related to eligibility, allowable activities, application requirements, deadlines, or federal regulations. Questions can be sent to dbhc@fws.gov or directly to the Program Coordinator at Callie_McMunigal@fws.gov.

USFWS is also offering one-on-one calls with interested applicants to discuss eligibility or application requirements. However, due to merit review and conflict of interest rules, USFWS NAWCA staff and members of the merit review process can only provide general

guidance to an applicant but cannot directly provide proposal specific guidance to help write a proposal or gain a competitive advantage.

8. Is there a cap or limit on the amount of funds that can be requested through a proposal?

No, per the NOFO, there is not a cap in the 2026 grant cycle. Applicants can ask for as little and as much as they need, as long as the minimum grant to match ratio (1:1) is met, with at least 50% of the match coming from U.S. sources. Applicants must be ready to begin work under proposals selected for funding upon the start date in the notice of award for the grant agreement.

9. Can organizations submit more than one proposal?

Yes, organizations may submit multiple applications within the same NAWCA funding cycle. In many cases it is beneficial to design proposals so that each one focuses on a set of targeted activities that result in long-term habitat conservation. Proposals that are limited to a specific geography may be easier to manage than those spanning multiple provinces and field offices. Submitting several smaller proposals may also reduce the risk of an all-or-nothing funding decision. As a result, some organizations may determine that multiple smaller, well-focused proposals are preferable to a single larger one.

10. Is my proposal submission going to be shared with others?

Proposals are shared with individuals involved in the merit review process, including members of the Council and the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. Some information will also be available in public files, including the project database on the NAWCA website.

Basic information such as the recipient's name, location, grant number, grant program, total award amount, and project abstract may appear on public government sites like grantsolutions.gov and usaspending.gov.

11. Will our previous grant performance affect the selection of our new grant proposal(s)?

Yes, it may. Federal agencies must review the applicant's responsibility and qualification records in SAM.gov before making an award. This is completed as part of a risk assessment that evaluates the organization's financial stability, management systems and standards, history of performance, audit reports and findings, and the ability to effectively implement the requirements. The assessment also includes elements such as the quality of the application, award amount, risk associated with the program, and fraud risks.

12. If my proposal was not selected in a previous year, can I re-submit it?

Yes, applicants may resubmit proposals that were not funded in prior years. However, you should carefully review the current NOFO and application instructions and update your proposal as needed to ensure it meets any new or revised requirements.

13. Can I submit a proposal under the 2026 cycle if I have an open and active NAWCA grant?

Yes. Recipients can have more than one active grant at a time. However, organizations should carefully consider their internal capacity before applying for or managing multiple awards. Recipients must be prepared to begin activities for new grants upon the issuance of the notice of award. As noted above, an organization's performance on existing grants may influence future funding decisions.

14. When will I know if my project is selected for funding?

USFWS will notify applicants of their status after proposals are reviewed by Council and after projects are approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. Depending on the federal budget and other required reviews, additional approvals may still be necessary. Applicants should use caution and avoid making commitments until the grant is officially released in GrantSolutions through a Notice of Award.

15. What systems must we be registered in to apply for a federal grant?

All applicants must have active accounts with sam.gov and grantsolutions.gov. Please see the application instructions and grant administration standards for more information.

16. Do match letters have to be provided by the application deadline?

Yes, all components of the application package, including match letters, must be submitted to USFWS by the application deadline. See the application instructions for additional information.

17. What resources are available to assist applicants with the bird numbers in TAQ 1 & 2?

The Canadian Wildlife Service is developing tools to help applicants. Once written guidance is available, we will send it out to all potential applicants and include it on our website.

Applicants may also reach out to the Joint Venture Coordinators for assistance with the tools.

Website: <https://mbjv.org/who-we-are/directory/>

PBJV CIJV – Andrew Huang - andrew.huang@ec.gc.ca

PHJV – Mara Erickson - mara.erickson@ec.gc.ca

EHJV – Laura King – laura.king@ec.gc.ca

18. Will match properties be scored within the proposals and if so, how will their score influence the overall proposal score?

The federal grant award consists of activities funded with grant and match. Under awards, match activities are treated the same as grant activities. As a result, the merit review process evaluates the total cumulative acres proposed to be accomplished through the award (grant and match).

19. Does it make a difference to the scoring of proposals depending on whether the match property is within a significant wetland area, or which wetland types are present within the match property (if any), etc.? Do match properties need to be described with the same types of details as that of a NAWCA funded project?

Yes, because match and grant funded work is treated the same under an award, it does make a difference. All award activities (funded with grant or match) must be included in the proposal and adequately described. All activities will be considered during the merit review process. Regardless of whether the activity is funded by grant or match, benefits to higher quality wetland types or areas result in a higher score. Proposals should explain the wetland types, qualities and proposed benefits. Council tends to view the creation or improvement of large complexes of habitat favorably. For additional information on scoring, see scoring criteria in the application instructions.

20. What is the best strategy for including project areas (tracts) that are unknown at the time the proposal is being written?

While specific tracts may not be known, applicants should provide as much information as possible in proposals. The work plan allows applicants some flexibility as to how to break out proposed activities – by tract or focus areas within a project boundary. If using focus areas / priority areas, be as accurate as you can with the process for how tracts will be selected, what the minimum proposed benefits will be, what habitat types will be benefited, how long will the benefits last, proposed NAWCA interests, etc. The proposal (including the work plan objectives and TAQ tables) become part of the award and NAWCA grant administrators will use this information during grant implementation to ensure successful delivery of the project. When answering the TAQ questions, be as accurate as possible and avoid using ranges as the lowest number of a range will be the number used in merit review scoring. Explanations of how the numbers were determined are helpful.

21. Would overinflating the numbers hurt my score?

Yes, overinflating the numbers can lower your score. Be as accurate as possible with proposal benefit estimates in the TAQs. Include explanation of numbers reported in TAQs.

22. Do rebuilds have to fulfill the entire duration of the original agreement? Is it a management cost?

Yes, the recipient must ensure that the benefits of NAWCA projects are maintained for the duration specified in the original agreement. Rebuilds are not eligible as a management cost

under the award; if a rebuild is needed prior to reaching its lifespan recipients must cover the costs of this action without the support of NAWCA grant or match funds.

23. Is there some sort of life span calculator for rebuilds?

No, the determination of the expected lifespan is left to the discretion of applicants. Some applicants decide to be more conservative and others more ambitious with the thresholds for life expectancy. Applicants must ensure the benefits last for whatever duration is committed to NAWCA. If benefits do not last that long, applicants may owe an attributable share to the program.

24. Can perpetuity be claimed for restoration, enhancement or management activities?

The NAWCA program does not recognize enhancement, restoration or management as perpetual in nature. Boxes for restoration, enhancement, and management activities are greyed out in the TAQ tables for this reason. The TAQ's require applicants to categorize the actions into the following duration bins - ten years or less, 11-25 years, or 26-99 years. However, work plans should be as specific as possible. If the work plan proposes a more specific threshold for any activity, that number sets the minimum duration required.

25. How do you pick a project area and how much flexibility does an applicant have during implementation if the award is selected and awarded?

Picking the project area is at the discretion of the applicant. However, the geographic and financial scale of the project area should support effective and successful implementation and long-term management. Some geographies might be too broad to allow for accurate scoring because there are too many different types of landscapes. If specific tracts are not known at the time of application, see question 20.

The work plan section offers flexibility for applicants to define multiple priority areas within the larger project area. Applicants should break out proposed activities as much as possible. Also, make sure that all grant and match activities fall within the defined project area and priority areas. Approved proposals are incorporated in the grant agreements and recipient performance will be measured against proposed objectives. Activities or costs that do not align with information provided in proposals (priority areas, activity types, methods, habitat types, habitat benefits, duration of benefits, NAWCA interest, acres, etc) may be deemed ineligible.

26. How will USFWS evaluate recipient performance? Are any modifications allowed?

Once submitted, applicants may not edit proposals unless requested by USFWS due to eligibility review. Application materials, including proposals, become a binding part of a grant award. During grant implementation, USFWS grant administrators will evaluate the recipients progress on activities and objectives against those proposed in their application. In

annual and final reports, recipients should include a comparison of proposed objectives vs accomplishments to date including the information from the various TAQ tables. Recipients must meet or exceed proposed objectives, activities, and match.

During grant implementation, we recognize that recipients may encounter unforeseen circumstances. Recipients may request prior approval of modifications to grant objectives, but these changes are not guaranteed. Modification requests that do not meet or exceed original proposed activities (i.e., reduce proposed objectives, shorten durations, or change habitat types, reduce habitat conservation values, etc.) will not be allowed.

27. Is biological control of invasive species an eligible enhancement activity?

Biological control of invasives may be eligible if the proposed actions meet the eligibility criteria for enhancement activities. If approved and accepted by Council, biological control and intended benefits must be completed during the life of the grant. Any management required to meet the duration commitment of the award after the period of performance is over is the responsibility of the recipient. Since enhancement requires an on-the-ground habitat improvement, proposals should describe proposed biological control activities and the expected habitat improvement (conservation value, duration, etc.). Applicants are encouraged to describe the species, methods, and research surrounding the proposed biological control activities. Research activities to determine whether biological controls are effective are ineligible. Proposals must adequately describe the activities such that Council is able to evaluate the proposed activities during the merit review process. Activities, even if eligible, that are not included in proposals in adequate detail to be considered during the merit review process will be disallowed.

28. Are activities conducted on public land in the Boreal Forest region eligible?

It is difficult to answer eligibility questions generally for the Boreal Forest region as decisions may differ based on the specific activities being proposed. Applicants should carefully review the list of ineligible activities in the eligibility criteria and reach out to USFWS directly with questions.

Applicants should carefully consider what activities they want to be part of the NAWCA project. Some activities previously completed under stewardship are no longer eligible (e.g., extension, technical assistance, mapping / GIS, workshops, education, outreach activities, protection of habitat without a real property interest, etc.). Protection of habitat is only eligible under acquisition if it results in a real property interest (funded by match or grant) and meets federal regulations.

28. Can applicants pursue landowner unknown acquisitions through auctions or other methods?

All acquisition activities must result in a real property interest and meet 2 CFR 1402 (Financial Assistance Interior Regulation, FAIR) rules for land acquisition. Some of the requirements such as getting an appraisal, documenting a willing seller, and notifying the landowner of the fair market value may be difficult or impossible for acquisition activities associated with unknown owner tracts or auctions. Acquisition activities that do not meet FAIR requirements are ineligible. Reach out to USFWS in advance for assistance with the real property requirements and eligibility rules.

29. Do applicants have to submit match letters for each source of match, or can applicants continue to submit a single match letter if specific match partners have not yet been identified?

Applicants may continue to submit a single match letter if specific match partners are unknown at the time of application. However, the partner information reported in TAQ 7 must be consistent with the match letters provided. This means that if the individual sources of the partner match cannot be verified through the partner contribution letters, the sources of partner match may not be utilized in TAQ 7. Applicants may not gain a competitive advantage in the merit review process for partners that are unknown at the time of application.

30. In the work plan section, should applicants specify add and non-add acres?

Information provided in proposals should be consistent and should be as accurate and detailed as possible. Since the executive summary and the TAQs request add and non-add acres to be identified separately, applicants should include add and non-add acres in the work plan section for consistency.

31. Under enhancement, what is the minimum length of time required to meet the long-term criteria?

The Act requires long-term conservation. Project activities should strive to meet the long-term requirement. However, Council has recognized that actions with a benefit lasting less than 10 years may be eligible in limited cases as they may be important for conservation goals in some areas. Council allows applicants to request consideration of activities for less than 10 years through the identification of the acres in TAQ 5 and in the work plan. Proposals should describe these activities in detail to enable USFWS to conduct an accurate eligibility review of the proposed activities and to enable Council to understand how the activities will benefit wetlands and/or associated uplands and/or how they may lead to long-term habitat conservation. For example, will the activities lead to further protection actions or more conservation with the landowner? Why is the duration appropriate for the activity being proposed? Activities with a duration of under 10 years will not score as many points as long-

term activities. Applicants should review the merit review scoring criteria table in Appendix A of the Application Instructions for additional information.

32. If a large percentage of the proposed acres are in the less than 10 years enhancement category, will your proposal receive a lower score?

The Act requires long-term conservation, and most activities completed under NAWCA should strive to meet that intent. While Council will consider activities that benefit habitat for less than 10 years, applicants should assume that proposals will receive a lower score, particularly if most of the activities fall into that category. Applicants should fully describe all proposed activities, especially activities that are less than 10 years, so that Council can adequately evaluate the benefits and durations of the proposed activities during merit review.

33. If an individual project will restore or enhance upland habitat adjacent to wetland, is the project eligible?

Enhancement and restoration activities must occur in wetland ecosystems and associated habitat. A project that protects upland habitat surrounding a marsh or other type of wetland can be just as essential and beneficial to the conservation of wetlands and as such may be eligible. However, applicants must clearly describe the type of activities proposed in their application and explain the connection and benefit to the associated wetlands when proposing projects or tracts that only enhance or restore uplands. The link to the wetland acres is what will be used to determine the eligibility of the activity. If the activity is eligible and the proposal is forwarded to Council for merit review, Council will determine how to score the proposal based on the level and duration of the proposed benefits.

In this situation, what acres can be included in the proposal as part of the project and claimed as benefited under NAWCA?

If the enhancement / restoration activities to the upland acres are eligible due to being wetland associated uplands, they can be claimed under NAWCA. However, the wetland acres may not be included. For the wetland acres to be claimed, a direct on-the-ground habitat improvement is necessary. Applicants cannot claim on-the-ground accomplishments that are not being delivered and completed during the period of performance. Details for each project can differ. Applicants should reach out to USFWS for additional information if they believe that proposed upland acres will benefit the adjacent wetlands.

What acres must be included in the underlying protection mechanism (i.e., landowner agreement or easement) required to protect the NAWCA investment in the enhancement activity? If we restore the wetlands on a property and sign up a buffer around the wetlands, can we claim the upland buffer?

It is difficult to answer eligibility questions based on a hypothetical proposed activity described as “sign up” of buffer acres. Applicants should provide adequate details for the

proposed activity and underlying protection in the proposal to facilitate accurate eligibility review and merit review. NAWCA projects are often complex, and not all tracts will have the same determination of eligibility. Answers may differ depending on the specific scenario and specific activity. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to USFWS directly for assistance with eligibility questions.

Enhancement requires an on-the-ground improvement to the habitat to be eligible. If acres are not directly enhanced or restored, they are ineligible to be claimed under NAWCA.

At a minimum all acres enhanced under NAWCA must be protected by a long-term mechanism, such as a landowner agreement or easement that protects the NAWCA investment for the duration of the benefits.

34. If the uplands adjacent to a wetland are being restored, are the wetland acres considered restored or enhanced?

No, only the upland acres being restored should be part of the NAWCA project.

Enhancement and restoration require an on-the-ground benefit to the habitat to be eligible. If acres are not directly enhanced or restored, they are ineligible to be claimed under NAWCA.

Each project tract is unique and applicants should reach out to USFWS for additional information. Applicants should include information on indirect benefits to the wetlands due to the restored or enhanced uplands in the work plan narrative, but without a real property interest or an improvement to the on-the-ground wetland habitat that is funded by NAWCA grant or match, there are no wetland acres to report/claim under NAWCA.

35. How do you recommend grantees break out close out costs from grant administration costs?

The distinguishing factor is the timing of the activities. Grant administration costs are incurred during the period of performance while close out costs are incurred after the period of performance ends until the due date of the final report. Recipients must be sure to seek reimbursement for close out costs within the 120-day liquidation period after the period of performance ends.

If the applicant is eligible to charge directly for close out costs, they should estimate the time necessary to complete work related to completing and submitting final reports after period of performance ends.

Close out costs and grant administration costs must be allocable to a specific NAWCA grant. Applicants must be able to document costs incurred related to work on a specific grant. Additionally, if grant administration or close out costs are included in a recipient's indirect rate agreement, they cannot be charged directly through close out costs or grant

administration costs. See the eligibility criteria for additional guidance on close out costs and grant administration costs.

36. Will applicants be asked to edit proposals after eligibility review?

Applicants may be asked to edit proposals after USFWS completes the eligibility review. Applicants should ensure that the contacts for the proposal are available to respond to eligibility edits in a timely manner. We encourage all applicants to have back-up points of contact if they expect to be out following the due date of proposal submission. Proposals containing ineligible costs / activities that are not revised in time will be deemed ineligible.

37. Are non-NAWCA rebuilds eligible? Are rebuild actions categorized as enhancement or restoration? Are the acres additive or non-additive acres?

A rebuild activity is specific to previously funded NAWCA activities. Because all rebuilds occur on previous NAWCA acres, all rebuild acres are non-additive acres. Rebuilds may be eligible only after they have reached the end of their useful life and agreement term.

Applicants may submit a proposal in advance of the end of the current agreement, but the new project would only be eligible after the expiration of the original agreement.

Rebuild activities can be associated with restoration or enhancement activities. Restoration requires the on-the-ground rehabilitation of degraded wetland ecosystems and habitat associated with wetland ecosystems. Enhancement requires the on-the-ground modification of wetland ecosystems and associated habitat to improve their value for migratory birds and other fish and wildlife.

Without a previous NAWCA investment, the proposed replacement activity is not considered a rebuild under NAWCA. Replacement of non-NAWCA funded structures or projects are evaluated as new activities under NAWCA. These should be requested under enhancement or restoration as appropriate and are considered additive acres if NAWCA has never funded any activity on the acres in the past.

To be eligible, proposed NAWCA rebuild or other replacement activities must result in an on-the-ground habitat improvement (enhancement) or an on-the-ground rehabilitation of degraded habitat (restoration). Simply reaching the end of the expected lifespan does not make a rebuild or replacement project eligible. For example, if a structure is failing or no longer functioning properly such that the replacement structure results in an improvement of the habitat, the project would be eligible under enhancement.

Because the specific details of each rebuild or replacement project affect the eligibility determination, proposals must include adequate details for all proposed activities. USFWS must be able to conduct an accurate eligibility review and Council must be able to accurately score proposals based on anticipated benefits of proposed activities.

38. Section A (Applicability and Authorities) of the Grant Administration Standards denotes what kind of habitat is eligible under NAWCA. Are acquisition activities on non-wetland habitat still eligible?

This language was updated to more closely align with the Act. NAWCA funds projects benefiting wetlands and / or associated habitats. Upland projects may be eligible, but applicants must be able to document the connection to wetland habitat and explain how the upland project will benefit the associated wetlands. This information should be provided in the proposal as it is necessary for an accurate eligibility review and for accurate merit review scoring of the proposal.

39. Can recipients delay the acceptance of an award? Is there a time period wherein work must begin after NOA is issued?

While you do not need to start work the day the funds arrive, delayed starts should be communicated to the USFWS Program Office to avoid potential compliance issues regarding timely performance.

Federal regulations (2 CFR 200.329) require recipients to notify the USFWS when a significant development could impact the Federal award. Significant developments include events that enable meeting milestones and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or that produce different beneficial results than originally planned. Significant developments also include problems, delays, or conditions that impact the recipient's or subrecipient's ability to meet milestones or the objectives of the Federal award in a timely manner.

Under 2 CFR 200.308, the disengagement from a project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time and effort devoted to the Federal award over the course of the period of performance, by the approved project director or principal investigator, requires prior approval.

40. Under pre-award costs, can an acquisition project be completed prior to award issuance?

Yes, at their own risk, recipients can acquire a real property interest during the pre-award period consistent with the requested pre-award activities and costs in their proposal. However, recipients may not complete all activities under a grant during the pre-award period. All pre-award activities must comply with all laws, regulations, and policies applicable to the NAWCA award as referenced in the terms and conditions of the award at the time of award issuance.

41. Is there a minimum NAWCA interest threshold required? Or is there a minimum NAWCA interest that is preferable?

No, a minimum NAWCA interest has not been defined. The grant administration standards state that if the USFWS determines that an activity does not have sufficient grant or match investment, the associated costs may be disallowed. If a low NAWCA interest is proposed, applicants should describe why the minimal amount of NAWCA investment is critical for the project's success. Applicants are encouraged to develop projects with meaningful levels of NAWCA interest. Council will consider the proposed NAWCA interest along with other benefits of the proposal during merit review.

Applicants should also keep in mind that the interest threshold disclosed in the proposal will become a binding part of the award. If no non-match leverage is disclosed, a 100% interest will be assumed and the recipient will be held to the 100% interest threshold during the implementation of an award.

42. Can we modify the proposed NAWCA interest? For example, if a project falls through and we need to replace it with another project, can the NAWCA interest change?

The Act requires a minimum of 1:1 matching contribution with at least 50% of the match coming from U.S. sources. Non-matching funds cannot be used to gain a competitive advantage during the merit review process. As a result, applicants must disclose the use of non-match and the expected NAWCA interest in activities in their proposal. This allows Council to score the proposal based on the proposed NAWCA interest level as well as the expected benefits of the project. Because the NAWCA interest level is used in the merit review process, recipients must meet or exceed the proposed NAWCA interest during grant implementation.

43. Since nonmatch contributors have to be made aware that they are contributing to a NAWCA project. What is the level of documentation needed? What requirements exist around this.

It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that all parties leveraging funds in a federal program are aware of the U.S. federal nexus in real property interests. Since NAWCA will obtain an interest in all acre accomplishments and will include all acres in accomplishment reporting, recipients must notify non-match partners of the intent to pool funds with NAWCA grant / match and ensure they are willing to allow NAWCA to obtain an interest in all of the acres of the given tract. Since there is not a standard form or letter to meet this requirement, the USFWS will consider it met if the recipient, at a minimum, is able to document the disclosure.

44. If we acquire more matching partners during the period of performance than what was disclosed in the proposal, do we need to provide additional match contribution letters at that time? Or are matching contribution letter requirements limited to contributors mentioned in the proposal?

Applications must include matching contribution letters for all matching partners listed in the proposal. If additional matching partners are acquired during the period of performance, the recipient does not need to provide additional match letters to USFWS at that time. However, recipients must maintain records of the new match and its source and document changes in matching partners and contributions in annual and final reports. Recipients must maintain adequate documentation for all match (cash and in-kind) as federal regulations (2 CFR 200.306) require all cost share to be verifiable in the recipient's records. Appropriate level of documentation includes detailed records such as timesheets, invoices or valuation reports for donated goods or services to verify fair market value. Because proposals are scored based on the number of partners and their level of contributions, all partners and associated contributions listed in TAQ 7 become a binding part of the award.

45. How accurate must program income estimates be in proposals?

Applications must include requests for consideration of program income when it is expected as part of an award. The request for consideration should include a description of the activities that will result in program income and an estimate of the amount expected. Recipients will not be held accountable for meeting program income estimates in proposals. The information provided will be used to conduct eligibility review of activities, provide required pre-approval for the anticipated program income, and to assign appropriate terms and conditions related to program income to the grant at the time of issuance.

46. If we submit a proposal that includes pre-award costs for an acquisition activity, but our proposal is not selected for funding, can that acquisition be used as match for other awards or future proposals?

Yes, potentially. The timing of the acquisition activity must be consistent with allowable match for the other award or proposal. Any match acquisition must meet all NAWCA eligibility rules and federal requirements.

47. Are there any significant changes to appraisal requirements for conservation easements or agreements? Do traditional before / after CE appraisals meet the requirements?

All real property acquisitions, including conservation easements, must meet the Financial Assistance Interior Regulations (FAIR) requirements for real property located outside of the United States and acquired with Department of Interior (DOI) financial assistance. FAIR requires real property interests to be appraised by an independent real property appraiser licensed or certified in the country in which the property is located in accordance with any in-country appraisal standards. Traditional before / after CE appraisals of the specific NAWAC interest by independent real property appraisers licensed or certified in Canada should be consistent with the FAIR requirements.

Appraisals must reflect the specific interest and acres to be acquired under NAWCA and list USFWS as an intended user. The NAWCA real property interest must be clearly defined to ensure consistency across all valuation steps. USFWS must be able to legally define the real property interest being acquired. Utilizing an average cost per acre (or en bloc approach) is not an acceptable valuation practice as it does not result in a true value of the specific NAWCA interest being acquired. Recipients may negotiate a purchase price that differs from the FMV, but NAWCA grant and match funds used may not exceed the FMV.

48. When recipients are required to submit mineral evaluations or assessments, are Canadian Provincial Mineral Regimes acceptable if we don't have access to site-specific extraction plans?

Potentially, applicants should reach out to USFWS for review of the documentation and for additional site-specific guidance. Proposals should describe the mineral extraction risk for proposed projects so that Council can accurately score proposals and weigh anticipated conservation benefits against the risk of extraction. If extraction activities result in impacts to conservation values of NAWCA projects, recipients should reach out to USFWS for disposal guidance.

49. Are applicants allowed to acquire real property interests from forestry companies with preexisting harvest plans provided harvest does not occur post-acquisition? Is harvesting timber allowable?

Yes, applicants can acquire real property interests that have existing harvest plans if the harvest plans are consistent with NAWCA conservation objectives or if the harvest plans will be terminated. Details regarding the future status of the timber operation (perpetual pause, termination, revision for habitat improvement) should be provided in the proposal to allow for accurate eligibility review and merit review scoring. If timber harvest is expected, the value of the timber may not be included in the fair market value of the property interest.

50. Is the value of the carbon credits only applicable as program income during the POP of the grant?

Program income is limited to income generated during the period of performance as a direct result of grant activities. Any income generated outside of the period of performance is not considered program income.

Carbon credit programs must be consistent with the conservation objectives of NAWCA. See the grant administration standards for additional guidance on carbon credit programs. Eligibility determinations are often case specific. If you wish to pursue carbon credits, please reach out to USFWS for guidance.

51. Is there a threshold for the distance outside of the priority area where changes to proposed activities will be allowed through the modification process?

Applicants should accurately describe the project area and proposed priority areas where grant objectives will occur. Because this information is used by Council in the merit review process to score proposals, changes to project areas or priority areas will not be allowed. If projects fall through, the recipient should identify substitution projects that meet the acre objectives in the same project area and priority area.

Recipients will be held accountable for acres listed in TAQ 3A as inside priority areas vs outside priority areas. Updated TAQ tables showing the details of project accomplishments should be included in annual and final reports.

52. In TAQ 3A, if a tract is within the NAWMP wetland priorities (but not a Joint Venture target area in the implementation plan) can the applicant include that as an “IN” acre?

Yes, according to the published scoring criteria, both Joint Venture and NAWMP priority areas apply. Applicants should identify which priority areas are being used (Joint Venture or NAWMP or both) and list the number of acres that are in or out of those priority areas.

Applications should explain or show how their proposed acre objectives align with the priority areas. The proposal must include a map depicting the priority areas and proposed project locations. If the proposal includes to be determined tracts, maps should show the areas in which the project locations will be identified and whether the acres will be in or out of the priority areas.

53. In TAQ 3A, does this question only apply to wetland associated species? Or could target or priority areas include priority areas in the Implementation plans for upland or forest species?

It could include others such as Partners in Flight species, but the focus is on wetlands.

54. In TAQ 6, can an applicant list a species for an ESA or SARA or other priority species that they listed in TAQ1 or 2?

No, applicants can only include species that were not already listed in TAQ 1 or 2.

55. Under the acquisition category, what happens in scenarios where we want to do long-term large-scale protection without a real property interest? Is there mechanism to use NAWCA for this activity?

To be eligible as acquisition, protection activities must result in the acquisition of a real property interest. Acquired acres must adhere to foreign land acquisition requirements in the Financial Assistance Interior Regulations (2 CFR 1402.329(c)) which require a fair market valuation of the interest. Additionally, NAWCA award funds (grant and / or match) must be applied directly to the cost of the specific property interest being acquired in order for other associated costs to be eligible.

56. We are working with a forestry company and to date our work has been focused on the company adopting BMPs in forest management plans lasting for 10-years. Are these activities eligible? Do we need to show where they have implemented the practice on specific acres?

For an activity to be eligible under enhancement, it must result in on-the-ground improvement to habitat during the period of performance. Costs associated with including BMPs in plans or implementing BMPs to prevent future impacts, are ineligible. Recipients also must be careful with costs associated with 10–15-year plans, because activities must result in habitat improvement during the period of performance. All costs must be incurred during this period as well. NAWCA cannot pay for upfront costs associated with expenses under a management plan or other landowner agreement that are incurred after the period of performance ends. Activities must result in habitat improvements on specific acres that are identified in reports and GIS files submitted to USFWS.

57. Is there a mechanism under NAWCA to protect habitat that hasn't been severely impacted yet, but will be without any action?

No. Acquisition activities must result in the acquisition of a real property interest. Protection of existing habitat is ineligible under enhancement and restoration.

58. Under enhancement and restoration, what is required to meet the long-term protection mechanism requirement?

Legal instruments such as landowner agreements that protect the NAWCA investment for the appropriate length of time are acceptable. The agreements should reference NAWCA funding and describe the project activities, purpose, and conservation values to be protected. USFWS can provide examples.

59. If something is a regulatory requirement, can we use NAWCA for it?

NAWCA cannot be used for activities associated with mitigation. For other regulatory requirements, it depends. If the recipient's eligible NAWCA habitat restoration project requires a permit to implement the project, that cost is eligible. However, if a non-NAWCA related activity is being planned (i.e., private company is installing a road or powerline) and the conditions require the implementation of BMPs, the activities are not eligible under NAWCA. Applicants should reach out to USFWS for additional information.