

## State Wildlife Grants Competitive Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2013

Notice of Availability of Grants and Request for Applications

Program Overview Information

### **Federal Agency Name:**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

### **Funding Opportunity Title:**

State Wildlife Grants Competitive Grant Program

### **Announcement Type:**

Announcement of availability of grants for fiscal year (FY) 2013 and request for applications.

**Funding Opportunity Number:** DOI-FWS-WSFR-SWGCOMP13

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 15.634

**Dates:** Applications for Competitive State Wildlife Grants submitted by mail or email are due to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Regional Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) Office by March 27, 2013, 4:00 p.m. local time. Applications submitted via <http://www.grants.gov/> will be accepted through March 27, 2013, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. However, we recommend that you submit applications through Grants.gov in advance of the deadline to allow for any unforeseen technical complications.

### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

Since 2001, the Service has awarded State Wildlife Grants (SWG) for “the development and implementation of programs for the benefit of wildlife and their habitat, including species that are not hunted or fished...” To participate in the SWG program, as directed by Congress, each State, Commonwealth, territory, and the District of Columbia (hereafter referred to as a State) developed a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan (later referred to as a State Wildlife Action Plan or SWAP) for review and approval by the Service. All the State SWAPs were submitted to the Service and approved by early 2006.

Each SWAP identifies species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) that occur in a State, and the habitats needed to conserve them. In addition, the SWAPs provide detailed information on

issues affecting SGCN and their habitats, and conservation actions and strategies to address these issues. Congress annually appropriates funds for the SWG program to support implementation and updating of the SWAPs. The majority of these funds are non-competitively apportioned by the Service to State fish and wildlife agencies through a formula based on population and geographic area. More information about the SWG Program is available at: <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/SWG/SWG.htm>.

Congress established the SWG Competitive Grant Program (SWG-C) in 2008 through Public Law 110-161. This nationally-competitive program, the focus of this announcement, also provides a resource to implement or enhance the SWAPs, with a special focus on promoting and advancing cooperative partnerships that result in large-scale landscape conservation.

SWG Competitive Grant Program applications must address: (a) eligible issues identified in Service-approved SWAPs; (b) emerging issues (such as climate change effects on SGCN) that are adequately documented in the grant application and that propose to improve the status of SGCN and their habitats; and/or, (c) improvements to SWAPs that meet one or more of the themes described in Section IV.F. of this announcement.

In FY2013, eligibility for SWG-C is restricted to a minimum of two States which choose to work together to jointly manage and administer a project, with exceptions for those States which do not share common boundaries with other States (Alaska, Hawaii, and the other insular jurisdictions). States applying to the SWAP Enhancement Fund (see Section IV.G.) may also apply as single States.

In administration of SWG-C, the Service adopts policies described in the Service's policy handbook for the non-competitive apportioned State Wildlife Grants (for more information see <http://www.fws.gov/policy/517fw10.pdf>), except where there may be conflicts with information contained in this announcement.

Priority will be given to proposals that identify measurable, on-the-ground performance results and outcomes. Additional consideration will be given to proposed projects that seek to contribute to the goals and objectives of regional, science based multi-partner conservation strategies, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC), Joint Ventures, Fish Habitat Partnerships or other similar landscape-scale conservation efforts. Funds will be awarded to the highest-scoring applications using the scoring criteria contained in this announcement, at the discretion of the Service Director.

**For more information:**

Landscape Conservation:

<http://www.fws.gov/science/SHC/lcc.html>

Migratory Bird Conservation:

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/PartnershipsAndInitiatives.html>

National Fish Habitat Action Plan:

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/fisheries/ActionPlanFunding.html>

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program:

<http://www.fws.gov/partners/>

National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy:

<http://www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov/>

Please read this announcement carefully prior to applying for SWG Competitive Grant Program funds. Applications that are incomplete or that contain ineligible activities will not be reviewed. We encourage States to coordinate closely with Regional WSFR Staff in the development of applications to ensure that applications are complete and proposed activities are eligible for funding. Contact information is included in Section IV.A. below. However, due to limited resources, the Service cannot guarantee that applicants seeking pre-deadline technical assistance will be served in a timely fashion. Responsibility for submission of complete proposals by the specified dates, and describing eligible activities, remains with the applicant.

**Items to note in FY 2013:**

- A special fund has been designated for States seeking to make specific improvements to their SWAP (Section IV.F.). A State wishing to apply for these funds must submit a separate application which will be ranked according to the criteria given in Section V.B.
- To be eligible for SWG-C, a minimum of two States must propose a joint project, except for Alaska, Hawaii, and the other insular jurisdictions (Section III.A.). States applying for SWAP Enhancement funds are also exempt from this requirement.
- The maximum award for a partnership of two or more States is \$500,000; the maximum award for Hawaii, Alaska, and the U.S. insular jurisdictions, applying as a single State, is \$250,000 (Section II.). Such single- or multi-State projects will be ranked according to the criteria given in Section V.A.
- Criteria used to score and rank proposals for competitive SWG projects have been significantly revised (Section V.A.).
- All letters of match commitment from a State applicant or partnering State must be signed by the person who would normally approve revisions to the SWAP; matching resources that are not so documented will be deemed ineligible and may negatively impact scoring of the proposal.
- All letters of match commitment from a non-State partner (for example, an NGO, University, or other private entity) must be signed by the chief financial officer, or other individual with authority to commit funds on behalf of the entity.
- The lead state in multi-State projects must include, along with other project objectives, a stated objective to compile and submit a final comprehensive report for all States involved in the project (Section IV.B.4.c.).

**II. Award Information:**

To date, Congress has not appropriated FY2013 funds for the SWG Competitive Grant Program; however, WSFR anticipates that approximately \$5,000,000 may be made available based on the FY 2010, 2011, and 2012 Congressional appropriations. If funds are made available, for

applications for competitive SWG projects involving two or more States, the minimum Federal award is \$150,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$500,000, except for Hawaii, Alaska, and the U.S. insular jurisdictions; for these latter States, if applying for competitive SWG projects as single states, the minimum Federal award is \$75,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$250,000. All States applying to the SWAP Enhancement Fund (Section IV.F.) may apply for a minimum of \$25,000 and a maximum of \$100,000.

Awards are expected to be announced in July 2013, subject to the availability of funds.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Partnerships of two or more State agencies with primary responsibility for fish and wildlife management and conservation in each of the 48 contiguous United States plus the District of Columbia are eligible applicants. Alaska, Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands; the Territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa are eligible to apply as single States. Any single State agency is eligible to apply for SWAP Enhancement funds (Section IV.F.). Only entities with Service-approved SWAPs are eligible to apply for SWG Competitive Grant Program funds.

#### **B. Cost-Sharing or Matching**

For the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the maximum Federal cost share for SWG Competitive Grant Program funds is 75 percent of total project costs. The Service will waive the 25% non-Federal matching requirement of the total project cost for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands up to \$200,000 (48 U.S.C. 1469a (d)).

The overall non-Federal cost share is a factor used in scoring applications. Applicants are encouraged to provide more than the minimum (25%) required non-Federal cost share. For all multi-state proposals, the State which submits the proposal (i.e., applicant and designated lead State) is responsible for ensuring the non-Federal share identified on the Application for Federal Assistance Form SF424 is provided.

Sources of non-Federal cost share from State partners must be documented through letters of commitment. Letters of commitment must be signed by the State officer normally authorized to sign SWAP revisions. The letter of commitment must be included in the application package and must detail the amount of cost sharing funds and/or the value of donated services, equipment, or materials for the application to be eligible.

For all multi-State projects, any letters of commitment from partnering States submitted on their behalf by the lead State applicant must also detail that the activities to which they will contribute are addressed in their own SWAP or are an emerging issue in their own State. If a

partnering State will address an emerging issue, it must be documented as required (Section IV. B. 4.(7) and Attachment A., Question 8).

Letters of commitment must be complete and contain all required information as described in this announcement. Matching funds or other resources referenced in a letter of commitment that are not so documented will be deemed ineligible and may negatively impact scoring of the proposal. Letters of commitment are considered part of a proposal and will not be accepted after the proposal is submitted. Letters of commitment should be addressed to the Service Director.

NOTE: The State applicant identified as the designated lead for a multi-State project is accountable for the full amount of non-Federal cost share detailed in the Form SF 424 for all partners, including other States.

### C. Eligible Activities and Project Partners

The Service will not review or score any proposal that contains a part or portion of a proposed project that is ineligible for funding. This includes proposals for multi-State projects where an ineligible activity is included as a planned action for only one of the partnering States or other project partners. Although only designated State fish and wildlife agencies may apply for and receive grant funds under this program, cooperating with other partners is encouraged. Partners may include Tribes, Federal agencies, other State agencies (in or out of State), local governments/jurisdictions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions (e.g. universities), private landowners, industry groups, and other countries. See Sections 10.13 and 10.14 of the Service’s policy handbook for more information on eligible activities (<http://www.fws.gov/policy/517fw10.pdf>).

## IV. Application and Submission Instructions

### A. Address to Request and/or Submit Application Package

Potential applicants may request application forms and other materials necessary to apply for SWG Competitive Grant Program funds by contacting one of the Service’s Regional WSFR Offices. Application forms are also available through the Grants.gov website and the WSFR toolkit (<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/ToolkitFiles/toolkit.pdf>).

State applicants may mail applications in hard-copy or email electronic (PDF) files to the appropriate Service Regional WSFR Office listed below. Below is a list of Service Regional WSFR Office contacts. Applications may also be submitted online at Grants.gov.

<b>States, Commonwealths, the District of Columbia, and territories by U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Region</b>	<b>Regional Contact Information</b>
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<p><b>Region 1:</b> American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> r1fa_grants@fws.gov <b>Hard-Copy Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Migratory Birds &amp; State Programs WSFRP 911 NE 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181 <b>Contact Person:</b> Karla Drewsen 503-231-2389 <a href="mailto:karla_drewsen@fws.gov">karla_drewsen@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 2:</b> Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> fw2fa@fws.gov <b>Hard-Copy Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 500 Gold Avenue, SW Albuquerque, NM 87103 <b>Contact Person:</b> LeAnne Bonner 505-248-7459 <a href="mailto:leanne_bonner@fws.gov">leanne_bonner@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 3:</b> Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> R3fedaid@fws.gov <b>Hard-Copy Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990 Bloomington, MN 55437-1458 <b>Contact Person:</b> Mike Sweet 612-713-5130 <a href="mailto:mike_sweet@fws.gov">mike_sweet@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 4:</b> Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the U.S. Virgin Islands</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> r4federalassistance@fws.gov <b>Hard-Copy Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 240 Atlanta, GA 30345 <b>Contact Person:</b> Diana Swan 404-679-7058 <a href="mailto:diana_swan@fws.gov">diana_swan@fws.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Region 5:</b> Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West</p>	<p><b>Electronic Documents to:</b> fw5fareports@fws.gov <b>Hard-Copy Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program</p>

Virginia	300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035 Contact Person: Dee Blanton 413-253-8513 <a href="mailto:dee_blanton@fws.gov">dee_blanton@fws.gov</a>
<b>Region 6:</b> Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming	<b>Electronic Documents to:</b> FW6_FAGrants@fws.gov <b>Hard-Copy Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Center Denver, Colorado 80225 Contact Person: Anna Schmidt 303-236-4375 <a href="mailto:anna_schmidt@fws.gov">anna_schmidt@fws.gov</a>
<b>Region 7:</b> Alaska	<b>Electronic Documents to:</b> ak_fa@fws.gov <b>Hard-Copy Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 261 Anchorage, AK 99503 Contact Person: Cliff Schleusner 907-786-3631 <a href="mailto:cliff_schleusner@fws.gov">cliff_schleusner@fws.gov</a>
<b>Region 8:</b> California and Nevada	<b>Electronic Documents to:</b> R8FA_Grants@FWS.gov <b>Hard Documents to:</b> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 2800 Cottage Way, W-1729 Sacramento, CA 95825 <b>Contact Person:</b> Jill Wright 916-978-6182 <a href="mailto:jill_wright@fws.gov">jill_wright@fws.gov</a>

## B. Content and Form of Final Application

Applications for regular competitive SWG and SWAP Enhancement Fund projects must be submitted separately and include the following, except where noted in this Section. No exceptions will be given for applications that are not complete and received by the required date. If the narrative project statement section of the application (See 4., below) exceeds the respective page limit for an implementation or planning project, the Service will not consider the information beyond the page limit when reviewing and/or scoring the application.

1. A single Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424) reflecting the funding request in its entirety.
2. Budget Information, i.e., estimated costs to attain the project objectives. Applicants should use (a) Standard Form 424A, Budget Information – Non-construction Projects, (b) Standard Form 424C, Budget Information – Construction Projects, or (c) present the information in a similar table with cost categories, partners, etc. The various activities or components of each project should be clearly identified and broken down by cost and by funding partner(s). This must include donated matching funds, services, equipment, or materials. Applicants proposing multi-State projects must detail the Federal and non-Federal share for which each State will be responsible. (Note: letters of commitment from partnering States must also be included, as described in this Section).
3. Statement of Assurances of compliance with applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Applicants should use either Standard Form 424B, Statement of Assurances – Non-construction Projects or Standard Form 424D, Statement of Assurances – Construction Projects. This form may be waived if your State agency has a valid approved Statement of Assurances on file with the Service Regional WSFR Office.
4. For competitive SWG projects, a project statement of no more than 20 pages. For SWAP Enhancement Fund projects, a project statement of no more than 10 pages. Project statements must include the following:
  - a. The need for the proposed project;
  - b. Discrete, quantifiable, and verifiable objectives to be accomplished during a specific time period.
  - c. For grants involving two or more states, the following objective must be included in the project statement: The lead state will submit a comprehensive report of all activities that address each objective conducted by or on behalf of all States that receive funding to the WSFR Regional office by the required performance reporting period.
  - d. Expected results or benefits from accomplishing the objectives;
  - e. The approach to be used in meeting the objectives, including specific procedures, schedules, key personnel, and cooperators;
  - f. Description of the expected compliance needs for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Sections 7 and 9 of Endangered Species Act (ESA), and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); and
  - g. A project location and map. The applicant should include two maps: a map of the State showing the general location of the project and a map of the project site(s). Other geographic aids, such as aerial photographs, may be attached. Maps and geographic aids will not be counted as part of the 20-page narrative limitation. (Applications for SWAP Enhancement Fund projects may omit maps).
5. A description with appropriate documentation of how the proposed project addresses each of the scoring criteria.
  - a. We suggest you address each scoring criterion with a brief statement or table.
  - b. It is not necessary to duplicate information that addresses the scoring criteria in your project statement (#4 above).

6. Evidence of commitment from an authorized representative of each partner. The authorized representative must have budget authority for the partner. The commitment document must detail the amount of matching funds and/or the value of donated services, equipment, or materials for the application to be eligible. For multi-State projects, the letter of commitment from the partnering State(s) or other partner(s) must also detail that the activities to which they will contribute are addressed in their own SWAP or are an emerging issue in their own State. If they will address an emerging issue, it must be documented as described in this Section.
7. The following requirements for documenting emerging issues must be met if applicant(s) propose to address an emerging issue:
  - a. Describe the emerging issue fully by identifying the species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) or habitats that would benefit from the proposed action(s);
  - b. Explain why it is an emerging issue; and
  - c. Commit the State to monitoring the effectiveness of the completed action(s) so the State can adaptively manage future activities. The application must include a commitment letter that the director of the State fish and wildlife agency has signed stating that the next version of the State Plan will include the emerging issue if it remains a priority. The Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs, or a Service official in a similar position associated with WSFR, must review the grant application or any future amendments that include emerging issues not in the State Plan before the application is sent to the national review panel for scoring. The Assistant Regional Director of the Service must concur that the issue is an emerging issue, or the application will not be considered for funding. WSFR must retain the original paper copy, or an electronic copy of the concurrence or non-concurrence document.

Note: The Service encourages States to coordinate closely with Service Regional WSFR Staff in the development and submission of applications to ensure that applications are complete and all proposed activities are eligible for funding, although pre-deadline review for completeness/eligibility is not guaranteed. Applications that are incomplete or that contain ineligible activities will not be scored or ranked. We suggest that entire application packages for competitive projects not exceed 30 pages, including all forms, maps, photographs, drawings, and letters; nor exceed 20 pages for final applications for SWAP Enhancement Fund projects. See Attachment A, Q18, for more information.

We request you arrange the application package in the following order:

- a. SF 424
- b. SF 424C (or budget table)
- c. SF 424D (as applicable)
- d. project statement (Part of the page limit)
- e. scoring criteria information (Part of the page limit)
- f. maps, drawings, schematics and/or photos
- g. letters of commitment

h. other information (resumes or vitae, or literature cited sections.)

Applications must be on or formatted to print (in the case of an electronic application) on 8.5" X 11" paper, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides, and page numbers at the bottom of the page (starting with the project statement). Fonts must be legible, 12 point Arial, Times New Roman, or other commonly used font. Please do not bind paper copy applications.

#### C. Submission Dates and Times:

Applications submitted by mail or email are due to the Service Regional WSFR Office by March 27, 2013, 4:00 p.m. local time; applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accepted until March 27, 2013, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. We will not consider incomplete packages, or packages received after the specified time on March 27, 2013.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

The SWG Competitive Grant Program is not subject to EO 12372 "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

#### E. Funding Restrictions

For competitive SWG projects, the SWG Competitive Grant Program will only award funds for projects proposing to: (a) implement eligible actions or strategies identified in Service-approved SWAPs; and/or (b) address emerging issues (e.g., climate change effects on wildlife) documented in the grant application that will improve the status of SGCN or their habitats. For SWAP Enhancement Fund projects, the SWG Competitive Grant Program will only award funds for projects that address one or more of the themes described in Section IV.F. of this announcement.

The SWG Competitive Grant Program is funded through annual appropriations by Congress. There is no assurance that it will be authorized this fiscal year or in subsequent fiscal years.

#### F. SWAP Enhancement Fund

In Fiscal Year 2013, the Service designates a special fund for use by States seeking to make specific improvements to their State Wildlife Action Plans. The intent of this fund is to support planning activities resulting in more strategic, accountable and/or collaborative SWAPs. Criteria used to rank and score applications to the SWAP Enhancement Fund are different from those used to score and rank regular competitive SWG projects (See Section V.).

A maximum of \$500,000 may be awarded, subject to availability of funds. The Service reserves the right to distribute any portion of the designated funds contingent upon receipt of complete and eligible proposals which describe projects that will address one or more of the six themes described in this Section.

Eligibility for these funds is open to single State fish and wildlife agencies, or to partnerships of two or more State fish and wildlife agencies and/or other non-State partners, irrespective of the status of current SWAP review or revision efforts. The maximum award is \$100,000, and the standard Competitive State Wildlife Grant matching fund requirement applies (maximum federal award of 75% of total project costs). States may apply for both a SWAP Enhancement Fund project and regular competitive SWG project simultaneously; however, a complete application for each type of project must be submitted separately.

To apply, submit items listed in Section IV. B. of this announcement. Note that the page limit for SWAP Enhancement Fund applications is 10 pages, and applicants to this Fund may omit the project location and maps. Applications must be submitted by in the dates and times specified in Section IV.C.

Themes include:

1. **Landscape-Scale Conservation:** The Service supports projects that will result in better alignment of conservation goals and objectives of two or more State Wildlife Action Plans. Examples include development of modeling analyses or other tools which aid in selection of common biological objectives across States, or adoption of a unified system for identification and classification of threats and conservation actions. In accomplishing the work, applicants are encouraged to establish collaborative partnerships with other entities engaged in landscape-scale conservation, including but not limited to Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs).
2. **Climate Change:** The Service supports proposals that incorporate climate change adaptation strategies for wildlife into SWAPs. Such activities may include but are not limited to identification and planning for protection and restoration of migration corridors, conducting climate change vulnerability assessments for multiple SGCN, or downscaling (or applying existing downscaled) climate change models for use at regional or local scales. Additionally, we encourage proposals that seek to integrate and align SWAP strategies with the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy (<http://www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov>), or with another regional climate change planning effort, including but not limited to those developed by a consortium of States, or by Climate Science Centers or Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs).
3. **Mapping Enhancements:** The Service supports State efforts to identify and map geographic areas of the State that present the best opportunities for SGCN conservation (focal areas or conservation opportunity areas), especially States which have not done so to date. Mapping efforts should utilize advanced digital mapping technology to geospatially delineate priority areas for conservation on a statewide basis within a single State. Partnerships of two or more States may also utilize funds to align and unify existing State maps which delineate these areas.

4. **Prioritization and Goal Setting:** Prioritization efforts should focus on strategic and systematic identification of a State’s highest priority SGCN, their habitats, and associated conservation actions, on a statewide basis. For example, States may utilize funds to establish and apply criteria for ranking SGCN resulting in development of a tiered classification system, for adoption of an existing prioritization methodology (e.g. NatureServe), or for collaboration among multiple States resulting in adoption of a unified ranking procedure. Results of this work should include articulation of measurable future habitat conditions or other biological outcomes to be achieved within a defined period.
5. **Development and Land Use Planning:** The Service encourages proposals which identify wildlife adaptation strategies for planned infrastructure development, including but not limited to energy or transportation. Examples include geospatially identifying areas where specific industry development should be avoided, or identifying wildlife connectivity needs and opportunities arising from planned development, on a Statewide basis. States may also utilize funds to repackage and deliver SWAP data to local or regional entities engaged in land use planning, so that data is more accessible and relevant to towns, counties, or other entities.
6. **SWAP Evaluation:** The Service supports State efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of a State’s Wildlife Action Plan, to determine whether or to what degree the SWAP is meeting its intended goals, and to develop strategies to improve the SWAP. Evaluations must be undertaken by a qualified, third-party entity. Applicants should describe the method and timeframe in which results of the evaluation will be incorporated in future SWAP review or revision.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Scoring Criteria for Competitive SWG Projects

This set of criteria assesses proposed competitive SWG projects on their contributions to collaborative, landscape-scale conservation, their direct and immediate benefit to SGCN and their habitats, and the overall technical merit of the proposed work. The grant application must provide a clear description of how the proposed actions will implement an applicant’s SWAP. Note that criteria used to assess proposals for SWAP Enhancement Fund projects are separate and are given in Section V.B.

1. Proposed conservation actions link with and contribute to objectives of a regional collaborative landscape conservation strategy or plan developed by a partnership of federal, state, tribal, and/or non-governmental organizations. (0 to 4 points).
  - a. Proposal cites and describes contributions to one landscape conservation plan objective (1 point) or multiple objectives (2 points);
  - b. Proposal cites and describes contributions to one landscape conservation plan (1 point) or multiple landscape conservation plans (2 point).

2. Proposal describes consistent and cohesive conservation actions (up to 2 points), methods for data-sharing (up to 2 points), monitoring (up to 2 points) and reporting (up to 2 points) among all States, federal agencies, and other partners (maximum 8 points).
3. Extent to which proposed conservation actions directly target an *urgent* threat to SGCN identified in an approved SWAP, or an identified and documented emerging issue (0-3 points).
4. Proposed conservation actions include on-the-ground habitat management specific to targeted SGCN, and the proposal includes a description of how the actions are critical to, and are substantial efforts to conserve, targeted SGCN (0-5 points).
  - a. No on-the-ground habitat management (0 points); or
  - b. Critical and substantial for 1 SGCN (1 point); or
  - c. Critical and substantial for 2-5 SGCN (2 points); or
  - d. Critical and substantial for 6-10 SGCN (3 points); or
  - e. Critical and substantial for 11-15 SGCN (4 points); or
  - f. Critical and substantial for more than 15 SGCN (5 points).
5. Extent to which proposal explicitly describes the connections between planned conservation actions and the expected short-term (i.e. 5 years) and long-term (10 or more years) outcomes for SGCN and/or their habitats (0 to 4 points).
6. Extent to which proposal identifies indicators associated with project objectives that are appropriate, distinct, obtainable, and quantifiable (0 to 4 points).
7. Proposed conservation actions are provided in adequate detail to understand how the State(s) and partner(s) will implement the project (0-7 points). The following information should be provided for all proposed conservation actions:
  - a. Consistent methods/procedures used in conservation action (4 points); and
  - b. Who will implement the actions, and their qualifications (1 point); and
  - c. Any local, State, or Federal permits needed to undertake the work (1 point); and
  - d. Schedule of work (1 point).
8. Proposed conservation actions will impact both public and private lands (0-4 points):
  - a. Habitat management actions are accomplished on private lands, including lands owned by individuals, private academic institutions, or nongovernmental organizations (0 or 2 points).
  - b. Habitat management actions are conducted on lands owned or managed by other State or local agencies (including academic institutions owned or managed by the State), Federal agencies, or Tribes (0 or 2 points).
9. Proposal describes a monitoring plan that each participating partner will use to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation actions and provide for adaptive management (0 to 7

points). One point for describing each of the following items clearly and in sufficient detail:

- a. Method of establishing baseline conditions (1 point);
- b. Monitoring procedures and protocols described (1 point);
- c. Clearly-defined effectiveness measures (1 point);
- d. Roles and responsibilities of each partner in monitoring/evaluation (1 point);
- e. Timeframe for monitoring activities (1 point);
- f. Identifies potential financial resources to ensure long-term monitoring and evaluation (1 point); and
- g. Process that will be used to incorporate data into adaptive management decisions (1 point).

10. Proposal describes how Federal compliance requirements can be addressed in a reasonable time and provides an estimated timeline (0-2 points).

- a. Compliance documentation effort may require six months or more (0 points);
- b. Compliance documentation effort is expected be completed in 3-6 months (1 point); or
- c. Compliance documentation effort is expected to be completed in under 3 months (2 points).

11. Non-Federal Match: For the total amount of match identified in the Budget and the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424), the application identifies the percentage of non-Federal match (0-4 points total). The match must be well documented through a statement of commitment describing the nature (i.e., cash, waived cost, and/or in-kind), the source, and the value of the match (0-4 points).

- i. Non-Federal match is 25 % (0% for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (0 points); or
- ii. Non-Federal match is > 25 to 30 % (>0 to 5 % for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (1 point); or
- iii. Non-Federal match is > 30 to 40 % (>5 to 15 % for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (2 points); or
- iv. Non-Federal match is > 40% (>15 % for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) (4 points).

**Total Score Possible = 52**

## B. Scoring Criteria for SWAP Enhancement Fund Projects

This set of criteria assesses proposed SWAP Enhancement Fund projects on their contributions to collaborative, landscape-scale conservation through specific enhancements to a SWAP, and

on the overall technical merit of the proposed work. The grant application must provide a clear description of how the proposed actions will address one or more of the themes described in Section IV.F. For the following criteria, reviewers will use a scale of 1 to 5, as follows:

- 1- Minimal; not at all; poor; none; very unlikely: 1 point*
- 2- Somewhat; barely; fair; to a small degree; unlikely: 2 points*
- 3- Medium; moderately; average; adequately; neutral: 3 points*
- 4- Mostly; largely; good; to a large degree; likely: 4 points*
- 5- Fully; completely; excellent; significantly; very likely: 5 points*

1. To what extent will the project provide the specific products, results, or benefits to a State's SWAP, as identified within the relevant theme (Section IV.G.)?
2. To what extent does the proposed activity represent a significant advancement in the quality or utility of the applicant's SWAP?
3. How appropriate, clearly stated, and achievable are the project objectives?
4. How sound are the technical approach, project design, and methods?
5. How well does the applicant demonstrate a clear understanding of the problem being addressed, and an awareness of best practices and/or models used successfully to address the problem?
6. How reasonable and realistic (high probability of being met) is the proposed timeline?
7. How effective and sufficient is the applicant's plan for tracking and measuring progress and ensuring that stated outputs and outcomes are achieved?
8. How justifiable, realistic, and reasonable is the budget, considering the work proposed and the expected results and benefits?
9. To what extent does the proposal demonstrate the inclusion of match or the leveraging of additional resources to carry out the proposed project?

**Total Score Possible = 45**

### C. Review and Selection Process

Award selection is a three-step process: application acceptance, application scoring, and application selection.

1. Application acceptance - The Service Regional WSFR Offices determine that applications are complete and include eligible projects that are substantial in character and design.

2. Application scoring – Once an application is accepted, the Service Regional WSFR Office sends the application to the Service WSFR Headquarters, which coordinates the review and scoring of the applications. A national review team will review and rank the applications and provide award recommendations to the Assistant Director, WSFR.
3. Application selection - Funding awards will be subject to the final approval of the Service Director.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Awards are expected to be announced in July 2013. Applicants will be notified by the Service Regional WSFR Offices of the process needed to complete the grant award.

### VI. Award Administration Information

#### 1. Award Notices

Service Regional WSFR Office will notify successful applicants that they have been selected for award and the remaining process needed to complete the grant award. The Service will also publish a press release announcing the awards.

#### 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Compliance with all applicable Federal laws, policies, and regulations, must be addressed before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can approve an award. In accepting Federal funds, applicants must comply with 43 CFR Part 12, 2 CFR 225, and the OMB Circulars (A-87, A-102, A-133). Applicants must supply evidence of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and any other relevant Federal laws.

#### 3. Reporting

Reporting requirements, including general records retention and access requirements, are specified in 43 CFR 12.82. Additional details regarding requirements, guidance, etc. are available in the Interim Guidance for Financial and Performance Reporting, located at <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/toolkitfiles/intgdrpt.pdf>.

### VII. Agency Contacts

The SWG Competitive Grant Program is administered by the Service through the WSFR. National-level program information can be obtained by contacting:

Paul Van Ryzin  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

Mailstop WSFR-4020  
4401 North Fairfax Drive  
Arlington, VA 22203  
(703) 358-1849  
[paul\\_vanryzin@fws.gov](mailto:paul_vanryzin@fws.gov)

### **VIII. Other Information**

The Federal government is not bound to financially support any selected project until a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service authorized representative has approved the award. The Service reserves the right to award a portion of requested funds based on availability, at the discretion of the Director.

#### **OMB Control Number 1018-0109 - PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT:**

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires us to tell you why we are collecting this information, how we will use it, and whether or not you have to respond. We will use the information that we collect to evaluate applications submitted for Competitive State Wildlife Grant Program funds. Your response is required to receive funding. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. We estimate that it will take an average of 50 hours to complete the application. The average estimated annual burden associated with writing and submitting required performance reports is 6 hours. You may send comments concerning the burden estimates or any aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS 222 ARLSQ, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203.

Attachment A provides additional information for the FY2013 SWG Competitive Grant Program.

## **Attachment A.**

### Fiscal Year 2013 State Wildlife Grants (SWG) Competitive Grant Program Questions and Answers

#### **Q1. Will grant applications from a single State be considered for funding?**

- A. Yes, State fish and wildlife agencies of Alaska, Hawaii, and the other insular U.S. jurisdictions may apply for regular SWG Competitive Grant Program funds as a single State. For SWAP Enhancement Fund projects, any single State fish and wildlife agency may apply. However, wherever appropriate, we encourage partnering with other State agencies, Tribes, Federal agencies, academic institutions, organizations, businesses, or individuals (e.g., private landowners), etc.

#### **Q2. Is there a minimum or maximum Federal share for an application?**

- A. For applications for regular competitive SWG projects involving two or more States, the minimum Federal award is \$150,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$500,000, except for Hawaii, Alaska, and the U.S. insular jurisdictions; for these States, if applying for regular competitive SWG projects as single states, the minimum Federal award is \$75,000 and the maximum Federal award is \$250,000. All applications to the SWAP Enhancement Fund (Section IV.F.) may apply for a minimum of \$25,000 and a maximum of \$100,000.

#### **Q3. If Federal funds remain after awarding competitive grants, how will the Service make them available to the States?**

- A. Remaining funds will be added to monies appropriated the following fiscal year, if applicable, and used in the next cycle of awards through this competitive program. If subsequent competitive program funds are not authorized, the Service will use the funds as approved by Congress.

#### **Q4. Will the SWG Competitive Grant Program continue in future years?**

- A. The SWG Competitive Grant Program is appropriated annually by Congress; there is no assurance that it will be authorized this year or in subsequent years.

#### **Q5. How long are funds available for obligation?**

- A. Funds awarded to a selected applicant must be obligated with an approved Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) within six months of the notice of selection (as determined by date of publication of the Service press release). Unobligated funds and unused balances on awarded grants will revert to the Service and be added to available funds for the next cycle of awards through this competitive program. The funds will be used for other

purposes approved by Congress if competitive program funds are not authorized for the subsequent fiscal year(s).

**Q6. Is there a maximum grant period?**

- A. Yes. The maximum period for grant applications is three years from the effective date of grant award obligation. If approved by the Regional Service Director or his/her designee, an extension may be approved through an amendment; however, the grant may be extended no more than an additional two years.

**Q7. What are the cost-sharing percentages for this competitive program?**

- A. The Federal share for SWG Competitive Grant Program grants may not exceed 75 percent of the total grant cost. Matching requirements are waived for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands up to \$200,000 (48 U.S.C. 1469a. (d)). The non-Federal share may not include Federal funds or Federal in-kind match unless specifically allowed by law.

**Q8. How must a project statement document an emerging issue?**

- A. We consider emerging issues relevant to species of greatest conservation need or their habitats although they are not included in the SWAP.

A project statement must:

- (1) Describe the emerging issue fully by identifying the wildlife species or habitats that would benefit from the proposed action;
- (2) Explain why it is an emerging issue; and
- (3) Commit the State to monitoring the effectiveness of the completed action so the State can adaptively manage future activities.

The project statement must include a commitment letter that the director of the State fish and wildlife agency has signed stating that the next version of the Plan will include the issue if it remains a priority. The Assistant Regional Director for Migratory Birds and State Programs, or an official in a similar position associated with WSFR, must review grant applications or amendments that include emerging issues not in the SWAP. The Assistant Regional Director must concur that the issue is an emerging issue. WSFR must retain the original paper copy, or an electronic copy of the concurrence or non-concurrence.

**Q9. For multistate grant applications, should one State be the project lead and does each State need to contribute a 25% match?**

- A. One State must be the lead in submitting the grant application and coordinating most aspects of the grant application including: coordinating work; coordinating monitoring; and writing a final performance report that summarizes overall results with specific data from all participating States and other partners.

Each participating State that is an active partner wishing to directly receive grant funds from the Service must submit an Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) to obligate its portion of awarded funds. In addition, each State must prepare and submit individual financial status and performance reports for its portion of the overall project.

For multi-State projects, the overall match must be at least 25%; however, each State may provide more or less than 25%. For States that provide less than a 25% match, the designated lead must document at least 25% match on the SF 424 (regardless of the source).

The lead State may also choose to develop a subgrant or a contract with another State.

**Q10. What activities are eligible for funding under this program?**

- A. 1) Conservation actions such as research, surveys, species and habitat management, land acquisition, facilities development, and monitoring.
- 2) Development of habitat mapping, data management systems, monitoring protocols, and specific improvements to SWAPs identified in Section IV.F.
- 3) Education and law enforcement activities, but only when each comprises a minor portion of a grant project objective, are critical to project success, and specifically address a threat or issue identified within the SWAP. "Minor" is considered no more than 10 percent of an individual project cost.

**Q11. What are the compliance requirements for activities funded under this program?**

- A. States must comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations as a condition of acceptance of Federal funds. In addition to the authorizing legislation, compliance requirements for the SWG Competitive Grant Program include 43 CFR Part 12, 2 CFR 225, OMB Circulars (A-87, A-102, and A-133), ESA, NEPA, NHPA, and other applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Applicants must provide assurance that they will comply with applicable provisions. [Appendix 2, 522 FW 1](#) of the Service Manual provides an assurances checklist for construction grants (SF 424D) and for non-construction grants (SF 424B) that States may use to develop a grant application (Service Manual [522 FW 1.3B and C](#) and [523 FW 1](#)).

**Q12. Are there additional formatting criteria?**

- A. Formatting criteria are included in the Request for Applications. There are no additional requirements unless an applicant applies via Grants.gov. Those formatting requirements can be found at <http://www.grants.gov/>.

**Q13. Where should an applicant submit SWG Competitive Grant Program applications?**

- A. Applicants must submit applications to the appropriate Service Regional WSFR Office or to Grants.gov. Service Regional WSFR Office addresses may be found in Section IV. A of the Request for Applications.

**Q14. Who announces the awards, and what additional documentation is required of selected applicants?**

- A. The Service Director makes selections for awards based on scored ranking of the criteria. The Service Regional office will notify applicants of the selections and provide any additional information requirements.

**Q15. When are environmental compliance documents required?**

- A. The Service, in cooperation with grantees, must address Federal compliance issues relating to the ESA, NEPA, and NHPA prior to obligating awarded grant funds. Service Regional WSFR Staff can assist grantees in explaining the procedures and documentation necessary for meeting Federal requirements prior to approval of the Application for Federal Assistance to obligate funds.

**Q16. What must be done during the grant period if a change in objectives or approach is needed?**

- A. This is a competitive program. Therefore, each grant application is judged to be complete with all costs needed to accomplish the objectives of the application. The Service will have discretion, however, to determine if proposed changes can be accepted if the original objectives will be met and the resulting benefits will be equivalent to those previously described. Otherwise, no changes to costs, objectives, benefits, or approach will be allowed.

If the State(s) cannot complete the grant as approved, the grant will be terminated; all remaining unexpended funds will revert to the Service; the State must submit a final report within 90 days of the termination date. The Service may require that the State(s) repay all expended funds if the final financial status report and the final performance report indicate that no substantive accomplishments were made. In addition, the Service will not accept

applications from the grantee to participate in the next two award cycles following the termination date.

**Q17. Who has the authority to terminate a grant?**

- A. Grants may be terminated by the Service Director or by mutual agreement between the State Director and the Service Regional WSFR Chief. A termination decision by the Service Director is not subject to appeal.

**Q18. What is included within the page limits for the proposal narrative, and what is not?**

**Project Narrative Content:**

<b>Included in page requirement</b>	<b>Not included in page requirement</b>
<b>Narrative describing needs, objectives, Results and benefits, approach (methods)</b>	<b>Forms (e.g., SF424, SF424C, SF424D, assurances)</b>
<b>Location description</b>	<b>Budgets</b>
<b>Project leader information (i.e., name, address)</b>	<b>Maps</b>
<b>Graphs and tables inserted within the narrative</b>	<b>Photos</b>
<b>Interpretations of Scoring criteria</b>	<b>Drawings</b>
<b>Addendums that explain or provide additional information to supplement the narrative</b>	<b>Schematics</b>
	<b>Literature cited</b>
	<b>Resume/vitae</b>
	<b>Letters of commitment</b>
	<b>Letters of support</b>
	<b>Location map</b>
	<b>Photographs</b>

**Q19. What resources are available to help with project design and proposal development?**

States seeking to submit competitive SWG proposals may benefit from information contained in the document, “Measuring the Effectiveness of State Wildlife Grants,” available at: [http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/Effectiveness-Measures-Report\\_2011.pdf](http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/Effectiveness-Measures-Report_2011.pdf). Applicants submitting proposals to the SWAP Enhancement Fund may benefit from information provided in the document, “Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans,” available at: <http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/SWAPBestPractices.pdf>.

