



2016 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

VOLUNTEER MONITORING SUPPORT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Nonpoint Source Program has \$12,000 in grant funding under the federal Clean Water Act Section 604b to assist local volunteer monitoring (VM) groups in their efforts to protect and restore surface and groundwater.

SCOPE

DEQ seeks grant applications for up to \$3,000 from VM groups needing financial assistance with laboratory sample analysis costs associated with water quality monitoring projects related to nonpoint source pollution. Eligible applicants include non-profit local watershed groups, conservation districts, water quality districts, school systems, county extension services, and county governments. This program is for laboratory analyses and sample shipping costs, and does **not** provide funding for any operational costs such as developing Sampling and Analysis Plans (SAPs), travel, monitoring time, or purchasing/maintaining field equipment. The maximum amount of funding per VM group for lab analyses and shipping costs is \$3,000. Energy Laboratories, Inc. is the service provider for lab analyses under this Call for Applications. Energy Laboratories will ship coolers and sample supplies to the VM group free of charge. Samples will be shipped or hand delivered to Energy Laboratories' facilities in Billings or Helena. Analytical results will be sent directly from the lab to the VM group. All data that is collected using these funds is required to be uploaded to DEQ's eWQX database.

Application, SAP Template, and SAP Supplemental Guidance Document can be downloaded from DEQ's Nonpoint Source Program's wiki site located here:

<http://montananps319grants.pbworks.com/w/page/21640346/Montana%20DEQ%20NPS%20-%20Volunteer%20Monitoring%20Wiki>

ELIGIBILITY CHECK-LIST

In order for an application to be eligible, the following requirements must be met:

- Applicant is a non-profit local watershed group, conservation district, water quality district, works with a school system, county extension service or county government
- Applicant provided a Tax ID number for their fiscal sponsor organization
- Application was received or postmarked by 5PM on April 18, 2016
- Application is complete

- Draft SAP is included
- Sampling and final reporting is to be completed by February 28, 2017

SCHEDULE

Applications are due April 18 at 5pm and must include a draft Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP).

Applications will be compared to the eligibility checklist to determine applicant eligibility. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. If the total amount requested exceeds the amount available, eligible applications will be scored according to the scoring criteria (see page 3) and the highest scoring projects will receive funding. Nonpoint Source Program staff will review SAPs and provide feedback to applicants by April 22, 2016. Funding will be made available once comments are sufficiently addressed and DEQ has accepted the Awardee's SAP.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

A minimum non-federal match of 40% is required, which may consist of cash or in-kind contributions (i.e. volunteer hours). Grants awarded under this Call for Applications expire February 28, 2017 or when all sampling described in a VM group's SAP has been completed, whichever comes first. All sample collection procedures and laboratory analyses funded through the VM support program must meet DEQ's quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) requirements located at:

<http://deq.mt.gov/Water/WQPB/qaprogram> . A VM group must have a DEQ-approved SAP prior to submitting samples to Energy Laboratories. Funding can be awarded to groups under an existing DEQ-approved SAP.

Quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) activities must be followed as described in the SAP. QA/QC documentation must occur for all monitoring activities, including, but not limited to, the completion of field site visit forms and chain of custody forms for samples submitted to labs.

All data that is collected using these funds is required to be uploaded to DEQ's eWQX database. Instructions are located here: <http://deq.mt.gov/Water/WQINFO/datamgmt/mtewqx> . The responsibility for uploading the data to the eWQX database should be determined in advance of the data collection efforts. VM groups may upload the data themselves or work with a partner to upload the data. Recipients are required to submit a brief final report summarizing the activities performed; important findings and outcomes of the project activities; feedback from participants; an evaluation of how well the goals and objectives were met; and photos of activities. The final report must also include an estimate of the total amount of non-federal match for the grant. Volunteer hours used as match should be converted to a dollar amount using DEQ's most current volunteer rate guidance document which can be found here:

<http://montananps319grants.pbworks.com/w/page/21640327/319%20Projects%20Home> . Grantees must meet all Terms and Conditions described in this Call for Applications in order to remain eligible for continued support through this program.

ASSESSMENT FOCUS FOR VOLUNTEER MONITORING PROJECTS

For the purposes of this program, monitoring is defined as the collection of field data using a consistent sampling methodology that is guided by a pre-established Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP). In this regard, water quality monitoring is a tool used to gather information necessary to answer questions

about water quality. A monitoring effort should therefore be a component of an assessment project with the purpose of answering a pre-defined question. The components of a VM project should include:

- 1) **Project goals:** purpose of project
- 2) **Project objectives:** specific assessment questions to be addressed. The assessment questions determine how the study needs to be designed.
- 3) **A review of existing data** of relevance to the project objectives (identifying information or information gaps that may guide the assessment or help answer the questions of interest).
- 4) **A sampling and analysis plan (SAP)** which includes:
 - A) **The quality assurance and control requirements:** determining the appropriate sample collection methods for the selected parameters, and determining appropriate lab analysis procedures; establishing data quality objectives.
 - B) **The study design:** sampling design-when, where, and how to collect data in order to address assessment questions; determining in advance how the data will be analyzed; establishing any necessary decision criteria for making conclusions about assessment questions.
 - C) **Defined participant roles and responsibilities:** designating who will perform each project task.
- 5) **Data management and data analysis:** a reliable system for storing the data; a plan for who will analyze the lab results; a plan for how the results will be analyzed in order to address the assessment questions; a plan for how conclusions will be formulated.
- 6) **Reporting the results:** how the data analysis results will be communicated and additional considerations.

The SAP is the tool used to ensure that QA/QC requirements will be met. In addition to the quality assurance and control measures, the second component of the SAP is the study design. DEQ will review the study design and provide comments and recommendations. However, it is the sole responsibility of the applicant to develop a study design that will appropriately address the assessment questions. A scientifically valid study design is not a requirement for receiving DEQ approval of a SAP. DEQ cannot ensure that a VM effort will develop and implement a study design that is scientifically appropriate for addressing each assessment question. DEQ approval of a VM SAP does not constitute an endorsement that the study design is valid for addressing the assessment questions.

DEQ encourages VM groups to develop projects having one main goal and narrowly defined assessment questions. DEQ cautions VM groups against either undertaking a project involving multiple goals and assessment questions or undertaking “baseline” data collection without specifying assessment questions to be addressed.

DEQ recognizes that the level of technical rigor necessary for an individual monitoring effort varies according to the goals and objectives of each VM project. In this regard, the VM support program is open to VM groups at all levels of technical capability. Prior to applying for lab analysis support funding, DEQ encourages volunteer monitoring groups to consider how well the technical knowledge, skills, and experience of the VM group aligns with the scientific complexity of the project objectives.

SCORING CRITERIA

Eligible applications meet the requirements outlined in the “Application Checklist” and provide all the information requested in the attached application form. The decision to award funds to a VM project will be based on the following criteria, as addressed in the application form:

1. The application identifies a narrowly focused project goal.

2. The application identifies a specific question(s) about water quality that the monitoring will be used to address.
3. The proposed monitoring parameters focus on the identified monitoring question(s).
4. The applicant has identified existing sources of relevant data and the applicability of the data to the current project been considered.
5. The group has taken the appropriate steps to facilitate monitoring this year.
6. The applicant has identified how the laboratory results will be analyzed in order to address the study questions.
7. The applicant has the appropriate experience and/or technical assistance for the type of project for which funding is requested.
8. Results of the project will be shared with the appropriate audiences.
9. Results of the project will be used to make positive improvements in water quality.

In the event that funds requested exceed the amount available, the above scoring criteria will be given a rank from zero to three, zero being: *does not meet criteria*, three being: *meets criteria*. Projects will be scored accordingly and highest scoring projects will receive funding.

For more information about the Volunteer Monitoring Support Program, please contact:

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