

APPENDIX A – 2026 GRANT CYCLE DETAILS

The DEQ Nonpoint Source and Wetlands section (NPSW) uses a two-phase application process: Draft Application Phase, and Final Application Phase. APPLICANTS MUST COMPLETE BOTH PHASES to be eligible to receive nonpoint source funding.

Draft Application Phase – 1/5/2026 through 2/27/2026

Friday, 1/5/2026 – Call for Applications Issued, Draft Application Phase Begins

An announcement that the Call is open has been made through the state's online platform [GovDelivery listserv](#), DEQ's social media accounts and an official public notice.

The Call for Applications is available on the DEQ Nonpoint Source Program website: <https://deq.mt.gov/water/Programs/nonpoint>. You can also download a copy of the application form(s) using the embedded links below:

- [On-the-Ground Projects Application Form](#)
- [Supplemental Project Form](#)
- [On-the-Ground Budget Template](#)
- [Capacity Building and Education Outreach Application Form](#)
- [Capacity Building and Education Outreach Budget Template](#)

The application forms are fillable PDFs. Adobe Reader software is required and can be downloaded for free: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

Before filling out an application form, read the entire Call for Applications, paying special attention to the Calendar, the Scoring Sheets, and the example Contract Template. Space for answering application questions is deliberately limited. Do not change font size to include more information. Do not type “see attached document” into the answer boxes and then attach a separate document with longer answers.

1/5/2026 – 2/27/2025 at 5:00 pm – Nonpoint Source and Wetland Section Staff

Available for Consultation

Contact Nonpoint Source and Wetland Section staff to:

- Help determine whether the project is eligible for nonpoint source pollution reduction funding;
- Provide guidance on how to make the proposal more competitive;
- Conduct a site visit and provide technical guidance on restoration techniques;
- Help identify and develop project effectiveness evaluation procedures;
- Share experience gained from years of helping other applicants develop successful applications;
- Answer questions about the application form, scoring sheets, application process, etc.;
- Discuss draft applications.

Friday, 2/20/2026 at 5:00 pm – Draft Applications and All Attachments Due to Meagan Gilmore (Meagan.Gilmore@mt.gov) by 5:00 pm

To be eligible to receive funding, you **must submit a complete, draft application for review and comment by DEQ by 2/20/2026 at 5:00pm. This is the only draft application that NPSW will review.**

Submit all application materials, including attachments, in either PDF or Microsoft Office Suite compatible file format. **Draft applications must be fully signed, completely filled out, and include necessary letters of support and other attachments. Unsigned applications will be rejected, as will any information submitted after 5:00 pm on Friday, 2/20/2026.**

Electronic documents smaller than ten megabytes (10 MB) may be delivered via email to Meagan Gilmore. Electronic documents larger than ten megabytes (10 MB) must be delivered using the State of Montana's File Transfer Service. Sign up instructions are available at <https://transfer.mt.gov/Home/Instructions>. DO NOT send electronic files through Dropbox, Google Docs, or any other commercially available file transfer service.

Contact Meagan Gilmore to make sure that all documents were received: Meagan.gilmore@mt.gov or 406-755-8918.

Friday, 2/27/2026 – Draft Application Feedback Posted

DEQ will post all draft applications and Nonpoint Source and Wetlands Staff's feedback on projects to the [DEQ Nonpoint Source Program website](#). DEQ encourages applications to consider all comments and revise applications as needed to prepare for the Final Application phase.

Common questions from draft application review will be posted to the eMACS Q&A Board. After 2/27/2026, all questions must be submitted through the Q&A Board on eMACS. Answers will be posted there as soon as possible. Within the Q&A Board, you will be able to view all other posted questions and answers.

Final Application Phase

Friday, 3/13/2026 at 5:00 pm – Final, Complete, Signed Applications and all Required Attachments Must Be Submitted in eMACS

Final, complete, fully signed application forms and all necessary attachments, including required landowner letter of support, must be submitted in eMACS. Unsigned applications will be rejected, as will any information submitted outside of eMACS, or after 5:00 pm on Friday, 3/13/2026.

Wednesday 4/1/2026 – Thursday 4/2/2026 – Agency Review Panel Meeting

The Agency Review Panel will consist of two half day hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings. Applicants are encouraged to attend the 2nd day of the Agency Review Panel meeting, and to have key project partners and landowners on hand to answer questions during the allotted question and answer time. DEQ staff will be on hand throughout the meeting to answer additional questions and provide clarification on nonpoint source program requirements. The public is also invited to attend the 2nd day.

The Panel will be chaired by DEQ and will include representatives from various state and federal natural resource agencies. The purpose of the Agency Review Panel is for DEQ to draw upon the knowledge and experience of other natural resource professionals to better inform DEQ's decisions about which projects to fund.

Wednesday 4/1/2026

DEQ will train the Agency Review Panel on the process for completing score sheets ([Appendix E](#)). The scoring sheets are intended to support the Agency Review Panel discussion and guide funding recommendations. **They are not final decision-making matrices.** Panelists will also discuss each application and compile questions for applicants.

Thursday 4/2/2026

Each applicant will be given a set amount of time to respond to questions from the Panel; this will be the only opportunity for applicants to discuss with the Agency Review Panel. After, the Panel will finalize scores and deliberate funding recommendations for DEQ's consideration.

Monday, 4/20/2026 by 5:00 pm – Award Determination Notices Sent to Applicants

Following the Agency Review Panel meeting, DEQ staff will review the Agency Review Panel's recommendations and issue tentative award determination notices to all applicants. Final funding decisions will be dependent on EPA review and approval.

4/20/2026 through 5/11/2026 – Contract Development

Funds are administered as contracts. Contracts are legally binding agreements that identify specific products or work that must be completed prior to receiving reimbursement. Only work done after a contract is signed and before the contract expires can be submitted for reimbursement or reported as match.

If your application is successful, a DEQ project manager will be assigned to work with you to develop a contract based on the information provided in your application and recommendations made by the Agency Review Panel and DEQ Management. Your DEQ project manager will use a template similar to the one found in [Appendix G](#) to prepare a draft scope of work.

The goal is to develop a mutually agreeable scope of work by May 8, 2026. DEQ will submit the scope of work to EPA for approval in June of 2026. EPA reviews the final scopes of work for consistency with the current [Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan](#), consistency with EPA nonpoint source program guidelines, and overall impacts on water quality.

October 2026 – Contract Initiation

Once DEQ receives confirmation of EPA approval and release of funding to states, DEQ will issue contracts to successful applicants. We anticipate having funding available in October. Expenses and match incurred by applicants prior to the full signing of a contract CANNOT be applied to the contract.

October 2026 to Approximately September 2029 – Project Implementation, Reporting, and Close-out

Once a contract has been signed by the project sponsor and by DEQ, applicants can begin accruing and reporting expenses and match funds. Payment is made on a **reimbursement** basis. Applicants may request payment no more frequently than monthly and no less frequently than semi-annually. With each payment request, applicants are required to submit a report that includes a description of the work completed and justification for expenses incurred. Templates and reporting guidance for these reports can be found under "Guidance for Funding Recipients" on the website:
<https://deq.mt.gov/water/Programs/nonpoint#accordion1-collapse5>

Projects are expected to be completed within 3 years of the date the contract is signed, although contracts may be extended an additional 1.5 years with justification. Final reports and deliverables must be submitted electronically at least 15 days prior to the expiration date of each contract.

Applicants are expected to maintain copies of all deliverables, reports, and correspondence related to the project for a minimum of eight (8) years following the close of the contract.