

2026 NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION REDUCTION CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



Middle Fork of the Judith River Restoration: Riparian Road Decommissioning and Rehabilitation, Phase 5 – Post-restoration 2024. Photo Credit: Trout Unlimited.

January 2026

Prepared by:

Nonpoint Source and Wetlands Section
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Table of Contents

1.0 – Purpose	4
2.0 – Funding Availability	4
3.0 – Match Requirements	5
4.0 – Applicant Eligibility	5
5.0 – Project Requirements	6
5.1 – On-The-Ground Project Requirements	6
5.2 – Capacity Building/Education Outreach Project Requirements	8
5.4 – Co-Benefit Considerations	10
6.0 – Additional Resources.....	10
APPENDICES	11
Appendix A - Grant Cycle	11
Appendix B - Additional Program Requirements.....	11
Appendix C - Project Examples	11
Appendix D – Community Based Social Marketing Framework	11
Appendix E – Scoring Sheets	11
Appendix F – Application Forms and Budget Templates	11
Appendix G – Example Contract and Scope of Work Templates.....	11

Two-Phase Solicitation Schedule

APPLICANTS MUST COMPLETE BOTH THE DRAFT AND FINAL APPLICATION PHASES IN ORDER TO BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING (See [Appendix A](#) for additional scheduling details).

<i>Draft Application Phase</i>	
Monday 1/5/2026 – Wednesday 2/18/2026 at 5:00 pm	Solicitation opens. Applicants should work with Nonpoint Source and Wetlands (NPSW) staff to discuss potential projects and applications.
Friday 2/20/2026 at 5:00 pm	Complete, signed draft applications and all attachments, including required landowner letter of support, must be submitted to Meagan Gilmore (Meagan.Gilmore@mt.gov) by 5:00 pm. This is the only draft application that NPSW will review.
Friday 2/27/2026	Draft applications and feedback posted to DEQ website https://deq.mt.gov/water/Programs/nonpoint . After this deadline, all questions must be posted to the Q&A Board in the State’s procurement management system (eMACS).
<i>Final Application Phase</i>	
Friday 2/27/2026	Final solicitation opens. eMACS Q&A Board opens.
Monday 03/09/2026 at 5:00 pm	eMACS Q&A Board closes.
Friday 3/13/2026 at 5:00 pm	Final, complete, signed applications and all attachments, including required landowner letter of support, submitted to the eMACS by 5:00 pm. Unsigned applications will be rejected, as will any information submitted outside of eMACS.
Wednesday 4/1/2026 - Thursday 4/2/2026	Agency Review Panel meeting (see Appendix A for more details).
Monday 4/20/2026	Applicants notified of funding decisions.
Monday 4/20/2026 – Friday 5/8/2026	NPSW staff and successful applicants draft contracts prior to DEQ internal reviews.
October 2026	Funding becomes available.

NPSW Program Contacts

- [Hannah Riedl](#), Section Supervisor – 406-444-0549
- [Mark Ockey](#), Water Quality Specialist – 406-444-5351
- [Meagan Gilmore](#), Water Quality Specialist – 406-755-8981
- [Ella Lunny](#), Water Quality Specialist – 406-444-6740
- [Stephen Carpenedo](#), Senior Wetland Specialist – 406-444-3527
- [Torie Haraldson](#), Water Quality Specialist – 406-556-4511
- [Tiffany Lyden](#), Education and Outreach Specialist – 406-444-3576

eMACs Online Platform –All final applications must be submitted through the state’s online procurement management platform eMACS (electronic Montana Acquisition and Contracting System). <http://spb.mt.gov/eMACS-Resources>. Applicants should be registered ahead of time in eMACS. Step-by-step registration instructions: [Overview of eMACS Registration Steps for Nonpoint Source and Wetland Program Partners](#)

Still have questions?

1. emacs@mt.gov or the eMACs Help Desk at 406-444-2575 for the submittal assistance
2. Contact Customer Support 1-800-233-1121 for registration and/or login/access assistance
 - a. Select option 1 for English
 - b. Select option 1 again for Supplier (Vendor)
 - c. Select option 2 for Supplier Support at sciquest.com (URL)
 - d. As soon as you get a representative, explain to them that you are a State of Montana supplier having issues with the vendor portal.

Unanticipated Program Changes

Information in the Call for Applications may be subject to change based on unforeseen changes to DEQ or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). If changes become necessary, DEQ will post the changes on the [Nonpoint Source Program website](#) and eMACS.

Refer to [Appendix A](#) – Grant Cycle for additional information.

1.0 – PURPOSE

To reduce and prevent nonpoint source pollution
by
restoring and protecting natural processes and conditions.

2.0 – FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Funding for this call comes from the EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Grant Program and the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program; and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Renewable Resource Grants program. DEQ anticipates at least \$1.5M will be available to distribute by October 2026. Funding will be disbursed as follows:

- \$750k to competitive projects located within the Lower Shields River Focus Watershed or National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Watersheds*.
- \$750k, plus any unallocated funds from the Focus Watersheds, to on-the-ground projects including capacity building and education outreach programs elsewhere in Montana.
- ****NEW**** Additional funding available for on-the-ground project applications that help reduce and prevent harmful algal blooms (HABs) downstream and decrease economic risk.
- No single project may receive more than \$300k, but a single applicant may submit multiple applications if they have multiple projects.

* The Lower Shields River Watershed is the current DEQ NPSW Section Focus Watershed for 2026, 2027, and 2028 funding years. The Natural Resource Conservation Service's NWQI watersheds are also considered Focus Watersheds. These are the Camp and Godfrey Creeks (contained within the Lower Gallatin) and Shields River watersheds: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/national-water-quality-initiative/montana/national-water-quality-initiative>

3.0 – MATCH REQUIREMENTS

Applicants are required to meet a **minimum 10% non-federal cost share** (also known as match) for the project. **A 40% non-federal match is encouraged.** Match can be from private, state, local, or non-profit sources. Contributions from federal sources cannot be counted toward non-federal match. Use the following formula to calculate the amount of non-federal match required for your project.

Calculating Required Match

$$[(\text{grant funding requested})/0.90] - (\text{grant funding requested}) = \text{required non-federal match}$$

Where 0.90 calculates the minimum 10% required non-federal match. Use 0.60 to calculate the recommended 40% non-federal match.

Example: For a project sponsor requesting \$100,000 in grant funds, the minimum required match would be:

$$(\$100,000 \div 0.90) - \$100,000 = \$11,111.11$$

Expenses and match incurred by applicants prior to the signing of a contract, and after the expiration date of the contract, CANNOT be submitted for reimbursement or applied as match.

4.0 – APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

*All applicants must submit draft **and** final applications according to the schedule and instructions described on page 3 and [Appendix A](#). All applicants must register with the state’s online platform eMACS to post questions and view responses and submit final, complete applications.*

The following entities may be eligible to receive funding:

- Nonprofit organizations having a tax-exempt declaration of 501(c)(3) from the Internal Revenue Service.
- Governmental entities. A governmental entity is a local, state, federal, or tribal organization that has been established and authorized by law.

Applicants must also meet the following minimum qualifications:

- **Have a current UEI number. Unique Entity Identifier.** Each project applicant is required to have a current UEI number. **The UEI number replaces the old DUNS number.** If your organization had a DUNS number, you should have received a notification from the federal government indicating that your DUNS number has been changed to a UEI number. If you did not receive this notification, or if you never had a DUNS number, you will need to go to the federal

government's System for Award Management (SAM - <https://sam.gov/content/home>) to obtain your UEI number.

- Be registered with the federal System for Award Management (SAM). The SAM registration website is <https://sam.gov/SAM/>.
- Be registered with the Montana Secretary of State. All applicants must be registered with the Montana Secretary of State to do business in the state of Montana. Registration with the Secretary of State may be completed via the following website: <https://sosmt.gov/business/start-maintain-grow/>
- Have the necessary liability insurance.
- Comply with the Workers Compensation Act.
- Have sufficient technical and managerial resources available to facilitate completion of the project.

5.0 – PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

This Nonpoint Source Project Application Call supports two types of projects:

- On-the-ground projects
- Capacity building and education outreach projects

5.1 – ON-THE-GROUND PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

On-the-ground projects may include related tasks such as planning, design, permitting, construction, effectiveness evaluation, education and outreach, and project administration. Depending on the readiness of the project and applicants' timeline, applicants may choose to only request funding for the planning, design, and permitting phase of a project, or only the implementation and effectiveness monitoring phase of a project, for example.

Pass-through mini-grant programs with on-the-ground projects will also be considered in this category. A competitive process must be used to distribute mini-grant funds.

Minimum Funding Request (per project): \$10,000

Maximum Funding Request (per project): \$300,000

Time For Completion: 3 years from the signing of a contract with DEQ, though extensions may be granted for an additional 1.5 years.

Eligibility

These projects must meet all the eligibility requirements listed below to qualify for funding.

- Projects must implement activities or practices identified in a DEQ-accepted watershed restoration plan or an EPA-approved Tribal Nonpoint Source Management Plan.
 - If you do not have a DEQ-accepted watershed restoration plan or an EPA-approved Tribal Nonpoint Source Management Plan by the application deadline, you must submit a draft prior to applying for funding. DEQ staff will review the draft and estimate the likelihood of it being accepted prior to October 2026. See DEQ's interactive [Watershed Plan Viewer](#) map for information on existing Watershed Restoration Plans.
- All projects must reduce or prevent nonpoint source pollution by restoring and protecting natural processes and conditions.

- Projects that address water quality impairments on [Montana’s 2020 List of Impaired Waters](#) are preferred though not a requirement. Funding may be used for projects that protect waterbodies that are demonstrated to be healthy.
- All projects must implement actions consistent with recommendations in the current [Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan](#)
- Applicants must complete the [2026 On-the-Ground Project Application Form](#), the [2026 On-the-Ground Budget Template](#) and where necessary, the [2026 Supplemental Project Form](#).

Ineligible Activities (applicable to on-the-ground project funding only)

The following activities are NOT eligible for on-the-ground project funding:

- Development of a Watershed Restoration Plan or similar type of plan.
- Activities that reduce or prevent discharges from a point source.
- Watershed characterization studies.
- Pollutant source identification.
- Water quality monitoring, except for monitoring the effectiveness of funded projects.
- Statewide education outreach campaigns.
- Projects whose primary purpose is to protect infrastructure from stream channel migration.
- Riprap, except in instances where it is necessary to protect a new bridge or culvert designed to restore aquatic organism passage or improve natural stream processes.
- Projects designed to address violations of state and federal law (e.g., projects that stem from a 310 violation or an Army Corps violation).

All projects that include implementation of on-the-ground practices must meet minimum design standards (see below), minimum monitoring requirements, and the successful applicant must enter into a signed agreement with the landowner prior to beginning construction. Additionally, DEQ encourages up to \$5,000 per project for education, outreach and training efforts to raise awareness about the project and generate additional efforts to reduce nonpoint source pollution. See the [2026 On-the-Ground Application Form](#) for minimum requirements and details covering all components of on-the-ground projects.

Projects must meet the following minimum design standards:

- Projects must restore and maintain natural conditions and processes.
- Only native, site-appropriate plant species may be used for revegetation.
- Projects involving riparian or wetland buffer creation must have a minimum buffer width of 35 feet, as measured from the ordinary high-water mark. If the buffer must be less than 35 feet in some places to accommodate bridges, water gaps or other infrastructure, the buffer should be made proportionately wider in other areas.
- Projects must allow for the continued existence and future colonization of beaver.
- Revegetation efforts must include browse protection where necessary.
- Projects addressing stream flow through improved water use efficiency must include reasonable assurance that unused water will remain in the stream (e.g., through a change of use to instream flow, or a signed commitment from the water right holder).
- Projects must not result in a net loss of wetlands or wetland function.
- Projects involving grazing management (e.g., riparian fencing, creation of riparian pastures) must include a grazing management plan as a deliverable.

****NEW** - Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) Reduction Projects** – Additional funding is available for on-the-ground projects that contribute to reducing the prevalence of documented harmful algal blooms (HABs) downstream and associated economic risk. Considerations for this funding include:

- \$125K minimum funding request for on-the-ground HAB reduction applications.
- HAB reduction projects should reduce upstream or upland sources of nutrients through practices like wetland restoration, riparian revegetation, and improved soil management. In-lake treatment strategies are not eligible for project funding.
- A watershed restoration plan is not required but is encouraged to support project implementation into the future. See funding opportunity in **Section 5.2**.
- A DEQ contract manager will work with successful applicants to include carbon sequestration and/or emission reduction estimates in the final report.

Please use the “Co-benefit Considerations” response on the [2026 On-the-Ground Application Form](#) to justify the proposed project is eligible for this funding. Resources that can be used to demonstrate eligibility include but are not limited to:

- HABs reported since 2020 and upstream watersheds are depicted in the [Harmful Algal Bloom Report Map](#). Watersheds are prioritized by whether drinking water intake or wastewater outfalls are also present, however, DEQ recognizes these are not the only economic risk factors.
- Additional documented HABs are listed in [Appendix C](#) of the Harmful Algal Bloom Guidance Document.

5.2 CAPACITY BUILDING/EDUCATION OUTREACH PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Minimum Funding Request (per project): \$10,000

Maximum Funding Request (per project): \$30,000

Time For Completion: 1.5 - 3 years from the signing of a contract with DEQ, though extensions may be granted for an additional 1.5 years.

Eligibility

DEQ will award funding for projects related to capacity building and education outreach consistent with activities described in the current [Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan](#), and to projects that serve underserved markets. An underserved market may be identified as an area without a Watershed Restoration Plan, identified using [demographic-based tools](#), or otherwise justified on the application form.

Applicants must complete the [2026 Capacity Building/Education Outreach Application Form](#) and the [2026 Capacity Building/Education and Outreach Budget Template](#).

Ineligible activities for Capacity Building and Education Outreach

- Food and beverage costs
- Re-creation of existing educational lesson plans
 - *Applicants are encouraged to review [the Educational Resources Guide](#) for existing lesson plans that can be implemented as part of proposed activities*
- Statewide education outreach campaigns

- Normal website maintenance

5.2.1 Capacity Building

The intent of supporting capacity building is to increase organizational capacity, aid in watershed planning, and/or lead to a grant application(s) for larger on-the-ground projects.

Eligible activities for Capacity Building:

- Development of a watershed restoration plan or alternative.
- Update to a Tribal Nonpoint Source Management Plan.
- Demonstration projects to encourage partnerships with landowners.
- Capacity building to support growth of an organization (trainings and symposiums, monitoring equipment, etc.).
- Nonpoint source pollution reduction projects that invest in/benefit traditionally underserved markets.
- Pursuing creative finance partnerships to address match requirements.
- Conducting a water quality investigation to help prioritize the most effective restoration options and build stakeholder buy in (this type of project will likely require a sampling and analysis plan).
- Preliminary data collection on a previously un-assessed waterbody (this type of project will likely require a sampling and analysis plan).
- Cultivating partnerships with landowners and land managers to develop future projects that could be eligible for nonpoint source funding.

5.2.2 Education Outreach

DEQ will prioritize education outreach campaigns founded in the community-based social marketing framework ([Appendix D](#)) that promote impactful behaviors that will prevent or reduce nonpoint source pollution. *Applicants are encouraged to review existing resources in the [Educational Resources Guide](#) and [EPA's Environmental Education Guidelines](#).* Note: smaller projects (under \$8,000) may be eligible for funding through [E&O Water Quality mini-grants](#).

Eligible activities for Education Outreach:

- Develop, implement, and evaluate community-based social marketing strategies ([Appendix D](#)) to promote behaviors that reduce nonpoint source pollution to improve water quality. This may include seeking funding to support the application of any phase of community-based social marketing:
 - Phase One: Behavior Prioritization
 - Phase Two: Barrier/Benefit Research and Strategy Recommendations
 - Phase Three: Strategy Design
 - Phase Four: Pilot Testing
 - Phase Five: Implementation and Evaluation
- Lead project tours to demonstrate potential changes homeowners or landowners could take to improve water quality.
- Host workshops, classes, or trainings that address nonpoint source pollution issues.
- Develop videos, media, or other outreach tools that address nonpoint source pollution.

5.4 – CO-BENEFIT CONSIDERATIONS

Nonpoint source pollution reduction and prevention projects are part of DEQ’s broader mission to champion a healthy environment for a thriving Montana. The positive impact of these projects often stretches beyond simply improving water quality. The following priorities reflect some of the potential that nonpoint source pollution reduction projects have for serving the greater good. These potential benefits are reflected in the Scoring Sheets.

Harmful Algal Bloom Reduction

HAB reduction project applications may be further prioritized if applicants demonstrate that the project would provide additional benefits such as reducing economic hardship such as from cost and energy needs to treat municipal drinking and wastewater treatment, livestock mortalities, or loss of income from recreation.

Community Engagement

Projects are encouraged to provide equitable access and opportunities to a clean and healthy environment for underserved markets and provide meaningful involvement in environmental decision-making processes from all affected stakeholders. DEQ encourages applicants to support projects that take into consideration the protection of public health.

Drought and Flood Resilience

Ongoing warming temperatures and precipitation regime shifts will have a significant impact on water quality, affecting the timing and quantity of precipitation and snowmelt, the temperature of lakes and streams, and nutrient cycling within aquatic environments. Some nonpoint source pollution prevention projects can lessen these impacts on water quality and quantity by improving environmental resilience or restore cool, late-season stream flow.

Impacts to Downstream Communities and Natural Systems

The effects of nonpoint source pollution are often felt by downstream communities and natural systems. Nonpoint source pollution can increase the cost and complexity of treatment for communities that rely on streams as a source of drinking water. It can increase algal growth, limiting recreational opportunities, and can also have negative impacts on human health, food webs, and wildlife health.

6.0 – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources may also be useful in preparing your application:

- [The Current Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan](#)
- [A map showing watersheds](#) with Watershed Restoration Plans, total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) and final TMDL documents
- The Clean Water Act Information Center (CWAIC) database is available to help search for information on the impairment and TMDL status of Montana waterbodies. The database can be searched online at www.cwaic.mt.gov

Adobe Reader software is required and can be downloaded for free: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

APPENDICES

[APPENDIX A - GRANT CYCLE](#)

[APPENDIX B - ADDITIONAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS](#)

[APPENDIX C - PROJECT EXAMPLES](#)

[APPENDIX D – COMMUNITY BASED SOCIAL MARKETING FRAMEWORK](#)

[APPENDIX E – SCORING SHEETS](#)

[APPENDIX F – APPLICATION FORMS AND BUDGET TEMPLATES](#)

[F1 – 2026 On the Ground Application Form](#)

[F2 – 2026 Supplemental Project Application Form](#)

[F3 – 2026 On the Ground Project Budget Template](#)

[F4 – 2026 Capacity Building & Education Outreach Application Form](#)

[F5 – 2026 Capacity Building & Education Outreach Budget](#)

[APPENDIX G – EXAMPLE CONTRACT AND SCOPE OF WORK TEMPLATES](#)

These requirements can change prior to contract signature. This example is intended to provide applicants with a rough idea of what to expect. The scope of work template is primarily applicable to on-the-ground projects. Given the variability of mini-grant programs and capacity and planning or education outreach projects, DEQ does not have a comparable template for those projects.