



*Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council
c/o Nashua River Watershed Association, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450*

Land Protection Grants Program 2026 Request for Proposals

The Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) announces the availability of Land Protection Grants for 2026. The Land Protection Grants Program supports the advancement of land protection projects that protect and/or enhance the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers and their Outstandingly Remarkable Resource Values (ORRVs) as set forth in the *Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan (Stewardship Plan)*.

The program will further local conservation efforts by providing funds to support acquisition, transaction, and other due diligence costs associated with land protection. In the previous year of this program, the Council awarded a total of \$59,150 for five projects. Grantee organizations committed over \$1,202,541 worth of matching funds and volunteer hours from local communities.

Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan:

The following is a list of land protection goals described in the *Stewardship Plan*; detailed *Stewardship Plan* information is available at:

<https://www.wildandscenicnashuarivers.org/stewardship-plan-and-appendices.html>

Land Protection

- Encourage voluntary land conservation to protect important riverfront and watershed lands.
- Increase land protection efforts to focus on connecting existing protected greenways.
- Restore and sustain lands along all water bodies, including wetlands and their surrounding lands, as linear greenways for their natural resource values.
- Protect priority land habitat, especially along the three rivers and their tributaries.
- Protect priority headwater streams that supply coldwater downstream.
- Recognize and protect important historical and cultural landscape features related to the rivers.

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Grant Timeline

Applications due: **June 1, 2026**

Notifications of awards: **Late June 2026**

Project completed, funds expended, and final report submitted by: **June 1, 2027**

Who may apply:

Eligible entities include municipalities, 501(c)(3) organizations, and state agencies that have land conservation as a primary function in the communities along the Wild and Scenic designated rivers (Ayer, Bolton, Brookline, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Hollis, Lancaster, Pepperell, Shirley, and Townsend). The Stewardship Council may consider applications from municipalities and organizations based outside the Wild and Scenic communities when the project will directly benefit the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers' resources and communities. These organizations are encouraged to consult with the Stewardship Council before applying to discuss their eligibility.

Previously funded entities may apply in subsequent years with a different project, or one that takes previously funded work to the next level. Performance on a previous grant will be weighed in decision making, as will the applicant's ability to learn from evaluation efforts.

Eligible projects:

The Land Protection Grants will support acquisition and transaction costs for land protection projects (fee or easement/restriction) in the Nashua River watershed. Allowable costs may include, but are not limited to surveys, appraisals and appraisal reviews, attorney's services for title searches, closing services, deed preparation and negotiation, baseline document preparation, easement and land recording, and other professional services. Funds can also be used to acquire direct real estate interests (fee or easement/restriction) in land.

Entities may apply for multiple grants, but the applications must be for discrete projects.

Funding:

The Stewardship Council will consider grant requests up to \$20,000.

Funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis upon completion of the project and receipt of the final report, receipts, and any associated products.

The Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) is the fiduciary agent for the Stewardship Council.

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Grant Application Process:

Interested parties are encouraged to contact the Stewardship Council Chair, Lucy Wallace, at lbwallace34@aol.com prior to starting the application process to confirm their eligibility and the appropriateness of the Land Protection Grants for their project. Applications should be no longer than four pages. Additional support materials (maps, photos, etc.) and letters of support and/or commitment are encouraged and do not count toward the four-page maximum.

All application materials should be emailed to emma_lord@nps.gov. Use “N-S-N W&S Land Protection Grant Proposal 2026 – [Group Name]” in the subject line.

The Stewardship Council Executive Committee will evaluate all proposals and present acceptable proposals to the full Stewardship Council for final approval. Successful applicants will be notified via email of the results of the selection process approximately one month after the close of application period. The Stewardship Council reserves the right to ask an applicant to attend a monthly Stewardship Council meeting to further explain their application and/or project before making their funding decision.

Review Criteria:

The merits of an individual project will be evaluated according to the following criteria (in no particular order). Projects do not need to meet all these criteria to be eligible; however, stronger proposals will be those that address many, if not all, of the following:

- How will the proposed project advance the goals of the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Plan?
- Will it address the protection, enhancement, and/or promotion of one or more of the rivers’ outstanding resource values?
- Will the project protect valuable water resources (designated Wild and Scenic River segments, tributaries, headwater streams, wetlands, vernal pools, etc.)?
- What are its direct benefits for the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers’ resources and communities?
- Is the land identified as a priority for protection in any local, state, or regional plans?
- Does the land protection project abut already protected land or provide a linkage to already protected land?
- Will the project provide for public recreational access?

Reports and Products:

Open communication between the grantee and the Stewardship Council is encouraged throughout the grant timeline. Grantees may be required to submit an interim report. Grantees

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will be required to submit a final written report on their projects no later than 30 days after completion and expenditure of funds.

Final reports must contain the following:

- **Project summary** - Title, purpose, accomplishments, and benefits. The summary should be no more than two paragraphs. It will be used for the Stewardship Council's web site and reports to the W&S towns and may inform other groups that would like to start similar projects.
- **Additional information** - Project details such as audience, tasks, procedures, and evaluation of results.
- **Budget** - Using the format of the budget table provided in your application, itemize and describe the actual expenses and in-kind match amounts. Explain significant differences from the initial budget. Describe any additional funds leveraged with Stewardship Council funding and list the number of volunteers involved and estimated hours. Attach a copy of receipts for all expenditures.
- **Associated products** - Relevant reports, press releases, photos, etc. If possible, please include photo credits so your project photos can be used in Stewardship Council publications.

Grantees who are unable to complete their project within the grant timeline should contact the Stewardship Council as soon as possible to request a grant extension. Contact the Stewardship Council Chair, Lucy Wallace, at lbwallace34@aol.com.

The Stewardship Council retains copyright rights and may use any or all materials generated as it sees fit without any additional compensation. Grantees may be requested to speak or present to the full Stewardship Council when their project is completed.

Recipients of Stewardship Council funding must include recognition of the Stewardship Council contribution in all promotional materials and other appropriate public documents related to the funded project and its results. The following line is an example of acknowledgement:

“Funding is provided by the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council through the National Park Service under CFDA: 15.962 – Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Wild and Scenic River Assistance.”