



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

Community Grants Program 2024 Request for Proposals

The Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) announces the availability of Community Grants for 2024. The program supports projects that protect and/or enhance the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers and their Outstandingly Remarkable Resource Values (ORRVs).

The Community Grants program aims to engage municipalities and local organizations in protecting the rivers' resources and building strong local stewardship of the rivers in accordance with the *Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan (Stewardship Plan)*. In the previous year of this program, the Council awarded a total of \$ \$27,718 for eight projects. Grantee organizations committed over \$143,000 worth of matching funds and volunteer hours from local communities.

Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan:

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

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

Biological Diversity

- Sustain and enhance existing biological diversity along and within the rivers and their tributaries.
- Protect Priority Natural Communities and rare species habitats.
- Protect state-listed Blanding's turtles (Threatened in Massachusetts and Endangered in New Hampshire).
- Protect and enhance coldwater fisheries resources.
- Protect and enhance anadromous fisheries.
- Sustain and improve populations of freshwater mussels.
- Minimize the effect of non-native invasive species.
- Maintain and improve our rivers' water quality so that it supports the needs of native wildlife, aquatic resources, and water supplies.
- Maintain and enhance high-quality riparian habitat.
- Preserve, protect, and improve wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

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- Promote balanced growth, which preserves property values and protects and enhances the riparian resources for future generations.
- Restore, protect, and enhance water quality and associated aquatic resources and water supplies.

Recreation and Scenic

- Promote continued protection of “temporarily protected” greenway lands (Chapter 61, 61A and 61B lands in Massachusetts; “Current Use” lands in New Hampshire).
- Promote additional permanently protected greenway lands and continued protection and completion of the “Nashua River Greenway” – the vision of a greenway along both sides of the rivers and their tributaries.
- Support existing greenways.
- Ensure healthy ecosystems to support recreational fisheries.
- Preserve and enhance opportunities for boating.
- Provide opportunities for safe swimming in our rivers.
- Maintain and enhance regional trail systems.
- Encourage other recreational activities as appropriate.
- Maintain contact with the public regarding their enjoyment of the rivers.
- Protect scenic views related to our rivers.

Historical and Cultural Resources

- Celebrate the roles of influential conservationists inspired by the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers.
- Foster, stimulate, and support the next generation of conservationists.
- Preserve the history of the clean-up of the Nashua River as a national model and preserve “The Marion Stoddart Story.”
- Use the above goal as a springboard for initiating contemporary activities.
- Continue to document the River Renewal.
- Educate and engage the public in the ongoing story of the renewal of the river and what needs to be done to keep the rivers as healthy as possible.
- Identify, protect, and enhance important historical and cultural features, sites, and pathways related to the rivers and recognize the importance of the rivers to the development of the communities.
- Recognize and protect important landscape features related to the rivers.

Grant timeline:

Applications due: **March 8, 2024**

Notifications of awards: **March 28, 2024**

Project completed and funds expended by: **March 21, 2025**

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Who may apply:

Eligible entities include municipalities, municipality-affiliated groups, and nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations from the communities along the Wild and Scenic designated rivers (Ayer, Bolton, Brookline, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Hollis, Lancaster, Pepperell, Shirley, and Townsend). Eligible entities may include but are not limited to conservation commissions, planning boards, water/wastewater departments, libraries, historical commissions, recreation departments, schools (including environmental clubs, art programs, science classes, etc.), historical societies, garden clubs, art associations, houses of worship, regional organizations, local land trusts, and neighborhood groups. Groups without 501(c)(3) status and individuals interested in applying for funding must partner with an eligible entity. The Stewardship Council may consider applications from nonprofit groups 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:

Projects must address one or more of the goals of the [Stewardship Plan](#) and protect and/or enhance the ORRVs of biological diversity, historical & cultural, or recreational & scenic resources and/or increase awareness, appropriate use, and appreciation of these resource values.

Possible projects include but are not limited to the following:

- Conservation, restoration, or enhancement of aquatic organisms, wildlife, riverine ecology, water quality and flow, historic, or recreational resources
- Protection and stewardship of land along the rivers and their tributaries
- Public education about the river and its resources and values
- Research studies contributing to increased understanding, and improved management, of the rivers' outstanding resources
- Access to, or increased, recreation to encourage people to use and protect the rivers
- Public art projects that engage the public and promote the river
- Invasive species management
- Water conservation education and implementation
- Protection of natural river flow regimes
- Projects engaging youth in the arts and sciences of river resources and encouraging an awareness and appreciation of river resources
- Efforts to plan and manage for climate resiliency

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

Projects mandated as part of a regulatory requirement are not eligible; for example, mitigation for enforcement actions and/or permit requirements.

Funding:

The Stewardship Council anticipates awarding grants up to approximately \$7,500 each to advance the goals of the *Stewardship Plan*.

One half of the total grant will be paid to the grantee upon notification of grant approval by the Stewardship Council. The remaining half will be paid to the grantee upon completion of the project and receipt of the final report, receipts, and any associated products. Any distributed funding not used will be returned to the Stewardship Council.

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

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 Community Grants for their project. Applications should be no longer than four (4) 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 Community Grant Proposal 2024 – [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 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:

- **Wild and Scenic ORRVs/goals of the *Stewardship Plan*:** Does the proposal address the protection, enhancement, or promotion of one or more of the rivers’ outstanding resource values or advance the goals laid out in the *Stewardship Plan*?

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- **Stewardship:** Does the project strengthen relationships among municipalities, non-profit organizations, community groups, and/or the public to enhance local stewardship?
- **Thoroughness of planning:** Does the project plan contain enough detail to show all resources required to meet the project timeline? Is the budget reasonable?
- **Leveraging of additional resources:** What matching funds and/or in-kind contributions will be contributed to the project?
- **Potential for build-on projects:** Does the project have potential to serve as the foundation for future work to protect river resources and build local stewardship?
- **Project outcomes:** Has the applicant thoroughly described the anticipated outcomes of the project?
- **Project evaluation:** Does the applicant have a plan to evaluate the project's effectiveness and impact (relative to the project goals)?
- **Community support:** Is there demonstrated support for this project from all involved parties?
- **Engagement of underrepresented communities:** Does the project engage or benefit Black, indigenous, people of color, people of different abilities, and/or environmental justice populations?
- **Partnerships and awareness:** Does the project engage partners and/or raise public awareness about the rivers?
- **Experience and capability:** Does the proposal demonstrate sufficient experience or available expertise needed to complete the project (either from the applicant or through partners or contractors)?
- **Longevity/sustainability:** Are results of the project sustainable after completion of the grant? Is there a plan for ongoing maintenance or work, if relevant? Will future activities/decisions at the community, municipal, regional, or state level build on the results of the proposed project? How will sufficient funds be raised to continue or maintain the outcome of this project?

The Stewardship Council may consider applications from applicants based outside the Wild and Scenic communities, but projects from applicants within the 11 Wild and Scenic communities will be given higher priority.

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

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Grantees who are unable to complete their project by the project completion date 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.

Final reports should contain the following:

1. **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.
2. **Additional information** - Project details such as audience, tasks, procedures, and evaluation of results.
3. **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.
4. **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.

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 are asked to 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: 15.921 – Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Wild and Scenic River Assistance."