



2024 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS*

Application Period Opens: **October 16, 2023**

Application Period Closes: **November 30, 2023**

Funding Available: **\$190,000**

Funding Amounts: **\$2,000 - \$30,000 per organization**

Project Period: **Projects completed between February 1 – December 31, 2024**

****You must be a current NWSA Member Organization to apply***

Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) Funding Program

The National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA), in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, is proud to bring our members this funding opportunity to support their work with Forest Service partners on Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) activities on National Forest Wilderness Areas across the U.S. Approximately \$190,000 is available for work completed between February and December of 2024 and award amounts will range between \$2,000 and \$30,000 per organization. Projects that support volunteers receive additional emphasis. The application period opens October 16, 2023 and closes November 30, 2023. Awards will be announced by January 30, 2024.

This funding program is for 501(c)(3) organizations working with Forest Service partners to complete wilderness stewardship activities that contribute to overall improvement in Wilderness Stewardship Performance scores for individual national forest wilderness areas to help the agency to meet their performance goals. There are a variety of activities that qualify for consideration. See the Forest Service [Wilderness Stewardship Performance Guidebook](#) for more detailed information about these and other activities.

Wilderness Stewardship Performance is the suite of activities the Forest Service uses to measure their wilderness stewardship accomplishments. Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) guides much of the wilderness work the Forest Service and its wilderness stewardship partner organizations do by informing performance goals and identifying needs for funding to support them. NWSA has offered this funding program since 2016 and we are excited to support more accomplishments in the coming year.

Program Requirements

- Must be a 501(c)(3) organization in good standing to qualify for funding.
- Must be a current NWSA Member Organization to apply ([JOIN OR RENEW](#)).
- Projects must contribute to Forest Service Wilderness Stewardship Performance scoring and meet all Qualifying Projects criteria.
- Applicants must demonstrate collaboration and partnership with local Forest Service personnel.
- 20% match requirement (can be combination of cash and in-kind contributions)
- Maximum award amount is \$30,000.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion components are strongly encouraged.
- WSP activities chosen must match with the local unit's chosen 10 elements for each wilderness.

Qualifying Projects

Project activities must meet **all** of the following criteria to be considered:

- Each Forest Service Ranger District that manages wilderness has chosen 10 Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) Elements for each Wilderness. **Activities must fall within the 10 Elements selected for the Wilderness area(s) where work will be performed.**
- Activities must be listed as Wilderness Stewardship Performance activities per the [Wilderness Stewardship Performance Guidebook](#).
- All activities supported by this funding must be approved by the local Forest Service District Ranger or Forest Supervisor.
- All work completed must contribute to improved WSP scoring or help to maintain an existing WSP score(s).
- Projects must have a completion date no later than December 31, 2024.

Before proceeding with your application, check with your local Forest Service staff to:

- Verify which elements are chosen for your wilderness area(s),
- Understand current WSP scores for the wilderness area(s) and how your activities will contribute to increasing those scores (including the point increases your work will result in), and
- Obtain a signed letter showing local Forest Service knowledge of and support for ALL of the activities proposed in the grant application.

Matching Funds Requirements & Guidelines

A minimum matching contribution of 20% of requested project dollars is required for this funding. Matching funds can be accomplished through contributed funding (cash match) and/or in-kind contribution. Cash matching will raise evaluation scores but is not required. Contributed funding refers to payments made by the organization or another non-federal entity for a portion of the project costs. In-kind contributions generally constitute the value of volunteer labor (at a rate of \$31.80 /hour) and/or use of existing equipment. Federal contributions of any kind DO NOT count as matching funds but can be reported separately to reflect agency support.

Project and Activity Examples

Work proposed under this Grant application may include, but is not limited to, work in the following categories:

Invasive Species

- Inventory and monitoring surveys for invasive species
- Eradication and control of invasive species

Air & Water Quality

- Inventory and monitoring of air pollution sensitive receptors
- Water quality monitoring of lakes and streams, and watershed restoration treatments

Ecological Monitoring

- Fish and wildlife population monitoring, fish and wildlife restoration activities to conserve or recover indigenous species
- Rangeland inventory and monitoring, grazing allotment monitoring, riparian area monitoring, and riparian area restoration activities

Recreation & Infrastructure

- Wilderness recreation site monitoring and restoration activities
- System trail condition assessments and approved trail restoration activities
- Inventory and restoration of user developed trails
- Inventory of significant infrastructure and administratively provided recreation facilities

Opportunities for Solitude

- Inventory and monitoring of opportunities for solitude

Wilderness Management

- Assistance with developing minimum requirement analyses
- Assistance in developing wilderness management plans and monitoring of special provisions in wilderness legislation

Education

- Wilderness training, including traditional tools and skills
- Public education outreach about wilderness and wilderness stewardship activities

Please consult with your local Forest Service staff to determine WSP needs and understand your role in helping the agency to improve its Wilderness Stewardship Performance scoring.

Strategies for a Successful Proposal

COORDINATE WITH THE FOREST SERVICE

Coordination with the Forest Service is essential. The local Ranger District should approve your project proposal and support it with a Letter of Support. It's never too early to discuss project ideas with your local contacts and develop a long-range plan of stewardship activities to support Wilderness Stewardship Performance.

ENSURE THE PROPOSAL WILL RESULT IN WSP SCORE IMPROVEMENTS

With Forest Service coordination ensure the project proposal will actually improve Wilderness Stewardship Performance scores for your wilderness area(s). Each District has chosen 10 WSP elements that they use to track wilderness performance. The activities in your proposal **MUST** contribute to at least one of these scoring elements to qualify for funding.

WORK MUST OCCUR ON A FEDERALLY DESIGNATED FOREST SERVICE WILDERNESS AREA OR AREAS

The WSP project proposal must be for work that will be completed in or for a designated wilderness managed by the USDA Forest Service. Wilderness study areas and recommended wilderness areas and roadless areas, while they also need the support of stewardship groups, do not qualify for funding within the WSP program. Work in wilderness areas managed by other agencies also does not qualify. NWSA would love to help broaden stewardship work in Department of Interior wilderness areas, but our funding only supports the National Forests at this time.

ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

Look for ways to significantly engage volunteers and other partners in your wilderness stewardship work. Getting more people engaged in WSP activities helps build support for wilderness, fosters public understanding about wilderness management issues and strategies, and enlarges the stewardship capacity of your organization. Volunteer engagement also helps lower the overall cost to complete your project, further increasing its competitiveness.

INCORPORATE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INTO YOUR WORK

Expand your wilderness stewardship community and welcome new people into your wilderness stewardship work. Wilderness is for everyone. We all need to work to make it a place where all Americans feel welcome, safe, and included.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS

Be sure to claim credit for your cash and in-kind contributions, but don't overreach or exaggerate your match. Cash or in-kind contributions associated with the project should be exclusively for work during the project period and directly tied to the WSP outcomes of your proposal, **NOT** part of a broader organization funding plan or for general organization needs.

BE ON TIME & BE REALISTIC

Be timely. Choose activities that can be completed within the grant timeframe and submit your application on time. If you have questions about the application or your project idea, ask them early; don't wait until the last day of the application period. Be sure to submit **ALL** of your application materials, in their original file formats, by the deadline.

EXPAND YOUR WSP PORTFOLIO

Don't just rely on what you've always done. Seek ways to expand your organization's stewardship portfolio by tackling new WSP activities that count for your wilderness area. Consider bundling several WSP activities together or explore other creative ways to further raise the WSP score for your wilderness areas.

PLAN AHEAD & PREPARE

Have a solid and realistic plan in place to accomplish the project goals and tell us the details. Do your homework – many WSP elements require previous steps to be completed before points can be earned for remaining activities. If a plan or monitoring protocol is missing for a project you want to propose, consider working with your local Forest staff to complete one.

DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT

NWSA understands it takes funding to prepare and manage these funding opportunities. That's why we've arranged for up to 10% to be included in your proposal for indirect expenses. Staying within this limit will ensure your proposal is considered.

How Projects Will Be Selected

NWSA's Wilderness Stewardship Review Team will rank projects based upon:

- What will be accomplished and how the project will contribute to Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) scores
- Amount of matching funds, either cash, in-kind, or both, and other resources contributed to the project. Projects with cash match receive added consideration, but cash match is not required.
- Project feasibility and scope
- Approval by local Forest Service District Ranger or Forest Supervisor and general agency support
- Engagement of volunteers in wilderness stewardship
- Support or advancement of DEI principles
- Regional and activity balance among selected projects

Funding Details

This Wilderness Stewardship Performance Funding is part of a larger Forest Service Challenge Cost-Share Agreement and is therefore managed as reimbursable funds subject to Federal Regulations. Award amounts may vary depending on the needs of each project, the number of proposals, and the availability of funds. Organizations must expend funds prior to seeking reimbursement and expenses must align with the approved budget and work plan associated with the grant award. Organizations may submit requests for reimbursement monthly or less frequently throughout the life of the grant. Reimbursements can take up to 90 days to fully process and will be made by Direct Deposit to the organization's bank account. Only expenses incurred during the grant award period will qualify for reimbursement.

Reporting Requirements

Awarded organizations will be expected to submit a final report of their accomplishments following the end of the grant period. This report will consist of a narrative description, project photos, a final project budget, and final WSP score increases for each wilderness and WSP element. Reporting templates will be provided to organizations receiving funding.

How To Apply

Download the **application package** and find more information on our website:

https://www.wildernessalliance.org/wsp_funding_info

Each Grant Application must include:

- A completed **GRANT APPLICATION FORM**
- A complete proposed budget for the project, including in-kind contributions and contributed funds, submitted using the **BUDGET WORKSHEET**
- A **LETTER OF SUPPORT** for each Forest Service District or National Forest where work will be completed. The letter(s) must be on Forest Service letterhead and signed by the local District Ranger or Forest Supervisor. The letter(s) must identify the activities that will be completed and the Wilderness Stewardship Performance Elements this grant will support as well as the anticipated increase in WSP points for each element.
- **IRS 501(c)(3) LETTER**, if not already on file with NWSA

Applications will be accepted between **October 16 – November 30, 2023** at

WSPFunding@wildernessalliance.org. Please leave all files in their original format when submitting your package and complete the subject line of your application email as follows: **Fall 2023 WSP Application – [Organization Name]**. Late applications will not be considered.

Grant awards will be announced by January 30, 2024.

Resources

Visit [Wilderness Connect](#) for Complete Information on Wilderness Stewardship Performance and explore these resources:

- [Forest Service Wilderness Stewardship Performance Guidebook](#)
- NWSI training video: [Wilderness Stewardship Performance Overview](#)
- NWSI training video: [Wilderness Stewardship Performance – Opportunities for Solitude](#)
- NWSI training video: [Wilderness Stewardship Performance – Recreation Sites](#)
- NWSI training video: [Wilderness Stewardship Performance - Trails](#)

Still Have Questions?

Questions about the National Forest Wilderness Stewardship Performance Partnership Funding may be directed to Joelle Marier, Executive Director at joelle@wildernessalliance.org or, visit our WSP Program Funding page at https://www.wildernessalliance.org/wsp_funding_info.