Financial Incentives for Sustainable Habitats (FISH) Grant Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the main goal of the FISH Grant?
A: To advance the mission of the District, to protect and conserve our District's natural resources, by leveraging District funds through conservation-related work that is carried out by other organizations and cooperators as well as land managers working directly with the District.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for FISH Grants?
A: Anyone may apply for a FISH grant. However, individual landowners must consult a technical advisor (i.e., watershed council, private consultant, BES, etc.) prior to submitting a grant.

Q: How many FISH grants can I apply for each year?
A: Each applicant can receive an award of no more than one FISH grant per fiscal year. The applicant can serve as a partner on additional FISH grants within the same fiscal year, and can receive project management reimbursement for grants. The WMSWCD fiscal year runs July 1 – June 30. Grants must be completed within two years of award.

Q: When can I apply for a FISH Grant?
A: The FISH Grant offers two deadlines, pending availability of funds. If funds are exhausted before the end of the fiscal year, incoming applications will be evaluated in the August round of the following fiscal year. Signed hard copies of these grants must be postmarked by the dates below and electronic versions must be received by 4 PM on these dates:

- August 15
- February 15

If the due date falls on a weekend or federal holiday, it will be moved to the following business day. *There is an "emergency funding" option which allows funding outside the quarterly deadlines if the applicant can demonstrate that funding prior to deadlines is an emergency. This determination is left up to WMSWCD staff and the FISH Grant Committee.

Q: What projects are eligible?
A: The projects or events must meet these criteria:

- Must address one or more of the following: water quality, watershed health, flora health, wildlife habitat, fish habitat.
- Be located within the District (Multnomah County lying west of the Willamette River and all of Sauvie Island), and/or directly benefit citizens of the District.

The following examples are types of projects/events that are eligible for FISH Program funding:

- <u>On-the-ground restoration or conservation project.</u> Examples: stream riparian improvements, tree planting, weed removal.
- <u>Sustainable agriculture or gardening project.</u> Examples: composting, use of beneficial insects.
- <u>Soil/water pollution prevention project.</u> Example: trash cleanup along a stream.
- <u>Soil/water quality testing.</u> Examples: soil contaminant testing, water quality testing/monitoring, stream invertebrate sampling.
- <u>Demonstration project.</u> Examples: parking lot bioswale, interpretive sign at a restoration site.
- <u>Education of youth and/or adults.</u> Examples: workshop on septic system maintenance, school field trip to learn about watershed health, informational booth on sustainable lawn management.
- <u>Community event focused on improving the public's understanding of natural resource conservation.</u> Example: festival celebrating the annual return of salmon to spawn.

Q: How are the grants evaluated?
A: After each deadline, applications are checked by staff for completeness and eligibility Applications are then sent to the FISH Grant Committee which is made up of a WMSWCD Board Member, WMSWCD staff, community volunteers and local environmental issue specialists. FISH grants are all reviewed by each FISH Grant Committee member and ranked with the following criteria: *evaluation criteria link.* After reviewing and ranking the grants the FISH Committee meets to determine awards.

Q: How does WMSWCD track a grant project and its accomplishments?
A: After the applicant enters into a grant agreement, funds are disbursed based upon the approval of project invoices and financial tracking forms updated over the term of the project. At the end of the project, a final report is required for the final disbursement of funds. Grant agreements require regular status reporting on completed watershed restoration projects for a period of two years. WMSWCD staff may conduct field visits to check on the status of completed projects.

Q: Can any work that was done prior to the submission of the grant be used as match?
A: Yes, pre-implementation planning costs (i.e. design & plan development) may be utilized solely as match, but this may not exceed 50% of your total match. Also, on the ground type work (i.e. invasive species removal, erosion control, planting) that was completed prior to the grant being awarded can contribute to that 50% of the total required match, but it must have been done within one year of the grant submission and after an initial contact with a technical staff person.

Q: What is an acceptable in-kind rate for volunteer work?
A: The WMSWCD observes the state accepted volunteer value, which can be found at http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time Please note that 2014 is the latest year for which state-by-state numbers are available. There is a lag of almost one year in the government's release of state level data which explains why the state volunteering values are one year behind the national value. Currently, the Oregon state volunteer value is $21.99, which we round to $22/hour for ease of processing grant budgets.

Q: Can "volunteer work" be reimbursed?
A: No, only work that is done by mission-appropriate certified licensed contractors may be financially reimbursed from FISH grants.

Q: If this project is being completed within the City of Portland, the local neighborhood association must be notified (via letter or presentation) prior to grant application submission. How do I find my local neighborhood association?

A: To determine what neighbor association your project is in and how to contact your neighborhood association, please visit the following website: http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/ or contact the Office of Neighborhood Involvement by phone at 503-823-4519.

Q: How do I find an appropriate technical advisor for my project?

A: Please contact WMSWCD staff for either direct assistance or referral to another technical advisor.

Q: Will this project pay for design work?

A: Under special circumstances, yes, but please keep in mind that this grant is intended for project implementation rather than design, and that this may make your project less competitive than others.

Q: Will a project be considered if the appropriate permits/design work has not completed?

A: A project without secured permits or design work will only be considered if the applicant can demonstrate that this process will be completed along with the actual project within the timeframe of the grant, based on the experience of either the applicant or a co-applicant/grant partner.

Additional Resources Online:

Engineering List

Native Plant Nurseries

Native Plant Landscapers (Backyard Habitat Certification Program)

Link to WMSWCD Resources Page