

Vermont Watershed Grant Application Guide 2025



The Vermont Watershed Grant Program provides financial assistance to groups looking to protect, restore, and enhance the biological integrity and public appreciation of Vermont’s lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. Funded by half of the proceeds from sales of the Vermont Conservation License Plate fund, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department distributes Watershed Grant money, in coordination with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, to local and regional water-related projects throughout the state. Groups new to watershed protection and the grant program are especially encouraged to apply.

This Application Guide provides general information about the program and the application process. If you have additional questions or would like to discuss your proposal and application requirements, contact the Grant Administrator listed at the end of this guide.

Application forms and other information are available on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department website: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/get-involved/apply-for-a-grant/watershed-grant>

Program Goals

Since its creation in 1998, the primary focus of the Vermont Watershed Grant Program has been to support the protection, restoration, enhancement, and public appreciation of Vermont’s lake, pond, rivers and streams. The grant program also supports efforts that improve surface water quality in keeping with stated habitat improvement objectives.

Watershed Grant projects have included:

- Protect or restore fish and wildlife habitat
- Protect or restore water quality and shoreline
- Monitor fish and wildlife populations and/or water quality
- Reduce nutrient and sedimentation loading
- Enhance recreational use and enjoyment of aquatic habitat
- Educate people about aquatic resources and conservation stewardship
- Identify and protect historic and cultural resources associated with habitat conservation and stewardship

Vermont’s Tactical Basin Planning can help identify project areas or types that are more likely to be funded: <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/watershed-planning>

The following are not eligible for funding:

- Land purchases and associated costs, such as appraisals.
- Control or inventory of nuisance aquatic plants. Other grant programs are available to fund these activities (<http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps> or <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/lakes-ponds/aquatic-invasives/funding>). NOTE: Proposals focused on education and outreach, new or experimental demonstration control efforts are eligible for watershed grant funding.

Who may apply

Municipalities, local or regional governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and citizen groups are eligible to receive watershed grant dollars for work on public or private lands. Individuals and state and federal agencies are not eligible to receive funds directly but may be partners of a project. Only one project will be accepted per applicant. Applications will not be accepted from groups with open Watershed Grants from a previous year.

Other Funding Sources

The Department of Environmental Conservation also administers the Clean Water Investment Program (CWIP). The goal of this program is to reduce and control nutrient and sediment contributions to surface waters from nonpoint sources of pollution. Please consider this fund if you are considering a similar project. A Watershed Grant may still prove useful if additional technical information (assessment, monitoring, design) is needed for an CWIP project at a later point in time. <https://dec.vermont.gov/content/funding-opportunities-0>

If your project falls within the Vermont portion of the Lake Champlain drainage, be sure to check the Lake Champlain Basin Program. Since 1992, they have awarded nearly \$8 million and funded more than eighty important research and demonstration projects. <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/>.

2025 Grant Program

For 2025, total available funding is \$70,000. There are three project categories (education & outreach, planning, and implementation) and the maximum award per grant varies by category.

While all projects will be considered, the following are being emphasized in this year's cycle:

- Education and practical outreach concerning watershed flood resiliency and implementing measures to protect or restore stream/river corridor habitat.
- Groups new to the grant program.

Project Category Types

1. Education and outreach – up to \$5,000
2. Planning, assessment, inventory, monitoring – up to \$3,500
3. On-the-ground implementation – up to \$10,000

Grants are intended for complete projects or discreet, identifiable portions of larger projects. Funds can be used for all aspects of a project including materials, labor, printing, and equipment rental. Salary or administrative costs are acceptable. Equipment purchase is also acceptable, if its more cost-effective than borrowing or renting.

Examples of Watershed Projects

Category 1: Education and outreach

- Educational programs for youth, related to wetland, lake or stream ecology.
- A community newsletter for lakeshore property owners to address shoreline and lake conservation topics.
- A workshop for road foremen on best management practices to address transportation-related stormwater runoff.

Category 2: Planning, assessment, inventory, monitoring

- Working with landowners to assess stream
- Assisting landowners and municipal road officials plan and manage storm runoff from driveways, parking areas, and town roads.
- Water quality monitoring of an important habitat area.
- A survey of road erosion areas or local culverts associated with surface waters to identify priority areas in need work.

Category 3: On-the-ground implementation

- Rain gardens or other infiltration-based practice to control runoff from stormwater.
- Planting native trees and shrubs to restore aquatic habitat areas.
- River clean-up projects.
- Dam removal.
- Instream habitat improvements to benefit the aquatic community.
- Measures to improve aquatic organism passage, such as through culverts.

A list of previously funded projects can be obtained at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/get-involved/apply-for-a-grant/watershed-grant>

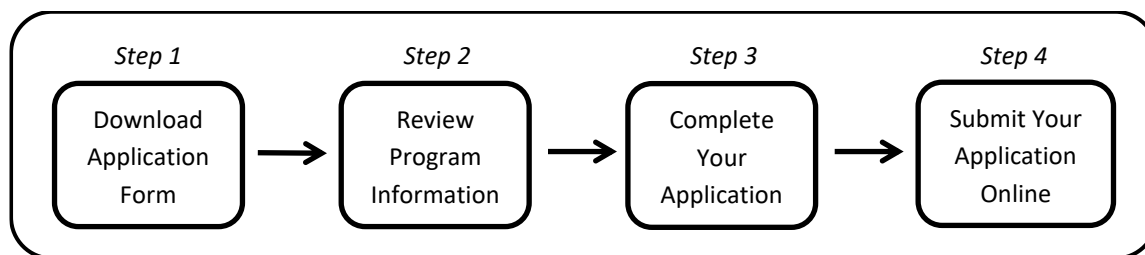
Applications

The application form and instructions are available at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/get-involved/apply-for-a-grant/watershed-grant>. Watershed Grant Program applications must be submitted by email. During the grant application submittal process, applicants must affirm that they understand the insurance requirements for grant recipients and have the required insurance or will purchase it if awarded a grant. If you are not familiar with these requirements, please contact the Watershed Grants office well before applying to learn what is involved.

Tips for Applicants

- Project outcomes should be clear and achievable.
- Include estimated quantitative results such as miles of shoreline or acres of floodplain that will be restored or number of people the program will reach.
- Partnerships are important.
- As applicable to your project, consider coordinating in advance with key personnel in the Agency of Natural Resources.
- Consider letters of support

Application Filing Instructions



1. Download the application form at the website listed throughout this guide.
2. Read over the contents of the Administrative Guide document.
3. Complete the application form, including site location maps, photos and letters of support as appropriate.
4. Email completed applications to William.Eldridge@vermont.gov with "2025 Watershed Grant Application" in the subject line. You will receive a confirmation email as soon as possible and be notified with a few months about your status. **Please send a follow up email if you do not receive confirmation within 7 days.**

The application must include a budget table. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the application is complete and clear. **Late or Incomplete applications will not be forwarded to the Citizen Review Committee.**

Project Selection Criteria

A Citizen Review Committee, appointed by the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, reviews and ranks project proposals for the Commissioner's final approval. The Review Committee considers comments on each proposal arising from internal review. The Review Committee makes recommendations on project funding based on the nature, quality, cost effectiveness and priority of work being proposed, and evaluates applications on a 100-point basis, using the following criteria:

A. Value & Benefits to Result from the Project (up to 35 points)

Category 1: Education and outreach

Participatory; audience clearly defined; provides a long-lasting positive impact.

Category 2: Planning, assessment, inventory, monitoring

A previously established priority basis exists for the activity. The activity is consistent with a pre-defined protocol; plan for information sharing post- activity. Clear benefits will result from the project.

Category 3: On-the-ground implementation

Protects or restores natural, cultural or recreational values associated with important wildlife habitat. Protects or improves water quality or aquatic habitat through an effective land treatment or best management practice; reduces nutrient loading and/or sedimentation; landowner agrees to maintain and inspect installed practice(s) for a minimum of 10 years. Long-term benefits will result from the project.

B. Management & Design Considerations (up to 15 points)

Project design and work plan is well organized; highly likely to achieve outcomes.

C. Public Support & Involvement (up to 12 points)

Local government or citizens contributing funding, equipment, or labor; local government, NGO or stakeholder has provided a letter of endorsement; project is part of local planning; other evidence of community support.

D. Cost Effectiveness (up to 15 points)

Project leverages volunteers or other funds and resources to maximize results.

E. Stream Corridor or Habitat Protection & Restoration (up to 13 points)

Project will protect or restore in-stream or river corridor fish and wildlife habitat in a manner consistent with natural processes. Project involves education and outreach regarding stream or lake shoreline habitat protection or restoration, flood resiliency or related flood impact topics.

F. Special or Other Considerations (-10 to +10 points)

Other considerations including application quality and clarity.

Grant Timetable

February - Applications due

March - Citizen Review Committee meets and completes ranking. Applicants notified.

April-May - Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife approves selected projects. Projects initiated with signed grant agreements.

January of following year- Submission and approval of final report and financial information for most projects.

Allowances can be made for grant funded projects needing more time. However, projects should be ready to begin before August otherwise grant funds should be applied for during a successive year.

Payment Process

Successful applicants will enter into a grant agreement with the Department of Fish and Wildlife that includes a work plan and payment schedule. Grants are usually divided into two payments; 80% upon signing and the remaining funds upon receipt and approval of the final project report.

If you have questions, contact:

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Vermont Watershed Grants are administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Conservation. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is an equal opportunity agency and offers all persons the benefits of participating in each of its programs and competing in all areas of employment regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual preference, or other non-merit factors. This document is available upon request in large print, Braille or audiocassette.

VT Relay Service for the Hearing Impaired 1-800-253-0191 TDD>Voice - 1-800-253-0195 Voice>TDD