

Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program | Potential Project Examples

The following are provided as potential examples of the types of projects that might be developed in each of the three funding categories. The distinctions among categories are not always rigid. Your project may fit into more than one category. We will move your project to a different category if appropriate—your initial choice of category will not impact review of your proposal in any way. Contacts for additional information are at the bottom of this document.

Watershed Action Projects

Focus human and financial resources on implementing priorities from existing conservation plans--Many public and private organizations have created plans that could help guide watershed protection efforts in your area. Synthesizing these plans and creating the infrastructure necessary to implement key recommendations is one approach; focusing on developing funding strategies is also essential.

Assess and/or prioritize watershed protection needs--Identifying what areas are most important to maintain or improve the health of a watershed is an essential activity. Factors in this analysis may include water quality, drinking water protection, biological diversity, or ecological connectivity. Understanding threats to these sites may also provide motivation to protect them.

Using a previously developed watershed assessment, develop an action plan that identifies how you will address each of the success factors listed above to achieve protection goals.

Support for staff to negotiate conservation easements or land acquisition in a watershed that has developed a watershed assessment and strategy. Funding from other sources may be used to protect priorities for watershed protection that have been defined and where outreach will be strategic and measurable.

Develop and implement ordinances that result in watershed protection.

Building Watershed Protection Capacity

Hire a coordinator or other needed staff to focus on your specific watershed protection needs. Large-scale watershed protection is a long-term, time-consuming activity. Devoting someone to the planning, landscape assessment, partnership-building, and fundraising needs for a program can accelerate progress and improve results. People in this position would typically spend significant time interacting with key partners, such as water utilities, land conservation groups, and public and private conservation agencies. The focus for staff in this position will depend on the specific needs in your watershed. Clear, measurable outcomes would need to be stated.

Provide assistance for private landowners to tap into federal or state cost-share programs for conservation and management may be valuable. For example, the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service offers many cost-share programs including conservation easements and land management activities. Many state forestry and natural resource agencies offer similar programs. Encouraging landowners to take advantage of these programs, and providing the assistance they need to do so, is an opportunity. Developing such relationships with both landowners and resource agencies may require multiple years of funding.

Assess and/or prioritize watershed protection needs--Identifying what areas are most important to maintain or improve the health of a watershed is an essential step. Factors in this analysis may include water quality, drinking water protection, biological diversity, or ecological connectivity. Understanding threats to these sites may also provide motivation to protect them.

Advancing the State of Practice

Understanding the economic relationship between watershed protection and water quality treatment, water supply, drinking water flood control, recreation, or other factors could help galvanize support and funding for watershed protection. For example, if protecting a watershed helps a water utility avoid the need for filtration, this may incentivize them to invest in protection efforts. In watersheds where recreational activities such as fishing or boating are important, clarifying the link between the maintenance or growth of these pursuits and watershed protection could be important.

Explore and develop funding opportunities for large-scale watershed protection--This could be undertaken on the national, regional, state, or local level. For example, setting the stage for tapping into State Revolving Funds for watershed protection could be a game changer. Supporting efforts to secure funding from conservation ballot initiatives could result in significant funding for watershed protection.

Projects that incentivize private landowners to protect watersheds--Supporting these landowners in pursuit of conservation easements, certification, or other programs could provide multiple benefits. Exploring opportunities for private landowners to take advantage of carbon sequestration opportunities is an emerging source of funding that could be used to protect watersheds.

Contact Peter Stangel (peter@usendowment.org; 404-915-2763) or Jeff Lerner (jlerner@americanforests.org; 202-236-1883) with questions or to discuss where your project best fits.