

NEWS

GRANTS TO ACCELERATE WATERSHED PROTECTION

-- 22 Grants totaling more than \$4 million to protect America's watersheds--

U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (April 25, 2018)

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program's third-year of awards expands the pace of proactive watershed protection in the U.S. through conservation and improved stewardship of thousands of acres of lands that provide drinking water, flood risk reduction, and an array of economic and environmental benefits. The 22 awards total \$4.168 million and will benefit organizations and partnerships in 20 states. The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program was conceived by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water (EPA) and launched in late 2015. EPA co-funds the program with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U. S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment), which manages the partnership.

"Protecting working lands and natural habitats in our watersheds is a win for people, the economy, and our environment," said Carlton Owen, the Endowment's President and CEO. "These projects are developed at the local level; help protect drinking water sources; often benefit rural jobs associated with agriculture, ranching, and forestry; and provide measurable benefits for fish and wildlife. We are very grateful to EPA and NRCS for their partnership in this program. We are especially pleased that projects in the Chesapeake Bay, Florida, and Arizona support military installations and Sentinel Landscapes Partnerships. The latter brings together the Departments of Defense, Agriculture, and Interior to protect working lands important to our nation's defense mission."

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program's goal is to "accelerate and expand the strategic protection of healthy, freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds." EPA and the Endowment each committed \$3.75 million and NRCS \$3.5 million, to the six-year partnership. In this third year of the program, 76 applications requesting \$15 million were received.

Grants focus on three categories: 1) short-term funding to leverage larger financing for targeted watershed protection; 2) funds to help build the capacity of local organizations for sustainable, long-term watershed protection; and 3) new techniques or approaches that advance the state of practice for watershed protection and that can be replicated across the country. The awards listed below benefit natural lands and also working forests, farms, and ranches.

The 22 funded proposals are:

Maine: Sebago Clean Waters Initiative: Forests. Faucets. Forever - \$350,000 over three years to the Highstead Foundation, which will work with the Open Space Institute, The Nature Conservancy, and Sebago Clean Waters partners to secure drinking water quality in Sebago Lake through land conservation. Goals include increasing collaboration among Sebago Clean Waters partners, private landowners, communities, and water users; developing and launching a water fund to enable downstream water users to jointly invest in upstream land conservation; and conserving 2500-3500 acres of land feeding and filtering Maine's largest drinking water supply.

West Virginia: Upper Monongahela Land Conservation Program - \$150,000 over three years to the Morgantown Utility Board to create a land protection program and fund in the Upper Monongahela Watershed, the drinking water source for 100,000 people in Monongalia County. The project will focus initially on the Cobun Creek Watershed, where a new drinking water reservoir is under construction. These efforts will support the Utility's Source Water Protection Program.

Pennsylvania: Assessing and Protecting Wild Trout Streams - \$100,000 over three years to Trout Unlimited to support assessments of 300 streams for naturally reproducing trout, with the expectation of documenting 100 new populations, and to engage grassroots volunteers in securing protective regulatory designations for 1,000 miles of streams and the resultant protection of an estimated 24,000 acres of wetlands and 18,000 acres of riparian buffers.

Virginia : Healthy Watersheds/Forest TMDL Phase III Project - \$120,000 over three years to Virginia Department of Forestry and its partners to build on Phases I&II successes by addressing challenges associated with creating the policy and financial infrastructure needed to facilitate forest and agricultural land conservation and retention on a sustainable, Chesapeake Bay-wide basis. One major goal of Phase III is to create the policy and financial infrastructure needed to facilitate forest and agricultural land conservation and retention on a sustainable, landscape-scale, long-term, sustainable basis.

Maryland, Delaware, & Virginia: Delivering the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement on the Delmarva Peninsula - \$204,000 over three years to the Lower Shore Land Trust with the goal of permanently protecting 11,000 acres with conservation easements by 2020. Watershed land protection will increase stream buffers, forest protections, and water quality and soil conservation throughout the region. This program will help deliver 10% of the acres needed in the Delmarva states to reach the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goal of 2,000,000 acres conserved by 2025. This area includes one of seven designated Sentinel Landscapes in the U.S., a collaboration involving the Departments of Defense, Agriculture, and Interior.

Florida: Accelerating Land Protection in Florida's Ocala to Osceola (O2O) Conservation Corridor - \$183,000 over three years to the North Florida Land Trust to support land protection and outreach staff to protect 10,000 acres (in 3 years) in the 1.6 million acre O2O Corridor. This accelerates larger goals of strengthening the public-private O2O Partnership and securing funds to protect 140,000 acres by 2040. Land protection in the O2O will benefit headwater regions of six North Florida watersheds, as well as protect wildlife habitat, rural landscapes, and military training capacity of Camp Blanding Joint Training Center.

Alabama: Accelerating Headwater Land Protection in the Mobile Bay Basin - \$300,000 over two years to the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program to advance strategic protection of healthy habitat parcels in Mobile Tombigbee and Alabama River basins, where 75% of catchments drain first and second order

streams, key to the ecological health of the Mobile Bay estuary. A land protection atlas will identify priority parcels and possible funding sources for acquisition and protection and the Alabama Forest Resources Center will be engaged to work with landowners on watershed land protection.

Wisconsin & Minnesota: Building Capacity for Healthy Forest Protection in the St. Croix Watershed - \$150,000 over two years to develop capacity for forest protection across the ecologically significant St. Croix River Watershed. Funds will support the protection and stewardship of 15,000 acres over the next two years, working towards a long term goal of 300,000 acres of forest protection and stewardship in the St. Croix.

Arkansas: Establishing Conservation Funding Mechanisms in the Beaver Lake Watershed - \$234,000 over three years to The Beaver Watershed Alliance to coordinate development of funding mechanisms, including enhancements to the State's clean water revolving loan program, an open space conservation fund and a source water protection partnership with three water utilities on Beaver Lake.

Texas: Middle Colorado River & Contributing Watersheds Protection Plan - \$180,000 over three years to the Hill Country Conservancy to catalyze protection of up to 15,000 acres of priority watershed lands and formalize the Hill Country Conservation Network, which seeks to secure \$10M in public funds, develop a regional strategic conservation plan, and promote a conservation ethic for landowners and the public. This collaboration addresses an urgent non-point source threat to three critical regional drinking water sources, the Middle Colorado, Blanco/San Marcos Rivers, and Edwards Aquifer.

Texas: Accelerating Land Acquisition to Protect Watersheds & Increase Resiliency - \$300,000 over three years to Katy Prairie Conservancy to conserve diminishing prairie in five important watersheds. This will aid flood control and help create a resilient landscape from the prairie to the Gulf. Hurricane Harvey and continuing development have made natural watershed protection, with supportive financial mechanisms, a priority for the Houston area.

New Mexico: Monitoring for success and sustainability to protect the Rio Grande Watershed - \$150,000 over two years to The Nature Conservancy to advance the state-of-practice in watershed monitoring and management for the upper Rio Grande. The Rio Grande and its tributaries supply water to one-half of New Mexico's population. The Rio Grande Water Fund was established to help protect these watersheds from severe fire and other threats. This project will help quantify the impact value of ecosystem services provided by watershed protection activities supported by the Rio Grande Water Fund.

Montana: Connecting Partners to Conserve Working Lands in the Missouri River Basin - \$90,000 over one year to World Wildlife Fund to engage conservation districts, agencies and not-for-profit partners in a discussion on threats to their watersheds and addressing barriers to enrolling landowners in programs that help to reduce those threats. The focus will be on intact grassland habitat.

Arizona: Identifying Conservation Priorities in the Upper Santa Cruz Watershed - \$219,000 over two years to the Arizona Land & Water Trust to address groundwater overdraft, land fragmentation and development in the Upper Santa Cruz River Watershed. An analytical framework will be developed to help identify threats and prioritize land conservation projects that will limit development in riparian areas, stabilize groundwater levels, and assure continued flow in the river. This area includes one of seven

designated Sentinel Landscapes in the U.S., a collaboration involving the Departments of Defense, Agriculture, and Interior.

Hawaii: Building Capacity for Hawaii's Watershed Partnerships - \$160,000 over two years to the State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources to support the Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships Outreach and Education Specialist position to build capacity for Hawaii's 10 Watershed Partnerships by developing a sustainable financing mechanism to help fund long-term watershed management and the goal of protecting 253,000 acres of priority areas across the State.

California: Ensuring the Resiliency of the San Pablo Bay and Russian River Watersheds - \$180,000 over two years to the Sonoma Land Trust to accelerate protection efforts in these biologically rich hotspots. The Land Trust's long-term cultivation of landowners at the watershed scale provides them the opportunity to secure key properties to help support these valuable ecosystems.

California & Oregon: Transforming Watershed Health for 2 Top-Tier Havens for Pacific Salmonids - \$250,000 over one year to Western Rivers Conservancy to advance two large-scale projects: A conservation easement over nearly 20,000 acres (10% of the watershed) of Oregon's Hood River Basin to protect drinking water for 8,000 people and conserve habitat for endangered fish; and in California's Klamath Basin to establish a new land management regime to restore 47,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat that WRC permanently conserved in partnership with the Yurok Tribe to save Blue Creek, the cold-water lifeline of the Klamath River.

Oregon: Building a Sustainable Conservation Program in the John Day River Basin - \$250,000 over two years to the Blue Mountain Land Trust to accelerate watershed protection with willing landowners and to demonstrate a sustainable funding model for expanding land trust capacity in a watershed without long-term reliance on grant funding.

Oregon: Protecting Oregon's Pristine Waterways and Public Lands - \$31,000 over one year to Trout Unlimited to help protect two priority watersheds through state designations including the State Scenic Waterway Program and Outstanding Resource Water Designation Program and through the federal Oregon Wildlands Act.

Washington: Accelerating Watershed Protection in Central Puget Sound, Part 2 - \$150,000 over two years to the Emerald Alliance to build on work accomplished in an earlier Healthy Watersheds Consortium grant to develop a Regional Open Space Conservation Plan, currently in development by the Puget Sound Regional Council. Phase 2 work is to develop a comprehensive funding strategy that serves to implement the Regional Open Space Conservation Plan and to support the newly formed Emerald Alliance's organizational infrastructure so it can grow to provide a neutral forum for collaboration and action to better implement this new Regional Open Space Conservation Plan

Washington: Upper Puyallup River Watershed Assessment: Protection & Resiliency Planning - \$225,000 over three years to Forterra to conduct on-site data collection and research in the Upper Puyallup River Basin in support of a long-term goal to protect 40,000 acres of forestland, floodplains, and critical fish and wildlife habitat. This work will further the partners' efforts to secure funding to conserve this critical landscape in the shadow of Mt. Rainier.

Alaska: Fish Inventory in Select Drainages of the Kobuk and Koyukuk Rivers - \$192,000 over one year to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to conduct an inventory of stream fish assemblages and aquatic and riparian habitats in select drainages of the Kobuk and Koyukuk Rivers. Anadromous fish observations made will be used to nominate water bodies to Alaska's Anadromous Waters Catalog, which represents Alaska Statute 16.05.871, Alaska's strongest and most comprehensive instream fish habitat protection standard. All of the fish and habitat data collected will be made available through the department's online Fish Resource Monitor interactive mapper.

For more information: [Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program](#).

#

For more information contact:

Peter Stangel, Chief Operating Officer, 404-915-2763, peter@usendowment.org

The **U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities** (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity working collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities – www.usendowment.org