

Vermont Watershed Grants

Administration Guide

Project Year 2024

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
Vermont Watershed Grant Program
Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
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Use of Funds

Grant funds may be used for:

The protection, restoration, and enhancement of the biological integrity and public appreciation of Vermont's lake, pond, river and stream ecosystems.

Grant funds may *NOT* be used for:

- Work on private land where written permission has not been granted;
- Work on private land where the landowner charges a fee;
- Paid advertising and promotion;
- Payments that are in conflict with 501(c)(3) regulations, such as stipends to board members;
- Projects that are not in compliance with relevant state and federal laws and regulations;
- The purchase of heavy construction equipment (backhoe, tractor, etc.);
- Land purchases and associated costs such as appraisals; and,
- Control or inventory of nuisance aquatic plants.

Policy on funding publications

Funds may be used to print free publications and for start-up costs related to fee publications, excluding the direct costs of printing. Funds may not be used for revisions and reprinting of publications where there is a charge.

Pre-award expenditures

No expenditures with grant funds may be used on work completed prior to execution of the Grant Agreement. However, for projects which have been recommended for funding by the review committee, design, engineering and the ordering of supplies and materials are payable under the grant if incurred no more than 60 days prior to Project Agreement. However, the organization will only receive funds per the scheduled specified in their signed Project Agreement. No on-the-ground work may begin prior to Project Agreement.

Grant Award Process

Review of Project Applications

Completed applications are first reviewed internally by staff within the Agency of Natural Resources. Once the internal review is complete, applications will be distributed to the seven-member Citizen Review Committee for rating and ranking (incomplete or late applications will not be considered for funding). *Refer to Appendices regarding Committee roles and membership.*

Rating

Applications are rated according to the Project Review Criteria found in the Watershed Grant Application Guide.

Ranking

Based on the rating scores, projects will be ranked in descending numerical order. Projects may be funded for less than the requested amount at the discretion of the Citizen Review Committee. Recommendations for funding will then be forwarded to the VFWD Commissioner for approval.

Notification of Approval

Applicants will be notified if the project will receive funding and the amount, if approved. If any project is withdrawn, or is unable to begin by August, the funds may be awarded to an alternate project or re-allocated in the next funding cycle. Successful applicants will be expected to sign a Project Grant Agreement.

Grant Project Implementation

Prior to executing the project, the grantee and the State will sign a standardized Project Grant Agreement which will include but not be limited to the name of the grantee, the project period, project work plan, grant amount, and payment schedule. An insurance certificate documenting evidence of insurance coverage at specified coverage limits and a completed W-9 form will be necessary before the grant agreement can be executed.

Payment Schedule

Grants generally are divided into two payments: an advance payment made upon signing of the Project Grant Agreement, and the remaining balance upon receipt and approval of the Final Report. The advance payment to successful applicants will generally be 80% of the grant amount or \$10,000, whichever is less. Grantees will be expected to use a standardized invoice form when seeking payment. The invoice form will be provided in the Project Grant Agreement.

Grant Award Conditions

Work on Public Lands

Prior to receiving a copy of a fully executed Project Grant Agreement from the State, organizations and individuals receiving grant funding for work on public lands will be required to enter into a separate agreement with the public agency(s). A copy of this agreement shall be submitted to the Watershed Grant Program.

Work on Private Lands

Any recipient receiving approval for work on private land must have a signed statement from each landowner that he or she understands the work to be done, grants permission for that work on their land, and the landowner agrees to maintain and inspect installed practice(s) for a minimum of 10 years. Copies of signed agreement(s) shall be submitted to the program.

Permits or Other Approvals

All local, state, and federal permits or other approvals that are required as a result of the activities proposed under the project must be obtained from the appropriate agencies prior to receipt of the second payment under this grant (see Appendix D). Copies shall be submitted to the program. *In the event that any necessary permits are denied, the sponsor will be required to refund any grant monies to the State within 90 days of such denial.* Refer to Appendices for permit and compliance contact lists.

Project Implementation

Project Agreement

Upon receipt of a fully executed Project Grant Agreement, the grant recipient may begin work. Costs incurred prior to the execution of the Project Grant Agreement will not be eligible for grant funding except for pre-award expenditures as outlined on page 1.

Project Period

Projects should be ready to begin before August. Discuss any known, special time-table needs with the Watershed Grants Program prior to applying. The completion date for the project will be stated on the Project Agreement. Most project periods will be from signing of the Project Grant Agreement until January 31 of the following year; longer project periods can be arranged. Requests for an extension of time will be considered with proper justification. Properly justified requests for extensions of the project completion date shall be granted through an Amendment. Expenses incurred after the Project Agreement expiration date are not eligible for payment.

Project Reporting

All sponsors will be required to submit a final report to receive final payment. Refer to Appendix G for more information. At a minimum, this report should include:

- How did you meet the objectives of the project?
- Final itemized costs;
- Quantified deliverables and results;
- Identification of any difficulties encountered during project implementation and administration;
- Photographs (captioned and credited; digital copies encouraged);
- Two copies of any funded publications.

Standard Watershed Grant Timetable

1. Grant application submitted (due February).
2. ANR review of grant applications. Citizen Review Committee ranks submitted projects and makes recommendations for funding. Applicants are notified of preliminary decisions (March).
3. Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife makes final approval of selected projects. Project Grant Agreements are drawn up between ANR and Project Sponsors (April-May). Project agreement specifies:
 - a. Project period, project work plan including tasks and deliverables, grant amount;
 - b. Grant payment schedule; and
 - c. Any relevant conditions or requirements.
4. After signing of Project Grant Agreement and after submittal of an invoice, Project Sponsor/Grantee receives first grant payment (April-May).
5. Work begins on project (see also Pre-Award Expenditures, page 1).
6. Project is completed and Final Report is submitted (Winter, unless otherwise stated in the Project Agreement). Final Report is approved by the Watershed Grants office. Project Sponsor submits an invoice for final payment after the Final Report is approved.

Purchasing and Contracts

Purchases, materials and contract for services must follow State guidelines, unless the grantee is a municipality. These guidelines are based on the total contract amount or the total cost of materials, equipment, or services to be purchased.

\$0-\$3,500	No bids are required. Verbal agreements are acceptable.*
\$3,501-\$14,999	Documentation required to show that the sponsor requested at least three written quotes.
\$15,000 and Over	Formal written bids are required. Several suppliers must be given the opportunity to bid. The written bids received must be maintained in the grant recipient's files for audit purposes.

* Multiple purchasing is not permitted for the same item. For example, purchasing \$1,000.00 worth of needed materials in two \$500.00 lots.

Record Retention

It is recommended that all program and financial records be retained by the grant recipient for official audit by the State of Vermont, or for a period of five (5) years after the final close-out date, whichever occurs first.

The following records should be maintained and made available for audit:

- Payroll register by pay period showing names, hours worked, hourly rate, benefits, deductions, gross pay and net pay;
- Final cost summary of all payroll registers;
- Time sheets signed by both employees and their respective supervisors;
- Invoices for purchased materials;
- Invoices for all design and construction costs;
- Indicate check number and date paid on each invoice;
- Canceled checks or copies thereof;
- Time & Attendance Report for Force Account Labor (if applicable); and,
- Copies of Payment Requests / Performance Reports.

Appendices

- A. Application Checklist
- B. Historic Preservation & Cultural Resources Survey
- C. Vermont Watershed Grants Citizen Review Committee
- D. Environmental Permits & Clearances & ANR Contacts
- E. Time & Attendance Report for Force Account (Employee) Labor
- F. Donated (in kind) Labor Report
- G. Contents of Final Report & Use of Program Logo

Appendix A: Application Checklist

This list is provided to help the project applicant ensure that all appropriate materials have been included with the grant application. Some applications will not require everything on this list, depending on the nature of the project. Contact the Watershed Grant office for clarification. Remember to include the appropriate materials as part of your application.

1. Completed and signed application form
2. Project time line and/or schedule of events
3. Brief outline of proposed publications, including mock-ups if available
4. Answers to Project Review Criteria questions
5. Project Budget Summary
6. Status of local, state and federal permits which have been or will be obtained
7. Status of written landowner agreements
8. Letters of Support
9. Maps, design drawings, etc.
10. Historic Preservation Survey (Applicants must submit this survey if required, see Appendix B).

NOTE: Once notified of being selected to receive grant funds, applicants will be expected to complete and submit a federal W-9 form and provide documentation of insurance coverage.

Appendix B: Historic Preservation and Cultural Resource Survey

Many types of projects require historic preservation review: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/review-compliance> If necessary, please complete the Historic Preservation Project Review Cover Form if appropriate and submit it to the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) prior to submitting your Watershed Grants application: <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/HP/ProjectReviewCoverForm2.pdf>

Appendix C: Vermont Watershed Grants Citizen Review Committee Guidelines and Membership

Composition. Seven-member citizen committee which represents the following interests to the fullest extent possible:

- Land planner, regional or town
- River association (large and small)
- Lake association (large and small)
- Cultural resources
- Recreation
- Fish and wildlife organization
- Conservation group
- State Legislature
- Land trusts
- Educational institution(s) or group(s)
- Major watershed groups such as Lake Champlain Basin Program, Connecticut River Joint Commission, etc

Committee members are appointed by the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife with advice from the ANR Watershed Grants Steering Team. Terms are two years and staggered, with a renew option at the end of each term. A list of the current Committee members is available upon request to the Watershed Grants office.

Qualifications. The persons who serve on the Committee should generally be knowledgeable of watersheds needs and issues. While individuals may be appointed because they have a background from a certain interest group, their position on the committee must be broadly representative of watershed issues and not unreasonably advocate for their interest. If a member has a personal interest in a specific project, he or she shall not participate in the ranking of that project.

Responsibilities.

- X Review and rank watershed project proposals using criteria provided by the Commissioner of Fish & Wildlife and the ANR Watershed Grants Steering Team;
- X Make recommendations to the Commissioner of Fish & Wildlife on the level of funding watershed projects should receive from the Conservation Plate Watershed Fund; and
- X Conduct an annual review of application forms and selection criteria and recommend changes to the Commissioner of Fish & Wildlife and the ANR Watershed Grants Steering Team.

Time Commitment. The work will involve one or two day long meetings during the course of the year to review and rank projects and possibly to review program objectives. There will also be significant hours of “homework” involved in reading grant applications and assigning points using established Project Review Criteria.

Compensation. The members will be compensated for out-of-pocket expenses including meals and travel at the Vermont State allowances. A per diem payment cannot be provided.

Staff Assistance. The ANR Watershed Grants Steering Team, comprised of representatives from the Departments of Fish & Wildlife and Environmental Conservation, will provide support to the Committee.

Appendix D: Environmental Permits & Clearances and ANR Contacts

It is the responsibility of the project sponsor to ensure that all appropriate local, state, and federal permits have been obtained. Following is a list of contact people for some of the typical permits and clearances which are likely to be needed for watershed grant-related projects.

Agency of Natural Resources:

Activities that occur in or around lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and wetlands may require consultation with or permits from the Agency of Natural Resources and other agencies. Types of permits or consultations include:

- Aquatic nuisance control
- Wetlands
- Stormwater
- Floodplain
- Stream Alteration
- Dam Safety
- Act 250

The Watershed Management Division within the Department of Environmental Conservation administers several permit programs and works cooperatively with other permitting agencies. This page provides an overview of permits administered by the Watershed Management Division: <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/permits>. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Environmental Assistance Office Permit Specialist to determine if your project requires a permit from the Watershed Management Division: <https://dec.vermont.gov/environmental-assistance/permits/specialists>.

Vermont Natural Heritage Program (ANR will coordinate this review.)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 802-872-2893
(For projects involving wetlands and navigable waters)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vermont Project
8 Carmichael St., Suite 205, Essex Jct., VT 05452

State Division for Historic Preservation (D.P.)

Projects may require historic preservation review because of the type or work, area of the work, or the source of the funding. A description of the types of projects requiring historic preservation review can be found here: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/review-compliance> If necessary, please complete the Historic Preservation Project Review Cover Form on this website and submit it to the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) prior to submitting your Watershed Grants application.

Appendix E: Time & Attendance Report for Force Account (Employee) Labor.

It is not necessary to submit this form to the Watershed Grants office as part of the Final Report. A copy should be retained in the sponsor's project files for state audit purposes.

Signature of Employee

Paid by Check #

Project Name:

Project ID #

Day/date	Work performed	To - From (time)	# Hrs.	Pay Rate	Total Paid
Sun/				\$	\$
Mon/					
Tue/					
Wed/					
Thu/					
Fri/					
Sat/					
				Total	\$

Time and Attendance Reports for *each* sponsor employee must show data for the full week (or pay period). The hours spent on the project should be specified and marked as to task performed. The reports should be signed by the employee, indicate the rate of pay, and show the check number covering the wages. Sponsor is not required to submit canceled payroll checks. If the sponsor has a computerized payroll system or signed time sheets which shows at least this much information, it may be used instead.

Appendix G: Contents of Final Report & Use of Program Logo.

Watershed Grant Final Report

The following information must be included as part of the Final Report submittal.

- 1. Project Name:**

- 2. Project Sponsor:**

- 3. Project Location & Description:**

- 4. Describe your accomplishments relative to each task in your Work Plan as contained in the Grant Agreement.**

- 5. Benefits to the watershed:**

- 6. Benefits to the community:**

- 7. Please submit 2 to 4 photographs of your project and submit them with the hard copy of your final report. If possible, please also submit these images electronically, via email to the grant administrator.**

- 8. Please submit copies or photographs documenting how you used the license plate logo to explain where you received support for your project.**

Watershed Grants — Expenditures

Project name:

Grant Award #:

<i>Expense/Item</i>	<i>Grant funds</i>	<i>Other funds (cash & in-kind)</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
<i>Administrative Overhead</i>	\$	\$	\$
<i>Direct Labor</i>	\$	\$	\$
<i>Purchased Materials and Services</i>	\$	\$	\$
<i>Map, Plan or Publication Costs</i>	\$	\$	\$
<i>Other Costs</i>	\$	\$	\$
TOTALS	\$	\$	\$

Watershed Grant Logo

Grantee agrees to use the Conservation License Plate Logo in written or public materials or presentations reporting on the project as well as all publications, public events, annual reports, and permanent structures that describe or represent the work conducted under this grant shall include an acknowledgement of the Watershed Grant and the Conservation License Plate Program making use of the logo provided below:



**This project was funded in part by a
Vermont Watershed Grant.**

A high-resolution version of this image is available at the grant website or can be downloaded directly from here:

https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/images/Get%20Involved/Grants/watershed%20grants/Watershed%20Grant%20Program_Conversation%20License%20Plate%20Logo.jpg

