





# **Building Competitive Projects and Proposals**

A National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants Writing Workshop for Conservation Districts (SWCDs, SCDs, and CDs) – Chesapeake Bay Watershed focus

March 3, 2022





# Ahead of Today's Discussion

### Technical Issues?

Message Ginna Morris in the Chat Box

### Session will be recorded

 Slides will also be made available after today's workshop

### **Questions on Content?**

- Clarifying question? use Chat Box
- Content question? Q&A after presentations

### PollEV

- See Poll device link in Chat Box
- PollEv.com/cleanwater378
  - or text "cleanwater378" to 22333

# In ONE word - What do you enjoy MOST about working in the conservation field?

### **Join by Web**



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# NFWF Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund Team

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF):

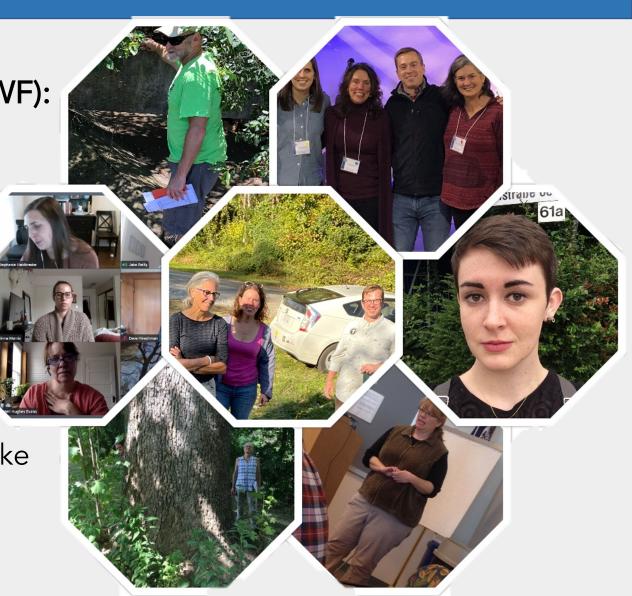
Jake Reilly, Director Stephanie Heidbreder, Manager Nicole Thompson, Coordinator

### **NFWF Field Liaisons:**

Liz Feinberg, Calvan Environmental David Hirschman, Hirschman Water &

Environment, LLC

Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake Katie Ombalski, Woods and Waters LLC Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters LLC



## What you'll get from today's workshop



**Update on current** NFWF Chesapeake Bay Watershed funding programs – Small Watershed Grant is today's focus



**Insights and practice** thinking through project needs and alignment with NFWF programs



Guidance and tips for preparing a competitive NFWF project proposal

# Agenda

**CBSF Grants Programs** 

Project Planning and Picking the Right Grant Program

Key Proposal Elements and Developing a Competitive Proposal

**Applicant Resources** 

Timeline for 2022

Q&A

# The NFWF CBSF Team

Jake Reilly
Director, Chesapeake Bay Programs
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)



Stephanie Heidbreder

Manager, Chesapeake Bay Programs

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)



Nicole Thompson
Coordinator, Northeastern Region
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

### Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund Grants Programs

Today's focus: Small Watershed Grants (SWG)

- NFWF's Chesapeake
  Bay grants programs
  have evolved and
  grown over 22 years
- We look to our partners (applicants) to continue to evolve and grow too!
  - Including in proposal quality



Photo: Nash Run, Washington DC

# Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Primary Goals and Objectives







National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Business Plan

August 2012 (Revised August 2018)

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund | 1

- 1. Improve water quality
  - sediment & nutrient reductions by 2025
- 2. Restore and protect **key species** and their **habitats**

- 3. Foster engaged and diverse citizen and stakeholder action
  - including underrepresented, underserved under-resourced communities

# Side-by-Side Look at Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants

Grant Program:	Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction Grant	Small Watershed – Implementation Grant	Small Watershed – Planning & Technical Assistance Grant
Project Focus:	Regional-scale programs, partnerships and collaboratives that will significantly scale up water quality improvements	On-the-ground actions to protect and restore water quality, species, and habitats	Enhance local capacity through assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance- oriented activities.
Award Size:	\$500,000 - \$1Million	\$75,000 - \$500,000	Up to \$75,000

### CD, SCD, and SWCD - Examples of Awards

### SWG-PTA (Planning & Technical Assistance) grants:

- Headwaters Restoration Plan Development, Schuylkill Co Conservation District (PA)
- Accelerated Watershed Implementation Plan Development, Bradford Co Conservation District (PA)

### SWG-I and PA Most-Effective Basin (MEB) implementation grants:

- Demonstrating Sustainable Farm Operations at the Augusta County Correctional Center (VA), Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District (VA)
- Developing Ag Plans & Cover Cropping Programs in Middle Crk Watershed, Snyder Co CD (PA MEB)

### Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction (INSR) grants:

- Connecting Urban & Agricultural Sectors for Accelerated Water Quality Improvements, Blaire Co Conservation District (PA)
- Strengthening the Conservation Community Foundation in the Upper Susquehanna Watershed (NY, PA), Tioga Co Soil & Water Conservation District of NY

### CD/SCD/SWCD Roles:

- Leadapplicant
- Partner
- Convener
- TechnicalSupport
- Other

### NFWF's Field Liaison Team



**Liz Feinberg**CalVan Environmental



Dave Hirschman
Hirschman Water &
Environment, LLC



Kristen Hughes Evans Sustainable Chesapeake



Katie Ombalski Woods and Waters Consulting, LLC



Kristen Saacke Blunk Headwaters LLC

# Project Planning - BEFORE the RFP hits the streets

Picking the right funding program

# Heart of the Project Planning Partners + Place + Purpose

### WHO are the partners?

- Stakeholders who share your conservation concerns?
- Upstream or downstream residents, landowners or land managers?
- Community members who may not have been previously represented or engaged?

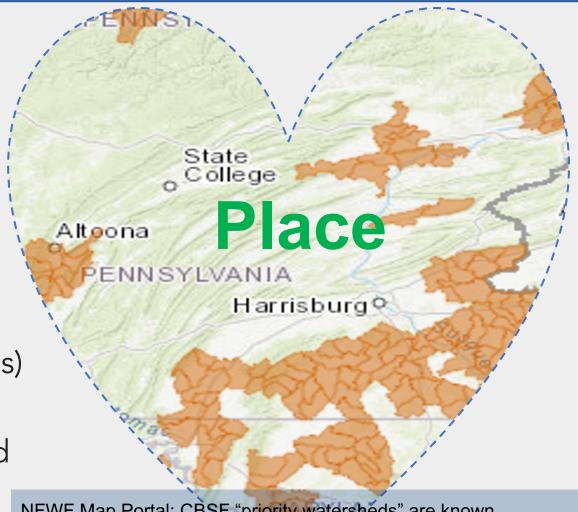
Good projects build on existing partnerships/relationships **AND** actively seek new ones



# Heart of the Project Planning Partners + Place + Purpose

# WHERE will your project make improvements?

- Where are conservation concerns?
- At what scale is water quality or habitat improvement achievable?
  - o watershed or sub-watershed?
  - o catchment scale? (i.e., few blocks or acs)
  - o a single site?
- Who is concerned, interested, or impacted by conservation issues in this place?



NFWF Map Portal: CBSF "priority watersheds" are known opportunity areas for nutrient and sediment reductions. What makes your project "place" a restoration/conservation opportunity?

# Heart of the Project Planning Partners + Place + Purpose

### WHAT will your project do?

- What interventions or actions will address conservation concerns?
- Are people and places that have been previously underrepresented now involved in the project? Are their priorities considered?
- Will improvements provide meaningful outcomes to historically marginalized (or underserved) residents and communities?



### Once the RFP hits the streets

Read the RFP - Does it align with the project you have in mind?

- If YES then go forth and develop your proposal.
- If NO perhaps consider building a project or capacity for a future year and NFWF submittal.
- If you're UNSURE Consult with NFWF or a Field Liaison OR attend the applicant webinar to further explore.





#### SMALL WATERSHED GRANTS

#### 2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday, April 22, 2021 by 11:59pm ET

#### **OVERVIEW**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the federal-state Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, is soliciting proposals to restore water quality and habitats of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and

NFWF is soliciting proposals under the Small Watershed Grants (SWG) program for projects within the Chesapeake Bay watershed that promote community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams. NFWF will award funding through two distinct funding opportunities: SWG Implementation (SWG-I) grants of \$50,000-\$500,000 will be awarded for projects that result in direct, on-the-ground actions to protect and restore water quality, species, and habitats in the Bay watershed; SWG Planning and Technical Assistance (SWG-PTA) grants up to \$50,000 will be awarded for projects that enhance local capacity to more efficiently and effectively implement future on-the-ground actions through assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities.

NFWF estimates awarding \$8-10 million in grants through the combined SWG program in 2021 contingent on the availability of funding. Major funding comes from the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office, with other important contributions by Altria Group, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

All projects must occur wholly within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Priority consideration will be provided to projects located within priority subwatersheds or habitat units based on the unique opportunities to maximize multiple goals and outcomes for water quality, species, and habitats. Specific priority areas have been identified for each of NFWF's major focus areas for the SWG program. Applicants should consult outcome-specific geographic priorities referenced in this Request for Proposals and NFWF's online Chesapeake Bay Business Plan mapping portal to determine appropriate geographic focus areas for their proposed project activities.

#### PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Consistent with the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership's 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the SWG program supports efforts to achieve water quality improvement, restoration and protection of key Chesapeake Bay species and their habitats, and the fostering of an engaged and

# What type of project are you interested in finding RESOURCES (\$) for?

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# Choosing the Right Category Small Watershed Grant Planning & Technical Assistance (SWG-PTA)

### Water Quality or Habitat Focused

- Build team/convene stakeholders to address conservation needs
- Enhance staff or program capacity
- Assess existing conditions or develop data to support a public engagement campaign, restoration plan, or BMP design
- Develop a strategy, plan, or approach to prioritize practices, interventions, or actions
- Other conservation activities



# Scenario: SWG-PTA



- A watershed group is interested in protecting a local, high-quality, cold water trout stream
- The township is also interested in water quality protection, but unsure of the most impactful interventions, conservation practices or restoration activities
- Both the township and the watershed group want a joint action plan to guide future implementation of conservation practices and public engagement

### Choosing the Right Category: Small Watershed Grant Implementation (SWG-I)

### Water Quality or Habitat Focused

- Plant trees
- Implement or incentivize riparian buffers (forest buffers preferred, but grass buffers & conservation landscapes too)
- Restore wetlands

- Retrofit urban stormwater BMPs
- Implement nature-based GSI
- Install structural/non-structural
   BMPs on ag, urban or rural lands
- Build barnyard controls / farm conservation practices
- Restore/reconnect floodplains and stream channels











# **Example of SWG-I**



- A watershed organization has concept designs for rain gardens to be installed on several sites
- Landowners have agreed to installations
- Engineer must finalize designs and project construction must be bid out
- A service provider will be lined up to inspect/maintain BMPs
- Desire to fund local watershed stewards to conduct education

# **Example of SWG-I**



- The Conservation District has a group of farmers who have agreed to inject manure across 1,200 new acres that had previously received manure broadcasted.
- The District is working with a local custom operator to make the practice equipment available.

### PA Most-Effective Basin Grant (MEB)

# Ag Conservation practices that reduce Nitrogen in PA's Most-Effective Basins such as (PARTIAL LIST):

- Tillage management
- Riparian protection including livestock exclusion, forested and grass buffers
- Wetland restoration
- Cover crop and other soil health practices
- Barnyard and roof runoff controls
- Animal waste management storage
- Manure incorporation, injection, and transport
- Prescribed grazing
- Soil and Water Conservation Plans







### Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction (INSR) Grant

### Projects that have:

- Multiple partners and are an existing, successful or emerging collaborative AND
- An agreed upon path forward to INCREASE water quality benefits for a particular practice or place (a region as opposed to a small, single watershed), AND
- There are NEW ways, or new-to-the multipartner team ways, to ACCELERATE water quality outcomes.



Photo: The Nature Conservancy's Wetlands Acceleration Partnership, A. Jacobs

### Which grants program is best fit?

### Scenario:

- Water quality and habitat focused project NFWF priority watershed for Eastern brook trout stronghold
- Plan is to: 1) replace culvert; 2) enhance 100' wide forest buffer with new trees and removal of invasives; 3) plant live stakes along stream bank
- Collaborate with local colleges, TU, contractor, to finalize designs and implement.
- Local volunteers and students on-board to assist with planting and invasives management



### Which grants program is the best fit?

### Scenario:

- Two farms in an agriculturally impaired watershed
- Practices ready for implementation include 1)
  barnyard runoff controls; 2) 35' wide grassy buffer
  with livestock exclusion and controlled stream
  crossing.
- Applicant is coordinating with conservation district and NRCS for technical and financial assistance
- Project proposes to fill funding gap
- Applicant has landowner agreements signed or in negotiation
- Project lead will hire a local firm to finalize design plans and install practices



### 5 Minute Break

Key proposal elements

Developing a competitive project proposal

# A Reviewer's Perspective



- Lots of proposals to read
- > Tough decisions to make
- Need to be able to understand what's on the paper to evaluate and compare
- Proposals that are NOT clear and understandable may raise a RED flag
- "Can the project succeed if the proposal doesn't convey it well?"

### 3 Specific Practices to use when drafting a proposal

Practice 1

Use simple and precise declarative sentences that a lay person can readily understand.

Practice 2

Use specific and concrete language to state (not explain) what your project will do.

Practice 3

Use these statements consistently throughout your proposal.

# NFWF Proposal – Key Elements

- Project Description
- \* Budget
- \* Match
- Narrative

# **Project Description**

The first most important place in an application to be CLEAR & CONCISE:



1st Project DESCRIPTION...

It's the front door!

# **Project Description**

### Project DESCRIPTION

The first important point in the application where reviewers see what your project will do and what it will accomplish.





- Proposal
- Tip Sheet

### . . . .

#### PROJECT INFORMATION

- Project Title: Please do not call your project "Chesapeake it a short, descriptive name that will distinguish it from other including spaces)
- Project Start Date: Projects should begin within six months of to
- Project End Date: Projects should be completed within one to 3
- Description: Should be two sentences long in most cases. The
  used to address a specific species/habitat and location. The sex
  investment and relevance to conservation. Please refrain from us
  including spaces)
- Abstract: Provide a more detailed description of your project; in habitat, outcomes (deliverables at the end of the grant period) an completed outside of the US or US territories), please provide on U.S. Please refrain from using pronouns such as I, we, our, etc.
- Requested Amount: Grant requests should be between \$500,0 categories of funding).

### When writing a Project DESCRIPTION - Put the 3 Practices to work!

**Project Description:** State what **action** your project will take, **where it will occur** and the **outcome** you will achieve.

The Cow Conservation Alliance will work with farmers to

install manure storage structures, implement manure

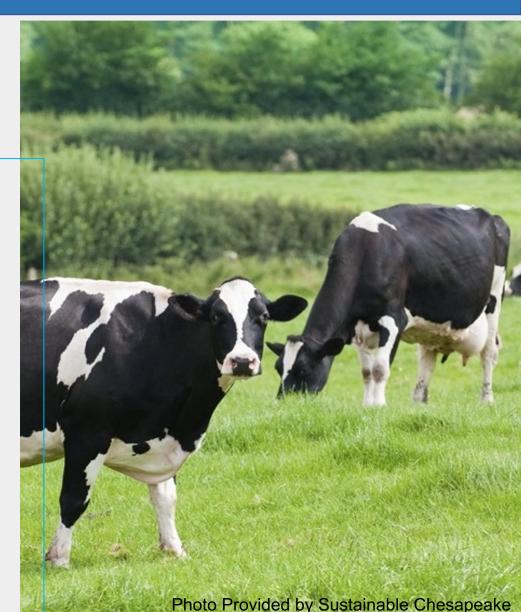
injection and enhance riparian buffers on

three family dairy farms in the Warrior Run watershed,

Northumberland County. Conservation practices

implemented will reduce nutrient runoff pollution and

improve water quality consistent with the CAP priorities and restore stream health.



#### Respond at **PollEv.com/cleanwater378**

Text CLEANWATER378 to 22333 once to join, then A, B, C, D, or E

What would you include in the proposal project description to strengthen it? Check all that apply.

A brief and specific depiction of where the work will take place. A clear statement of the main activity or method that will address a location, species or habitat. A philosophical statement on why my organization is the best lead for the project. The conservation outcome that will take place in response to the investment and action. At least 5000 characters.

# Budget – the Numbers

- Include <u>all</u> applicable project costs
  - staff
  - resources for partners
  - contractors/subgrantees
  - if project includes monitoring, a Quality

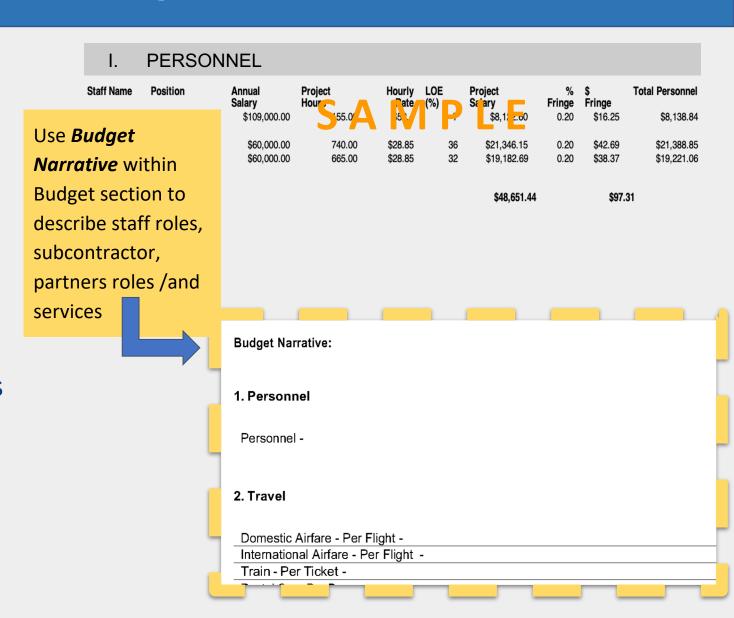
    Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required budget resources
- Budgets should show that a project equitably allocates funds among partners carrying out project activities



- ✓ Travel
- √ Equipment
- ✓ Materials and Supplies
- ✓ Contractors
- ✓ Other Direct Costs
- ✓ Indirect Costs

## Budget – the "Budget Narrative"

- Use Budget Narrative to your advantage
- Be clear and concise
- An important opportunity to succinctly describe partner roles
- An opportunity to reflect authentic partnerships



#### Match

**Match -** the portion of total project costs provided by the applicant and its partners in the form of in-kind donations or cash expended during the project period.

#### Sources/Type:

- Cash contributions
- In-kind services/contributions
  - volunteer hours
  - pro-bono support
  - staff time not covered in the budget

**Status:** Pledged or Intend to Apply

2022 Match Requirement: **SWG-PTA** 0% \* SWG-I PA MEB INSR 100% non-federal \*optional, but encouraged especially non-federal match

## Match - Important to every proposal

#### Match Matters!

- <u>Cash</u> match can boost proposal competitiveness
- <u>In-kind</u> match can boost proposal competitiveness
- Match represents partner buy-in
- Letters of Support validate match and financial commitments



#### Match - Scenario

You're proposing a project to install riparian forest buffer along 800' of stream. A local community college is lining up internships for its landscape-professionals training program. Interns are available to provide 300 hours of service to inspect, maintain, and replant the project site over two growing seasons.

#### How can this be reflected in a proposal to boost its competitiveness?

- Select "In-Kind Match Contribution Pledged"
- Identify the value of contribution (and how it was calculated)
   300H x \$28.54/hr (ex. Rate for volunteer) = \$8,562
- List college as the Source of Match
- Describe the service being pledged
- Include Letter of Support from the college showing the contribution
- In the Project Narrative, describe how the project leverages partner support

# What types of match might your organization be able to leverage in a NFWF proposal?

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## Project Narrative - Use it to your advantage!

### A compelling Project Narrative...

- States Project Goal & Objectives
- Provides Context
- Identifies Co-benefits
- Includes a Work Plan

## When drafting the **Project Narrative**

- ✓ use NFWF's template
- ✓ refer to RFP
  terminology as a guide

## Project Objectives



A second important place in an application to be CLEAR and CONCISE:

## **Project OBJECTIVES**

Project Objectives: specific steps to be taken to accomplish the project goal and achieve project outcomes

# Putting those <u>3 Practices</u> to work when writing Project OBJECTIVES

**Objectives:** A single, concrete sentence.

#### Stating:

- Specific actions to be taken,
- By whom, and
- To achieve what results.

Objective 1: The SWCD will update existing conservation plans with three dairy farmers and help them enroll in NRCS programs to implement enhanced nutrient management practices that address water resource concerns.

#### 3 Practices:

- 1- simple & precise declarative sentences
- 2- specific & concrete language
- 3- consistent language

Objective 2: The riparian buffer will be restored and expanded by the project team to improve filtering function and increase width.

### Project Context

#### Why is this particular geography important?

- a local or regional priority?
- impaired streams <u>and</u> motivated farmers/landowners?
- a priority catchment or site based on a recent assessment or action plan?

#### Who is involved or concerned?

- a local watershed group or land trust interested?
- local farmers, residents or municipalities benefit from outcomes?

#### How are stakeholders already involved/engaged?

- watershed stewards or environmental council leading community education?
- BMP designs vetted by community members?

#### What past/ongoing activities support this project?

- has data been gathered that reinforces the need or illuminates your story?
- stakeholder communications or partner collaboration underway?
- community input sought or design charette / watershed summit held?



#### Project Co-Benefits

...when a water quality or habitat improvement project results in **additional outcomes** that meet broader Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) priorities

- Diversifies songbird population
- Bolsters local amphibian populations
- Enhances habitat for freshwater at risk species (e.g., mussels, hellbenders)
- Diminishes heat islands in city hot spots
- Protects drinking water supplies
- > Engages new audiences in restoration
- Builds workforce skills and jobs
- Sequesters carbon
- Reduces flooding

Conservation

Public Health & Social

Climate & Resiliency

### Project: Co-Benefits

- Co-benefits should **ACCOMPANY** not overshadow PRIMARY CONSERVATION OUTCOMES
- Co-benefits can boost project cost effectiveness and proposal competitiveness
- NFWF is interested in multiple benefits!
  BUT project co-benefits should be real & meaningful
- Don't assume reviewers know the value of project co-benefits – tell them!



Respond at PollEv.com/cleanwater378

Text CLEANWATER378 to 22333 once to join, then A, B, C, D, E...

# Which co-benefits are current priorities for your organization? Check all that apply.

Land protection	A
Biodiversity and habitat	В
Climate adaptation and resiliency	С
Flood mitigation	D
Recreation	E
Workforce development and opportunities	F
Source water protection	G
Citizen stewardship	Н
Groundwater recharge	1
Farm and food security	J

#### Work Plan

Identifies how partners will accomplish project objectives.

For each objective identify:

- ✓ Major tasks
- ✓ Who performs tasks
- ✓ Task timeframe
- ✓ Deliverables

Tip: Major tasks should align with activities described in Budget Narrative

**Objective 1:** Update farm conservation plans to enroll dairy farmers in NRCS programs and implement enhanced nutrient management practices

	Task / Activity	Who	Timeframe	Deliverable
	1.1 Schedule on-site meeting with farmer	SWCD	By End of 2021	Project launch
	1.2 Update conse vation plan	SWCD with producer	January 2022	Updated conservation plan
•	1.3 Complete enrollmer process for NRCS & State Cost share for manure injection & storage	Co / Jonservation A Jar CF A Tech	Winter 2022	Contracts for cost share
	1.4 Field day, evaluation of manure injection	Cow Conservation Alliance & partners	Fa' 2022	Educational and utreach materials
	1.5 Manure storage construction	Contractor, Producer	Spring 2023	Completed manure storage shed
	1.6 Edge of field monitoring	NRCS and SWCD	Spring 2023	Post implementation evaluation

## Before Tapping Submit...

- ✓ Carefully review RFP for all required Uploads
- ✓ Upload proposal attachments, such as...
  - Project Narrative ("Full Proposal Narrative") always required
  - □ FieldDoc Project Summary always required
  - Letters of Support required for some; encouraged for all proposals
  - □ Photos optional; very helpful to reviewers
  - Key design documents optional; can strengthen proposals
  - lue Others...
    - -- Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Plan
    - -- Landowner Agreements
    - -- Stream restoration supplement, if applicable

## NFWF Program Resources

- NFWF Program Staff
- NFWF contracted Field Liaisons
- NFWF.org prior RFPs, proposal tip sheets, recorded webinars



## 2022 Timeline

Small Watershed Grant (SWG) Application
Opened
Feb 2022

Application
Closes
April 21, 2022

Award
Announcement
Summer 2022

INSR (2023-round) Application
Opens
~ Fall/Winter 2022

Application
Closes
~ Fall/Wint. 2022

Award
Announcement
~ Spring 2023

## **Contact Information**

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Katie Ombalski	Woods and Waters Consulting, LLC	katie@woodswaters.com	(814) 574-7281

## Questions & Answers



Raise Hand & Unmute

Put Questions in Chat Box

# THANK YOU for joining us!

# SIGN UP PROJECT PROPOSAL CONSULTATION with NFWF Team Member



We'd appreciate feedback - Please take our brief survey!

~ See Chat for links ~