Request for proposals: 2024 Lake Conservation Grant

We are seeking project proposals for funding from the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership (MGLP) 2024 Lake Conservation Grant. The MGLP is one of twenty partnerships that span the nation under the umbrella of the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP). The MGLP area of focus is glacial lakes and their watersheds (see figure). Nine Midwestern states, federal agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Forest Service, tribal governments, and private natural resource entities including The Nature Conservancy, have been integral partners in the development and operation of the MGLP.

*The MGLP works to protect, rehabilitate, and enhance sustainable fish habitats in glacial lakes of the Midwest (black stippled area) for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.*

We support conservation projects that work toward meeting the goals and objectives set forth in the MGLP Strategic Plan ([midwestglaciallakes.org/resources](http://midwestglaciallakes.org/resources/)) to benefit glacial lake fish habitats, which include addressing the chemical, physical, and biological components of the habitats that fishes found in glacial lakes use throughout their lives. We have directed funding toward a wide range of aquatic conservation projects that benefit imperiled, endangered, and recreational fish species and their habitats. We typically fund 3-5 projects annually between $30,000 and $100,000, but larger projects will be considered for funding up to a maximum of the approximately $360,000 expected for distribution. Projects have been successfully implemented because contributions and capabilities of many partners have been combined to accomplish project goals that none of the partnering entities could accomplish on their own.

Projects considered for funding **must** align with the goals and objectives of the MGLP and can range in scale from projects that affect one or more sites, from individual or multiple lakes to entire watersheds. Projects should address the processes that cause fish habitat impairments as opposed to managing or treating the symptoms of those causes. Examples include, but are not limited to:

* projects that implement or demonstrate new approaches
* watershed-level nutrient control projects;
* water quality and erosion control measures;
* native vegetation or wetland rehabilitation;
* natural riparian or in-lake habitat restoration and protection;
* barrier removal for improved native fish passage;
* fish population or watershed assessments needed for project evaluation;
* habitat assessment, prioritization and planning for future habitat projects;
* evaluating current and future habitat conditions;
* projects addressing climate change adaptation or mitigation through fish habitat;
* projects training biologists and managers on inland lake fish habitat management tools and approaches; and
* community outreach and education on the importance of and how to better conserve glacial lake fish habitat.

In addition to conducting independent outreach and/or education, successful applicants will be expected to work with the MGLP to coordinate media and public outreach to raise the profile of MGLP-funded projects.

If you have a lake conservation project aligned with the goals and objectives of the MGLP and need financial assistance, we encourage you to submit a proposal for project funding. If you have any questions, please contact Joe Nohner at nohnerj@michigan.gov or 517-599-6825 or John Hiebert, MGLP Steering Chair, at john.hiebert@state.mn.us. An application for funding is included with this announcement and you can submit your application by emailing it to MGLP Coordinator Joe Nohner at nohnerj@michigan.gov.

Eligibility and administrative information

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants include state and federal management agencies, non-governmental organizations (e.g., conservation groups, community associations, watershed councils, cooperatives, civic groups), municipalities, universities, schools, private landowners, and local and tribal governments.

Projects carried out by Indian Tribes may be eligible for additional funding from the National Fish Habitat Partnership and have special considerations relaxing match funding requirements. We are still awaiting administrative interpretation of these considerations; if your project is led by or in collaboration with an Indian Tribe, please contact Joe Nohner to discuss further.

What types of projects may NOT be funded?

Funds may NOT be expended on the following. If any of these activities is integral to a project that addresses the MGLP strategic action plan, funds from other sources can support the activities, but not NFHP funds. However, those other funds may qualify for matching or leverage purposes.

Ineligible costs

1. Pre-award costs associated with preliminary design, surveys, and appraisals.
2. Realty costs (e.g., lease or purchase interests in real property or to make rental or other land use incentive payments to landowners).
3. Operation and maintenance of facilities or structures. This applies to buildings and structures only and not to maintenance or construction of earthen structures.
4. Actions required by existing regulatory programs, except funds may support activities under voluntary agreements that exceed regulatory requirements for conserving habitats (e.g., hydropower licensing in which the licensee enters into a voluntary agreement to restore habitat that exceeds regulatory requirements).
5. Projects that are primarily research studies. Fish habitat assessment projects can be funded and are not considered research.
6. Long term monitoring projects and includes long term monitoring of fish populations.
7. Incentive payments.

Available Funding: The MGLP plans to allocate approximately $360,000 among one or more individual projects for this cycle. However, the exact amount of funding available to the partnership varies annually depending on the final budget allocation with final fund availability determined in the spring.

Match Required: Successful proposals must demonstrate a 1:1 or greater non-federal match, which may include cash, time, materials, or other in-kind services. **Greater match funding among all sources will result in a more competitive project proposal.** There are no match requirements for projects carried out by Indian Tribes. Match must occur during the project period.

Deadline: Applications are due by **February 17, 2023.** In order to help applicants put forward the best possible projects for consideration by the MGLP Steering Committee, MGLP has a set of criteria by which projects are evaluated for funding and applicants should address these criteria in their project applications. Please review the attached materials for project selection criteria and application instructions. MGLP Coordinator Joe Nohner can assist with the development and implementation of projects.

Decision process and timeline for funding: The Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership must recommend projects to the NFHP Board by March 31, 2023. The NFHP Board will consider MGLP recommendations and must make a recommendation to the Department of Interior by July 1, 2023, for approval and funding. The MGLP will communicate all funding decisions to applicants as soon as possible, with decisions anticipated during Fall 2023 – Winter 2024, depending on the status of the federal government budget.

Project Duration: MGLP-funded projects are likely to be contracted and available in early 2024 with a likely completion date of September 30, 2026. In some cases, the MGLP will consider funding phases or components of larger, long-term projects, as long as funds can be expended, objectives met, and benefits realized by the likely completion date. Multiple-year requests beyond the above time limitations will not be considered at this time.

Grant administration: Project agreements will be administered by the USFWS. Successful applicants to the MGLP Lake Conservation Grant will then work with USFWS to create and administer grant agreements; additional information about this process for applicants receiving MGLP Lake Conservation Grants can be found in this [USFWS Application & Award Requirements](http://midwestglaciallakes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-10-27_NFHP-Application-and-Award-Requirements.pdf) document.

Midwest Glacial Lakes

 Fish Habitat Partnership

2024 Lake Conservation Grant

 Application Instructions

**Consultation**

 Prior to submission, you must discuss your project with the MGLP Coordinator (Joe Nohner; nohnerj@michigan.gov; 517-599-6825) for preliminary feedback on project fit for the grant and areas for improvement.

**Submission Instructions**

 Complete the Grant Application available on the MGLP website

 Complete the Budget and Monitoring Template (two tabs) available on the MGLP website.

 Provide 2-5 project site pictures and a map of the area as separate files.

 Provide a letter of support from the relevant State Fish and Wildlife Agency.

 All file names should include the project name.

 Submit the above items electronically as email attachments to the MGLP Coordinator (Joe Nohner nohnerj@michigan.gov). Please send a separate email with no attachments to Joe Nohner for confirmation of application receipt.

**Please note, the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership will not consider:**

1. Late requests.

2. Requests for projects or programs already completed.

3. Refunding projects, programs or items purchased before the project is approved or awarded.

4. Participating in or funding of any political campaign on behalf of any issues, organizations or candidates.

**Deadline**

Applications are due by **February 17, 2023.**

If you have any questions, please contact Joe Nohner at nohnerj@michigan.gov or 517-284-6236 or John Hiebert, MGLP Steering Chair, at john.hiebert@state.mn.us.

Midwest Glacial Lakes

 Fish Habitat Partnership

Project Selection Guidelines, Evaluation Criteria and Process

The MGLP Steering Committee will review and evaluate proposals based on the criteria listed below. A list of the projects that are recommended for funding will be submitted to the National Fish Habitat Board and ultimately the U.S. Department of Interior for final approval. Grant agreements will be completed with recipients by September 30, 2024, although they may be completed earlier in federal fiscal year 2024. Project applicants should address these requirements, guidelines, and criteria below in their project applications.

Requirements

1. Project must be consistent with specific MGLP goals and objectives as outlined in the MGLP Strategic Plan (available for download at <http://midwestglaciallakes.org>).

2. Project must benefit at least one native fish species in its historic range on a lake within the MGLP. The MGLP border has been revised; you can confirm eligibility through discussion with Joe Nohner.

3. Project proposals must be supported in writing by state and/or federal fish and wildlife management agencies, or tribal governments, within project-area jurisdictions. Project application must include a signature and contact information for a ‘sponsoring professional’ from a relevant management agency.

4. If project is located on private land, a support letter from the landowner will be required.

5. Projects must include an education and outreach component that includes the local or regional community.

6. Projects must include monitoring and evaluation measures.

7. Successful applicants must agree to submit a short completion report to Joe Nohner (nohnerj@michigan.gov) within one month of project completion that describes project outputs, outcomes, and lessons learned in accordance with the MGLP completion report template.

General Criteria and Considerations

Strong applications should address the criteria and considerations below satisfactorily.

* Is the project likely to succeed? In other words, are the methods, applicant expertise, committed funding, and other factors sufficient to ensure likely success?
* Does the project address more than one of the goals or objectives listed above and in the MGLP Strategic Plan, or a priority need or limiting factor in a species conservation, management or recovery plan? If so, please reference and explain.
* Does the project protect or restore a natural process, and/or address a root cause of decline or habitat degradation? Is the project self-sustaining over time (preferred), or will it require periodic/regular maintenance? Please describe.
* Does the project address a need identified in a lake management plan or the MGLP Conservation Guidelines for the lake? MGLP Conservation Guidelines for most lakes can be found on the [MGLP Conservation Planner](http://midwestglaciallakes.org/resources/conservationplanner/).
* Does the application establish that the project is technically sound and supported by the best available science or knowledge in the field, and are the project objectives realistic, measurable, and achievable?
* Does the project convey a large conservation benefit to a MGLP priority species? Priority species can be found in the [MGLP Strategic Plan](http://midwestglaciallakes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MGLP-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025.pdf).
* Does the project have a high probability of being completed within the proposed project timeline?
* For habitat and restoration projects, are there adequate assurances that the project will be monitored, and the benefits maintained over the long term (we prefer projects that will sustain themselves after completion)? If necessary, are there provisions for operation and maintenance?
* After project completion, is the lake ecosystem expected to be resilient (preferred) or vulnerable to climate change in the future? Vulnerability will be determined based in part on the potential loss of habitat suitable for cool or coldwater species under climate change as modeled by the MGLP in its [Conservation [Planner](http://midwestglaciallakes.org/resources/conservationplanner/)](http://midwestglaciallakes.org/resources/conservationplanner/).
* Will the project increase or protect a lake’s resilience to climate change? Examples could include restoring fish passage to mitigate fish kills or minimizing eutrophication that exacerbates the loss of cool, oxygenated habitats for fishes.
* Who are the various partners that will participate in the administration and implementation of the project? Does the partner list include stakeholder organizations with diverse experiences, roles, and relationships to the project?
* Does the project include an outreach and/or education component? In addition to conducting independent outreach and/or education, successful applicants will be expected to work with the MGLP to coordinate media and public outreach to raise the profile of MGLP-funded projects.
* Project alignment/compatibility with other conservation plans (e.g., State Wildlife Plans;

Biological Opinions; Land Management Plans).

* Does the proposal identify specific habitat measures of success and performance targets that are observable and amenable to pre- and post-project monitoring and include social, economic and biological benefits such as enhanced recreational, commercial and subsistence fishing opportunities, increased public visitation, or innovative project designs that address specific fish conservation challenges?
* Is the budget well-defined and linked to clear deliverables and outcomes?
* Are external funds leveraged in support of the proposed project?