



FY2026 DFHP Project Funding Opportunity Applications Due February 21, 2025

The Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP) is proud to announce our FY2026 Request for Project Proposals. As one of 20 federally recognized National Fish Habitat Partnerships, DFHP is a collaborative effort represented by 11 western states, seven federal agencies, sovereign tribes and tribal organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private conservation groups that seek to cooperatively conserve native desert fish species across their historic ranges by protecting, restoring, and enhancing aquatic ecosystems. Project funding through this RFP is made available to grantees annually through the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) program. That NFHP funding is made available by Congressional authorizations through The America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act.

America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act

America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act was passed by Congress and signed by the President on October 30, 2020. Importantly, the legislation made significant changes to project requirements to be eligible for NFHP funding. The ACE Act places an emphasis on restoration efforts that will improve recreational fishing opportunities and public use of the resource. Improvements in public access as a component of projects are also encouraged. Some specific requirements include:

- Requested NFHP grant funds must be matched 1:1 with non-federal funds, with an exception for Indian Tribes. Non-federal match can include cash and/or in-kind labor, materials, or equipment if there are no federal ties to those funds. State agency funds can be used for the non-federal match if labor and/or materials are not being matched to another federal grant. State agency funds that are being used to match other federal grants would not be eligible as match. Match must also occur during the grant period of performance.
- All NFHP funded projects must include an outreach/education component.
- Monitoring and evaluation measures must be included as part of the project application but should not make up a significant portion of the funding request.
- The ACE Act allows a state, local government, or other non-federal entity to receive NFHP funds for the acquisition of real property from willing sellers if the acquisition ensures public access for fish and wildlife-dependent recreation or contributes a scientifically based, direct enhancement to the health of fish and fish populations as determined by the NFHP Board. All real property acquisition projects funded with NFHP funds must be approved by the state agency in the state in which the project is occurring.

Eligible Projects: Projects considered for funding address science-based habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement activities that benefit native desert fish species addressed by DFHP (for a complete species list, visit the [DFHP Strategic Plan](#)). Types of eligible projects may include riparian or instream habitat protection, enhancement, and restoration; barrier removal or construction; range-wide population or watershed habitat assessments to prioritize and plan habitat conservation; and habitat-related community outreach and education actions.

NFHP funds must be used for on-the-ground habitat projects (engineering assessment, design, construction, implementation, monitoring, etc.), scientific assessments, outreach or communication projects, or acquisition of real property. Funds may not be used for research projects. Funded projects must be completed within 18-24 months of receipt of contract agreement in 2026, and multi-year projects MUST be broken into distinct phases by year for tasks, accomplishments, and budget.

NFHP National Conservation Priorities: FY2026 project proposals must fall under at least one of the NFHP National Conservation Priorities. More detail about priorities and example strategies that fall under each NFHP Priority can be found [here](#):

- Conserve waters and habitats where all processes and functions are operating within their expected range or natural variation.
- Conserve hydrologic conditions for fish.
- Conserve physical and living habitats and features that support viable and sustainable species and/or populations in impacted or at-risk systems.
- Reconnect fragmented fish habitats.
- Conserve water quality for fish.
- Support the structure and function of Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs).
- Enhance recreational, commercial, subsistence, and traditional fishing opportunities when conducting projects that conserve fish habitat.

DFHP's Focal Area: Up to 75% of DFHP's NFHP funding **may** be allocated to a specific DFHP geographic region rotating on an annual basis, starting with the Lower Colorado, and followed by the Upper Colorado, Rio Grande, and Basin and Range (see map below delineating geographic region boundaries). It is not guaranteed that 75% of available NFHP funds will be allocated to projects within the focal geographic region for that year and **project submissions from all geographic regions are welcomed and encouraged**. Proposals will be judged on merit, first and foremost.

- **FY2026 – Lower Colorado**
- FY2027 – Upper Colorado
- FY2028 – Rio Grande
- FY2029 – Basin and Range

Available Funding: NFHP project funding from The ACE Act is authorized annually and the available FY2026 funding for NFHP projects nationwide will not be known until early 2025. Project funding allocated to DFHP varies annually but we anticipate it will be in the range of \$150,000-\$250,000 for FY26 based on previous years. This is a very competitive process, and we anticipate our pool of applicants to exceed available funding. Typical funding per project is within the range of \$5k-\$50k; however, proposals requesting over \$50k are welcome and will be considered. There is a **1:1 non-Federal match requirement**, which may include cash and/or in-kind labor, materials, or equipment if there are no Federal ties to those funds. Once the requested NFHP grant funds are matched with non-Federal cash or in-kind, an unlimited amount of other Federal or non-Federal contributions to the project are allowed. DFHP gives special consideration to projects with more than the minimum non-Federal match. The DFHP Steering Committee will review and rank applications based on their ability to meet the partnership's key priorities and strategic objectives (see the [DFHP Strategic Plan](#)).

NFHP funds are Federal funds, administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). All organizations that receive NFHP funding are required to complete all requirements for Federal grants, including registration on the Federal System for Award Management (www.sam.gov), Automated

Standard Application for Payments (ASAP), Grants Solutions grant management system, and provide interim and annual reports to the USFWS and DFHP. NFHP funds are processed through a grant agreement completed through the USFWS Regional Offices or local Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO). Grants are paid on a reimbursable basis. All Federal funding requires environmental compliance documents (Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and National Historic Preservation Act) to be approved prior to execution of a grant agreement. DFHP also requires the timely provision of copies of final reports with before/after project photos to DFHP.

Anticipated Timeline:

Dec 2024-Feb 2025	Develop project proposals for funding consideration
February 21, 2025	Project Proposals Due
March-Dec 2025	Proposals evaluated by DFHP Steering Committee, NFHP, DOI
Jan-May 2026	Announcement of awards to recipients (dependent on Congress appropriation)
Jun-Sept 2026	Agreements processed/funds awarded

Contact Information: Please contact the DFHP coordinator, Jon Sjoberg, at jon.sjoberg@wafwa.org with any questions. Below are DFHP’s **Regional Representatives** who can answer questions specific to their respective regions and assist with the process.

Regional Representatives

Basin and Range

Chris Crookshanks (NDOW)
ccrookshanks@ndow.org
(775) 688-1530

Lower Colorado River including the Rio Yaqui, Rio de la Concepcion, and Rio Sonoyta

Brandon Senger (NDOW)
bsenger@ndow.org
(702) 668-3999

Upper Colorado River

Tom Fresques (BLM)
t1fresqu@blm.gov
(970) 876-9078

Rio Grande including Pecos River and Tularosa Basin

Bryan Bakevich (NMDFG)
Bryan.Bakevich@dgf.nm.gov
505-470-7358



Applications must be received by 5PM Pacific Time, Friday February 21, 2025.

Submit completed proposals, including the application form in PDF format, the two spreadsheets, and separate photos to the DFHP coordinator, Jon Sjoberg, at jon.sjoberg@wafwa.org. The Application Forms and all application related documentation with specific guidance for completing the application is available on the [DFHP website](#). *Late or incomplete applications will only be considered under special circumstances, such as if on time applications do not meet anticipated funding levels.*