



NFWF, Federal Agencies and Private Partners Announce \$91 Million in Grants from America the Beautiful Challenge

Inaugural round of funding supports broad range of conservation efforts across the nation

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Washington, D.C., Nov. 10, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) joined its public- and private-sector partners today in announcing nearly \$91 million in grants through the new America the Beautiful Challenge (ATBC). The 55 new grants announced today will support landscape-scale conservation projects in 42 states and three U.S. territories, leveraging \$50.7 million in matching contributions to generate a total conservation impact of about \$141.7 million.

ATBC grants support projects that conserve, restore and connect habitats for wildlife while improving community resilience and access to nature. The [America the Beautiful Challenge](#) is a partnership between NFWF and the U.S. Department of the Interior through the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service, the U.S. Department of Defense, and Native Americans in Philanthropy.

The competitive grant awards were made possible with funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, other federal conservation programs and private sources. Additional support this year was provided by the Bezos Earth Fund.

“Nature is essential to the health, well-being and prosperity of every family and every community in America,” said Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. “Through the America the Beautiful Challenge, we are investing in

economy, address equitable access to the outdoors, and help tackle the climate crisis.”

To streamline and centralize access to these funds, NFWF and partners worked together to establish the ATBC in May 2022 as a “one-stop-shop” competitive grant program for landscape-scale conservation and restoration projects that implement existing conservation plans across the nation. The 2022 ATBC request for proposals received an unprecedented response, with applicants submitting 527 proposals requesting a total of \$1.1 billion. The grant slate announced today addresses about 10 percent of this overall level of demand, illustrating the highly competitive nature of the ATBC.

“The inaugural year of the America the Beautiful Challenge shows what’s possible when partners go all-in on a collaborative approach to providing resources for locally led restoration efforts,” said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of NFWF. “These grants will support voluntary landscape-scale conservation efforts that will restore fish and wildlife habitats across the nation and build a brighter future for all of us.”

The grants announced today enable states, Tribal nations, U.S. territories, nonprofits, academic institutions and other grantees to develop and implement multijurisdictional, high-priority restoration projects on both public and private lands. The program is intended to encourage the development and implementation of diverse and comprehensive landscape-level projects that:

- Address priority conservation and restoration needs
- Showcase cumulative benefits to fish and wildlife
- Enhance carbon sequestration and storage
- Engage with and benefit underserved communities
- Connect people with nature
- Advance existing conservation plans and/or are informed by Indigenous traditional knowledge
- Help safeguard ecosystems and communities through resilience-focused and nature-based solutions

“Restoring and maintaining 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands and conserving hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural and private lands is a task too large for any one organization to do alone,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “That is why we have long worked with a wide array of partners and our co-stewardship agreements with

Examples of the types of projects funded this year include:

- **Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks** (\$4,330,000) will improve the resilience of 90,000 acres of fire-dependent habitats including piney woods, blackland prairie, and loess bluffs ecosystems through restoration, habitat management, invasive plant species control, revegetation, cost-sharing, outreach and training.
- **Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa** (\$219,000) will build a young adult Indigenous Conservation Crew (Maajii-akii-gikenjigewin crew) to support existing and future on-the-ground management plans on the Fond du Lac Reservation while providing participants with skills and experience for careers in the natural resource field.
- **University of Montana** (\$674,000) will develop decision-support tools to identify invasive treatment locations, facilitate surveillance of 1.2 million acres of shrubland, grassland, and woodland habitat, collaboratively prioritize treatment areas, and fill field technician positions through a recruitment partnership with Little Big Horn College.
- **Ducks Unlimited** (\$348,000) will advance on-the-ground wetland habitat restoration, help with project designs, conduct outreach to new landowners, and provide engineering technical assistance to implement NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife Black Duck program across targeted mid-Atlantic wetlands.

"The 2022 America the Beautiful Challenge grants support the long-term sustainability and resilience of Department of Defense (DOD) missions in the Georgia and Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscapes and exhibit the valuable collaboration occurring across local, state, and federal partners. DOD will continue supporting activities through the streamlined America the Beautiful Challenge to safeguard critical testing and training missions at installations across the country, all while protecting valuable habitats and accelerating national security strategies," said Mr. Paul Cramer, Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment.

The ATBC includes an emphasis on supporting Tribal nation access to grant funding for restoration, conservation and capacity-building, and seeks projects that incorporate Indigenous traditional knowledge in planning and implementation. The number of proposals received from Tribal nation applicants in 2022 far exceeded expectations and demonstrated high demand and clear need for the funding. Ultimately, about one-third of the 2022 grants and funding will support projects implemented by Tribal nations, representing an unprecedented level of funding dedicated to Tribally led projects for a single grant program at NFWF. This includes the largest-ever grant made by the Foundation to a Tribal nation.

using indigenous ecological knowledge and their unique legal and political relationship with the U.S. government,” said Erik Stegman, CEO of Native Americans in Philanthropy.

The ATBC consolidates funding from multiple federal agencies and the private sector, enabling applicants to develop and pursue large-scale or complex, locally led projects that collaboratively address shared priorities across public and private lands. The program supports projects that contribute to one or more of the following focal areas:

- Conserving and restoring rivers, coasts, wetlands and watersheds
- Conserving and restoring forests, grasslands and other important ecosystems that serve as carbon sinks
- Connecting and reconnecting wildlife corridors, large landscapes, watersheds and seascapes
- Improving ecosystem and community resilience to flooding, drought and other climate-related threats
- Expanding access to the outdoors, particularly in underserved communities

A complete list of the 2022 grants made through the ATBC is available [here](#).

To learn more about the program, including applicant eligibility, funding priorities and submission requirements, visit the NFWF ATBC [webpage](#).

About the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation’s fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate, foundation and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,000 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of \$7.4 billion. Learn more at www.nfwf.org.

About U.S. DoD REPI Program

The Department of Defense (DoD)’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program fosters multi-agency initiatives and collaboration to preserve compatible land uses and promote resilience around military installations and ranges. These efforts preserve and enhance Department of Defense (DoD) assets and capabilities in support of military readiness through the creation of unique cost-sharing partnerships with state and local governments and private conservation organizations. The REPI Program is administered by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Learn more at www.repi.mil.

through leadership development, education, research, and strategic partnerships with funders and philanthropic organizations. The cornerstone of their work is their relatives and their networks. NAP supports several communities of stakeholders that work together to build knowledge, community, priorities, and power in the sector. These networks include Native professionals in philanthropy, elected Tribal leaders, Native youth leaders, Native philanthropic executives and board members, and Native nonprofit leaders.

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