



CONSERVATION FACT SHEET

NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF)

The Clean Water Management Trust Fund was established in 1996 by the North Carolina General Assembly with the goals of protecting and preserving clean water throughout the state for future generations. In over 25 years and 100 NC counties, grants from the trust have been used to conserve over half a million acres of land and restore over 3,000 miles of natural streams and rivers. Today, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund is known as the North Carolina Land and Water Fund (NCLWF) to establish its commitment to protecting water sources and the lands surrounding them.

For an NCLWF application, matching funds are required. These can be in the form of a bargain sale of the NCLWF easement, meaning accepting less than full fair market value of the easement, or in a separate donated easement on the uplands or different portion of the property. This is a less restrictive type of easement and is sold by Three Rivers Land Trust.

What is NCLWF?

The NCLWF has a competitive grant that private landowners can apply for, with the help of a nonprofit organization or county agency, to conserve natural spaces in NC. While the NCLWF typically funds acquisition projects for conservation easements, it also funds various restoration, stormwater management, planning, and donated property mini grants.

For the Conservation Easement projects, NCLWF seeks to fund projects that:

1. protect habitats for both rare and significant flora and fauna, those native to NC
2. Buffer streams to filter sediments and other pollutants
3. Protect downstream and drinking water supplies
4. Provide recreational opportunities such as greenways and trails
5. Protect historic sites from disturbance
6. prevent incompatible land use near military installations



NCLWF awards grant funding to many different types of projects but priority is given to those projects that have one of the following characteristics:

1. Riparian buffers: These areas are important to conserve and protect the water quality of downstream communities. These areas may also create wildlife corridors by connecting with other easements, improve air quality, regulate stream temperatures and lessen flood damage in the floodplain. Many of these sites are eligible for safe, legal public access to streams for general recreation purposes.
2. Cultural and Historical Sites: These areas are ones that host important historical sites, whether in historical districts or stand alone. Historic buildings and infrastructure must be managed by a third party organization.
3. Ecological Diversity: NCLWF works closely with the NC Natural Heritage program to rank various natural ecosystem communities that represent the ecological diversity of North Carolina. Areas with a higher rank receive higher priority as they can protect a greater percentage of NC species' diversity.
4. Military Installations Buffers: These areas are often located near military installations with streams and or nearby natural communities with rare and/or endangered species of flora and fauna. NCLWF funds these projects with the purpose of preventing unsustainable use of land and water resources near installations.
5. Greenways: These areas are those purchased with NCLWF funds that have trails made of either natural surfaces or paved markers for education and recreational uses. Special consideration is given to project proposals that connect pre-existing community parks, schools and neighborhoods in urban areas void of green space in the state.

For typical Land and Water fund conservation easements, properties remain wild, forever. This allows for a varieties of activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, and trail-making but prohibits activities such as timber harvesting and agriculture. These typical LWF easements are held by the State of North Carolina. For an upland donated easement that is used as matching funds, it is a typical TRLT donated working lands easement that allows for forestry and agriculture practices. However, NCLWF will not pay for an easement that allows for timber harvesting or agriculture.



Eligibility

NCLWF eligibility is determined through the NCLWF rating system that classifies a certain project based on its resource significance, military buffers, public benefits, the landowner's readiness and needs and the project's value. In general, projects are eligible if they are aimed at protecting and conserving riparian buffers for the purpose of providing environmental protection for surface waters and urban drinking water supplies. NCLWF's overall goal is to establish a network of protected riparian greenways that are available for environmental, educational and recreational uses.

Specific requirements of acquisition applications include:

1. Land must be within 30 feet from the top of the stream bank or the width of the 100 year floodplain
2. Land may include natural areas, element occurrences or species of concern as defined by the NC Natural Heritage program. Adjacent buffer land that is critical to the viability of those latter areas are also included.
3. Land may buffer natural habitats around military installations or military training areas
4. Land may include historic or cultural aspects

Benefits

While the NCLWF aims to conserve and protect water and land resources, the benefits of the program expand to many areas throughout NC. These benefits include but are not limited to:

1. Conservation of natural areas
2. Water Quality Protections
3. Outdoor Recreation and Education Opportunities
4. Support for Agriculture
5. Climate Change Resilience
6. Economic Benefits
7. Collaborative Partnerships



Application Process

After the land trust organizations has submitted the application, the landowner will be prompted to schedule an interview with a field representative. This representative will schedule a site visit to the proposed location. The application is then reviewed and the rating system described above is used to score the project. Applicants are given an opportunity to review their score in August and provide feedback to the program staff.

Decisions regarding grant funding are typically made at the NCLWF Board Meeting held annually in mid-September. However, decisions could be released later depending on when the NC state budget is passed.

More Information

NC Land and Water Fund Homepage

<https://nclwf.nc.gov/>

NC Land and Water Fund Acquisition Funding Manual

<https://nclwf.nc.gov/acquisition-funding-manual/open>