

Grant Opportunity: Riverscape Restoration in the Western United States and Northern Mexico

January 2024



The Biophilia Foundation is seeking proposals for projects to improve the resilience of watersheds in arid and semi-arid regions of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico.

Two types of grants are available:

- Grants of \$50,000 to \$100,000 are available for projects that implement low-tech, process-based, and/or beaver-based restoration of upland streams and rivers.
- Grants up to \$25,000 are available for:
 - Capacity building: Assistance with the development of watershed plans, place-based networks, or preparation of proposals for federal or state grants.
 - Engagement: Outreach to landowners and land managers to improve the availability of information and make implementation achievable.

The Biophilia Foundation also welcomes enquiries regarding capacity building for riverscape restoration, research (primarily carbon sequestration, climate change adaptation, and other riparian ecosystem services), innovative finance, and improving the availability of information available to landowners and land managers.

The target geography for these grants includes arid or semi-arid regions of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Nuevo León.

Background

Rivers and streams are the lifeblood of ecosystems in the arid and semi-arid regions of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Healthy watersheds have more abundant vegetation; are more resilient to extreme conditions caused by climate change such as drought, floods, and wildfire; provide better habitat for wildlife; and provision more ecosystem services for people. Yet land use changes over the last three hundred years have led to deforestation, grassland conversion, beaver eradication, logjam removal, and other practices that changed hydrological function.

When applied *en masse*, low-tech structures such as beaver dam analogs (BDA), post-assisted log structures (PALS), and rock detention structures (RDS) used on ephemeral, intermittent, and small ("wadable") perennial waterways can reverse the effects of degradation. By slowing down water and enabling soil infiltration, these structures allow more water to be stored in soil and

released over time, which can lead to greater water availability in soils and more consistent flow in channels. In-stream structures can be coupled with other cost-effective techniques, such as tree planting, exclosure fencing, beaver reintroduction, beaver conflict mitigation, and changes to grazing regimes, in response to local needs.

In response to the opportunity presented by these techniques, the Biophilia Foundation has created a Riverscape Restoration Initiative to address several needs:

- There is extensive degradation of riverscapes across the West.
- Regulation to protect watersheds can act as a barrier to restoration by mandating extensive and often expensive compliance measures.
- Philanthropic and government funding are insufficient to restore riverscapes at the necessary scale. New sources of revenue, such as impact investing, carbon credits, water markets, and other payments for ecosystem services programs are needed to scale these practices.
- While numerous ecosystem services have been documented, few have been quantified reliably. More data are needed to evaluate the benefits of the practices.
- Despite growing interest from restoration practitioners, there is too little awareness of these practices among landowners and land managers for government agencies.

Funding Opportunities

Grants provided through this initiative will include the categories described below. Eligible entities can apply for funding from one or more categories.

1. Implementation Grants

Implementation grants of \$50,000 to \$100,000 are available for riparian restoration projects using low-tech, process-based restoration (LTPBR) techniques, such as RDS, BDA, PALS, grass plugs, etc., and supporting practices, such as tree planting and exclosures. Priority will be given to larger projects (50+ structures), geographic areas where LTPBR is not widely practiced, and upper watersheds where numerous small, low-tech structures have the most impact.

Implementation grants can also support restoration for the purpose of beaver translocation or beaver recolonization. Grants for this purpose may include practices for nonlethal management of beaver conflicts (e.g., pond levelers). Preference will be given to sites that prohibit beaver trapping.

Where financially beneficial, the Biophilia Foundation supports integration of carbon finance and/or other payments for ecosystem services into restoration projects.

Implementation grants will be evaluated based on ecological and social criteria, including appropriateness of LTPBR to the context, biodiversity and ecological value, project scale, partnerships, and financial viability. Projects that utilize blended funding, such as government funds, philanthropic resources, carbon credits, or other payments for ecosystem services are preferred.

Only projects in the target geography will be considered for implementation grants.

In general, funded projects may apply for funding for one or two years, depending on scale and scope.

2. Capacity-Building and Engagement

Grants of up to \$25,000 are available to assist with capacity-building and engagement. Capacity-building includes the development of watershed plans, creation of place-based networks, or preparation of proposals for federal or state grants. Funds may also be used for projects to increase the capacity of the system, such as addressing training and workforce development.

Engagement grants fund efforts to reduce barriers to LTPBR implementation by landowners and land managers. Examples include videos, websites, hosted workshops, or targeted outreach/marketing to candidate landowners. Topics could include guidance on practices, permitting, financing, benefits, and risk mitigation.

Other: Research and Finance

In addition to the grants currently available, the Biophilia Foundation welcomes enquiries regarding:

- Research to address data gaps on the benefits and risks of riparian restoration. Our primary interest areas are carbon sequestration, climate change adaptation, and other ecosystem services.
- Innovative finance for riparian restoration, including carbon credits and other payments for ecosystem services.

Enquiries regarding research and restoration finance may be directed to Jennifer Gooden at jennifer@biophiliafoundation.org.

Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by registered nonprofit organizations, civil society organizations, and Native American tribes in the geographic area described above. Proposals may be for implementation grants, capacity building / engagement grants, or both, and proposals may be submitted by a single entity or partnerships of multiple entities. Priority will be given to small and mid-sized organizations.

Proposals

Please include the following in the proposal. A 5- to 7-page proposal is usually sufficient to address the questions for implementation grants, and 3 to 4 pages for capacity building and engagement proposals. Proposers may include attachments to support the proposal.

1. Cover sheet with name and location of project, name and contact information for primary contact person, and 2-4 sentence summary of the proposal
2. Description of problem(s) to be addressed and the factors that led to the problem(s)
3. Planned activities, including timeline and budget
4. Explanation of how the planned activities will address the problem and expected outcomes for the environment, wildlife, and people
5. Risks associated with the project
6. List of stakeholders directly and indirectly affected by the project and how they have been or will be included in planning and decision making
7. The proposers' qualifications

Quarterly deadlines for consideration are as follows:

- February 29, 2024
- May 31, 2024
- ~~August 31, 2024~~
- November 22, 2024

The August deadline will be merged with the November 22 deadline. All applications received between June 1 and November 22, 2024, will be considered together in December.

Questions?

For more information, please contact Jennifer Gooden at jennifer@biophiliafoundation.org.