National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Is a project in my waterbody/region eligible?

EPA established the geographic areas that delineate eligible areas, which can be viewed on an interactive map available here. Please use the zoom function on the map to access the fine details of where projects may be funded. All projects must occur in their entirety within the delineated areas. Projects occurring outside of these areas will not be considered, nor will the geographic boundaries change.

2) How were the geographic eligibility areas determined?

In general terms, the geographic polygons established by EPA represent the existing National Estuary Program (NEP) sites along with some additional upstream and/or downstream areas. More specifically, the eligible areas represent Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC) 12s from the Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD) that are either partially or entirely within an NEP study area and drain into an NEP estuary, or to the coast adjacent to the NEP study area. To create the eligibility boundary polygons, EPA identified USGS’ National Hydrography Data-plus flowlines that terminated within NEP study area boundaries and traced them upstream using attributes included in the data. EPA selected the WBD HUC12s containing these flowlines, limiting them to include only those HUC12s that were entirely or partially within an NEP study area. We also included inland and ocean-draining HUC12s that intersected NEP boundaries. In some instances, this step resulted in polygons that extend alongshore beyond the NEP study area boundary. Please note that HUCs may occur offshore, although most maps only show the land-based HUCs.

3) How can I get a NEP site established in my region or waterbody?

EPA is not considering expanding the number of NEP sites at this time. Estuaries of national significance were initially identified by Congress in Section 320 of the 1987 Clean Water Act amendment, or have since been selected for inclusion in the NEP through a nomination process. The last call for nominations took place in 1994 when EPA’s Congressional appropriation provided funding to support the addition of NEPs. EPA has not expanded the NEP since then and has no plans to do so currently.

4) Is my organization eligible to be an applicant?

Eligible organizations include state, interstate, tribal, inter-tribal consortia and regional water pollution control agencies and entities, state coastal zone management agencies, and other public or nonprofit private agencies, institutions, and organizations. Eligible public agencies include county and local
governments. Academic institutions are eligible, as well. Non-profit organizations must be able to demonstrate their non-profit status.

Federal agencies, for-profit corporations, and private individuals are not eligible grantees, but may be included as partners in proposals submitted by eligible recipients. Public-private partnerships are encouraged, consistent with the competitive procurement requirements. For-profit partners, including consultants, who will receive grant funding must be selected in compliance with the competitive procurement requirements.

Recipients and team members may be based in Canada so long as the work is being performed within the geographic eligibility areas.

5) Organizations are limited to three proposals. How is that determined?

Organizations are considered to be included in a proposal if they are slated to receive funding and are included in the proposal budget. National organizations with chapters are limited to three proposals in their area of jurisdiction. For example, if XYZ national organization has a chapter in Florida, then XYZ-FL may be on a total of three proposals that occur in Florida.

6) What is an existing State or locally approved community-based watershed management plan?

It is a completed plan available to the public that: 1) contains actions that address urgent and challenging issues that threaten the ecological and economic well-being of coastal and estuarine areas as identified in this subaward, 2) demonstrates State and/or local buy-in and commitment to implement actions by the appropriate parties; and 3) applies to the defined eligible areas.