

City of Seattle
Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant
Program Guidelines

Updated: July 2008

Background

The Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant program is a unique resource available to individuals, non-profit/community groups, and businesses to support projects within City of Seattle limits that improve, preserve, and restore aquatic habitat in creeks or along creek, marine, or lake shorelines, when the aquatic habitat has been or will be affected by the City's stormwater drainage system. It is one of the key action items under the Mayor's Restore Our Waters initiative, and was created by Resolution 30719, November 2004. To be eligible, projects must improve or prevent a direct impact from stormwater runoff through the City's drainage system on aquatic habitat and provide a public benefit. The Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant Program is administered by Seattle Public Utilities and funded from the Drainage and Wastewater Fund.

Program Goals

The goals of the program are to:

- Protect and/or improve aquatic habitat along creek, marine, and lake receiving waters from the direct impacts of stormwater runoff through the City of Seattle's drainage system operation.
- Create and fund partnerships between the City and the community to implement aquatic habitat improvement, preservation, and restoration.
- Contribute to regional species recovery and watershed protection and restoration.

Program Objectives

Funded projects must show how they meet the following goals from Seattle Public Utilities' Comprehensive Drainage Plan.

The primary goal addressed by this program is:

- Prioritize and protect existing habitat from direct impacts of stormwater runoff through the City's drainage system and work to improve habitat conditions that have been directly affected by the City's drainage system.

The secondary goals addressed by this program are:

- Correct existing high-priority water quality and/or sediment quality problems associated with City stormwater discharges (if applicable).
- Foster awareness and stewardship of water quality and aquatic ecosystems, as they relate to stormwater.

Process

- Applications accepted once a year.
- Applications will be rated based on eligibility and rating criteria. Once eligibility criteria are met, rating criteria are applied.

- The Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant Review Board will recommend the awards, to then be approved by the Mayor and Seattle City Council.
- Notice of award within four months of the application deadline.
- Awards start at \$2,000 per project, up to \$75,000. Awards greater than \$75,000 may be given for projects resulting in restoration of significant habitat.
- Seattle Public Utilities reserves the right to award an amount less than the request, or to award the project in phases.
- Projects must be completed within 24 months of contracting, aside from required monitoring and maintenance activities.
- These guidelines will be adjusted as needed for future grant rounds to ensure a successful program.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Applicants

Any individual, citizens' group, non-profit and charitable organization, business owner and developer, or neighborhood organization with an interest in aquatic habitat improvement, preservation, and restoration, and ecological diversity and preservation, may apply for an Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant. Projects may be located on either private or public property.

Projects must meet the following criteria to be considered eligible for review:

- Be located within the City of Seattle limits.
- Be located in or adjacent to a creek, pipe, or ditch that is part of the City's drainage system or in a part of a waterway (creek, river, lake, Ship Canal, marine nearshore) that has been directly affected by the City's drainage system.
- Provide a direct public benefit to aquatic habitat that has been directly affected by the City of Seattle's drainage system operation.
- Match the City's resources at least 100% with community, private resources, or non-city grants. The match may include: cash, volunteer labor, donated land or easements, donated supplies or equipment, donated professional services, or other non-City funds. Neighborhood Matching Fund grants or other City resources will not be considered or included as a match to the Aquatic Habitat Matching Grants.

Projects Eligible for Funding

Projects must provide a direct public benefit to aquatic habitat that has been impacted by the City's drainage system. Projects need to be within the riparian areas of creeks that are part of the City's drainage system or are impacted by flooding, high flows, or contamination coming from City stormwater outfalls, or along lake or marine shorelines where these creeks or City stormwater outfalls enter and impact aquatic habitat (see map 1). Projects must demonstrate how impacts from stormwater runoff through the drainage system will be improved or prevented in the future.

Examples of projects that may be eligible for funding, given the above:

- Removal of fish passage blockages that are located on private property and are in the City's drainage system or created by the drainage system.
- Removal of non-native invasive plant species from aquatic habitats and restoration of native plant species and riparian vegetation where high flows in or from the City's drainage system have caused erosion and disturbance.
- Removal of bank armoring where it had been installed to protect from flows associated with the City's drainage system.
- Re-establishment of creek connectivity where connectivity has been disrupted in or by the City's drainage system.
- Restoration of channel or shoreline complexity where impacted by high flows due to the City's drainage system.

Projects may be split into design and implementation phases.

Conditions

The Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant Program may not be used for the following purposes:

- A project that does not improve or prevent a direct impact in the City's drainage system or due to the City's drainage system.
- Duplicate an existing private or public program.
- Fund actions required as a permit condition for development or otherwise required by law.
- Support ongoing and usual services of an organization.
- Fund more than three phases or components of the same project.
- Pay for food, beverages, and/or catering services. (However, if these items are donated to the project or paid with other resources, they can be counted as match.).
- A project that provides no public benefit. If an applicant is proposing to make improvements to property not owned by the City, the application must clearly articulate — and provide concrete examples in the application — the benefit the public will receive in consideration for its award of Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant Program funds.
- If the project involves use of, or changes to, property not owned by the applicant, the applicant must get written permission from the owner, e.g., Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle School District, or private property owner.

Examples of potential projects the City may fund:

Urban Creeks that are part of the City's drainage system or have been impacted by the drainage system: Add habitat and shoreline complexity by adding large woody debris (anchored) and/or boulders to increase channel roughness. Remove non-native invasive vegetation and replant native riparian vegetation. Remove bank armoring where possible. Reduce stormwater flows and pollution to creeks by decreasing runoff from private and public property. Remove known fish barriers.

Lake Washington (near City stormwater outfalls or at creek mouths that are part of the City's drainage system): Create armor free, shallow water habitat with fine substrate and with overhanging riparian vegetation. Low growing shrubs such as red osier dogwood and willows work well because they tend to grow out over the water and do not block aesthetic views as much as trees. Daylight small creek mouths. Bonus – south Lake Washington Shoreline, where juvenile salmonids are concentrated.

Ship Canal (near City stormwater outfalls): Create armor-free, shallow water habitat. Bonus: East Ship Canal - predators such as smallmouth bass are most abundant toward the east end and much less abundant as the Locks are approached.

Duwamish (near City stormwater outfalls): Plant native riparian vegetation. Provide shallow water intertidal habitat, including off-channel habitat. Protect water quality through pollution source controls. Remove bank armoring where possible.

Marine Nearshore (near City stormwater outfalls or creek mouths that are part of the City's drainage system): Create shallow water habitat by removal of bulkheads. Removal of invasive plants. Planting of native riparian vegetation. Restoring creek mouths to estuarine conditions.

Examples of projects the City will not fund:

- Projects outside the City limits
- Property beautification projects with no relationship to City stormwater flow or quality or aquatic habitat
- Projects outside of riparian areas (more than 100 feet from top of bank)
- Bank stabilization projects that protect private property
- Removal of isolated culverts that are not blocking fish passage or flows, or the removal of which would simply enhance private property
- Projects that conflict with or are duplicative of planned City capital improvement or maintenance projects
- Projects likely to result in damage to property downstream or upstream
- Projects that are deemed to not be effective in accomplishing the stated objectives.

Proposal Applications

Application forms for proposals will be available each grant cycle, or once a year. Potential applicants should use only those forms for the current grant cycle, as it's possible they may be updated from the previous year. The application forms are based on the eligibility and rating criteria.

Proposal applications should include the following components:

Project abstract- Summarize the project in no more than 250 words.

Background and Location – Describe the area and problem to be addressed. Include a location map and a conceptual diagram of the site at the appropriate scale to convey project objectives. In addition, photos of the site are helpful.

Project Goals – Describe the purpose of the project, how it will improve or prevent a direct impact from stormwater runoff through the City's drainage system, and the outcomes expected. State how the project relates to one or more of the Aquatic Habitat Matching Fund program goals. Describe criteria for measuring success.

Activities – Describe the actions to be taken, by whom, and when. Activities should be tied clearly to the objectives and to the outcomes.

Project Partners/Project Support – List the partners and their roles if the project is located on public property. If the project is on private property, demonstrate that the project will have support from neighbors, or if they have objections explain why. List any partners. The applicant must provide letters of support from each owner of property where work is proposed to be done.

Budget – Outline the expected costs, including the project match. Use the budget table provided in the application form.

Full proposal applications should clearly and concisely address each of these requirements, as well as the rating criteria below, using the application form to be provided. Project applications shall not exceed 10 pages (excluding attachments).

Rating Criteria

Application quality (5 points)

It should be clear to the proposal reviewers what you are trying to accomplish. Proposals that are well-organized and thought through will receive more points.

Adherence to program guidelines and objectives including consistency with the goals of the City's Comprehensive Drainage Plan (10 points)

Funded projects must show how they meet one or more goals from Seattle Public Utilities' Comprehensive Drainage Plan and how they protect or improve creek, marine, and lake

receiving waters from the direct impacts of Seattle Public Utilities' drainage system. Projects should be consistent with the following goals:

- Prioritize and protect existing habitat from direct impacts from stormwater runoff through the City's drainage system and work to improve habitat conditions that have been directly impacted by the City's drainage system
- Correct existing high-priority water quality and/or sediment quality problems associated with City stormwater discharges
- Foster awareness and stewardship of water quality and aquatic ecosystems, as they relate to stormwater

Scientific merits and aquatic environment benefits (25 points)

Projects must strive to protect or improve creek, marine, and lake receiving waters from the direct impacts of stormwater runoff through the City's drainage system. In general, this means projects that improve, preserve, and/or restore aquatic habitat and/or ecological diversity and enhancement, or that address water flow and/or quality. Projects that provide significant benefits to the environment based on sound science will receive priority. Projects will be reviewed by technical staff (including biologists, ecologists, water quality experts, etc.) who shall make findings and recommendations to the Board as a basis for rating this category. Projects should address solutions that improve conditions at the watershed or more local scale. The Comprehensive Drainage Plan identifies key factors that adversely affect or limit the health of aquatic ecosystems. Projects that improve or prevent impacts from the City's drainage system in the following areas will receive priority:

- Altered hydrology/flow regime
- Water quality/toxicity
- Horizontal connectivity to floodplain
- Longitudinal connectivity – fish, sediment and/or wood barriers
- Sediment – gravel (not enough)
- Sediment – fines (too much)
- Channel/ shoreline complexity
- Riparian vegetation

Projects must demonstrate how impacts from the City's drainage system will be improved or prevented in the future.

Project Scope of Work (15 points)

Describe the actions to be taken, by whom, and when. Activities should be tied clearly to the objectives and to the outcomes. Identify permits needed and when the permit applications will be submitted, if not already obtained. Include a timeline for all the activities.

Community Involvement Benefits (10 points)

- a. For projects located on public property, the local community shall be involved from the planning phases to implementation. This can be included as part of the match. Agreement or support must be demonstrated by neighboring property owners. Projects will receive more points if local community councils, watershed councils, or other groups with an interest in improving aquatic habitat show support or are listed as partners.
- b. For projects located on private property, more points will be given when neighbors show support. Property owners may decide whether to involve volunteers or not. Community involvement is encouraged.

Stewardship, Maintenance, and Monitoring (15 points)

To ensure the sustainability of the project, stewardship of the project once it is in place must be included as part of the project design and activities. This means inclusion of a plan for maintaining and monitoring the project. Projects that require low maintenance are preferred. If on private property, consider applying for a conservation easement.

Project Feasibility, Budget and Cost-effectiveness (20 points)

- a. The proposed project or project phase is well-planned and is reasonable to implement within the expected time frame of 18 months. Project deliverables and milestones are clear.
- b. The project budget is realistic and accurately represents the project's expenses and revenue. Projects will be rated according to the clarity of the funding needs.
- c. Project Match - Applicants must match the City's resources at least 100% with community, private resources, or non-city grants. Identify the types of match: cash, volunteer labor, donated land or easements, donated supplies or equipment, donated professional services, or other non-City funds. Neighborhood Matching Fund grants or other city resources will not be considered or included as a match to these Habitat grants.

Extra points (up to 10)

- Projects that leverage existing City projects or community efforts.
- Projects that are very likely to result in increases in fish and wildlife abundance and/or diversity.
- Projects that implement the Salmon Conservation Plans in Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIA) 8 or 9 (Cedar-Lake Washington and Green-Duwamish watersheds).
- Projects that help reduce pollutants in impaired waterbodies as listed by the Washington State Dept of Ecology under Section 303 d of the Clean Water Act (see list).
- Projects on private property that include obtaining a conservation easement.
- Projects located in prime habitat areas (ex. South Lake Washington shoreline, East Ship Canal).
- Projects that are located in underserved areas or that involve underserved communities
- Other public benefits.