



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

Hudson River  
Estuary Program



NEIWPCC

&

**NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Management Program**

## **Request for Proposals**

### **2026 Small Grants for Watershed Education and Stewardship**

#### **Objective**

The NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Management Program (“Estuary Program”) in coordination with the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (“NEIWPCC”), is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for projects that will directly support the Clean Hudson River Water and Healthy Tributaries goals of the [\*Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2026-2030\*](#). The objective of this funding opportunity is to support community-led projects to engage the public and stakeholders through outreach, education, and stewardship focused on Hudson River Estuary tributary and watershed conservation, restoration, flood resilience, drinking water source water protection, and best management practices (BMPs).

#### **Eligible Activities**

Projects should implement strategies and actions outlined in the Clean Hudson River Water and Healthy Tributaries goals of the [\*Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2026-2030\*](#) and build support for watershed stewardship, management, and actions that will benefit the Hudson River Estuary. Priority will be given to projects and partnerships that are led by local, community-based watershed groups. Projects that promote increased engagement of underrepresented groups in watershed management and/or engage the public in disadvantaged communities or potential environmental justice areas will receive additional points in scoring. Examples of eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Public outreach and education events to share estuary, tributary, and watershed data, recommendations, flood resilience measures, floodplain management guidance, drinking water protection strategies and/or best management practices (BMPs) with residents, decision-makers, and the business community.
- Materials to support public outreach, education, and stewardship, including but not limited to waders, nets, field guides, or scientific data collection materials.
- Office supplies and software for local watershed organizations, such as computers, printers, and GIS or accounting software.

- Printing and design of pamphlets, posters, or interpretive signage for public locations about tributaries, the Hudson River estuary and its watershed, and conservation and management strategies.
- Website, video, and/or social media content focused on watershed and tributary connections to the Hudson estuary to increase awareness and engagement about ecology and local conservation and management priorities.
- Interactive and digital maps highlighting local watersheds, tributaries, points of interest, and priorities to encourage implementation of restoration projects, BMPs or other watershed management projects.
- Estuary or tributary clean up or stewardship events.
- Riparian buffer plantings and maintenance, including invasive species removal.
- Development or updating an intermunicipal watershed cooperation agreement or a municipal land use policy to protect tributaries and water quality and mitigate local flooding.
- Implementation of a priority action in a local watershed management plan or a surface water-based drinking water source protection plan.
- Outreach to dam owners to increase awareness and feasibility of dam removal.

### **Ineligible expenses**

Grant funds awarded from this RFP may not be used for:

- Fundraising,
- Lobbying or advocacy,
- Out of state travel,
- Private or for-profit events,
- Indirect costs or operating expenses
- Rent for space, purchase of property, utilities, insurance, etc. However, please note a Purchase Order can be issued when renting a space for a specific outreach event.
- Environmental data collection, analysis, or plan development unless the work falls under an existing Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) approved by NEIWGCC.

### **Disbursement of Funds**

Approximately \$50,000 in funding is available to support awarded projects. Grants of between \$1,000 to \$10,000 will be awarded. One proposal may be submitted per organization or entity. Partial funding of total application requests may be awarded. In-kind or cash match is not required.

Depending on the activity, a purchase order or a contract may be the appropriate method of reimbursement. Entering a contract requires a W-9, SAM.gov registration, and liability

insurance. If the applicant plans on purchasing supplies or services (website services, printing pamphlets, etc.), a purchase order would be more appropriate.

A contract allows an organization to apply for funding for a complete program or activity which may include multiple tasks and be reimbursed upon completion of each task. The determination of the appropriate funding mechanism (contract or purchase order) will be decided upon award. Payment for costs incurred will be on a reimbursement basis and cannot cover work completed prior to the project start date. This grant opportunity is supported by funds from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, in partnership with the DEC Hudson River Estuary Management Program. All awards are subject to funding availability.

### **Anticipated Project Timeline**

Successful applicants will complete projects according to the following schedule (subject to change)

|                                                        |                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Proposals due to NEIWPCC                               | By 4:00 PM December 4, 2026 |
| Applicants notified of funding decisions               | January 15, 2027            |
| Anticipated project start date                         | March 1, 2027               |
| Project deliverables and final report due on or before | December 31, 2027           |

**LATE OR INCOMPLETE PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**

### **Inquiries and Grant Writing Resources**

Please direct all inquiries to:

Emily Bialowas, Environmental Analyst

[ebialowas@neiwpcc.org](mailto:ebialowas@neiwpcc.org)

### **Overview of the Hudson River Estuary Management Program and NEIWPCC**

The New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Hudson River Estuary Management Program includes the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve (HRNERR), Hudson River Estuary Program, Hudson and Delaware Marine Fisheries, and the Region 3 Marine Habitat Program. The program's mission is to protect, preserve, restore, and enhance the Hudson River estuarine district. Staff and partners work to achieve the goals of the *Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2026-2030*, including:

- Robust Estuarine Fisheries
- Robust River Habitats
- Clean Hudson River Water

- Healthy Tributaries
- Climate-Adaptive Communities
- Conserved Natural Areas
- An Informed and Engaged Public
- An Accessible Hudson River Estuary for All

NEIWPCC is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality. We engage and convene water quality professionals and other interested parties from New England and New York to collaborate on water, wastewater, and environmental science challenges across shared regions, ecosystems, and areas of expertise. Our mission is to advance clean water in the Northeast through collaboration with, and service to, our member states. NEIWPCC's vision is for clean and sustainable water throughout the Northeast. We base our work on the core values of leadership, collaboration, education, service, and science.

### **Who may apply**

Applicants must be located within the Hudson River Estuary Management Program boundaries (<https://dec.ny.gov/sites/default/files/hregrantmap.pdf>). Potential applicants may include:

- Colleges and universities,
- K-12 schools,
- Nonprofit organizations,
- Local watershed groups,
- NY Soil and Water Conservation Districts,
- Municipal or county governments or agencies,
- Independent contractors or individuals working with a local watershed group or municipality.

Ineligible entities include:

- Federal and state agencies,
- Organizations based outside the United States.

Applicants must coordinate with an existing watershed group, if one exists, and provide a letter of support indicating the group's role in the project. If no watershed group exists for the tributary/watershed, letters from appropriate partners are encouraged. Applicants may submit proposals as part of a collaborative team comprising multiple organizations. However, each proposal must identify a single organization or individual as the primary applicant.

### **Required Project Deliverables**

- A final report describing all work completed under the grant. The report must include dates and locations of any public events held and number of people attending, if applicable.

- 1-3 Photos from public events with permission for use in DEC newsletters, social media, or reports, if applicable.
- A written testimonial about the value of the project to the watershed and local community with permission to share.

Electronic copies of any products developed as part of the project must be submitted with the final report. Signs, website content, written products, or other tangible materials created with the grant funds must be approved by DEC and include Estuary Program and NEIWPCC logos, as well as the following statement:

“The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation provided funding for this project from the Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program in partnership with NEIWPCC.”

### **Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed by Hudson River Estuary Program and NEIWPCC staff according to the following criteria:

- **Primary Objective (up to 20 points):** How well does the project meet the objective of this RFP, to support locally-led projects to engage the public and stakeholders through outreach, education, and stewardship focused on Hudson River Estuary tributary and watershed conservation?
- **Action Agenda Alignment (up to 10 points):** Does the project advance a measure of success or action within the Clean Hudson River Water or Healthy Tributaries goals of the *Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda 2026-2030*?
- **Project Scope and Methods (up to 20 points):** Does the application clearly detail the scope of work, deliverables, budget, and timeline? If applicable, are the methods sound and well thought out?
- **Collaboration (up to 10 points):** Does the application incorporate meaningful collaboration or partnerships with local watershed groups and/or municipalities, or other relevant organizations?
- **Community Engagement (up to 10 points):** Does the application propose or contribute to robust engagement with target audiences, including underrepresented groups?
- **Environmental Justice (up to 10 points):** Is the project located within or will it benefit a potential environmental justice area or disadvantaged community?
- **Experience (up to 10 points):** Does the applicant demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and/or track record to successfully undertake a project of this nature?

- Budget (up to 10 points): Is the budget appropriate and cost effective? Are the line items budgeted justified in the project narrative?. Is the budget presented in the requested format?