



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

WaterSMART

Funding Opportunities for Planning, Design,
and Implementation of Restoration Projects

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Webinar

January 13th, 2025

WaterSMART Program

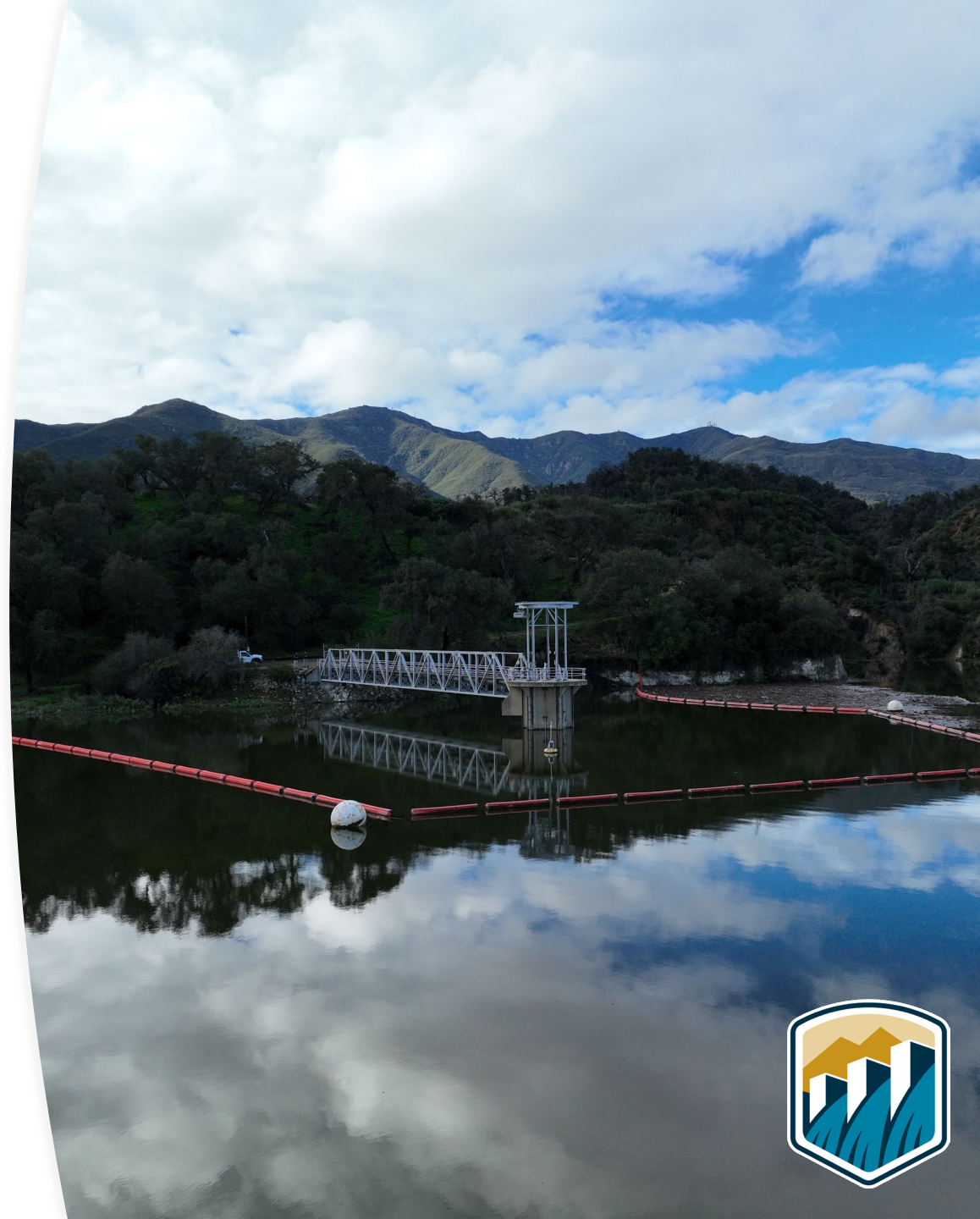
General Program Information

- Most WaterSMART activities are grant programs
- Eligible applicants typically include entities such as states, Tribes, cities, water districts, irrigation districts, watershed groups, non-profits, and flood control districts within the 17 Western United States, Alaska, Hawaii, the Insular Areas, and Puerto Rico.***
- Applications are solicited through Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO), and projects are selected through a competitive selection process.
- Generally, a 25-50% non-Federal cost share is required.



What is WaterSMART?

- WaterSMART is an “umbrella” initiative that has several associated funding opportunities.
- These opportunities cover a wide array of water management concerns, with a growing subset focused on restoration, fish passage, and projects with environmental benefits.
- Today we will focus on this subset of WaterSMART opportunities.



WaterSMART Program Grants

Planning & Design

- Drought Contingency Plans
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program
- Water Strategy Grants
- Project Design Grants
- Basin Studies
- Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration Projects
- Water Recycling and Desalination Planning

Science & Tools

- Applied Science Tools
- Drought Resiliency Projects
- Basin Studies

Construction/Implementation

- Drought Resiliency Projects
- Water and Energy Efficiency Grants
- Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects
- Environmental Water Resources Projects
- Title XVI
- Large Scale Water Recycling
- Water Desalination
- Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration Projects



What Program Is Right For Your Project?

Conceptual Planning

- Planning and Project Design Grants
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program

Design

- Planning and Project Design Grants
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program
- Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (Task A)

Construction

- Environmental Water Resources Projects
- Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (Task B)



What Program Is Right For Your Project?

Ask yourself, where in the development process is my project?

Conceptual Planning

- Planning and Project Design Grants
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program

Design

- Planning and Project Design Grants
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program
- Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (Task A)

Construction

- Environmental Water Resources Projects
- Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (Task B)



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Construction

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My watershed has a problem. We are not sure what to do yet.



What Program Is Right For Your Project?

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Construction

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We have studied and prioritized projects, now we need to do site-specific design.



What Program Is Right For Your Project?

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Design

- Planning and Project Design Grants
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program
- Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (Task A)

Construction

- Environmental Water Resources Projects
- Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (Task B)

*We are at 60% Design.
Ready to implement
our selected project.*





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WaterSMART Restoration Funding Opportunities

Watershed Groups: Definition and Provisions

A watershed group, as defined in Section 6001(6) of the Cooperative Watershed Management Act:

- Is a grassroots, non-regulatory entity that addresses water availability and quality issues within the relevant watershed.
- Is capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources in the watershed.
- Makes decisions on a consensus basis.
- Represents a diverse group of stakeholders representing different water use sectors, including hydroelectric producers; livestock grazing; timber production; land development; recreation or tourism; irrigated agriculture; the environment; municipal water supplies; private property owners; Federal, state and local governments; Tribes; and disadvantaged communities.

We highly recommend you do not apply to this funding opportunity unless your organization **ORGANICALLY** meets this definition.



Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I

*Funding Opportunity
Open! Applications Due
May 20, 2025*

Eligible Project Types:

Watershed Group Development

- Develop mission statement and bylaws
- Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement
- Coalition and Consensus Building
- Gathering information about restoration needs in the watershed

Watershed Restoration Planning

- Studies, mapping, monitoring
- Creating or updating a watershed restoration plan

Watershed management project design

- Site-specific project design and engineering

Funding:

- Up to \$300,000 in for projects lasting 3 years
- Can include salary support in the budget, as is applicable to the management of the project
- Non-Federal cost-share is not required



Applicant Eligibility

New Watershed Groups:

States, Indian Tribes, local and special districts (e.g., irrigation, water districts, water conservation districts), local governmental entities, interstate organizations, non-profit organizations, and institutes of higher education sponsoring a watershed group. To be eligible, applicants must also meet all the following requirements:

1. Be sponsoring the development of a New Watershed Group
2. Significantly affect or be affected by the quality or quantity of water in a watershed
3. Be capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources

Existing Watershed Groups

States, Indian Tribes, local and special districts (e.g., irrigation, water districts, water conservation districts), local governmental entities, interstate organizations, non-profit organizations, and institutes of higher education sponsoring a watershed group. To be eligible, applicants must also be an Existing Watershed Group, which meets the definition of a watershed group and legally incorporated as a non-profit entity; be a participating entity in an Existing Watershed Group; or be a fiscal sponsor of an Existing Watershed Group.



Planning and Project Design Grants

Water Strategy Grants Eligible Project Types Include:

- Water Marketing Strategies
- Water Supply and/or Conservation Strategies
- River Restoration Strategies

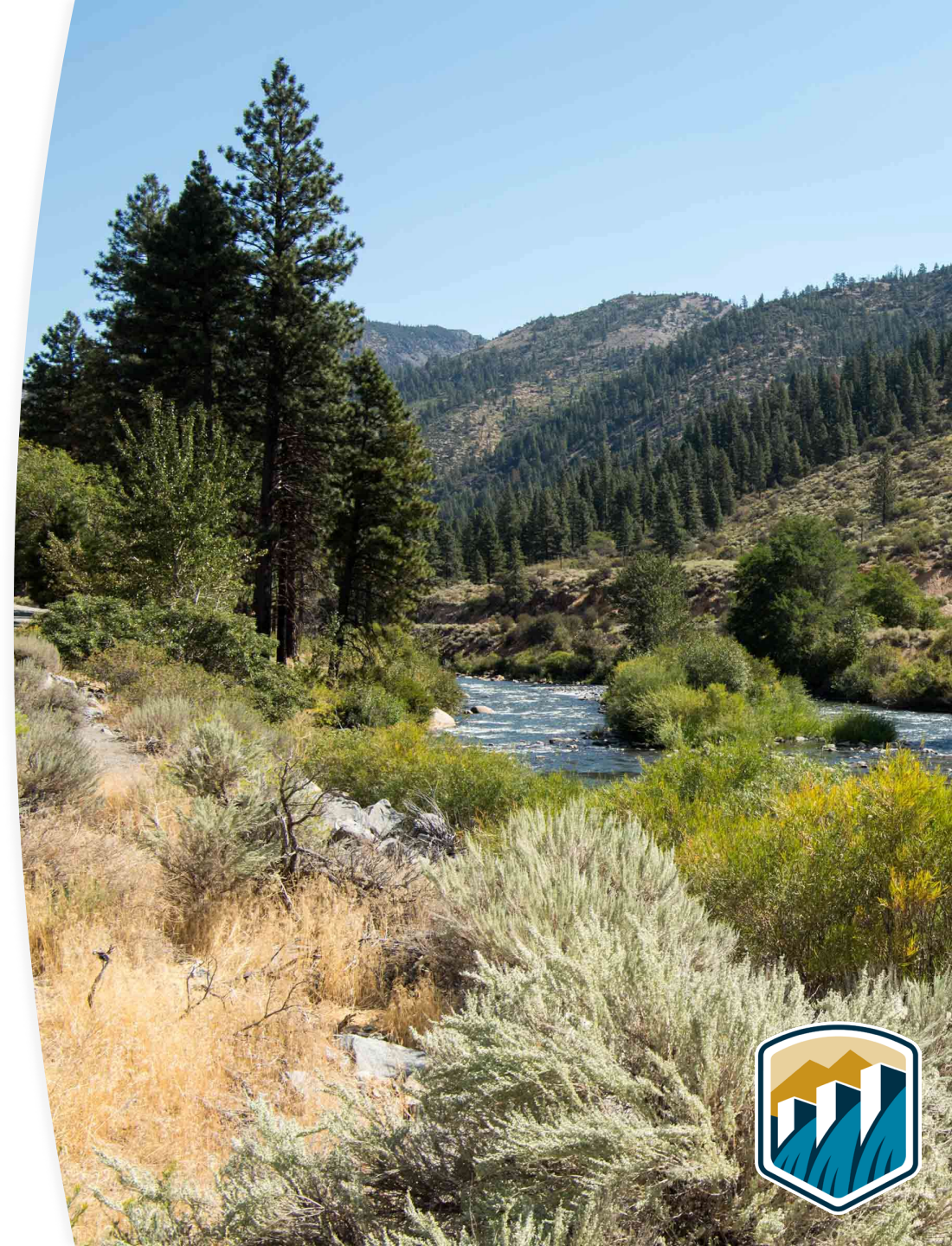
Project Design Grants Eligible Project Types Include:

- Environmental Water Resources Projects
- Water Management and Conservation Projects
- Drought Resiliency Projects

Funding

- Up to \$400,000 for projects that to be completed in 2-3 years
- Non-Federal Cost Share: 25% for projects with ecological benefits, 50% for all other projects

**Funding Opportunity Expected to Open
Summer 2025**



Environmental Water Resources Projects

*Upcoming Webinar:
January 14th, 10am MST*

Funds the implementation of on-the-ground projects that provide significant ecological benefits, including water conservation for in-stream use, fish passage, habitat, and water quality projects.

Task A: Ecologically Focused Water Conservation and Efficiency Projects

- Improvement of water conveyance or storage infrastructure paired with a formal mechanism (MOU or Water Right) to ensure the conserved water is dedicated to instream use

Task B: Ecologically Focused Water Management and Infrastructure Improvements

- Installation of fish passage infrastructure, or strategic exclusionary fish screens, modification of water infrastructure to optimize co-benefits for wildlife

Task C: Restoration and Nature Based Solutions Projects

- River or wetland restoration, floodplain reconnection, in-stream/ in-channel work, placement of gravel, rock structures, LTPBR mechanisms, etc.



Environmental Water Resources Projects

Applicant Eligibility

Category A: States; Indian tribes; irrigation districts; water districts; state, regional, or local authorities, whose members include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority; and other organizations with water or power delivery authority.

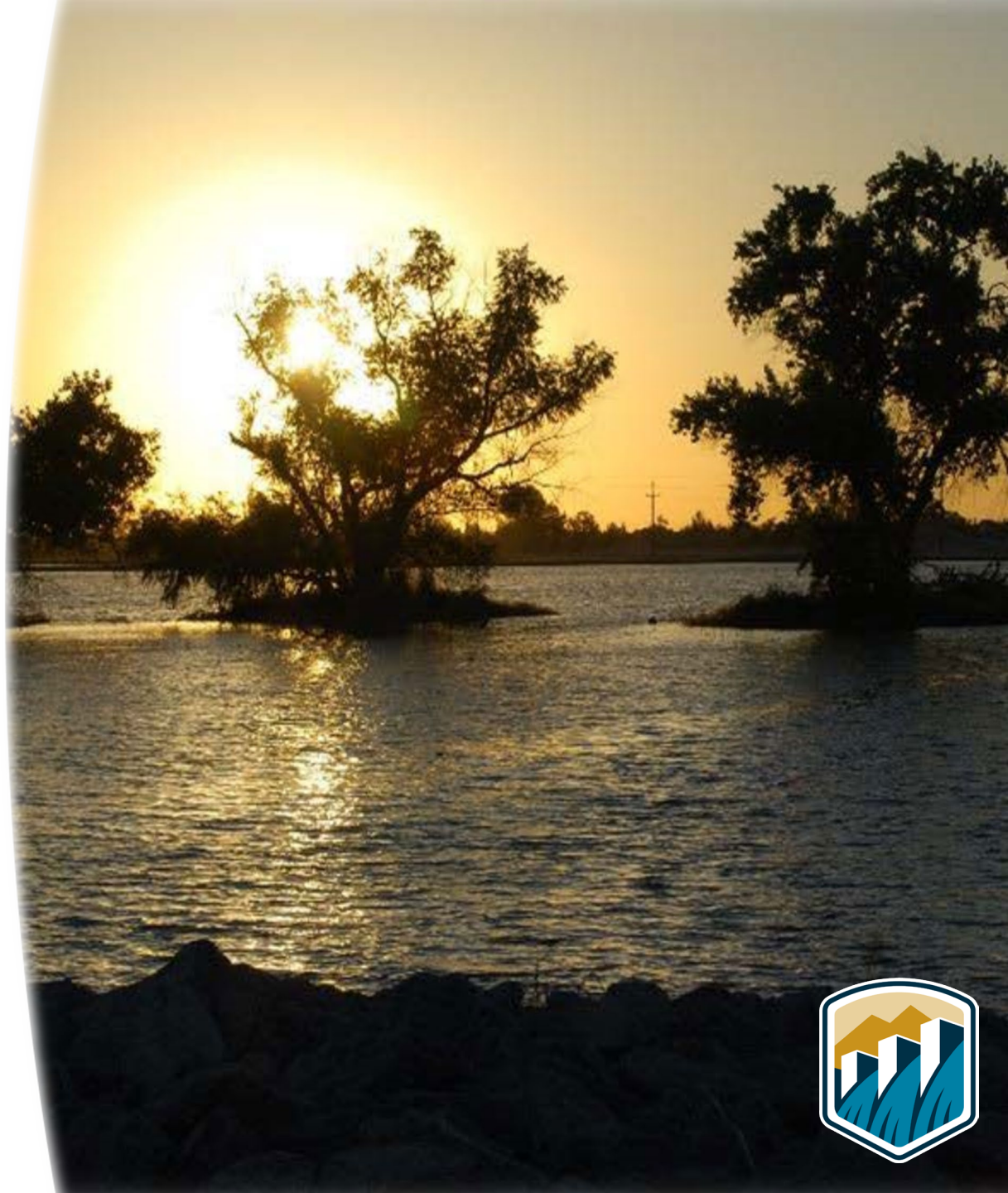
Category B: Non-profit conservation organizations, **including watershed groups**, that are acting in partnership with a Category A Entity.

Category C: Non-profit conservation organizations submitting an application for a project to implement a nature-based solution on Federal land may submit an application without a Category A partner, if they demonstrate that entities described in Category A from the applicable service area have been notified and do not object to the project.

Funding

- Applicants may request up to \$3 million in Reclamation funding, (or, up to \$5 million for a watershed group). Total project costs are capped at \$6 million.
- Non-Federal Cost Share: 25%*

Funding Opportunity Currently Open! Applications due March 11, 2025



Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program

*Upcoming AERP Webinar:
January 16th, 1pm MST*

- Funds the study, design, and construction of large-scale aquatic ecosystem restoration and protection projects that result in the improvement of the health of fisheries, wildlife, and aquatic habitat
- Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:
 - Removal or Modification of Barriers to Fish Passage
 - Restoration of Floodplain Connectivity
 - Restoration of Aquatic Habitat
 - Implementation of Nature-Based Solutions Projects
 - Improvement of Water Availability, Quality, and Temperature

Federal Funding Levels

Task A: Study and Design: \$500,000 - \$2 million

Task B: Construction: \$3 million - \$10 million

Minimum 35% Non-Federal cost-share required

Funding Opportunity Open Now!

Applications due April 15, 2025



Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program: Eligible Applicants

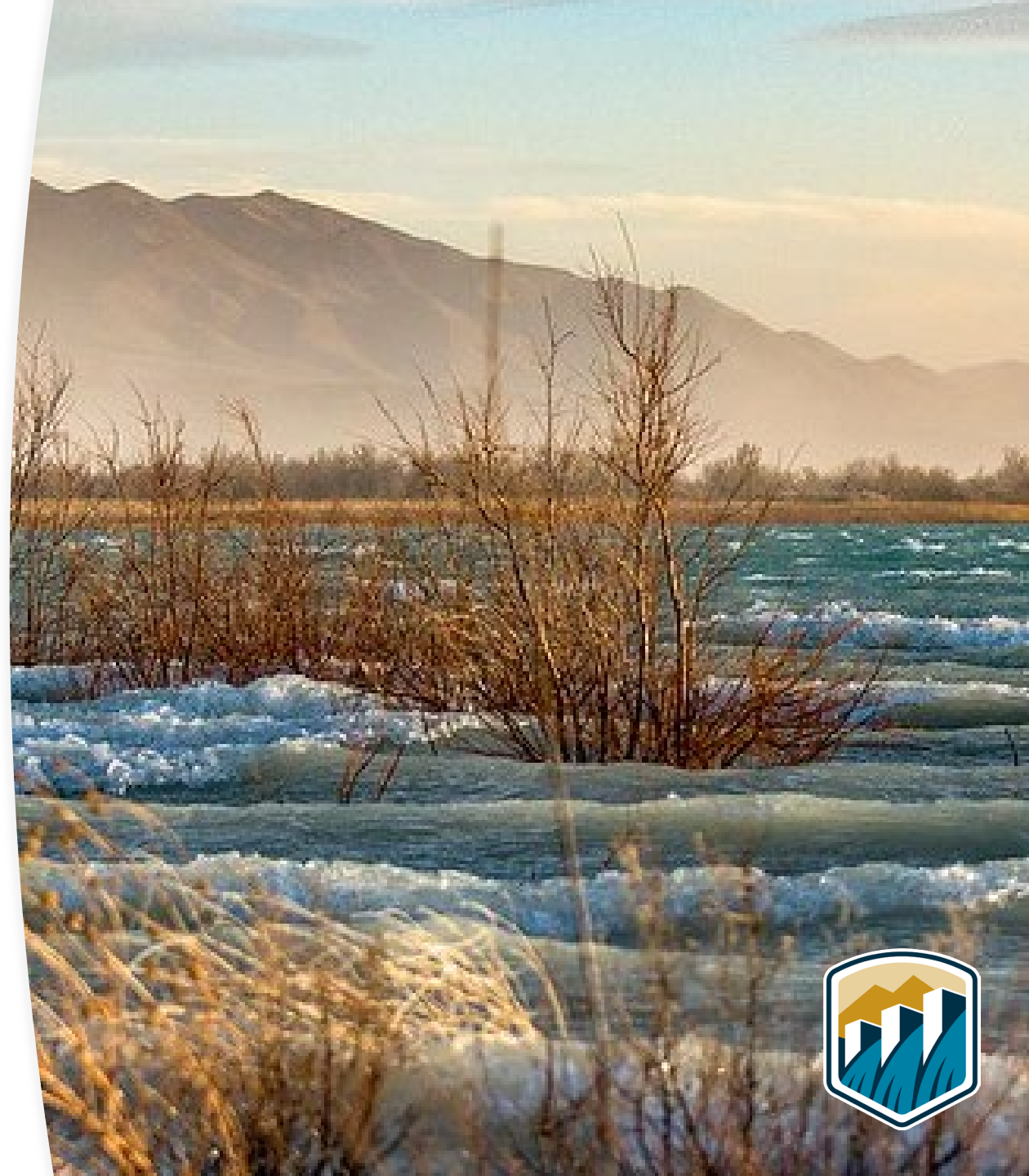
'Reclamation States' (17 Western States, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands. and Does NOT include Alaska and Hawaii)

Category A Applicants:

- States, Tribes, irrigation districts, or water districts;
- State, regional, or local authorities, the members of which include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority;
- Agencies established under State law for the joint exercise of powers;
- Other entities or organizations that own a facility that is eligible for upgrade, modification, or removal.

-OR-

Category B: Nonprofit conservation organizations that are acting in partnership with, and with the agreement of an entity described in Category A, with respect to a project involving land or infrastructure owned by the Category A entity. All Category B applicants must be located in the United States, or the specific Territories identified above.



AERP Task A: Study and Design Eligible Project Activities

- Stakeholder outreach
- Analysis of restoration project design alternatives
- Project analysis and design
- Project site studies and selection
- Site-specific design and engineering of the restoration project to reach a target 60% level of design
- Preparation of project cost estimates and development of project construction plan
- Legal and institutional requirements research
- **Required Project Component:** Development of a monitoring program
- *Note: Proposals for appraisal investigations and feasibility studies are not eligible under this funding opportunity.*

**Final Product of Task A Grant = 60%
Project Design**



AERP Task B: Construction Eligible Project Activities

- Completion of a final design package for the selected restoration project
- Outreach to affected stakeholders
- On-the-ground restoration activities including:
 - Removal or modification of barriers to fish passage
 - Implementation of nature-based solutions
 - Restoration of river and/or floodplain connectivity
 - Restoration of aquatic habitat
 - Improvement of water availability, quality, and/or temperature
- **Required Project Component:** 12 months post-construction monitoring





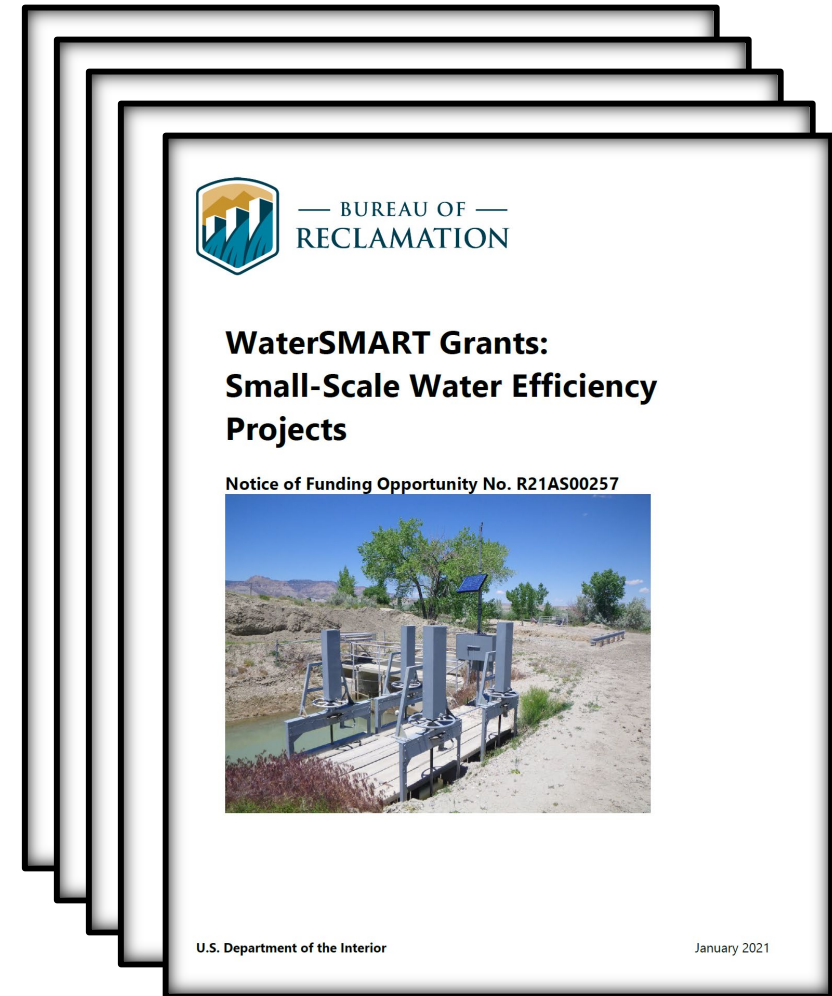
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Application Tips and Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Application Tips

Which WaterSMART NOFO is right for me?

- The most successful projects are those that fit well with the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
- Review the objective of the NOFO, the eligible project types and the evaluation criteria carefully to choose the right NOFO.
- Make sure you present your project in a way that aligns with the NOFO. You may want to make minor revisions. E.g., if you will conserve more water by piping over lining, maybe your project could be revised.
- **Application Tip:**
 - Schedule a meeting with the Program Coordinator to discuss your project – <https://outlook.office365.com/book/ReclamationWaterSMARTProgram@doimsp.onmicrosoft.com/>
 - Look at past successful applications at www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART



Application Tips: Polishing Your Proposal

- Assume the people reviewing your application **KNOW NOTHING**.
- ***Paint a picture of your problem***- and back it up with data.
- Mind the **page limit**
- Maps, site photos, and relevant studies or articles are useful to include (and can be an attachment if you are running out of space)
- **Letters of Recommendation** are key to showing us there is support for a proposed project.



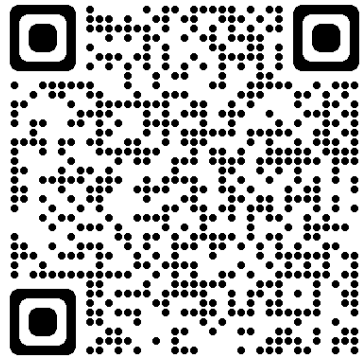
Application Tips: Grants.gov & SAM.gov

- **START EARLY-** Register for these systems as soon as you know you intend to submit a grant application.
- **Cross-check what is required in Grants.Gov and the Notice of Funding Opportunity.** Make sure all required documents identified in the NOFO are submitted with your Grants.gov package.
- If you have any questions, **reach out to us.**
- **Submitting early** (by a few days at least) is always a good idea.



WaterSMART Program Resources

- WaterSMART Program Website:
<https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart>
 - Previously funded applications for all programs
 - Interactive Data Visualization Tool
 - WaterSMART Dashboard
 - WaterSMART mailing list
 - Recent announcements
 - Funding opportunity calendar



A screenshot of the WaterSMART website interface. The top navigation bar includes the Bureau of Reclamation logo, a search bar, and social media icons. A secondary menu lists categories: Water & Power, Resources & Research, About Us, Recreation & Public Use, and News & Multimedia. The main content area features a 'WaterSMART' heading, a breadcrumb trail 'Reclamation / WaterSMART', and a sidebar with a list of program areas such as Applied Science Grants, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program, and Basin Studies. The main text area contains an overview of the program, a 'Join the WaterSMART Mailing List' section, and a 'WaterSMART Project Selections Overview' section. On the right, there are sections for 'OPEN FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES' and a 'FUNDING OPPORTUNITY CALENDAR' with a 'GRANTS.GOV' logo and a link to view application status.





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