



Overview of the Community-based Restoration Program

2018 Habitat Enterprise Fish Passage Program Review

Background

NOAA Fisheries started the Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) in 1996 to provide technical and financial assistance to support the implementation of community-driven habitat restoration. The CRP collaborates with partners to restore coastal wetlands, coral reef, shellfish, estuarine, and riverine habitat to benefit coastal and marine species under NOAA Fisheries' jurisdiction. Restoration implemented under the CRP include projects such as dam removal and fish passage projects, hydrologic reconnection projects, shellfish and coral reef restoration projects.

The CRP is managed within the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation's Restoration Center and was authorized in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006. NOAA Fisheries' primary goals under its core mandates include ensuring the productivity and sustainability of fisheries and recovering and conserving protected resources. Healthy ecosystems and the availability of habitat are critical to these resources and therefore restoring coastal, marine, and riverine habitat is an essential element of NOAA Fisheries' strategy to achieve its primary goals. To support this strategy, the CRP provides technical and financial assistance to identify, develop, implement, and evaluate community-driven habitat restoration projects that yield the greatest benefit to the resources under NOAA Fisheries jurisdiction. CRP staff coordinate across NOAA and other Federal and non-Federal partners to identify shared habitat priorities and focus resource investments to increase the impact of habitat conservation and restoration actions. The program's restoration specialists, including fish biologists, ecologists, and engineers, located throughout the country, provide comprehensive expertise to facilitate effective habitat restoration.

To support project implementation through financial assistance, the CRP primarily establishes cooperative agreement funding awards with non-Federal partners. Non-Federal partners may include non-governmental organizations, tribes, states, and local government agencies and communities. Competitive solicitations are issued as Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) announcements on Grants.gov. The CRP establishes cooperative agreement with selected applicants based on a competitive, technical review process to maximize opportunities for public access to CRP resources. Financial assistance is awarded and managed following the Department of Commerce Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200). Activities that constitute legally required mitigation or are required by federal, state, or local law or court order are not eligible for CRP funding.

Community-based Restoration Program Activities and Priorities

The CRP supports projects featuring all aspects of coastal habitat restoration, conservation, and protection that recover threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act, sustain or help rebuild fish stocks managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, or benefit other coastal and marine species with a connection to NOAA Fisheries management. Within this broad authority, the CRP focuses its efforts to more effectively achieve NOAA Fisheries' species recovery and fisheries sustainability goals, as well as demonstrate the results and multiple benefits of the CRP's investments. Focused and coordinated approaches are critical because funding for coastal habitat restoration remains insufficient to fully address the needs of all habitat-limited coastal and marine species. To help set priorities and inform strategic decisions on where and how the CRP targets its efforts, program staff coordinates across NOAA and develops key partnerships with other Federal agencies, tribes, states, counties, local communities, and other non-governmental organizations. This leadership and collaboration helps set shared priorities and goals, and increases the impact of the CRP's coastal

restoration funding by leveraging resources and coordinating investments from multiple habitat restoration and conservation organizations and CRPs involved in habitat conservation and restoration.

To execute the CRP's targeted habitat restoration goals, the CRP may focus its technical assistance and funding on specific geographic areas, habitats, restoration techniques, actions identified in protected species recovery plans or fishery management plans, or where NOAA and partner resources are aligned to yield a greater collective impact. The CRP's targeted goals and priorities are explicitly outlined within each FFO and applications are evaluated on how well the proposed activity meets those priorities. Funding may be provided through cooperative agreements for restoration planning and feasibility studies, engineering and design, implementation and construction, and monitoring and evaluation efforts.

In addition to providing funds for restoration projects, the CRP provides technical expertise to foster the development and implementation of habitat restoration actions that support the recovery of protected species and sustainability of fisheries. To most effectively meet these core mandate goals, program staff proactively identifies restoration opportunities, coordinates with other entities to help drive investments towards the highest priorities, and develops solutions to overcome obstacles to restoration success. CRP staff provides technical expertise to ensure that restoration partners have the necessary support to successfully carry out complex habitat restoration activities such as dam removals and large-scale hydrologic reconnection projects. The technical assistance that CRP staff provides to restoration project partners includes guidance on project feasibility assessments, engineering and design, project implementation oversight, regulatory compliance, and monitoring planning. The CRP also accelerates the delivery of resources and implementation of restoration by streamlining permitting and environmental compliance processes when possible through the development and use of programmatic approaches. These core technical and financial assistance capabilities enable the CRP to efficiently support the implementation of other targeted habitat conservation and restoration initiatives within NOAA.

Habitat restoration projects implemented through the CRP are developed in partnership with the communities in which they are based and reflect the needs and interests of local stakeholders. As restoration is conducted using a collaborative, ecosystem approach, projects often result in multiple benefits beyond the CRP's primary goals. These benefits may include increased coastal resiliency, improved infrastructure, enhanced public safety, increased recreational opportunities, and strengthened coastal economies. The CRP also fosters natural resource stewardship and local community engagement by supporting outreach, education, or volunteer opportunities as restoration project components.

Reporting and Regulatory Compliance

The CRP uses a specific reporting format that has received Paperwork Reduction Act clearance. The progress report format assists recipients of CRP funding in tracking their progress towards self-defined milestones and performance measures. These semi-annual progress reports may also include monitoring and evaluation results. The CRP-specific form also helps the program populate a project tracking database, which supports agency-wide performance measure reporting and provides public information through the Restoration Atlas at www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/restorationatlas.

The CRP assists its restoration partners and financial assistance recipients in completing their regulatory compliance responsibilities when possible, and may serve as lead agency for consultation and analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and other applicable federal laws and regulations. The CRP takes a programmatic approach to regulatory compliance when available.