



## FFY22-23 Stormwater Grant Funding Opportunity

The Barnegat Bay Partnership (BBP) is pleased to announce a grant funding opportunity for stormwater management implementation projects entirely within and/or benefitting overburdened communities, as defined by NJ's Environmental Justice Law, N.J.S.A. 13:1D-157. The BBP anticipates that a total of approximately \$530,000 will be available to support one or more projects.

In 2021 the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (henceforth BIL) was signed into law. As part of BIL, funding was allocated to each of the National Estuary Programs, including the BBP. The purpose of the funding is to make meaningful contributions towards reaching the 2021 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan goals (CCMP), the document that identifies the priorities of the BBP and its partners for the next 20 years. The BBP and its partners have chosen to use a portion of these BIL funds towards the improvement of stormwater infrastructure within the Barnegat Bay Watershed, directly addressing a major CCMP goal to reduce sources of nutrients, contaminants, debris, and other pollutant loadings from point and nonpoint source pollution. In the most recent revision of the CCMP, the BBP and its partners created eight [Ecosystem-Based Targets](#) (See Chapter 3.) that taken together present a holistic evaluation of the condition of the Barnegat Bay watershed and our efforts to maintain and improve that condition.

Stormwater projects funded by this award, **in addition** to the requirement that they be located entirely within or benefit overburdened communities, should help address one of the targets listed below.

- Public Beach Openings/Closures – Work with the partners to: 1) increase the number of bay beaches and lakes within the watershed open for swimming from the 2018 baseline of 32, and 2) reduce the average number of annual beach closure days below that of 2016-2018 (75 days).

ONE OF 28 NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

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- Approved Shellfish Areas – Upgrade 5% of the potentially harvestable shellfish acreage that is currently restricted or closed for shellfishing from the 2018 acreage (11,220 acres).
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation – Maintain the overall extent of submerged aquatic vegetation present in 2009 (12,980 acres) and restore an additional 10 acres of seagrass.
- Wetland and Riparian Buffer Preservation – Maintain or increase the current acreage of upland buffers adjacent to all wetland and riparian corridors. Baseline acreage is not currently available.
- Wetland Protection – Maintain overall extent of tidal wetland acreage (20,922 acres) as identified on the 2015 aerial imagery. Restore or enhance 10 acres of tidal wetlands impacted by sea level rise and erosion through nature/natural based strategies to limit further loss.
- Clam Restoration – Return hard clam abundance in Barnegat Bay-Little Egg Harbor to 1985/87 estimated population size of roughly 377,000,000 clams by means of stock enhancement, habitat restoration, and other management actions.
- Ecological Flows – Maintain flow levels at least 30% over minimum ecological flows for gauged waterways within the watershed. To achieve this target, the minimum ecological flows for gauged waterways needs to be determined.
- Water Conservation and Reuse – Reduce five-year rolling average water withdrawals 10% below the 2010 estimate of 85.56 mgd. Explore appropriate water-reuse technologies used elsewhere in New Jersey and possibly other states.

Examples of projects that address these targets could include stormwater improvements that result in:

- reductions of pathogens benefitting swimming areas or shellfish harvest areas
- increased buffers around riparian areas as part of a green infrastructure project
- increased groundwater recharge through infiltration infrastructure
- water quality benefits which impact downstream SAV beds

Projects do not need to align exactly with the language written in the Ecosystem-Based Goals, but should align with the intent of the goals. For example, green infrastructure projects that increase water infiltration help maintain ecological flows above minimum thresholds.

As part of the BIL funding, the BBP and its partners are seeking to spend at least 40% of the total BIL award on projects benefitting overburdened communities, as defined by NJ’s Environmental Justice Law, N.J.S.A. 13:1D-157. A significant portion of that 40% commitment will come from the stormwater projects funded by these awards. To determine if a community has been designated as overburdened, please see the [NJDEP Office of Environmental Justice](#) tool.

Engagement with the community where the proposed project is taking place, or to the community the proposed project will benefit, is a required component of the project if selected

for funding. Applicants are encouraged to begin engaging community members and including them in discussions and development of the project as soon as possible. If selected for funding, the BBP will work with award recipients to further engage the community in project planning/implementation. The BBP wants the community to have an authentic seat at the table during project development and/or implementation. Applicants should understand these commitments to community engagement and outreach are critical components for establishing a successful project. Projects occurring outside the geographic boundaries of an overburdened community but have major benefits to an overburdened community must show clear evidence that the project would benefit an overburdened community in their application (*e.g.* letters from the community attesting to this, documented previous site usage).

### **Who May Apply**

Proposals are welcome from organizations, government agencies, academic institutions (colleges and universities), governmental or public agencies, private businesses, professional organizations, and non-governmental organizations (501[c]3). All projects must identify a project leader (*i.e.*, Project Manager), whose qualifications (education, background, and experience) are a component in the evaluation process. Organizations and individuals may submit more than one proposal. If the applicant is not the local government entity owning the property, the municipality where the proposed project is occurring must be a partner on the application, and provide a letter of support.

### **Application Process and Proposal Review**

The following application process will be used to evaluate projects.

- 1) All applicants should submit a pre-proposal to the BBP office via email to [amcgowan@ocean.edu](mailto:amcgowan@ocean.edu) by 5:00 PM on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The pre-proposal should include a project description of no more than five single-spaced pages consisting of:
  - a) a project title;
  - b) project overview and justification;
  - c) documentation that the project is located in, or would benefit an overburdened community;
  - d) which ecosystem targets the project addresses;
  - e) project proponents and management (*i.e.*, who will perform and oversee the work);
  - f) approximate timeline;
  - g) an estimated budget (including match requirements, see below). The budget does not count towards the five-page length limit;
  - h) any letters of support. Letters of support do not count towards the five-page length limit; and

- i) if the application is not from the local govt entity owning the property, then a municipal/county letter of approval and support. Letters of support do not count towards the five-page length limit.
- 2) The Stormwater Workgroup, a subcommittee of the BBP Science and Technical Committee, will review the pre-proposals and notify applicants as to whether a full budget and presentation should be submitted by October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. This pre-proposal review will focus on confirming that the stormwater project:
  - a) is located in, or would benefit an overburdened community;
  - b) addresses the CCMP goal of reducing sources of nutrients, contaminants, debris, and other pollutant loadings from point and nonpoint source pollution;
  - c) addresses at least one of the Ecosystem Targets listed in this document;
  - d) and the project team has the necessary qualifications for conducting the work listed in the pre-proposal.
- 3) Selected applicants will then develop and submit a detailed budget and timeline, and deliver a virtual presentation (not to exceed 30 minutes), to the review team, which is composed of at least two independent, external reviewers (*i.e.*, not affiliated with the applicants) and members of the BBP's Communications and Education Committee (CEC), by 2:30 PM on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The review team will remain anonymous. The month between pre-proposal notification and presentation to the review team should be used to further refine the project. The presentation to the review team should cover in detail:
  - a) the reasons why this project is important;
  - b) the modelled or anticipated benefits if the project is implemented;
  - c) the proposed plan for the implementation of the project;
  - d) the timeline for the project;
  - e) the maintenance plan for the project after implementation;
  - f) and a strategy to engage the residents of the impacted overburdened community (as well as any outreach activities performed thus far).

BBP's review team will rank the presentation and budget/timeline using the following evaluation criteria: (a) the project's importance; (b) project outcomes and/or benefits, (c) the project's relevance to the stated CCMP goal and at least one of the listed Ecosystem-Based Targets; (d) the budget's consistency with BBP guidelines, including matching provisions; (e) the quality of both the maintenance plan and the outreach strategy; (f) an appropriate timeline; and (g) qualifications, experience, and past performance of project proponents (*i.e.*, managers).

Please note that organizations associated with any submitted proposals will not participate in the discussion and ranking of proposals to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

Committee members and reviewers may be disqualified from reviewing proposals to which they have any actual or potential conflicts of interest. An individual may not serve on a review panel if he/she has any direct personal/familial or financial relationship or connection with any of the proposals to be reviewed or any of the applicants. In addition, individuals who have other types of relationships with the proposals being reviewed or any of the applicants cannot serve on a review panel if that relationship would impair or influence their objectivity or impartiality in reviewing proposals and the conflict of interest cannot otherwise be mitigated or avoided. Some situations that may constitute a conflict of interest include the following:

- Applicants to this award notice cannot serve on review panels.
- The application or proposal being considered is from the reviewer's parent institution or member organization. This applies to subcontractors or sub-recipients.
- The reviewer and the applicant are related through family or have been related as a student or thesis/post-doctoral advisor.
- The reviewer and the applicant have collaborated within the last 3 years on a related project.
- The reviewer will benefit directly from the project, *e.g.*, as a consultant or paid collaborator.

### **Funding, Budget, and Reporting Guidelines**

- Consistent with previous GFOs, the BBP's Science and Technical Advisory Committee recommends that indirect expenses not exceed 10% of an institution's federally approved indirect rate. Any indirect rate not claimed may be used to fulfill the match requirement. For organizations without a federally approved indirect rate, the allowable indirect would be calculated as 10% of the modified total direct costs.
- A portion of funding must be set aside for the implementation of outreach activities with the overburdened community of interest (*e.g.* community meetings, project signage, community planting days).
- The BBP is encouraging all applicants to provide a 1:1 ratio of matching funds or in-kind services. Matching funds may be from federal sources. Projects which provide match above 1:1 are strongly encouraged.
- The scheduling of projects is flexible to accommodate seasonal and other special considerations; however, we anticipate the project should be completed within three years of the start date. Projects may be extended under special circumstances with justification from

the Project Manager and approval by the BBP. The presentation to the review team proposal must explicitly identify all project deliverables and a schedule of their delivery.

- The BBP reserves the right to terminate projects that are not initiated and/or completed (including any project deliverables) in accordance with agreed-upon project schedules. In such cases, any remaining payments to the agency/organization will be forfeited. Such termination does not relieve the grant recipient of any reporting requirements.
- Submission of a progress report, including budget expenditures, to the STAC is required at the mid-term of the project. The final payment will not be made until the final project report, including the final financial report, is submitted to the STAC. The final report must include detailed descriptions of all work, findings, and the final (as-spent) budget (including match). Except in special circumstances, final reports and all other required materials (see below) are due within 60 days of the project's completion.
- In addition to completing a final report, all grant recipients must develop an outreach product (*e.g.*, newsletter article with photos) which provides an overview of the project for a general audience. This must include project signage (approved by the BBP) at the site. All project reports, presentations, and other media presentation must include specific recognition of the funding provided by the BBP.
- The final report and the outreach products become the property of the BBP.
- The successful applicant(s) must be able to provide the appropriate evidence of liability insurance, and be able to indemnify and hold harmless the BBP and Ocean County College from all claims for proposed project activities.
- Any changes to the scope of work or a significant change (>10%) to the project budget requires prior approval of the BBP.
- A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is required for any environmental data collection and/or data use projects, including modeling and secondary use of data as per the BBP's Quality Management Plan. A BBP-approved QAPP is required before commencement of any environmental data collection and/or use. Data collection must also comply with all state requirements and standards to ensure data can be used by the state. EPA Guidance for the development of QAPPs for environmental monitoring projects can be found at [www.epa.gov/quality/us-epa-region-2-guidance-development-quality-assurance-project-plans-environmental](http://www.epa.gov/quality/us-epa-region-2-guidance-development-quality-assurance-project-plans-environmental). Development of the QAPP is an allowable cost; however, QAPP costs should generally be a minor component of the total budget. Initial QAPP submittal to the BBP will be due within 90 days of the executed contract date. It is anticipated that most QAPPs can

be reviewed, revised as needed, and approved within 3 months of initial submission; however more complex projects may require additional time.

- Projects MUST COMPLY with all federal requirements applicable to the assistance received (including those imposed by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (“IIJA”), Public Law No. 117-58) which the Participant understands includes, but is not limited to, the following requirements: that all of the iron and steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the Project are to be produced in the United States (“**Build America, Buy America Requirements**”) unless (i) the Participant has requested and obtained a waiver from the cognizant Agency[1] pertaining to the Project or the Project is otherwise covered by a general applicability waiver; or (ii) all of the contributing Agencies have otherwise advised the Participant in writing that the Build America, Buy America Requirements are not applicable to the Project. Project recipients must also comply with all record keeping and reporting requirements documenting that materials used in the project meet the Build America, Buy America requirements.

Please contact Andrew McGowan ([amcgowan@ocean.edu](mailto:amcgowan@ocean.edu); 732-255-0472) with any questions regarding the proposal guidelines or other issues.

### **Proposal Schedule**

Sep 26, 2024:	Pre-proposals to be submitted electronically to <a href="mailto:amcgowan@ocean.edu">amcgowan@ocean.edu</a> by 5:00 p.m.
Oct 31, 2024:	Applicants will be notified if they are selected for submission of a full proposal.
Dec 5, 2024:	Submission of detailed budget and presentation of project to review team completed by 2:30 p.m.
Dec 19, 2024:	Notification to applicants.

### **About the Barnegat Bay Partnership**

The National Estuary Program (NEP) was established in 1987 by Congress pursuant to Section 320 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1330) and reauthorized in 2000 (P.L. 106-457), 2016 (P.L. 114-104), and 2020 (P.L. 116-337) to promote comprehensive planning, conservation, management, restoration and other activities in nationally significant estuaries threatened by pollution, development, or overuse, and to encourage the preparation of management plans for those estuaries.

The Barnegat Bay estuarine system was accepted into the NEP in 1996. A Management Conference was convened to develop the BBP’s Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (see <https://www.barnegatbaypartnership.org/about-us/ccmp/>), which was

approved by the USEPA in 2002 and revised in 2021. The BBP is one of only 28 NEPs in the United States.