



John R. Kasich, Governor
Mary Taylor, Lt. Governor
Craig Butler, Interim Director

Request for Proposals
2014 Surface Water Improvement Fund Grants
STATEWIDE — Proposals due 04/11/14

Dear Water Resource Management Partner:

We are pleased to announce that Ohio EPA is soliciting proposals for grants awarded from the Surface Water Improvement Fund (SWIF). Grants up to \$150,000 each will be awarded for the implementation of projects that address nonpoint source pollution and/or storm water runoff and improve water quality in Ohio's streams, rivers and lakes. Grants will be awarded for a two year term—as a result, it is anticipated that most awards will be made for single site-specific projects.

Background: The Surface Water Improvement Fund was created in 2008 and authorizes the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to provide grant funding to applicants such as local governments, park districts, conservation organizations, and others listed below. We expect that at least \$1.5 million will be available for 2014 Surface Water Improvement Fund grants.

Eligible Applicants: The following entities are eligible to receive grant funding from the Surface Water Improvement Fund:

- Local municipalities, counties and townships
- County and municipal park districts and public Zoological Parks
- Soil & water conservation districts
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation groups w/land managing responsibilities
- Watershed groups are eligible only with a local government applying on their behalf

Eligible Projects: Water quality improvement projects eligible for SWIF grant funding include:

- Stream Restoration and/or Restoration of Natural Flow
- Wetland Restoration and Protection
- Innovative Stormwater Demonstration Projects
- Riparian Restoration and/or Invasive Species Removal
- Inland lake Management and Restoration

A more detailed listing of sample projects that are eligible for SWIF grant funding is included starting on page 3 of this RFP.

Priority Funding: SWIF grants are targeted to Ohio waters where nonpoint source pollution is a significant cause of aquatic life use impairments. Projects that eliminate such impairments and/or that restore impaired waters will score significantly higher in the review process and receive more favorable consideration.

We fully anticipate that this will be a very competitive grant cycle. All grants awarded under the SWIF will be done so following a competitive process. Projects that demonstrate the following **at the time of application** will receive more favorable consideration during the review process:

- A readiness to proceed.
- Local commitment to the project (matching funds are not required, but applications that include local match will score higher)
- A specifically defined area of focus.
- Appropriate “rights-of-entry” and/or landowner authorization to work on the site
- Consistency with an approved TMDL, endorsed watershed action plan and/or an approved remedial action plan.
- Evidence that successful completion will improve riparian or in-stream habitat conditions or reduce stormwater runoff.
- Evidence that the project will address a known environmental problem
- Allowable, appropriate and reasonable project costs.

In addition, Ohio EPA’s director may elect to award SWIF grants for other types of projects when doing so may result in the elimination of impairments and/or advancement of NPS management capacity.

Grant Amounts: Applicants may request up to \$150,000 in Surface Water Improvement grant funding. However, it is expected that most SWIF grants will be awarded for substantially less than \$150,000. There are no local match requirements.

Grant Terms & Requirements: Surface Water Improvement Fund grants will be awarded for a two-year period. Successful applicants will be required to execute a formal grant agreement with Ohio EPA and projects must be completed within the two-year grant year period. *Projects that are “shovel-ready” and will complete all scheduled activities within the first 12-months will receive significantly higher consideration.*

Public Outreach Requirements: All applications for SWIF grants must include project-specific public outreach activities (such as public meetings, project tours, signs, newsletters and fact sheets) communicating the successes of the project throughout the community. Costs associated with project-specific public outreach activities are eligible as a cost component of a SWIF grant, but may not exceed five percent (5%) of total project costs.

Sample Project Listing

A listing of the types of eligible projects for SWIF grants funding follows:

Stream Restoration and/or Re-naturalization Projects

Ohio EPA is encouraging applications for stream restoration or re-naturalization projects that re-establish in-stream habitat, natural flow conditions and stable morphological conditions. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Natural stream channel restoration where site conditions are appropriate
- Stream bank stabilization, using materials other than rip-rap
- Levee/dike removal or modification to reconnect streams to flood plain areas
- Low head dam removal and/or modification of larger dams
- In-stream habitat restoration
- Other projects that restore natural stream ecology, morphology and flow

SWIF funding is not well suited for large complex restoration projects that may require individual 404 permitting and/or 401-certification. The two-year grant term is best suited for small discrete restoration; small low head dam removals or stream bank stabilization projects that may be covered under US Army Corps of Engineers nationwide permits.

Wetland Restoration

Wetland areas play a critical role in effectively filtering nonpoint source pollutants/nutrients. We are particularly interested in funding projects that protect or restore existing wetland areas that are currently being degraded by land uses such as farming, mowing or active development. Eligible wetland projects include but are not limited to the following:

- Restoring historical wetland areas that have been converted to farmland or other uses
- Replanting impacted wetland areas with native plants, tree and shrubs species
- Removal of non-native invasive species in high quality naturally occurring wetland areas

Surface Water Improvement funding may NOT be used for constructing wetlands in areas where no wetlands previously existed.

Innovative Storm Water Demonstration Projects

Uncontrolled runoff from storm events may be a serious contributor of nonpoint source pollutants to some of Ohio's streams. Many urban areas in Ohio are required to regulate and/or manage storm water flow and do so under storm water permits issued by Ohio EPA. (SWIF grants may not be used to implement any activities required under storm water permits or as mitigation for other permits such as those issued under section 401 of the Clean Water Act). Recent trends in storm water management have identified innovative practices and techniques that are showing promise in the management of storm water. Ohio EPA is interested in promoting these practices by funding **HIGHLY VISIBLE** local projects that demonstrate these innovative storm water management practices. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to the following:

- Retrofitting public commons or parking areas with permeable pavement or pavers
- Constructing storm water treatment wetlands
- Installing small scale green roofs on public buildings
- Installing bio-filtration islands and/or vegetated retention structures such as large public rain gardens or large infiltration planting areas
- Installing passive “treatment trains” combining multiple BMPs such as pocket wetlands, bio-filtration islands and others
- Constructing rainwater harvesting and reuse systems on public buildings or facilities
- Other practices designed to demonstrate innovative management of storm water flows. *(We recommend that you contact us if you have questions about whether or not your proposed practices meet these criteria.)*

Projects that are completed at highly visible public facilities such as city halls, heavily visited public parks and other areas where projects may help to educate the public and others on alternatives to traditional stormwater management will score considerably higher than projects that are proposed in areas that are not generally accessible by the public.

**Surface water improvement funding may only be used for installing green stormwater practices on public lands or lands with abundant public access. Grant funds may not be used on private for profit business facilities.*

Riparian Protection and Restoration Projects

Ohio EPA is also encouraging applications for projects that propose to protect riparian areas along high quality streams and/or to restore impacted riparian areas along impaired streams. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to the following:

- Riparian plantings using native hardwood tree and shrub species
- Riparian wetland restoration
- Invasive species management in riparian areas
- Floodplain re-naturalization projects
- Levee/dike removal or modification to reconnect streams to flood plain areas.

Inland Lake Management and Restoration

Ohio’s public inland lakes are primary recreational areas that may show the effects of nonpoint source pollution entering the lakes through tributaries in the watershed. Lake protection and restoration project grants are available to applicants interested in implementing projects that will measurably protect and/or improve lake water quality in and around recreation areas. SWIF grants may be used to reimburse public entities for costs associated with the following:

- Channel aeration to address anoxic conditions and eliminate fish kills
- Alum treatment demonstration projects designed to inactivate nutrients
- Lake water circulators and/or other devices to reduce blue-green algae blooms
- Upstream fore bays or constructed wetlands designed to capture incoming pollutants
- Shoreline stabilization using only bioengineering methods and materials
- Other techniques designed to specifically address identified lake-related recreational, human health, or aquatic health concerns

SWIF funding is not available for projects on private lakes or lakes that do not permit public recreational access.

Ineligible Projects

The following activities are not eligible for SWIF grants:

1. Home sewage treatment system repair and/or replacement projects
2. Projects that propose to acquire property
3. Acid mine drainage abatement and abandoned mine land reclamation
4. Logjam removal projects and/or drainage ditch maintenance or management
5. Projects required under enforcement order or an enforcement-required supplemental enforcement project, or required as mitigation under regulatory programs such as Section 401 permits, NPDES permits or Permits to Install
6. Any project that is part of an approved nutrient trading program. Nutrient trading projects in general are not eligible for consideration under the SWIF program.
7. Projects that propose the construction of dikes or levees within a floodplain
8. Projects that propose best management practices (BMPs) or “end-of-pipe treatments” which are either required or expected to be required under an NPDES permit or a Permit to Install
9. Projects required under Phase 1 or Phase 2 NPDES storm water compliance efforts
10. Research or monitoring activities

Application Deadline & Review Procedures

The deadline for submitting SWIF grant applications is **April 11, 2014**. Applications must be complete and postmarked by the above date to be considered for funding. Applications postmarked (or hand-delivered) after this date will be returned to the applicant without further consideration. Please submit three (3) copies of the complete application with original (blue ink) signatures and one (1) copy of the application in Microsoft Word format and any project site photos or design drawings on a CD. Completed applications may be mailed or delivered to:

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Division of Surface Water
Attn: Russ Gibson, NPS Program Manager
50 West Town Street, Suite 700
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

Upon receipt, all SWIF grant applications will be reviewed for completeness, technical merit and adherence to the SWIF grant RFP criteria. Applications found to be administratively complete will undergo a comprehensive review using criteria designed to evaluate and score the following:

- Environmental results likely to be achieved
- Overall effectiveness of the project
- Feasibility of completing the proposed project in a timely manner
- Applicant's capability to administer state grant funds
- Project's readiness to proceed
- The project includes a site specific location
- The long term benefits of the project

- The cost effectiveness of the project and
- Existing environmental quality and restorability of the watershed
- Status of TMDL report and/or local watershed planning efforts
- Project specific educational and outreach activities

In addition to the above general criteria that are applicable to all applicants, projects also will be evaluated using specific technical criteria developed for the type of project that is being proposed.

Upon completion of all reviews, applications will be ranked according to their review scores and recommendations for funding will be developed based upon this ranking. Funding decisions will be made by the Director of Ohio EPA. We anticipate that grant awards will likely be announced in June 2014. Successful applicants will be required to execute a formal grant agreement and adhere to all requirements of the SWIF grants program.

Application Materials and Technical Assistance

Applications are available at the Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water (DSW) homepage located at www.epa.ohio.gov/dsw/nps/index.aspx. Applications are also available at Ohio EPA's district offices.

We appreciate your interest in the SWIF grants and look forward to working with you to help Ohio meet important water quality goals. If after reviewing this information you require additional assistance or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Martha Spurbeck at 614-644-2869 or Russ Gibson at 614-644-2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Hall".

Brian Hall, Assistant Chief
Division of Surface Water

cc: Ohio EPA District Office Water Program Managers