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WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects (EWRP)

2026/2027 Funding Opportunity Webinar

June 16, 2026

Agenda

- Staff Introductions
- Quick WaterSMART Overview
- Program Overview
- Merit Review Criteria
- Environmental & Cultural Compliance Guidance
- Financial Assistance Requirements
- WaterSMART Application Tips
- Additional Opportunities, Tools and Resources
- Question & Answer Session





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WaterSMART Overview

WaterSMART Program Overview

- The WaterSMART Program is an umbrella program composed of multiple Federal assistance opportunities.
- Through WaterSMART, Reclamation supports projects with a diverse array of benefits, including projects that increase water supply reliability and help meet competing demands for water resources.
- WaterSMART supports projects in various stages of development, including initial study, design, and construction.
- Cannot fund operations, maintenance, or repair (OM&R) projects.



**Increase
Reliability**



**Competing
Demands**



Drought



WaterSMART Program Overview



Most WaterSMART activities are competitive grant programs with funds allocated annually.



Eligibility is determined by the authorizing statute. Generally, includes States, Tribes, entities with water or power delivery authority and non-profit conservation entities.



Generally, a 50% non-Federal cost share is required for grants under WaterSMART. This opportunity has a 25% non-Federal cost share requirement.



WaterSMART Program Components

Building a Foundation for Success



Planning

- Drought Response Program
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program
- Planning and Project Design Grants
- Basin Studies
- Water Recycling and Desalination Planning

Science and Tools

- Applied Science Grants
- Drought Response Program
- Basin Studies

On-the-Ground Projects

- Drought Response Program
- Water and Energy Efficiency Grants
- Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects
- **Enhancing Water Resources Projects**
- Title XVI
- Large Scale Water Recycling
- Water Desalination





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Program Overview

Program Overview

- The WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects (EWRP) supports collaboratively developed projects that benefit multiple water users, improve water supply reliability, and enhance watershed health.
- The program funds on-the-ground water resource actions, including watershed restoration and fish passage projects, water management or infrastructure improvements, and water conservation and efficiency efforts.
- **All projects must provide quantifiable benefits to watershed health and should benefit multiple water users or interest groups.**

(Note: this funding opportunity was previously known as Environmental Water Resources Projects).



Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be located in the 17 Western States, Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands

Category A applicants include:

- States, Tribes, irrigation districts, or water districts
- State, regional, or local authorities, the members of which include organizations with water or power delivery authority
- Other organizations with water or power delivery authority.

Category B applicants include:

- Nonprofit conservation organizations that are acting in partnership with an entity described in Category A.
 - Category B applicants should identify their Category A partner in their application and provide a letter from the Category A partner certifying their role prior to award of funding.
 - **Note:** *Partners are not required to contribute cost-share funding*



Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be located in the 17 Western States, Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands

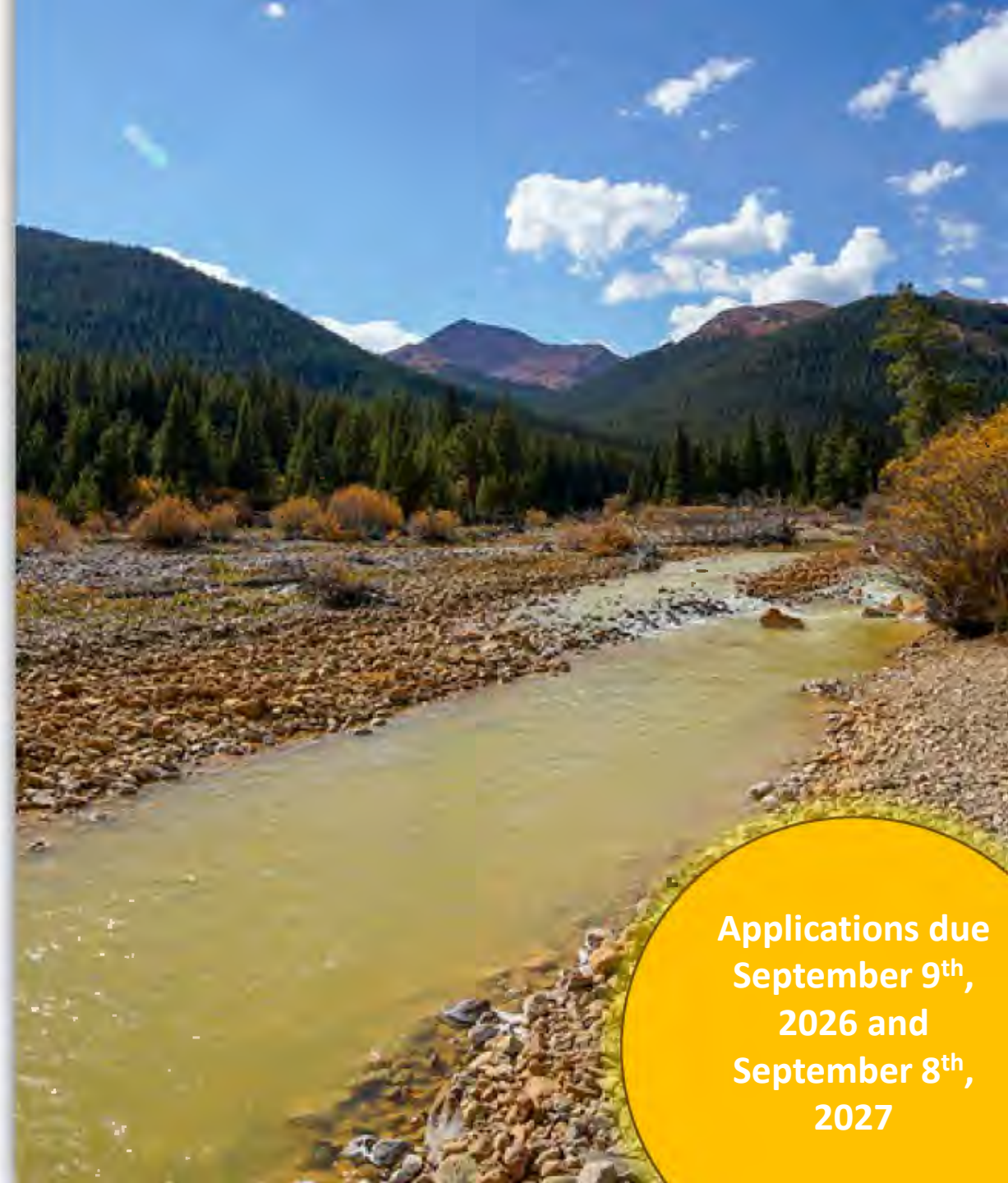
Category C applicants are:

- Watershed groups as defined in the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, Section 6001(6).
- To be eligible, the watershed group must:
 - Be a grassroots, non-regulatory entity that addresses water availability and quality issues within the relevant watershed;
 - Capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources in the watershed;
 - Make decisions on a consensus basis; and
 - Represent 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.
- Applications submitted by watershed groups will be ranked separately from all other applications.
- *Watershed groups must have a Category A partner to be eligible for 75% cost-share funding*



Program Requirements

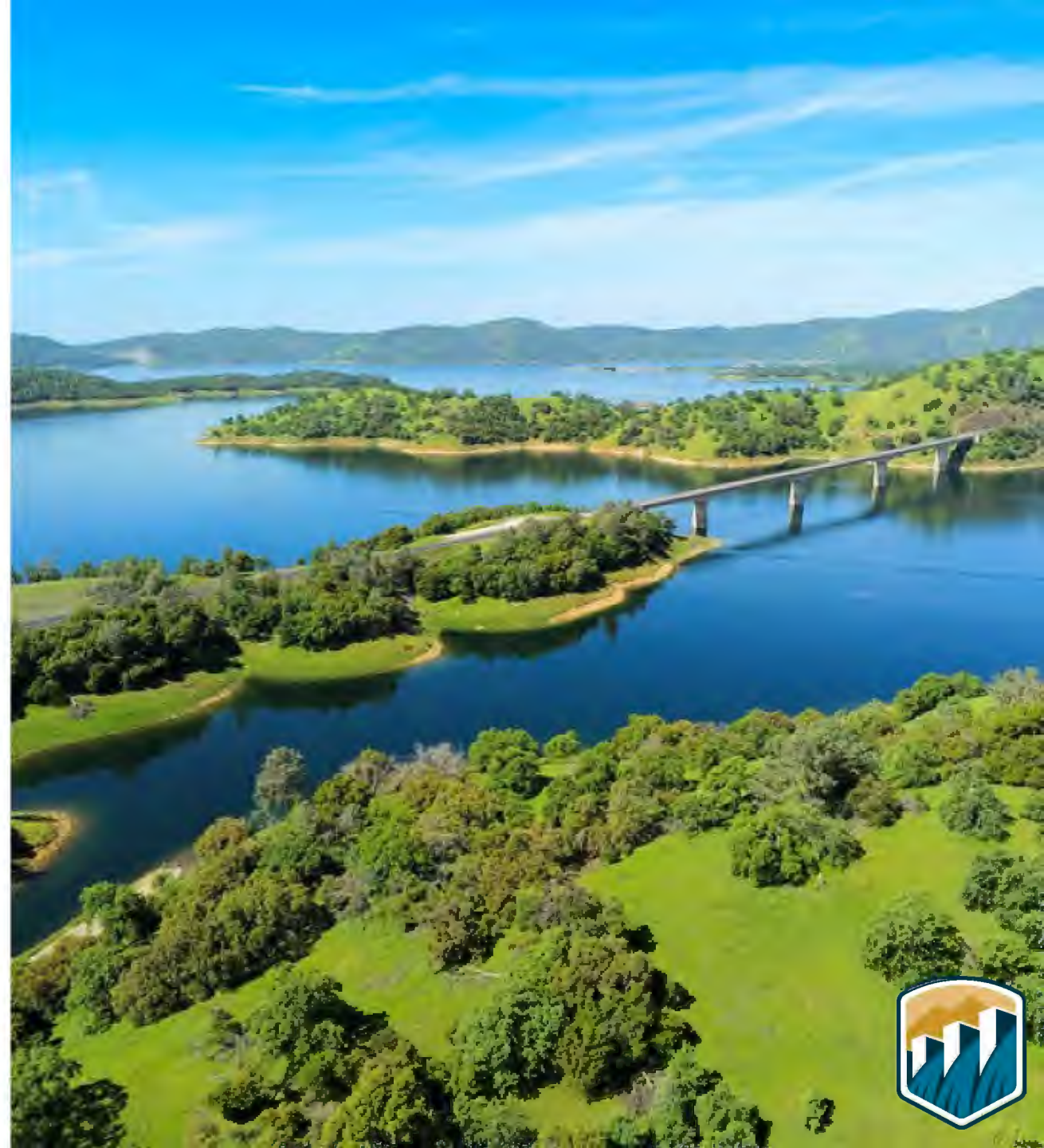
- Applicants may request up to \$3 million in Federal funding for a project that can be completed in 3 years.
- Projects may not exceed \$6 million in total project cost (WaterSMART funding + non-Federal cost-share sources)
- Category A entities may receive up to \$3 million per funding round. Category B applicants (i.e. national conservation non-profits) may *receive up to \$9 million per funding round*.
- A **minimum 25% non-Federal** cost share is required for all projects. Additional cost-share beyond 25% is incentivized in the merit criteria.



Applications due
September 9th,
2026 and
September 8th,
2027

Eligible Activities

- **Water Supply Reliability Actions**
 - *Water supply reliability projects funded under EWRP must be coupled with a means of ensuring water will be made available for instream use, typically via a water right, formal MOU, or seasonal use agreement.*
- **Strategic Water Management**
- **Aquatic, Riparian, or Floodplain Restoration**
- **Monitoring and Adaptive Management**
- **Project Specific Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach**
- **Invasive Species Treatment**
- **Fisheries Management and Fish Habitat Improvement (Including Barrier Removal or Infrastructure Relocation)**
- **Forest Management**
- **And more!**



Ineligible Activities

- Operations, Maintenance, and Replacement (OM&R)
- On-Farm Efficiency Improvements
- New Conveyance Infrastructure for Municipal or Agricultural Water Delivery
- Storage for new consumptive water use
- Water or Land Purchases and Easements
- Pilot Projects
- Building Construction
- Removal of Non-Fish Taxa
- CERCLA- Subject Activities and Standard Mine Remediation Activities
- General Training, Education, or Outreach
- Projects Receiving Other Federal Financial Assistance



Past Funded Projects

- Fish ladder and fish ramp installations
- Moving of a road and bridge to reconnect a floodplain to a river channel
- Diversion upgrades for conveyance efficiency, fish passage, and boater safety
- Coordinated fish barrier removal effort that reopened an entire stream reach
- Large area floodplain restoration efforts with multiple LTPBR techniques
- Canal piping project with dedication of a significant water right to instream use
- Riparian restoration coupled with livestock enclosure fencing and bank stabilization work





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Merit Review Criteria

Merit Review Criteria Overview

Evaluation Criteria	Points
A. Project Benefits	40
B. Project Planning and Support	15
C. Readiness to Proceed	15
D. Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities	20
E. Construction Priority	10
F. Cost Share Priority	5
Total	105



Criterion A: Project Benefits (40 points)

This criterion evaluates the extent to which the project will provide a variety of benefits in line with the intent of the funding opportunity.

- ***Sub-Criterion A.1. Benefits to Multiple Users, Stakeholders, & Interests (15 points)***
 - ***Sub-Criterion A.2. Water Supply, Quality, and System Benefits (10 points)***
 - ***Sub-Criterion A.3. Fish and Wildlife Benefits (10 points)***
 - ***Sub-Criterion A.4. Project Performance and Monitoring (5 points)***
- *What scores well?* Clear and logical description of how the proposed project will provide benefits to A1-A3. Responses should include both **qualitative AND quantitative support**. Where possible, include data-backed support, applicable maps, and figures. For A.4. Describe your plan to monitor and analyze applicable biological, physical, or hydrologic indicators for a period of five years post-implementation. Include monitoring equipment and labor for one year post-implementation in your budget and project schedule.



Criterion B: Project Planning and Support (15 points)

- This criterion evaluates the extent to which the proposal is supported by a sound prior planning effort and has broad support from diverse entities in the project area.
- **Sub-Criterion B.1. Prior Planning (5 points)**
 - What scores well? Projects that are the result of a previous planning effort that included stakeholder input and was technically-sound
- **Sub-Criterion B.2. Project Support (10 points)**
 - What scores well? Projects that are supported by a large and diverse group of stakeholders in the project area (include letters of support as applicable)



Criterion C: Readiness to Proceed (15 points)

This criterion evaluates the extent to which the proposed project is prepared to begin compliance proceedings and construction work upon entering into a financial assistance agreement.

- **Sub-Criterion C.1. Design and Engineering (5 points)**

- *What scores well?* A project at an advanced (generally 60%) stage of design and engineering, with a clear plan to complete final design steps

- **Sub-Criterion C.2. Environmental and Cultural Compliance (5 points)**

- *What scores well?* Clear thought has gone into compliance prep. You included the cost of compliance in the budget, and may have started initial conversations with Reclamation.

- **Sub-Criterion C.3. Project Implementation (Schedule and Budget) (5 points)**

- *What scores well?* Technically-sound and feasible projects with a well-developed budget and budget narrative and a clear implementation plan. All land/ water access thought out and documented, and maintenance agreement considered.



Criterion D: Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities (20 points)

Up to 20 points may be awarded based on the extent that the project demonstrably:

- advances the Trump Administration's priorities, including E.O. 14154: Unleashing American Energy, justifies alignment with priorities and requirements in E.O. 14332: Improving Oversight in Federal Grantmaking
- includes primary project elements that develop, demonstrate, and or implement artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that advance the Trump Administration and Department of Interior's priorities for AI, including OMB M-25-21 Accelerating the Use of AI through Innovation, Governance, and Public Trust; S.O. 3444 Leading Interior's Path to Artificial Intelligence Transformation
- aligns with Secretary Burgum's strategic objectives, including those identified in Secretarial Orders 3417 Addressing the National Energy Emergency, 3418 Unleashing American Energy, 3419 Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis
- aligns with goal and objectives in the U.S. Department of the Interior FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan; supports water management and enhanced operational flexibility in Reclamation States, within with priority given to the Colorado River Basin and other basins which is experiencing long-term drought conditions

Please address only those priorities that are applicable to your project.



Criterion E: Construction Priority (10 points)

- Up to **10 points** may be awarded based on the extent that the proposed project is a construction project that can be completed within the allowable project duration. **Projects that focus on construction of hard infrastructure to deliver durable, long-term improvements in water reliability and resilience will be prioritized.** Hard infrastructure is tangible or built infrastructure. Please identify the hard infrastructure construction components of the project, if applicable.
- *What Scores Well?* Projects with at least one 'hard' (i.e. gray) infrastructure component will receive more points under this criterion.



Criterion F: Cost Share Priority (5 points)

- Up to **5 points** may be awarded to proposals that include non-Federal cost share contributions **exceeding the minimum by at least 5 percent**. Projects with a higher non-Federal cost share may be awarded more points. State the percentage of non-Federal funding provided using the following calculation:

$$\text{Non-Federal Funding} / \text{Total Project Cost} = \%$$

See Cost Sharing Requirement and Budget Narrative for more information on cost-share requirements and eligible costs.





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Environmental and Cultural Resource Considerations

Environmental and Cultural Resource Compliance: *Preparing Your Application*

- All selected projects are required to comply with Federal and State environmental and cultural resource compliance laws.
- Environmental and cultural compliance is required for all project activities, regardless of whether they are paid for with Federal funding, or non-Federal cost-share funds.
- Contact your local Reclamation office to discuss requirements and the associated timelines and costs.
- Include a line for environmental and cultural resource compliance in your application budget.



Environmental and Cultural Resource Compliance: *Preparing Your Application*

- Cost for compliance activities are generally commensurate with project scope and complexity.
 - Costs you may need to include, for example:
 - Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement
 - Cultural resource surveys of area of potential effect
 - Biological surveys and assessments of listed-species impacts
 - Other laws and regulations around water quality, air quality, wetlands, etc.
 - Potential mitigation
- Compliance can take 6-12 months or more, depending upon project complexity and scope.
- Reach out to your local Reclamation office to discuss potential time frames and options to utilize environmental and cultural resource consultants to support compliance activities.



Environmental and Cultural Resource Compliance: *If Your Project is Selected*

- Reclamation is ultimately responsible for compliance with Federal environmental and cultural resource requirements.
- Your Grants Officer Technical Representative (GOTR) will contact you after award to initiate discussions regarding compliance requirements and next steps.
- You will be required to provide detailed information about your project necessary to comply with Federal environmental and cultural resource requirements.
- You may be able to contract out many required compliance activities to support your project.
- You ***must receive a notice to proceed from Reclamation before initiating any on-the-ground work***. This includes field work, surveys, etc. Not doing so will jeopardize the funding potential of your project.





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WaterSMART Financial Assistance Requirements

Financial Assistance (FA) Office

Our Role:

1. Answer questions about financial assistance requirements
2. Conduct initial screening for completeness and eligibility
3. Remove incomplete or late applications
4. Notify applicants about their application status

The contact information from the SF-424 Application form is used to send out notifications. Be sure this information is accurate.



SAM.gov Registration

Register in SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

- [SAM.gov | Entity Registrations](#)
- Sam.gov Help Desk Information
 - By phone: (toll-free) 866-606-8220. Call and live chat hours are Monday - Friday from 8am - 8pm EST
 - Document Technical Difficulties, if needed

*Start
Early!*

The SAM.gov registration process can take up to TEN days!

The screenshot displays the SAM.gov homepage. At the top right, there is a 'Sign In' link. The main navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Search', 'Data Bank', 'Data Services', and 'Help'. The SAM.gov logo is prominently displayed. A banner at the top right states 'Official U.S. Government Website 100% Free'. The central content area is titled 'The Official U.S. Government System for:' and lists various services: 'Contract Opportunities', 'Contract Data (Reports ONLY from fpds.gov)', 'Wage Determinations', 'Federal Hierarchy (Departments and Subtiers)', 'Assistance Listings', 'Entity Information (Entities, Disaster Response Registry, Exclusions, and Responsibility/Qualification (was fapils.gov))', and 'Entity Reporting (SCR and Bio-Preferred Reporting)'. A 'View FASCSA Orders' button is also present. On the right side, a section titled 'Register Your Entity or Get a Unique Entity ID' contains a 'Get Started' button circled in red, a 'Renew Entity' button, and a 'Check Entity Status' link. Below this, a search bar asks 'Already know what you want to find?' with a dropdown menu for 'Select Domain...' and a search input field containing 'e.g. 1606N020Q02'. At the bottom, there are two tabs: 'Announcements' and 'How to get a Unique Entity ID'.



SAM.gov Tips

Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations

Entity Registration
Core Data
Assertions
Reps and Certs (FAR/DFARS)
> Reps and Certs (Financial Assistance)
Financial Assistance Representation And Certification
Exclusions
Responsibility / Qualification

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE REPRESENTATION AND CERTIFICATION

The Grants Certifications are a common set of certifications and representations required by Federal statutes or regulations in accordance with the grants guidance under Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR 200.208 Certifications and Representations). Those non-Federal entities who intend to apply for, or are already recipients of Federal grants or agreements, must read and agree to the corresponding certifications and representations. Registrants who reply yes to the following questions are required to keep these certifications and representations current, accurate, and complete as part of their entity registration.

Does [REDACTED] wish to apply for a Federal financial assistance project or program, or is [REDACTED] currently the recipient of funding under any Federal financial assistance project or program? **Yes**



Eligibility Review

All application packages will be screened to ensure:

- Timeliness, Completeness, and Eligibility
- Active Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and SAM registration
- Meets the content requirements
- Contains completed and signed mandatory forms



Selection Notifications

After Eligibility Review:

- Ineligible applicants will be notified
- Eligible applicants will move on to the Merit Review stage

After Merit Review:

- All remaining applicants will be notified
 - Unsuccessful applicants will have the opportunity to request a debriefing
 - Successful applicants will receive instructions on next steps

Notifications will all come from this mailbox: Bor-sha-fafoa@usbr.gov



What to Expect

If Selected, you may be asked to provide:

- Budget clarifications
- Cost-share documentation
- Explanation of pre-award costs
- Reports should be up to date on other Reclamation awards





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Financial Assistance Questions?

Email the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Team
directly at:

bor-sha-fafoa@usbr.gov

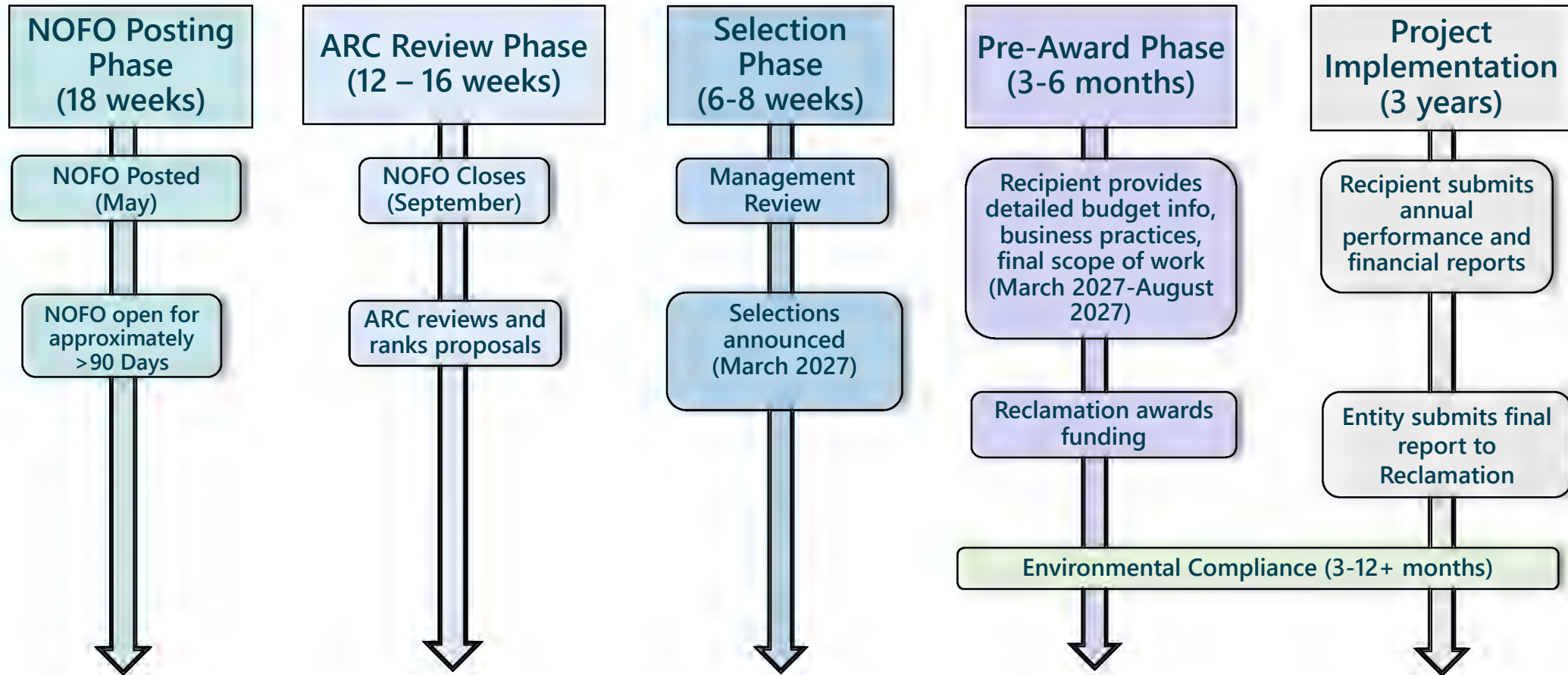
****Include the NOFO number (R26AS00017) in the subject of your email.****



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Application Advice

WaterSMART Selection Process: *Example Schedule*



From NOFO Closing to Award of Funding = ~10 months



Application Tips: *General Considerations*

- The most successful projects are those *that fit well with the* Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and objectives of the program
- Review the objective, eligible project types, and evaluation criteria *to ensure your project fits*
- Look at past successful applications on the WaterSMART website
- If you have questions, book an Inquiry with program staff

Contacts

For additional on WaterSMART Enhancing Water Resources Projects, please contact Ms. Katherine Tucker at 303-445-2586 or send an email to ktucker@usbr.gov.

Prospective applicants may schedule a consultation call to discuss project fit and get answers to more specific questions. [Click here](#) to set up a call with Reclamation staff.



Application Tips: *Evaluation Criteria*

- A **well-organized proposal** is easier to score
 - Copy and paste the evaluation criteria into your application
 - Use tables and diagrams to highlight specific ideas, like project benefits
- Be sure to provide support for statements made in the proposal, **including citations and figures**
 - Quantify claimed benefits whenever possible. *General statements will not score well*

For example:

Restoration Opportunities	Santa Ana Sucker	Arroyo Chub	Western Pond Turtle	Two-Striped Garter Snake	Least Bell's Vireo	Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	Yellow-Breasted Chat	Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo
Benefits to Santa Ana sucker and Associated Resources	x	x	x	x				
Rehabilitate Existing Channel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Establish New Floodplain	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Reconfigure Channel near Confluence with Santa Ana River	x	x	x	x				
Construct Rock and Woody Debris Structures	x	x	x	x				

Source: Upper Santa Ana River Tributaries Restoration and Mitigation Reserve Program Final Environmental Impact Report, updated by Valley District Biological Resources Department, 2021.





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Additional Opportunities, Tools and Resources

Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP)

Provides support to establish watershed groups, develop watershed restoration plans, and design watershed management projects

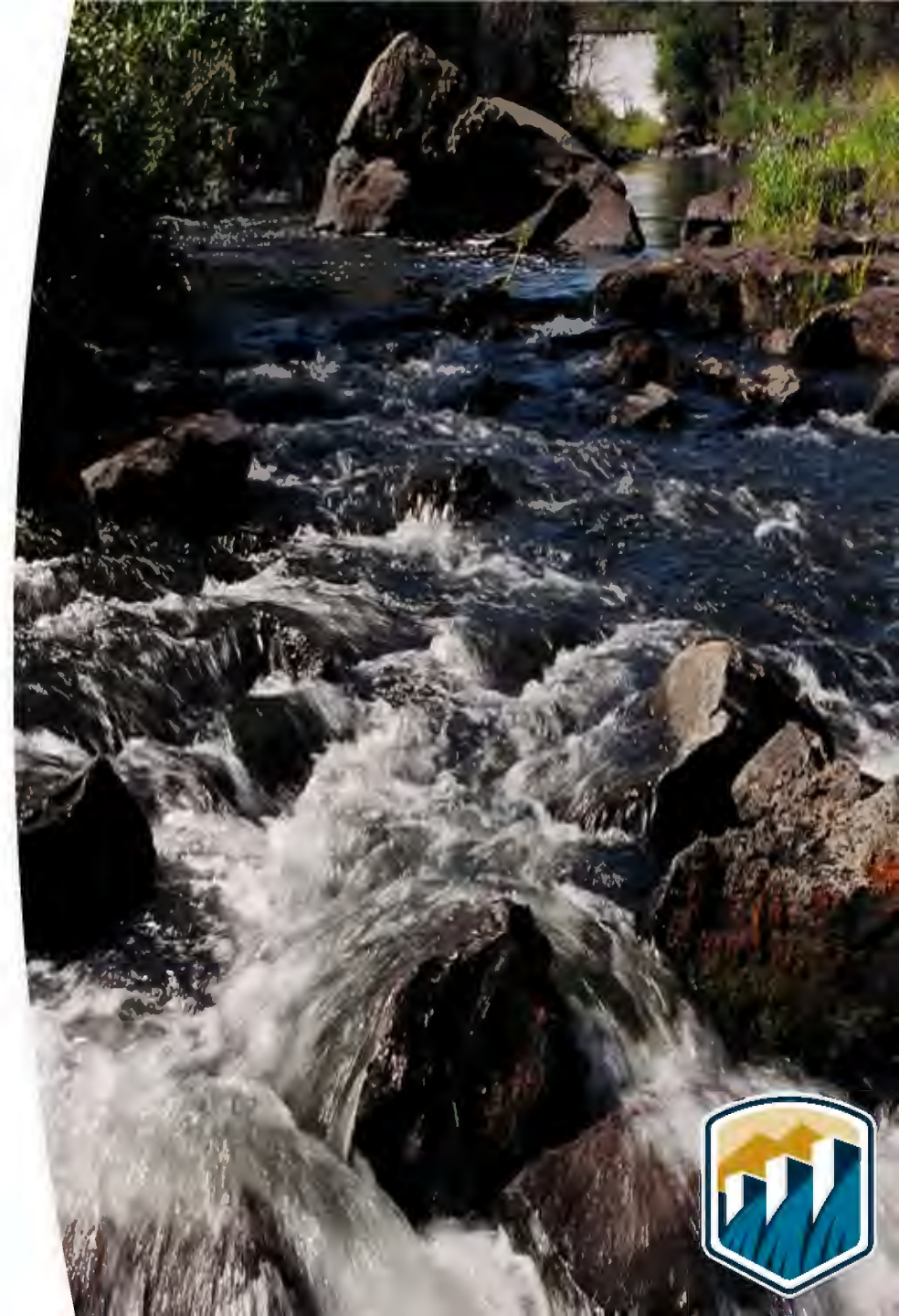
Eligibility

- Watershed groups must be located in the 17 western states, Territories, Alaska, Hawaii or Puerto Rico
- Watershed group sponsors include States, Tribes, local and special districts, local governmental entities, interstate organizations, nonprofit organizations, and institutes of higher education

Funding

- \$100,000 per year for up to 3 years
- Funding released incrementally
- Non-federal cost share is NOT required

NOFO No. R26AS00349
Applications Due: October 7, 2026



Planning and Project Design Grants

Development of a Water Strategy:

- Water Marketing Strategies
- Water Supply and/or Conservation Strategies
- Other Water Resource Enhancement Strategies

Project Planning and Design:

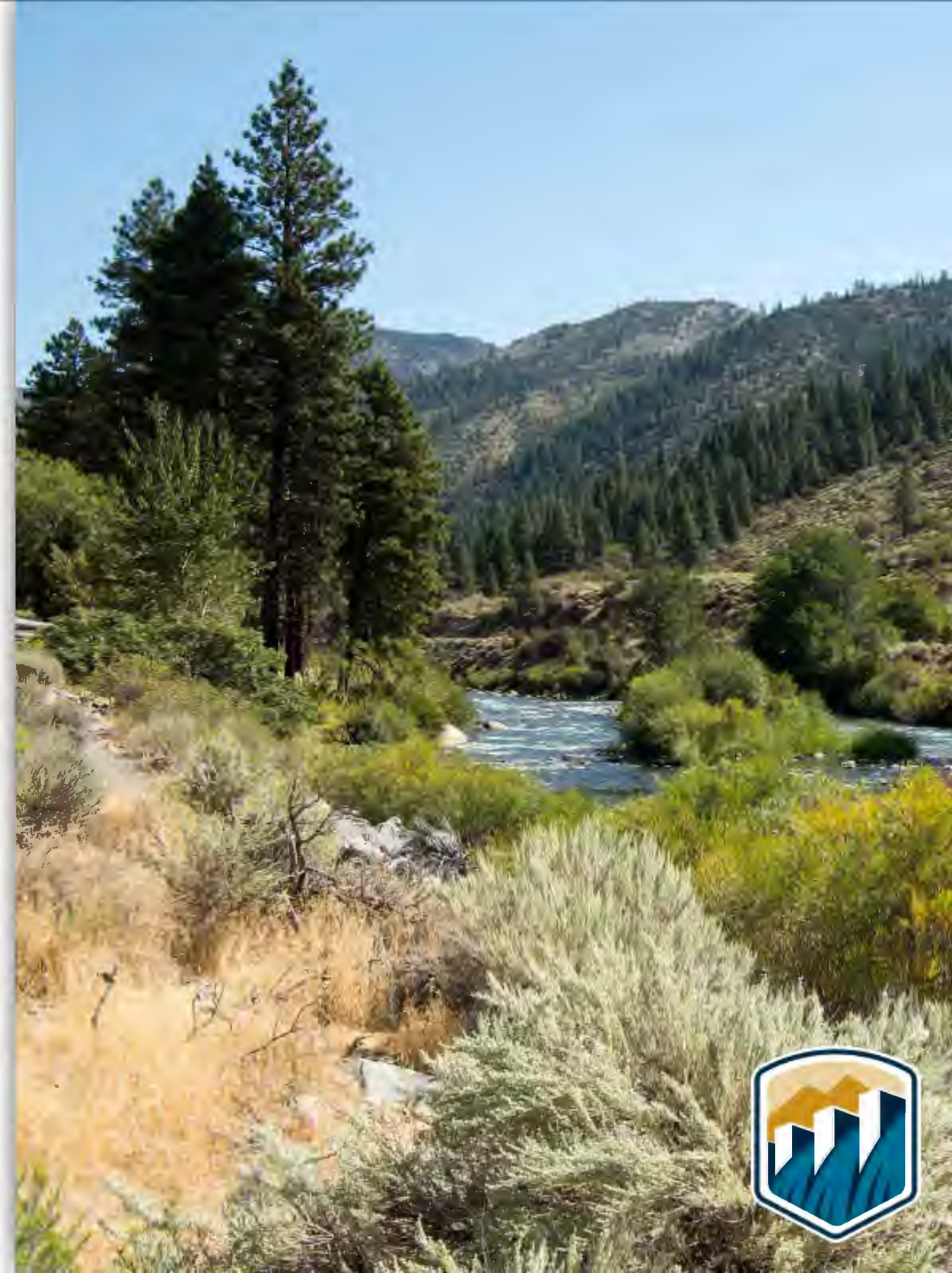
- Environmental Water Resources Projects
- Water Management and Conservation Projects
- Drought Resiliency Projects

Funding

- Up to \$300,000 for projects that to be completed in 2-3 years
- Non-Federal Cost Share: 50%
Some Project Planning and Design projects may qualify for a 25% non-Federal cost share

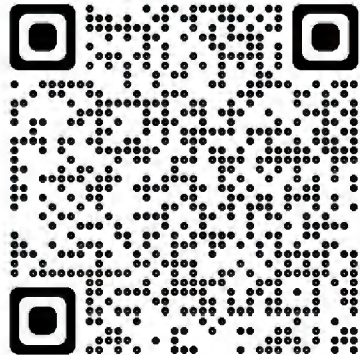
Funding Opportunity Expected to Open

Fall 2026



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 Program Website. The page features a blue header with the Bureau of Reclamation logo and navigation links: Water & Power, Resources & Research, About Us, Recreation & Public Use, and News & Multimedia. A search bar is visible in the top right. The main content area is titled "WaterSMART" and includes a sidebar with a list of program categories such as Applied Science Grants, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program, and Basin Studies. The main text area contains an introduction to the program, a "Join the WaterSMART Mailing List" section, and a "WaterSMART Project Selections Overview" section. On the right side, there are sections for "OPEN FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES" and a "FUNDING OPPORTUNITY CALENDAR" with a "GRANTS.GOV" logo.





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Questions?

Use the Q&A Function or contact
Katherine Tucker at ktucker@usbr.gov
or (303) 445-2586