

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Design, Planning, and Capacity Building Activities to Remove Barriers for Aquatic Habitat Connectivity in the Narragansett Bay Region

October 1, 2025

I. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this Request for Proposal (RFP):

- Design and Planning Activities include site-specific studies, desktop and field assessments, designs, plans, and permitting for improving freshwater and estuarine aquatic connectivity with a primary focus on aquatic organism passage. The “Design & Planning” steps 6-8 (Figure 1) are eligible. Stakeholder engagement (step 1) is strongly encouraged throughout the project development process but should not be the sole focus of a proposal.
- Capacity Building Activities include any actions needed to advance aquatic connectivity efforts from step 1 through step 7 (Figure 1), such as (but not limited to) developing watershed wide barrier removal or improvement prioritization plans, hiring dedicated staff or redirecting existing staff toward aquatic connectivity efforts, or developing community engagement plans for priority barriers within the watershed.
- Aquatic Habitat Connectivity refers to the removal of barriers that impact water and/or organism passage between two waterbodies and improves habitat within and surrounding those waterbodies. Barrier removals may include development of fish ladders or passageways, culvert replacements, full or partial dam removal, breaching of impoundments, etc.
- Co-Benefits include the additional positive outcomes to removing waterflow barriers including flood reduction, increased safety for nearby and downstream communities, improved public access to water resources, and water quality improvements.

NBEP Project Development Process

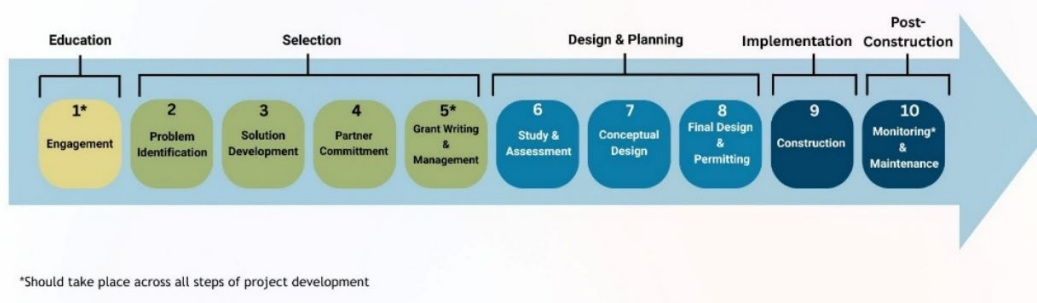


Figure 1. NBEP Project Development Process

II. OVERVIEW

The [Narragansett Bay Estuary Program \(NBEP\)](#), through its host, [Roger Williams University \(RWU\)](#), is issuing this RFP for aquatic habitat connectivity with climate resilience benefits projects within the Narragansett Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Coastal Ponds watersheds in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut (Narragansett Bay Region). Federal funding is provided under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) through EPA Cooperative Agreement #CE00A01336. Projects funded via this request will advance implementation of NBEP's mission and [Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan \(CCMP\)](#). The specific purpose of this opportunity is to fund 1. watershed-wide capacity building and planning activities that enable a clear future direction for aquatic barrier removal efforts that improve aquatic habitat connectivity and 2. site-specific design and planning activities that enable subsequent construction of projects that improve aquatic habitat connectivity. Approximately **\$900,000 is available with a proposal due date of December 1, 2025, and an expected award notification date of January 30, 2026.**

III. FUNDING DETAILS

A total of ~\$900,000 is available from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) through EPA Cooperative Agreement #CE00A01336. NBEP expects individual awards to range from approximately \$75,000 to \$250,000 and anticipates funding 5-7 projects. All funds are provided on a reimbursement basis. Match is not required. These funds expire on September 30, 2029 so all proposed work must be complete by that date, although 2-year project timelines are preferred.

IV. FUNDING TEAM

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION: RWU

RWU is NBEP's fiscal sponsor and will make formal funding awards, establish agreements, receive invoices, and provide reimbursement to awardees.

PROJECT OVERSIGHT: NBEP

NBEP's Grants Subcommittee will select projects while NBEP will manage agreements, evaluate reports and deliverables, and provide technical assistance to awardees.

V. PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

LOCATION

Projects must take place within the boundaries of NBEP's [study area](#) (Figure 2). This area includes [113 municipalities](#) in the Narragansett Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Coastal Salt Ponds watersheds in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Note that the links above direct you to ArcGIS layers that will allow you to confirm your project is in NBEP's study area.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include state or local government agencies, tribes, interstate agencies, private non-profit organizations and institutions, and academic or educational institutions. For-profit organizations or individuals are not eligible; however, they may be subcontracted by the applicant. Those eligible to respond to this RFP become a “subawardee” if selected for funding. Although multiple partners may be involved with a project, a single subawardee will be the recipient of funds, and partners receiving funds through the subawardee will be considered subcontractors. The subawardee has primary responsibility for the completion of all tasks including those undertaken by subcontracted partners.

Please note that applicants must meet the following minimum requirements to receive and manage federal funds before funds are subawarded:

1. Organization is legally registered in its country of operations;
2. Has or will adopt a financial conflict of interest policy prior to subaward, or agrees to use [RWU's policy](#);
3. Has identified no reasons (local conditions, laws, or institutional circumstances) that would prevent an independent accountant from performing an audit of the organization;
4. The applicant organization is not subject to an active exclusion and not currently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or declared ineligible for the award of contracts by any federal agency;
5. Accounting records can:
 - a. separate the receipts and payments of an RWU award from the receipts and payments of the organization's other activities, and
 - b. record expenditures on the RWU award according to budget categories such as salaries, supplies, travel and equipment;
6. Proof of Comprehensive General Liability and Workers Compensation insurance;
7. If the project involves purchasing, the organization has or will adopt a purchasing/procurement policy creating standards in the procurement of supplies and other expendable property, equipment, real property and other services, and;
8. If the project involves staff time, the organization can provide signed timesheets with invoices. Note that none of the funds appropriated in this RFP shall be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II (\$225,700 per year for 2025).

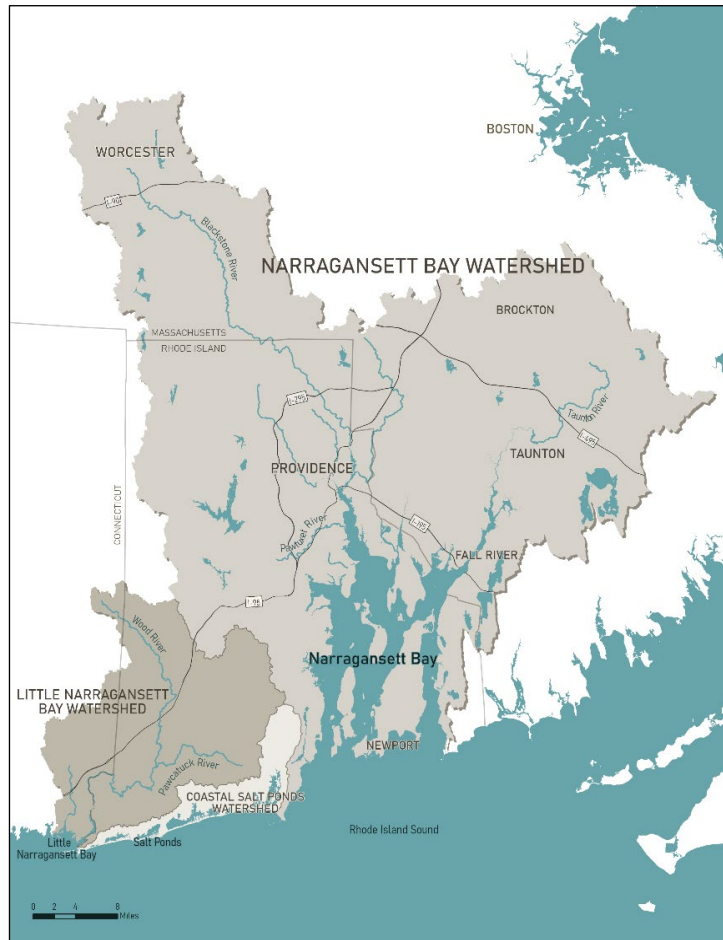


Figure 2: Narragansett Bay Estuary Program Study Area.

RWU's [Subrecipient Financial Questionnaire](#), which selected subawardees will be required to complete prior to award, provides more information on subawardee requirements. NBEP recommends that all applicants review the Questionnaire and contact NBEP with questions or concerns. NBEP and RWU will be available to assist selected subawardees to develop required policies and procedures.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Eligible projects fall into two categories that will be described separately.

Category 1 Projects

Category 1 projects are intended to support the development of capacity at the watershed scale for initiating barrier removal projects in the future in the Narragansett Bay Region (Figure 2, [link to online map](#)). See definitions in Section I. Capacity building projects must demonstrate a critical lack in an ability to identify and initiate barrier removal projects and must show how funds will fill that gap. Projects are encouraged in watersheds that have historically had a paucity of stream connectivity work due to low capacity, that support species of special concern, and/or that can provide critical linkages to intact, high-quality habitat.

Examples of eligible Category 1 projects include (but are not limited to):

- Inventorying and collecting relevant data about watershed wide stream barriers;
- Identifying and prioritizing barrier removals for aquatic organism passage and co-benefits such as resiliency, public access, and water quality improvement;
- Engagement and outreach efforts to form strategic watershed wide partnerships focused on promoting connectivity for organism passage;
- Developing community engagement plans surrounding barrier removals;
- Redirecting or hiring staff dedicated to developing plans for the evaluation and removal of aquatic organism barriers;
- Preliminary conceptual planning for multiple barrier improvement projects within a watershed.

Category 2 Projects

Category 2 Projects are limited to site-specific design and planning activities that advance future construction to primarily improve aquatic connectivity in the Narragansett Bay Region (Figure 2, [link to online map](#)). See definitions in Section I. In addition to improvements in aquatic organism passage, projects that demonstrate secondary habitat and ecosystem improvements, such as water quality, floodplain connectivity, natural flow regime, ecological services, ecological restoration, and/or resiliency, in addition to improved public access, are encouraged as long as the primary project purpose is restoration of aquatic connectivity for organism passage. Additionally, projects stemming from existing restoration or community resiliency plans are highly encouraged. Priority will be given to projects that bring projects to permit-ready status, if not construction ready (Step 8 in Figure 1). Projects must demonstrate support from site owner.

Examples of eligible Category 2 projects include (but are not limited to):

- Planning, design, and permitting:
 - To install new or redesign existing fish ladders or passageways. Projects that are proposing to redesign a fishway should demonstrate improvement over the current fishway;
 - To replace or remove culverts to primarily provide aquatic organism passage and secondarily promote flood resilience and/or water quality improvement;

- For partial or full removal of a dam or other man-made barrier restricting aquatic organism passage;
- For tidal restoration projects where the main objective is to remove tidal restriction barriers;
- For partial or full removal of berms and barriers designed to impound water for drinking or agricultural use;
- For prioritized projects in existing restoration or resiliency plans which provide aquatic habitat connectivity;
- To daylight streams with the primary objective to provide habitat connectivity or projects which connect non-daylighted streams with other waterbodies;
- To restore floodplain connectivity as part of a barrier removal project.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

The following types of projects will **not** be considered:

- On-the-ground construction of aquatic connectivity, habitat restoration, or flooding mitigation;
- Purchase of land or real estate;
- Planning for projects where the primary purpose is not to improve aquatic connectivity;
- Projects without an environmental enhancement component;
- Projects with a goal to permanently remove a beaver dam or other natural barrier;
- Study or research that does not advance future construction to improve aquatic connectivity;
- Projects which solely monitor the effects of a barrier removal;
- Low Impact Development (LID) and stand-alone stormwater management projects;
- Actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order;
- Lobbying activities attempting to influence specific 'legislation' as defined by the Internal Revenue Service.

MATCH

Match is not required for this RFP and will not factor into project scoring. If match is included in a proposal, it must be tracked and included in financial reports and invoices. Match can be provided with cash, in-kind services, or a combination of both.

DELIVERABLES

1. *Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)* if required. See below for additional information about this deliverable.
2. *Quarterly reports* delivered to the designated NBEP Project Manager no later than the 10th day of April, July, October, and January for the duration of the project. At a minimum, reports should include a summary of activities, problems and opportunities encountered, and activities planned for the next quarter. NBEP will provide a quarterly report template that outlines these and other reporting requirements.
3. *Final planning documents*, including but not limited to workshop notes, studies, assessments, plans, permits, and any data that underlie the document (e.g., modeling outputs, ArcGIS layers).
4. *Final report in Word format* including a description of all project activities, planned next steps after project completion as appropriate, projected amount (acres or miles) of habitat or river to be improved by the currently planned project or the future projects enabled from the increase in capacity, and new funding obtained or being pursued as a result of planning activities funded

with this NBEP subaward. NBEP will provide a final report template that outlines these and other reporting requirements.

5. *Photographs* as appropriate, included as separate attachments (not embedded in a document).
6. *Approved final report in Adobe PDF format* following the incorporation of feedback from RWU and NBEP.

DELIVERABLE OWNERSHIP

All deliverables funded under this RFP in whole or in part shall be made available to RWU, NBEP, and EPA. These parties shall have unrestricted right to use these materials.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

RWU and NBEP require subawardees to maintain insurance, including Comprehensive General Liability and Workers Compensation insurance, at all times for the term of the subaward at least at the minimum level as defined by the State of Rhode Island. More details on such insurance requirements will be provided to applicants selected for funding.

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN (QAPP)

A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is a planning document that provides the plan for obtaining the type, quantity, and quality of data needed to support environmental decision making. If a project is using data to make a decision, then a QAPP is needed. Environmental data include information collected directly from field measurements, produced from models, and compiled from other sources such as databases or literature and evaluated for a project. Data are defined as both natural and social science information collected and analyzed for a project. A QAPP is also needed when using or developing a computer model to aid in decision making.

Projects that involve environmental data collection operations will be responsible for developing and submitting a QAPP to NBEP for review once an agreement between RWU and the awardee are in place. The QAPP must be approved by EPA and the NBEP Staff Scientist prior to any data collection or analysis. Development of the QAPP can be completed as a task under this project and included in the proposal narrative, timeline, and budget. Allow a minimum of 90 days for the review and approval of your QAPP. It is appropriate for an applicant to utilize or build upon an existing, relevant, approved QAPP if one exists. For more information about QAPPs, visit the [EPA Quality Program website](#) and [NBEP's Grants Forms and Guidance webpage](#). Questions regarding QAPPs should be directed to Courtney Schmidt, NBEP Staff Scientist, at Courtney.Schmidt@nbep.org.

COMPLIANCE WITH SUBAWARDEE REQUIREMENTS

Subawardees must comply with the terms and conditions in their agreement with RWU, to include timelines for deliverables and reporting, as well as all [EPA General Terms and Conditions](#).

VI. PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL AND EVALUATION

PROPOSALS

A single-step proposal process (no letter of intent or pre-proposal) will be used for this RFP. Note that proposals will be eliminated from consideration that do not contain all information requested or that exceed the stated page limit. Hyperlinks may be included in proposals, but the Grants Subcommittee

is not obligated to review them. Minimum font size allowed is 11 point. The following information is required unless otherwise stated:

Cover letter

One (1) page cover letter, printed on official letterhead and signed by an authorized representative of the project applicant. The cover letter must state that you are applying for funds under this RFP and acknowledge that funding is provided on a reimbursement basis.

Cover page

One (1) page cover page using the format provided as Appendix 1. Appendix 1 offers this cover page as a fillable .pdf or applicants may download the fillable form from [NBEP's Forms and Guidance webpage](#).

Project Narrative

Up to eight (8)-page text narrative that describes the:

1. Project consistency with this RFP;
2. Expected tasks, outputs/deliverables, and outcomes;
3. Project timeline;
4. Project purpose, importance, benefits, co-benefits, and potential impacts, including a projection of the number of acres of habitat or river miles that will be improved when the project is constructed or of future projects enabled due to increase in capacity;
5. Ongoing or planned meaningful engagement with appropriate community members or groups;
6. Expertise of key project participants in relevant subject areas and a description of the applicant/participants' successful completion of past projects similar to the proposed project;
7. Potential adverse impacts on water quality, wildlife, and quality of life in surrounding communities and how they will be investigated/addressed;
8. Plans for future project construction if Category 2, or plans for pursuing specific projects if Category 1 (e.g., next steps, availability of funding).

Figures

Up to five (5) pages of maps, photographs, and other figures included as appendices.

Project Budget

One (1) page budget using the format provided as Appendix 2. The Project Budget provided as Appendix 2 is an example only; an editable MS Excel version of this sheet is provided separately on the NBEP [website](#). The filled form should be saved and added to the final PDF file submission.

Budget Narrative

One (1) page summary narrative that provides a brief justification for the proposed costs in terms of completing project deliverables, an explanation of how indirect costs are calculated, description and justification for any subcontracts, and information on current and pending financial resources for non-federal cost share or matching funds that are intended to support the project. Note that entities intending to use a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate must provide documentation of their rate. Applicants without a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement may include a de minimis indirect cost budget line not to exceed 15% of modified total direct costs. If match is offered, include a description of the committed cash and/or in-kind match. If letters, forms, or other formal documentation of match are available, please provide (these do not count toward the one-page limit).

Letter(s) of Support

Project site owners and partners identified in the proposal are expected to provide a letter confirming endorsement and participation in the project for Category 2 grant applications. Partners in capacity building grants (Category 1) may provide a letter confirming their interest in building capacity for future river connectivity work.

OPTIONAL PRE-SUBMITTAL CONSULTATION

Applicants may reach out to the RWU and NBEP contacts listed in Section X of this RFP to clarify project eligibility and seek answers to other questions in advance of submittal.

SUBMITTAL

Submit your proposal and all supporting information as a single PDF document to Jenny Rogers, Staff Ecologist, at jrogers@nbep.org. If received successfully, you will receive an email from NBEP with the subject line "RFP Submission Confirmation" confirming your submission. **Applications must be received by 11:59pm EST on Monday, December 1, 2025.**

EVALUATION

All proposals deemed complete and received by the deadline will be provided to the NBEP Grants Subcommittee for review, scoring, and pursuit of consensus funding decisions. This is an independent subcommittee consisting of [NBEP Steering Committee](#) members and other regional experts. The Project Scoring Sheet provided as Appendix 3 will be used to guide consideration of proposals by the subcommittee. Note that RWU and NBEP staff are not members of the subcommittee and will not participate in scoring. Note that the Project Scoring Sheet is included for information purpose only and is not to be filled out by the applicant.

VII. FUNDING ADMINISTRATION

RWU's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs will administer awards under this RFP. Once selected by the NBEP Grants Subcommittee, awardees will be notified in writing by RWU, and development of an agreement between RWU and the subawardee will begin. The funding team aims to have agreements in place for all awards by March 15, 2026 so expenditures can begin by April 1, 2026.

VIII. RFP SCHEDULE

RFP released	October 1, 2025
Proposals due	December 1, 2025 11:59 PM EST
Proposal review by Grants Subcommittee	January 2026
Subaward selections announced	~January 30, 2026
Agreements for subawards in place	~March 15, 2026
Earliest project start date	~April 1, 2026
Complete project work	~July 31, 2028
Funds expire	September 30, 2029

IX. PUBLIC INFORMATION

Since this RFP and subsequent awards are supported by federal funds, all materials submitted to NBEP may be made available for public review. RWU, NBEP, and EPA expect to use the abstract noted in Appendix 1 and quarterly reports to produce online updates and to post final project deliverables and reports on the NBEP website in the [Resources Library](#) and the [Funded Projects Map](#).

X. CONTACT INFORMATION

RFP Questions

Jenny Rogers,
Staff Ecologist
NBEP

jrogers@nbep.org
(401) 276-4870

QAPP Questions

Courtney Schmidt,
Staff Scientist
NBEP

Courtney.Schmidt@nbep.org
(401) 633-0550

Financial Questions

Bob McCarthy, Research &
Sponsored Programs
RWU

rmccarthy@rwu.edu
(401) 254-3552

XI. APPENDICES

1. Application Cover Page – fillable .PDF provided in RFP package, or download from NBEP's [Forms and Guidance webpage](#).
2. Budget Format – example only; download an Excel template from NBEP's [Forms and Guidance webpage](#).
3. Project Scoring Sheet—provided for information purposes only; not to be filled out by the applicant.

REPLACE WITH NEW FORM AFTER CONVERTING TO PDF

Please extract as a separate document or [download from the NBEP website](#) and attach to your application.

Project Title:

Project Location:

Project Applicant:

Applicant Contact Name:

Applicant Contact Email:

Funding Request: \$

Match Funds: \$

Project Start Date:

Project End Date:

Number of acres of habitat and/or river miles the project will improve when constructed, or that the plan, study, or public engagement effort aims to include (estimate):

Deliverables: (check all that apply)

- ☐ QAPP ☐ Data Collection Surveys (listed in QAPP) ☐ 10-30% designs ☐ 30-60% designs
☐ 90-100% designs ☐ Permits ☐ Construction Bidding Documents
☐ Other: _____

PROJECT ABSTRACT

1. ☐ I acknowledge that funds provided through this RFP are awarded on a reimbursement basis.

Appendix 2: Budget

[Visit the NBEP website to download an Excel version of this budget template](#)

PROJECT BUDGET			
BUDGET CATEGORY <i>(add/remove itemizing lines below as necessary but do not delete major categories)</i>			PROPOSAL REQUEST
A. Personnel Total <i>(list individual names and titles below):</i>	Hours*	Rate*	\$ -
B. Fringe Benefits ____% (e.g., 10% of total personnel costs)			\$
C. Travel Total (estimate number/purpose of trips below):			\$ -
D. Equipment Total (itemize below):			\$ -
E. Supplies Total (itemize below):			\$ -
F. Contracts Total (itemize below):			\$ -
G. Other Total (itemize below):			\$ -
H. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (sum of rows A-G)			\$ -
I. INDIRECT COSTS ____% of _____:			\$
J. TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (sum of H-I):			\$ -

*Timesheets will be required to document personnel costs for invoicing. If your organization cannot provide timesheets, please contact NBEP staff.

Appendix 3: Project Scoring Sheet. **DO NOT COMPLETE, FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

Project Title: _____

Project Applicant: _____

Final Total: _____

Under Evaluation Criteria, unless otherwise noted, score each criterion from 0-3, where "0" does not meet the criterion or the criterion is not applicable to the action, "1" partially meets the evaluation criterion, "2" meets the criterion, and "3" exceeds the criterion. For each criterion, unless otherwise noted, multiply the Weight Column by the Score Column to create the Total Column, and then add the Totals to create the Final Total on the second page of the sheet. The Final Total should also be added above.

Screening Criteria*	Yes	No
1. The project meets the "Project Requirements" in Section V of the RFP.		

*If you answer 'No' to this criterion, do not further score.

Evaluation Criteria	Weight	Score	Total
1. <u>Quality</u> . Proposal narrative and budget information are sufficiently detailed, realistic, and clear.	2		
2. <u>Importance</u> . The proposal addresses a significant problem or need that the project and/or future construction of the plans will address.	3		
3. <u>Benefits</u> . The planned project or increase in capacity, when constructed or realized, will result in tangible, measurable, and lasting benefits to aquatic organism passage, and demonstrates co-benefits, such as improved resiliency and public access.	3		
4. <u>Community Engagement</u> . The application has already meaningfully collaborated with appropriate stakeholders (e.g., municipal officials, site users, site owners, neighboring landowners and communities) when developing the project, or obligates to do so as part of the project.	2		
5. <u>Probability of Success</u> . Project is well-conceived, consistent with laws and technical standards, considers long-term sustainability, and otherwise has high probability of success. Project will advance plan to permit or construction-ready status or will increase capacity in a watershed in a way that will make aquatic connectivity projects able to be conceived, designed, and implemented. Project timeline is reasonable. Applicant has or will have access to the necessary expertise and capacity to carry out the project based on completion of projects of similar scope, duration, and complexity.	3		
6. <u>Adverse Impacts</u> . Consequences of future implementation work that could have negative impact on natural resources and people (e.g., long-term maintenance, trash, pests, safety, resident displacement, aquatic organism smothering or displacement) are acknowledged and adequately managed.	1		
7. <u>Cost</u> . The cost of the project is line with similar activities undertaken in the region, generally accepted costs, and current market conditions.	2		
FINAL TOTAL:			