



Westfield River Wild & Scenic Community Conservation & Stewardship Grants Program

The Wild & Scenic Westfield River Advisory Committee (W&SWR Committee) announces the availability of **Wild and Scenic Westfield River Community Grants for up to \$20,000⁺**. Towns, town-affiliated boards & committees and community based nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations from the ten Wild and Scenic Westfield River communities, (Becket, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Huntington, Middlefield, Savoy, Washington, Windsor and Worthington) or other entities who work directly to enhance the Westfield River's outstanding resources within one or more of the ten Wild & Scenic Westfield River communities are invited to apply. Individuals interested in applying for funding must partner with a town or eligible 501(c)(3) organization. The grants are intended to advance projects supporting and enhancing the protection and enjoyment of the Wild and Scenic sections of the Westfield River and its outstanding resources and work to advance the Westfield River Conservation and Stewardship Plan.

Background:

In 1993, forty-three miles along the Westfield River's three upper branches were federally-designated Wild and Scenic in recognition of the river's outstanding natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources. In 2002, thirty-four additional miles were added to the designation.

The Wild & Scenic Westfield River Advisory Committee (W&SWRA) was formed as a stewardship and advisory group with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement by the ten towns through which the Wild & Scenic Westfield River flows, (Becket, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Huntington, Middlefield, Savoy, Washington, Windsor, and Worthington), as well as the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Commonwealth), the National Park Service (NPS), Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), The Trustees, and the Westfield River Watershed Association (WRWA). The Westfield River Environmental Center (WREC) at Westfield State University was subsequently added to the W&S Committee as an associate member.

Mission and Goals.

The mission of the W&SWRA Committee is to preserve, protect, and enhance the special qualities and outstanding natural resources of the Westfield River in concert with the Wild & Scenic towns, residents, landowners and partners. The recently updated Stewardship and Conservation priority outcomes include:

- protect and improve the ability of the Westfield River to support cold water assemblages;
- improve stream habitat connectivity especially the removal of physical barriers;
- work toward comprehensive and coordinated invasive species management;
- promote pro-active visitor use management efforts to reduce stress and negative impacts to the river and adjacent lands;
- improve public outreach coordination to encourage citizen engagement and river stewardship.

To help advance these stewardship and conservation priorities, the W&SWRA Committee provides technical assistance, support and funding for pro-active projects and activities. This support includes identifying needs and seeking resources to undertake special projects and support efforts to protect the river's outstanding resources. The work of the W&SWR Committee is undertaken by dedicated volunteers with contributions of time from member agencies and organizations.

Community Conservation & Stewardship Grant Program:

Recognizing the important role towns and local groups play in the protection of river resources, the intent of the Community Conservation & Stewardship grant program is to support activities able to directly and measurably enhance and protect river resources or build strong local stewardship of the river and its tributaries. The W&SWRA Committee dedicates a portion of its annual budget to our member communities for sound, creative and/or pro-active projects. Most often these projects leverage significant local in-kind and other support to advance the stewardship and/or conservation priorities listed above. The W&SWRA Committee wishes to emphasize the goal of the Community Grants is to fund projects and activities that will produce measurable stewardship and/or conservation outcomes.

Who may apply:

Eligible entities include, but are not limited to, conservation commissions, planning boards, select boards, libraries, historical commissions, recreation departments, schools and other town-sanctioned committees and boards. Community-based nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations are eligible for funding. Partnerships, between towns, boards, organizations, etc., are encouraged. Individuals interested in applying should partner with either a town or nonprofit organization(s). The W&SWRA Committee may consider applications from nonprofit groups from outside the Wild & Scenic communities when the project will directly and measurably benefit the Westfield River Wild & Scenic resources and towns. These organizations outside the Wild & Scenic watershed are strongly encouraged to consult the W&SWRA Committee before applying to discuss their eligibility.

Eligible projects:

Projects that enhance the protection or improve the outstanding resource values by advancing the priority conservation and stewardship outcomes listed above are eligible. The purchase of capital equipment will not be funded. The W&SWRA Committee stresses a preference for measurable positive and beneficial outcomes and impact over outputs. Possible project ideas include but are not limited to the following:

- * Conservation, restoration or enhancement of fish, wildlife, water quality, historic, or recreational resources,
- * Protection or restoration of stream connectivity and natural river flow regimes,
- * Protection and/or enhancement of riverine buffers to benefit water quality and habitat,

- * The long term protection of land along the rivers and their tributaries,
- * Effective (measurable) and creative public education or art projects resulting in the understanding and stewardship of river resources,
- * Promotion of passive recreation to encourage use complementary with protecting resources,
- * Projects that are watershed-wide or involve multiple W&S Westfield River communities.

Projects mandated as part of a regulatory requirement are not eligible. This may include mitigation for enforcement actions.

Funding:

Grant requests may range from \$500 to \$20,000. Larger amounts may be considered for projects with multiple partners and/or focused on the protection or enhancement of cold water fisheries. Funding may be used for work through September 30 though the Committee will consider projects extending beyond September, (applicants should explain the need for an extended timeline in the application and the expected end date of the project). Funding can not be used for refreshments of any kind. All funds are on a reimbursement basis unless the Committee votes to allow a one time exemption based on compelling need.

Accepted applicants will be expected to acknowledge the Committee funding in materials, advertising and other outreach materials. The Committee requests review and approval of acknowledgment(s) used. The Committee reserve the right to disseminate press releases and/or other announcements about the grant award. Recipients may be asked to provide a quote for inclusion in the press release.

Application Process:

Interested parties may contact the W&SWRA Committee (Andrew Petitdemange Andrew_Petit_de_Mange@nps.gov) prior to starting the application process to confirm their eligibility and the appropriateness of the Community Conservation & Stewardship Grant for their project. Interested parties are asked to complete the entire application form below. Completed forms should be sent by email. If electronic filing is a barrier to applying, please contact the W&SWRA Committee to arrange an alternative to electronic filing. Electronic applications may be sent to Andrew Petitdemange (Andrew_Petit_de_Mange@nps.gov). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and may be submitted through August 30 for projects to be completed by October 31 of the following year. It is anticipated funding will be available for the next fiscal year and applications received after August 30 will be considered for the next year's funding. Successful applicants will generally be notified of results of the selection process within 4 to 8 weeks. Please plan accordingly as the W&SWRA Committee generally needs a minimum of 4 weeks to review and vote on submissions.

Applications should be no longer than five (5) pages, including narrative, budget, and timeline. Additional support materials and letters of support and/or commitment are encouraged and do not count toward the 5 page maximum. The W&SWRA Committee may need to follow-up with additional questions or requests for clarification, including asking a representative to attend a W&SWRA Committee monthly meeting, before making their funding decision.

The W&SWRA Committee requests a final report upon completion of the project, (details will be provided to awardees). This information will help us to promote this grant program, enhance our education and outreach efforts, and provide valuable information about the amount of money and in-kind services the Community Grants leverage.

Review Criteria (in no particular order):

- Does the proposal have a clear, measurable and appropriate outcome(s)?
- Does the proposal address the protection of outstanding resource values?
- Does the proposal strengthen relationships to protect river resources?
- Does the project build on ongoing efforts of the W&SWR Committee or W&S town?
- Is the project feasible with the funding requested/available and the timeline proposed?
- Does the project engage partners and raise awareness about the river?
- Will future activities/decisions build on the results of this project?

- Are results of the project sustainable after completion of the grant?
- Are there matching funds or in-kind contributions to the project?
- Is there a pertinent evaluation process to measure impacts and/or outcomes?

For further information and to submit application:

Contact Andrew Petitdemange: Andrew_Petit_de_Mange@nps.gov and westfieldrivercommittee@gmail.com