



CALIFORNIA FISH PASSAGE FORUM

CALIFORNIA FISH PASSAGE FORUM FY2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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Funding Opportunity Description

As one of 20 nationally recognized fish habitat partnerships (FHPs) under the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) the California Fish Passage Forum (Forum) is pleased to announce its FY2026 funding opportunity. Since its recognition as an FHP in 2012, the Forum has received funding through NFHP (via the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)) to advance shared goals of protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish habitat – with the Forum’s specific focus on anadromous fish populations in California.

Projects eligible for this funding will help advance the Forum’s mission to protect and revitalize anadromous fish populations within the Forum’s geographic scope by restoring freshwater habitat connectivity throughout their historical range.

Get more information about the Forum at <https://www.cafishpassageforum.org/> and see previous projects supported by the forum at <https://www.cafishpassageforum.org/funded-projects/>

Funding Available, Project Budget, And Matching Funds Requirement

The Forum will award an estimated \$250,000-\$350,000 in FY2026 for projects that advance its mission. This amount is based on previous funding received from the NFHP for this purpose. The exact amount of funding available varies annually and is not known currently. To fund a diverse portfolio of projects, strong project proposals that request less than \$100,000 are preferred. However, proposals of particular merit may be funded at a higher level, at the Forums discretion.

America’s Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act was passed by Congress and signed by the President on October 30, 2020. Importantly, the legislation made significant changes to project requirements to be eligible for NFHP funding. The ACE Act places an emphasis on restoration efforts that will improve recreational fishing opportunities and public use of the resource. Improvements in public access as a component of projects are also encouraged.

The ACE Act requires that all NFHP-funded projects demonstrate matching funds:

- All projects must show 1:1 non-federal financial match. Matching funds may be in the form of cash or in-kind support from non-federal sources and must be spent during the project period.
- Matching funding requirements are waived for projects proposed by tribal sponsors where the tribe is the applicant and funding recipient. Providing matching funds from tribes does not qualify a project for matching fund waivers.

A detailed project budget is required, specifying which components of the project will be paid for with Forum funds, cost shared funds and the required matching funds. Funding status (in-hand, proposed, in-kind) should be indicated. See Appendix A for information required.

The project, or portion of a project, that Forum funds should be spent within three years of receipt of funding and all funds matching Forum funding should be spent during that time. The proposal should include a detailed timeline for the use of Forum funds. See Appendix C.

Project Review Period and Timing of Funding

Project sponsors should assume that funding will be received in Summer of 2025. See below timeline for project funding timeline.

Timeline for project funding*

Friday, February 7 th 2025	Proposals Due
February 2025	Proposal evaluation and project ranking by Forum Review Committee
March 2025	Submit ranked project list to Congress by National Fish Habitat Partnership
Summer 2025	Congress Notification of project ranking (not award notification)
Winter or Spring 2026	Announcement of award recipients*
Summer 2026	Funding available*
April 1st, August 1st, January 1st	Project progress reports due

*Subject to change. Funding availability is dependent upon the federal appropriations process.

Eligibility

Examples of Eligible Projects:

- Barrier assessments to prioritize and plan barrier removals.
- Design and implementation of fish passage barrier removal or remediation.
- Fish passage-related monitoring that is directly related to barrier assessment, removal, or remediation. Any data collected should conform with standard data collection methods recommended or used by the Forum.
- Community outreach and education actions directly related to barrier assessment, removal, or remediation.
- Land acquisition/easements; and
- Projects that assess the effectiveness of restoration techniques relevant to the Forum's geographic scope and priority species.

Forum funding can be used for all phases of a project, from feasibility to post-construction monitoring. However, projects that involve on-the-ground implementation will be more competitive. Proposals should clearly detail which part of the project will utilize Forum funds in the project budget, see Appendix A. Acquisition projects - The ACE Act allows a state, local government, or other non-federal entity to receive NFHP funds for the acquisition of real property or protective easements involving willing sellers if the acquisition ensures public access for fish and wildlife-dependent recreation or contributes a scientifically based, direct enhancement to the health of fish and fish populations as determined by the NFHP Board. Acquisition projects will be evaluated using the same criteria as restoration projects and must address California Fish Passage Forum priorities. Please contact The Forums Coordinator if you have a project request that includes real property acquisition.

Ineligible Costs:

The following types of costs will not be paid for with Forum funds:

- Pre-award costs.
- Operation and maintenance of facilities or structures. This applies to buildings and structures only and not to maintenance or construction of earthen structures.
- Actions required by existing regulatory programs (e.g., mitigation projects), except that funds may support activities under voluntary agreements that exceed regulatory requirements for conserving habitats (e.g., hydropower licensing in which the licensee enters into a voluntary agreement to restore habitat that exceeds regulatory requirements).
- Incentive payments.

Priority Species and Priority Projects

To protect and revitalize anadromous fish populations in California by restoring connectivity of freshwater habitats throughout their historic range. California Fish Passage Forum has identified the following priority/focal species.

- Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)
- Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)
- Steelhead/rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)
- Pacific Lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*)
- Coastal cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia clarkia*)
- Green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*)
- White sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*)
- Eulachon (*Thaleichthys pacificus*)
- Threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*)

Forum Funded Projects should align with one or more of the California Fish Passage Forum objectives.

Objective 1. Remediate barriers to effective fish migration.

Objective 2. Facilitate coordination and communication among agencies, agency staff, and other entities that may propose, review, or promulgate fish passage criteria within California.

Objective 3. Coordinate funding mechanisms to remove fish passage barriers.

Objective 4. Support state and federal permit coordination and streamlining.

Objective 5. Facilitate plans to monitor and evaluate fish passage restoration effectiveness to ensure accountability.

Objective 6. Encourage existing state and national policy and actions that support fish passage improvement in California.

Objective 7. Implement education and outreach activities, targeting both the general public and fish passage practitioners.

Projects must also support at least one of the NFHP National Conservation Priorities

Priority 1: Conserve waters and habitats where all processes and functions are operating within their expected range or natural variation.

Priority 2: Conserve hydrologic conditions for fish.

Priority 3: Conserve physical and living habitats and features that support viable and sustainable species and/or populations in impacted or at-risk systems.

Priority 4: Reconnect fragmented fish habitats.

Priority 5: Conserve water quality for fish.

Priority 6: Support the structure and function of fish habitat partnerships (FHPs).

Priority 7: Enhance recreational, commercial, subsistence, and traditional fishing opportunities when conducting projects that conserve fish habitat.

Project Monitoring

All project proposals must include a monitoring plan. At a minimum, projects should describe the implementation monitoring plan designed to document that the project was constructed or completed as proposed. Additionally, project partners should assess fish passage at their project site using the Barrier Removal Performance Measures & Monitoring Worksheet (PDF) pre-and-post-implementation. If possible, additional long-term effectiveness monitoring is advised to better understand best practices in anadromous fish passage remediation. The Forum For a good description of the difference between implementation and effectiveness monitoring, please see <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration-projects>

Project monitoring plans will be evaluated on the extent to which they:

1. Appropriately assess the biological, ecological, or other results of the Forum funded activities.
2. Articulate adaptive management strategies if the monitoring indicates that project objectives are not being met.
3. Identify improvements to existing fish populations, recreational fishing opportunities for the local community of the fish habitat conservation project.
4. Include completion of a monitoring report, which should be submitted at project completion, describing monitoring results and conclusions.

Acquisition and assessment projects must also include a monitoring plan. These plans should include methods to monitor project progress, including evaluation of progress at key milestones, such as data collection, draft reporting, etc.

Project Reporting Requirements

Recipients of Forum funding are expected to provide reports along with invoices to the agencies who award the project contracts, either the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission or the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Additionally, a final report is required upon project completion that includes descriptions of all objectives met, associated deliverables, and before and after photos of any barriers removed or remediated.

How to Apply

To apply for funding, complete and submit the online application on JotForm.

<https://form.jotform.com/243085724644157>

Upload into JotForm either .pdf or .xlsx files of Appendices A (budget), B (metrics), and C (timeline). Upload photos of your project in individual high-resolution .jpg, .png, or .pdf files. Examples include upstream or downstream barrier images*, aerial images, project vicinity images, images of target species around the project site, images of project meetings and partners, and images of previous phases of the project.

*The USFWS requires pre-and and implementation photos of each funded project, so upload at least one image of the project area/barrier itself.

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. The deadline for project proposal submissions into JotForm is 5:00 PM PST, Friday, February 7th, 2025.

Notification of awards will be made in summer of 2025, and funds are expected to be awarded in the summer of 2026. Please note that this funding is linked to the federal budget.

If you have any questions, please contact the Forum Coordinator, Holly Steindorf, at info@cafishpassageforum.org or hsteindorf@nrccorp.com.

Evaluation Criteria

Preference will be given to proposals that address one or more fish passage barrier(s) that:

- Secure Non-federal financial match (1:1) - matching funds may be in the form of in-kind support from non-federal sources and must be spent during the project period. Projects led by a Tribal organization are exempt from the 1:1 match requirement.
- Contain a detailed budget outlining how Forum funding will be applied and ALL partner match (cash and in-kind) See Appendix A.
- Align with one or more of the Forum's seven objectives.
- Align with one or more of NFHP's FY24 National Conservation Strategies
- Benefit at least one of the Forum's priority fish species, streams, rivers and/or anadromous fish habitats throughout their historical range.
- Provides measurable project goals and objectives (See Appendix B for Metrics)
- Address a barrier listed in the California Passage Assessment Database (PAD).
- Address a priority identified by state, tribal, and/or federal agency(s).
- Address actions/barriers listed in a key restoration plan for the region.

- Include plans for monitoring and evaluation.
- Has an outreach and education component.

Project Permitting

The California Fish Passage Forum is committed to reducing barriers to project partners to accelerate habitat connectivity restoration. Accelerated permitting pathways established in advance can simplify the process and reduce time and cost for both regulatory agencies and project proponents while ensuring essential environmental protections and design standards are in place. Sustainable Conservation's Accelerating Restoration Program acts as a resource to help project partners discover the permitting options for their projects.

Visit <https://acceleratingrestoration.org/> for more information or contact the Forum coordinator to arrange a permitting consultation.

Forum FY26 Project Scoring Sheet

Benefit to the Forum's Goals & Objectives - 20 points max

Technical Merit - 20 points max

- Objectives, approach and scope are clear and technically sound.
- Project includes a monitoring/evaluation plan.

Scale of Benefits - 20 points max

Cost Effectiveness - 15 points max

- Includes a well-defined, reasonable budget clearly referencing deliverables.
- Leverages funds and resources (cash and in-kind)

Organization Qualifications - 10 points max

Community Involvement/Outreach – 7.5 points max

Match – 7.5 points max

- Project demonstrates 1:1 non-federal/federal match.
- Any additional leveraged match (i.e., federal) is also desired, but will not be scored as high as non-federal.
- Match from tribal partners can be considered non-federal, and Forum funds going to tribal organizations does not require non-federal match.

Total=100 points max

Appendix A: FY26 Project Budget Template

This page is for reference purposes only. Fill out this budget in the attached Excel file. Budget should include all project costs, clearly identifying how Forum funding requested will be used. All partner contributions (cash and in-kind) should be captured in this spreadsheet as well. Please add columns for each individual Partner's contributions and edit categories as necessary.

Name of Project:	
Project Lead Organization:	

Category	CFPF FY24 Funding Requested	Partner "A" Contributions (cash)	Partner "A" Contributions (in-kind)	Partner "B" Contributions (cash)	Partner "B" Contributions (in-kind)	Partner "C" Contributions (cash)	Partner "C" Contributions (in-kind)	Partner "D" Contributions (cash)	Partner "D" Contributions (in-kind)	Total Cost
Salaries and Wages										\$0.00
Employee Benefits										\$0.00
Supplies										\$0.00
Construction										\$0.00
Professional Services										\$0.00
Equipment*										\$0.00
Administrative Overhead										\$0.00
Contracted Services										\$0.00
Travel										\$0.00
Other										\$0.00
Totals	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Budget Narrative:

Use this field to clearly describe how Forum funds will be used, how any partner match (cash and/or in-kind) applies, whether or not that match is secured and if not when it may be, and any other information that may be helpful to the review panel.

**Equipment is any individual item over \$5,000 that you are purchasing. Even if an item is tangible, nonexpendable, and having a useful life of more than one year, items costing less than \$5,000 should be placed under the Supplies Category. If you are not purchasing equipment, rental of equipment should be listed under contractual or construction.*

Appendix B: FY26 Project Metrics

This page is for reference purposes only. Fill out this summary sheet in the attached Excel file. Please input the anticipated relevant metrics for your project in column F. For metrics that do not apply, leave the cell blank, or put "0". These numbers greatly aid in reporting of the summed benefits of fish passage remediation work in California. Thank you.

DO NOT ALTER THESE COLUMNS OR CELLS					
Project Type	Project Subtype	Project Technique	Output Measure	Measure Type	Measure Type # (numbers only)
Habitat Treatment	Aquatic Connectivity	Aquatic Connectivity	Number of barriers removed or upgraded	#	
			Length of habitat reconnected	miles	
			Area of habitat reconnected	acres	
		Fish Screening	Number of structures modified or installed	#	
	Invasive Species Control/ Management	Invasive Species Removal	Name(s) of species controlled or removed	text (list)	
			Number of barrier installations to prevent invasives	#	
			Length of habitat treated for invasives	miles	
			Area of habitat treated for invasives	acres	
	Water quality	Water quality improvements	Length of habitat treated for water quality or pollution	miles	
			Area treated for water quality	acres	
	Ecological Function and Process	Vegetation Planting	Length of vegetation planted	miles	
			Area of vegetation planted	acres	
		Structure Modification or Installation	Number of habitat installations	#	
			Length of habitat installations	miles	
			Area of habitat installations	acres	

		Habitat Condition Improvement	Length of habitat restored or enhanced	# miles	
			Area of habitat restored or enhanced	# acres	
	Hydrologic Flow	Streambank Stabilization	Increase in flow	annual cfs	
			Decrease in flow	annual cfs	
			Timeframe for flow changes	# years	
Channel Reconfiguration	Length of channels created or reconfigured	# miles			
Habitat Conservation	Land Acquisition	Land Acquired or Leased	Area acquired/leased	# acres	
	Habitat Protection	Habitat Protection	Length of habitat protected	# miles	
		Habitat Protection	Area of habitat protected	# acres	
Outreach and Education	Outreach and Education	Outreach/ Education Event	Number of outreach or education events held	#	
			Type of outreach or education events held	text (list)	
			Number of people reached in education or outreach events	#	
		Engagement	Number of tribal communities engaged	#	
			Number of underserved or rural communities engaged	#	
Engineering and Design	Engineering and Design	Project Engineering and Design	Number of project designs developed	#	
Assessment and Research	Assessment and Research	Assessment	Number of assessments	#	
			Length of habitat assessed	# miles	
			Area of habitat assessed	# acres	
		Research	Number of publications or reports developed	#	
			Number of research studies conducted	#	
			Number of datasets or data tools developed	#	
Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring Programs	Number of monitoring frameworks developed	#	
			Length of habitat monitored	# miles	
			Area of habitat monitored	# acres	
			Monitoring timeframe	# years	

Appendix C: FY26 Project Anticipated Timeline

This page is for reference purposes only. Fill out this timeline in the attached Excel file. Please input the anticipated relevant timeline for project activities including permitting, design, and implementation.

Type	Estimated Annual Schedule (Month, Year or FY)	Task Milestones	Description
<p>Example: Construction Activities</p>	April 2024	95% Design Plans and Specifications	<p>DWR has funds for SJRRP staff operations with unfunded needs estimated at \$1.5 million for construction costs. Requesting a portion of the unfunded needs of the CFPF. See budget narrative/justification.</p>
	June 2024	Real Estate Actions Completed	
	June 2024	Final Design Plans and Specifications	
	August 2024	Obtain All Permits	
	November 2024	Advertise Project	
	January 2025	Award Construction Contract	
	April/May 2025	Begin Construction	
	December 2025	Complete Construction	
<p>Example: Administrative and Environmental Compliance Activities</p>			