



YORK RIVER

WILD & SCENIC

2026 York River Watershed Grants Program

Request for Proposals – issued February 26, 2026

The York River Stewardship Committee (Stewardship Committee) requests proposals for projects that implement the [York River Watershed Stewardship Plan](#) to protect or enhance watershed resources.

Proposals are due by April 30, 2026.

Purpose: Through this funding opportunity, the Stewardship Committee aims to support activities undertaken by municipalities and local organizations to protect river and watershed resources and facilitate strong local stewardship in accordance with the *York River Watershed Stewardship Plan*. The Stewardship Plan identifies objectives and actions intended to preserve the York River watershed's natural resources, ecosystem health, water quality, historic resources, and cultural resources and promote sustainable uses.

The Stewardship Committee anticipates this grant program will be an annual funding opportunity, made possible by a partnership with the National Park Service through the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. This is the third round of grant funding for York River watershed projects. Information about projects supported by the Stewardship Committee in prior years of the Watershed Grants Program is available on YorkRiverMaine.org.

Funding and awards:

- Funding requests can range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 per application.
- Projects are expected to begin on or soon after July 1, 2026, and last for up to 12 months. Longer durations or later project start dates can be accommodated if an entity can demonstrate the need, but all grant funded activities should be completed by December 31, 2027.
- Funds are from the National Park Service Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program (CFDA 15.962), provided through a Cooperative Agreement with the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (WNERR), the fiscal agent for the Stewardship Committee. Continued program funding is subject to annual Congressional appropriations.
- Successful applicants will enter into a contract agreement with WNERR; as recipients, entities will be responsible for meeting financial reporting requirements and certain other federal regulations.
- Awardees will be required to submit a final project report that summarizes the work and accomplishments and includes associated products or deliverables. Reporting requirements, funding acknowledgement, and other terms will be included in the contract agreement.
- Funds will be paid to awardees on a reimbursable basis after progress is demonstrated on the project or upon submission of receipts. The final payment will occur at the conclusion of the project following submission of all deliverables and receipts, as outlined in the contract agreement.
- Project costs incurred prior to July 1, 2026, are not eligible for reimbursement through the award.

Who can apply: Eligible entities include community-based nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, municipal boards/committees and municipal departments including schools, and water districts. Groups that are not non-profit organizations and individuals interested in applying should partner with a town board or

department or a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to serve as the lead applicant. Statewide or regional nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and state, regional, or county government agencies outside the York River watershed communities of Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick, and York are eligible if they apply for projects that directly benefit the York River watershed and its communities. Project proposals must clearly demonstrate this connection.

Eligible entities may submit one proposal. An entity can be a partner on any number of applications submitted (and led) by others. Boards, departments, and committees of a single town are all considered separate entities for application purposes (i.e., multiple proposals may be submitted by different municipal departments or committees in a single town).

Application: Proposals are due by 5:00 p.m. on April 30, 2026, and should be submitted as an attachment in an email to jh.yorkriver@gmail.com. The fillable application form provided (Word format) should be used by applicants. If this format is problematic, other formats may be used to develop your application, but it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all requested information is provided. The [York River Watershed Grants Program – 2026 APPLICATION FORM](#) can be accessed and downloaded from www.YorkRiverMaine.org or can be requested by email from jh.yorkriver@gmail.com. If you are unable to submit your application by email, contact Jennifer Hunter to let her know you will be submitting it by mail. Mailed applications must be postmarked no later than April 30, 2026, and mailed to: York River Stewardship Committee, c/o Wells Reserve, 342 Laudholm Farm Road, Wells, ME 04090.

Eligible activities: Projects must directly address objectives listed in the [York River Watershed Stewardship Plan](#) to positively impact or sustain York River watershed resources, including historic resources, natural resources (watershed landscape; habitats, wildlife, and biodiversity; water resources; water quality; climate resilience), working waterfront, sustainable recreation, or scenic resources. Types of activities and approaches can include resource protection or preservation, habitat restoration, habitat stewardship, monitoring or assessment, documentation, mapping, training, education, outreach, planning, demonstrating or installing sustainable practices, community engagement, citizen science, or other resource stewardship. It is the applicant's responsibility to identify, plan for, and secure any permits or other approvals necessary to conduct the proposed activities.

Requested funding cannot be used for:

- Membership recruitment and/or fundraising materials and activities
- Events for which there are fees to participate
- Events that are not open to the public, with the exception of activities specifically designed for school-based groups
- Projects mandated as part of a regulatory requirement or to address violation enforcement or mitigation requirements
- Lobbying or other activities for which the use of federal funds is prohibited

Project locations: Site-based projects should be located in the [York River watershed](#) or should directly enhance, protect, or promote York River watershed resources. Town-wide implementation or project implementation in areas extending beyond or occurring completely outside of the York River watershed but still within one or more of the four York River watershed communities (Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick, and York) is acceptable for certain types of projects or activities that are consistent with the goals and actions of the *York River Watershed Stewardship Plan*.

Interested parties are encouraged to contact Jennifer Hunter, Watershed Program Coordinator for the Stewardship Committee, prior to starting the application process to confirm eligibility and discuss the

appropriateness of their project for the York River Watershed Grants Program (jh.yorkriver@gmail.com or 207-641-9122).

Proposal evaluation: A York River Stewardship Committee subcommittee will review and evaluate all proposals and make funding recommendations to the full Stewardship Committee for approval. The subcommittee or the Stewardship Committee reserves the right to request additional information from any applicant. The subcommittee will consider the following factors and aspects in its evaluation of proposals:

- Connection to *York River Watershed Stewardship Plan* objectives
- Thoroughness of the project plan and soundness of approach, including a realistic timeframe
- Clearly articulated products, outcomes, or results with a high likelihood of being achieved
- Anticipated public benefits resulting from project implementation
- Reasonableness of project costs (Note – matching or leveraged funds are not required for this grant funding; however, budgets should include all funds required for the project including in-kind support, and projects that include additional funding sources will be viewed favorably.)
- Sustainability or transferability of project activities and approaches; improved capacity; and/or new engagement and partnership opportunities resulting from project implementation
- Experience and capability to complete a successful project

Timeline:

- Request for Proposals issued – February 26, 2026
- Applications due – April 30, 2026
- Subcommittee review and evaluation of proposals – May 2026
- Stewardship Committee funding decisions and applicants notified – by end of May (anticipated)
- Contract agreements between WNERR and successful applicants developed – June
- Contracts executed and projects/funded activities to begin – on or after July 1, 2026

Questions: All questions on this funding opportunity should be directed to Jennifer Hunter, York River Watershed Program Coordinator, by email: jh.yorkriver@gmail.com or by phone: 207-641-9122.

RESOURCES

[York River Watershed Grants Program – 2026 APPLICATION FORM](#)

<https://yorkrivermaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/YRWGP-2026-APPLICATION-FORM.docx>

[York River Watershed Stewardship Plan](#)

<http://www.yorkrivermaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/York-River-Watershed-Stewardship-Plan-August-2018.pdf>

[York River watershed map](#)

<https://yorkrivermaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Designated-Stream-Reaches-Poster-1.pdf>