



The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is pleased to announce a new round of grantmaking through its Climate Adaptation Fund, a program that supports projects that implement effective interventions for wildlife and ecosystem adaptation to climate change. The Climate Adaptation Fund is made possible through the generous support of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Interested applicants should carefully review the information outlined in this Request for Proposals (RFP) and the accompanying [Applicant Guidance Document](#) for instructions.

The Climate Adaptation Fund 2020 Grants Program A Request for Proposals

I. Program Overview

With funding managed by the Wildlife Conservation Society, the [WCS Climate Adaptation Fund](#) will provide up to \$2.5 million in competitive grants in 2020. Grants will run one to two years in length. Awards will be made to non-profit conservation organizations for applied, on-the-ground projects focused on implementing priority conservation actions designed to help wildlife and ecosystems adapt to climate change at a landscape scale.

Eligibility: This program provides grants to U.S.-based non-profit conservation organizations with approved IRS 501(c)(3) status. Grants can be awarded for projects only within the 50 U.S. states and other U.S. territories. The WCS Climate Adaptation Fund is unable to make grants to for-profit corporations, individuals, universities, public agencies, municipalities, or other types of government entities. Public agencies, tribal governments, and universities may partner on proposals submitted by an eligible non-profit conservation organization or work as paid contractors on funded projects. We encourage proposals to emerge from collaborations between the applicant organization and any number of partners from academia, public agencies, and other non-profit organizations.

To apply: Submit a completed WCS Pre-proposal Application using our [online application form](#) no later than **5:00 PM Eastern Time on Wednesday, April 8, 2020**. You will need to create a new account for your organization if you have not applied previously to the Climate Adaptation Fund online.

New this year: National organizations that have received a total of \$1.5 million or more in Climate

Adaptation Fund grants over the past 10 years are only eligible to apply if their proposal meets additional requirements below. See the FAQs section below for more detail.

II. Funding Priorities

The Climate Adaptation Fund supports applied, on-the-ground projects focused on achieving wildlife and ecosystem conservation outcomes in the face of a changing climate. Projects must propose actions that anticipate and respond to potential or observed climate change impacts to maximize long-term conservation success. The Fund supports projects that manage for outcomes that sustain dynamic ecological processes, landscape functionality, and species assemblages, as opposed to single-species or historical conditions that may not be possible in an altered climate.

Applicants must reference the scientific research, analyses, and other sources that provide the basis for their adaptation project, and articulate how that climate science informs the proposed conservation goals and actions. The program also requires projects that use strategic communications activities to amplify their conservation and adaptation impact.

Minimum requirements on which projects are scored:

1. Designed with climate adaptation as a core goal or outcome of the work.
2. Proposes conservation goals and actions that are grounded in the best available science.
3. Conducts on-the-ground implementation, not research or planning.
4. Focuses on the functionality of ecosystems, rather than conserving individual species.
5. Designed for long-term conservation impact.
6. Creates the potential for impact at a landscape scale.
7. Uses strategic, targeted communications activities to amplify adaptation outcomes.

A portion of our annual awards are allocated to urban projects and projects that achieve joint adaptation and mitigation outcomes.

We strongly recommend that all applicants review the [Applicant Guidance Document](#) for detailed information on programmatic priorities and guidelines for writing a competitive proposal.

Restrictions on Use of Funds: The WCS Climate Adaptation Fund is unable to support the following types of activities: land acquisition and conservation easements (both capital and non-capital costs), building construction, political lobbying, organizational capacity building (e.g., fundraising costs, staff training, etc.), captive breeding, zoo exhibits, direct cash payments to private individuals, lethal eradication of wildlife, carbon offset project design, tool development, or stand-alone monitoring efforts. Proposals that are primarily focused on conducting scientific research, data collection, or planning will not be considered. Proposed projects are expected to have completed all of the planning necessary for implementation and must be shovel-ready. Implementation work must begin, at the latest, in Quarter 2 of the second year, to be considered. Contact WCS staff with questions on this issue. See FAQ Section IV below for additional details on matching funds requirements and other program

rules.

The Fund supports implementation work taking place in marine environments ONLY if there is a direct benefit to terrestrial species, terrestrial ecosystems, or marine species that also rely on terrestrial habitat (e.g., species that use terrestrial haul-out sites or nesting locations).

We do permit the use of funds to support assisted migration projects. However, please note that we expect all applicants to articulate a clear and compelling rationale for why they have chosen to implement their proposed adaptation actions, and discuss how they plan on limiting any potential risks from particularly novel, innovative, or less-well-tested adaptation approaches, including assisted migration.

III. Application

How do I apply? Register your organization and complete the [Pre-proposal Application Form](#). The form must be submitted using our online application form no later than **5:00 PM ET on Wednesday, April 8, 2020**.

IV. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who is eligible to apply? This program provides grants to U.S.-based non-profit conservation organizations with approved IRS 501(c)(3) status. Non-profit conservation organizations without a 501(c)(3) status may apply through another 501(c)(3) conservation organization as a fiscal sponsor. The WCS Climate Adaptation Fund is unable to make grants to internationally-based organizations, for-profit corporations, individuals, students, universities, public agencies, municipalities, other types of governments, quasi-government agencies, or through fiscal sponsors to governmental organizations.

What is the duration of funding for projects? 12-24 months, beginning in November 2020. WCS will not consider no-cost extensions.

What is the range of funding that can be requested? \$50,000 to \$250,000 per project.

What are the evaluation criteria? Pre-proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- The project fits within the scope of the funding priorities identified in Section II above;
- The project meets the criteria listed in the Applicant Guidance Document; Conservation outcomes are well-defined, oriented towards long-term adaptation goals, and attainable in a 12-24 month time period;
- Climate-informed planning process is well articulated and strong sources of science are cited to back up the goals and selection of the proposed techniques;
- Well-defined communications efforts aimed at catalyzing others to replicate similar projects across a landscape;

- The qualifications of the organization and individuals involved in the project; and
- Availability and amount of matching funds.

Proposals that are dependent on receiving permits to complete deliverables will be accepted only if the implementation timeline provides evidence that the permits will be received early in the process, and that implementation work will begin, at the latest, in Quarter 2 of the second year.

What are the parameters for the Climate Adaptation Fund’s consideration of adaptation projects in urban areas? Please refer to Section 8 in the [Applicant Guidance Document](#) that accompanies this RFP for more detailed information on our programmatic initiative for wildlife adaptation in and around urban areas.

What are the parameters for the Climate Adaptation Fund’s consideration of joint mitigation and adaptation (JMA) projects? Please refer to Section 9 in the [Applicant Guidance Document](#) that accompanies this RFP for more detailed information on our programmatic initiative for JMA strategies for wildlife and ecosystems.

Are matching funds required? Yes, the WCS Climate Adaptation Fund requires a minimum 1:1 match. Matching funds may be “in-kind”; i.e., a contribution of goods, staff time, or services rather than cash, but only to a maximum of 50% of requested funds from WCS. If matching funds have not yet been secured, please indicate a time frame and sources from which you anticipate securing other funding. While matching funds are not required to be in hand at the time of applications, WCS will favor projects that have already secured some or all of the required match at the time the full proposal is submitted. Previously expended funds are not eligible as a match.

Are there any circumstances under which a 1:1 match is not required? Yes. In a few select cases, WCS will waive or reduce the 1:1 match requirement for projects proposing innovative new ideas and methods for addressing adaptation problems. The Climate Adaptation Fund continues to seek novel and innovative projects with on-the-ground outcomes for adaptation. We also recognize that fundraising for some creative or untested methods can be difficult. If you believe you have such a project and would like to request a match waiver, please indicate so in your pre-proposal application. Those applicants should still include any sources of available match, even if less than 1:1, in their pre-proposal budget. We will consider each request on a case-by-case basis and notify applicants whether such a waiver has been approved. Please contact our staff directly if you have questions about matching requirements before submitting your pre-proposal application.

What local, state and federal funds can be used as matching funds? We look favorably upon projects that apply funding from a variety of sources for the implementation of fish and wildlife conservation activities. Examples include, but are not limited to: the State Wildlife Grants program (SWG), other state wildlife, transportation, or environmental protection programs; federal incentive programs through the Farm Bill (e.g., National Resource Conservation Service’s Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Healthy Forest Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program, Farm and Ranchlands Protection

Program), Department of Interior Land and Water Conservation Fund, Department of Defense Buffer Program, National Marine Fisheries Service Species of Concern Program, Federal Highway Administration transportation mitigation funding, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies' Multistate Conservation Grants Program, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Keystone and Special Initiative Grants programs, and the Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program.

Can funds from mitigation or environmental damage awards be used as a match? Yes, we are interested in supporting projects that use direct mitigation funds or payments of natural resource and environmental damage awards toward priority actions for wildlife adaptation, consistent with the program requirements for use of such funds (e.g., mitigation funds from highway projects or settlements reached at EPA Superfund sites). WCS grant funds may not be used for mitigation that is required under the law.

What other types of funds can be used as matching funds? Funds from private sources, corporate donors, foundations, and memberships may all count as matching funds. Matching funds may be "in-kind"; i.e., a contribution of goods, staff time, or services rather than cash, but only to a maximum of 50% of requested funds from WCS. Funds previously expended on a project or donations of property will not be accepted as matching funds. Funds received directly or indirectly from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation will not be accepted as a match. Please check with us if you have questions on the use of matching funds.

Can organizations submit multiple pre-proposals for different projects? Yes, but only one per state or territory. Organizations may submit only one proposal per state, but may be a partner on proposals from other applicant organizations.

Can the same project or organization receive funding again? Organizations previously funded through this grants program or other Doris Duke Charitable Foundation grants may not apply for a renewal of an existing grant, but are eligible to apply for support for different projects than those previously funded. Beginning in 2020, national organizations that have received a total of \$2 million or more in Climate Adaptation Fund grants over the past 10 years are only eligible to apply if their proposal includes a plan to engage other conservation organizations to facilitate institutional adoption of climate-informed conservation planning and implementation. This engagement must be meaningful and strategic, and the proposal must align with all of the Fund's other requirements.

What do national organizations that have received \$1.5 million or more in Climate Adaptation Fund grants over the past 10 years have to do to be eligible to apply?

We consider national organizations that have received this level of funding over the past 10 years as strong partners and leaders in the adaptation field. We want to continue supporting and learning from their adaptation work, but we also want these organizations to co-invest more deeply in our mission of making climate-informed conservation a standard practice. These organizations will leverage their

leadership and expertise by driving policy and regulatory change through strategic partnerships, building the capacity of other conservation organizations to conduct climate-informed conservation work, by pioneering adaptation in new places or in the form of new approaches. There are three potential pathways to eligibility for proposals submitted by national organizations that have received \$1.5 million or more in grants from the Fund, one of which must be met:

1. The national organization applicant must partner with a State or Tribal agency on an implementation project that will also have a direct effect on changing policy or regulations relevant to the adaptation approaches applied by the proposed project.
2. The national organization applicant must propose a project that meaningfully and strategically engages other conservation organizations or tribal nations to facilitate adoption of climate-informed conservation planning and implementation in the other entity's work. The proposal must also meet the rest of the Fund's requirements for an implementation project. By 'meaningful' we mean engagement that is evidenced by sub grants, formal MOUs or partnership agreements. By 'strategic' we mean engagement that is backed by a clear goal to increase the capacity of conservation organizations and/or tribal nations to do climate-informed work. The results of this engagement must be observable (e.g. an active conservation project that has been adaptively managed by the partner entity to address climate change impacts, a revised conservation project plan approved by the partner entity's leadership, or a new or revised staff-wide protocol or best practice guidance for conservation staff or personnel at the partner entity).
3. The national organization applicant brings adaptation approaches to a new or underrepresented geography by submitting a proposal from a state that has 1 or fewer Climate Adaptation Funded projects. Strong engagement with local partner organizations is encouraged. Alternatively, the national organization applicant proposes adaptation actions that have not been previously funded by the Fund. Please refer to our [website](#) for more information on previously funded work.

Each applicant from any national organization that has received \$1.5 million or more in Climate Adaptation Fund grants must pursue one of the above options to be eligible for funding in 2020.

Can I re-apply for the same project if my proposal was not funded in a previous year's grant cycle?

Yes, but be aware that some of the program's priorities, minimum requirements, and application processes have changed. Please read both this RFP and Applicant Guidance Document carefully for instructions.

Will multi-state or regional level projects be considered? Yes, we encourage applications for projects

that address regional, landscape-scale needs for fish and wildlife conservation.

Who will evaluate the proposals and make decisions on the grant awards? The Wildlife Conservation Society is responsible for the evaluation of all proposals and final decisions on grant awards. A national advisory committee comprising representatives from nonprofit conservation organizations, private foundations, academia, and state and federal wildlife agencies assists WCS with the evaluation process.

Is it appropriate to contact members of the advisory committee? It is not appropriate to contact advisory committee members to advocate for your proposal. All questions on the grants program, eligibility, funding priorities, and application process should be directed to the Wildlife Conservation Society. See WCS staff contact information on page 9 below.

What is the source of funding for the WCS Climate Adaptation Fund? A grant to WCS from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Will pre-proposals that fall outside the minimum requirements or geographies be considered? No, proposals are restricted to those priorities outlined in this RFP and [Applicant Guidance Document](#). The Fund cannot support conservation projects outside of the 50 states and U.S. territories. If funding is being sought as part of a multinational project, WCS funding can only be used for that part of the project within the 50 states and U.S. territories. Solely international projects or organizations based outside of the United States are not eligible to apply.

How does the grant proposal process work? WCS utilizes a two-step evaluation process: 1) an open call for pre-proposals, and 2) a full proposal invited from a select number of pre-proposal applicants.

When will pre-proposal applicants be notified if they have been selected to submit a full proposal? We anticipate notifying all applicants of their pre-proposal's status within eight weeks of the submission deadline. Those invited to submit full proposals will be notified at that time, as well.

When will award decisions be made? Grant awards will be announced no later than December 2020.

If my project is funded, what requirements will I need to meet? All successful applicants are required to provide WCS with a progress update every six months. Two of these updates are written reports - at the end of year 1 there is a written progress report and at the end of year 2 there is a comprehensive final report. The other two interim 6-month reports are conducted by phone. WCS will also require documentation of a secured 1:1 match for the project by early 2021. Grantees are occasionally asked to participate in surveys, evaluation activities, communications efforts, and learning opportunities.

How can I get more information on this process? [The WCS Climate Adaptation Fund website](#) provides more information on the grant program, including a list of previously funded projects. If you have further questions, please contact WCS Climate Adaptation Fund program staff (see contact information below).

What is the Wildlife Conservation Society? The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), founded in 1895, saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. Our story began in the early 1900's when we successfully helped the American bison recover on the Western Plains. Today, we protect many of the world's iconic creatures here and abroad, including gorillas in the Congo, tigers in India, wolverines in the Yellowstone Rockies, and ocean giants in our world's amazing seascapes. Since our founding, we have forged the power of our global conservation work and the management of our five parks in New York City to create the world's most comprehensive conservation organization. We currently manage about 500 conservation projects in more than 60 countries in 16 global priority regions. With a commitment to protect 50 percent of the world's biodiversity, we manage 200 million acres of protected lands around the world, with more than 200 scientists on staff. The WCS parks in New York City inspire 4 million visitors each year, and help the city to educate millions of schoolchildren in science and conservation issues at our five living institutions in New York City on important issues affecting our planet. Our parks include: the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo and Queens Zoo.

IV. Instructions and Application for Submission of Pre-proposals

Please read these instructions carefully, as well as all of the guidelines provided above.

Requirements:

Pre-proposals must be submitted no later than **April 8, 2020 at 5:00 PM Eastern Time**. Grant applicants will be notified by email that their application has been received.

Please use our convenient online application system to submit your proposal.

The application can be accessed by creating a user account and registering your organization here:

[Register your organization and complete the Pre-proposal Application Form.](#)

If you have applied before, do not create a new account for your organization.

Proposals submitted by regular mail or in any other electronic format than specified above will not be considered. **Please do not send letters of support, conservation plans, annual reports, brochures, or other supplementary information with your pre-proposal.** In order to conserve paper resources, please do not mail a hard copy of your pre-proposal application.

Contacts for the Climate Adaptation Fund:

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