

Request for Proposals

Natural Resource Damage and Water Quality Restoration Projects for Spring River Watershed

I INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Springfield Plateau Regional Restoration Plan (SPRRP), the Natural Resource Trustees (Trustees), consisting of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR) are releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) announcing the availability of grant funding to support restoration activities. Through this solicitation, the Trustees seek eligible applicants to implement projects that restore aquatic natural resources injured by historical mining practices of ASARCO, Blue Tee, Eagle Picher Technologies, and others, referred to as “mining companies” throughout the RFP.

A. Background

The SPRRP was developed as an ecoregion-comprehensive plan to guide Trustees in restoring natural resources injured by the release of hazardous substances and is jointly administered by the Missouri Trustee Council to assist in carrying out their natural resource trust mandates under the Comprehensive Environmental Remediation, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Clean Water Act, and other laws. Funds received through settlements must be used to restore, rehabilitate, replace and/or acquire the equivalent of those natural resources injured and services lost.

The release of this RFP is an action that has been previously described as part of the SPRRP, which fulfills the requirement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 to provide public review and comment. This document can be found at: [Springfield Plateau Regional Restoration Plan](#)

B. Natural Resource Injury Overview

The Trustees have identified extensive natural resource injuries in the Missouri portion of the Tri-State Mining District due to the releases of hazardous substances from mining companies’ activities throughout the 1900s. Terrestrial resources (e.g. soil and migratory bird habitat) are injured due to toxic concentrations of lead, zinc, and cadmium in abandoned mine/mill waste. Aquatic resources (waterfowl, mussels, fish, crayfish, other invertebrates) are injured due to releases of heavy metal- contaminated water and sediment to area streams. Groundwater is contaminated with heavy metals due to mining activities, which has potentially limited the habitat of the federally threatened Ozark cavefish. The Trustees collected Natural Resource Damages through legal settlements with the ASARCO, Blue Tee, and US Steel mining companies. Restoration funding made available through this grant solicitation represents compensation to the public for these losses.

C. Restoration Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the Trustees is to award funds to an entity or entities whose projects can best restore and protect aquatic habitat that benefit federally listed mussel species. Mussels rely upon many components of water quality and therefore serve as a good proxy for overall aquatic ecosystem quality. The Western Fanshell mussel (*Cyprogenia aberti*) is one of three federally listed mussels that occurs in the Spring River. According to the Species Status Assessment, these mussels (and others) rely upon stable river channels, a natural hydrologic regime, unimpeded upstream and downstream connection, water and sediment quality, presence and abundance of fish hosts, and minimal exotic predators. The analysis of the past, current, and future variables that influence the Western Fanshell mussels' needs for long-term viability revealed that there are three factors that pose the largest risk to future viability: water quality degradation, altered flow, and landscape changes.

Because mussel habitat restoration relies heavily on water quality, the Trustees also wish to fund projects that improve water quality in select areas throughout the greater Spring River watershed. NRD funds may support eligible projects implemented under MoDNR's Section 319 Nonpoint Source Subgrants (319 Program), which require a 40% non-federal match. This program awards up to \$400,000 in funding per subgrant, though a project's total cost may exceed that amount. Applicants may therefore combine 319 funds with NRD funds to expand or supplement restoration activities.

Approximately \$2 million is available under this solicitation for restoration projects within priority areas within the Spring River watershed. Grant recipients will carry out projects which benefit aquatic resources via direct habitat restoration and ensure the long-term viability of the restoration projects by way of contracts, conservation easements, ownership, or other controls. Applicants should propose projects to address one or more of the following restoration objectives:

- Augment/reintroduce freshwater mussel species that have declined in streams.
- Create migratory bird habitat, particularly benefitting grassland species by using deep-rooted native plants in agricultural settings and other areas.
- Reduce the erosional loss of land and associated sediment inputs to streams due to unstable streambanks.
- Reduce nutrient and ammonia run-off and inputs from agricultural activities, wastewater treatment plants and private septic systems.
- Remove, modify, or replace aquatic organism passage barriers that reduce aquatic connectivity.
- Reduce impacts from heavy metals present in the water and sediment in areas of Spring River that are unlikely to be addressed by USEPA remedial actions in the region.

- Reduce stream sediment inputs from gravel roads and other sources.

D. Geographic Priority Areas for Restoration

The Trustees have prioritized areas for restoration within the Springfield Plateau (See Figure 1) in a tiered approach as a means of complying with the SPRRP preferred alternative, and to provide restoration specific to mussels and other injured aquatic resources. The highest priority sites are (in descending order):

- Areas impacting the FWS critical habitat areas for endangered aquatic species within Spring River (Priority 1 areas)
- Areas within the direct watersheds of the Spring River and the Missouri portion of the North Fork of Spring River (Priority 2 areas)

The 319 Program of MoDNR administers subgrants to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) which address water quality impairments due to nonpoint source pollution. In the Spring River watershed, these impairments may include bacteria, dissolved oxygen, and total suspended sediment. Figure 1 is sourced, in part, from the Spring River Nonpoint Source Watershed Plan. Subwatersheds with hatchmarks are designated in that plan as high priority for BMP implementation and a priority for 319 Program funding.

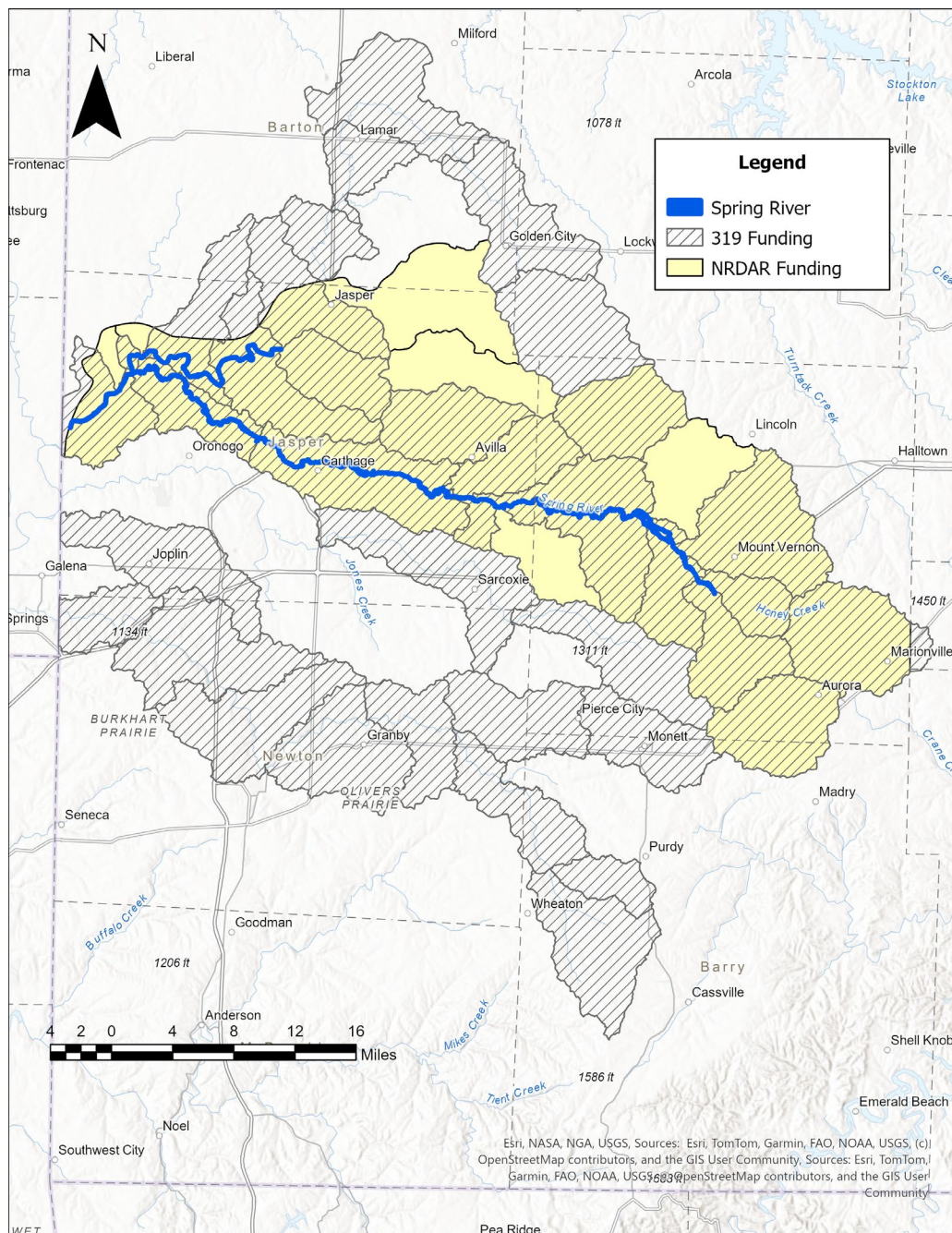


Figure 1. Combined Priority Area Map for NRDAR and 319 Program Funding Within the Spring River Watershed

The respective funding priorities for the two programs are overlaid in Figure 1 above. Note that the two funding sources are not mutually exclusive, and proposals will be considered from the perspective of both funding programs. A project proposal may be funded by NRD funds, 319 funds, or by both programs, on a case-by-case basis.

E. Proposal Specifications

This RFP is soliciting restoration project ideas from entities (including external parties as well as the Trustees) to achieve the Trustees' restoration objectives of benefiting aquatic natural resources and improving water quality within the prescribed tiered priority areas. Successful applicants will implement specific projects and/or a programmatic suite of projects with a proven track record of positive benefits to aquatic habitat and other aquatic natural resources.

In order to be acceptable, all NRD restoration projects proposed must be 1) compliant and consistent with federal and state laws, 2) technically feasible and within the current funding limits and 3) address injured natural resources or the services they provide. Projects cannot be used for EPA response actions, nor can they be proposed by parties responsible for NRD injury to reduce their NRD liability.

Individual projects will be scored by the Trustees based on the scoring matrix found in Appendix I. Proposals must include:

Name of group submitting proposal - Name the group or individuals submitting the restoration project proposal. Include name of project coordinator, address, telephone, and e-mail address.

Project Description – Provide a description of the type of project and location of proposed restoration. If the project location is unknown, please provide the watersheds/subwatersheds where work is anticipated to occur. Maps should be provided with relevant landmarks.

Project Goals and Benefits – Provide a synopsis of what is intended to be accomplished by the restoration project in terms of environmental improvements and benefits to natural resources. If water quality is the focus of the project, specify the pollutant targeted, BMPs to be implemented, and the expected load reduction per year.

Project Budget - Provide an approximate budget for the funding requested in descriptive summary categories such as: salary, fringe, indirects, supplies, equipment, travel, contractual, operations and maintenance costs, monitoring, etc. Proposals stating only a total cost with no budget breakdown will not be considered. It is not expected that the institutions applying will have all specific projects “in hand”, but it is certainly preferred. Please include information pertaining to any types of cost sharing, such as other funding sources or in-kind services that will add to possible restoration projects.

Description of staff resources and hourly salary rate - Please provide details on the number of staff that can work on projects, how they would work on projects, and the portion/amount of their hourly wage that would be covered by awarded funds.

Timeline - Outline the estimated time and steps or phases needed to complete the project including an estimated completion date. Estimate how long the project will take to reach its full potential. The maximum time for a federal agreement is 5 years.

Experience and capabilities - Please detail your experience with performing the tasks you have described. List any equipment that is currently owned that could be used in your proposed projects.

Description of long-term plan – Describe how the projects you propose to implement will be legally/contractually protected to ensure their long-term sustainability. Please provide information on your experience with easements that have been managed by your organization.

Description of experience with enrollment in state and federal cost-share programs - Please detail your experience in helping landowners participate in cost-share programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program, 319 Program, or your organization's own experience in enrolling in these programs. Please detail how you would maximize NRD funds by leveraging funds from other sources.

Description of any restoration projects currently being considered - Please provide details on any known projects that are in need of funding in order for them to be implemented.

Description of monitoring - Please provide details on how you will gauge success for your project, and your experience with developing monitoring plans.

Outreach Components – For 319 Program projects only, describe how you would share information about this project to the community, and what types of outreach strategies would be implemented. NRD cannot fund outreach.

II. PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS AND AWARD PROCEDURES

Proposals will be reviewed by a state and federal technical committee based on the scoring matrix. Note that each Trustee may submit proposals for consideration as well. Following review, the committee may recommend short listing the proposals that are potentially acceptable to the Trustee Council. At this point, the Trustee Council may request more information about the applicants, and carry out negotiations for the purpose of obtaining best and final offers on the short listed applicants. The Trustees reserves the right to prepare clarifications and minor modifications to this RFP. Such modifications will be shared on a timely basis with potential respondents as an addendum to this RFP. Any oral communication will be considered unofficial and non-binding on the Trustees. Interested parties should rely only upon written statements issued by the Trustees. The Trustee Council will make the final funding decisions, and grant recipients will be notified in writing.

The Trustees reserve the right to withdraw this RFP at any time and for any reason and to issue such clarifications, modifications, and/or amendments as they may deem appropriate. Any additional information will be posted on the Trustee websites, and it will be the responsibility of the applicants to check for updates. These websites are: <https://www.fws.gov/project/missouri-portion-tri-state-mining-district-natural-resources-damage-assessment-and-restoration-nrdar/southwest>

Proposals will be due at 5 p.m. CST on November 23rd, 2026. The Trustees may extend this due date, if insufficient proposals are received or other circumstances arise that warrant granting more time. The Trustees may request additional information as necessary from applicants within approximately 30 days after the proposal due date. The Trustee will provide written award notifications within approximately 60 days after the deadline for proposal submission.

Grant recipients will enter into a grant agreement with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additional requirements may be applicable for successful projects. For example, professional services or certain construction activities may require proof of Errors and Omissions Insurance and securing of a Payment and Performance Bond. Grant recipients will be notified of requirements upon selection of proposals, as needed. Final approval of a project will occur upon execution of all required agreements.

III. CONTACTS

Questions and RFP submittals should be submitted electronically to Scott_Hamilton@fws.gov and Elliot.Hollingsworth@dnr.mo.gov.

Appendix I **Proposal Scoring Matrix** **Natural Resource Damage Restoration Projects for** **Spring River Watershed Restoration**

ACCEPTABILITY CRITERIA: Projects Must Pass These Four Criteria for Further Consideration:

Is compliant and consistent with federal and state laws, policies and regulations.	Yes or No
Demonstrates technical feasibility.	Yes or No
Addresses injured natural resources or services targeted for restoration within the RFP.	Yes or No
Project will not be used for response actions, is not being proposed by an identified potentially responsible party (PRP), and is unlikely to be disturbed by future response actions.	Yes or No

PROJECT RANKING CRITERIA: Scored Criteria : 0-5; “0” = criteria not addressed; “5” = criteria is fully met.

Scoring:

1. Location of project (25 points possible):

a) Project occurs in a priority geographic area identified within the RFP. When applicable, score according to the tiered geographic priorities identified in the RFP.	(Score 0-10)
b) Project occurs in a 303d listed stream reach.	(Score 0-5)
c) Project occurs in proximity to a historically metals-impacted areas.	(Score 0-5)
d) Project occurs near known mussel beds or other ecologically important locations.	(Score 0-5)

2. Benefits and services provided, identified in the RFP (27 points possible):

a) Benefits federal- and state-listed species, or Missouri Species of Concern.	(Score 0-7)
b) Restores lost human uses (e.g., drinking water, recreational opportunities).	(Score 0-5)
c) Improves wildlife habitat (in-stream or riparian/floodplain).	(Score 0-5)
d) Reduces or mitigates nutrient, sediment, or e. coli inputs to the stream system.	(Score 0-5)
e) Reduces bank or channel erosion.	(Score 0-5)

3. Sustainability (14 points possible):

a) Ecosystem improvements or physical structures emplaced are self-sustaining or low maintenance.	(Score 0-7)
b) Includes a conservation easement, public land ownership, or other institutional control.	(Score 0-7)

4. Cost-effectiveness (23 points possible):

a) Utilizes cost effective means	(Score 0-3)
b) Provides the greatest scope of benefits to the largest area or natural resource population.	(Score 0-5)
c) Additional funds (matching or scaled) are provided by proposal source (submitter) or to be pooled with other funding sources.	(Score 0-7)
d) Project involves partnerships between multiple entities	(Score 0-5)
e) Entities involved have experience implementing proposed activities.	(Score 0-3)
5. Evaluation component (11 points possible):	
a) Project includes a monitoring component.	(Score 0-5)
b) Project identifies performance measures for successful restoration.	(Score 0-3)
c) If goals of restoration are not being achieved, the project identifies the “next steps” to achieve restoration.	(Score 0-3)

Proposed water quality projects seeking 319 funding will be ranked according to a subset of the above criteria directly applicable to that program. To be eligible for 319 funding, projects must propose implementation of best management practices that address water quality impairments according to the priorities described in the Spring River Nonpoint Source Watershed Plan: <https://www.hstcc.org/projects-6>