



MNRCP Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can MNRCP funds be used to acquire lands with no associated wetland restoration (i.e., a “preservation only” project)?

A. No, for the 2025 funding round, MNRCP will not be accepting applications for projects that are “preservation only”. Funds will only be awarded to projects that include wetland restoration, enhancement, or creation of aquatic resources (wetlands, streams, submerged aquatic vegetation, vernal pools, etc.). Wetland restoration, enhancement, and creation projects more directly address state and federal mitigation policy and the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Maine DEP have determined that these types of projects are needed to better offset development impacts to aquatic resources in the state.

Q. Can an applicant receive funds for preservation of a property if the project also includes wetland restoration?

A. Yes, but it will depend on the project details. MNRCP still requires long-term protection for most projects. Therefore, funds may be awarded to preserve land that is not currently conserved surrounding a significant restoration project in order to provide that long-term protection. For example, a project that includes a 5-10 acre wetland restoration site could include the costs to acquire a 20-30 acre buffer around the restoration area. However, a project that includes 100 acres of preservation, but only proposes removing one small culvert on a woods road as the restoration, would be unlikely to receive funding.

Q. Can an applicant submit a proposal for a restoration, enhancement, or creation project on land that is already conserved?

A. Yes, MNRCP supports restoration or enhancement of aquatic resources on land that is already conserved.

Q. Can MNRCP funds be used to reimburse the costs of a prior land acquisition?

A. No, MNRCP funds cannot be used for reimbursement of costs for land that is currently owned by a conservation entity.

Q. Can MNRCP funds be used for culvert replacements or fishways to improve fish passage?

A. Projects that are solely focused on fish passage (e.g., fish ladders, nature-like fishways, etc.) are generally not supported by MNRCP. While MNRCP has provided funding in the past for a limited number of fish passage projects, the Corps and DEP have determined that, moving forward, all such projects must restore broader ecological benefits to river and stream systems (beyond passing fish), and provide some measures to ensure the permanence of the work (not necessarily requiring preservation). As a compensatory mitigation program, MNRCP must award





funds to projects that result in conservation outcomes for aquatic resources that have been impacted by permitted development activities. Currently, MNRCP is not accepting payments into the program for stream impacts. However, recent legislation will allow for stream impact projects to pay into the program, which may result in more funding being available for more stream focused projects in the future. Culvert replacement projects are generally uncommon but may be funded if the project demonstrates restoration or enhancement of wetland functions and values beyond just passing fish. Dam removal and culvert removal projects are eligible for funding and are encouraged.

Q. Can MNRCP provide a list of qualified consultants for wetland restoration work?

A. MNRCP cannot specifically recommend a consultant or contractor. You can find a Directory of Environmental Consultants on the Maine Association of Wetland Scientists website (www.mainewetlands.org). A link to the directory is provided in the "Quick Links" section of the home page. A list of consultants is also available on the Maine Land Trust Network website (<https://www.mltn.org/resources/consultants/>).

Q. Can costs to obtain state and federal permits for restoration work be included in the budget?

A. Yes. Federal, state, and/or local permits may be required for certain restoration and enhancement projects and costs to prepare permit applications can be included in the MNRCP project budget. Please note, however, that MNRCP restrictions may be different than what is allowed by permit; therefore, consultation with MNRCP is recommended prior to seeking permits from regulatory agencies.

Q. Can fees for consultants to identify restoration sites, develop conceptual plans, and assist with developing the MNRCP application be included in the budget?

A. Some of these fees may be eligible for reimbursement, if a project is awarded funding. MNRCP policy dictates that all project costs should be included in the project budget (full cost accounting) so that the full cost of the implementation of projects is known. Because many of these costs are essential to project implementation, it is possible that they can be reimbursed. However, MNRCP is not able to provide funding for these services if the project is not awarded funding.

Q. Are complete design/engineering plans required for the proposal phase for restoration projects?

A. No, but proposals should include at least a conceptual or preliminary plan to describe the proposed work.





Q. Can fees for consultants/contractors to prepare final project plans/designs be included in the budget?

A. Yes, however, the design fees must be for a project for which you are currently seeking funding to implement on-the-ground work. For example, you cannot apply for MNRCP funding for the design phase of a project only. The design and implementation costs must be included in the same application.

Q. Can project management costs be included in the budget?

A. Yes. MNRCP allows the inclusion of reasonable project management costs for restoration/enhancement projects. MNRCP does not have a set maximum/minimum or percentage of the total cost that can be included for project management. The Review Committee and IRT will review each budget carefully and determine if the requested project management costs are appropriate for the scope of the project.

Q. Can I change my budget during the proposal review process and/or after awards are made?

A. Project budgets can be adjusted between submission of a Letter of Intent and submission of a full proposal. The budget submitted for the Letter of Intent does not need to match the budget in the full proposal. After the full proposal has been submitted, the Review Committee and/or IRT may sometimes suggest a change in budget depending on their review of the proposed project. These budget changes would happen at the request of the Review Committee or the IRT only. After awards are made, the total amount awarded cannot be changed. The allocation of the budget to different tasks may change after the award, but this would be subject to approval by DEP and the Corps. MNRCP encourages the inclusion of contingency funds in a project budget to account for unexpected costs that may arise.

Q. Are appraisals, surveys, environmental assessments, and other due diligence required to be completed prior to submitting an MNRCP application?

A. No, a complete appraisal, survey, purchase and sale agreement, or environmental assessment is not required to be completed for the application process. However, if these items are complete and included in the application, it may increase the "Project Readiness" score for the project. If funds are awarded for preservation, appraisals must be completed within one year of closing. Environmental assessments must be completed within 180 days of closing. A formal land survey is required, but older surveys may be permitted if they have been confirmed recently by a licensed surveyor.





Q. Does MNRCP require matching funds?

A. No, matching funds are not required. Applicants can apply for up to 100% of project funding from MNRCP. However, additional funds from applicants and other partners are viewed favorably and may help projects score better in the review process.

Q. Can MNRCP funds be used as non-federal match?

A. It depends on the federal program. Some federal funding programs (such as North American Wetlands Conservation Act [NAWCA], Community Forest Program, and National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants) do not allow the use of mitigation funds as non-federal match. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) does also not allow the use of mitigation funds as match. MNRCP funds are considered mitigation funds and are therefore not allowed to be used as non-federal match for some programs. MNRCP funds may also be considered federal funds, depending on the source of the funds paid into the program. However, MNRCP may be eligible to fund a restoration project on properties previously acquired with funds from these federal programs. We recommend you contact the federal grant program you are considering for more information. We also recommend that you review grant agreements from other programs to make sure there are no provisions that might contradict MNRCP requirements.

Q. Can MNRCP funds be combined with Land for Maine's Future (LMF) funds?

A. Yes. MNRCP and LMF have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that allows for the use of both funding sources for a single project. However, MNRCP and LMF have different program goals and the ability to combine both funding sources will be project specific. Some projects may not be compatible with both funding sources depending on the site details and proposed land uses. Because MNRCP is focused on restoration and enhancement projects, it may be possible to use LMF to acquire a property and then utilize MNRCP to perform subsequent restoration or enhancement of wetlands on the property. If a project sponsor is contemplating requesting funding from both programs, we recommend talking with representatives from each program before the funding rounds begin to identify potential incompatibilities early on.

Q. Can MNRCP funding be used to cover stewardship and long-term monitoring costs?

A. Yes, but the funds need to be restricted to the parcel/project relevant to the MNRCP application and award and must be deemed reasonable by MNRCP reviewers.

Q. Is timber harvesting allowed on parcels protected with MNRCP funds?

A. Timber harvesting may be allowed in uplands on parcels acquired with MNRCP funds; however, due to federal mitigation policy, MNRCP cannot take mitigation credit for any areas where timber harvesting is proposed to be conducted on the property. Therefore, the inclusion of timber harvesting in a project proposal will affect the scoring and ranking of the project during review. For a project to be approved and funded by MNRCP with portions of the property available for future timber harvest, the following conditions are required.





- Timber harvesting must not occur in the following locations: in forested wetlands or mapped Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat; within at least 100' of any mapped wetland, stream, open water body; or within at least 250' of mapped vernal pools.
- Outside of the no-cut areas described above, timber harvesting within larger riparian buffers should conform to the MNRCP Riparian Habitat Management Guidelines available at <https://www.mnrcp.org/resources>.
- Timber harvesting may only occur within areas of upland forest that are accessible from existing roads that do not impact protected natural resources.
- Timber harvesting may not occur within rare or exemplary natural communities and ecosystems or within rare plant populations or their specified buffers as identified by the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP). Buffer sizes may be determined in consultation with MNAP.
- The project site must contain both wetland resources and no-cut upland areas sufficient to generate mitigation credits. The ratio of mitigation credits generated per unit of MNRCP cost is considered by MNRCP reviewers and a higher credit per cost ratio generally leads to a higher project score.
- Timber harvesting in approved upland areas will be performed with the overall goals of sustainable harvesting, mimicking natural disturbance patterns, and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat and climate resiliency. A forest management plan is required and will be reviewed by MNRCP reviewers.

MNRCP reviewers will review each project individually to determine if timber harvesting is appropriate based on the existing site conditions. Even if a project meets the conditions outlined above, MNRCP reviewers may still determine that timber harvesting is not suitable on a particular parcel and may prohibit it as a condition of the MNRCP award.

Note that specific management activities to address invasive species, pest/disease outbreak, or safety concerns are not considered "timber management" for the purposes of MNRCP and are generally allowed, provided they are reviewed and approved in the project's long-term management plan.

Q. Is public access/recreation allowed on parcels obtained with MNRCP funds?

A. Yes, access for low-impact recreational uses such as hiking, hunting, and fishing is allowed (but not required), as long as the recreational uses, trails and any other infrastructure do not negatively impact natural resources or significantly disturb associated upland buffers being protected with MNRCP funds. Overnight camping, however, is generally not allowed.

Q. Is vehicle access allowed on MNRCP parcels?

A. Vehicle access for maintenance or stewardship purposes is generally allowed on existing roads if they do not impact protected natural resources. The construction of new roads is





strongly discouraged but may be considered on a case-by-case basis if they do not impact resources and buffers. Removal of roads through wetlands and removal of stream and wetland crossing structures is encouraged and could potentially be funded by MNRCP.

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