

MNRCP Review Criteria

1. Potential to Meet MNRCP Goals (35%)

Assesses the extent to which the proposal meets the core program requirement that a project sustainably restores, enhances, preserves, or creates wetlands or other resources determined by the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program to be Priority Resource Types.

Considerations include:

- The sustainability of the proposed conservation action (restoration, enhancement, preservation, creation) and the acreage affected. Projects focused on restoration or enhancement in priority resource areas will be strongly preferred, assuming they have adequate funds in their budget to ensure successful attainment of project goals. Project budgets may include fees for restoration design by qualified professionals (i.e., consultant fees), provided the application includes funding for both project design and implementation.
- The resource types restored, enhanced, preserved or created and the degree to which the proposed project replaces the functional benefits of impacted resources in the Biophysical Region based on a functional assessment of the project.
- The proximity of the proposed project to impacted resources in the Biophysical Region. To fully meet this criterion, projects must occur within the same ecoregional sub-section as a permitted impact. Please contact us for maps to help assess proximity to permitted impacts.
- For preservation projects, the threat of destruction or adverse modification to the aquatic resources and their associated buffers on the site over the next 20 years, if the property is not protected.
- The inclusion of upland areas sufficient to protect, buffer, or support identified resource functions on the property as well as on adjacent conservation areas or undeveloped large blocks of habitat.
- The current and proposed condition of the property, and the “functional lift” provided by the project (e.g., the proposed change in habitat quality, the contribution to functioning biological systems, water quality and the level of degradation).

2. Landscape Context (20%)

Assesses the extent to which the proposal meets the core program requirement to consider the location of a potential project relative to statewide focus areas for land conservation or habitat preservation identified by a state or federal agency, or other regional or municipal plans.

Considerations include:

- Presence within or adjacent to habitat areas of statewide conservation significance or other natural resource priority areas.
- Presence within or adjacent to public or private conservation lands to preserve habitat connectivity, and/or presence within a watershed-based conservation plan.
- Presence of natural resources of significant value and/or rarity within the project site.

3. Project Readiness/Feasibility (30%)

Assesses the extent to which the proposal meets the core program requirement to demonstrate project readiness and likelihood of success, where success is defined by the ability of the project to meet MNRCP goals as stated in the proposal. Assesses the extent to which the proposal meets

the core program requirement to provide for long-term management and/or stewardship by a responsible state or federal resource agency, or conservation organization. Considerations include:

- Documentation of the willingness of the landowner and a qualified, long-term management entity to participate in proposed project, including conveying the property or a conservation easement with respect to the property (for projects not on public/private conservation lands).
- Level of project urgency (e.g., area of rapid development or on-going site degradation, other available funding with limited timing, option to purchase set to expire, etc.)
- Degree to which the proposal demonstrates an understanding of resource conservation issues and needs.
- Soundness of the technical approach of the conceptual plan presented in the application.
- Initial progress (e.g., planning, fundraising, contracting, site design, etc.).
- Likelihood that the project will meet proposed schedule and/or required deadlines.
- Likelihood that the proposed actions will achieve the anticipated ecological benefits and results.
- Completeness and feasibility of the plan for long-term stewardship and monitoring, including endowment funding. Please refer to the Long-term Management Plan template available at <http://mnrcp.org/about> to accurately estimate the level of effort to complete this task.
- Potential for adverse impacts (such as flooding or habitat loss) associated with the project.
- Conformance with any applicable Army Corps of Engineers and state mitigation policy, guidance and permitting requirements, including appropriate financial assurances for any construction activity.
- Presence of a qualified, capable conservation entity willing to sponsor and/or maintain the project.
- For restoration projects, inclusion of a qualified professional capable of completing the technical aspects of the project. Please refer to the Restoration Guidance template available at <http://mnrcp.org/about> to accurately estimate the level of effort to complete the required restoration work plan.
- Level of support and involvement of other relevant agencies, organizations, and local community.
- Degree to which the project sponsor, and any associated partners, demonstrate the financial, administrative, and technical capacity to undertake and successfully complete the project.
- Adequacy of long-term stewardship to ensure that the project is sustainable over time and presence of a funding mechanism for the associated costs (e.g., endowment or trust).
- Legal and financial standing of the project sponsor.
- Quality and completeness of proposal materials.

4. **Cost Effectiveness** (10%)

Assesses the extent to which the proposal meets the program requirement that a project represent an efficient use of funds expended given the condition, location and relative appraised values of the property. Considerations include:

- Clarity and detail of the budget submitted, and estimated costs deemed to be reasonable.
- Sufficiency of funds available in the applicable biophysical region.
- Availability and source of matching funds necessary to complete the project. (Note that while matching funds are not required, they generally increase the competitiveness of a proposal.)

- Land acquisition or conservation easement costs must be based on an appraisal completed within the last two years in accordance with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) and meeting the requirements of the Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act (Public Law 91-646). A copy of the final appraisal must be provided prior to closing. MNRCP cannot pay more than fair market value for a property.

5. Other Benefits (5%)

Assesses the potential for this project to support economic activity, job creation, recreational access, scenic enhancements, climate change resiliency, educational opportunities, or other contributions to “Quality of Place” in the town or region where the project is located. For projects involving acquisition of land, documented support from the municipality in which the project is proposed is encouraged.