



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Outdoor Recreation and Legacy Partnership Program

Posted Date: July 9, 2026

Recurring Proposal Due Dates:
11:59 PM, each September 1 through 2031

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Full NPS Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) found [HERE](#)

NOTE: This RFP is for submission to Connecticut DEEP, and will have different requirements and deadlines than those listed in the federal NOFO

I. Introduction

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is pleased to announce this funding opportunity through the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program. This initiative can provide up to 50% matching for eligible projects (minimum award - \$300,000, maximum award - \$15,000,000) that acquire or develop land and water for outdoor recreation purposes in qualifying urban areas.

Background & Purpose:

Created in 2014 by the National Park Service (NPS), the ORLP Program is a nationally competitive grant program wherein states (in partnership with municipalities; Native American Tribes and Tribal Governments) can submit proposals for land acquisitions or improvements that will provide or significantly improve recreational opportunities in qualifying urban areas. This initiative is consistent with the purposes and requirements of the LWCF Act and the [LWCF Manual](#).

In Perpetuity Requirement:

As a condition of this grant funding, the NPS requires that language be recorded against the deed of the assisted park/recreation property advising that the property was acquired and/or developed with Federal funds from the LWCF and that the property must be preserved for outdoor recreation uses in perpetuity and cannot be converted to any use other than public outdoor recreation use without the written approval of the Secretary of the Interior. Before seeking a LWCF grant, project sponsors should carefully consider their ability and willingness to comply with this provision of the law.

II. Applicant and Project Eligibility

A. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

In accordance with the LWCF Act, only the State's lead agency for the program (in this instance, DEEP), or federally recognized Native American Tribes, may apply to the Federal Government for ORLP grants. DEEP is seeking proposals from eligible subrecipients (AKA project sponsors). Those include the following in the state of Connecticut:

- Municipal governments*
- Native American Tribes and Tribal Governments (no population requirement) **
- [Regional Planning Groups](#) applying for a project within a city or town that meets project eligibility requirements



*DEEP encourages Land Trusts and other nonprofit organizations to partner with municipal or tribal governments for eligible projects on their behalf, however the municipal or tribal government must be the noted subrecipient in the application.

**This year federally recognized Native American Tribes and Tribal Governments may apply independently of DEEP; we are however happy to offer advice or assistance in the preparation of an ORLP submission.

Any applications submitted directly to the Federal Government by entities other than the State Lead Agency or federally recognized Native American Tribes for LWCF-ORLP will not be considered. Individuals, nonprofit organizations, and other private entities are not eligible as applicants or sub-recipients.

B. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

The ORLP Program is designed to provide recreational opportunities in qualifying urban areas. Therefore, the project proposals must meet the criteria below in order to be considered eligible for these awards. Projects must:

- Meet recreation goals as identified in Connecticut's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2024-2029 ([SCORP](#)). Projects must align with at least one priority within the SCORP.
- Be located within a Qualifying Area, defined by the National Park Service as:
 - "An urban area that has a population of 25,000 or more in the most recent census; or
 - Two (2) or more adjacent urban areas with a combined population of 25,000 or more in the most recent census; or
 - An area administered by a federally recognized Indian Tribe or an Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian community organization.
 - Applicants can learn more about census-designated urban areas and access a list of all urban areas on the US Census's [TIGERWeb](#) web page."

III. Award Information and Cost Match

Five-Year Recurring Notice

The National Parks Service has issued this grant on a recurring five (5) year Notice of Funding. Applications to DEEP will be accepted on a rolling basis and batched based on the cutoff date of September 1st. Applications submitted after the cutoff date will be grouped with the following batch. NPS reserves the right to institute changes to the grant over time, and DEEP will be releasing annual RFPs to provide any updates on the grant program and remind applicants of upcoming program deadlines.

Estimated total program funding is \$50-120 million as available annually. Total funding for ORLP competitive grants will be based on funds made available by Congress in the current and future fiscal years. Unused funds from prior years may provide additional funds to the overall available amount. Awards will range based on the project, with a minimum award of \$300,000, and a



maximum of \$15,000,000. It is expected that 20-45 projects will be selected for award per calendar year. Awards will be made upon NPS' final review and approval of the full application. LWCF ORLP awards are given as grants to the State Lead Agency, then the State Lead Agency grants a sub-award to the subrecipient which sponsored the project.

Awards are given at a rate of 1:1 match funding for projects, with applicants/subrecipients providing matching contributions totaling 50% of the project total. Eligible match contributions are to be outlined in the Budget Narrative, and can include:

- Cash
- In-kind contributions of land
- Materials
- Volunteer services

Matching share must be secure or firmly committed at the time of application and be confirmed in a signed letter from the donor describing the type and amount of contribution. In the Budget Narrative be sure to indicate how all funds and in-kind contributions for the project will be used.

Furthermore, NPS requires that the ORLP-funded portion of the project to result in a viable park or recreational opportunity, and not be dependent on other funding, even within the scope of a larger project.

IV. Submission Information

A. APPLICATION SUBMISSION TIMELINE/INFORMATION

The State will make an initial determination about which applications to submit to the NPS for consideration in the national competition. As such:

The State submission deadline is earlier than the Federal ORLP submission deadlines.

This allows the State's LWCF review board to conduct the initial review of proposals for completeness and eligibility requirements. If deemed complete and eligible, DEEP will evaluate and prioritize proposals according to the criteria used for the competition. Based on this evaluation, DEEP will choose the top projects for submission to NPS. If your project is chosen for submission, DEEP will provide constructive feedback and allow time for applications to be improved prior to submission to the NPS, increasing the chances of being selected for funding.

PLEASE NOTE: DEEP will review projects on a rolling basis for completeness and eligibility. The earlier DEEP receives an application, or notice of intent to submit, the sooner DEEP can start the required reviews.

RFP Official Announcement: July 20, 2026

Projects must be submitted to CT DEEP no later than:

- 11:59 PM September 1st



DEEP Final Selection of Projects to be Submitted to NPS:

- September 25

Final Application Edits Due to DEEP:

- October 16

DEEP Final Submission to NPS: November 1st.

B. NPS ANTICIPATED ANNOUNCEMENT

November 1 Submissions: May 1 selection announcement (next calendar year)

Selected projects must submit a full application for NPS' final review within one year of the selection announcement to remain eligible for funding. DEEP will help NPS selected projects through that process. Official Federal awards will be made upon NPS' final review and approval of the full application.

V. Application Requirements

MULTI-STEP APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process for ORLP is Multi-Step (NOFO Page 16):

1. DEEP receives proposals from eligible subrecipients and determines eligibility of proposals. DEEP Staff work with subrecipients to produce complete and high-quality applications for submission to NPS by the State.
2. Each NPS submitted application is reviewed for eligibility and scored by an independent merit panel and technical reviewers. (NOFO pg. 17-23)
3. Based on the reviews of an independent merit panel, the NPS Selection Official determines which projects are selected for funding, pending submission of a full application and satisfaction of federal compliance requirements.
4. The State will work with subrecipients on NPS selected projects to prepare a full application (NOFO pg. 22-23, see table of documents) for NPS' final review and funding determination.

-Full applications (listed in Step 4 above) must be submitted to NPS within one year of the NPS public announcement of the project's selection to remain eligible for funding.

-NPS Selected projects will be issued a Notice of Award by NPS and subrecipients will need to sign a contract with DEEP. No project work or cost (except for approved pre-award costs listed in the application) should be incurred until subrecipients have received Notices of Award from NPS and signed contracts with DEEP.



REQUIRED PROPOSAL ELEMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO DEEP (NOFO pg. 10-15):

PLEASE NOTE: Additional details for these items contained within the Federal Notice of Funding ([NOFO](#)). **Information beyond the page limit for specific elements will NOT be reviewed.**

1. [Project Abstract Summary](#) (NOFO pg. 11)
2. [Project Narrative](#) (**under 10 pages, 11-point font, 1-inch margins**) to include the following:
 - A) Project Data Page (NOFO pg. 11)
 - B) Project Overview (NOFO pg. 11-12)
 - C) Responses to the Project Criteria (NOFO pg. 13; 18-20)

It is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** by DEEP and NPS that the Project Narrative specifically addresses the Merit Review Criteria (NOFO pg. 19-24) and every bullet point in the NOFO page 11-13.

3. [Budget Narrative](#) (NOFO pg. 13)
 - Breakdown costs into cost categories, providing unit costs for all budget items
 - All costs must be compliant with [2 CFR §200 Subpart E](#) cost principles
 - Narrative description of all budget items, reflecting only costs related to work completed under the ORLP grant
 - Indicate federal vs. matching share (and source of match cost) where appropriate
 - Administrative costs, in accordance with the EXPLORE Act, are capped at 7% of the total award amount.
 - The EXPLORE Act specifically excludes acquisition support costs including appraisal and title work
 - Contingency costs (up to a recommended 10%) are allowed with justification and explanation of the methodology by which they were determined.
 - Pre-Award costs are allowed. Costs must be clearly indicated, directly related to the proposed project.
 - Planning, engineering, design, environmental analysis and other supporting costs are allowable pre-award costs
 - Construction or groundbreaking activities are **NOT** eligible as pre-award costs.
4. [Project Timeline](#) (**max 1 page**, NOFO pg. 14) to complete the tasks/activities under the proposal.
5. [Photos](#) (NOFO Pg. 14) provide context such as site conditions, surrounding environment, etc.
6. [Maps](#) (NOFO pg. 14) **high-quality original PDFs or JPGs preferred, avoid using scanned images**
 - a. [Map \(or Aerial Photo\) Delineating Project Area and Proposed Boundary](#) - must clearly indicate area to be acquired and/or developed, as well as the proposed boundary of the larger park/recreation area that would be subject to the perpetual protection provisions of the LWCF Act ([54 U.S.C. 200305\(f\)\(3\)](#)), all known outstanding rights and interests in the area held by others, total acres within the boundary(ies), and a north arrow. ([EXAMPLE MAP](#))
 - b. [Site Analysis Map](#) that illustrates site attributes such as flood zones, storm data, slopes, conservation areas, trees, nutrient-rich soils, impervious surfaces, viewsheds and impervious cover.
 - c. [Plan or Sketch of the Current Site Features](#) that highlight locations for public access, parking, playgrounds, conservation areas, rain gardens, concepts for managing stormwater, and other features, aligned with site analysis and community feedback.



d. Plan or Sketch of Proposed Site Features. Include any other supporting graphics that illustrate the objectives of the project proposal. ([EXAMPLE PLAN](#))

7. Letters of Commitment of Secured Contributions/Matching Share (NOFO pg. 14) clearly stating the amount and type of contribution. Contributions from project sponsors must also be confirmed. Anticipated date of contributions should be made clear.

8. Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement (NOFO pg. 14-15). Applicants must disclose if aspects of this project overlap with those in any other Federal proposal or award. See NOFO for details on reporting requirements. If no federal overlap exists, a statement to that effect must be included.

9. Optional Documents (NOFO pg. 15-16) – Includes General Letters of support and case-specific disclosures and reports, see NOFO for detail. *While optional, Letters of Support are a key indicator of community outreach and involvement with the project, and are highly recommended by CT DEEP*

VI. CT DEEP Review Criteria and Selection Process

A: Initial Review

After intake of applications, CT DEEP will review applications for the following:

- Applicant Eligibility
- Application Completeness
- Project Eligibility

Missing application items and eligibility concerns will be discussed and assessed by DEEP prior to the full Merit Review.

B: Merit Review

Once a project application has been determined eligible and complete, DEEP program staff will review all application materials and gauge the merit of the proposal based on the Merit Criteria listed in the federal NOFO, and the clarity and veracity of the information and data presented in the application.

If selected for submission, CT DEEP will provide:

- A full review of the application, with an overall summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project and its application
- Redlines and comments on application materials, identifying areas of concern, follow-up questions, the need for additional information, and suggested changes.
- DEEP, as the State Lead Agency, will fill out all federal submission forms and submit the final application package on Grants.gov

If not selected for submission, CT DEEP will provide (as staff capacity allows):

- A report on the application, and the reasoning behind DEEP's decision
- Recommendations on appropriate next steps, including:
 - Further project research, development, or application work for a future ORLP application
 - Recommendations for other funding sources that fit the project better



- Discussion of project specifics to determine changes to increase eligibility or fit with this and other programs.

Federal Selection Process Overview

The NPS review process is described in the federal NOFO, Pages 17-23. And involves Eligibility and Comprehensive Merit Review segments. If selected for award, NPS may request additional information or further project details on submitted application materials. In addition, a full application (NOFO pg. 22-23) must be assembled and submitted within 1 calendar year. CT DEEP will provide guidance, assistance, and review of application materials prior to submission to NPS.

DEEP is committed to helping applicants produce complete and high-quality applications for submission to NPS. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to DEEP with any questions related to any aspect of their applications.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to Cameron Clegg with any questions:
Cameron.Clegg@ct.gov