Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers
Stewardship Council
PO Box 601 Westerly, RI 02891

October 2026

Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council Community Grant Proposal Process

Background

The Dingell Act, signed into US law in March of 2019, designated 7 rivers in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed as part of the prestigious National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This designation represents national recognition that these rivers (Beaver, Chipuxet, Green Fall – Ashaway, Pawcatuck, Queen-Usquepaugh, Shunock, Wood), as well as their tributaries, have outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values and should be protected and preserved for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) consists of Representatives from each of the 12 Rhode Island and Connecticut watershed towns, plus allied governmental and non-profit organizations. The Stewardship Council implements its Stewardship Plan for the rivers through voluntary action, public education, and offering technical and financial support to communities, nonprofits, tribal nations, and states. Funding for this Grant Program is provided by the U.S. National Park Service Wild and Scenic Rivers program and administered by the Stewardship Council.

Wild and Scenic Community Grants

The Stewardship Council is seeking grant applications for projects that promote stewardship of the watershed's rivers, streams, and brooks, or protect or enhance their outstandingly remarkable values. Grant proposals should address action strategies contained in Chapter Six of our Stewardship Plan. This year, proposals that address the following topics will receive elevated consideration:

- preserve and protect water quality and quantity
- preserve, protect, and restore habitat within or near a river or tributary
- reduce the impact of ecologically harmful species within or near a river or tributary

Who may apply:

- Non-profit organizations; local, state, and regional governmental agencies and commissions; Tribal and First Nations; public schools and other educational institutions. All other groups, individuals and businesses interested in applying for funding should partner with an eligible entity.
- Grant proposals must involve activities located in at least one town within the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed and, with only a few exceptions, occur within the watershed itself.
    - In RI: Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, North Kingstown, Richmond, South Kingstown, Westerly, West Greenwich.
    - In CT: North Stonington, Sterling, Stonington, Voluntown.
- Grant funds can be used as part of a larger project but cannot be used as a match for other federal grant funding.

    - The Stewardship Council does not allow any indirect cost charges on grants less than $25,000
- Due to our funding cycle, only grant requests that can meet a December 31, 2028 final report deadline are eligible to apply for this round of grants

Application and grant details

- Applications will be accepted from October 1, 2026 through December 29, 2026.
- Grants from $2,000 up to $20,000 are available.
- Applications will be acknowledged via email within 5 business days of receipt.
- Applicants will be notified of grant decisions via email by March 31, 2027
- After completing a memorandum of understanding (MOA), successful applicants will receive 80% of the requested grant amount with the final 20% of the award disbursed upon completion of the final report (see below). If more than 80% of the award is needed initially, the applicant must provide a detailed justification.
- Applications should be submitted via email to Casey Merkle, Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinator (coordinator@WPWildRivers.org)

Resources to Assist with Grant Ideas and Application

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Additional proposal topics include but are not limited to the following:

- Programs and initiatives that highlight the outstandingly remarkable values of the rivers, streams and brooks as documented in the Dingell Act:
    - Hydrology/Geology
    - Exceptional Ecosystems
    - Cultural
    - Scenic/Recreation
- Land preservation activities related to management of preserved lands or in support of land acquisition or conservation easements (e.g. attorney fees, survey fees, application fees, etc.) Grant requests towards the purchase price of land or conservation rights are not eligible.
- Planning and managing for climate resiliency
- The Stewardship Plan contains detailed information regarding each of the 7 rivers in the watershed.
- Chapter 6 of the Stewardship Plan is important to review. This section provides specific actions that can be used to generate ideas for grant proposals.
- Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Flood Resiliency Management Plan, Appendix F: Town Summary Sheets provide recommended actions for improving flood resiliency in each of the 12 towns in the watershed. These recommended actions can be used to generate ideas for grant proposals.

  If you have a question about your eligibility or need assistance filling out the application, please email Casey Merkle, Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinator (coordinator@WPWildRivers.org)

Please note: **Grant selection is a competitive process; submittal of a proposal does not guarantee funding**

Restrictions and Other Details

Grant proposals will not be accepted for review if any of the conditions below apply:

- Proposed activities are not located within at least one of the 12 towns of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed;
- Required permits for proposed deliverables have not been obtained prior to submission of the grant proposal;
- Grant request is for the actual purchase of land or conservation rights;
- Grant request is for more than the maximum grant amount (currently $20,000);
- Application is not complete;
- The application is received after December 29, 2026.

Funding may not be used for federally-mandated activities or to address violation enforcement requirements or mitigation. Funding may also not be used for entertainment, lobbying, illegal activities or any other restrictions associated with federal fund use.

- Proposed deliverables that are mandated as part of a regulatory requirement are not eligible. This may include mitigation for enforcement actions and/or permit requirements.
- If the grant proposal is one where human health or safety is a concern, the applicant may be required to provide proof of insurance.
- To combat the spread of ecologically harmful species, all equipment used in projects must be free of plant material and soil before entering the work area. Similarly, all material used (i.e., straw mulch, gravel) and any materials disposed of (i.e., soil) must also be clean.

Reporting Requirements

Contact Casey Merkle, Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinator (coordinator@WPWildRivers.org) for the final report template. Information needed for the template will include:

- a brief description of the funded activities (including title, purpose, outcome);
- a description of the budgeted funds and how they were spent with appended receipts;
- copies of any products (photos, maps, reports, digital and metadata, etc.);
- 2-3+ photographs or videos documenting grant activities
- other requirements as agreed to in the individual MOA