

# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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MassDEP’s Official Answers to Questions

Regarding the Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area

2025-2026 Grant Program

Posted on October 6, 2025

On September 12, 2025, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced the 2025-2026 Opportunity for the Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area (NRNSA) Grant Program (Grant Program). On September 18, 2025, at 1 p.m., MassDEP held a virtual Pre-Application Meeting. A [recording of the video](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality#natural-resource-nitrogen-sensitive-area-grant-program) is available on our website. Written questions from potential applicants were accepted through September 19, 2025. Written and verbal questions received, and their answers are summarized in accordance with Section 3 of the Grant Program’s Request for Responses, the Estimated Calendar for Grant Application/Award.

Below are MassDEP’s official Answers to all questions received by the September 19, 2025, deadline. All questions are formatted in **bold font** and answers are posted below questions in normal *italicized* font.

# Eligible Projects

## Question 1 (Q1): Is the development of the actual application for a Watershed Permit a fundable activity under this grant opportunity?

Answer 1 (A1): Yes, the preparation of the permit application is eligible for funding. As identified in Section E. “Eligible Projects” of the Request for Responses (RFR), eligible projects will assist Local Government Units in completing Watershed Management Plans for the purpose of applying for a Watershed Permit, including planning activities that contribute to, or come from, a Watershed Management Plan (WMP), a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), a Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (CWRMP), a Targeted Watershed Plan (TWMP), Watershed Permit application or De Minimis Load application (as defined in 314 CMR 21.00) will be considered for funding.

## Q2: Is the work to complete an update to an existing Watershed Permit a fundable activity under this grant opportunity?

A2: Yes. Worked performed for an application to update an existing Watershed Permit is an activity eligible for funding under this grant opportunity because it is a planning activity that contributes to, or comes from, a WAMP, CWMP, CWRMP, TWMP, Watershed Permit application or De Minimis Load application (as defined in 314 CMR 21.00). See RFR, Section 1.E.

## Q3: If groundwater monitoring is required as a watershed permit condition, would the sampling and analysis costs for that be eligible for funding under this grant opportunity?

A3: Yes. Pursuant to Section 1.E. “Eligible Projects” of the RFR, sampling and analysis costs connected to a watershed permit may be eligible costs if they are planning activities that “contribute to, or come from, a Watershed Management Plan (WMP), a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), a Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (CWRMP), a Targeted Watershed Plan (TWMP), Watershed Permit application or De Minimis Load application (as defined in 314 CMR 21.00).”

## Q4: Can you give us some examples of other planning activities?

*A4: Only planning activities that contribute to, or come from, a Watershed Management Plan (WMP), a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), a Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (CWRMP), a Targeted Watershed Plan (TWMP), Watershed Permit application or De Minimis Load application (as defined in 314 CMR 21.00) will be considered for funding. Examples of Eligible Projects include, but are not limited to:*

* + *Planning activities necessary to complete a watershed permit application as explained by 314 CMR 21.03(2) or De Minimis Load Exemption application as explained by 314 CMR 21.12. This includes, but is not limited to:* 
    - *Completing a Watershed Management Plan, CWMP, TWMP, or Scientific Evaluation;*
    - *Assessment of nitrogen loads; or*
    - *Modeling of nitrogen reduction scenarios.*
  + *Planning activities required by approved watershed permit. This may include, but is not limited to:* 
    - *Data analysis of ambient water quality monitoring results; or*
    - *Permeable reactive barrier design.*
    - *Review of ambient water quality monitoring, modeling, and/or other measures for the purpose of demonstrating de minimis load within a watershed or sub-watershed.*

# Eligible Entities

## Q5: Is a non-profit an eligible entity under this grant opportunity?

A5: No. A non-profit organization is not an eligible entity to apply for this grant opportunity. Pursuant to Section 1.D. of the RFR, Eligible Entities are regional or local government units that: (a) meet the regulatory definition of "Local Government Unit" as defined in 314 CMR 21.02; and (b) are seeking a Watershed Permit to address nitrogen pollution in at least one (1) of the 31 Cape Cod watersheds designated as an NRNSA under Title 5. The NRNSA Address Lookup Map can be found at: [MassDEP NRNSA Map Viewer I Mass.gov](https://mass-eoeea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=96035fe034044e2596b49168b0e35d8e)

# Award Questions

## Q6: The project that would be submitted, the work under the grant would have to be completed by the end of next June? Even if the work continues, the scope of the grant has to end then?

A6: Yes. Applicants may seek funding for Eligible Projects that will exceed the length of the grant award period (i.e., past June 30, 2026); however, only work that is proposed to be completed on or before June 30, 2026, is eligible to be funded. This is due to the fact that funding for this program is appropriated annually by the Legislature. See RFR, Section 1.H.

# Misc. Questions

## Q7: Next step is to file the watershed permit. Just curious, what the level of effort is involved with doing that?

*A7: Each applicant will need to determine for itself whether it has sufficient expertise on staff to file a watershed permit application, or if they will need to contract for professional services to assist them with those efforts. Watershed permit application requirements are outlined at* [*314 CMR 21.00*](https://www.mass.gov/doc/314-cmr-21-massachusetts-watershed-permit-regulations/download)*.*

This information is available in alternate format. Please contact MassDEP at 617-292-5500

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