



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

# Department of Environmental Protection

100 Cambridge Street Suite 900 Boston, MA 02114 • 617-292-5500

Maura T. Healey  
Governor

Kimberley Driscoll  
Lieutenant Governor

Rebecca L. Tepper  
Secretary

Bonnie Heiple  
Commissioner

## **NOTICE OF GRANT OPPORTUNITY**

### **NATURAL RESOURCE NITROGEN SENSITIVE AREA 2023-2024 GRANT PROGRAM**

**Summary of Grant Opportunity:** The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP or the Department) seeks proposals from Massachusetts municipalities or other government entities that meet the definition of "Local Government Unit," as defined in 314 CMR 21.02, and have a watershed that has been designated as a Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area under 310 CMR 15.000, Title 5. The purpose of this grant program is to assist municipalities in a variety of activities which facilitate completion of a Watershed Management Plan (WMP) for the purpose of completing a Watershed Permit application or De Minimis Load application, each of which address solutions to cultural eutrophication caused by nitrogen pollution from wastewater and other sources. Only planning activities that contribute to or come from a Watershed Management Plan, Watershed Permit application, or De Minimis Load application (as defined in 314 CMR 21.00) will be considered for funding. For more information, please see the Notice of Grant Opportunity.

**Grant Opportunity Application and Requirements:** The Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area Grant Program document was issued on December 12, 2023, and is posted on MassDEP's website at the following link:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality#natural-resource-nitrogen-sensitive-area-grant-program>

**Environmental Justice:** MassDEP is committed to advancing equity, diversity, and environmental justice (EJ) through its public investments. The agency seeks to prioritize the direction of these resources to benefit EJ communities and to address environmental inequities. To that end, MassDEP grant and funding programs include criteria and evaluation parameters that emphasize equity, diversity and environmental justice, consistent with each program's statutory authority and source of funding. Preference will be given to projects that provide direct benefit to environmental justice populations. Information on which communities are classified as environmental justice populations can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/environmental-justice-populations-in-massachusetts>.

**Eligible Entities:** 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 one (1) of the 31 Cape Cod watersheds designated as an NRNSA under Title 5. The NRNSA Address Lookup Map can be found at <https://mass-eoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=96035fe034044e2596b49168b0e35d8e>

This information is available in alternate format. Please contact Melixza Esenyie at 617-626-1282.

TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370

MassDEP Website: [www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep)

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Local Government Unit - Any town, city, district, county, commission, agency, authority, board or other instrumentality of the commonwealth or of any of its political subdivisions, including any Local Government Unit (314 CMR 21.02).

**Eligible Projects:** Eligible projects will assist Local Government Units in completing Watershed Management Plans for the purpose of applying for a Watershed Permit, each of which address solutions to cultural eutrophication caused by nitrogen pollution from wastewater and other sources. Proposed projects must be in one (1) of the 31 Cape Cod watersheds designated as an NRNSA to be eligible. Interested applicants can use the MassDEP Designated Natural Resource Area Nitrogen Sensitive Area Address Lookup Map to determine if their project is eligible. The NRNSA Address Lookup Map can be found at <https://mass-eoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=96035fe034044e2596b49168b0e35d8e>

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. Preference will be given to Eligible Projects that provide a benefit to the Local Government Unit's environmental justice populations, if present and applicable.

Watershed Management Plan or WMP – A plan that:

- (a) is consistent with a 208 Plan, if such plan exists, as determined by the designated areawide planning agency under § 208 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1288;
- (b) includes or is supplemented with the information and documentation specified in 314 CMR 21.03(2), unless the Department determines otherwise;
- (c) is based on one or more Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plans (CWMPs), Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plans (CWRMPs), or Targeted Watershed Management Plans (TWMPs), as defined in 314 CMR 21.02, which may serve as the WMP if all requirements of this definition are met; and
- (d) provides a schedule and description of actions to achieve Necessary Nitrogen Load Reductions. Unless otherwise determined by the Department, the WMP may address pollutants other than nitrogen (314 CMR 21.02).

Watershed Permit – A permit issued by the Department pursuant to 314 CMR 21.00 for one or more watersheds with a term of no longer than 20 years, including the Pleasant Bay Watershed Permit (Permit No. 001-0) that was issued August 3, 2018, by the Department prior to the promulgation of 314 CMR 21.00 (314 CMR 21.02).

Both existing and proposed projects are eligible for this grant program, and funding will support work activities for the planning phase of Watershed Management Plans or a Watershed Permit, so long as the work funded by this program is conducted during FY2024 (i.e., July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024). All applications must include a feasible timeline for completion of the proposed work (i.e., illustrating that the work being proposed for funding can be completed on or before the June 30, 2024, deadline). For proposed projects including work conducted before submission of the Grant Application, but on or after July 1, 2023, the Applicant must provide documentation, such as invoices, in the Grant Application.

Only planning activities that contribute to, or come from, either a Watershed Management Plan or a Watershed Permit (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 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.

Construction or implementation projects will not be considered for funding. Examples of projects that are not eligible for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Construction or implementation projects, including but not limited to:
  - Construction of approved sewerage;
  - Upgrades to existing wastewater treatment facilities and/or septic systems; or
  - Installation of a permeable reactive barrier.
- Continued operation or maintenance of wastewater treatment facilities or upgraded septic systems.

Ownership of all equipment or resources purchased pursuant to a grant award shall remain the property of the grantee.

**Funding Availability:** MassDEP anticipates that up to \$300,000 in total funding may be available for projects through this program. Grant Awards may range from \$20,000 to \$300,000 per applicant, although MassDEP reserves the right, in its discretion, to grant smaller awards to proposals of exceptional merit. If there are remaining unspent capital funds available from other Department projects during the period between the announcement of this grant opportunity and the announcement of the grant awards, the Department reserves the right to allocate supplemental funds to this grant solicitation and/or initiate additional funding rounds.

Applicants may seek funding for Eligible Projects that will exceed the length of the grant award period (i.e., past June 30, 2024); however, only work that is proposed to be completed on or before June 30, 2024, is eligible for funding. In addition, work conducted after July 1, 2023, but before the date of the execution of the grant contract award, may also be eligible for funding. All funding for awards issued through this program are subject to the availability of appropriations or funding from other Department sources.

**Grant Application Process:** The Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area Grant Program document on MassDEP's website contains a grant application form, a procurement schedule describing the steps of the application process, all project proposal and qualification requirements, and a specific format for responding to this Grant Opportunity.

**Bidders' Conference:** A Bidders' Conference using Microsoft Teams will be held on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at 10:00 AM to field questions from Grant Applicants. To obtain the meeting link information or the Teams link please contact Caroline Adamson via email at [Caroline.P.Adamson@mass.gov](mailto:Caroline.P.Adamson@mass.gov) with "FY 2024 NRNSA Grant Bidders' Conference Details" in the email subject line.

**Evaluation Criteria:** The evaluation criteria components for MassDEP’s review and scoring of proposals are as specified in the Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area Grant Program Document.

**Application Deadline:** Applications are due electronically by 5:00 P.M., E.S.T. on Friday, January 5, 2024.

**Match and Other Funding Obligations:** Applicants are not required to provide matching funds. However, applicants are encouraged to identify other known sources of funding for a proposed project on the Application Form, from both secured and anticipated sources, which may make the Application more competitive during review and evaluation by MassDEP.

In addition, Applicants are advised that grant awards involving capital funds are required to be disbursed on a cost reimbursement basis, meaning that grantees will be reimbursed for funds already expended. To receive reimbursement for funds expended, grantees must submit a written request for payment, along with any other required documentation. Grantees are strongly encouraged to submit written requests for payment, and any corresponding supporting documentation, on or before June 30, 2024, as well. Please see section 1.L. for more information on required documents.

**Additional Information:** for additional information regarding the Natural Resource Nitrogen Sensitive Area Grant Program, please refer to the MassDEP website link:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality#natural-resource-nitrogen-sensitive-area-grant-program->