

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY &  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION**

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**Request for Response (RFR)**

**Eelgrass Restoration and Carbon Study  
Grant Opportunity**

**BWR-RFR-2026-WET01**

**December 1, 2025**

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This information is available in alternate format.  
Please contact MassDEP at 617-292-5002.  
TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370  
MassDEP Website: [www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep)



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Department of Environmental Protection**

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**Eelgrass Restoration and Carbon Study  
Grant Opportunity  
Request for Responses**

<b>Applications due:</b>	<b>January 12, 2026</b>
<b>Total funding available:</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Grant amounts:</b>	<b>Up to \$500,000;</b>
<b>Questions due:</b>	<b>December 16, 2025, by 5pm;</b>
<b>Responses provided:</b>	<b>December 23, 2025, by 5pm.</b>

**1.SUMMARY GRANT OPPORTUNITY**

- A. Proposals Sought:** The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (“MassDEP” or the “Department”) seeks grant proposals for an eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) restoration and monitoring project designed to also quantify carbon storage, sequestration rates, and/or emissions, within natural and restored eelgrass meadows in Massachusetts.
  
- B. Background:** This Grant Opportunity is funded through the Climate Protection and Mitigation Expendable Trust (“The Trust”). The Trust is designed to “support programs and projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change.”

Eelgrass serves many important functions, including providing fisheries habitat, primary production for coastal food webs, shoreline stabilization and potential amelioration of localized ocean acidification. Eelgrass meadows also serve as sources of carbon sequestration, acting as a carbon sink by sequestering carbon in the surrounding sediments for decades and centuries, according to a recent EPA study entitled *The Blue Carbon Reservoirs from Maine to Long Island NY*, published in March of 2023 (EPA Report).

The EPA Report also estimated that approximately 278,490 Mg of carbon is stored in the top 30 cm of sediment in the mapped eelgrass in Massachusetts. According to EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, this amount is equivalent to greenhouse gas emissions from approximately 238,184 gas powered vehicles for one year or CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from approximately 2,364,132 barrels of oil consumed ([Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator | US EPA](#)). Ongoing work by EPA and others has found consistent carbon concentrations at significantly deeper depths below eelgrass meadows, indicating that the carbon stock associated with eelgrass meadows is likely much higher than the EPA study's estimate.

MassDEP's long-standing eelgrass mapping program has documented a steady decline in eelgrass over the last 30 years. Mapping data show that as of 2024 Massachusetts has only half the coverage of eelgrass than was present in 1995, underscoring the need to take immediate action to better protect eelgrass habitats from anthropogenic activities and to support restoration. Because of eelgrass' ability to sequester carbon deep in the sediments, declining eelgrass coverage may be linked to declines in carbon storage and increases in greenhouse gas emissions.

Among the recommendations of the 2023 EPA Report was the need to better understand the link between eelgrass meadow characteristics and carbon storage. The Massachusetts Interagency Coastal Wetlands Climate Resilience Work Group has also recommended focused work on restoration efforts that will be designed to tolerate climate stressors. For example, researchers are experimenting with conditioning eelgrass seeds to warmer temperatures before planting, germinating seeds in the lab under different conditions, and moving plants from southern warmer areas up to New England. More work is needed on these experimental solutions, and they need to be tested in the field in Massachusetts.

Through this grant opportunity MassDEP intends to support projects that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the restoration of eelgrass, mitigate the impacts of climate change through the development of resilient restoration methods, and further our knowledge of the capacity of eelgrass to store and exchange carbon.

- C. Eligible Entities:** Eligible applicants for this grant opportunity are any Commonwealth state or local governmental entities, Commonwealth quasi-governmental entities, non-profit entities, or academic institutions.
  
- D. Eligible Projects:** This grant opportunity focuses on assessing the capacity of eelgrass to sequester carbon and supporting the restoration of eelgrass to increase this capacity. Through this opportunity, MassDEP seeks innovative proposals from qualified, eligible

entities to develop and implement an eelgrass restoration project alongside efforts to measure carbon sequestration and/or carbon and greenhouse gas fluxes. This work will help mitigate the impacts of climate change from greenhouse gas emissions and enable MassDEP to better understand restoration methodologies and the relationship between carbon and eelgrass.

The selected grantee(s) will be expected to develop an eelgrass restoration and monitoring project in Massachusetts and address at least two (2) of the four (4) following questions:

- 1) How much carbon do eelgrass meadows store? An approach to answering this question may include collecting cores in eelgrass meadows throughout Massachusetts marine waters and quantifying carbon stocks to a sufficiently deep core depth.
- 2) To what extent does carbon sequestration and/or greenhouse gas or carbon fluxes differ in eelgrass meadows with different characteristics? A possible approach to answering this question may include the measurement of carbon or greenhouse gas fluxes and/or carbon sequestration in:
  - a. long-time established “natural” eelgrass meadows (over 20 years) compared with restored beds at different stages of restoration, from newly planted to several years of successful growth;
  - b. stressed and declining meadows compared with healthy and persistent meadows;
  - c. meadows characterized by ephemeral or dynamic patches compared with stable and persistent eelgrass meadows; or
  - d. quantification of carbon exported from eelgrass meadows through lateral carbon fluxes.
- 3) How will carbon sequestration change under different sea level rise scenarios and/or increasing sea water temperatures? An approach to answering these questions may include modeling changes in the extent and characteristics of eelgrass associated changes in carbon storage.
- 4) Are there successful eelgrass restoration methods that are more resilient to climate change impacts and can be used in Massachusetts? An approach to answering this question may involve the development and implementation of a restoration method that takes climate impacts, such as changing temperature, depth, sediment type, invasive species, and frequency of storms, into consideration to make eelgrass restoration more resilient to these climate driven factors.

#### **E. Disadvantaged Communities**

MassDEP is committed to advancing Disadvantaged Communities through its public investments. To that end, preference will be given to projects that provide direct benefit to Disadvantaged Communities. Information on how communities are classified as Disadvantaged Communities and which communities they are can be found at [The Disadvantaged Community Loan Forgiveness Program | Mass.gov](#)

This Grant Opportunity will prioritize proposals that are located in, or directly benefit communities designated as a Disadvantaged Community, and that fall within one of three Affordability Tiers following a system first utilized by the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust and the State Revolving Fund. A “Disadvantaged Community” is a community that falls into one of the three tiers using an affordability calculation based on the State’s “Adjusted Per Capita Income” (Per Capita Income \* Employment Rate \* Population Change (2020/2010) = APCI). The State’s Adjusted Per Capita Income for the purposes of this RFR is \$53,549.85, from FY25, the most recent year data is currently available.

- Tier 1: Communities with APCI more than 80% but less than 100% of the State’s APCI.
- Tier 2: Communities with APCI more than 60% but less than 80% of the State’s APCI.
- Tier 3: Communities with APCI less than 60% of the State’s APCI.

The [FY25 Disadvantaged Communities Affordability Calculations](#) are available online.

Eligible applicants, including partnerships and coalitions, shall identify the municipalities served by their entity or entities, as well as which municipalities within their service area(s) are designated as Tier 1, 2, or 3 Disadvantaged Communities. MassDEP will assign a composite ranking based on the ranking of all the communities located within the service areas of the applicant(s). If the composite ranking falls within the scope of the assistance tiers, the Applicant will be assigned a Tier 1, 2, or 3 ranking for scoring purposes of the RFR. A list of communities by Tier is available in **Attachment B** of this RFR.

- F. Funding Availability:** Up to \$500,000 in total funding is available for this solicitation over two (2) years. MassDEP may elect not to award the total funding currently available during this grant opportunity. In addition, MassDEP reserves the right to increase award amount(s), issue additional or multiple award(s), or to initiate additional funding rounds. All awards are subject to the availability of funds. Due to the potential size and scope of proposed projects we expect to make one or two large awards and encourage collaborative team proposals.
- G. Match Preference:** While applicants are not required to provide matching funds or an in-kind match, a match is strongly preferred. Applicants are encouraged to identify other known sources of funding for a proposed project on the cover sheet, from both secured and anticipated sources. Matches from non-Eligible Entities are permitted; however, please be advised that any resulting grant award will be with the Eligible Entity only.
- H. Total Anticipated Duration of Grant(s):** The grant duration will be two (2) years from the date of full execution of the Grant Award Contract. MassDEP reserves the right, in its discretion, to issue a time-limited, performance-only contract extension to facilitate completion of performance, consistent with the terms of the grant award contract and the Trust.
- I. Applicable Procurement Law:** Grants – MGL c. 7A, § 7; St. 1986 c. 206, § 17; 815 CMR 2.00.
- J. Funding Conditions and Reporting Requirements:**

Grant awards will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis, meaning grantees will be reimbursed for funds already expended, unless a Grantee can demonstrate with sufficient financial documentation that it would be unable to implement its proposed project on a reimbursement basis. To receive reimbursement for funds expended, grantees must submit written requests for reimbursement, along with any other required documentation.

All work must be completed by the end of the two-year contract term.

An Interim Report after the first year and a Final Report after the second year shall be submitted to the Department. The project interim report shall specify up to that time how the funds were allocated, the preliminary results of the restoration project, and the preliminary findings of the carbon in eelgrass investigation.

Upon completion of the project, and with submission of the final request for reimbursement, the grant awardees shall submit the Final Report. The Final Report shall include a summary of how the project addressed the selected questions from Section D. above, with summarized data on restoration success and findings of the carbon in eelgrass investigation. Appendices of raw data tables shall also be provided. If the study will continue after this funding is complete, a description of the next steps and further work needed should also be included. After completion of the Final Report the awardee will be asked to present the project virtually or in person to MassDEP and other interested stakeholders.

MassDEP reserves the right to request additional materials, information, or other documentary evidence demonstrating completion of work and/or compliance with grant requirements. Specific reporting requirements, documentation, invoicing, site visit, and presentation requirements will be included in the contract scope of work to be negotiated after an applicant has been selected for an award. MassDEP also reserves the right to withhold funding until receipt and acceptance of satisfactory materials, information, or other documentary evidence, demonstrating completion of work and/or compliance with grant requirements.

- K. Ownership of Equipment or Other Resources Paid for with Grant Funds:** Equipment or other resources paid for with grant funds shall be owned and maintained solely by the Grantee, unless otherwise negotiated between MassDEP and the Grantee pursuant to a Grant Award Contract. Consistent with the Commonwealth's standard Terms and Conditions, MassDEP reserves the right to assert ownership and possession over all deliverables purchased or developed with state funds, including data sets.
- L. Compliance with Other Applicable State or Federal Legislative, Regulatory or Policy Requirements:** All potential applicants are advised that through submission of an application, the applicant agrees to be responsible for compliance with all applicable federal, state, or local permitting, regulatory, policy, or other requirements if selected for a grant award.

## 2. APPLICATION INFORMATION

- A. Application Deadline:** Applications are due by January 12, 2026, 5:00 p.m. EST

- B. Page Limit:** Grant applications must not exceed **ten (10) single-sided pages**, not including the cover sheet and attached supporting documents.
- C. Opportunity to Submit Written Questions:** Applicants may submit written questions by email to the MassDEP Carbon and Eelgrass CMT Grant Project Manager, Tay Evans, at [n.tay.evans@mass.gov](mailto:n.tay.evans@mass.gov), by December 16, 2025. Please use “Question, Eelgrass and Carbon CMT grant” in the subject line. All submitted questions and MassDEP’s official answers will be posted on COMMBUYS and MassDEP’s website here: [Water Resources Grants & Financial Assistance | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/water-resources-grants-financial-assistance) by 5 p.m. on December 23, 2025. All deadlines are in the Estimated Calendar for Grant Application/Award in section 4. below.

Please note that MassDEP will not respond to substantive questions regarding this grant opportunity after the December 16, 2025, question submission deadline.

### 3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION

- A. Required Information:** To be considered for a grant award, applicants must submit a completed application that: (1) includes a completed application cover sheet (Attachment A); (2) affirmatively commits to completing the project by the end of the two-year contract term; and (3) meets the eligibility requirements.
- B. Evaluation Criteria:** A MassDEP review committee will evaluate proposals based upon the criteria listed below. The application must address each of the evaluation criteria. The review committee reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.
- 1) *Project Description (25 points)*
    - a. How well does the proposed project, as described, address at least two of the four questions posed in Section 1.D of the Project Summary above?
    - b. How well does the applicant make the case that their proposed project will address an ongoing discussion or fill a gap in the scientific literature with regard to carbon sequestration and/or flux dynamics in eelgrass and the need for eelgrass restoration in the region.
    - c. How well does the Applicant present the eelgrass restoration plan, does it include methods and site selection justification? Does the plan demonstrate that the project has been designed and the site has been selected to increase the possibility of a successful eelgrass restoration?
    - d. Does the project description include proposed project tasks, personnel, success criteria and other metrics that will be used to measure success and desired outcome(s) for the project?
    - e. Does the project description include a discussion of deliverables, including an interim and final report that will detail how the funds are allocated and the results of the restoration project and carbon investigation, including monitoring data in electronic format and an analysis of results?
  - 2) *Project Benefit (25 points)*
    - a. How well does the Applicant demonstrate that the project is both consistent with, and will advance, the stated goals of the Climate Mitigation Trust (i.e., the

reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and/or mitigation of the impacts of climate change?)

- b. How well does the Application demonstrate that the project will substantially increase our understanding of carbon storage, flux and/or emissions in eelgrass?
- c. How well does the Applicant demonstrate that the project has been designed and the site has been selected to increase the possibility of a successful eelgrass restoration?

3) *Qualifications of Project Team and Organization (20 points)*

- a. How well does the Applicant demonstrate the qualifications of the Project Manager and organization to carry out the proposed work?
- b. Does the Applicant demonstrate a track record of accomplishing similar projects?
- c. Does the Applicant demonstrate a sound governance structure and record of fiscal responsibility?

4) *Budget and Timeline (20 points)*

- a. How well does the Applicant demonstrate a realistic understanding of project costs by providing a budget table with detailed and credible cost estimates?
- b. Does the Applicant identify and describe any match or other funding sources that will support the project? Is the applicant partnering with any other organizations to implement the project?
- c. How well does the Applicant describe the timeline for the proposed work? Is it demonstrated that the work can feasibly be completed within two years of the Notice to Proceed?

5) *Financial Need (5 points)*

- a. How well does the applicant demonstrate a need for financial assistance to implement the proposed project?

6) *Disadvantaged Communities (5 points)*

- a) *MassDEP will prioritize projects that are in, or directly benefit, Disadvantaged Communities. Points will be awarded proportionately by tier (i.e. the highest number of points will be given to Applicants with projects in communities that have been designated Tier 3 Disadvantaged Communities). Please see Attachment B for a list of Disadvantaged Communities by Tier as determined by the Clean Water Trust for FY25.*

**C. Application Completion and Submission Instructions**

All grant applicants must include the attached cover sheet (Attachment A) with their application and submit the packet electronically by email by 5:00 p.m. EST on January 12, 2026.

The COMMBUYS bid number for this grant opportunity is [BD-26-1045-BWR00-BWR01-123283](#)

Please submit applications, via email, to:

Tay Evans, Carbon and Eelgrass CMT Grant Project Manager, at [n.tay.evans@mass.gov](mailto:n.tay.evans@mass.gov)

Application emails should include in the subject line: “Applicant Name – CARBON AND EELGRASS CMT GRANT”).

Sections 1 and 2 of Attachment A must be included with the application. Attachment A is at the end of this document and also available for download at the grant website.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. MassDEP reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or request additional information, if needed.

#### D. Additional Required Documentation

If selected for a grant award, the applicant will be required to submit the following forms to complete the grant award contracting process. All forms are available on the [Comptroller’s Website](#).

- [Commonwealth Standard Contract Form](#), filled out and signed by the applicant. [Commonwealth Terms and Conditions](#). These Terms and Conditions are incorporated by reference into the Standard Contract Form, and do not need to be executed separately.
- [Commonwealth Alternative W-9](#) tax information form filled out and signed by the applicant with DUNS number and Federal Tax ID
- [Completed Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing](#) Form
- Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) form, provided by MassDEP upon award
- Detailed Scope of Work

Applicants are encouraged to review these forms prior to submission of an application.

## 4. ESTIMATED CALENDAR FOR GRANT APPLICATION/AWARD

EVENT	DATE	TIME
<b>NOTICE OF GRANT OPPORTUNITY</b> (posted on COMMBUYS and MassDEP website)	December 1, 2025	
<b>Grant Application Release Date</b> (posted on COMMBUYS and MassDEP website)	December 1, 2025	
<b>Deadline for Submission of Written Questions</b> (via email to <a href="mailto:n.tay.evans@mass.gov">n.tay.evans@mass.gov</a> )	December 16, 2025	5:00 p.m.
<b>Estimated Publication of Official Answers to Submitted Questions</b> (published on COMMBUYS and MassDEP website)	December 23, 2025	

EVENT	DATE	TIME
<b>Grant Opportunity &amp; Application Amendment Deadline</b> (if applicable updated documents will be published on COMMBUYS and MassDEP's website)	December 23, 2025	5:00 p.m.
<b>Deadline for Submission of Grant Proposals</b> ( <i>via email to n.tay.evans@mass.gov</i> )	January 12, 2026	5:00 p.m.
<b>Notification of Grant Awards (Estimated)</b>	April, 2026	
<b>Estimated Contract Start Date</b>	May, 2026	

# ATTACHMENT A

## EELGRASS RESTORTION AND CARBON STUDY GRANT

### 2026 Grant Program Application Form

**Overview:** The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (“MassDEP” or the “Department”) seeks grant proposals from Eligible Entities to quantify existing carbon storage, sequestration and emissions within natural and restored eelgrass meadows in Massachusetts through an eelgrass restoration and monitoring project.

**PLEASE COMPLETE SECTIONS 1 AND 2 AND INCLUDE IT WITH YOUR APPLICATION**

#### **Section 1: Applicant Information**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Short description of the project (<5 sentences):

Requested Funds: \_\_\_\_\_ Matching Funds (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person completing form: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**By checking this box  the applicant confirms that it is authorized to submit this grant application on behalf of the organization or entity listed above.**

#### **Section 2: Ability to Perform Proposed project**

**A. Ability to Use Funds:** If awarded a Grant, the awardee must be able to enter into a contract with MassDEP within 30 days of Grant Award.

**By checking this box  the Applicant acknowledges and agrees that it is able to enter into the contract and perform the project and meet all requirements of this state grant.**

### **Section 3: Application Guide**

***Consistent with the Evaluation Criteria outlined in the Grant Opportunity document, please include the following in your application, in no more than ten (10) pages:***

**Project Description:** Describe the proposed project and the proposed work to be covered by this funding. This project description should include project tasks and desired outcome(s) for the project, as well as how the proposed project meets the Funding Goals in section 1.D.(to quantify existing carbon storage, sequestration and/or emissions within eelgrass and conduct an eelgrass restoration).

**Project Benefit:** Provide information about how the project will benefit the Commonwealth and further our quantitative estimates of carbon in eelgrass while furthering eelgrass restoration efforts in the Commonwealth.

**Qualifications of Organization:** Describe the qualifications of the organization to carry out the proposed work.

**Project Budget and Timeline:** Detail the anticipated cost associated with the proposed project. Demonstrate a realistic understanding of project costs by providing a budget table with detailed and credible cost estimates. Identify and describe any match or other funding sources that will support the proposed project. Describe the timeline for the proposed project, including how it will be completed within the grant term.

**Financial Need:** Explain the need for financial assistance to implement the proposed project, including other anticipated or secured funding sources that will support portions of the project (if applicable).

**Disadvantaged Community Status:** Please identify all municipalities served by the Applicant; indicate which of those municipalities are designated as Tier 1, 2, or 3 Disadvantaged Communities.

## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **Disadvantaged Communities by Tier**

#### **Tier 1:**

Amesbury, Ayer, Barnstable, Berkley, Billerica, Bourne, Braintree, Brewster, Cummington, Deerfield, Dighton, Douglas, East Longmeadow, Eastham, Falmouth, Gloucester, Great Barrington, Groveland, Hampden, Harwich, Hopedale, Hudson, Hull, Kingston, Lakeville, Leyden, Lunenburg, Mashpee, Maynard, Medford, Merrimac, Millis, North Attleborough, Northampton, Northbridge, Norwood, Pembroke, Pepperell, Plainville, Plymouth, Plympton, Raynham, Rehoboth, Richmond, Rochester, Rutland, Seekonk, Southampton, Sterling, Stockbridge, Sturbridge, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, Uxbridge, Waltham, West Bridgewater, West Tisbury, Westhampton, Westminster, Westport, Wilbraham, Winthrop, and Woburn

#### **Tier 2:**

Abington, Acushnet, Agawam, Alford, Ashburnham, Ashby, Attleboro, Auburn, Avon, Becket, Belchertown, Bellingham, Blackstone, Blandford, Bridgewater, Brimfield, Carver, Charlton, Clinton, Conway, Dalton, Dartmouth, Dennis, Dracut, East Bridgewater, East Brookfield, Easthampton, Egremont, Fairhaven, Framingham, Freetown, Granby, Granville, Hadley, Halifax, Hanson, Hatfield, Haverhill, Hinsdale, Holbrook, Holland, Hubbardston, Huntington, Lancaster, Lee, Leicester, Leominster, Malden, Marlborough, Methuen, Middleborough, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Monson, Monterey, Montgomery, Mount Washington, New Ashford, New Braintree, New Marlborough, Northfield, Norton, Oakham, Otis, Oxford, Paxton, Peabody, Pelham, Petersham, Phillipston, Quincy, Randolph, Revere, Rockland, Rowe, Salem, Salisbury, Saugus, Sheffield, Shirley, Somerset, South Hadley, Southwick, Stoughton, Swansea, Townsend, West Boylston, West Brookfield, Weymouth, Whitman, Williamstown, Worthington, and Yarmouth

#### **Tier 3:**

Adams, Amherst, Ashfield, Athol, Barre, Bernardston, Brockton, Brookfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Chelsea, Cheshire, Chester, Chesterfield, Chicopee, Clarksburg, Colrain, Dudley, Erving, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Florida, Gardner, Gill, Goshen, Gosnold, Greenfield, Hancock, Hardwick, Hawley, Heath, Holyoke, Lanesborough, Lawrence, Lowell, Ludlow, Lynn, Middlefield, Monroe, Montague, New Bedford, New Salem, North Adams, North Brookfield, Oak Bluffs, Orange, Palmer, Peru, Pittsfield, Plainfield, Royalston, Russell, Sandisfield, Savoy, Shelburne, Shutesbury, Southbridge, Spencer, Springfield, Sunderland, Taunton, Templeton, Tisbury, Tolland, Tyringham, Wales, Ware, Wareham, Warren, Warwick, Webster, Wendell, West Springfield, Westfield, Whately, Williamsburg, Winchendon, Windsor, and Worcester

**Date Source:** [FY25 Disadvantaged Communities Calculations](#)

**Note:** FY25 is the most current year for which data was available at the time of the publication of this RFR. New calculations are typically published in October.