



*October 2021*

## **FISHING IS FUN GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

Fishing Is Fun provides up to \$600,000 in federal and state matching funds annually to local Colorado communities and organizations for the development and improvement of Colorado's aquatic resources and angling opportunities. The grants **REIMBURSE** project sponsors for up to 75 percent of approved expenses. The following Fishing Is Fun grant program guidelines discuss:

- eligible applicants,
- eligible project types and elements,
- project application and implementation timetables,
- project selection and approval process,
- cost-sharing requirements and details, and
- post-award processes, requirements and rules.

An example of a completed application is provided, as is a blank application form. A fillable application form and this entire program guidelines booklet is available on-line at the Fishing Is Fun program's page on Colorado Parks and Wildlife's website at:  
<http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/FishingIsFunProgram.aspx>

### **WHO MAY APPLY**

A wide range of entities are eligible to apply for Fishing is Fun grants including: local and county governments, park and recreation departments, open space departments, water districts, landowners, angling organizations, land and water trusts, conservation groups and other non-profit organizations. Applicants may not participate in more than two projects annually. Separate chapters or units of statewide organizations are considered as separate applicants. Two or more local agencies may form a partnership to conduct a project.

For applicants with limited experience with grant administration, state contracting, permitting, or fund management, partnering with a county or municipality can facilitate project management. While such partnerships are encouraged they are not required.

## ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

The Fishing Is Fun Grant Program is designed to improve Colorado's sportfishing resources and anglers' ability to access them. Characteristics of projects that can help meet those goals include:

- The project will assist Colorado Parks and Wildlife in reaching its Strategic Plan goals, most notably an increase in angler recreation days or angler satisfaction.
- Proposed improvements are substantial in nature.
- The project directly relates to an improvement in or access to the sportfishing resource.
- Features will be maintained for the life of the project for sportfishing purposes, normally considered to be 20 years.
- Public access to the sportfishing resource is assured for the useful life of the project.
- The project is a cost-effective investment.
- Physical facilities will be of barrier free construction and be open to all anglers.

The Fishing Is Fun program has historically supported four broad categories of projects. However, project proponents are encouraged to propose other innovative projects if they can meet the goal of the FIF program – improvements to Colorado's angling recreation resources.

The four main categories of projects are:

1. **New Angler Access** - This category covers projects developing access to streams and lakes that have been previously closed to the public or to lands that are owned by public agencies but have been largely inaccessible by the public for lack of development or other site challenges. Access can be accomplished by easements, leases, or in some cases, fee title acquisition. It can include site and facility development associated with that access such as trails or access steps to fishing waters. It can also include identification of and signage for existing, but underutilized publicly owned angling access.

2. **Habitat Development** - Includes in-stream structures, bank stabilization, erosion control, revegetation, submerged fish habitat improvements, and renovation to irrigation diversion structures to facilitate fish migration or float angling access.

In-stream habitat project often present specialized challenges and require specific skills. For projects involving in-stream habitat work, early consultation with CPW aquatic biologists is strongly advised. Improvements based on the Natural Channel Design approach is also advised. A link to a Natural Channel Design checklist and background document is available on the Fishing Is Fun page on the CPW website. CPW aquatic biologists can also advise project sponsors on firms experienced with Natural Channel Design. Project sponsors have also often found it helpful for CPW aquatic biologists to be involved with the contractor selection process.

3. **Fishing Site Improvements** - This category includes development activities at existing public fishing sites such as restrooms, angler trails, fishing piers, shade shelters, parking lots, and other angler amenities.

**4. Boat Access** - This category covers all types of amenities associated with motor boat access. Projects can be on rivers or lakes and include improvements such as boat ramps, docks, restrooms, parking lots, fencing and access road improvements.

Fishing Is Fun projects often include one or more of the following elements:

- Construction or renovation of public fishing ponds
- Construction or renovation of boat ramps, docks, or fishing piers
- Restrooms (1)
- Stream or lake habitat improvement structures
- Fencing of stream riparian habitat
- Facility improvements such as access trails, parking, shade shelters, bank stabilization
- Angler access structures
- Public access for stream or lake fishing by fee title, easement or lease (2)

(1) If restrooms are involved, they must be an integral part of a fisheries project and substantially benefit anglers. Grant funding must be commensurate with the overall project benefit to anglers, i.e. costs may be pro-rated to reflect anticipated angler share of usage.

(2) If new public access involving a property interest (i.e. access easement, fee title acquisition) is part of a project, the sponsor must contact the FIF program coordinator early in the process and prior to submitting the application. Additional requirements are involved with real estate actions that must be addressed by CPW staff.

## **INELIGIBLE PROJECT ELEMENTS**

No grants will be made for overhead, program administration, planning or research. Awards are not given for contingency funds or unanticipated overages. Grants will not be made for any project not available to the general public for fishing purposes or for ventures with a commercial emphasis. "Seed" money or general operations funds are not available from Fishing is Fun. BBQ pits, RV hookups and non-fishing related amenities are not eligible for reimbursement or for use as match.

Projects that are designed primarily to benefit other outdoor recreation activities that may conflict with angling will be closely scrutinized. Whitewater parks are a recent example of projects that may result in habitat or usage impacts that can impair a quality angling experience. Applicants should work with CPW aquatic biologists to assure potential conflicts will be avoided.

Proposals such as fishing clinics, aquatic displays or angler education are not eligible for Fishing Is Fun funding, but can receive assistance through other CPW programs. Please contact the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Education Section in Denver for information on programs that can

support angling education projects. Additional information is also available on the CPW website.

## EXAMPLES OF RECENT FIF PROJECTS

- Open municipally-owned raw water pond to public fishing, including parking and access trails.
- In-stream work to deepen stream channel and establish improved fish habitat.
- ADA-compliant fishing piers and access trail on existing and new ponds.
- Shade structures and restrooms at existing ponds and lakes.
- Redesigned in-stream diversion structures to allow fish migration to and from spawning areas.
- Perpetual access easements to stream or lake angling opportunities.
- Boat ramps to allow angler float fishing opportunities.
- Aerators to improve fishing pond aquatic conditions.

A map showing the locations of recent Fishing Is Fun projects is available on the Fishing Is Fun page on the CPW website.

## PROJECT REVIEW AND APPROVAL SCHEDULE

There are several steps in the FIF application, review and approval process. Applicants are advised to contact their local Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) office as soon as possible, but at least 30 days prior to application deadline. Projects often have technical or biological questions associated with them. Guidance and input from local CPW personnel has proven to be valuable in developing the best possible proposal.

**Applications are due in area or regional office by early March. See the application calendar for specific dates for the upcoming funding cycle.**

Once the application is complete, the District Wildlife Manager (DWM) or area aquatic biologist will sign and forward it to the Senior Regional Aquatic Biologist. Applications in each CPW region will be evaluated and ranked by staff. Applications undergo a thorough review process by the CPW Regions. Project sponsors may be contacted during this time for more information, beyond that provided in the first stage. **Please be patient but also be aware that lobbying CPW management, commissioners or review panel members during the selection process will disqualify the project from further consideration.**

Applications are forwarded to the Denver headquarters by early April. Following technical review by the FIF program coordinator, project funding applicants and local sponsors will present their project at the meeting of the **FIF Review Panel in Denver in mid-May** (see the current application calendar for specific dates). CPW Regional Aquatic Biologists or the local District Wildlife Manager who helped with the project application may also be present to answer technical or biological questions from the panel.

After the presentations, the Review Panel develops a set of funding recommendations, which will be forwarded to the Director of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. In the selection process, high-rated projects historically have been those that foster significant increases in angler use, open up new public access to fishing waters, and/or include a high percentage of matching funds. However, the review panel also recognizes that not every community or organization can provide matching funds beyond the 25% minimum, or that a project may not provide a large increase in angler numbers but may be very important to that community. The review panel takes such factors into account in assessing the merits of projects. Other review factors include confidence in an ability to complete the project, a diversity of local funding or support, the quality of the project description in the application and at the review panel presentation, and regional CPW assessment of the project. Around mid-June, applicants will be notified of final funding decisions.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR PROPOSAL IS AWARDED FUNDING?**

After CPW conditional award of funding, projects are also reviewed by the regional U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office. This stage is not a competitive review, but assures that the project satisfies federal requirements, including compliance with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA), wetlands protection, historical site protection and other federal laws and rules. After federal grant approval is received, a contract will be drawn up and signed between the project sponsor and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife -- the final step before construction can begin.

Examples of standard contract language for projects with government and non-governmental project sponsors are available on the Fishing Is Fun page of the CPW website. Project sponsors are strongly advised to review and understand contract requirements that will apply once a project receives final funding approval. Please contact the Fishing Is Fun program coordinator if you have questions about any of the contract provisions.

There is no legal commitment of funding until federal approval of the project is received and a contract is duly executed by the state and sponsor. At that time a specific letter of authority to proceed will be provided to the sponsor. **Starting any work or letting any contracts before the contract is approved and prior to having the letter to proceed may invalidate the federal grant and state award!**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval and a signed contract with the state for the project, including the Notice to Proceed, should be completed no later than April of the following year of the conditional award notification. Earlier US Fish and Wildlife Service approval and state contract completion is often possible, depending on the timing of project construction and the complexity of the work to be done. Projects should be completed in a timely manner but no later than December 31 of the year following the final grant and contract execution.

Applicants are required to submit quarterly status reports during construction, and upon completion of the project an annual operating report. Instructions and standardized forms will be

attached to the contract for this purpose, and are also available on the Fishing Is Fun page of the CPW website.

Field inspections may be made as projects are being constructed. Particularly for in-stream habitat improvement projects, project sponsors should keep CPW area personnel advised of construction schedules. Upon completion of the project, CPW personnel will inspect the project prior to approving final payment to the sponsor. The project sponsor is responsible for acknowledging, generally through credit signage, the Fishing Is Fun Program's financial support of the project. Acknowledgement of Fishing Is Fun's support can be made on signage that also recognizes other donors to the project. If signage is not possible, recognition on the sponsor website or in newsletters may substitute.

Annual inspections or reports from project sponsors on the condition of funded improvements are also called for in the contract. Project sponsors are obligated to maintain the use of the project for its anticipated lifetime, normally considered to be 20 years. Public access to the improvements is required for the entirety of the useful life of the improvements.

## **WHAT IF YOUR PROPOSAL IS NOT SELECTED?**

Fishing Is Fun is a competitive statewide assistance program. As with any grant program, experience with program expectations will improve a project's chances. Discussions with and reviews by local CPW personnel and aquatic biologists will also help applicants strengthen a proposed project. A clear willingness to cost-share the project can also be an important factor – historically, local cost share for successful Fishing Is Fun projects have averaged approximately 40 percent of total project costs. The Fishing Is Fun program coordinator can also provide feedback on the review panel's comments or observations on the project.

Proposals not funded in one year may be re-submitted in future years, but they must go through the same application process – e.g., be submitted to and signed by the local DWM officer or aquatic biologist and sent to the regional FIF coordinator -- for the next funding cycle. An application which fails to follow this process will not be considered.

## **WHAT QUALIFIES AS MATCHING FUNDS?**

Matching funds are an important part of any proposal. For an applicant, the determination of acceptable matching funds can be confusing. If questions arise during application preparations, it may be advantageous for the District Wildlife Manager or applicant to contact the FIF Program Coordinator, Jim Guthrie, directly at [jim.guthrie@state.co.us](mailto:jim.guthrie@state.co.us) to determine if the proposed funds or donations are eligible for use as match.

Guidelines covering the determination and use of eligible matching funds are as follows:

- 1. Fishing Is Fun funds may not exceed 75 percent of the total project cost.** "Federal funds" includes Fishing Is Fun grants and Sport Fish Restoration Program funds from the CPW. Other

federal funds such as those from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Army Corps of Engineers, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be part of a project but cannot be counted as eligible match. In-kind and cash donations must come from non-federal sources.

2. In-kind contributions may be in the form of non-federal volunteer labor, donated or reduced cost materials from local businesses, and donated use of equipment or costs incurred by the contractor or subcontractors to complete the project. To be eligible as an allowable cost, all in-kind contributions must be expressly approved by the state and USFWS to be a necessary and integral part of the project. In-kind matching funds may be used in addition to, or in place of, cash donations.

3. Third party in-kind contributions may count toward satisfying the matching requirement only if the project sponsor would otherwise have to pay for them to complete the project. Adequate documentation of volunteer labor (e.g. signed time sheets) and in-kind services will be important when requesting reimbursement.

4. In-kind match may not include costs that are borne by other federal grant agreements. This includes costs and third party in-kind contributions that have been used to satisfy matching or cost-sharing requirements of another federal grant/aid agreement or any other award of federal funds. U.S. Forest Service challenge grant or federal county aid dollars cannot be used to match Fishing Is Fun grants.

5. Unless expressly permitted in the project assistance agreement, income derived from the project or program by the participants or subcontractors may not be counted as part of the match requirement.

6. In-kind match must be specifically tied to approved work units of the project documented in the work plan of the application, and will be specified as a line item in the budget exhibit of the contract.

7. Indirect costs (such as overhead charges or contingency estimates) may not be included as part of in-kind contributions. This also applies to non-expendable tools and equipment that have a use beyond the project.

8. Engineering, project design, land and water surveys, blueprint preparation and environmental assessment preparation specific to project construction can be counted as matching funds.

9. No funds expended prior to the receipt of a letter to proceed will be eligible as match, except for pre-approved preliminary costs associated with the design and planning of project. This does not apply to property or structures already owned by the applicant which may be dedicated to the objectives of the project. However, if the proposed project contemplates using land or buildings as match, consultation with the Fishing Is Fun program coordinator is strongly advised.

10. Under no circumstances will expenses on construction work performed prior to the grant approval and contract execution be eligible as match or for reimbursement.

Federal dollars cannot be used as the source for local match nor can donated labor from a federal agency be used for match. Acceptance of justifiable items and their value will be subject to approval by the Fishing Is Fun Program Coordinator.

## **HOW IS THE VALUE OF IN-KIND MATCHING FUNDS DETERMINED?**

The valuation of an in-kind contribution is dependent on whether the contribution is from the state, contractor or a third party. Examples of in-kind match include volunteer labor, reduced cost or donated specialized labor or equipment provided by a project partner, or labor from a county public works crew paid for by the county.

1. State contributions are valued at cost to the state regardless of current market value.
2. Generally, contractor or third party in-kind contributions are valued at the rate the state or the project sponsor would have to pay for similar services or property if purchased on the open market.
3. Materials such as rocks, gravel, or lumber contributed by a contractor or third party will be assigned the market value at the time of the contribution.
4. If the contractor or a third party contributes land or equipment, or the use thereof such as a construction access easement, the contribution will be valued at the fair rental rate over the term of the project or the fair market value of the land or equipment, whichever is less. Only land or equipment, or portions thereof, necessary and integral to the completion of the project will be considered for inclusion as an in-kind contribution.
5. Fair market or rental values included in projects are subject to state review and approval. Documentation or certification of comparable market value must be provided at the time of a reimbursement request.
6. If not specified in the budget outline of the application, the donated labor will be valued at \$20 per hour. The use of higher hourly figures must be justified by the type of work and qualifications of the worker. Contact the Fishing Is Fun Program Coordinator for further information on the determination of allowable wage rates for donated labor or services.

## **COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS**

A number of federal requirements have to be addressed for all projects. These “compliance issues” are addressed as part of the federal aid application portion of the process, not during the initial application and panel review process. Depending on the nature of the projects, substantial

delays – up to nine months or more – may occur as a result of these requirements, although lengthy delays are the exception. The following lists some compliance assurances that are typically required as part of the federal review process:

**Potential compliance requirements -- What it is, who takes lead on addressing:**

**Historical and Cultural Preservation**

*A written statement from the State Historical Preservation office clearing your project – CPW normally takes the lead on this.*

**Prime and Unique Farmland**

*A written confirmation from the Natural Resources Conservation Service clearing your project site from the unique or prime farmland restrictions – CPW normally takes the lead on this.*

**Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permit**

*A 404 Permit, nationwide permit or clearance from the Corps of Engineers may be needed for projects that could affect jurisdictional wetlands or will occur in streams, rivers, lakes and the like – the project sponsor normally takes the lead on this, if applicable, through contact with the local Army Corps of Engineers Office. CPW aquatic biologist can often provide guidance or assistance on this requirement.*

**Endangered Species**

*Each project must assess whether there will be an impact on any federally-listed threatened or endangered species or how any impact will be mitigated – CPW personnel normally take the lead on assessing the presence of any listed species. Project sponsor may take the lead on determining course of action should endangered species issues arise.*

**Environmental Assessments**

*Projects that involve water depletions, wetlands or other environmental impacts may require an acceptable Environmental Assessments – Project sponsor will develop any required environmental assessments.*

## **TIPS FOR REVIEW PANEL PRESENTATIONS**

- Arrive at least 15 minutes early.
- Powerpoint presentation is the most common way to describe the project, but is not required. If handouts are used, bring 8-10 copies.
- Plan on a 10-15 minute presentation, followed by about 10-15 minutes of questions from the panel.
- Focus on the angling benefits of the project. Describing the overall project (e.g. new town park, including a fishing pond) is helpful, but Fishing Is Fun funding is for angling improvements so those should be emphasized.
- If the site currently has some angling, do you have photos of angling activity?
- Include a map showing the general location of the project, and a site map showing the proposed improvements, if possible.
- List partners and supporters of the project. These can include potential beneficiaries and interested parties (e.g. youth organizations, nearby schools or senior centers) as well as financial supporters.
- If possible, include comments from local CPW field staff or aquatic biologist.
- Describe the expected timing of the work – when would you like to start?
- Be ready to say whether or how the project would be affected if only reduced funding is available.

## **Important points to keep in mind as a project is developed or implemented**

- Early consultation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife local personnel and/or aquatic biologists can be helpful in project design, and to identify and resolve issues prior to the review panel meeting.
- Federal funds (e.g. Forest Service, BLM funds) cannot be used as match for a project.
- Volunteer time is best documented at the time it is provided, commonly through signed volunteer timesheets. Trying to document volunteer participation in a project after the fact is difficult at best, and may result in reduced match and reduced reimbursement for expenses.
- In-stream habitat projects should conform to Natural Channel Design guidelines. CPW aquatic biologists can help with an assessment of the proposed project and may be able to recommend experienced contractors.
- Do not start construction work before the federal grant is approved and a contract with the state is fully executed.
- If the project design or cost estimates change, contact the Fishing Is Fun program coordinator to determine if an amendment to the federal grant or the state contract is needed. Waiting until the end of the grant period to tell the Fishing Is Fun Program Coordinator of design or budget changes may preclude CPW from being able to reimburse the project sponsor for some costs.
- Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis, which means the project sponsor pays for expenses up front, and then is reimbursed for the Fishing Is Fun share of the expenses later.
- Project sponsors are responsible for maintenance of angling improvements for their useful life, generally 20 years. If a project is on property the sponsor does not own, such as an angling group constructing a project on a water district-owned lake or county open space, either the property owner must accept financial responsibility for the maintenance or the project sponsor must have an agreement with the property owner to provide the maintenance.
- Project sponsors are required to have liability and worker's compensation insurance and to include Colorado Parks and Wildlife as "additional insured".

