

**Freshwater Conservation RfP
Frequently Asked questions**

Updated January 18, 2024

These FAQs are specific to the National Geographic Society's Freshwater Conservation RfP. Please also review the [Funding Opportunity Overview](#) and the Society's [Grants Program Overview](#).

If you have questions not answered here please email us at funding@ngs.org with "Freshwater Conservation RfP" in the subject line.

[Q: What is the application process?](#)

[Q: What are the eligibility criteria?](#)

[Q: What Primary Focus Area do I select in the pre-application \(Land, Oceans, Wildlife, Human Ingenuity, or Human Histories and Cultures\)?](#)

[Q: Which Primary Focus do I select in the pre-application \(Storytelling, Conservation, Research, Technology, or Education\)?](#)

[Q: Where can I find the pre-application template?](#)

[Q: Where can I find the full application template?](#)

[Q: When will candidates be notified about the status of the pre-application?](#)

[Q: What is a National Geographic Society "Conservation" grant?](#)

[Q: Is this RfP a second round of the 2023 National Geographic Society's Freshwater Storytelling funding opportunity?](#)

[Q: Does this need to be a new conservation project?](#)

[Q: What are the budget guidelines for the RfP?](#)

[Q: Can National Geographic Explorers with active grants apply for this RfP?](#)

[Q: What are the global water gap Hotspots?](#)

[Q: Where are the global water gap Hotspots?](#)

[Hotspots](#)

[Figure 1. Global water gap Hotspots \(credit, created by Martin Gamache for M Leijnse, M F P Bierkens, K H M Gommans, D Lin, B Droppers, A Tait and N Wanders. In Review. The key drivers and pressures of the global water scarcity hotspots\).](#)

[Q: In the full application, how should applicants present evidence of local community participation, from start to finish, in the development and implementation of the project?](#)

[Q: How will the applications be evaluated?](#)



Q: What is the application process?

A: To be eligible, all candidates must submit a [pre-application](#) by the deadline of **March 25, 2024, 11:59pm EDT**. These grants are highly competitive and reserved for select projects located in one of the 20 water scarcity / water gap Hotspots, as defined by the modeled water gaps in the [World Water Map](#). The Hotspots are listed in this FAQ document – see [Q: Where are the global water gap Hotspots?](#). All candidates will receive a notification in mid-April with either a declination or an invitation to submit a full application. Invited candidates will have until **May 22, 2024, 11:59pm EDT** to submit a [full application](#).

To start a new pre-application, visit <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/society/grants-and-investments/rfp-freshwater/> and select the “Apply now” button.

If you already started an application for this opportunity, return to the grants portal and login to continue your application:
<https://grants.nationalgeographic.org>

Q: What are the eligibility criteria?

A: **Projects are eligible if they meet the following criteria:**

- Project must align to the [Conservation](#) primary focus
- Project must align to the [Land](#) focus area
- Candidate must not be a current National Geographic staff member
- Candidate must be over the age of 18
- Project budget may not exceed \$50,000
- Project must be completed within 2 years of receipt of funding
- Project must occur in a National Geographic Society World Water Map water scarcity hotspot
- Project must be focused on freshwater conservation and must not include large-scale gray infrastructure (for example, municipal-scale stormwater or wastewater infrastructure, or desalination plants)
- Application materials must be complete enough to be able to assess candidate’s skills and experience, as well as the project idea

Q: What Primary Focus Area do I select in the pre-application (Land, Oceans, Wildlife, Human Ingenuity, or Human Histories and Cultures)?

A: This funding opportunity will prioritize projects that align with our [Land Focus](#) area. Projects may have a secondary focus area, but it is not required.



Q: Which Primary Focus do I select in the pre-application (Storytelling, Conservation, Research, Technology, or Education)?

A: This funding opportunity will fund Conservation projects. See also [Q: What is a National Geographic Society “Conservation” grant?](#)

Q: Where can I find the pre-application template?

A: The pre-application template is located [here](#) at the bottom of the National Geographic Society’s “[Grants and Investments](#)” page. It is the same template as the “Level I Grants Program Pre-application.” Candidates are required to upload a CV or a resume with the pre-application.

Q: Where can I find the full application template?

A: The full application template is located [here](#), at the bottom of the National Geographic Society’s “[Grants and Investments](#)” page. It is the same template as the “Level II Grants Program Conservation Application.”

Q: When will candidates be notified about the status of the pre-application?

A: All applicants will be notified by email in mid-April with either a declination or an invitation to submit a full application. Candidates who were invited to submit a full application will be notified of funding decisions in August, 2024.

Q: What is a National Geographic Society “Conservation” grant?

A: National Geographic Conservation grants, “*aim to achieve quantifiable outcomes as a result of evidence-based and scientifically-informed actions. There must be a demonstrated need and urgency for conservation, as well as a clear method to evaluate the success or failure of the project. Applicants must propose projects that result in or inform tangible solutions that contribute to the conservation of natural resources or the long-term survival of cultural resources.*”

In the case of this RfP, the “tangible solutions” will contribute to the conservation of freshwater quality, quantity or hydrology. Competitive projects will include tangible freshwater conservation goals such as creating resilient and sustainable solutions for improved water quantity, quality, and/or water connectivity (hydrology), for example, through green-infrastructure or nature-based solutions.



Q. Is this RfP a second round of the 2023 National Geographic Society's Freshwater Storytelling funding opportunity?

A: No, this is a funding opportunity to support Conservation projects. The RfP is part of the Freshwater Initiative at the Society, but in this opportunity we seek to fund community-led Conservation projects. Projects that focus only on techniques typically supported by our Storytelling grants (e.g., photography, filmmaking, and journalism) will not be eligible for funding in this opportunity.

Q: Does this need to be a new conservation project?

A: Candidates may request funding for freshwater conservation projects that are new projects, pilot-studies, or on-going projects. Conservation projects funded by this opportunity may have multiple sources of funding besides the National Geographic Society.

Q: What are the budget guidelines for the RfP?

A: The budget request may not exceed \$50,000. Please refer to the [Budget Guidelines](#) for Level I and II Grants for more details on what can be included in the budget request.

Q: Can National Geographic Explorers with active grants apply for this RfP?

A: Explorers must close previous grants before applying for this RfP. This entails submitting the final report and media assets on the Society grants portal. Please note that this does not apply to most Explorer-exclusive funding opportunities such as Meridian Projects (formerly known as Explorer Community Collaboration Grants).

Q: What are the global water gap Hotspots?

A: The global water gap Hotspots were determined from the latest model results of simulations from the Utrecht model of global water availability and demand ([Sutanudjaja et al., 2018](#)). Water gaps are averaged over larger areas called "water provinces" (Straatsma et al., 2020), which are administrative boundaries that match borders of major water basins around the world. If the average water gap is significant (more than 0.015 meters per year), the area was determined to be a water gap Hotspot. When neighboring water provinces both have significant water gaps, they are grouped together and included in the same Hotspot. If multiple large surface and groundwater basins are located within a group, the hotspots are separated and centered around these major basins, for example the Indus and Ganges-Brahmaputra

basins. Finally, Hotspots have been verified through a literature review where independent local case studies offer evidence that the region suffers from water scarcity.

Sutanudjaja, E. H., Van Beek, R., Wanders, N., Wada, Y., Bosmans, J. H., Drost, N., ... & Bierkens, M. F. (2018). PCR-GLOBWB 2: a 5 arcmin global hydrological and water resources model. *Geoscientific Model Development*, 11(6), 2429-2453.

Straatsma, M., Droogers, P., Hunink, J., Berendrecht, W., Buitink, J., Buytaert, W., ... & Bierkens, M. F. (2020). Global to regional scale evaluation of adaptation measures to reduce the future water gap. *Environmental Modelling & Software*, 124, 104578.

Q: Where are the global water gap Hotspots?

A: These grants are highly competitive and reserved for select projects located in one of the 20 water scarcity / water gap Hotspots, as defined by the modeled water gaps in the World Water Map. Priority will be given to applicants proposing projects in the areas highlighted in bold in the list below, where historically the Society has funded fewer projects. See also [Figure 1](#).

Hotspots

Europe and Western Asia

- **Greece**
- **Turkey**
- **Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain**
- Italy
- Spain

Asia-Pacific

- **Central and South Thailand**
- Ganges/Brahmaputra river basins, India/**Bangladesh**
- **Mekong Delta, Vietnam**
- Indus River Basin, Pakistan

- Java, Indonesia
- Murray-Darling Basin, Australia
- **Japan**
- North China Plain

Latin America

- **Central Chile**
- Coastal Peru
- Mexico (various locations)

Northern North America

- Central Valley, California
- US High Plains (Ogallala Aquifer)

Africa

- **Nile River Delta, Egypt**
- **White Nile, Sudan**

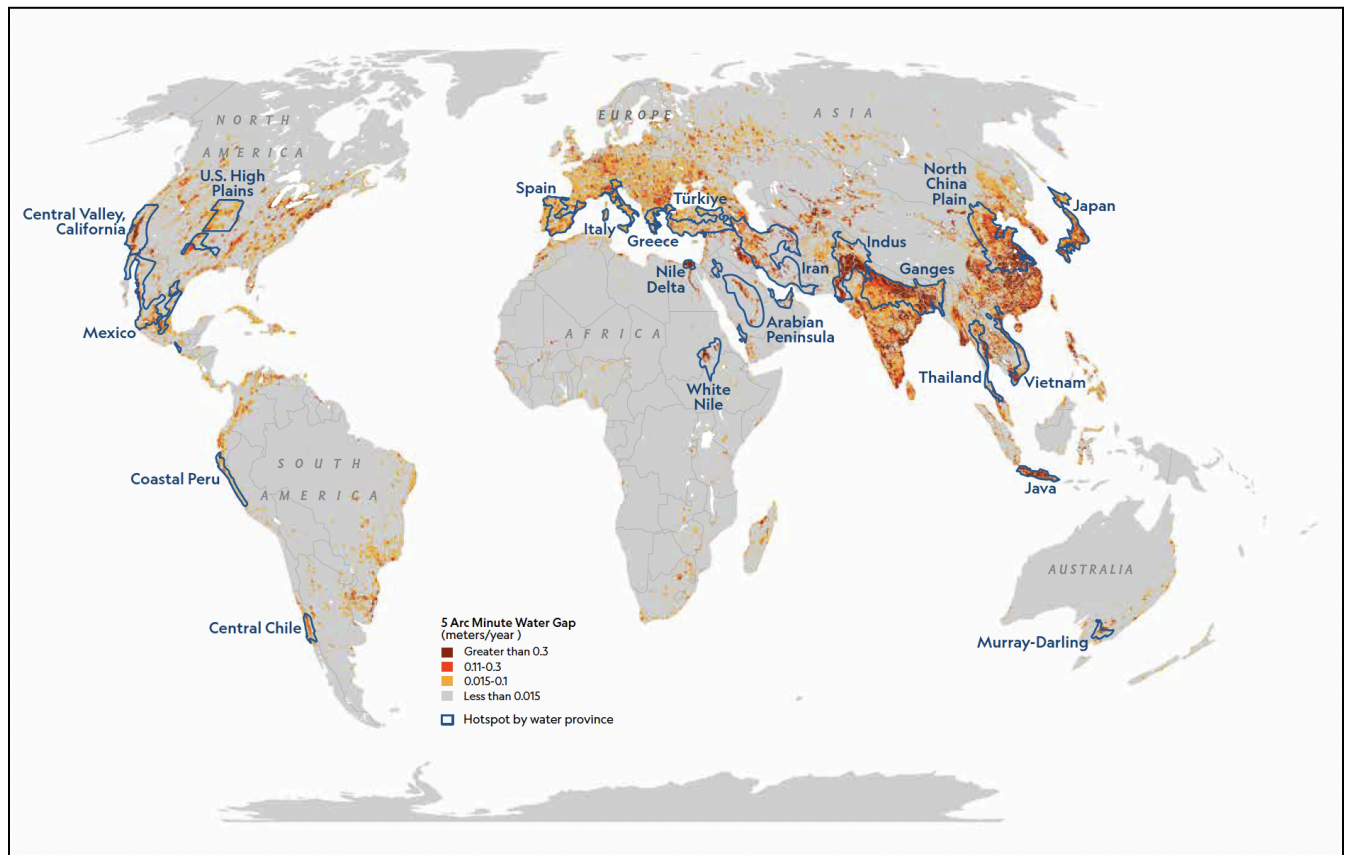


Figure 1. Global water gap Hotspots (credit, created by Martin Gamache for M Leijnse, M F P Bierkens, K H M Gommans, D Lin, B Droppers, A Tait and N Wanders. In Review. The key drivers and pressures of the global water scarcity hotspots).

Q: In the full application, how should applicants present evidence of local community participation, from start to finish, in the development and implementation of the project?

A: Evidence can be described in the full application section, “**Stakeholders and Partners.**” In addition, evidence may also be provided as an attachment to supplement the description in “Stakeholders and Partner.” Candidates will need to provide sufficient detail for the reviewers to understand that the project is co-created and collaborative with the local community. In this RfP, the primary Stakeholders should be the local community members. Representatives of the local community should be involved in the development and implementation of the project, from the start of the project to the end of the project. Candidates should present evidence of local community consent to implement the conservation project through a Free, Prior,



and Informed Consent (FPIC) or a similar process appropriate for the local community.

The “**Stakeholders and Partners**” section asks for candidates to:

“Define the stakeholders and partners of this project, and describe how they will be integrated into the project activities from inception to completion of the project. Stakeholders are defined as entities that have a vested interest in the project and its results but are not necessarily involved in the development and/or implementation of the project activities. Partners are defined as entities whose work is aligned with the project activities and are involved in the development and/or implementation of the project activities. Be sure to consider how you will coordinate and collaborate with the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in your project area.”

Q: How will the applications be evaluated?

A: Applications will go through the National Geographic Society’s standard grants evaluation process, which includes detailed reviews from a variety of stakeholders.

Reviewers will evaluate the applications based on the skills and expertise of the candidate; the level of community collaboration and co-creation of the conservation project; the feasibility and impact of the conservation project; and how humans, watersheds, and/or ecosystems benefit from the conservation project.