



Watersheds United Vermont (WUV) 2025 Riparian Buffer Planting Grant Application Guidance Document

Grant Dates:

Site Specific WUV Riparian Buffer Planting Applications are due on October 30, 2024. Depending on funds remaining, there may be additional grant rounds on a rolling basis. WUV is currently accepting applications for Spring and Fall 2025 Plantings.

Purpose:

WUV has three sources of funding to subgrant to organizations for high quality riparian buffer plantings in the 2025 planting season; the three grant opportunities are:

1. WUV's Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Woody Buffer Block Grant (WBBG) is for organizations to implement high priority, cost-effective, native riparian woody buffer plantings. This WBBG will support the implementation of forested woody buffers along rivers and streams using native vegetation. Projects must have a minimum buffer width of 35 feet and a minimum planting density of at least 300 stems/acre. Additional requirements described below.
2. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grant. This grant is a subgrant to WUV from the Natural Resources Conservation Council to support watershed groups with riparian plantings in priority areas for habitat improvement, particularly focused on Eastern brook trout, wood turtle and migratory birds. Similar site requirements exist to the above DEC WBBG.
3. Pur Projet Grant: WUV is in the final year of grant funding from a private company called Pur Projet. Pur Projet prioritizes projects on agricultural land but is also open to supporting other projects with interested landowners. Pur Projet projects require one year of post planting monitoring.

General Buffer Requirements (across all planting funds):

1. Must be at least 35'
2. Need to have at least 300 stems per acre
3. Native woody species appropriate to site location
4. Planting Plan and Landowner Agreement completed before planting
5. Adherence to the USDA NRCS Forest Buffer Standards

Additional Recommendations:

1. Stock from Vermont grown nurseries
2. 3 to 5-foot trees (both this and the above recommendation have been shown to lead to lower mortality)
3. Wider buffers (50 feet) where appropriate and possible
4. More stems per acre (400) for certain sites

Organizational Requirements

1. Proof of Liability Insurance and all other required insurance
2. W-9

Funding Amounts and Match:

In 2025, WUV has the following funding amounts to subgrant:

1. *~\$150,000 to subgrant for DEC WBBG plantings.*
2. *~\$30,000 to subgrant to NFWF riparian buffer planting projects*
3. *~6,000 stems to subgrant (~\$36,000) for PUR Project plantings*

WUV will evaluate projects based on how well the project meets the ecological objectives and eligibility requirements of each funding source as well as the feasibility of project implementation.

The WUV buffer grant application is primarily designed around the requirements for the DEC Woody Buffer Grant program. However, as indicated above, WUV has 2 other planting funding sources that can be matched with DEC Woody Buffer funds or can be utilized individually. The application is designed to get information that will allow WUV to create a funding structure that fully supports the planting cost (if eligible and highly ranked) through the use of multiple funding programs. WUV asks that you complete the budget section of the application for the total amount of funding you are requesting for a planting site with the knowledge that this funding may come from two planting sources. This means that some reporting may take longer to satisfy the deliverables. Please make sure your request matches the amount or work/time it may take to complete the reporting and planting process.

There is no match requirement for the DEC Woody Buffer Block Grant or PUR Project funds. WUV has a 1:1 match for the grant. However, WUV will take responsibility for working with applicants to ensure match. Because of this, WUV will often pair any awarded NFWF funding with either DEC WBBG or Pur Project funding. We will still ask groups to estimate and track voluntary match.

The Natural Resources Conservation Council also holds the Woody Buffer Block Grant and the NFWF funding source. WUV recommends that Conservation Districts apply to NRCC for planting funds. However, all eligible entities can apply through any Funding Program Administrator if there is a need.

DEC Woody Buffer Block Grant Funding Requirements

The DEC Woody Buffer Project Block Grant is under DEC's Enhancement Grant Program. Therefore, all projects must meet at least one of the statutory goals of the Enhancement program:

- a. Protect high quality waters,
- b. Maintain or improve water quality,
- c. Restore degraded or stressed waters,
- d. Create resilient watersheds and communities, or
- e. Support the public's use and enjoyment of the State's waters

For the DEC Woody Buffer Block Grant, WUV will prioritize:

1. Projects based in the Connecticut and Hudson basins;
2. Projects that best meet the statutory purposes of the Enhancement Grant Program;
3. Projects where the DEC WBBG funding leverages matching funds

DEC Approvals for Site Selection

All sites must be part of the applicable Tactical Basin Plan strategies and/or identified in a River Corridor Plan or otherwise approved by the DEC Watershed Planner. The project will need approval from the applicable DEC Basin Planner and will need a Watershed Project Database number. If the planting project was added into the Database as part of a larger plan (River Corridor Plan), you will need a new Watershed Project Database number that is specific to the planting site. You will also need to contact your DEC River Scientist for approval of the planting. This requirement was optional in previous rounds of WUV Woody Buffer funding, but has become a requirement under the 2023 CWIP Guidance. Please give your River Scientist ample time to review and approve the project. If you are not able to receive approval before the application deadline, please still submit your application and let WUV know that approval is pending.

There will be no technical staff approvals for plantings requesting PUR Project or NFWF funds, however you will need to make sure that the planting sites fit the requirements of the planting funds sources.

DEC Eligible Expenses for 2025:

All project work and expenses must meet the eligibility requirements in the Department of Environmental Conservation's 2023 Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) Funding Policy - [2023 CWIP Funding Policy](#).

Tools are now an eligible expense if the tool or equipment is used to assist with implementation of clean water projects. The parameters for the purchase of tools and equipment is listed under the ineligible expenses section of the [CWIP Funding Policy on pg. 15](#). All tools must be under \$5,000 and must directly assist in the implementation of the tree planting process. In addition, all tools must have a useful life over 1 year.

The Site Specific Application has a line item for tools, if you are purchasing tools, you must explain all purchases in the budget narrative section so WUV can confirm that these are eligible

expenses and meet the above guidelines.

Eligible Examples include:

- Shovels
- Planting Gear (gloves, rain gear, planting boots)
- Saw dust and sorting bags for tree storage
- Wagon or carts to transport trees on large sites
- Stakes or flagging to mark planting area
- Items for tree survival/maintenance

Please note that tool requests must be a minor part of total funding request and must be at an appropriate scale for the total planting budget for a group.

DEC Project Type Definition, Milestones and Deliverables:

Project Type Definition:

Planting of native woody trees and shrubs within buffer area of rivers/streams, wetlands, and/or lakes. Planting results in a minimum average buffer width of 35-feet and a minimum density of 300 stems per acre. Buffer supports restoration of river corridor/floodplain, wetland and/or lakeshore, filters nutrient and sediment pollution from runoff, and provides habitat benefits. Includes riparian plantings on agricultural lands. Work includes site identification, planting plan development, materials sourcing, site preparation, and planting installation. Sites will be selected for their benefits to water quality and must meet approval of the State (local DEC River Scientist and Basin Planner). Sites will be stable, proximate to water, and high-priority. Permit(s), access license(s)/easement(s), and operation and maintenance plan(s) are in place prior to planting.

Performance Measures:

- 1) Acres of riparian corridor buffer planted/restored
- 2) Linear feet of riparian corridor buffer planted/restored

DEC Project Type	DEC Milestones	DEC Deliverables
Riparian Buffer Planting	<p>Project initiated; proposal/bid solicitations issued and contractor selected (if applicable)</p> <p>Sites and constraints identified, DEC River Scientist and Basin Planner approval secured</p> <p>Developed planting plan (including species type, number, and estimated cost) in accordance with SGA or River Corridor Planning recommendations (if available)</p> <p>10-year (minimum) DEC Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Plan drafted and signed; refer to O&M manual for guidance</p> <p>10-year (minimum) access license or easement (if applicable) drafted and signed by landowner; refer to DEC template for guidance</p> <p>Clean Water Project Sign installed during construction if the project is considered publicly visible.</p> <p>Site preparation activities (if applicable)</p> <p>Buffer restoration planting completed</p> <p>Return of Clean Water Project sign to host site (if applicable)</p> <p>Project complete</p>	<p>Photo(s) of site(s) pre-implementation</p> <p>Signed 10-year (minimum) DEC Operation and Maintenance Plan and Agreement, including map of location of planting and final planting plan (species list and counts).</p> <p>Signed 10-year (minimum) access license or easement (if applicable)</p> <p>Photo(s) of site(s) post-implementation, including photo of Clean Water Project Sign (if applicable)</p> <p>Media announcement</p> <p>Final Performance Report or ANR Online Clean Water Project - Project Closeout Form (once available)</p>

DEC Enhanced Survivorship Treatment Funding

As part of WUV’s DEC Woody Buffer Block Grant, WUV is able to fund woody buffer enhanced survivorship treatment activities. Enhanced survivorship treatment activities are eligible to be performed on sites supported in whole or in part with DEC funds and registered within the Clean Water Project Explorer as “River – Planting” project type. If this site would benefit from either site prep or one year follow up maintenance, you can add a budget request for enhancement activities at that site. This request will allow you to be able to fund the following activities at the application site throughout 2025 and 2026:

Eligible enhanced survivorship tasks:

1. Visiting planted site in the year of planting and first year post planting to assess if additional enhanced survivorship activities are needed
2. Non-chemical site preparation activities
3. Post Planting weeding and vine removal around the immediate vicinity of stems to help new plantings get established above vegetative competition.
4. Re-planting: applicant should contact WUV post planting if re-planting funds are required.

Please see below guidance on site-prep, weeding, and vine removal. Chemical site-prep and large scale moving to combat knotweed are not currently eligible activities for DEC funding.

Site-prep activities can include:

- Site-prep mowing is if it's within the same footprint of the planted buffer and is used just to suppress competing grasses (i.e. not invasive management)
- Tiling and scraping of site area to expose bare ground

Weeding Activities can include:

- Weed whacking in 4' diameter around planted trees. Planted vegetation should be identified/flagged prior to weeding.
- Passive weeding such as the use of mulch (can do this preventatively)

Vine Removal Activities can include:

- Removal of vines from stems including Bindweed, Clematis, or Groundnut
- Vines can be manually pulled during maintenance visits, especially after planting or until trees and shrubs are large enough not to be overtopped.

Enhancement requests must be included in the budget on the application. There is a specific column for this entry labeled: Site Prep, Monitoring and Maintenance (one year after planting) Expenses. While there is no limit to the request for enhancement funding, we anticipate costs to be ~\$400-\$600/acre of planting. Please do not include re-planting requests in your budget, if you determine a need to re-plant a site, contact WUV directly at that time.

Note: There is also built in funding support under the Pu Projet source to provide funding for monitoring for 1 year post planting. There is also the ability to fund advanced survivorship activities under the NFWF grant for maintenance and monitoring in Year 0 (year of planting) and Year 1.

WUV has the ability through our funding sources to fund a wide array of site prep, maintenance and monitoring activities and in many cases a baseline level of these activities may be required. We encourage applicants to provide a budget and explanation for the full suite of site prep, monitoring and maintenance activities you would like to complete at a planting and WUV will work to fund and confirm if these are eligible and/or required if the planting is selected for funding.

PUR Projet Grant Funding Requirements

PUR Projet is a company that specialized in the development of agroforestry community projects and distribution of environmental services. The purpose of the Pur Projet funded WUV program is to implement tree planting for watershed health and ecosystem services. WUV has a contract with PUR Projet to subgrant funds to watershed groups and partners to implement tree planting projects. Funds must be used on private land with engaged landowners (agricultural properties are preferred)

2025 Available Funding: 6,000 stems (~\$36,000)

PUR Projet funds can be paired with DEC Woody Buffer and NFWF Funds; these funds can't be paired with funding sources that use the number of stems planted as the performance metric.

Deliverable Requirements:

1. Subgrantee will plant all trees listed above during the planting year. WUV cannot provide any funding for trees planted after this year;
2. Subgrantee is responsible for monitoring the sites after one year from planting. Subgrantee will be responsible for ensuring that the survivorship rate of trees is above 75% and will replant trees if survivorship falls under that number;
3. Subgrantee will establish and provide a Planting Plan for each site;
4. Subgrantee will sign PUR's Agreement with farmer/landowner;
5. Subgrantee will complete the planting registry for each site (Excel and GIS) and update after each monitoring. The registry includes information on the number of trees planted and survival rates, land history, location, planting model, etc.
6. Subgrantee will provide WUV with detailed information on each landowner participant, including history, pictures;
7. Subgrantee will provide WUV with at least 2 before and 2 after project photos for each site (more preferred);
8. Subgrantee will provide at least 1 testimonial to WUV from a landowner with the benefits of the program;
9. Subgrantee will provide WUV with overview of impact of plantings as WUV needs to provide a written report on the progress of the program and its environmental impacts;
10. Subgrantee will, where appropriate, encourage the landowner to invite PUR staff for a site visit.

Payment Provisions:

Payment is provided in three installments and is based solely on a per stem price paid. Installment one (is provided prior to planting, installment 2 is paid after planting and after all deliverables are submitted, and installment 3 is paid after one year of monitoring. The total payment per stem is \$7.25.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Funding Requirements

The WUV NFWF funds are to restore and manage forested riparian buffers in targeted high priority areas for eastern brook trout to improve and sustain habitat quality over time. The funding also prioritizes projects that protect and restore healthy forests and rivers that provide important habitat for wood turtles, freshwater mussels and fish, other native turtles and birds, and pollinators. The grant focuses on using enhancement techniques to improve survivability of plantings over time and funds can be used for that purpose (monitoring, weeding, replanting). These funds are held by the Natural Resource Conservation District with a subgrant to WUV.

Please see the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture webmapper [here](#) to identify if Brook Trout are present at your planting area. Applicants can reach out to Vermont Fish and Wildlife to confirm if planting site is a good habitat fit for these planting funds.

2025 WUV NFWF Available Funding: *\$30,000*

Match Requirement: 1 to 1 match requirement. PUR Project and DEC Woody Buffer funds can be used as match with this funding. However, WUV will take responsibility for working with applicants to ensure match.

Deliverables include:

Pre-planting Deliverables:

1. Landowner Agreement: Subgrantee must have an agreement with the landowner for the planting site that allows for:
 - a. The buffer planting to be maintained and preserved for a minimum of 10 years
 - b. Subgrantee to access the buffer location to perform monitoring tasks
2. Procurement and Subcontracting: Subgrantee must follow and document their procurement policy, document the selection of all subcontractors, and maintain all records for three years. Any subcontractual agreements must include the contracting provisions outlined in [Attachment C](#).

Post-Planting Deliverables:

1. Final Report: Subgrantee will provide WUV with a completed WUV/NFWF [Final Report Form](#).
2. Photos: Subgrantee will provide WUV with at least 2 after project photos for each site (more preferred), and at least 2 photos of the planting event. Must provide captions with a description of the activity taking place, species names where possible, and the photographer credit. Photos must have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi.
3. Subgrantee will provide a Press Release/Social media post related to the planting.

Post Monitoring Deliverables:

Subgrantee will monitor each site in the year following planting. Subgrantee will provide WUV with a 2-3 paragraph summary description including the following details:

1. How the site was monitored
2. Observations regarding factors that impacted survivorship
3. A description of activities performed to increase survivorship - note the goal of survivorship is 75%.
4. 2 photos of the site at the time of monitoring

Payment Provisions:

NFWF Funding is cost reimbursable. Invoices must itemize expenses (e.g trees, contractors, staff expenses). WUV requires invoices/receipts from any vendors/contractors. All funding is contingent upon the eventual completion of the planting project and meeting all reporting and deliverable requirements. Spring planting invoices must be submitted on or before June 14. Final monitoring invoices must be submitted on or before October 15 of the final monitoring year.