Wildlife Habitat and Community Resilience on Working Lands (Roots Program)
Request for Proposals and Grant Guidelines
June 2024

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Introduction

Point Blue Conservation Science is inviting proposals for projects, targeting the specific counties listed below, that improve and restore wildlife, fish and pollinator habitat on working lands across California. Working Lands broadly includes landscapes that are stewarded for food and cultural resources, including rural and urban farms, annual and perennial row crops, vineyards, orchards, livestock grazing lands, non-industrial forestlands, and active school and community gardens.

Roots Program Overview and Objectives

The intent of the Roots Program is to deliver wildlife-friendly community-based and community-centered restoration projects on farms, ranches, and other working landscapes across California. The overall goals of the Roots Program are to:

- Prioritize funding habitat restoration projects that result in multiple benefits to wildlife and pollinators. Awards can be supplemental funding for existing projects or fund new projects with no match requirement.

- Focus resources toward communities who are currently underserved due to both historic and current structural barriers to conservation.
- Engage communities in building ecological resilience and prepare California's working landscapes for the increased impacts of climate change by catalyzing community led conservation that directly engages a broad spectrum of Californians in the value of land stewardship for wildlife conservation.

We define Working Lands as: Landscapes that are stewarded for food and cultural resources, including rural and urban farms, annual and perennial row crops, vineyards, orchards, public and private livestock grazing lands, non-industrial forestlands, and active school and community gardens.

Program Goals: Over 4 years we aim to:

- At least 50% of projects with applicants that self-identify as historically underserved (historically underserved group, limited resource, beginning farmer or rancher, military veteran, >50% of students enrolled in Free and Reduced Meal program) and/or are within Disadvantaged Community (DAC) or a Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) according to the Department of Water Resources DAC Mapping Tool (DWR 2023)
- Fund 230 practices
- Fund projects in 35 counties
- Engage 8,000 volunteers
- Partner with 200 land managers

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include: Tribes/Tribal groups, private landowners, land lessees, individuals, nonprofit organizations, resource conservation districts, county and city agencies, schools and universities, research farms. All projects selected for funding will require that the landowner sign a landowner agreement stating that they will not intentionally destroy the project for 15 years. Projects implemented on federally recognized Tribal Land will require that the Tribe sign a limited waiver of tribal sovereignty.

Projects must be on **working landscapes, as defined above**, within California state boundaries. For this request for proposals, we are prioritizing funding projects in regions that have been underrepresented in previous rounds of funding to ensure a strategic distribution of project implementation on working lands across the state. **The following counties are eligible for this limited RFP**: ***Siskiyou, Modoc, Plumas, Mendocino, Lake, Napa, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Stanislaus, Orange and San Diego***.

The current funding round will prioritize these counties; however, if you are interested in applying for Roots funding for a project in a county not included here, please complete our Roots Program Project Request Form and our staff will respond as resources and capacity allow.

The deadline to submit an application for consideration is July 15, 2024.

Funding Potential

We intend to award projects in the $25,000-75,000 range with a maximum funding award of $100,000 per project. Point Blue staff are available to help with project planning and building project budgets.

Eligible Projects and Costs

All projects supported by this opportunity **must provide durable benefits to wildlife, fish and pollinators.** Examples of eligible practice types (not exhaustive) are included in **Appendix A**. Projects that support multiple benefits will be prioritized, including: benefits to wildlife, climate resilience, community engagement, and equity building (see rubric that will be used for scoring applications in **Appendix B**). Project examples can include stream side plantings that restore critical habitat for thousands of species of wildlife across California, hedgerow plantings that create pollinator habitat on farm edges and installation of ranch infrastructure that facilitates grazing management systems aimed at restoring oak woodlands, and upland wildlife habitat (see **Appendix A** for additional examples of project types). We expect many funded projects to be individually small in scale, but cumulatively, to have large value for wildlife.

All funded projects must have a direct conservation implementation component (e.g., restoration, planting, vegetation management, stream habitat improvement and management). Projects must comply with Federal, State, and local regulations.

Eligible costs include applicant time for project implementation, purchase of plants and materials needed to complete project implementation, labor costs, and tools and equipment needed for project implementation (not to exceed $5K per project).

Ineligible Projects and Costs

Examples of projects that are ineligible, include but are not limited to:

- Acquisition projects
- Projects mandated to address a violation of, or an order to comply with, a law or regulation
- Projects for the purpose of regulatory compliance or mitigation
- Projects that employ herbicides with grant or matching funds
- Prescribed fire
- Nursery operations
- Projects that are strictly for research purposes
- Projects that cannot be completed by December 31, 2026

Project Timeline and Durability

Proposed projects must be completed and funds expended by December 31, 2026. Projects are required to be protected and durable for at least 15 years post implementation. Project design

and technical merits of implementation plans will be evaluated prior to implementation. A Landowner Agreement (not deeded) is necessary for implementation funding to be awarded that will include terms to ensure the project is not intentionally damaged or removed for at least 15 years and for the project to be accessed annually by Point Blue and/or WCB staff with advanced notice provided in order to monitor project success.

Cost Share

Cost share is not required by this funding program, nor does it increase project ranking. This funding can support projects that are co-funded through other private, state or federal conservation programs.

Roots Program Process

Point Blue staff are available to provide assistance to all potential Roots Program applicants. If you need further information, we are here to support you. Please reach out to us via email at rootsprogram@pointblue.org for an initial consultation with our team to see if this grant opportunity is a good fit for your idea or project. Technical assistance is available from Point Blue staff to complete the application forms as needed.

Projects must be fully implemented by December 31, 2026. Projects that require permitting and/or extensive design and planning should have those tasks completed at the time of application. This funding round will prioritize "shovel ready" projects to ensure projects can meet the project implementation deadline of December 31, 2026.

1. Applicant submits project proposal using Roots Application Form (Spanish version here). If you need assistance completing this form, please contact us at rootsprogram@pointblue.org
2. If the proposed project is identified as eligible for Roots Program funding, a Roots Program project liaison will contact you to fully scope and develop a budget for the project.
3. The co-developed, fully scoped and budgeted project is submitted for final funding consideration by the Roots Program Core Team.
4. For projects approved for funding, Point Blue executes agreements with landowner and subgrantee.
5. Project proceeds with implementation.
6. As-builts and final documentation are submitted to Point Blue following project completion.
7. Project performance is monitored and evaluated.

Important Milestone

Date	Description
June 4, 2024	Release of limited Roots Program RFP/Round 2 funding period opens
July 15, 2024	Last day to submit a project concept and/or an application for consideration for the project selection decisions
Aug. 15, 2024	Round 2 projects selected for development * does not guarantee award
Aug. 15 - Dec. 31, 2024	Round 2 projects development and finalization with assistance from Point Blue staff. All final project materials must be completed and submitted by Dec 31, 2024
Jan. 15, 2025	All Round 2 projects are reviewed and either approved to move into contract, returned for further refinement, or rejected by the program committee.
Dec. 31, 2026	All projects complete and funds expended.

Program Contact Information

Pre-application consultation with program representatives is strongly encouraged. Questions related to this opportunity may be directed to Point Blue via email at (rootsprogram@pointblue.org).

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Appendix A: Examples Projects Implemented Through This Opportunity

Project Type	Associated practices	Wildlife benefits	Co-benefits
Active riparian restoration (permits not required, or already secured by applicant)	Herbaceous planting (seeds and/or plugs), woody planting, irrigation, bird and bee nest boxes, wildlife habitat brush piles, fencing, mulch, site preparation/ weed treatment (disking or solarization)	Increase pollinator habitat, increase songbird nesting and foraging habitat, fawning habitat, increase climate refugia for wildlife	Improved soil health, enhanced aesthetic & cultural value, improved water quality, reduced erosion, increased carbon sequestration
Passive riparian restoration	Wildlife friendly fence, livestock water with wildlife escape ramps, wildlife habitat brush piles, song bird and bee nest boxes, grazing management plan	Allows for the natural regeneration of willows and other riparian plants to increase songbird nesting and foraging habitat, fawning habitat, increases climate refugia for wildlife	Improved soil health, enhanced aesthetic & cultural value, improved water quality, reduced erosion, increased carbon sequestration
Oak woodland Restoration	Acorn planting and/or seedling planting, songbird, barn owl, and kestrel nest boxes, wildlife habitat brush piles, perennial grass seeding, irrigation, browse protection, fence, mechanical thinning to address conifer encroachment	Increase pollinator habitat, increase songbird nesting and foraging habitat, fawning habitat, increase climate refugia for wildlife	Improved soil health, enhanced aesthetic & cultural value, increased carbon sequestration
Wet meadow restoration	Beaver dam analogs, simple in-stream rock structures, willow planting, active riparian restoration (see above)	Improve beaver habitat, increase songbird nesting and foraging habitat, fawning habitat, increase climate refugia for wildlife	Increased carbon sequestration, soil stabilization, enhanced aesthetic & cultural value, improved water quality, reduced erosion
Hedgerow establishment	Woody and herbaceous plantings, annual pollinator seeding, song bird and bee nest boxes, irrigation, browse protection, mulch, site preparation/ weed treatment (disking or solarization)	Increase pollinator habitat, increased songbird nesting and foraging habitat, increase climate refugia for wildlife	Increased carbon sequestration, windbreaks, soil stabilization, weed suppression
Upland herbaceous pollinator planting	Annual native wildflower seeding, site prep/ weed treatment (disking or solarization), mulch, possible irrigation and fence	Increased pollinator foraging and nesting habitat	Soil stabilization, weed suppression
Monarch butterfly plot	Milkweed (Asclepias sp.) plugs or potted plants, other monarch beneficial plants and flowers, site prep/ weed treatment (disking or solarization), mulch, possible irrigation and fence	Increased habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators	Soil stabilization, weed suppression
Invasive species removal in preparation for restoration	Targeted grazing, manual and/or mechanical invasive species removal (Himalyian blackberry, yellow iris, fig, etc.)	Allows for successful implementation of wildlife habitat improvement projects (riparian restoration, upland	Soil stabilization, water quality, weed suppression

Project Type	Associated practices	Wildlife benefits	Co-benefits
		habitat restoration) that provide pollinator habitat, increased songbird nesting and foraging habitat, increase climate refugia for wildlife	
Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration (permits not required or already obtained by applicant)	Removal of light density encroaching western juniper, prescribed grazing to manage intensity and timing, and rangeland seeding and shrub planting. mesic area restoration with rock structures or beaver dam analogues (BDAs).	Improves sage grouse nesting, brood-rearing, and over-wintering habitat, improves native plant abundance for pollinators, increases food abundance and structure for sagebrush obligate songbirds, pronghorn antelope, and mule deer.	Improves soil health, hydrologic function of sagebrush rangelands and mesic areas, reduces fire risk and type conversion to annual grasses, increases carbon sequestration, increases native plant dominance and resilience to disturbance.
Wildlife Friendly Farming	Hedgerows, cover crop, bat and songbird boxes, bee hotels, raptor perches, targeted grazing for weed management	Increases breeding and foraging habitat for birds, bats, and pollinators; supports integrated pest management	Some practices (e.g, hedgerows and cover crops) improve soil health.
Community or School Garden Habitat Enhancement	Hedgerows, windbreaks, cover crop, bat and songbird boxes, bee hotels, butterfly gardens, wildlife habitat plantings	Diverse native plantings provide valuable habitat for pollinators, beneficial insects, and other wildlife, even on small scales. Wildlife habitat structures (bird/bat boxes, bee hotels) are another way to encourage wildlife to reside or breed in your garden if other habitat elements are already suitable.	Aesthetic value, pollination services, can be a component of IPM strategies. Hedgerows and windbreaks can mitigate wind and water erosion. Planting practices contribute to soil health and carbon capture. Community building and grass-roots science education.

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Appendix B: Project Selection Rubric

After confirming that the application is eligible, application reviewers will evaluate each project based on specific criteria using the Project Selection Rubric in addition to other criteria including staff capacity, project location and funding availability.

Category, Question #	Criteria	Score
Project Eligibility		
	In order to be considered for funding from this program, projects must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:	
	(1) the project will benefit wildlife and pollinators, and will provide other ecosystem co-benefits;	Y/N
	(2) the project can be completed within the timeframe of the program;	Y/N
	(3) the project has completed environmental review requirements, or has a plan in place to address environmental review;	Y/N
	(4) the landowner/land manager is able to sign a landowner agreement	Y/N
Equity Building (40%)		
1	Project will benefit a California designated DAC or SDAC: - 5 points: Disadvantaged Community - 10 points: Severly Disadvantaged Community	10
2	Applicant self identifies as either: (1) Historically Underserved Group (Black, Hispanic, Native American or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, LGBTQ+, Female); (2) Limited Resource - total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four ($30,000/ year; more information), or less than 50 percent of your county' s median household income (Find county information here); (3) Beginning Farmer or Rancher (farming or ranching less than 10 years); (4) Military Veteran; (5) Schools with more than 50% of students enrolled in the Federal free and reduced meal plan National School Lunch Program (10 points for any category; 10 points max for this section)	10
3	Project offers opportunity to directly engage broader community. - 5 points: Projects that engage community members through the implementation process - 10 points: Projects that engage disadvantaged communities or under-resourced communities through the implementation process (10 points maximum)	10
4	Project is on tribal land or directly benefits indigenous communities	10
Wildlife Habitat Quality and Connectivity (40%)		
5	Project includes 1) native plantings, 2) a diverse planting palette, 3) culturally significant designs elements, 4) encompases multiple ecosystems (ex. riparian and adjacent grassland) 5) support natural regeneration within an existing/planned protected area? (2 point each)	10
6	Project increase capacity to support a variety of vulnerable wildlife species, including: 1) Threatened or endangered species, or species of special concern, 2) grassland species, 3) migratory wildlife, 4) wetland species, 5) pollinators and beneficial insects? 6) Others? If yes, specify... (2 points each, 10 max)	10
7	Project has high connectivity using Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE) Terrestrial Connectivity Tool (1 to 10 points, from 'ecoregion biodiversity rank' x 2)	10
8	Project addresses barriers in CDFW's 2020 Wildlife Movement Barrier Priorities (rank 5 for one barrier, 10 for multiple barriers, 0 for none)	10
Climate Resilience (10%)		
9	Does project provide climate-resiliency to producers and their operations, by considering expected climatic fluctuations (e.x. more extreme weather events, hotter weather, longer droughts, more frequent fire, etc.) and improving the ecosystem's capacity to adapt to those fluctuations? (1 point = resilience benefits uncertain; 2 points = benefits likely; 3 points = benefits extremely likely)	3
10	Does project improves soil health? (1 point = little or uncertain improvement; 2 points = certain improvement)	2
11	Does project improve a degraded or impaired watershed process (e.g. improve soil structure or restore riparian habitat)? (1 point = one process likely improved; 2 points = multiple process improvements possible; 3 points = multiple process improvements likely)	3
12	Does project address inadequate wildlife-friendly water supply and reliability, freshwater management, or water quality concerns? (i.e. 1 point = not identified; 2 points = improves distribution)	2
Feasibility and Synergistic Effects (10%)		
13	Does project represent a technically sound, effective and appropriate design solution (i. e. is water available to support the practice, fencing to protect plants, consistent with ranch management, etc.)? (1 point = design appears effective; 2 points = design clearly links to appropriate support structures e.g. fencing, management plans, etc)	2
14	Project supports a landowner who is new to technical assistance programs? (0 points = landowner has often recieved technical assitance, 1 point = landowner has recieved some assitance in the past, 3 points = landowner has never before participated in a technical assistance program)	3
15	Does project take into account and address adjacent land use(s) that may threaten the project's intention & long-term potential benefits? (0 points = adjacent landuse is a known threat to longterm projet benefits, 1 point = adjacent landuse unknown, 3 points = adjacent landuse known and not a threat to project benefits)	3
16	Does project deliver public outreach and/or access benefits? (0 point = no; 1 points = some access, such as a tour, case study, demo site; 2 = open access to the public)	2