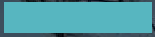
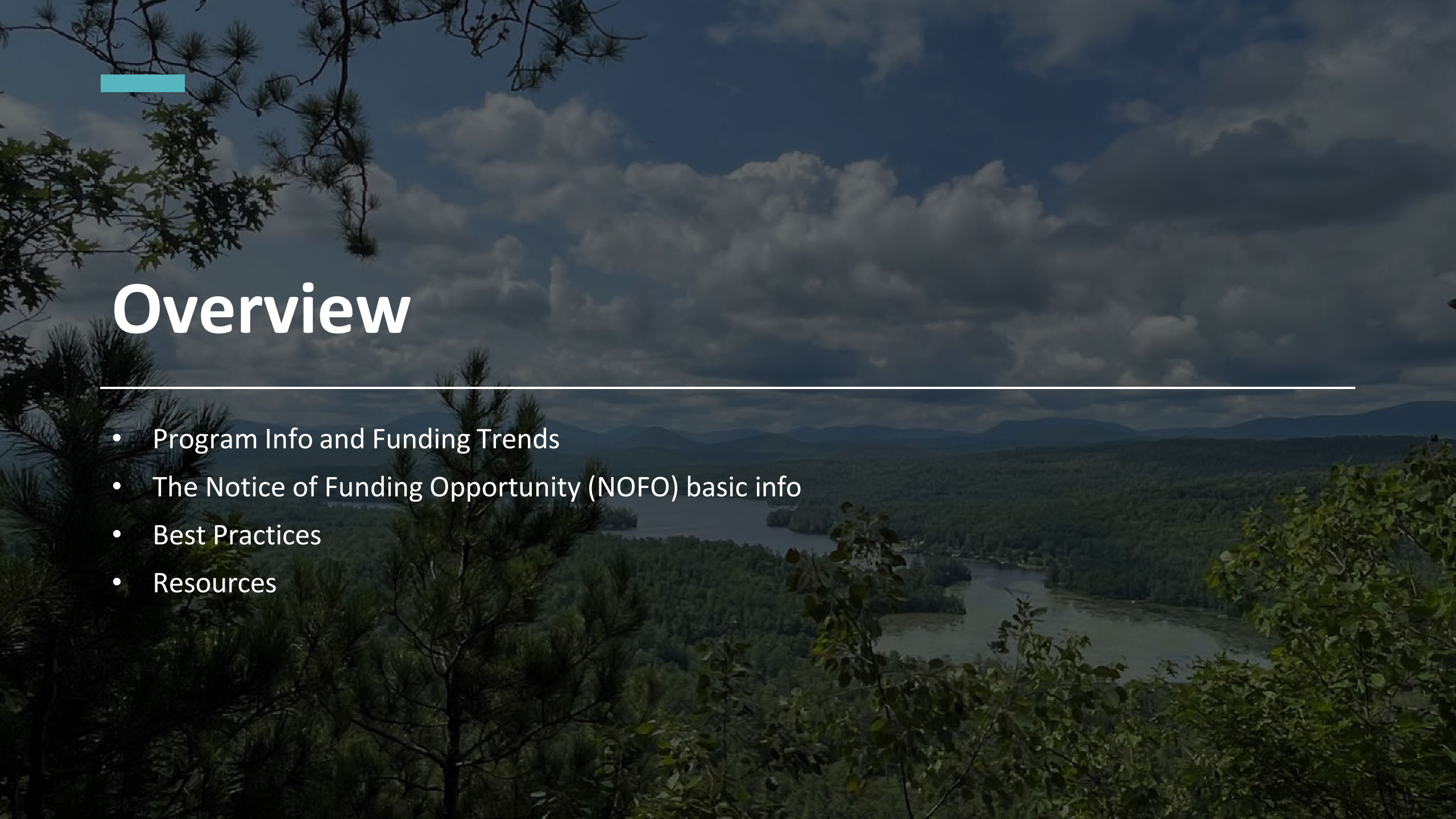




CWA Section 319 Competitive Grants: *tips for winning applications*

Margot Buckelew, US EPA Headquarters (Buckelew.margot@epa.gov)
Howard Kahan (Kahan.Howard@epa.gov)



Overview

- Program Info and Funding Trends
- The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) basic info
- Best Practices
- Resources

Caveat:



** The competition period is currently OPEN. Per the EPA competition policy, we are not able to discuss as many details in this session as in previous years.**



We will be taking detailed notes on any questions. Questions and responses will be added to the competition FAQ document. Questions will not be attributed.

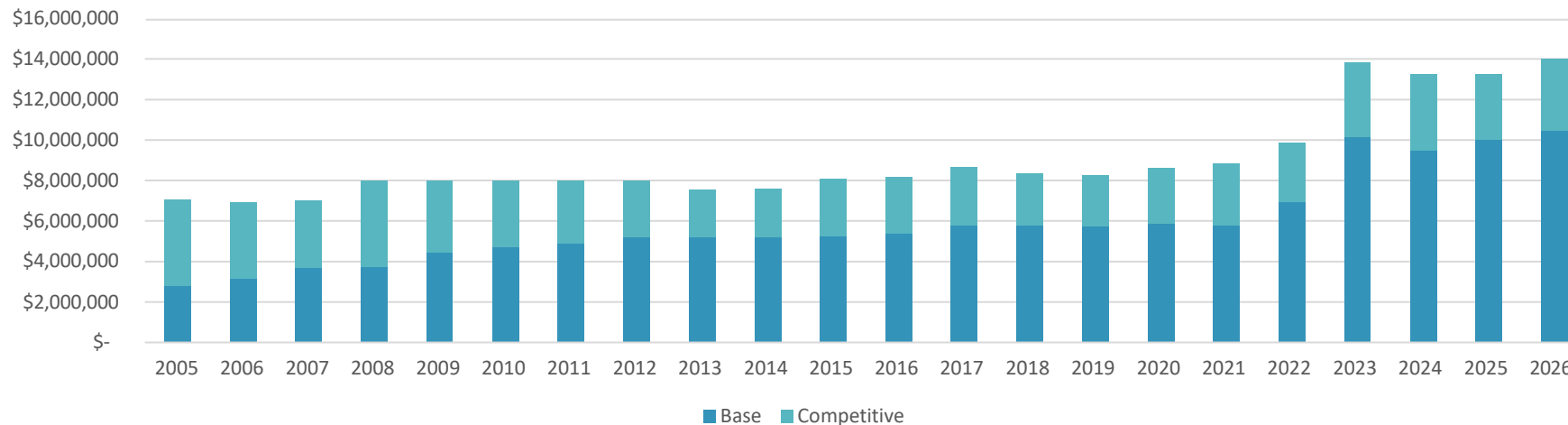


Due to our limited ability to discuss details about projects; **we strongly encourage peer to peer discussion after this session about potential project ideas or grant management.**

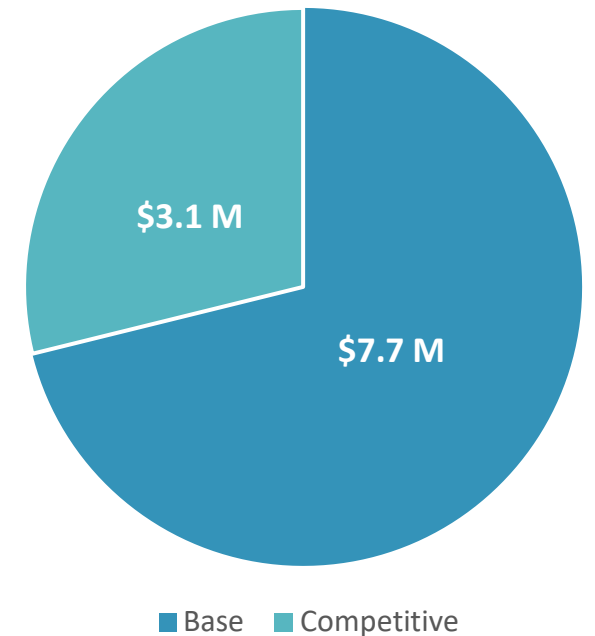
Section 319 Program Information

Section 319 Program Funding Overview

- EPA awards 319 grants to eligible Tribes in two parts:
 - **Base grants** (\$50-75K per Tribe, depending on land area) – primarily staff-led activities to implement NPS program. E.g., water quality monitoring, watershed coordination, education/outreach. (~200 grants / yr)
 - **Competitive grants** (up to \$175K/project) – on-the-ground projects to protect or restore water quality. (~25 grants / yr)



Average Tribal Funding for Base & Competitive
(2019 - 2025)



Competitive Grants Funding Trends

Year	# Applications	# Awarded
2020	47	28
2021	36	32
2022	35	31
2023	35	33
2024	41	34
2025	37	30
Avg.	37	32

New Applicant Set Aside:

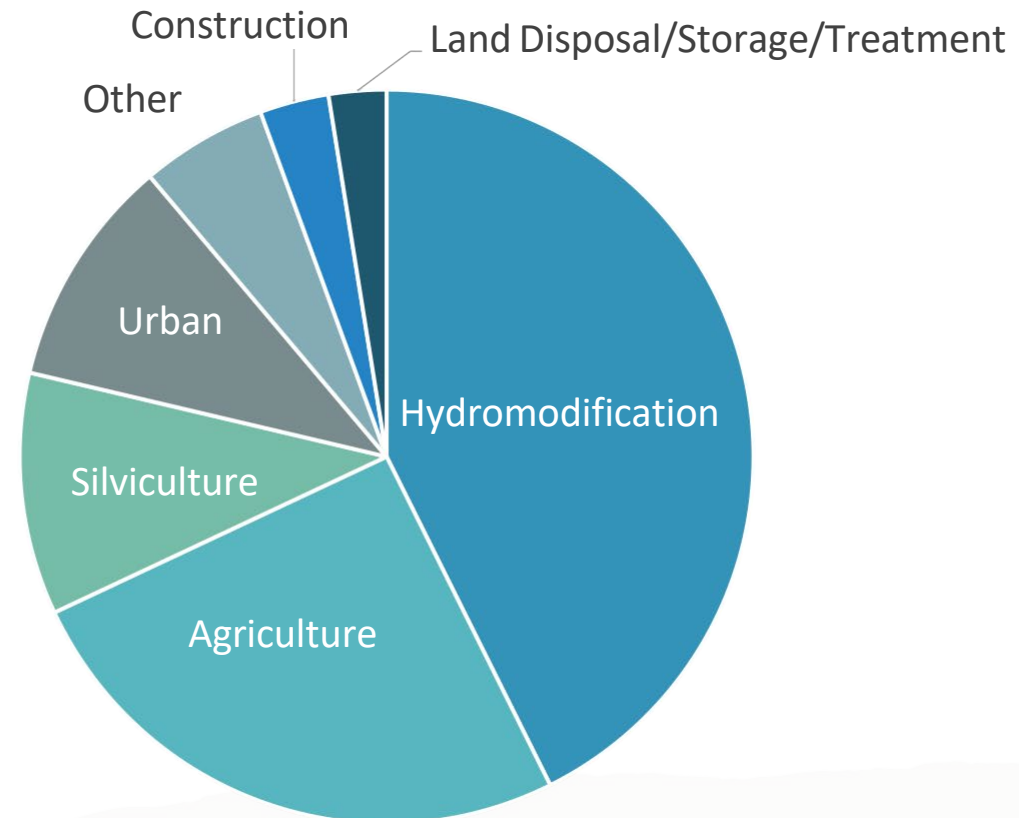
Year	# Applicants	# Awarded
2023	8	6
2024	10	4
2025	10	6

What is EPA looking to fund?

Projects that...

- Will directly improve/protect water quality by implementing on-the-ground BMPs.
- Are strategically targeted in the watershed to address a NPS pollution problem/threat.
- Demonstrate a “readiness to proceed.”
 - Reasonable and achievable budget and project schedule.
 - Project team with clearly defined roles/responsibilities.

Pollution Sources Most Commonly Addressed in 319 Projects



NOFO Overview:

Basic Information:

WHO CAN APPLY:

- All Tribes eligible to receive FY2026 319 grants.
- See [Current Grant Information](#) on our website for list.

HOW:

- NOFO may be accessed on the [Tribal NPS website](#) and on [grants.gov](#)
- **APPLICATION MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA GRANTS.GOV*

WHEN:

- *Application period is 75 days.*
- **Due November 9, 2026 11:59 pm ET.**

The Competitive Grant Process:

Applicant questions due to EPA by **October 3, 2026**
(email Tribal319grants@EPA.gov)

Applications must be submitted online at Grants.gov by
November 9, 2026

Threshold Review: EPA Regions review applications to ensure they are eligible and meet NOFO threshold criteria

Evaluation Review: Eligible applications reviewed by National Review committee. Scored out of 100 points.

EPA Selection Official: Selected applications for award, based primarily on ranking.

Selections announced in Spring 2027

***So, your project
schedule should not
begin before summer
2027.**

Key NOFO Reminders:

Match Requirements:

- Tribal PPGs – no \$ match requirement.
- 10% if requested a hardship waiver.
- Otherwise, match is 40%.

Reserved funding for Tribes that haven't received a grant FY 21-25

- See list for reference of [Tribes eligible for this set-aside](#)

Cover page

- Counted towards 15-page limit. See NOFO for required elements.

GRTS project information - *requirement added in 2022*

- If awarded funding, you are responsible for providing EPA project info within 90 days of your grant award. This will be included in EPA's 319 program grants reporting and tracking database (GRTS).

The background is a solid blue color. It features several decorative elements: a large, irregular white polka-dot shape in the top left corner; a large, irregular white polka-dot shape in the top center; a large, irregular white polka-dot shape in the bottom left corner; and a large, irregular white polka-dot shape in the bottom right corner. Additionally, there are several abstract, organic white shapes scattered across the background, including a large one on the left side and a smaller one on the right side.

Best Practices

Before preparing an application...



Establish the “Big Picture”



What are your program goals?



What specific project(s) will you implement to achieve those goals?



Talk to partners to ID joint priorities



NPS pollution is complicated, may take multiple phases of projects to address. It's OK to state this in applications.

When writing the application...



Be sure the funding opportunity is the right one for your needs



Tie the work back to the “Big Picture”



Don't get creative in your application format – stick to the NOFO criteria and address each criterion individually



Describe and show (photos, maps, graphs) the problem & proposed work



EPA likes data. Use data if available to support your claims in your application.



Most reviewers are new to EPA – Don't assume they know your program

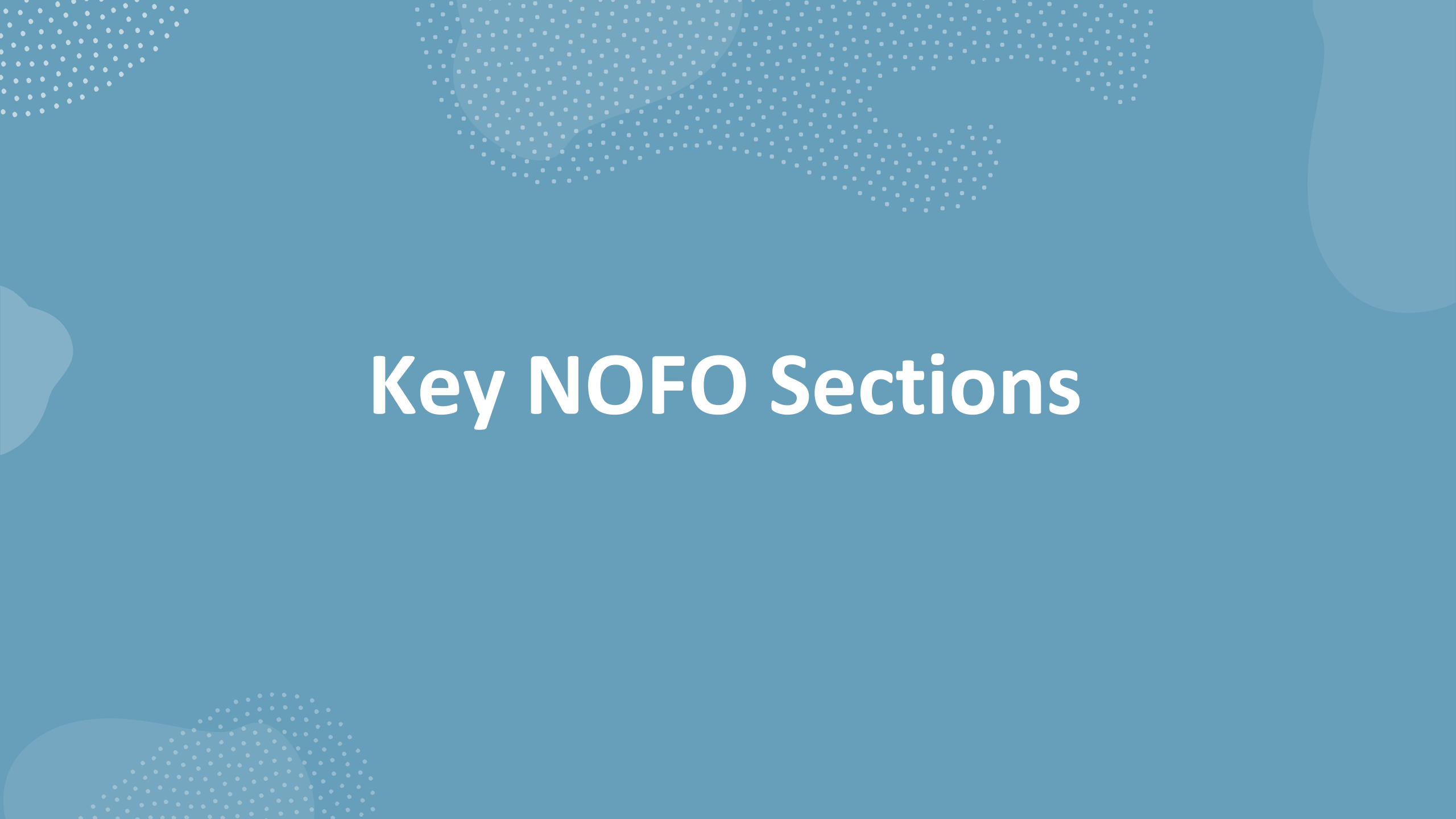


Stick to the page limit



Ask for a debriefing, regardless of outcome



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Key NOFO Sections

Overview:

No significant changes between the FY25 and FY26 NOFOs

- Project cap has increased to **\$175k**
- EPA has implemented a new NOFO template – the information will *look* different but is not substantially different.

Criteria changes were implemented in FY24

Walk through NOFO + highlight important sections

Cover Page Requirement:

- Included in 15-page limit
- Use space efficiently!

Cover Page (included in the 15-page Project Narrative limit and should not exceed 1 page). Include the following information in the cover page:

- **Project Title.** The project title should reflect the main project outcome/objective and should be 15 words or less.
- **Name of Tribe or Intertribal Consortium Applying for Funding**
- **Key Personnel and Contact Information** (i.e., name, email address and phone number).
- **Waterbody name and HUC12 ID Number(s).** A useful tool for looking up this information can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/how-my-waterway>
- **Abstract/Project Summary.** The abstract should begin with one or two sentences describing the main objective of the application. It should also include a description of the main tasks, including the specific BMPs and other activities, if applicable, to be implemented as part of the proposed project, as well as a description of the anticipated environmental outcomes. The entire abstract should be 250 words or less.
- **Pollution Category and Subcategory.** NPS pollution categories and subcategories can be found in [Appendix B](#).
- **Anticipated Environmental Outputs and Outcomes.** Include a brief description of the anticipated pollutant reduction measures and results. Detailed explanations and information should be included in the Project Narrative and will be evaluated as described in [Section V.A.iii](#).
- **Total Project Cost.** Specify the amount of CWA §319 federal funds requested and the non- federal cost share/match, if applicable, for the proposed project.

4. Application Contents and Format

- What to include in your application package – key forms
- **How to format your application (Section 4.B) and what to include to address each ranking criterion. *15-page limit for project narrative.**
- Other Program specific application information about QAQC

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5. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

- Submission deadline – **November 9, 2026 11:59 pm ET**
- Grants.gov submission instructions. Submission through grants.gov is required – only a few exceptions.

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6. Application Review Information

- **Review Criteria (Section 6.B):** point values, how each criterion will be evaluated.
- How EPA will review and select applications

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Review Criteria:

Criteria	Point Value
i. Project Location	15
ii. NPS Pollution Problem	10
iii. Project Goals and Environmental Results	15
iv. Project Workplan	25
v. BMP Technical Merit	20
vi. Project Budget	10
vii. Past Performance	5

General Grant Criteria:

iii. Project Goals and Environmental Results

- Outputs = deliverables you will achieve during the project period.
- Outcomes = results, effects, or consequences of outputs and is related to achieving the goal
- Explicit link to the EPA Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every America.
- A plan for measuring AND tracking progress

iii – Project Goals and Environmental Results The application will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which it clearly identifies and describes: a) Project goal(s) that link to the NPS pollution source(s) and water quality impairment described in the application, as well as a priority in the Tribal NPS management program. (6 points) b) The potential to achieve environmental results, anticipated outputs and outcomes (see Section 3.A), and how the outputs and outcomes are linked to and support Pillar 1: Clean Air, Land, and Water for Every American described in Section 3.A. of this announcement. (6 points) c) A plan for measuring and tracking progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes (3 points) See the Project Narrative Description (Section 4.B) for more information.	15 Points Total
---	-------------------------------

General Grant Criteria:

iv. Project Workplan

- Discuss responsible parties and lead contacts for all workplan components
- Milestone schedule should include:
 - Breakout of project activities
 - Timeframes, interim milestone dates
 - Discussion on ensuring that funds are expended in a timely and efficient manner

iv – Project Workplan The application will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which it clearly identifies and describes: a) Complete details for the project workplan, including a detailed breakdown of tasks to implement the proposed BMP(s), as well as other eligible project activities, where applicable. (15 points) b) The roles and responsibilities for each workplan component including responsible parties and lead contacts. (5 points) c) A milestone schedule that covers each year of the project period and includes a breakout of the project activities into phases with associated tasks and timeframe, interim milestone dates for each project component, and a clearly articulated approach, procedures, and controls to ensure that awarded funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner. (5 points) See the Project Narrative Description (Section 4.B) for more information.	25 Points Total
--	----------------------------

Other Criteria:

v. BMP Technical Merit

- BMP Technical Merit should Include:
 - detailed info on BMPs including planned or conceptual design, when applicable.
 - Justification on why this BMP is best suited for the identified problems
 - Description of potential future environmental conditions and how the BMP design will be responsive to this
 - A plan to maintain the BMP for its life span (usually 10 years)

v – BMP Technical Merit The application will be evaluated based upon the extent and quality to which it demonstrates the technical appropriateness of the BMPs, including identifying and describing: a) <u>Why the</u> proposed BMPs are best suited to address the NPS pollution source(s) and water quality impairment or potential impairment identified in the application. (10 points) b) Describe potential future environmental conditions at the project site and how proposed BMPs will remain effective during variable environmental conditions or weather events. (5 Points) c) The plan for operating and maintaining the proposed BMP(s) to ensure they	20 Points Total
remain effective for their expected lifespan. (5 points) See the Project Narrative Description (Section 4.B) for more information.	

General Grant Criteria:

vi. Project Budget & vii. Past Performance

- Budget should include:
 - Estimated funding for each workplan component / task
 - Detailed information for the entire project
 - Information on match (even if it is \$0!)
- Past Performance:
 - Be sure to document grants and cooperative agreements from the last **5 years**
 - Discuss how progress was documented and reported

vi – Project Budget

The application will be evaluated based upon the extent and quality to which it demonstrates the reasonableness of the budget and estimated funding amounts for each work plan component/task.

Applications will be evaluated based on the adequacy and specificity of the information provided in the detailed budget and whether the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable, including consideration of indirect/administrative costs. Total project costs must include both federal and the required non-federal cost share/match. The cost-effectiveness and reasonableness of all costs (federal and non-federal cost share/match) will also be evaluated.

See the Project Narrative Description ([Section 4.B](#)) for more information.

**10 Points
Total**

vii – Past Performance

Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant adequately documented and/or reported on its progress towards achieving the expected results (e.g., outputs and outcomes) under the federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include grants and cooperative agreements but not contracts) identified in the application performed **within the last five years** for similar scopes of work to the proposed project, and if such progress was not being made, whether the applicant adequately documented and/or reported why not.

Resources for Application Development

For Project Examples: GRTS Public Mapper



Project Number	Project Title	Appropriation Year	Program	Category of Pollution
02	Pueblo of Santa Ana Watershed Restoration Project	2020	Nonpoint Source Implementation Program	Urban Runoff/Stormwater Hydromodification
01	BMP Implementation and Watershed Collaboration to Manage NPS pollution from Rangeland and Range Roads	2019	Nonpoint Source Implementation Program	Hydromodification

Project: 06, Award Fiscal Year: 2019, Grant: 01F66101, Grantee: PUEBLO OF TESUQUE, Grant Description: PUEBLO OF TESUQUE FY 2019 NON-POINT SOURCE PROJECT

Project Number	Project Title	Appropriation Year	Program	Category of Pollution
01	Pueblo of Tesuque: Bridge and bank restoration	2019	Nonpoint Source Implementation Program	Construction Hydromodification

Project: 06, Award Fiscal Year: 2019, Grant: 01F66201, Grantee: PUEBLO OF SANTA CLARA, Grant Description: SANTA CLARA FY19 COMPETITIVE 319 NPS PROGRAM

Project Title	Appropriation Year	Program	Category of Pollution
Quality Improvements to Santa Clara Creek with Bank Stabilization and Sediment Control	2019	Nonpoint Source Implementation Program	Agriculture Silviculture Hydromodification Other NPS Pollution

Project: 06, Award Fiscal Year: 2018, Grant: 01F55701, Grantee: PUEBLO OF SANTA CLARA, Grant Description: SANTA CLARA FY18 COMPETITIVE 319 NPS PROGRAM

Project Title	Appropriation Year	Program	Category of Pollution
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For Specific Challenges:



Tribal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Pacific Southwest / Region 9

Water Division
Tribal Clean Water Section • December 2025

75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105
866-EPA-WEST

The **Tribal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program** helps federally-recognized tribes develop and implement polluted runoff control programs and watershed-based plans that address critical water quality concerns and achieve positive environmental results.

Funding Availability

Approximately \$13 million is anticipated to be allocated for Clean Water Act (CWA) §319 Tribal programs nationwide. This will allow awards of \$45,000 (for Tribes with land area less than 2 sq. miles), \$55,000 (for Tribes with land area between 2 to 50 sq. miles), or \$70,000 (for Tribes with land area more than 500 sq. miles) in base funding to eligible Tribes. The remaining funds will be awarded to eligible Tribes through a national competition to support the implementation of priority “on-the-ground” watershed projects that will

Examples of Eligible Projects

- Implementing the Tribe’s water quality management program
- Implementing best management practices to reduce or eliminate NPS pollution resulting in water quality improvements



Tribal Nonpoint Source Pollution: Best Management Practices After a Wildfire

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Pacific Southwest / Region 9

Water Division
Tribal Clean Water Section | June 2023

75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105
866-EPA-WEST | www.epa.gov/region9



Using Tribal Nonpoint Source Funding for Green Infrastructure/LID

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Pacific Southwest / Region 9

Water Division
Tribal Water Section • October 2024

75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105
866-EPA-WEST • www.epa.gov/region9

The **Tribal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program (NPS)** helps federally-recognized tribes develop and implement polluted runoff control programs and watershed-based plans that address critical water quality concerns and achieve positive environmental results. Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development projects are eligible to be funded under the NPS program.

The term “Low Impact Development” (LID) refers to systems and practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration or use of stormwater protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat.

“Green Infrastructure” (GI) includes an array of products, technologies, and practices that use natural systems – or engineered systems that mimic natural processes – to enhance environmental quality and provide utility services. Green Infrastructure practices recharge ground water, reduce the need for watering vegetation, and reduce and slow excessive stormwater flowing to streams.

Funding Availability

Approximately \$13 million is anticipated to be allocated for Clean Water Act (CWA) §319 Tribal programs nationwide. This will allow awards of \$45,000 (for Tribes with land area less than 2 sq. miles), \$50,000 (for Tribes with land area between 2 to 50 sq. miles), \$55,000 (for Tribes with land area between 50 to 500 sq. miles), or \$70,000 (for Tribes with land area more than 500 sq. miles) in base funding to eligible Tribes. The remaining funds will be awarded to eligible Tribes through a national competition to support the implementation of priority “on-the-ground” watershed projects that will



This 300-yard-long bioswale on the Santa Ynez Reservation in California is designed to reduce flooding danger to surrounding homes. It also provides wildlife habitat.



Region 8 Trash Free Water Tribal Program Handbook

Environmental Protection Agency
Region 8

2022





Tribal Nonpoint Source Management: Leveraging Opportunities to Protect and Restore Waters

EPA 841-B-22-002
May 2022

Focus: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

This fact sheet series connects Tribal water quality staff, government leaders, and landowners with financial or technical support for projects that reduce nonpoint sources of pollution.

Introduction

Partnerships are pivotal to the success of nonpoint source (NPS) pollution management efforts. Clean Water Act (CWA) section (§) 319 grants provide funding to more than 200 federally recognized Tribes to help assess and manage sources of NPS pollution. (Note: for this document, “Tribes” is a collective term encompassing all Indian Nations.) This fact sheet series explores ways Tribes can leverage CWA §319 funding to pursue resources from other federal agencies to support NPS management.

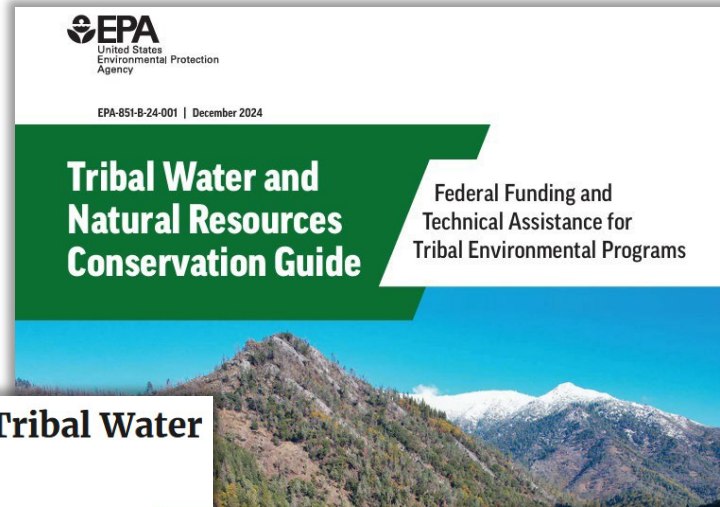
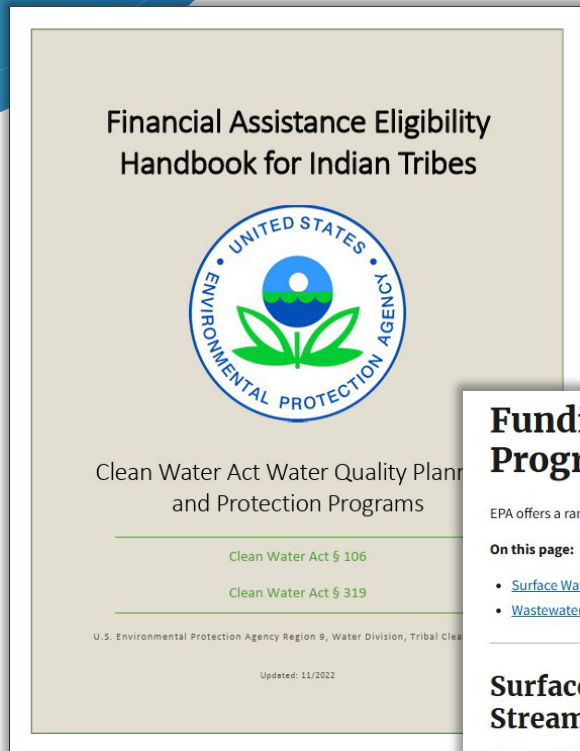
This fact sheet explores the resources available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) and, by extension, local conservation districts. Tribal governments may apply for NRCS project assistance or serve as a conduit to provide Tribal landowners with assistance. NRCS offers technical expertise in resource assessment, conservation planning, and other areas. NRCS works closely with local conservation districts to ensure that federal resources are distributed according to local conservation priorities and needs. Conservation districts often help to connect landowners with NRCS resources.

The following pages discuss how Tribes can:

1. Make connections with NRCS and conservation district staff



Supplemental Funding Resources:



Funding Opportunities for Tribal Water Programs

EPA offers a range of funding opportunities for tribes to support water programs.

On this page:

- [Surface Waters: Our Lakes, Rivers, Streams, Coasts, and Wetlands](#)
- [Wastewater Infrastructure](#)

Surface Waters: Our Lakes, Rivers, Streams, Coasts, and Wetlands

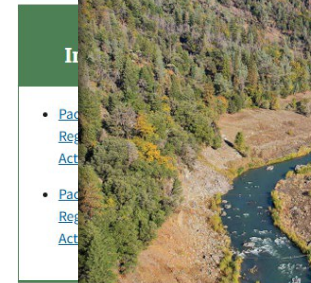
Water Pollution Control Program (Clean Water Act Section 106) Tribal Grant Program

Provides financial assistance to tribes and intertribal consortia to establish and administer programs for the prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. [Learn more about the CWA Section 106 Tribal Grant Program.](#)

Tribal Nonpoint Source (Clean Water Act Section 319) Grant Program

Provides funding to support the implementation of tribal nonpoint source programs to manage nonpoint source pollution. [Learn more about the Tribal CWA 319 Grant Program.](#)

Wetland Program Development Grants



U.S. Department of the Interior
Indian Affairs

Access to Capital Clearinghouse

Shortcuts



Questions?

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tribal319grants@epa.gov