

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

ADVANCING CULVERT AND BRIDGE RESTORATION IN COASTAL NEW JERSEY

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Introduction

The New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) is requesting proposals for culvert or bridge restoration projects in the New Jersey portion of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary (see [map](#)) in order to enhance aquatic connectivity and/or address undersized bridges or culverts that may cause flooding. This funding opportunity will support organizations in the assessment, identification, planning, and design of culvert or bridge restoration.

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program

[The New York - New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program \(HEP\)](#) engages people, partners, and communities to collaboratively advance understanding, improve stewardship, and enhance our shared waters and watersheds. Created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the request of the governors of New York and New Jersey, HEP is an ongoing effort to develop and implement a consensus driven plan to protect, conserve and restore the Estuary.

Identifying the Problem

For six years, HEP's [Aquatic Connectivity Through Climate-Ready Infrastructure project](#) has addressed two of our region's pressing issues in and around streams: habitat loss and flooding.

Aquatic Connectivity: Restoring aquatic connectivity removes barriers to provide more habitat for fish and other wildlife that migrate up and downstream as part of their lifecycle. This is especially critical for anadromous fish species, which are already vulnerable due to climate change and fishing pressure. Streams that were once free flowing are now hampered with dams and crisscrossed with roads, both of which can affect the ability of fish to utilize aquatic habitat. While the opportunities for improving aquatic connectivity have been studied in coastal New Jersey's watersheds with respect to dams, places where aquatic passage can be improved at culverts and bridges has not been comprehensively assessed.

Flooding and Erosion: Communities are exposed to flood risks due to undersized culverts and bridges. Flood risk, including road closures, erosion and undermining of roadways, and damage to nearby homes and property, can be reduced by proactively planning and implementing restoration strategies. A thorough inventory and hydraulic capacity assessment of existing infrastructure can identify the highest priority structures. Further, the more frequent, larger precipitation events that we are experiencing with climate change means that structures that were once adequate are no longer able to handle stormwater

flows. Such foresight can save time and money by addressing problems before they require emergency action—actions that too often result in the replacement of a damaged culvert with the same undersized or incompatible structure.

HEP has conducted assessments of bridges and culverts using protocols developed by the [North American Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative \(NAACC\)](#) and created [fact sheets](#) for many coastal watersheds in New Jersey. HEP has also published a [culvert prioritization toolkit](#), designed by Princeton Hydro, to help communities identify and advance bridge and culvert restoration projects. We are now seeking proposals from partners interested in prioritizing and designing structures to replace the infrastructure that no longer serves people or wildlife.

Scope of Work

Projects should include both of the following activities:

1. Identification of culverts or bridges for restoration using HEP's [toolkit](#), including assessments of stream road-crossings using NAACC protocol, if needed; and
2. Planning, design, and/or stakeholder engagement and outreach.

1. Culvert or Bridge Prioritization and Identification

This funding opportunity will support the identification of culverts or bridges with restoration need based on aquatic connectivity or hydraulic capacity issues that lead to flooding, erosion or tidal blockage. Grantees should utilize HEP's [culvert prioritization toolkit](#), designed by Princeton Hydro, to help target the bridge or culvert to upgrade.

The toolkit requires an assessment of the culverts/bridges using the protocols developed by the [North American Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative \(NAACC\)](#). Many NAACC assessments have been completed by HEP and other partners for areas of coastal New Jersey. If NAACC data are not available for the geographic scope of the project, NAACC assessments should be conducted under this funding opportunity—or with other leveraged funding—as an initial step in the project (see Available Budget and Timeline). See the section “Checking your area for NAACC assessments” below to see where assessments have already been completed. Field staff conducting NAACC assessments must be certified by NAACC, and HEP can assist in the training required to perform the assessments.

2. Advancing Restoration with Planning, Design, and Stakeholder Engagement

Following identification of culverts and bridges that have already been assessed, and undertaking any additional assessments, the grantee *must also* advance towards restoration of one or more culvert(s) or bridge(s). This can include planning, engineering, conceptual design, grant writing, community outreach or stakeholder engagement. The specific products will reflect the scope and scale of the priority project but should reflect an intent to seek support for additional engineering, final design, permitting, and/or construction.

Checking your Area for NAACC Assessments

To check whether your area has crossings assessed using NAACC protocol, navigate to their Data Center: https://naacc.org/naacc_search_crossing.cfm. Select the following options to most easily determine whether your area has culverts and bridges assessed using NAACC protocol.

1. For Location, select “New Jersey [2579].”
2. Select one or more borough/county/townships of interest. Select multiple geographic regions by control-clicking on each borough/county/township.
3. After selecting your region(s), ensure that the stream selection is set to “All NJ Streams” and that the option directly below is set to “All NJ Watersheds.”
4. Select Search in the bottom right corner of the panel.
5. For the easiest visualization, select “Map with Google Maps,” or you can download the data in different formats directly below that.
6. Using Google Maps, navigate or zoom to your region of interest, if necessary.
7. All stream crossings (assessed or unassessed) will be displayed in your specified regions. **Black** points indicated **unassessed crossings**, which would require you to collect data under this program. **Colored points** indicate **crossings that have already been assessed** and do not require assessment.

Depending on your geographic scope, your region may be fully assessed, partly assessed, or not assessed.

Available Budget and Timeline

The funding available for this opportunity is \$80,000 over the entire program (1.25 years). Applicants should plan to expend about 30% of the budget by August 31, 2025.

Eligibility

Eligible recipients include local governments, non-profits, or consultants working in partnership with the entity that owns or maintains the infrastructure in question (generally municipalities, counties, or transportation agencies). Culverts or bridges evaluated for restoration must be within the boundaries of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary in New Jersey (see the boundaries in [this map](#)).

Proposal Elements

Proposals must be submitted through our grants portal, [Proposal Central](#), by **5:00 pm Eastern Time, May 23, 2025**, and must include:

1. *Eligibility*– Is your organization a unit of local government or are you a non-profit or consultant working in partnership with the entity that owns or maintains the infrastructure?
2. *Title Page*– The title of the proposed project. For the program, select “Culvert and Bridge Restoration in Coastal New Jersey”).
3. *Applicant/PI*– Contact information and organizational affiliation of the lead applicant. **We strongly recommend that you create your account and update your personal profile in HRF’s application portal as soon as possible.** If your institution is not already registered in the portal, it can take up to two days to validate that institution. Anyone on your team who needs access to the proposal (e.g., institution signing official, fiscal officer, grant administrator) should do the same.
4. *Key Personnel (if applicable)*– The team members who will participate in the project, their roles, and their organizational affiliations.
5. *Project Details*
 - a. List any entities that you are partnering with for this project (e.g., municipalities, counties, or transportation agencies).
 - b. What is (are) the geographic area(s) that you will evaluate for culvert or bridge replacements?
 - c. Has this area been assessed using [North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative \(NAACC\)](#) protocols?
 - d. Will you be performing NAACC assessments as part of this funding opportunity?
 - e. If yes, are field staff already [certified](#) to conduct crossing assessments?
*Note that HEP can assist in training field staff.
 - f. Proposed Activities
 - Identification of culverts or bridges for restoration using HEP’s toolkit

- Assessments of stream road-crossings using NAACC protocols
 - Planning and site assessments
 - Conceptual design
 - Engineering
 - Grant writing
 - Community-based planning efforts, stakeholder engagement, and outreach
6. *Project Description* (pdf, limited to 3 pages)– A detailed description of the proposed culvert or bridge restoration project, as it addresses the problem and anticipated scope of work in this request for proposals. This should describe the goals and objectives of the project, what activities will be performed (e.g., planning and assessment, design, engineering, stakeholder engagement), the geographic scope, and expected outcomes. Please include a timeline of the activities over the approximately 1.25-year period and the milestones and/or deliverables.
 7. *Detailed Budget*– A detailed budget and justification. Applicants should plan to expend about 30% of the budget by August 31, 2025. Please provide amounts and descriptions of any cost sharing for this project, including grants or funding acquired by the applicant to support the restoration of a culvert or bridge identified under this opportunity. Instructions on how to format the budget will be included in the proposal portal.
 8. *Professional Merits and Relevant Experience* (pdf, limited to 3 pages)- Qualifications, including any relevant prior projects.

The award will be announced by **June 2025**.

Criteria for Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated first by eligibility and then by the following criteria:

- Goals, objectives, and rationale
- Technical approach to the project and specific tasks
- Ability to meet schedule
- Professional merits and relevant experience
- Cost effectiveness

Contact

For any questions about this RFP, please contact Isabelle Stinnette at istinnette@hudsonriver.org.