

Section 4: Funding for Tribes

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants under this Section are: (1) Federally recognized California Native American tribes; (2) non-federally recognized California Native American tribes on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission; and (4) nonprofit groups with 501(c) status with meaningful connections to or on behalf of eligible tribes.

Non-profit applicants must have a Native American-centered mission or have a majority Native American board. If the non-profit applicant does not meet this criterion, they must provide a letter of support from an eligible tribe detailing the nature of the relationship between the non-profit and the tribe, how the tribe will benefit from the project, and the tribe's support for the project.

At its discretion, the Department may also use the funding available under this Section to increase block grant awards where the block grant recipient partners or collaborates with a tribe to plan for, develop, and/or implement multibenefit land repurposing projects consistent with the project types listed below. In order to receive additional funding under this Section, block grant recipients must provide memoranda of understanding with or letters of support from the tribe(s) they are partnering or collaborating with detailing the work to be conducted using this funding.

Maximum Grant Award

Up to \$5 million in funding is available under this Section. Applications may be submitted for up to the total amount of funding available under this Section.

Solicitation Period

Applications submitted under this Section will be accepted on a rolling, non-competitive basis. If funding remains available under this section as of March 1, 2024, the Department, in consultation with the Agency Advisory Group and the California Natural Resources Agency Assistant Secretary of Tribal Affairs or similar position, may elect to distribute the remaining funds to regional block grant recipients.

Project Types

Tribes may apply for funding under this section to plan for, develop, or implement multibenefit agricultural land repurposing projects that address two or more project outcomes identified below. Projects must result in benefits lasting at least 10 years, unless they are directly responding to a state emergency drought declaration, in which case, benefits must be reasonably durable. Multibenefit projects are those that provide both groundwater sustainability benefits as well as at least one other community health, economic wellbeing, habitat, renewable energy, or climate benefit.

Examples of projects that may be funded include:

- Creation or restoration of habitat, including pollinator habitat, wetland habitat, upland habitat, and riparian habitat
- Creation of multibenefit recharge areas
- Conversion of irrigated land to dryland farming or non-irrigated rangeland
- Planting cover crops or conservation cover
- Reestablishment of tribal land uses

- Implementation of tribal cultural practices
- Facilitation of renewable energy projects that have an overall net GHG reduction
- Creation of parks or community recreation areas
- Incentive payments to landowners, farmers, and ranchers to implement multibenefit land repurposing projects that create a public benefit for at least ten years
- Land acquisitions to facilitate land repurposing and protect repurposed land uses
- Easement acquisitions to facilitate land repurposing and protect repurposed land uses

Land acquisitions, land transfers, and pumping allocation acquisitions must occur in conjunction with at least one non-acquisition land repurposing strategy or project type on the acquired land.

Desired outcomes for land repurposing projects include:

- Reduced groundwater use
- Increased groundwater recharge
- Improved baseflows in rivers and streams
- Conversion of land to less intensive water uses while maintaining natural and working lands
- Creation and/or restoration of wildlife and pollinator habitat and/or migratory resources
- Protection of cultural resources
- Improved water quality
- Land use agreements to accomplish prioritized opportunities
- Quantified achievement of multiple benefits of the program
- Incorporated participation from multiple partners and funding sources
- Replicability and scalability
- Integrated benefits to disadvantaged communities
- Tribes' ownership, co-ownership, co-management of, and access to the land
- Increased community outreach, involvement, and education
- Increased regional workforce development opportunities and support of local business.

As required by statute, any groundwater recharge achieved through these strategies and projects must be subtracted from any calculation by the Groundwater Sustainability Agency from the groundwater available for extraction by water users for the duration of the benefits paid for by the program. Payments for benefits must be linked to the achievement and delivery of the defined conservation outcomes for the project and the duration of those outcomes.

Tribes must work with the relevant Groundwater Sustainability Agency to quantify the groundwater recharge achieved by funded projects.

Eligibility Criteria

Criteria	Y/N
Applicant is a (1) Federally recognized California Native American tribes; (2) non-federally recognized California Native American tribes on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission; (3) members of a Federally recognized or non-federally recognized California Native American tribe; and (4) nonprofit groups with 501 (c) status with connections to or on behalf of eligible tribes.	Y/N
The project is located in one or more SGMA critically overdrafted basins managed under an approved groundwater sustainability plan or alternate plan; one or more high- or medium-priority groundwater basins where a state emergency drought declaration has been declared; or a combination of the two.	Y/N
Application is for an eligible project type.	Y/N
Application is complete.	Y/N
The proposed project provides groundwater sustainability benefits.	Y/N
The proposed project provides benefits in addition to groundwater sustainability benefits. Additional benefits include community health, economic wellbeing, habitat, renewable energy, or climate benefits. Projects that are conducted on lands that are least viable for irrigated agriculture and that contribute to resource connectivity (e.g., connectivity of habitat, agricultural landscapes, renewable energy centers, etc.) will receive priority for funding.	Y/N
The benefits provided by the proposed project will last for at least ten years.	Y/N
The proposed project meets at least three goals of the program and provides at least one desired outcome for project development or implementation grants, as relevant.	Y/N
The applicant has the fiscal and administrative control systems to adequately oversee the expenditure of the grant.	Y/N
The funding request is reasonable and commensurate with the work required to complete the project.	Y/N
The applicant has access to the site.	Y/N

Application Review and Project Selection

Materials and Submission

The application template is provided in Appendix D and is available on the [Department's website](#). Applicants should familiarize themselves with this solicitation prior to completing the application.

Applications will be reviewed as they are received.

Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant for revision. Applications that don't meet all the eligibility criteria will not be awarded funding.

Each applicant will receive an acknowledgement upon the Department's receipt of their application.

Application Review Process

Applicants will be required to submit an application for funding and participate in a site visit prior to a funding decision being made. Applications will be evaluated by Department of Conservation for consistency with the program's goals and requirements. Projects that meet the program's eligibility criteria will be awarded funding on a first come, first served basis as funding allows. The final funding decisions will be made by the Director of the Department.

Limited Waivers of Sovereign Immunity

Limited waivers of sovereign immunity may be necessary to ensure the enforceability of agreements. The Department will consult with tribes as needed in the formation of grant agreements.