

An aerial photograph of a river with a wooden boardwalk on the left and a tree with orange leaves on the right. The background is a mix of blue water and green land.

**§319-led
land
conservation
initiatives**

Protection Learning Exchange
Session 10
July 14, 2022

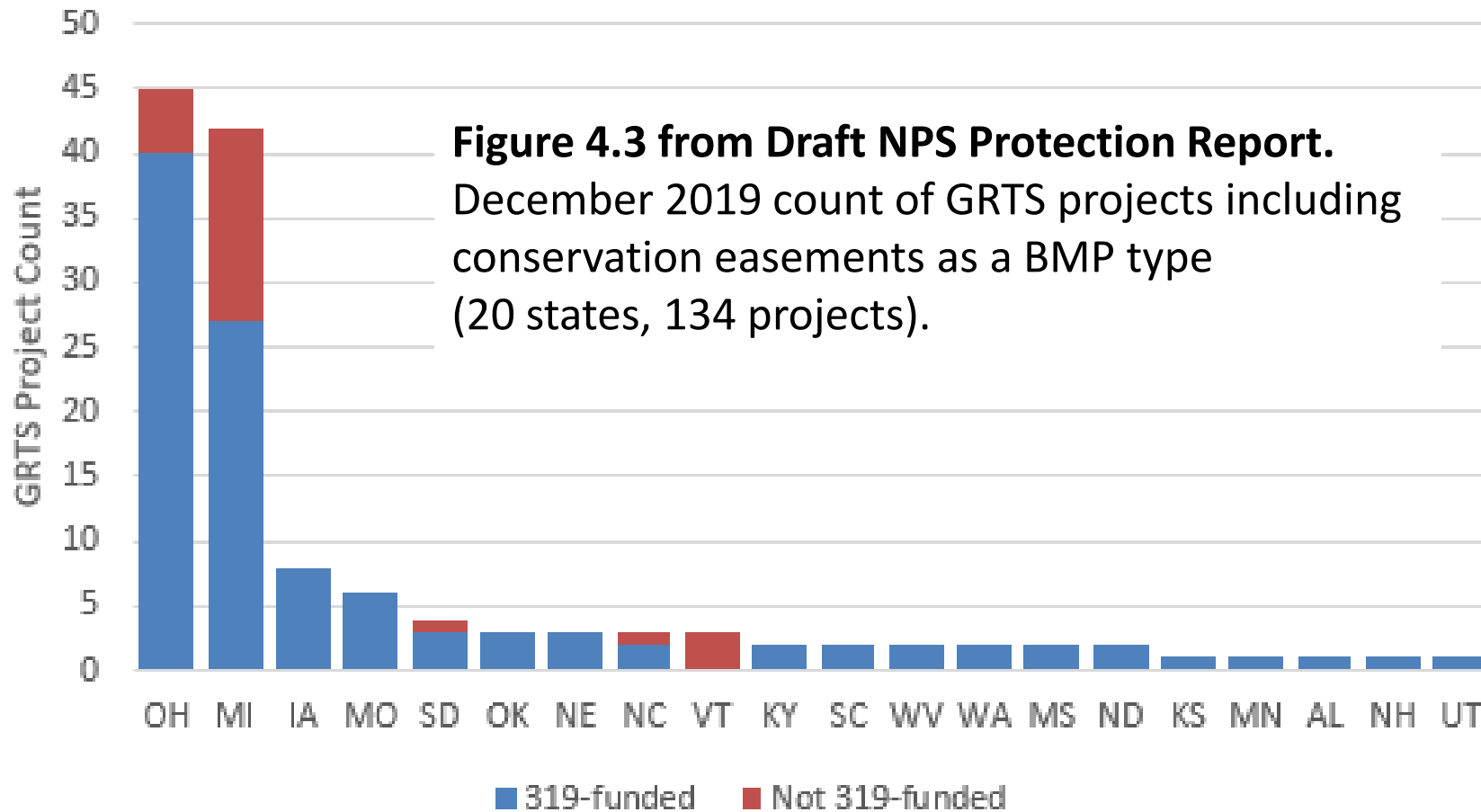
Steve Epting &
Sequoia Bua-Iam (ORISE)
EPA HQ, NSMB

**Healthy Watersheds Consortium
Grant Program**

and

***Advancing Watershed Protection
Through Land Conservation: A Guide
for Land Trusts***

Land Conservation in the §319 Program

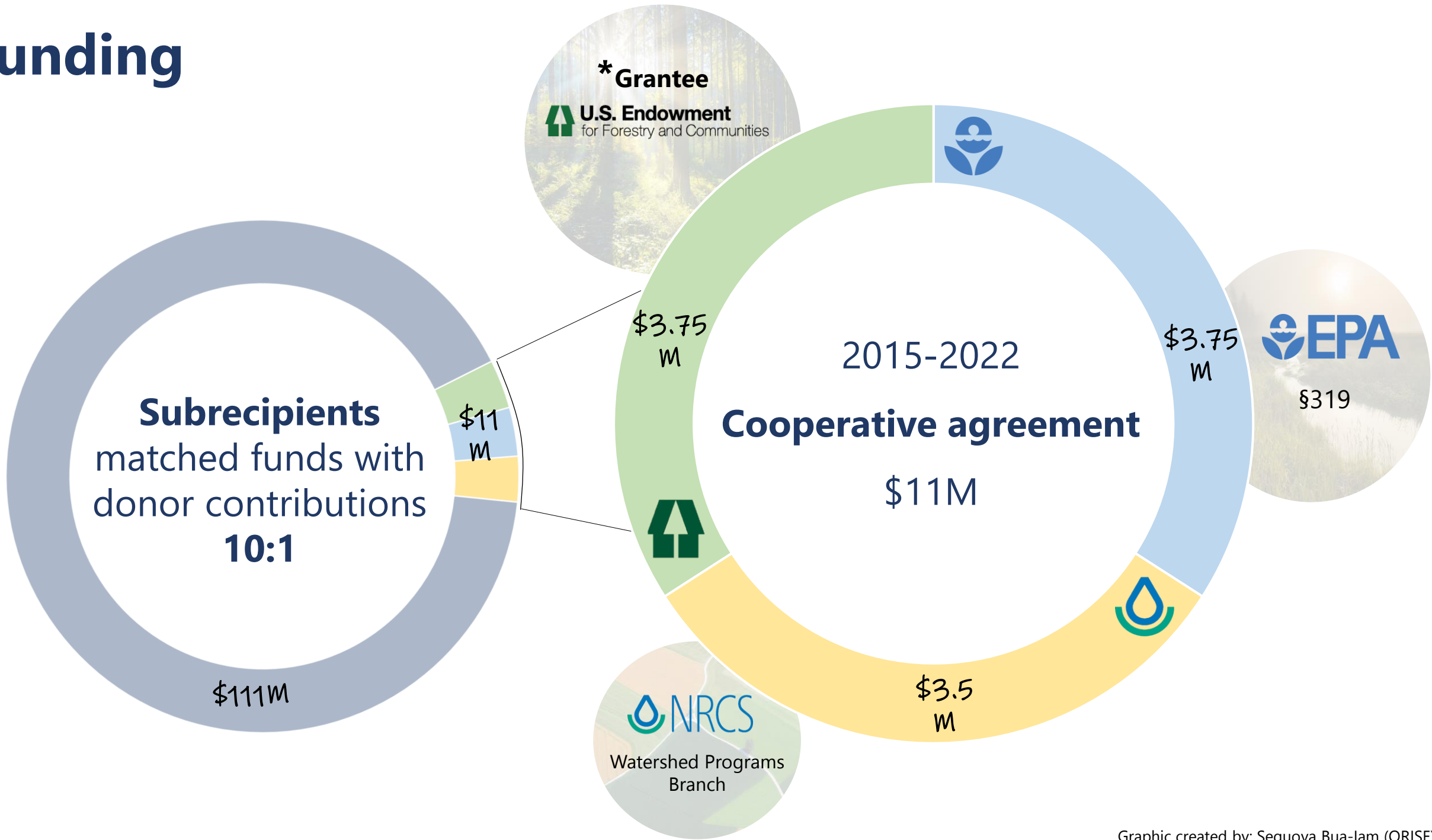


While §319(h) \$ **CAN'T** be used for land purchase, it **CAN** be used for easements.

Healthy Watersheds Consortium (HWC) Grant Program

- EPA issued RFP in December 2014
- **Program Objective:** *“Accelerate and expand the strategic protection of healthy freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds across the country...by supporting an array of projects that assess, identify, communicate the value, and demonstrate protection of these watersheds.”*
 - Build a consortium of funders (25% match requirement)
 - Develop a community of learning (2 nat'l meetings w/subawardees)
 - Communicate successes of HWC projects
 - Report on HWC project environmental results

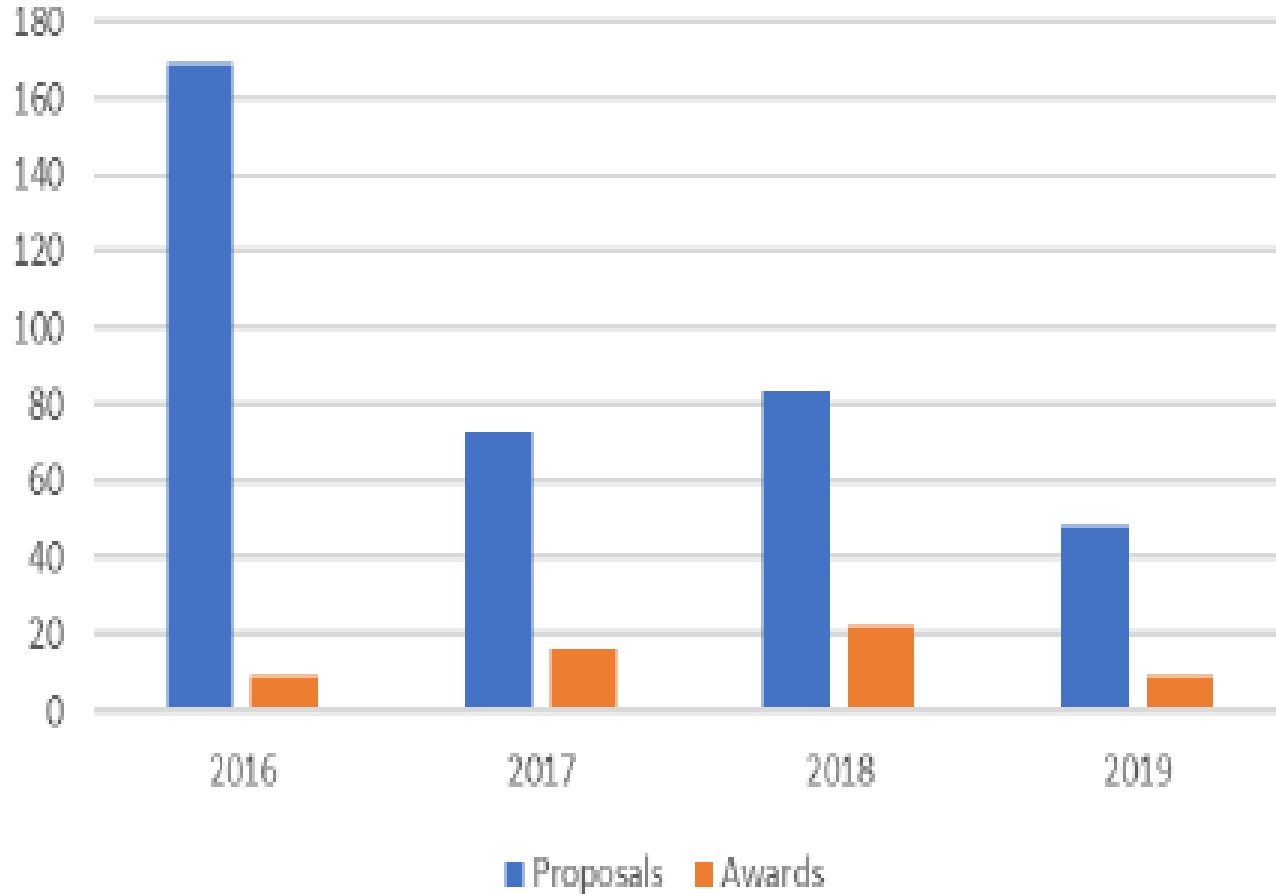
Funding



HWC Grant Application Process

- Each cycle, US Endowment held 2 info session webinars
 - Significant 1:1 engagement w/prospective applicants to answer Qs, etc.
- **Applications:** 8-pg form, 3-5 letters of support, ≤ 2 maps (optional)
 - *Current state of ecosystem health and watershed function?*
 - *Threats/timely opportunity for watershed protection?*
 - *Long-term vision (25 years) for watershed?*
 - *Links to an existing watershed plan/assessment?*
 - *Will project increase/maintain resiliency to climate change?*
 - *Does your organization have experience w/similar projects?*
- **Identify 'limiting factors' in watershed protection work**

Grants



* EPA provided input to the US Endowment during application reviews.

Grant Cycles: 4

Proposals received*: 367

Proposals funded: 56

Funds requested: \$80M

Funds awarded: \$11M



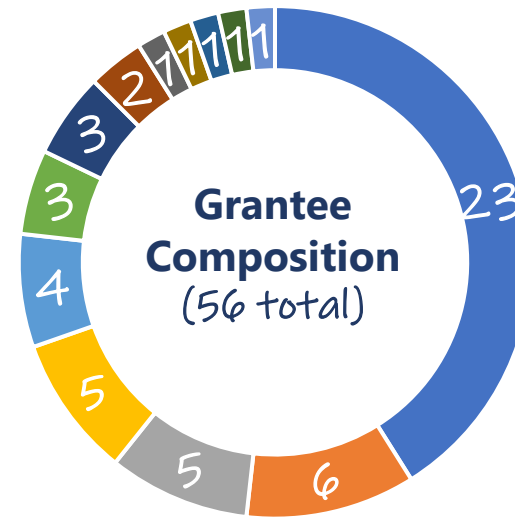
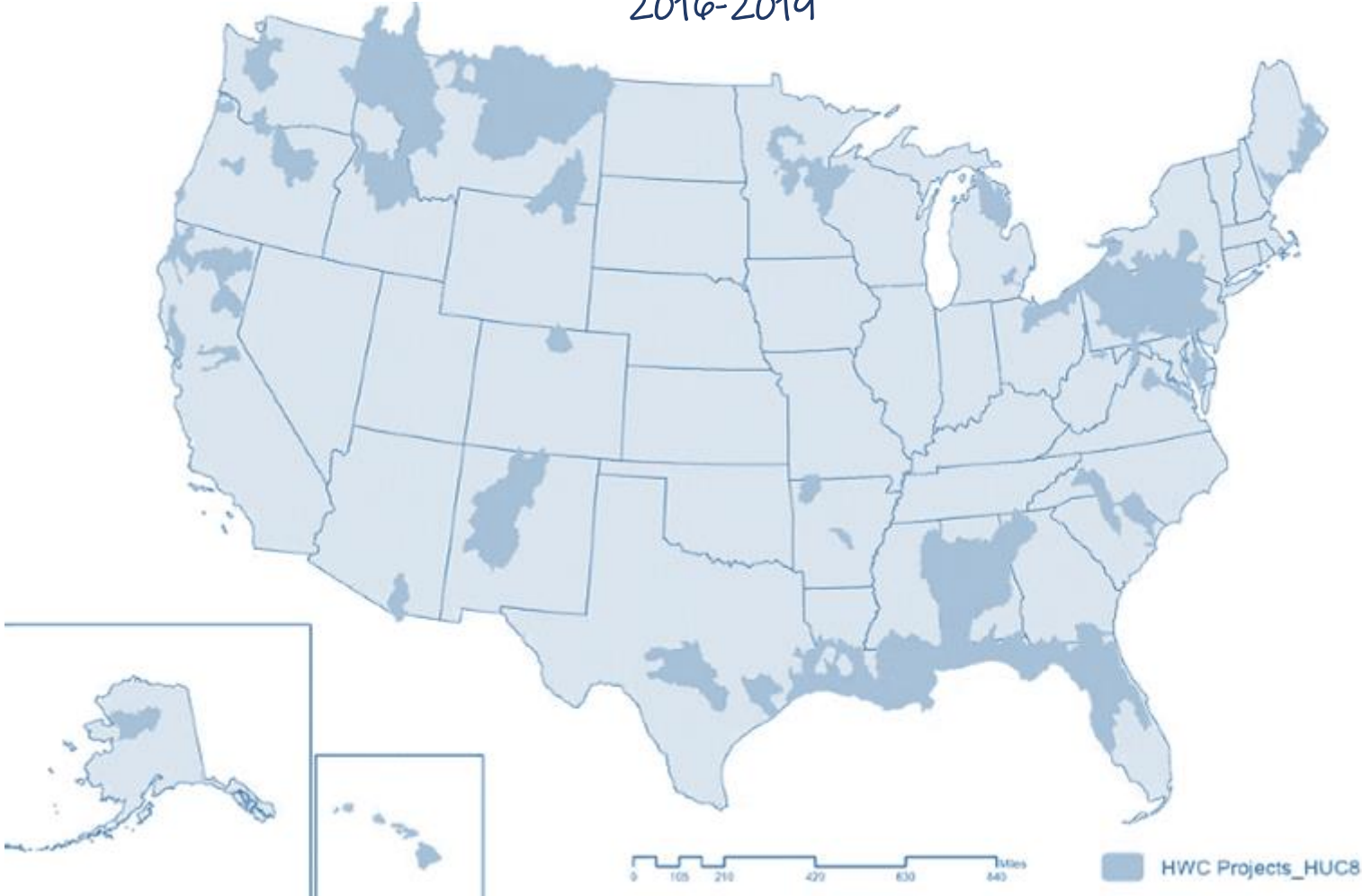
Average grant length: 2-3 years

Award range: \$31K-\$350K

Average award amount: \$177,756

Grantees

Projects Funded
2016-2019



- Land trusts
- Large non-profits
- Watershed groups
- Networks
- State government agencies
- Small non-profits
- Water utilities
- Conservation Districts
- Local governments
- Tribes
- NEPs
- Private
- Conservation Corps

Project Types



Results:

~ 1.1M acres

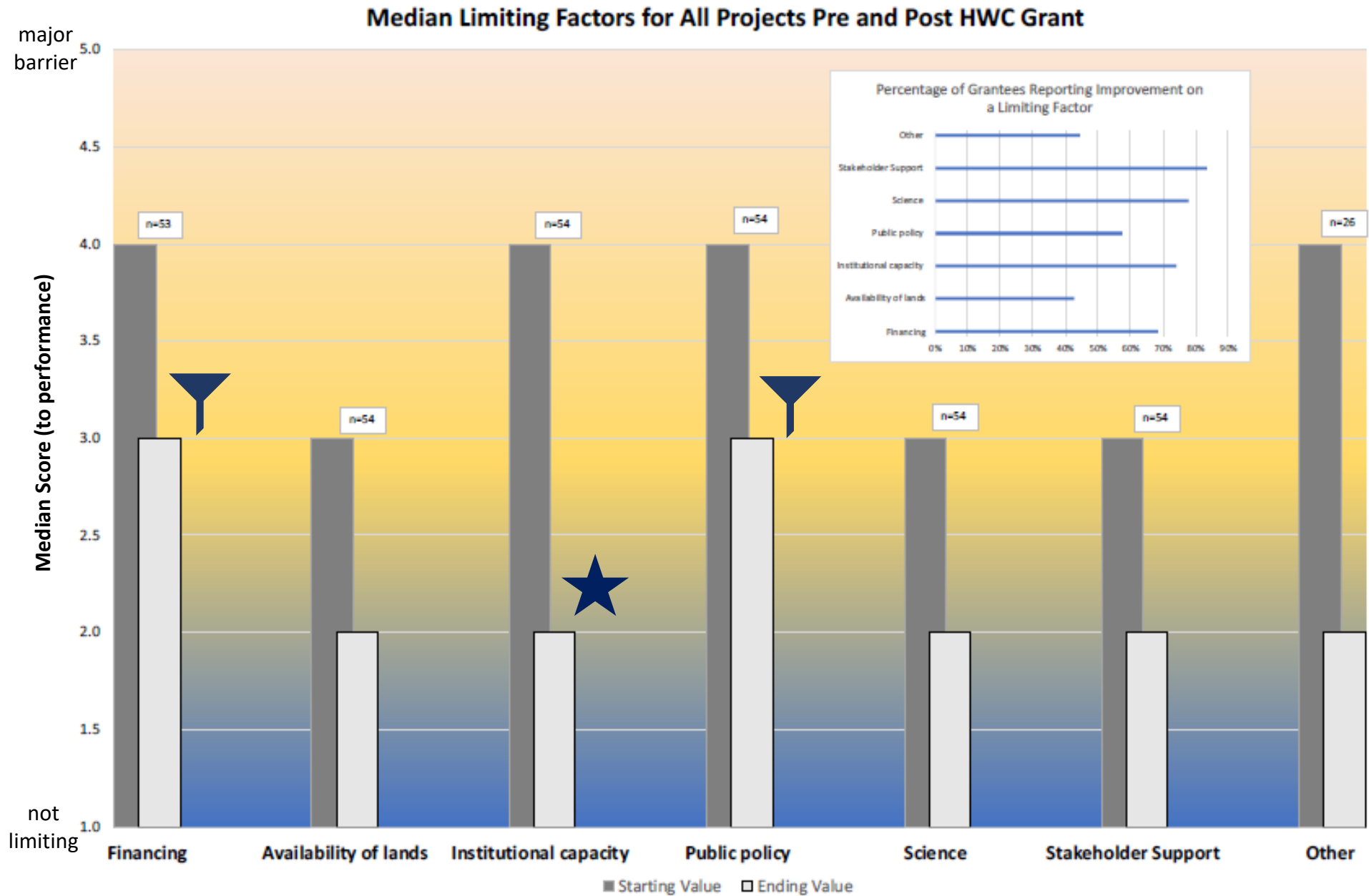
&

~ 5.2K stream miles

protected



*Principally in the form of easements
+
enhanced regulatory protections*



ADVANCING WATERSHED PROTECTION THROUGH LAND CONSERVATION

A Guide for Land Trusts

July 2022



34 pages

Watershed Protection 101

Key Components of a Watershed Watershed Approach

Clean Water Act Overview

Funding Matrix

Watershed Protection Strategies

- Building Partnerships
- Conserving Land
- Stewarding Land
- Community Outreach

Land trust features

Key Components of a Watershed

Headwater streams strongly influence the health of downstream waters. Because many headwaters have been lost or altered due to human activities, they may be protection candidates.

Natural infrastructure, like forests and wetlands, support watershed health by reducing erosion and runoff, regulating pollutant export, preserving natural flow patterns, and minimizing flooding.

Riparian Zones. Healthy waterbodies have surrounding plants—grasses, shrubs, and trees—that help to absorb rainfall, slow stormwater, and filter runoff.



Watersheds can be defined at multiple scales. **Catchments** typically refer to small areas of land draining to a single waterbody or river/stream segment.

Stewardship activities on working lands and in developed areas are key to preventing and reducing polluted runoff from these areas.

Water quality monitoring helps quantify upstream pollution problems and assess progress towards watershed goals.

Clean Water Act in Action - Program Summary Table

	Overview	Land Trust Connections
Collaborate and Adapt	<p>Establish Water Quality Standards</p> <p>Under the CWA, states establish goals for the condition of surface waters, termed water quality standards (WQS), that can include goals such as protection of aquatic life, recreation, and drinking water sources. WQS establish the foundation for CWA implementation programs, including setting CWA permit requirements, evaluating waterbody conditions, and setting water quality protection and restoration goals. WQS can also be used to establish special protections for certain high-quality waters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States review and can revise WQS every three years. Provide input to your state during these triennial reviews. Nominate waters for high-quality designations. Consider undertaking land conservation and stewardship around waters with high-quality designations, which may help spur public interest in conservation efforts.
	<p>Monitor and Assess Waters</p> <p>Water quality monitoring strategies can be designed to meet different needs (e.g., observe long-term trends, provide a comparison of water quality before and after a restoration project). Monitoring data collected by state agencies and partners is used to assess the conditions of rivers, lakes, bays, wetlands, estuaries, and nearshore marine waters to determine if WQS are being attained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are collecting local water quality information, reach out to your state to see if data can be used for CWA purposes. Assessment results can be an effective tool to communicate regional water quality conditions. Highlight high-quality or degraded waters to spark public interest. Consider monitoring sites and data as you target land conservation and stewardship activities.
	<p>Water Quality Reporting</p> <p>Every two years, states are required to report to the EPA and the public on the results of their monitoring efforts. The "303(d) Report" includes all that the state knows about its waters—healthy, threatened, and in poor condition. The "303(d) List" includes only those waters that are either threatened or already impaired (i.e., not meeting one or more WQS and need a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the list of impaired waters to target protection areas. Promote success stories, such as restoration and de-listing of an impairment, to the community and in watershed protection funding applications. Consider monitoring sites and data as you target land conservation and stewardship activities.
	<p>Identify Problems and Develop Restoration Plans</p> <p>Based on their water quality reports, states develop TMDLs and other plans to guide restoration of impaired waters. Given the high number of impaired waters across the US, states develop prioritization approaches to target planning efforts, for example in waters with greater likelihood to be restored where local partners are available to support implementation work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide input on state impaired waters prioritization. Support TMDL planning by sharing data and information on watershed conditions, submitting comments on methods and results, and participating in citizen advisory groups to monitor and track progress toward TMDL goals.
	<p>Control and Manage Sources</p> <p>The CWA discharges of pollutants from industry are regulated. Prevention is encouraged through various programs, and from many sources. The CWA, Title III, through a variety of funding and</p>	



Getting Started: Tips for Building Watershed Partnerships

- Research existing or potential watershed-based partnerships in your area.** Contact your local citizen-based watershed group (e.g., see the [River Network's "Who Protects Water?" Map](#)), water utility (e.g., see [EPA's Drinking Water Mapping Application to Protect Source Waters \(DWMAPS\)](#)), or other conservation organizations to identify potential partners.
- Share your land conservation goals and experiences with watershed partners.** Has your organization already prioritized parcels for conservation in your service area? Share these with watershed partners

1. Build Partnerships
In working at the watershed scale, you will be coordinating with various local stakeholders, including landowners, often across multiple jurisdictions. New ideas and input provided by partners not only provide a more solid commitment to solutions but also help to pool resources and skills.

4. Design Implementation Program
Most watershed plans cover a 10 to 15 year implementation period. You can keep your team on track by including an implementation schedule with interim milestones, identifying specific technical assistance and funding needs, and incorporating a monitoring/evaluation process to assess progress as you go.

2. Characterize the Watershed
Characterizing the watershed, its problems, and pollution sources provides the basis for developing effective management strategies (e.g., land conservation, stewardship practices) to meet water quality goals and helps to focus management efforts on the most pressing needs within the watershed.

5. Implement Plan
Time to get to work! Your implementation team, likely comprised of multiple organizations, can coordinate in developing project work plans and schedules. Remember to keep your community engaged along the way—and don't forget to highlight your successes!

3. Set Goals & Identify Solutions
Watershed goals are supported by specific objectives with measurable targets to assess progress towards each goal. This planning informs which management strategies are best suited to achieve your goals.

6. Measure Progress & Adjust
The watershed approach is not linear but circular, to allow you to integrate results back into your program. By tracking progress towards plan milestones and water quality goals, you can make adjustments along the way to make sure you're on track!

EPA Funding to Support Watershed Protection Work Table Continued

Funding Program	Type	Land Trusts Directly Fundable?	ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES							Award Amount Range	Match Requirement	Funding Cycle (e.g. annual)
			Land Conservation (including Land Conservation Easements)	Stewardship & Monitoring	Conservation Outreach	Water Quality Monitoring	Water Quality Reporting	Water Quality Assessment	Water Quality Research			
Environmental Justice, Small Grants Program	Grant	Yes								Up to \$75,000	None	Annual
Fire Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program	Grant	Yes								\$20,000 - \$50,000		
River Linkage Restoration Initiative*	Grant, Cooperative Agreement	Yes								Up to \$600,000		
Indian Environmental Assistance Program (IEAP Funds)	Grant, Cooperative Agreement, Partnership Grant	No								Varies		
National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grants	Subaward Grants	Yes								\$75,000 - \$250,000 (approximate)		
Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA)	Loan	No								Min: \$9.8M/ \$2.5M (small communities); No upper limit		
Water Pollution Control Grants (Clean Water Act F106)	Grant	No									Maintain*	Annual
Watershed Program Development Grants	Grant, Cooperative Agreement	Yes										

EPA Resource Spotlight: How's My Waterway

EPA's [How's My Waterway](#) tool provides the public with an easily accessible and understandable picture of water quality at a community, state, or national scale. The tool is a good starting point for understanding the condition of your local waters and educating your community. Users can enter an address or place name and find information on water safety conditions, waterbody impairment status, and current actions to restore or protect waters.

Landscape Characteristic	Why is it important?	Example Data Source
Natural land cover	Natural areas (e.g., forests, wetlands, natural grasslands) filter and process pollutants. They also support natural hydrology and flow patterns which help maintain healthy aquatic habitats and communities.	National Land Cover Database (NLCD)
Headwater streams	Headwater streams have important impacts on downstream water quality. The protection of headwater areas can support natural levels of water, sediment, and nutrient inflow to downstream waters.	National Hydrography Dataset (NHD)
Proximity to surface waters	Land near or within the riparian buffers that surround surface waters has a major influence on streamflow and water quality. Protecting natural lands in the broader floodplain also helps store and abate flood waters, thereby mitigating flooding impacts.	National Hydrography Dataset (NHD)
Critical groundwater areas	Lands near or above aquifer recharge areas, wellheads, and source water protection areas are critical to protecting groundwater and drinking water sources.	Contact local water utility or state drinking water agency



Engaging communities through citizen monitoring



Partnering across boundaries to protect Lake Erie



Since 1978

Prioritizing land conservation to protect rivers and aquifers



Stewardship through adaptive land management



Communicating watershed protection messages

**Thank
you!**

