

Application for the Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative (THWI)

Request for Proposals

Background of the THWI

With more than 60,000 miles of rivers and streams and more than 500,000 acres of lakes, Tennessee's waters provide recreational enjoyment and water supply to millions of people, and habitat for the most biodiverse freshwater aquatic species in the United States. In addition, they provide the irrigation needs of agriculture as well as meeting the needs of industry. Increasingly, responding to water use demands require collaboration and thoughtful planning among a broad partnership of agencies and interests in order to assure that our waters continue to fully meet the many needs placed upon them.

The Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative (THWI) is a collaboration of federal, state, and nonprofit organizations committed to maintain and improve water resources in Tennessee watersheds. THWI provides a forum for communication, collaboration, and thoughtful planning among a broad partnership of agencies and interests, and is coordinating implementation of protection and improvement efforts to protect and improve Tennessee's waters.

The THWI was launched under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed by The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), The Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and West Tennessee River Basin Authority (WTRBA) in August 2011. The MOU signatories recognize that many other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations have an interest in and a role in the health of Tennessee watersheds. Thus, a Charter was developed to describe and provide a structure that others can participate in to the extent of their interest and ability, whether that is focused on a single watershed, a region of the state, or the entire state. For example, the Coordinator of the Initiative will be seeking out members of a THWI Standing Team comprised of various stakeholder agencies and organizations that are willing to provide technical, financial, or other support in implementing THWI goals.

The overall goals of Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative are the following:

- (1) Establish and nurture partnerships that lead to the implementation of critical projects to protect and improve the state of watersheds in Tennessee; and to prevent watersheds from becoming impaired and to accelerate restoration of impaired streams;
- (2) Encourage the exchange of information, coordination, and planning among agencies, citizens, and communities to achieve healthy watersheds;
- (3) Encourage the application of good science to comprehensive and collaborative strategies for healthy watershed planning; and
- (4) Focus stakeholder programs and resources toward collaborative initiatives, promoting better decisions on spending available resources, and increasing the opportunity to protect and improve multiple resources and watersheds.

Application for the Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative (THWI)

Request for Proposals

8 Strategic Investment Areas

The Strategic investment areas for the THWI over the next three years are outlined in the MOU and must relate to water quality benefits. They are:

1. Regional Water Planning - Example: Develop long-range comprehensive plans to address water quality and supply issues focusing on watershed management units and service areas of water utilities more than political boundaries.
2. Restoration Projects - Example: Work in partnership to target and implement water resource protection/improvement projects that have the highest likelihood of success with measurable results.
3. Scientific Research and Monitoring - Example: Monitor stream conditions and conduct research to gain information needed to help communities, agencies, and industries to make better management decisions and take better care of the state's water resources.
4. Economic Development - Example: Work with key economic development partners to leverage resource and ensure future development has minimal impact on water resources.
5. Education & Empowerment - Example: Provide watershed/water resource tools and outreach material to local citizens and partners to ensure sustainability and to proactively prevent future problems by creating public awareness of practices affecting good water quality in the region.
6. Development of Best Practices - Example: Identify or promote best management practices that are most effective and efficient in reducing pollution loads.
7. Protection of Waters and Wetlands - Example: Work with partners to target healthy waters and critical wetlands, develop action plans, and implement protection initiatives.
8. Funding - Explore ways to focus existing funding and identify/develop new sources of funding for water resource protection and improvement.

Resources: Funding & Match

The THWI partners currently have funding to support projects that meet the goals of the Initiative until the end of the federal FY14 (September 2014). Anticipated funding by the THWI will range from \$30,000 to \$200,000 or greater per project depending upon the approved project's scope. Projects will be required to leverage additional resources and in-kind contributions will need to be both calculated up front and tracked during project. Final numbers will be required in final report.

After the THWI has reviewed the proposals and selected its recommendations for funding, THWI partners (signatories) will execute grant agreements as funds allow. The grant agreements will set the terms for submission of periodic reimbursement requests.

Application for the Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative (THWI)

Request for Proposals

Project Selection Requirements

All 3 elements below should apply to your project proposal to be considered for review. Once approved for review, projects will be ranked according to additional criteria specified in the application.

Required

- Yes No **THWI Strategic Investment Area.** Project fits into at least one of the eight THWI Strategic Investment Areas.
- Yes No **Above and Beyond Compliance.** Project is a proactive measure to improve and protect water resources. The project is not solely intended to help stakeholders meet regulatory requirements.
- Yes No **Leverages Additional Resources.** Additional agencies or organizations providing time and/or financial contributions to plan and implement the project.

Review Process and Project Funding Awards

Selection of Proposals: The THWI Executive Committee comprised of 1 member each of the four MOU signatories will review and select proposals for funding by October 31, 2012. Then THWI partners (signatories) will execute grants with project recipients as funds allow.

Announcement: The THWI Coordinator, Trisha Johnson, will announce awards by emailing and calling applicants. Announcements will also be available on THWI website. <Insert link here>

Start Dates for Projects: We anticipate a 2 month administrative period, such that projects may start January 1, 2013.

Expectations for Awarded Projects

Conditional aspects of the contract include communicating with THWI Coordinator and Stakeholders, assisting with a project plan and providing progress reports, monitoring environmental conditions (if applicable), tracking in-kind contributions, submitting a final report, and presenting at annual conference. These expectations will be outlined the final contract for the award.

Application for the Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative (THWI)

Request for Proposals

TVA National Environmental Policy (NEPA) Act Requirements

If your project is selected, and source of funding is TVA, a NEPA review will need to be completed before your project can begin. The NEPA review will be conducted by TVA concurrently with the contracting process. NEPA requires all federal agencies, including TVA, to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of actions they propose to take or in this instance, of actions others take through TVA-funded THWI projects. NEPA promotes early identification of environmental issues, problems, solutions, and mitigation options associated with the proposed project.

During the NEPA review, TVA will use details you provide in your proposal, to analyze your proposed project against a wide range of topics, such as impacts on T&E species, a wetland, floodplain, or wild and scenic river, cultural or historical resource, or other environmental resource. Therefore, as you complete the THWI application, be sure to include project details such as location, site details, photographs of the site, and potential impacts such as ground disturbance.

NEPA review will be completed no later than January 1, 2013. For more information follow this link to the TVA website. <http://www.tva.gov/environment/reports/nepa.htm>

Preparation and Submittal Guidelines

How to submit:

Proposal applications can be submitted one of two ways:

1. Electronically to trisha_johnson@tnc.org OR
2. By mail to Trisha Johnson, THWI Coordinator, 2021 21st Avenue, Nashville, TN 37212

Please submit using only one method. If submitting more than one project proposal, please submit each separately.

Please call (931) 854-1552 for questions or inquiries.

Time to submit:

Proposals should be received by email or mail by 5pm CT September 1, 2012.

Application directions:

Please fill out the application completely. Proposals should be received by email or mail by 5pm CT September 1, 2012. The application is a dynamic document and each requested field will expand as you fill in information. Use the "hover" option for a description of each field to be completed. Hovering will give a description of what information we are looking for in the proposals. Please follow this description of our request to the best of your availability. To print information in the "hover" fields, <need directions from Susan here>.