

Roots for Resilience: Strong Roots for a Changing Landscape

Living Shoreline Solicitation

Release Date:
January 5th, 2026

Overview and Goals:

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be funding a suite of nature-based climate solutions, including afforestation, forest management, coastal wetland restoration, and living shoreline restoration, through a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded to the Atlantic Conservation Coalition (ACC), which includes the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). To implement this work, DNR launched [*Roots for Resilience: Strong Roots for a Changing Landscape*](#)—a new initiative focused on supporting Maryland’s Lower Eastern Shore’s ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The overall Initiative will promote tree planting, coastal habitat restoration, and community engagement, thereby enhancing the landscape’s natural ability to store carbon and buffer against climate stressors. The *Roots for Resilience* Initiative builds upon existing partnerships and local efforts to foster both ecological and social resilience in a rapidly changing landscape. **This solicitation focuses on requests for living shoreline projects that will restore coastal shorelines and protect tidal marsh habitat**, while supporting DNR’s *Roots for Resilience* commitments.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) invites applications to be submitted for the construction, design/build, or design of living shoreline projects on the Lower Eastern Shore. “[Living shoreline projects](#) apply erosion control measures that include a suite of techniques which can be used to minimize coastal erosion and maintain coastal process, including marsh protection. Techniques may include the use of fiber coir logs, sills, groins, breakwaters or other natural components used in combination with sand, other natural materials and/or marsh plantings. These techniques can be used to protect, restore, enhance or create natural shoreline habitat.” Living shorelines can also create and protect adjacent marsh habitat, thus providing benefits beyond immediate shoreline erosion control. These benefits can include improved wildlife habitat, increased carbon storage in the adjacent marshes, and creating a more connected ecosystem that supports the health and stability of both the living shoreline and adjacent marsh habitat and allows for future migration strategies inland.

The goal of this RFP is to award large-scale living shoreline restoration projects that will collectively protect a total of 400 acres of adjacent high quality tidal marsh habitat. *Multiple awards are expected to be made to meet our 400-acre marsh protection goal*—your project should maximize the amount of marsh habitat protected through a living shoreline project. DNR is requesting living shoreline projects that will protect wetland complexes to improve habitat function and prolong the projected lifespan of the marsh. Selected applicants will become part of our broader network of partners already established to collaboratively implement DNR’s *Roots for Resilience* Initiative.

Eligible Applicants:

Applications can be submitted by the following organizations: local jurisdictions, non-profit organizations, and institutions of higher education. Please contact DNR if you have questions as to whether your organization is eligible to apply for funding. Note that eligible applicants must have and maintain in full force and effect liability insurance coverage in connection with the performance or failure to perform services during the term of the proposed project .

Eligible Project Locations and Project Types:

Funding is available to award living shoreline projects located in the Chesapeake Bay portions of Dorchester, Wicomico, and Somerset counties. Living Shoreline projects proposed on public lands (e.g., local government, state-owned, and federally-owned) in these counties are highly encouraged and preferred. In addition, projects proposed on private property will also be considered. *Applicants must clearly demonstrate landowner willingness and long-term support of the project.*

Living shoreline projects requesting funds through this RFP should intend to **protect high-quality tidal marsh habitat** and prevent conversion to open water habitat, thereby reducing carbon emissions and enhancing climate resilience. Projects should target wetlands that are at significant risk of conversion to open water due to erosion and wave action but where implementation of a living shoreline is expected to prevent conversion to open water for at least 25 years. Projects should also comprehensively incorporate the effect of sea level rise (SLR) into living shoreline designs. Factors that make the protection of marshes with living shorelines more likely such as edge erosion rates, marsh intactness, and marsh elevation should be considered in your project selection and will be considered in project evaluation. These elements can be assessed using data layers in the targeting map referenced below. These factors will help determine the likelihood of long-term marsh preservation. The risk of conversion should be documented using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and/or field-collected data.

To support applicants with project selection, DNR developed a Targeting Map to help identify suitable locations for living shoreline projects. This Targeting Map provides information on site eligibility, land ownership, and estimates of potential benefits and limitations of living shoreline projects across different areas. It is intended to help applicants understand the environmental context of proposed sites and ensure their projects align with both the eligibility criteria and the broader goals of the *Roots for Resilience* Initiative. A Technical Guide that includes detailed instructions for using the Targeting Map and its data layers is available here as map guidance. Proposed site locations must also demonstrate erosion is occurring at proposed locations that are currently protecting extensive wetland complexes (but is likely to continue to erode in the future without intervention). Erosion rates can be viewed and extracted using the MD ShorelineChanges - Rates of Change Transects Layer in the Targeting Map.

In addition to the above regarding site selection, proposed projects should describe other expected benefits such as improving or enhancing marsh habitat function, prolonging the projected lifespan of the marsh, enhancing ecological restoration for wetland species of concern (saltmarsh sparrow, black rail, diamondback terrapin, etc.), restoring aquatic resources, such as oyster reefs, enhancing migration corridors, protecting infrastructure, or improving recreational opportunities and public access to waterways and natural habitats. Additionally, applicants should describe steps that will be taken in their application to minimize impacts to existing resources such as submerged aquatic vegetation and other sensitive habitats.

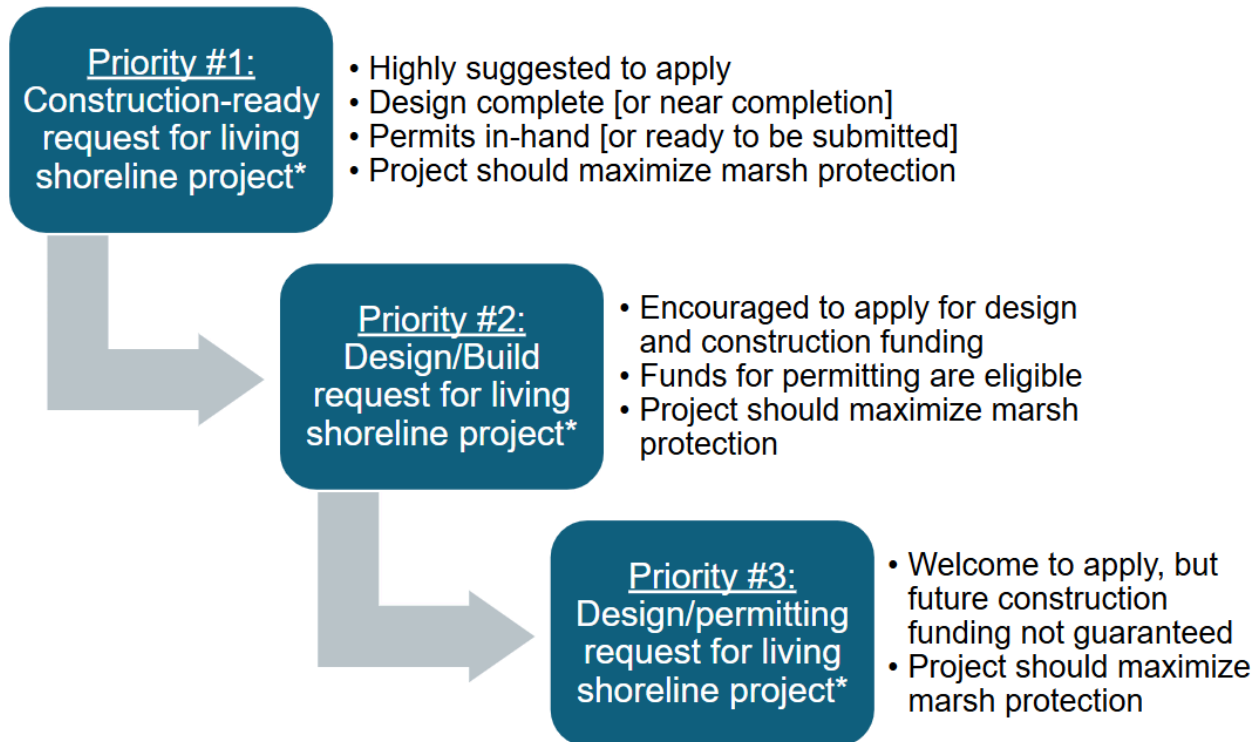
Proposed projects should also strive to improve community resiliency to sea level rise. Another key feature of the [Targeting Map](#) is the Climate Vulnerability Score (CVS), which helps identify priority areas for funding —such as watersheds facing significant current and future flood risks. The CVS evaluates climate vulnerability at the census tract level, incorporating two sub-indices from MDEnviroScreen: Climate Exposure (aggregates the impacts of flooding, storm surges, drought, and urban heat islands), and Community Impact (evaluates the degree to which a community is sensitive to a hazard and the degree to which it could mitigate the potential for harm). Climate vulnerability is defined as a combination of climate hazard exposure and community impact, classifying areas as having baseline, low, moderate, or high vulnerability. The CVS is one of several metrics that will be considered during project selection, alongside additional evaluation criteria outlined in the following section.

For all proposals: Applications must be submitted for voluntary restoration projects. Funds cannot be used to bank water quality credits, meet compensatory mitigation requirements (i.e. new or re-development) or otherwise sold for profit. Restored and/or protected acres of marsh funded under this Initiative will count towards meeting the Maryland goals for the Wetland Outcome for the Chesapeake Bay Program Watershed Agreement.

Eligible Projects Priority and Preference:

Requested living shoreline projects that will protect marshes will be prioritized through three tiers: 1) First Priority: permit-authorized or permit-ready construction projects (shovel-ready) are highly desired and encouraged to apply for implementation funding; 2) Second Priority: Design/build applications are encouraged to apply for design, permitting, and implementation funding; and 3) Third-Priority: Projects proposing design-only and permitting funding will also be considered. **Projects proposed for implementation on Public Lands will be prioritized, although projects on private property will also be considered. See Figure 1 below for details on project rankings.** Outreach and stakeholder engagement costs are also eligible expenses to include in your grant application.

Figure 1: Eligible Project Types by Rated Priority and Ranked by DNR Preference



To be considered competitive, proposals for the design and construction of each living shoreline **project should aim to stay under \$1,000 per linear foot**. Additionally, **for every 100 feet of living shoreline proposed, the project should protect at least 2.3 acres of marsh** from converting to open water. Strong proposals will also include: a clear demonstration of erosion and project need; documented landowner permission; a monitoring plan (will also be required by permitting agencies); integration with marsh restoration efforts, where applicable; evidence of additional co-benefits, such as the protection of natural or built infrastructure. Large-scale sites will be prioritized, but multiple sites may be submitted by applicants for consideration as a packaged project to meet your project goals. Please ensure justification for multiple sites is included in your application.

Project Timeline:*

Request for Proposals Announced: January 5, 2026

Information Session: January 14, 2026

Request for Proposals Due: April 6, 2026

Technical Review and Evaluation: April 6, 2026 - May 31, 2026

Project Selection: June 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026

Applicant Notification of Award: July 1, 2026 - July 31, 2026

Project Funding: July 1, 2026 – August 2029

***All construction must be completed by July 1, 2029**

Submission Guidelines:

All proposals must be submitted by 11:59 pm on Monday, April 6th, 2026.

Proposals must be submitted through a [web-based google form](#). You can save progress on your proposal using the following [application template](#) and submit to the above google form link when ready.

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Project Location and Eligibility** (Yes/No):
 - Is the project located within an eligible County (Somerset, Dorchester, or Wicomico) and within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed?
- **Project Need and Context** (Scale of 1 to 10):
 - Is the project need or problem fully justified and are existing conditions defined?
 - Are the project goals and objectives clearly defined and aligned with the RFP requirements?
 - Is the project located on public lands? Note: projects on private property will also be considered, but projects on public lands will be prioritized.
 - What is the proposed landscape context? Is the project well-connected to other important natural resources (e.g., habitat, wetlands, migration corridors, Targeted Ecological Areas, etc.)? See [map guidance](#) for more information.
 - Funding partners will consider restoration designs and/or implementation projects that aim to reduce shoreline erosion and provide enhancements to the hydrology, habitat, vegetation, etc. of existing marshes in need of protection, while reducing impacts to other natural resources.
 - Does the project help protect properties, public facilities, and/or utilities from storm damage?
 - Is marsh restoration incorporated into the design?
 - Is a living shoreline appropriate for the site conditions?
 - Will the existing marsh benefit from a living shoreline and does the marsh have sufficient lifespan from conversion to open water in the next 25 years?
 - Does stakeholder engagement inform the project?
- **Cost-Efficiency** (Scale of 1 to 10):
 - The most competitive proposals for design and construction of each living shoreline project should be less than \$1,000 per linear ft total and propose to restore a minimum of 1,000 linear ft of shoreline. Each 100 ft of living shoreline proposed for design and construction should also protect a minimum of 2.3 acres of marsh from conversion to open water. See [map guidance](#) for instructions on calculating the area of wetland protected.
 - Match is not required, but projects that demonstrate leveraged funding through other sources will be reviewed favorably.

- Projects that maximize the amount of marsh habitat (acres) protected through a living shoreline project will be prioritized for funding.
- **Readiness and Ability to Proceed** (Scale of 1 to 10):
 - Does the application include a realistic timeline for design, permitting, and construction?
 - Does the applicant have experience permitting/constructing and managing contracts for similar and successful projects in the past?
 - Contractual Work: If hiring a contractor, applicants must either:
 - 1) have already obtained cost estimates, quotes, or bids from at least three service providers or obtained bids through a publicly advertised, competitive, open solicitation prior to completing the application (and included this in the application) or
 - 2) indicated in the proposal that at least three estimates, quotes, or bids will be obtained or a publicly advertised, competitive, open solicitation will be used.
- **Long-term success** (Scale of 1 to 10):
 - Does the design take sea level rise into account?
 - Do you have a long-term adaptive management and maintenance strategy in place?
 - Are the appropriate stakeholders involved in the project?
 - Do you have land owner permissions? We recommend acquiring a letter of commitment from the site landowner(s) for inclusion in your application.
 - Note, all awarded projects will require signed landowner permission agreements prior to grant execution.
 - Easements or other perpetuity mechanisms in place or planned for in order to conserve land?

Grant Award Information:

Funding will be made available on a competitive basis. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will work with DNR to execute a funding agreement and the award will be subject to terms and conditions. Funding originated through a CPRG from EPA, and therefore, all awards will be considered 100% Federal funds. All Federal requirements are passed through to DNR and subrecipients of this RFP who successfully receive funding. *Because this Initiative is funded with federal dollars, applicants must abide by all regulations set forth in 2 CFR 200.*

Funding Availability:

The total funding available through this RFP for living shoreline restoration projects is approximately \$17 million, to be disbursed to all awardees by July 2029 (when the EPA funds expire). The minimum grant request is \$1,000,000.00 for design, permitting, and construction expenses. Lower requests are allowed for design-only applications; please email the DNR contact to receive permission for applying with a lower requested amount of

funding. Match is not required, but projects that demonstrate leveraged funding through other sources will be reviewed favorably. Invoicing for successfully awarded projects will occur on a monthly basis. Unless otherwise authorized, all payments will be made on a **reimbursable basis**. An [Example Budget](#) is available for support.

Additional solicitations for living shoreline implementation projects may be held in future years, depending upon funding availability and progress of marsh protection acreage goals.

Eligible Budget Items:

- Costs directly related to the implementation of the proposed living shoreline project
- Costs directly related to the design of the proposed living shoreline, including engineering or technical services associated with developing engineered designs (designs must be permissible by Maryland Department of Environment, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and all other appropriate local, state, and federal entities)
- Permit application fees and related documentation expense, including public meetings
- Community engagement, meeting facilitation, and/or coordination activities
- Contractor or consultant services directly tied to the work proposed
- Native plants and vegetation and other project materials or supplies
- Staff time directly associated with the project and documented according to federal requirements
- Indirect costs, consistent with the applicant's federally negotiated indirect cost rate (NICRA) or the de minimis rate, per 2 CFR 200.41. *The budget must be prepared utilizing Federal requirements, including 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E Cost Principles and applicable indirect cost rates, see 2 CFR 200.414. If you have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), it must be submitted with your application*

Because this program is funded with federal funds, applicants must comply with federal procurement standards under 2 CFR 200.318–200.327 for contractual work:

- For contractual work greater than \$10,000, applicants must obtain at least three cost estimates or use a publicly advertised competitive bid process.
- For amounts over \$250,000, a competitive procurement process is required.
- If the contractor has already been selected through a competitive process or retainer, applicants must describe the process used **in the application** and how federal procurement requirements were met.

Requirements and Further Information:

- A Transmittal Letter on official letterhead signed by an executive who is authorized to request funding on behalf of the applicant organization.
- If applying for construction only, a [Worksheet for Selecting a RSLR Estimate](#), which is Appendix A (also available on the Grants Gateway website) in the Guidance for Using Maryland's 2023 Sea Level Rise Projections report. This worksheet provides

documentation on how considerations of Sea Level Rise were incorporated into the project design.

- Current designs (if applicable/available), *with landowner signature on plans to indicate project endorsement.*
- Demonstration of landowner support: a signed Letter of Commitment must be included in your application from any landowner(s) on whose property the project is proposed (unless the applicant is the landowner) OR who has the authority to allow site access for construction, monitoring, and maintenance. *For projects proposed on public lands, Letters of Commitment are required from the responsible agency.*
- Landowner agreements will be required prior to executing a potential award even if the agreements are not finalized with the landowner at the time of your grant application submission.
- Permits (if in hand at time of grant application submission) or schedule for obtaining permits
- Complete budget
- Project schedule to meet required timeline (construction completed by July 1, 2029)
- A list of all project partners and Letters of Commitment from project partner(s). Letter should detail partner role and include specific technical and financial contributions (if applicable)
- Photographs of current conditions
- Site specific outputs from the Living Shoreline Targeting Tool showing the extent of marsh to be protected by the living shoreline, the USGS management suggestion for the marsh, shoreline rates of change, mean high high water, climate vulnerability score, and additional layers deemed relevant by the applicant. Please also include any additional relevant data to these factors that has been collected on site. These factors will be verified and corrected if necessary by DNR.
- Monitoring Plan (if available)

Please note that by submitting an application to this program, applicants acknowledge that: 1) they are compliant with federal employment and non-discrimination laws and 2) they have not been debarred, convicted, charged or had a civil judgment rendered against them for fraud or related offense by any government agency (federal, state or local) or been terminated for cause or default by any government agency (federal, state, or local).

Selection Process:

The Roots for Resilience Team at DNR will work with our state agency partners to evaluate each proposal based on the eligibility criteria, project need and context, cost-efficiency (including marsh acreage protected), readiness and ability to proceed, and long-term success. It is expected that multiple awards will be selected. Invoicing for successfully awarded projects will be on a monthly basis. Unless otherwise authorized, all payments will be made on a reimbursable basis.

Awards and Notifications:

Awards will be announced in July 2026 and projects can begin on July 1, 2026.

Cancellation of the Solicitation:

The state reserves the right to cancel this solicitation at any time.

Contact Information:

Please contact Ari Engelberg at ari.engelberg@maryland.gov to discuss general project ideas. We strongly encourage applicants to contact us to discuss their project(s) and arrange a site visit prior to applying.

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement 3D25824 to the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the Environmental Protection Agency endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document, as well as any images, video, text, or other content created by generative artificial intelligence tools, nor does any such content necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency.