

## ANALYSIS

### Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed Specialist

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**Analyst:** April McDonald

**Request:** Approve the submission of a federal grant application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for an America the Beautiful Challenge grant in the amount of \$1,500,000, over a five-year period, to support an Aquatic Noxious Weeds Specialist position, as well as contracted services, within the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

**Analysis:** Grants provided by the America the Beautiful Challenge 2023 (ATBC) are administered through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The aim of the ATBC grant program is to streamline funding opportunities for projects focused on conserving, connecting, and restoring lands, waters, and wildlife. This funding opportunity would support establishment of a full-time, limited duration Invasive Aquatic Weeds Natural Resource Specialist 4 position within the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). This position would focus on water resource protection and conservation and develop an invasive aquatic weed management strategy emphasizing intergovernmental collaboration. Additionally, the grant would fund contracted services to assist in implementation of collaborative projects with state, federal and local partners.

The Department's 2023-25 Agency Request Budget included General Fund in Package 385 to establish a similar position. If ODA is awarded this grant opportunity, the federal funds and the requested Specialist position would fulfill the need outlined in Package 385.

This is a competitive grant with a state match requirement equal to 10% of the total project cost, of which at least 2.5% must be cash. The match requirement will be met through the in-kind work of ODA staff and partners, coupled with existing Lottery Funds. The first proposal deadline is April 20, 2023, and award announcements are anticipated in November 2023. If awarded, ODA will return to the Legislature to request establishment of a limited duration Natural Resource Specialist 4 position as well as an increase in Federal Funds expenditure limitation.

**Legislative Fiscal Office Recommendation:** The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of this request.

## Oregon Department of Agriculture Crawford

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**Request:** Authorization to apply for a grant of \$1,500,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America the Beautiful Challenge 2023 grant program to support one limited duration Natural Resource Specialist to provide technical expertise as an aquatic noxious weed specialist.

**Recommendation:** Approve the request.

**Discussion:** This grant proposal seeks funding over five years to support an aquatic noxious weed specialist and the development of an invasive aquatic weed management strategy. The position would coordinate with other levels of government and partners on weed prevention and control projects. The grant requires a 10 percent match, of which 2.5 percent must be in cash. The agency will use Lottery resources to meet the match requirement.

The funding opportunity was posted in March and pre-proposals are due April 20, 2023 with final proposals due July 20, 2023. If the application is successful, the department will return to the appropriate legislative body to request federal funds expenditure limitation and the establishment of a limited duration Natural Resource Specialist 4 position.



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March 10, 2023

Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co-Chair  
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court Street NE  
H-178 State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs:

**Nature of the Request**

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) respectfully requests permission to apply for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) America the Beautiful Challenge 2023 grant. If the application is successful, these funds will be used to support an Aquatic Noxious Weeds Specialist position within the ODA. This funding opportunity was published in March 2023, pre-proposals are due April 20, 2023 and final proposals are due July 20, 2023. It is a competitive grant that has a 10% match requirement, of which 2.5% must be in cash. The department anticipates applying for approximately \$1,500,000 over five years.

**Agency Action/Background**

If funded, this effort will address a severe deficiency in aquatic technical expertise at the statewide level and within the ODA Noxious Weed Control Program. The request would support an Aquatic Noxious Weed Specialist to develop an invasive aquatic weed management strategy with emphasis on intergovernmental collaboration. This proposal would help to fulfill a critical role in the protection of water resources from the threat of invasive aquatic weeds through capacity building, collaboration, community engagement, planning, and on-the ground implementation of projects.

The position would coordinate with state, federal and local cooperators in the development and implementation of integrated prevention and control projects that protect water quality, quantity, and aquatic habitats that support Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species. This effort would expand and protect fish and wildlife habitat, strengthen ecosystem and aquatic community resilience, protect resources that provide ecosystem services and resilience to flooding, drought, and other climate-related threats. ODA's 2023-25 Agency Request Budget, Policy Option Package 385, requested General Fund for a

Natural Resource Specialist 4 position to serve as an aquatic noxious weeds specialist, due to limited funding we are seeking this opportunity to support this work.

### **Federal Grant Information**

America the Beautiful Challenge 2023 (ATBC) funds are administered through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), through cooperative agreements from the Department of the Interior (DOI), Department of Defense (DoD), and the Department of Agriculture's U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The ATBC vision is to streamline grant funding opportunities for new voluntary conservation and restoration projects around the United States. This request for proposals is a first step toward consolidating funding from multiple federal agencies and the private sector to enable applicants to conceive and develop large-scale, locally led projects that address shared funder priorities spanning public and private lands.

For the 2023 grant cycle the ATBC plans to award up to \$116 million in nationwide funding to advance the America the Beautiful Initiative and its goals to connect and restore the lands, waters, and wildlife upon which we all depend. This year, ATBC will seek to fund projects across the following themes:

1. Conserving and restoring rivers, coasts, wetlands and watersheds
2. Conserving and restoring forests, grasslands and other important ecosystems that serve as carbon sinks
3. Connecting and reconnecting wildlife corridors, large landscapes, watersheds, and seascapes
4. Improving ecosystem and community resilience to flooding, drought, and other climate-related threats
5. Expanding access to the outdoors, particularly in underserved communities

### **Partnership and Support**

There has been collaborative discussion with a myriad of agencies and partners to identify statewide priorities, partnership opportunities and where to most effectively locate this position. As the state lead for noxious weeds, the ODA has been identified as the most appropriate agency. Agencies and organizations that support this effort either in principle or through pledged in-kind contributions include Oregon State Marine Board, Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, Portland State University, Oregon Invasive Species Council, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Columbia



River Intertribal Fisheries Commission, Western Invasives Network, Washington Invasive Species Council, California Invasive Plant Council and numerous others.

**Action Requested**

The ODA respectfully requests permission to apply for this grant opportunity to support a new Invasive Aquatic Weed Natural Resource Specialist 4 position within the ODA Noxious Weed Control Program for increased emphasis on water resource protection and conservation. If successful, this request would support a full-time limited duration position for 48 months funded by the ATBC grant initiative and would fund contracted services to assist on-the-ground implementation of projects with partners.

**Legislation Affected**

If the grant application is successful, ODA will return to the Legislature for establishment of a limited duration Natural Resource Specialist 4 position and increased federal funds expenditure limitation.

Sincerely,



Lauren Henderson, Acting Director  
Oregon Department of Agriculture

