

**Freshwater Future  
Request for Proposals  
Spring and Fall 2008 Funding Cycles**

**Purpose of the Grants Program:** The goal of Freshwater Future grants program is to provide financial support to *advocacy activities* that strengthen the role of individuals and community groups working locally to protect and restore shorelines, inland lakes, rivers, wetlands, and other aquatic habitats in the Great Lakes Basin. Advocacy work, as defined here, involves local community members actively promoting aquatic habitat protection by influencing community and/or individual behavior or opinion, corporate conduct, and/or public policy.

**Mission:** Freshwater Future builds effective community-based citizen action to protect and restore the water quality of the Great Lakes Basin. We work toward this goal by providing financial assistance, communications and networking assistance, and technical assistance to citizens and grassroots watershed groups throughout the Great Lakes Basin. Through these efforts we work with over 1,800 grassroots watershed groups and citizens to protect and restore the rivers, lakes and wetlands in their communities.

An important link in protecting our water resources is the active involvement of individuals and community groups working at the local level to protect rivers, lakes and wetlands. The passion shown by Great Lakes Basin residents for their local resources is inspiring, and represents an important part of the environmental movement in the Great Lakes Basin. Citizens participate in local decisions affecting aquatic habitats, watch-dog the enforcement of environmental laws, and create change through civic engagement. Through these important local activities, the grassroots provide an important voice for aquatic habitat protection where the majority of land use decisions are made—at the local level. Realizing the importance of grassroots involvement, Freshwater Future works to build the capacity of local citizen-based aquatic habitat protection efforts by providing financial, technical, and communication support.

**Communications and Networking Support:** An important strength of Freshwater Future is the linkage between the funding component and the networking component. Freshwater Future's new Advocate Mentor Program provides additional networking support. See below for more details. For additional assistance please see [www.freshwaterfuture.org](http://www.freshwaterfuture.org) or call Freshwater Future staff at (231) 348-8200.

**What is Grassroots:** Applicants must be grassroots groups with limited funds that rely on volunteers for all or a majority of their work and that can demonstrate the capacity to accomplish the project. While Freshwater Future has no specific budgetary limitation for eligibility, it is highly unlikely a group with an annual budget over approximately \$200,000 will be considered eligible as a grassroots initiative under our definition.

**Eligibility:**

- Any *grassroots initiative* working to protect aquatic habitats in the Great Lakes
- United States applicants that do not have 501(c)(3) tax status or Ontario applicants that are not registered charities governed by the Income Tax Act must have a sponsoring 501(c)(3) organization or registered charity (see Sponsors section below)
- Applicants must be a 2008 member of Freshwater Future (you may join at time of application). If the membership fee is a hardship for your organization, please contact Freshwater Future for assistance.
- Each applicant may submit only one application for funding in either the Spring or Fall cycle. Groups or individuals who have received funding through Freshwater Future grants program may reapply, as long as previous projects have been successfully completed or are in good standing (please call to determine grant status).
- Each organization or individual is eligible for one Project Grant/Technical Assistance Grant and one Special Opportunity Grant each calendar year.

- A high priority is placed on supporting citizen initiatives within the watershed boundaries of the Great Lakes Basin. Applicants outside the Basin will be considered for funding if their project will demonstrably benefit aquatic habitats inside the Basin.
- If awarded a grant, a member of the organization will have the opportunity to have an experienced grassroots advocate as a mentor. If awarded a Spring Grant, this member is required to attend Freshwater Future's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Grassroots Symposium on May 2, 2008 in Huron, Ohio. If awarded a Fall Grant, this member is required to attend Freshwater Future's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Grassroots Symposium. Funding assistance will be provided for this member. Although only this member is required, we encourage more members to attend our Annual Grassroots Symposium. For additional information about the new Advocate Mentor Program see [www.freshwaterfuture.org](http://www.freshwaterfuture.org).

**Sponsors:** In order to apply for a Freshwater Future grant, non-501(c)(3) organizations and Ontario organizations that are not registered charities must have a qualified 501(c)(3) organization or a registered charity serve as a sponsor. The sponsor assumes responsibility for financial administration of the grant. If necessary, the sponsor may charge up to 5% of the total grant to cover administrative costs.

**Types of Activities We Do Not Fund:**

- Non-advocacy related education projects
- On-the-ground restoration projects without an advocacy component (limited funding in 2008, see below\*)
- Governmental functions (including governmental entities such as units of government, governmental agencies and conservation districts)
- Lobbying activities (activities that attempt to influence specific pieces of legislation)
- Projects that have already been completed

**Priority Funding Areas:** The following program areas direct Freshwater Future's grant making for the Spring and Fall 2008 funding cycles. Projects to protect aquatic habitats in the following strategic program areas will be considered:

- \*On-the-ground restoration activities that include an advocacy component (a small amount of funding for this area);
- Advocating for low-impact solutions to community stormwater issues;
- Land use planning and zoning;
- Watershed planning;
- Watch-dogging and participating in the development, implementation, and enforcement of local, state, provincial, and federal aquatic habitat protection regulations;
- Non-partisan voter education, voter registration, and candidate forums;
- Advocating for naturally functioning river and coastal ecosystems;
- Reducing polluted runoff;
- Launching special initiatives or creating unique opportunities to strengthen citizen involvement in aquatic habitat protection;
- Advocating for wetland protection and restoration;
- Communicating how local wetlands, lakes and rivers are interconnected in the Great Lakes Basin.

New applicants and those that have not received funding in the past year will receive priority.

**How We Evaluate Applications:** The following evaluation criteria strategically focus Freshwater Future's limited funds. Preference will be given to projects that do some or all of the following:

- Address one or more of the *Priority Funding Areas*;
- Embody a watershed or ecosystem perspective;

- Build partnerships or promote creative collaborations;
- Have the potential to leverage financial, volunteer, or in-kind resources;
- Provide long-term benefits to aquatic habitats and the local community;
- Have the potential to be replicated by grassroots efforts in other communities; and/or
- Help build the group's capacity to better protect aquatic habitats in the future.

It is important for applicants to know that Freshwater Future will receive many more applications than it can possibly fund. Grassroots groups that do not receive a grant can reapply for future funding.

**Assistance for Potential Applicants:** Freshwater Future staff members are here to help you. Potential applicants seeking advice on how to complete the grant application format or wishing to discuss potential projects are encouraged to contact a Freshwater Future staff member. For a list of other potential funding sources, visit [www.freshwaterfuture.org](http://www.freshwaterfuture.org).

### **FUNDING PROGRAMS AND SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**

There are three funding programs in the Freshwater Future Grant Program. This RFP covers each of these programs as described below: the Project Grants Program, the Technical Assistance Grants Program and the Special Opportunities Grants Program. For past funded projects visit [www.freshwaterfuture.org](http://www.freshwaterfuture.org).

The **Project Grants Program** provides grant awards ranging from \$500 to \$3,500 U.S. dollars (USD) to be used for specific project expenses such as mailings, printing, and meeting supplies for river, lake, and wetland protection. Organizations may apply for both this program and the Technical Assistance Grants Program in one application.

Project examples include:

- Influence the development and/or enforcement of regulatory, permitting, or assessment decisions;
- Collect and disseminate existing information or conduct applied research to enable individuals or citizen initiatives to more effectively advocate for protection of aquatic habitats;
- Conduct media campaigns, including message development and training, to increase the effectiveness of grassroots protection efforts;
- Build coalitions among new and diverse partners; and
- Build capacity of grassroots organizations, which could include training, board development, membership expansion, fundraising, strategic planning, electronic communication, and equipment purchases.

The **Technical Assistance Grants Program** provides grant awards ranging from \$500 to \$3,500 USD to be used to **hire an outside qualified consultant** to provide strategy assistance such as organizational development or campaign development. Organizations may apply for both this program and the Project Grants Program in one application.

Project examples include:

- Strategy assistance to hire an outside expert to develop a campaign or project under the Project Grants Program, such as:
  - Legal Services
  - Wetland Delineation or Assessment
  - Hydrology Studies
  - Issue Campaign Development
- Organizational development to hire an outside expert to assist with building the organization under the Project Grants Program, such as:
  - Board Training
  - Strategic Planning
  - Communications assistance

The Project Grants Program and the Technical Assistance Grants Program are joint programs under which funding can be requested in one application, seeking funding from both programs. **The maximum total grant request is \$5,500 USD, of which, no more than \$3,500 USD can be requested for either the Project Grants Program or the Technical Assistance Grants Program.**

**Submitting Your Application:** Proposals must be prepared based on the questions and format contained in the [2008 Grants Program Application Format](#). Please send your application via e-mail in a Word attachment to [grants@freshwaterfuture.org](mailto:grants@freshwaterfuture.org). Supporting documents may be sent via first class mail. **Please do not fax your application.**

**Deadlines:**

Applications must be received electronically by midnight:

**Spring 2008 Funding Cycle**

**March 28, 2008**

**Fall 2008 Funding Cycle**

**September 29, 2008**

**Spring 2008:**

Freshwater Future staff and Grant Readers from the basin of each Great Lake will review and prioritize applications. Freshwater Future staff will make final decisions and send letters to all Spring 2008 applicants by April 23, 2008. Contract letters to grant recipients will be mailed by May 23, 2008, with a grant start date of July 1, 2008.

**Fall 2008:**

Freshwater Future staff and Grant Readers from the basin of each Great Lake will review and prioritize applications. Freshwater Future staff will make final decisions and send letters to all Fall 2008 applicants by November 21, 2008. Contract letters to grant recipients will be mailed by December 19, 2008, with a grant start date of January 1, 2009.

**Grant Period:** The period for awards granted through the Project Grants Program and the Technical Assistance Grants Program is typically one year from the respective start date. If the proposed project requires a longer duration in order to ensure successful completion, Freshwater Future will consider an 18- or 24-month grant period. Clearly note the requested grant period in your application. The grant may fund a component of a larger project of longer duration. Funded applicants may apply for follow-up funding to support new initiatives or to build on successes of previously funded efforts, as long as previous projects have been successfully completed or are in good standing.

The **Special Opportunity Grants Program (Emergency Grants)** is for the aquatic habitat protection efforts that may not coincide with the application timeline or grant period for the Projects Grants Program and the Technical Assistance Grants Program. Freshwater Future realizes that many grassroots projects can be completed for under \$500 USD, therefore we maintain a reserve to support urgent projects or those that present a special, time-limited opportunity. Although the eligibility, overarching goal, priority program areas, and evaluation criteria are the same as the regular grants programs, Special Opportunity Grant (SOG) requests are processed differently to ensure quick turnaround. United States applicants that do not have 501(c)(3) tax status or Ontario applicants that are not registered charities governed by the Charities Accounting Act must have a sponsoring 501(c)(3) organization or registered charity.

***Application Process and Timeline for Special Opportunity Grants Program***

Grants will be disbursed on a first-come, first-served basis. Please send your application in the form of a brief letter via e-mail in a Word attachment to [grants@freshwaterfuture.org](mailto:grants@freshwaterfuture.org). Although preference is given to Special Opportunity Grants Program requests made prior to the expenditure of project funds, “after the fact” funding requests will be considered as long as the request is made within one month of

the expenditure. The request letter should be no longer than one page (front and back) and must include the following information:

- Organization name, address and Lake Basin of applicant, phone, fax, and e-mail address;
- Organizational annual budget;
- Project coordinator or contact person;
- Documentation of status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group or a registered charity;
- Amount of funding requested;
- Why the applicant qualifies as a grassroots initiative;
- Statement of need for the project;
- The goal of the project;
- Why the project is not compatible with the standard grant application process (Spring and Fall grant cycles);
- Specific activities or costs to be covered;
- Timeline for activities and expenditures; and
- How the activities are consistent with the Freshwater Future purpose, methods, program areas, and criteria.

For applicants that require a sponsor, please provide the following additional information:

- Name, address, phone number, and e-mail address of sponsor, including contact person, in the body of request letter;
- Documentation that sponsor is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity or a registered charity; and
- Letter from sponsor on sponsor's letterhead expressing support for applicant's proposed project and willingness to act as fiscal agent.

The Freshwater Future staff will review applications, seek input if necessary, and render a decision within two weeks of receipt of complete request. Payment will be made within four weeks of approval. Within one month of completion of the funded activity, the grant recipient must submit a one-page written report that briefly documents the actual expenses incurred, activities performed, and the outcomes.

### **Freshwater Future Staff**

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