

Tompkins County Natural Infrastructure Capital Program Guidelines

Revised and accepted by the Planning, Energy and Environmental Quality Committee of the Legislature May 13, 2024.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Natural Infrastructure Capital Program provides funding to protect natural systems that can help mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. At this time, the program focus is: 1) mitigating the potential for downstream flooding and sedimentation, and 2) establishing important migratory corridors to enable plant and animal species to be more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

The proposed project must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

1. The project must result in the long-term protection of the resource through fee-simple acquisition or a conservation easement being held on the property;
2. The property owner is a willing participant;
3. A qualified public or not-for-profit entity will be responsible for holding title or easement on the property, including future management and stewardship;
4. The project will provide permanent protection of the resource;
5. The project is at least partially located within:
 - a. A Natural Features Focus Area or Priority Protection Area as defined in the Tompkins County Conservation Plan; or
 - b. An area of high habitat connectivity value as defined in the Tompkins County Habitat Connectivity Plan; or
 - c. An area that impacts water quality or flooding, defined as an area that includes lands in one or more of the following categories:
 - 50' buffer of an intermittent stream;
 - 100' buffer of a perennial stream;
 - National Wetland Inventory Wetlands;
 - New York State DEC Wetlands;
 - Tompkins County Water Resources Council Wetlands;
 - FEMA designated 1% and/or 0.2% Annual Chance of Flood Hazard Area; or
 - d. An area of high scenic, recreational or trail value that also meets the program purpose;
6. The project is not the result of complying with local land use regulations that require the preservation of open space as part of a development proposal; and
7. The County cost will not exceed one-half of the most recent assessed value of the land that is eligible for this program, as valued by the County Department of Assessment, up to a maximum of \$200,000.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants for this program include local governments and non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations that have been operational for at least three years and have proven capacity to own, hold and steward land for conservation purposes. Other entities interested in accessing this funding should contact the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability (TCDPS) to determine if they are eligible to apply for these funds.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

1. Projects submitted will be screened by TCDPS for project and applicant eligibility.
2. Eligible projects will be evaluated by TCDPS and the Natural Infrastructure Committee of the Planning Advisory Board (PAB) to determine the proposed project’s ability to fulfill the program purpose.
3. If TCDPS and the Natural Infrastructure Committee recommend a project be funded, the proposed project will be reviewed by the full PAB.
4. Pending support from the PAB and the Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, the project will be presented to the relevant legislative committee.
5. If approved by the legislative committee, the project will go to the County Legislature for final approval.
6. If approved, the project will move forward in full compliance with County procedures for contracting for capital projects; project funds will be administered by TCDPS.