



Foundation for Appalachian Ohio

Environmental Stewardship Pillar

Request for Proposals | Grants, Fellowships and Scholarships





Environmental Stewardship Pillar of Prosperity

Request for Proposals

The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio (FAO) understands that funding conservation and environmental stewardship activities is not just an investment in our environment; it's an investment in the future of our communities and our people.

Our area is home to a rich biodiversity of plants and animals, supported by clean air and water, fertile soil and diverse habitats – all of which are foundational to our own health, economic growth and quality of life. In supporting these aspirational goals, FAO and its partners empower local communities to create and sustain a legacy of environmental prosperity in one of the most ecologically diverse and culturally significant regions of our state.

Thanks to transformative investments from the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) and the generosity of many donors – including Nicolozakes Trucking & Construction Inc., Ohio CAT, American Electric Power (AEP), the AEP Foundation and the AEP Ohio Foundation – FAO requests proposals for projects advancing conservation, environmental stewardship and greater well-being in Appalachian Ohio.



A total of \$250,000 will be available in 2026 as outlined on page 2.

Applications for funding are available online at:

www.AppalachianOhio.org/EnvironmentalStewardship starting Tuesday, June 30, 2026.

*Special thanks to everyone who has given generously to support
FAO's Environmental Stewardship Pillar of Prosperity.*





1 Research Grants

Research grants support research to address gaps in ecosystem services, planning and flood resilience and emphasize innovative monitoring and integrated watershed management. This program recognizes the important role research plays in informing conservation and sustainable watershed management strategies. More details about these grants and how to apply can be found on page 3. At least \$150,000 is available to support research grants.

2 Community Grants

Community grants empower local communities to preserve and enhance our natural environment. We know relatively modest projects can make an outsized difference when they promote environmental stewardship and engage whole communities in conservation. More details about these grants and how to apply can be found on page 5. At least \$50,000 is available to support community grants.

Innovation Grants

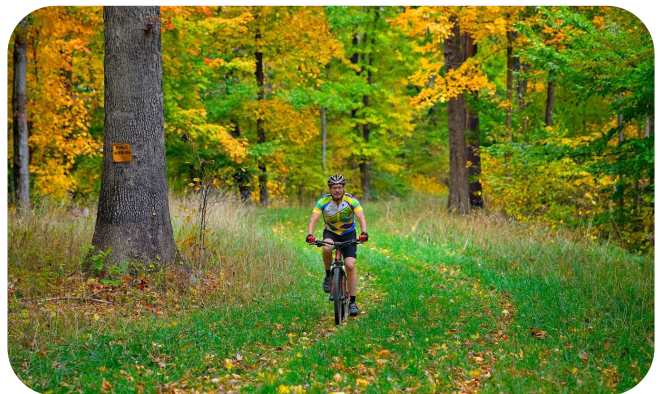
- 3 Innovation grants invest in new and creative solutions that result in environmental good while encouraging environmental stewardship. Possibilities include areas such as upcycling materials or developing approaches to harmonize energy, economics, environment and health. FAO will also consider strategic initiatives and planning for communities leveraging larger funds. Innovation grants can support pilot projects that increase the region's capacity to improve air quality; water quality; green energy generation, storage and adoption; and diesel emission reduction. More details about these grants and how to apply can be found on page 7. At least \$20,000 is available to support innovation grants.

4 Fellowships

Fellowships provide two years of support for individuals who pioneer positive change through projects that address environmental challenges and promote biodiversity conservation. Fellows are supported as they engage communities in educational initiatives related to sustainability and environmental stewardship. We seek to invest in fellows who will pilot new methodologies, develop scalable solutions and ultimately shift existing patterns in environmental stewardship. More details about these fellowships and how to submit a nomination can be found on page 9. Up to \$20,000 is available to support environmental stewardship fellowships over a two-year period.

5 Scholarships

Environmental Stewardship Pillar Scholarships support individuals seeking degrees or continuing education in ecology, forestry, wildlife ecology or related natural resource fields, as well as skilled trades, vocational and technical training in fields that integrate and support green energy technology, sustainable agriculture and land stewardship. Qualified individuals at any point in their education may apply. Preference will be given to applicants with an expressed intent to live and work in Appalachian Ohio. At least \$10,000 is available for scholarship awards. *Please note: Scholarships will be available as part of FAO's annual scholarship application cycle. Applications will be available in January 2027.*



Research Grants

Background

Recognizing the vital role of research in conservation and sustainable watershed management, FAO funds projects that advance knowledge of natural systems, flood resilience and nature-based solutions. Grants support research addressing gaps in ecosystem

services, planning and flood resilience, emphasizing innovative monitoring and integrated watershed management applications for the region.

Funding area

FAO welcomes proposals for projects that result in scalable change, with a priority for projects that will impact multiple counties. FAO will consider funding requests between \$5,000 and \$50,000 per project, and at least \$150,000 is available to award. We encourage applicants to propose research with the potential to significantly impact the understanding of aquatic biodiversity, water quality and threats to healthy habitats. The following examples illustrate eligible projects, but proposals are not limited to the listed areas.

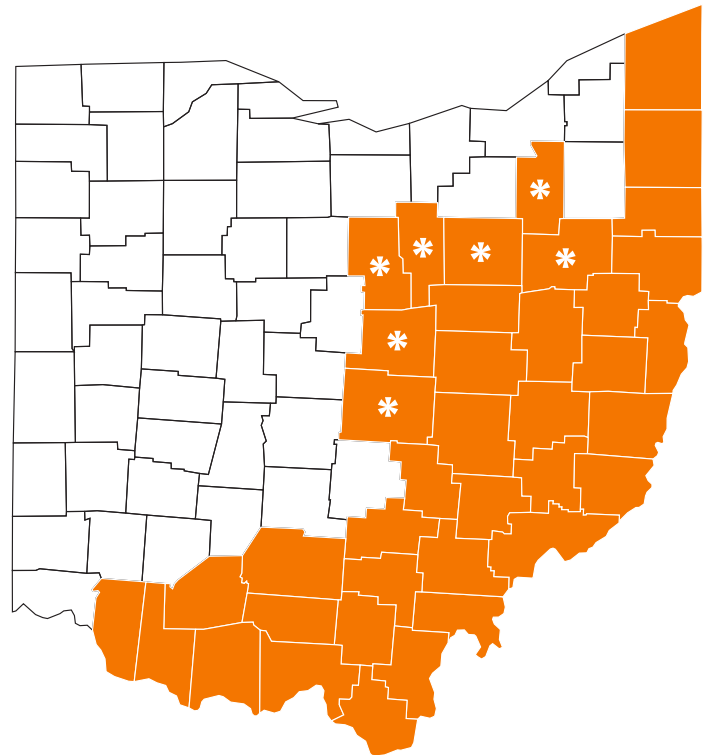
- **Flood resilience**
- **Watershed monitoring, analysis and management applications**
- **Application of innovative technologies and methodologies**
- **Collaborative research partnerships across disciplines and sectors**
- **Ecosystem services**

Eligibility

Public and nonprofit organizations and academic institutions, as well as groups operating in fiscal sponsorship with others who are conducting research within the Muskingum Watershed and Appalachian Ohio regions, are eligible to apply. Projects will be evaluated on their scientific merit and ability to foster collaboration among stakeholders. Proposals that contribute significantly to protecting and improving water quality or enhance ecological health and biodiversity will be ranked higher.

Our goal is to build and support environmental stewardship in Appalachian Ohio and across the Muskingum Watershed. As a result, priority will be given to projects led by organizations headquartered in Appalachian Ohio that focus on the Muskingum Watershed. Organizations headquartered outside the Muskingum Watershed and FAO service areas may apply but will need a local sponsor based within one of the counties listed below.

Eligible counties: Adams, Ashland,* Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Knox,* Lawrence, Licking,* Mahoning, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Richland,* Ross, Scioto, Summit,* Stark,* Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Vinton, Washington and Wayne*



*Denotes counties in the Muskingum Watershed also eligible for this opportunity.

Research Grants

Proposal guidelines

Applicants must submit proposals via FAO's online portal. See www.AppalachianOhio.org/EnvironmentalStewardship for more details. Applications must include the following information:

Applicant information: Include organization and applicant information.

Project title: List the title of the proposed project.

Project summary: Provide a concise overview of the problem statement, proposed solution or research, and expected outcomes.

Project objectives: Define the specific goals and objectives of the research project and why it is of significance.

Methodology: Describe the research methods, data collection techniques and analytical approaches to be employed.

Expected outputs and outcomes: Outline the project's anticipated results, impacts and contributions to the field of study and conservation efforts.

Budget and justification: Present a detailed budget, including itemized expenses and a justification

for each cost. College and university overhead is capped at 10%. Funding will not cover tuition but can support travel, materials and supplies, testing services, equipment, software and limited conference support.

Timeline: Provide a comprehensive timeline indicating key milestones, deliverables and project duration.

Partnerships and collaborations: Describe any existing or potential partnerships, collaborations or stakeholder engagement strategies.

Sustainability plan: Explain how the project will be sustained beyond the grant period, including plans for ongoing monitoring, maintenance and funding.

Evaluation plan: Outline a robust evaluation plan with clear metrics and indicators to measure the project's success and impact.

Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by a review committee of subject matter experts, based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with the Environmental Stewardship Pillar research grant goals and objectives
- Scientific merit, feasibility and rigor of methodology
- Potential for significant impact, scalability and relevance to the Muskingum Watershed and Appalachian Ohio
- Integration of community engagement, education and stakeholder involvement
- Demonstration of collaboration, partnerships and interdisciplinary approaches
- Budget justification, cost effectiveness and financial sustainability, including secured matching funds and other project funders
- Evaluation plan with measurable outcomes, indicators and success measures
- Need for funding and the degree to which the organization has access to other funding resources to bring the project to fruition
- Extent to which the project develops capacity for future research, conservation and environmental stewardship success in Appalachian Ohio

Submission instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically via FAO's online grant application by **August 11, 2026**. Late or incomplete proposals will not be considered. For inquiries or clarifications regarding the RFP, applicants may contact Kelly Morman at kmorman@ffao.org. Funded projects will have a standard 18-month grant reporting period with the opportunity for extensions as needed.

Community Grants

Background

Relatively modest projects make an outsized difference when they promote environmental stewardship and engage community members in

conservation. Involving wide swaths of the community multiplies the effect of environmental stewardship activities, today and for generations to come.

Funding area

FAO welcomes proposals for community projects that create positive change locally. These projects should be limited in scope and support “people-powered” ideas. Examples include volunteer-led efforts, youth-led

projects, grassroots initiatives and those led by civic associations. We encourage proposals that involve a collaborative effort from various community members.

Examples of eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- **Stream cleanups**
- **Trail maintenance and restoration**
- **Community pollinator gardens**
- **Environmental education workshops and events (e.g., nature hikes)**
- **Wildlife habitat restoration**
- **Community efforts to create storybook trails, pocket parks, greenspaces and community gardens**
- **Citizen scientist activities (e.g., the Great Backyard Bird Count)**
- **Starter forest distribution**
- **Public awareness campaigns**
- **Other projects that increase engagement and awareness of the local environment among the broader community**

Community grant requests should be between \$500 and \$5,000, and at least \$50,000 is available to award.

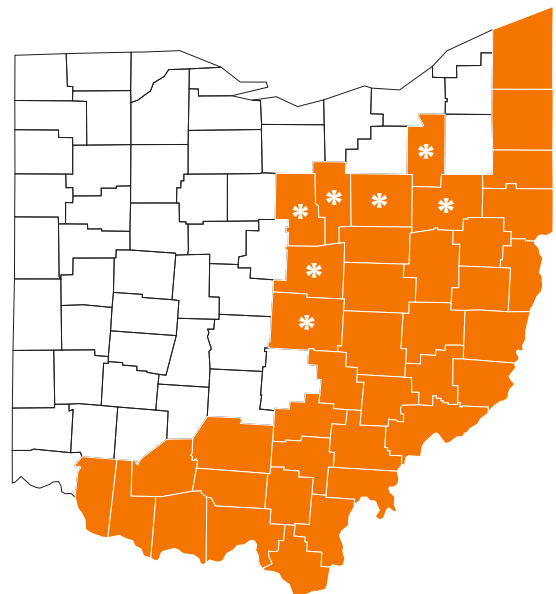
Eligibility

Public and nonprofit organizations and individuals or groups working with a fiscal sponsor may apply.

Our goal is to build and support environmental stewardship in Appalachian Ohio and across the Muskingum Watershed. As a result, priority will be given to projects led by organizations headquartered in Appalachian Ohio.

Organizations headquartered outside the Muskingum Watershed and FAO service areas may apply but will need a local sponsor based within one of the counties listed below.

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Community Grants

Proposal guidelines

Applicants must submit proposals via FAO's online portal. See www.AppalachianOhio.org/EnvironmentalStewardship for more details. Applications must include the following information:

Applicant information: Include organization and applicant information

Project title: List the title of the proposed project

Project summary: Provide a concise overview of the project objectives, methodology and expected outcomes

Budget: Present a detailed budget, including itemized expenses

Partnerships and collaborations: Describe any existing or potential partnerships, collaborations or stakeholder engagement strategies

Sustainability plan: Explain how the project will be sustained beyond the grant period (if necessary)

Evaluation criteria

Projects will be evaluated by a volunteer review committee using the following criteria:

- **Project need.** Why is the project needed? How will grant funding uplift the project?
- **Project impact.** What is the significance of the project to the community? Who will benefit? How many people will be engaged in the project?
- **Community support.** How does the project align with local community needs and priorities? Who within the community supports the project?
- **Additional partners.** What other local funds, resources or partnerships are committed to support the project? Has the project encouraged others to participate?
- **Community engagement.** How many people will participate in the project? How will you measure the impact on individuals who participate in the project? How has the project impacted participants' attitudes toward environmental stewardship?

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Innovation Grants

Background

Innovation grants invest in new and creative solutions that result in environmental good while encouraging environmental stewardship. Possibilities include areas such as upcycling materials and developing approaches to harmonize energy, economics, environment and health.

FAO will also consider funding strategic initiatives and planning for communities leveraging larger funds. Innovation grants can support pilot projects that increase the region's capacity to access public funds for improving air quality; water quality; green energy generation, storage and adoption; and diesel emission reduction.

Funding area

Appalachian Ohio's role in the energy economy provides a robust canvas for its people and organizations to be leaders in developing effective solutions to environmental challenges. Previous innovation grants have helped integrate solar technology as part of a playground project to create environmental learning opportunities and helped assess options for biosolids disposal that could save money, create jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Projects supported through this grant will:

- **Foster greater community involvement** (schools, nonprofits, businesses, etc.) in sustainable initiatives and projects with high impact across multiple sectors, including energy, economics, environment and health.
- **Support innovative projects that focus on developing new or improving upon existing methods for reducing and redesigning materials**, driving forward-thinking solutions that benefit communities and the environment.
- **Strengthen the ability of local organizations to secure substantial funding from state, federal and national programs.** Increasing access to these resources will amplify the impact of projects focused on large-scale and innovative approaches to cleaner air, cleaner water, green energy adoption and diesel emission reduction.

At least \$20,000 is available to award.

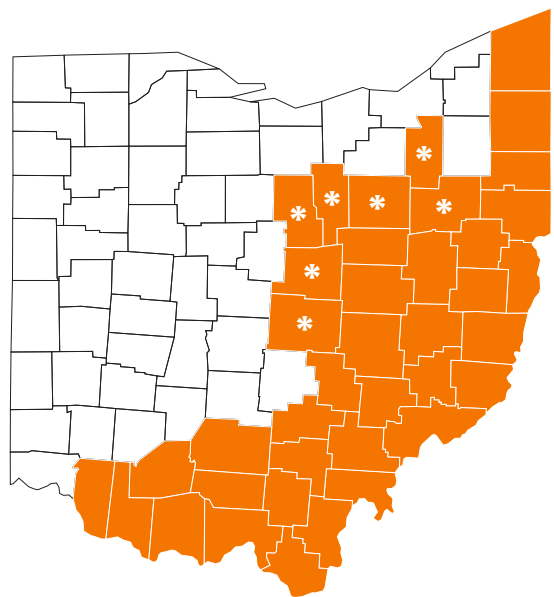
Eligibility

Public and nonprofit organizations and individuals or groups working with a fiscal sponsor may apply.

Our goal is to build and support environmental stewardship in Appalachian Ohio and across the Muskingum Watershed. As a result, priority will be given to projects led by organizations headquartered in Appalachian Ohio.

Organizations headquartered outside the Muskingum Watershed and FAO service areas may apply but will need a local sponsor based within one of the counties listed below.

Eligible counties: Adams, Ashland,* Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Knox,* Lawrence, Licking,* Mahoning, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Richland,* Ross, Scioto, Summit,* Stark,* Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Vinton, Washington and Wayne*



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Innovation Grants

Proposal guidelines

Applicants must submit proposals via FAO's online portal. See www.AppalachianOhio.org/EnvironmentalStewardship for more details. Applications must include the following information:

Applicant information: Include organization and applicant information

Project title: List the title of the proposed project

Project summary: Provide a concise overview of the project objectives, methodology and expected outcomes

Expected outcomes: Outline the project's anticipated results, impacts and contributions to innovative approaches to environmental stewardship

Evaluation plan: Outline a robust evaluation plan with clear metrics and indicators to measure the project's success and impact

Budget and justification: Present a detailed budget, including itemized expenses and a justification for each cost

Partnerships and collaborations: Describe any existing or potential partnerships, collaborations or stakeholder engagement strategies

Sustainability plan: Explain how the project will be sustained beyond the grant period, including plans for ongoing monitoring, maintenance and funding

Evaluation criteria

Projects will be evaluated by a volunteer committee composed of people experienced in implementing innovative solutions to our most significant environmental stewardship challenges. However, we remain open to exceptional projects that may not fit neatly into these guidelines.

- **Degree of innovation.** Does the project introduce new methods, materials, ideas or technologies? Are the innovations practical and implementable within the given context and resources? Does the project move an innovative bright spot forward? Does the project change the pattern or dominant approach in a way that will advance greater benefits?
- **Project impact.** Does the project solve a problem? How well does it promote a long-term sustainable solution? Does it improve efficiency, conservation and the wise use of resources? Will it unlock other funding opportunities?
- **Regional leadership.** Does the project move Appalachian Ohio forward as a leader in environmental stewardship innovation? Does it address a barrier to deeper environmental participation? Does it contribute positively to the social well-being of the community?
- **Closing gaps.** Does the project introduce new circular economy practices to Appalachian Ohio or significantly improve existing ones? Will it leverage additional funding for Appalachian Ohio? Does the project help build the capacity of communities and organizations to undertake more significant environmental initiatives?
- **Measurability and evaluation.** Are the project's goals and objectives clearly defined and measurable? Does the project include a robust plan for monitoring progress and reporting outcomes?
- **Scalability.** Can the project be scaled to have a broader impact? Can the project provide a model for other parts of the region, state and nation?

Submission instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically via FAO's online grant application by **August 11, 2026**. Late or incomplete proposals will not be considered. For inquiries or clarifications regarding the RFP, applicants may contact Kelly Morman at kmorman@ffao.org.

Fellowships

Background

FAO has long invested in regional “bright spots” – initiatives that are transformative, scalable and financially sustainable. The vision for FAO’s new fellowship opportunity is to support individuals who are developing and advancing bright spots related to environmental stewardship and conservation in Appalachian Ohio.

We seek to invest in individuals who will pilot new methodologies, develop scalable solutions and ultimately open new pathways to support environmental stewardship. Through this fellowship, FAO will support individuals who create and implement programs and projects that address pressing environmental challenges, promote biodiversity, foster conservation and engage deeply with their communities.

People with the potential to advance bright spots might not recognize themselves as prospective

fellows as much as others who observe their efforts and promise. Therefore, **we are inviting nominations for individuals who demonstrate strong potential for engaging in environmental stewardship activities outside their regular job responsibilities.**

This nomination process helps bring attention to individuals doing impactful environmental work for local communities and across the region – individuals who might not realize the potential impact of their work.

Fellows will receive financial support, mentorship and access to a network of experts and resources to help them refine and implement their projects. As such, this fellowship is an investment in both the individual and in the communities they serve. FAO is committed to identifying and nurturing leaders who can bring innovative solutions to Appalachian Ohio, ensuring a healthier, more resilient future for the region.

Fellow’s innovation will be supported by FAO through:

- **Financial stipends that support project materials, supplies and travel**
- **A structure and process to take their vision from dream to reality**
- **Leadership development through FAO’s Growing Home programming**
- **The technical expertise to support conservation and stewardship endeavors**
- **Introductions to other partners who can help with project sustainability**
- **A wide network of support**

Funding area

We encourage nominations of individuals who will implement innovative and impactful projects that align with the following thematic areas (although projects are not limited to these topics):

- **Biodiversity conservation:** Initiatives focused on protecting and restoring native flora and fauna, preserving habitats and enhancing ecological resilience in the Appalachian region
- **Environmental education:** Programs that promote awareness, knowledge and stewardship of the environment among community members, youth and other stakeholders
- **Sustainable practices:** Projects that demonstrate renewable resource management, promote renewable energy adoption or advance sustainable eco-friendly agricultural practices
- **Community engagement:** Efforts to empower local communities in science-based environmental decision-making, foster partnerships and build capacity for long-term conservation benefits

Up to \$20,000 is available. FAO anticipates that most projects will be completed within 24 months.

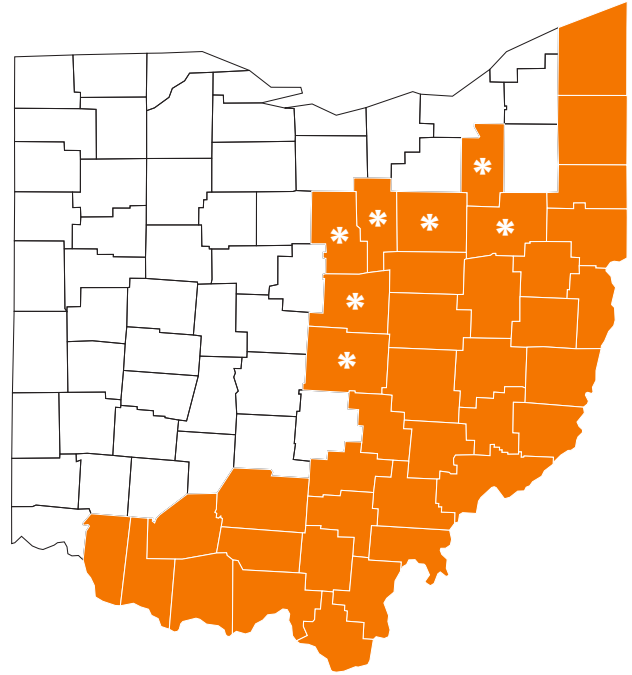
Fellowships

Eligibility

We are accepting nominations for individuals seeking funding to advance new initiatives or significantly expand ongoing efforts related to environmental stewardship. Nominations should be for activities performed beyond paid positions, reflecting an individual's commitment to environmental efforts in their community or through volunteer work.

Nominees do not have to be based in the counties served by the Muskingum Watershed or in Appalachian Ohio; however, project work and impact must occur in these counties. Priority will be given to projects led by applicants in Appalachian Ohio. Our goal is to build and support environmental stewardship in our region.

Eligible counties: Adams, Ashland,* Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Knox,* Lawrence, Licking,* Mahoning, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Richland,* Ross, Scioto, Summit,* Stark,* Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Vinton, Washington and Wayne*



**Denotes counties in the Muskingum Watershed also eligible for this opportunity.*

Submission process

Nominators may submit multiple nominations, and multiple people can recommend the same nominee. Self-nominations are also accepted.

Step 1: Complete the online nomination form available at www.AppalachianOhio.org/EnvironmentalStewardship

Step 2: Write a detailed nomination letter, explaining why you believe the nominee should be considered for a fellowship.

You may also submit any supporting materials that strengthen the nomination, including letters of support (optional). Additional materials may include anecdotes from others, press clippings, photos, videos, etc.

Step 3: Submit your nomination packet online. **Nominations must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on August 11, 2026.**

Step 4: Selected nominees will be invited to submit a full project proposal for consideration by the review committee.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Kelly Morman at kmorman@ffao.org.



Environmental Stewardship RFP Calendar

Research, Community and Innovation Grants

June 30, 2026..... RFP opens

August 11, 2026..... RFP closes

October 30, 2026..... Decisions announced

Fellowships

June 30, 2026..... Nominations open

October 30, 2026..... Nominations due

Scholarships

Environmental Stewardship Pillar Scholarships will be available as part of FAO's annual scholarship application cycle in January 2027. Sign up for FAO's e-newsletter at www.AppalachianOhio.org to receive updates on this and other scholarship opportunities.



Applications for funding are available online at:
www.AppalachianOhio.org/EnvironmentalStewardship