Eight projects to share $1.25 million in grants

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Fish and other aquatic species need healthy habitats in order to grow, reproduce and support Michigan's valuable fisheries, but degraded habitat threatens their populations throughout the state. Through its Aquatic Habitat Grants Program—which annually provides $1.25 million to fund habitat conservation projects around the state—the Department of Natural Resources supports the efforts of its partners to protect and restore fish populations and habitat.

Nonprofit organizations, local governments and state government agencies this year submitted a total of 24 proposals requesting $4.66 million in grant funding. The DNR reviewed these requests and will fund eight projects through the program.

“These projects are critical to protecting and restoring the aquatic habitats that produce our world-class fisheries and support healthy aquatic ecosystems throughout the state,” said Jim Dexter, chief of the DNR Fisheries Division.

Applicants receiving Aquatic Habitat Grant funding this year include:

Conservation Resource Alliance, $210,000 to remove two undersized culverts to allow fish passage on the Pere Marquette River.

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, $37,185 to restore approximately 200 feet of degraded shoreline on Lake Charlevoix (Charlevoix County) using bioengineering techniques that will serve as a demonstration for the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership's contractor training program and an example of shoreline bioengineering in an area with high wave energy.

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, $93,238 to replace a road/stream crossing on the Crooked River (Emmet County) with a channel-spanning bridge allowing fish and aquatic organisms to migrate from Pickerel Lake into the Crooked River watershed.

Huron Pines, $50,000 to remove an obsolete and partially failed dam on the Middle Branch of the Cedar River (Clare County).

Trout Unlimited, $180,000 to improve road/stream crossings on Big Devil, Boswell and Peterson creeks (Kalkaska, Manistee and Wexford counties) that served as barriers to fish and aquatic species in the Manistee River watershed.

Golden Lotus, Inc., $91,115 to implement Phase III of its project to rehabilitate the Pigeon River at the site of the former Song of the Morning dam (Otsego County). This dam was removed in 2016, and the current project will mitigate erosion occurring within the former impoundment and rehabilitate the stream into a more natural channel.

Columbus Township, $449,750 to rehabilitate over 2,000 feet of the Belle River (St. Clair County) for native mussels and anadromous fish (those that are born in fresh water, spend most of their life in the sea and return to fresh water to spawn).

The Marquette County Conservation District, $138,712 to replace a culvert on Norwald Creek and restore 650 feet of Brickyard Creek.

The Aquatic Habitat Grant Program is funded by revenues from fishing and hunting license fees. This funding will be available in the next cycle through the new Fisheries Habitat Grant.

The DNR will announce the request for proposals for this grant at the end of July.

Learn more about these programs and other grant opportunities at Michigan.gov/DNRGrants.
Shoreline contractors attend a training provided by the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership and gain hands-on experience restoring lake shorelines using bioengineering. [MIDNR]