

**Housatonic River Basin Natural Resources Restoration Plan**  
**Connecticut Trustee SubCouncil**  
**Project Proposal Evaluation Criteria**  
**Adopted on October 24, 2006**

Project proposals will be evaluated and scored using the following categories of evaluation criteria:

- Relevance and Applicability of Project - 5 criteria
- Technical Merit - 4 criteria
- Project Budget - 5 criteria
- Socioeconomic Merit - 4 criteria
- Applicant Implementation Capacity – 3 criteria

The Evaluation Criteria selected for inclusion are those that the Trustees believe to be the most significant in identifying the best projects for funding or are required to be considered according to the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration regulations. A rating system has been developed to apply the evaluation criteria. Project proposals will be assigned ratings of high, medium, low or none for each criterion, with a corresponding base score of 5, 3, 1 or 0 points. For certain criteria, a very high (5 points) and high (4 points) rating will also be used. To differentiate between the relative importance of the various evaluation criteria, each criterion is assigned a weighting factor ranging from ten (10) to one (1). The base point score for a project being evaluated under each criterion will be multiplied by the relevant weighting factor to determine the total score given to said project under that criterion.

Some criteria, particularly those that deal with the potential for a negative impact, do not lend themselves to differential scoring. These are considerations wherein the result or impact of the project is either acceptable or not acceptable, with no “gray area” between the two. These criteria are designated as “Pass/Fail” (“P/F”) criteria. These criteria do not add any points to a project proposal’s score. Instead, if the Trustees determine that the proposed project would have an unacceptable negative impact on the relevant resource or area of concern that cannot be mitigated, the project proposal would be given a “Fail” designation. Such project proposals would not be considered for funding from the natural resource damage recoveries (funds).

A summary table showing the evaluation criteria categories, the evaluation criteria, the weighting factors and the maximum points available for each criterion is presented in Table 1. An explanation of each criterion is provided in the following section. Guidance on the scoring of each criterion is also provided.

The scoring system of weighting factors and base scores is the result of extensive analysis by the Trustee Agency staff, and the Technical Consulting Team as well as in consideration of valuable input by the public. However, the Trustees recognize that it is not possible to develop a scoring system that could produce an absolute quantitative ranking of the most to least valuable projects given the diversity of natural resource restoration projects likely to be submitted. It is also the Trustees’ objective to fund a variety of project types from different restoration project categories. As a result, the scores developed under these evaluation criteria will be “advisory” information for the Trustees. The Trustees will apply their judgment in making the final decisions regarding which projects represent the best opportunities for restoration of natural resources and natural resource services for inclusion in the Restoration Plan.

**Table 1**  
**Connecticut Trustee SubCouncil**  
**Housatonic River Basin Natural Resources Restoration Plan**  
**Evaluation Criteria - Scoring System Summary**

Category	Criteria	Criteria Weighing Factor	Scoring by Criterion		Category Totals	
			Maximum Points	% of Total Points <sup>1</sup>	Maximum Points	% of Total Points <sup>1</sup>
Relevance and Applicability of Project	Location of Project	10	50	15 %	180	53 %
	Natural Recovery Period	5	25	7 %		
	Sustainable Benefits	6	30	9 %		
	Magnitude of Ecological Benefits	8	40	12 %		
	Magnitude of Recreational Benefits	7	35	11 %		
Technical Merit	Technical/Technological Feasibility	4	20	6 %	30	9 %
	Adverse Environmental Impacts		P/F			
	Human Health and Safety	0	P/F			
	Measurable Results	2	10	3 %		
Project Budget	Relationship Expected Costs/Expected Benefits	3	15	4 %	55	16 %
	Implementation Oriented	3	15	4 %		
	Budget Justification/Understanding	3	15	4 %		
	Leveraging Additional Resources	2	10	3 %		
	Comparative Cost-Effectiveness	-	-			
Socioeconomic Merit	Adverse Socioeconomic Impacts		P/F		30	9 %
	Coordination and Integration	2	10	3 %		
	Community Involvement	2	10	3 %		
	Public Outreach	2	10	3 %		
Applicant Implementation Capacity	Technical Capability of Applicant/Project Team	4	20	6 %	45	13 %
	Administrative Capability of Applicant/Project Team	4	20	6 %		
	Project Commitments	1	5	2 %		
<b>POTENTIAL MAXIMUM SCORE</b>					<b>340</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Percentages rounded off to nearest whole number to simplify comparison only.

**RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY OF PROJECT**

**(180 point maximum)** These criteria ascertain the relevance and applicability of the proposed project to the restoration of injured natural resources and the services they provide.

**Location of Project**

Location of Project: Priority will be given to projects based on the location of the project relative to the injured natural resources and/or services in the Housatonic River watershed in Connecticut.

**Very High** (50 points): The project takes place within the Housatonic Main Stem in Connecticut upstream of the Derby Dam.

**High** (40 points): The project takes place within any regional or subregional watershed contributory to the Housatonic River in Connecticut upstream of the Derby Dam.

**Medium** (30 points): The project takes place within the Housatonic Main Stem Regional Basin in Connecticut downstream of the Derby Dam and any regional or subregional watersheds contributory to this reach (excluding areas upstream of Derby Dam).

**Low** (10 points): Project does not take place within the Housatonic Major Basin in Connecticut.

**Natural Recovery Period**

The CT SubCouncil seeks to implement projects that will provide restoration benefits to injured natural resources and/or services in advance of the “natural recovery period.” The natural recovery period is the length of time it would take for the injured resource and/or service to recover to an optimal condition in the absence of human intervention. Preferred projects will describe the natural recovery period for the resource and/or service of interest, and demonstrate that the project would provide benefits to that resource and/or service in advance of the natural recovery period. Projects will not be funded if they would require a longer period of time to implement than the natural recovery period for the natural resource and/or service that is the focus of the project. This criterion addresses direction provided to Trustees in the NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. § 11.82(d)(6).

**High** (25 points): Project will clearly provide restoration benefits in advance of the natural recovery period.

**Medium** (15 points): Project has the potential to provide restoration benefits in advance of the natural recovery period.

**Low** (0 point): Benefits provided by the project are unlikely to result in restoration benefits in advance of the natural recovery period.

***[Assignment of a Low rating may constitute grounds for eliminating the proposal from further consideration]***

## RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY OF PROJECT

<p><b>Sustainable Benefits</b> Priority will be given to projects that provide long-term sustainable benefits to injured natural resources and/or the services they provide.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (30 points): Project will clearly result in long-term, self-sustaining and comprehensive benefits and incorporate permanent protection measures as appropriate. Project does not require recurring human intervention or maintenance.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (18 points): Long-term and sustainable benefits are likely to require periodic maintenance, protection measures or management that represents a relatively small investment to provide continuing benefits.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (0 point): Benefits provided by the project are likely to be short-term, unsustainable and/or finite, or project requires a significant investment of human intervention, management, and/or maintenance in order to provide continuing benefits. NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. § 11.82(d)(8).</p>
<p><b>Magnitude of Ecological Benefits</b> Priority will be given to projects that address a demonstrated need and maximize the level of restoration, rehabilitation and/or acquisition of the equivalent natural resources that were injured. For example, ecological benefits could be measured in terms of the increase in an animal population, an increase in native and/or rare plants in the Housatonic River environment, the increase in prey species provided for another species or the number of acres of habitat to be restored, enhanced or protected. This criterion will assist the CT SubCouncil in achieving the greatest possible level of ecological restoration.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (40 points): Project will provide a high level of ecological benefits.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (24 points): Project will provide a moderate level of ecological benefits.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (8 points): Project will provide a low level of ecological benefits.</p> <p><b>None</b> (0 points): Project will provide negligible ecological benefits.</p>
<p><b>Magnitude of Recreational Benefits</b> Priority will be given to projects that address a demonstrated need and maximize the level of restoration, rehabilitation, replacement and/or acquisition of the equivalent natural resources service (primarily recreational) benefits that were injured. For example, service benefits could be provided through increasing opportunities for recreation uses of the river through construction of boat/canoe launches, river walks or fishing access areas.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (35 points): Project will provide a high level of recreational benefits.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (21 points): Project will provide a moderate level of recreational benefits.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (7 points): Project will provide a low level of recreational benefits.</p> <p><b>None</b> (0 points): Project will provide negligible recreational benefits.</p>

**TECHNICAL MERIT**

**(30 point maximum)** These criteria assess whether the proposed approach is technically sound and likely to succeed using appropriate methods, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

**Technical/Technological Feasibility**

Priority will be given to projects that employ well-known and accepted techniques/technologies to achieve restoration, rehabilitation and/or acquisition of the equivalent natural resource or natural resource service benefits that were injured. The project will be evaluated based on the demonstrated likelihood of success of the proposed method(s) in the proposed project location in an acceptable period of time. The CT SubCouncil may approve projects that are innovative, as long as the approach is based on proven principles and concepts. “Stated project objectives” includes, but is not limited to, ecological, engineering, economic, and social objectives. This criterion addresses direction provided to Trustees in the NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. §11.82(d)(1).

**High** (20 points): Methods are widely regarded as, or based on, proven techniques/technologies for achieving stated project objectives. Likelihood of success in the proposed project location is high. Applicant clearly demonstrates technical/technological feasibility of the project and includes contingency actions, if appropriate, to address potential problems.

**Medium** (12 points): Method has been moderately successful as a technique/technology for achieving stated project objectives. Likelihood of success in the proposed project location is moderate. Applicant provides an adequate demonstration of project’s technical/-technological feasibility and includes contingency measures to address potential problems if they occur.

**Low** (0 point): Method is considered to be technically infeasible for achieving stated project objectives. Likelihood of success is low or unknown. Applicant does not demonstrate technical/technological feasibility of project.

**Adverse Environmental Impacts**

The CT SubCouncil will weigh whether, and to what degree, a project will result in adverse environmental impacts. This includes a consideration of significant adverse environmental impacts which could arise from a project, short term or long term, direct or indirect, including those affecting resources that are not the focus of the project. This criterion addresses the following requirements: NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. §11.82(d)(5); NEPA, 42 U.S.C. § 4321 *et seq.*; and CGS Section 22a-1b.

**This is a pass/fail criterion.** If the CT SubCouncil determines that this project has an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment that cannot be mitigated, the project will not be further considered for funding. The CT SubCouncil may chose to consider whether or not the unacceptable adverse impact could be adequately mitigated by modification of the project.

**Human Health and Safety**

Proposed projects will be evaluated for their potential to have adverse effects on human health and safety. Review of the project will focus on the human health and safety of a particular project to determine if protective measures could be added to the project to ensure safety. This criterion addresses the direction provided to Trustees in the NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. § 11.82(d)(8).

**This is a pass/fail criterion.** If the CT SubCouncil determines that this project has an unacceptable adverse impact(s) on human health and safety that cannot be mitigated, the project will not be further considered for funding. The CT SubCouncil may chose to consider whether or not the unacceptable adverse impact(s) could be adequately mitigated by modification of the project.

**TECHNICAL MERIT**

**Measurable Results**

Priority will be given to projects that deliver tangible, specific ecological, economic, social and/or human use results that are identifiable and measurable, and/or that may be evaluated by professionally accepted methods, so that changes to the Housatonic River watershed can be documented and evaluated. Priority projects will include clear performance criteria, measurable endpoints, and a monitoring plan.

**High** (10 points): Project success will be directly measured using quantitative endpoints or other professionally accepted methods. Project includes a clear plan and budget for monitoring and/or evaluation.

**Medium** (6 points): Project success will be estimated using meaningful qualitative endpoints or indirect quantitative endpoints.

**Low** (0 point): Success of proposed project cannot or will not be directly measured or estimated.

**PROJECT BUDGET**

**(55 points maximum)** These criteria evaluate the project budget to determine if it is desirable, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

<p><b>Relationship of Expected Costs to Expected Benefits</b>          The CT SubCouncil will consider whether a project’s costs are commensurate with the benefits it provides to injured natural resources and/or services. This will be a qualitative cost/benefit assessment that is largely based on information provided by the applicant. Costs should not solely be limited to those used for project implementation. Therefore, applicants should demonstrate economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. This criterion addresses direction provided to Trustees in NRDA regulations 43 C.F.R. § 11.82(d)(2).</p>	<p><b>High</b> (15 points): The project’s cost-benefit relationship demonstrates high net benefits.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (9 points): The project’s cost-benefit relationship demonstrates moderate net benefits.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (0 point): The project’s cost-benefit relationship demonstrates low or no benefit relative to the cost.</p>
<p><b>Implementation-oriented</b>          Priority will be given to projects that provide actual restoration of damaged natural resources or services (e.g., on the- ground habitat restoration) as compared to project proposals that are limited to planning and feasibility assessments. Projects that have well defined implementation plans for a specific action are preferred to those that provide only a funding allocation for the implementation of a future unspecified action.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (15 points): Project as proposed includes the implementation of defined actions to restore damaged natural resources and resource services.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (9 points): Project includes a clear and acceptable plan for how the project will result in restoration of natural resources and/or natural resource services.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (0 point): Project shows little or no planning for or evidence that it will result in the actual restoration of damaged natural resources or resource services.</p>
<p><b>Budget Justification and Understanding</b>          Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate strong budget justifications and understanding, including complete descriptions and detailed breakdown of costs for all elements of the project (e.g., design, engineering, permitting, implementation, construction, post-implementation monitoring, property appraisals for land acquisition projects, potential cost impacts of identifiable contingencies, etc.). For land acquisition projects, the CT SubCouncil will evaluate whether the land, easements, or other property interests proposed to be acquired are being offered for sale at fair market value.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (15 points): Budget is highly detailed, reasonable, realistic, and strongly justified for the proposed project.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (9 points): Budget provides adequate detail to determine whether budget is realistic or justified for the project.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (3 points) Budget provides some detail, but is inadequate to determine whether budget is realistic or justified for project</p> <p><b>None</b> (0 points): Budget provides no useful financial detail and/or budget provided demonstrates an unrealistic understanding of project costs.</p>

**PROJECT BUDGET**

<p><b>Leveraging of Additional Resources</b>          Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate a strong commitment of matching funds, in-kind services, volunteer assistance, or other such partnering actions. Leveraging of non-NRD funds is preferred because it extends the availability of restoration funds and therefore increases the resource benefits provided by the funds. The ratio of matching funds will be calculated by comparing the total amount of matching funds, as indicated by the applicant in the project budget, with the amount of NRD funds that are requested in the project budget. Non-NRD funds used for project-related expenditures up to six months prior to the deadline for receipt of applications will be considered. Matching funds shall be specific to the proposed project.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (10 points): Project budget demonstrates an average of \$1.00 or greater in non-NRD funding for every \$1.00 requested.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (6 points): Project budget demonstrates an average of \$0.50 - \$0.99 in non-NRD funding for every \$1.00 requested.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (2 points): Project budget demonstrates an average of \$0.10 - \$0.49 in non-NRD funding for every \$1.00 requested.</p> <p><b>NA</b> (0 points): Project budget shows little or no non-NRD funding.</p>
<p><b>Comparative Cost-effectiveness</b>          If two or more proposed projects provide the same or a similar level of benefits (including the “no action natural recovery” alternative), the least costly action may be preferred. This criterion addresses direction provided to Trustees in the NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. §11.14(j); § 11.82(d)(3), and (7).  <b>NOTE:</b> This criterion will only be applied if it is determined that two or more projects would provide the same or similar level of benefits. Points are not applicable to this criterion.</p>	<p><u>No points are associated with this criterion.</u></p> <p><b>Preferred:</b> Project provides same or similar restoration benefit at a lesser cost than another proposed project.</p> <p><b>Non-preferred:</b> Project provides same or similar restoration benefit at a greater cost than another proposed project.</p>

**SOCIOECONOMIC MERIT**

**(30 points maximum)** These criteria assess the degree to which the project addresses social and economic issues relevant to the restoration of injured natural resources and the services they provide.

<p><b>Community Involvement and Diversity</b>          Priority will be given to projects that provide an opportunity for community involvement (e.g., individuals, municipalities, state and federal agencies, private foundations, conservation organizations, community groups, academia, etc.). Projects should demonstrate how the public would be involved, such as through hands-on habitat restoration, and/or science-based monitoring. Projects that sustain public involvement after their completion are of particular interest to the CT SubCouncil.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (10 points): Project includes significant, diverse and meaningful community involvement opportunities throughout the life of the project (e.g., planning, implementing, monitoring, maintaining).</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (6 points): Project includes community involvement opportunities in some stages of the project’s life.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (0 point): Project includes minimal or no community involvement.</p>
<p><b>Adverse Socioeconomic Impacts</b>          The CT SubCouncil will weigh whether, and to what degree, a project will result in adverse socioeconomic impacts. This includes a consideration of significant adverse socioeconomic impacts that could arise from a project, short term or long term, direct or indirect. This criterion addresses NEPA compliance requirements, 42 U.S.C. § 4321 <i>et seq.</i></p>	<p><b>This Is a pass/fail criterion.</b> If the CT SubCouncil determines that a project has an unacceptable adverse socioeconomic impact that cannot be mitigated, the project will not be further considered for funding. The CT SubCouncil may chose to consider whether or not the unacceptable adverse impact could be adequately mitigated by modification of the project.</p>
<p><b>Coordination and Integration</b>          This criterion considers whether, how, and to what extent a project is coordinated or integrated with other ongoing or complementary activities in the Housatonic River watershed. Projects will also be assessed for their ability to complement goals, needs and/or recommendations in existing plans that incorporated public input and involvement in their development (e.g., restoration plans, watershed plans, regional land use plans, CT OPM Plan of Conservation and Development, town plans of conservation and development). Restoration projects that can be efficiently coordinated with other actions may achieve cost savings. The CT SubCouncil is particularly interested in projects that enable synergistic benefits to injured natural resources and their services (i.e., a combination of activities that produces benefits greater than the sum of the individual activities). Applicants are responsible for citing the specific plans, goals, needs and/or recommendations that the project would complement.</p>	<p><b>High</b> (10 points): Project is clearly coordinated and integrated with complementary restoration or conservation activities and public plans and policies. A high potential for synergistic benefits is demonstrated.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> (6 points): Project neither complements nor detracts from complementary restoration or conservation activities and public policies. Synergistic benefits may be possible, but are not substantiated.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (0 points): Project does not appear to complement goals, needs and/or recommendation as expressed in existing plans. Project detracts from or negates complementary restoration or conservation activities and public policies. Synergistic benefits are very unlikely.</p>

## SOCIOECONOMIC MERIT

### **Public Outreach**

Priority will be given to projects based on the degree to which the dissemination of information about the project has the potential to enhance the careful and responsible use, protection or management of natural resources and the environment.

**High** (10 points): Project includes the dissemination of information that has high potential to substantially enhance the careful and responsible use, protection or management of natural resources and the environment.

**Medium** (6 points): Project includes the dissemination of information that has moderate potential to substantially enhance the careful and responsible use, protection or management of natural resources and the environment.

**Low** (0 point): Project does not include the dissemination of information that will substantially enhance the careful and responsible use, protection or management of natural resources and the environment.

**APPLICANT IMPLEMENTATION CAPABILITY**

**(45 point maximum)** These criteria assess the capability of the project applicant to implement the project and whether the proposed project team possesses the necessary technical expertise, experience, training, facilities and administrative resources.

**Technical Capacity of Applicant and Project Team**

Priority will be given to projects based on the capability of the members of the proposed project team to conduct the scope and scale of the project, as indicated by their qualifications (i.e. education, training and experience) and past experience in designing, implementing, effectively managing and overseeing such projects. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged. Communities and/or organizations developing their first restoration projects may not be able to document past experience, and therefore will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, as evidenced by the explanation of characteristics such as education, training and/or experience of their primary project team members.

The evaluation under this criterion may also take into account technical capabilities apparent from the proposal. This may include, but not necessarily be limited to identification of potential problems in the design and implementation of the project, as well as during post-implementation maintenance and monitoring phases.

**High** (20 points): The applicant demonstrates considerable relevant technical qualifications, experience and capacity. The project team or individual team members have an established record of success in the implementation of projects of similar technical complexity, and/or they have a record of highly effective management of projects with similar scale and scope.

**Medium** (12 points): The applicant demonstrates adequate relevant technical qualification, experience and capacity. The project team or individual team members have successfully implemented and/or managed projects on a smaller scale or with less technical complexity.

**Low** (0 point): The applicant or individual team members demonstrates minimal or no qualifications, experience or capacity to implement and/or manage the proposed project.

**Administrative Capacity of Applicant and Project Team**

Priority will be given to projects based on the availability of the necessary facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities to support and successfully manage the restoration work, including the availability of outside technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion. The administrative capability of the members of the proposed project team will be judged based on their qualifications (i.e. education, training and experience) and past experience in effectively managing and overseeing such projects. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged.

**High** (20 points): The applicant demonstrates considerable administrative resources, capacity and experience necessary to conduct a project of the proposed complexity, scale and scope.

**Medium** (12 points): The applicant demonstrates adequate administrative resources, capacity and experience.

**Low** (0 point): The applicant demonstrates minimal or no administrative resources, capacity and/or experience to conduct a project of the proposed complexity, scale and scope.

**APPLICANT IMPLEMENTATION CAPABILITY**

**Project Commitments**

Preferred projects will demonstrate that commitments needed for project implementation from project participants, project sponsors or property owners for property access, funding, in-kind services or other project components have been secured.

**High (5 points):** Documentation showing commitments from all project participants has been provided.

**Medium (3 points):** Documentation showing commitments from critical project participants has been provided.

**Low (0 points):** Documentation showing commitments from critical project participant has not been provided.