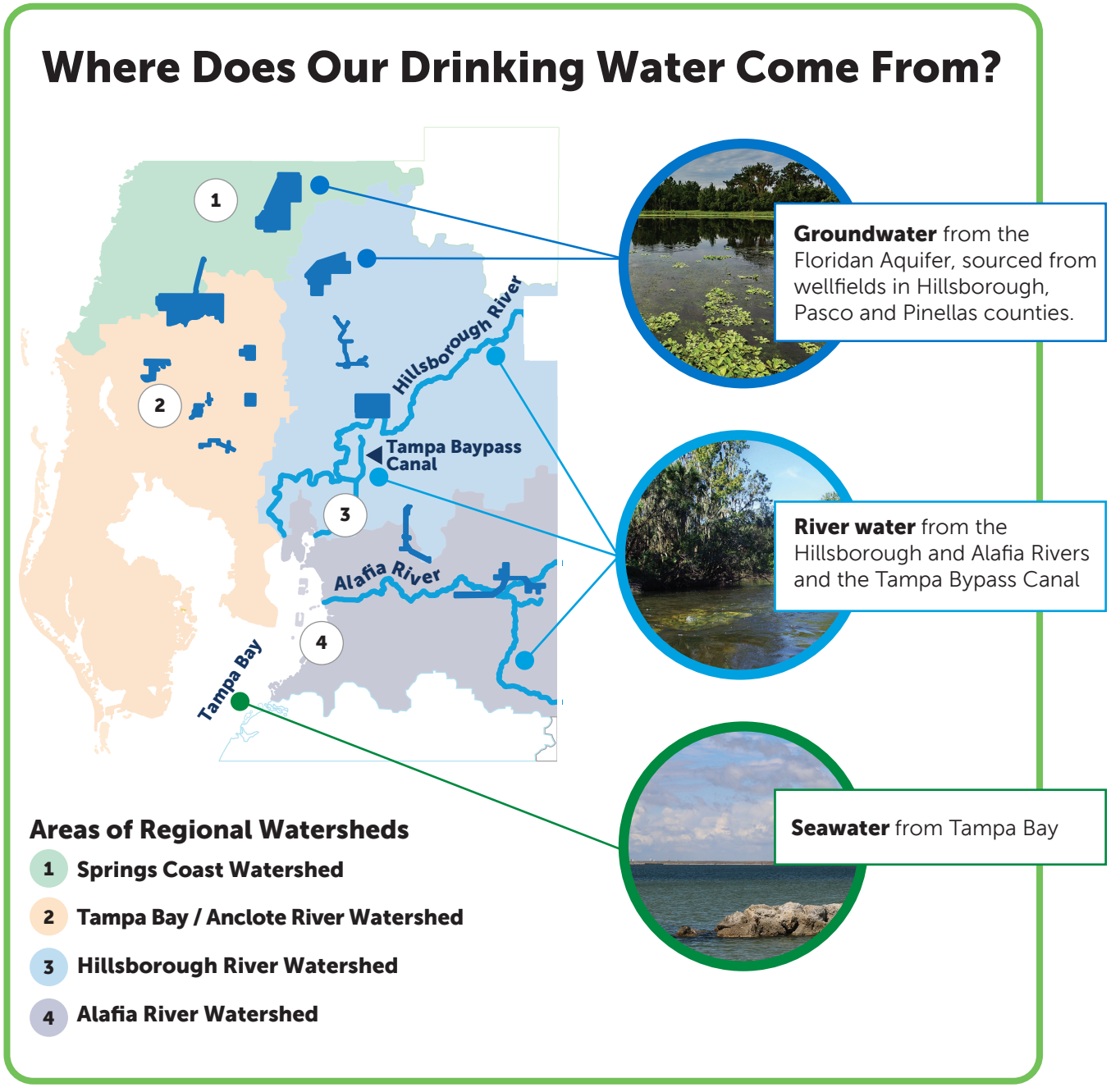
TAMPA BAY WATER
Supplying Water To The Region

Water Conservation and Protection Grant Program Guide

Where Does Our Drinking Water Come From?

Tampa Bay Water supplies wholesale drinking water to more than 2.6 million people in the Tampa Bay region through its member governments: Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties and the cities of New Port Richey, St. Petersburg and Tampa. We use a blend of three different sources to supply drinking water to the region: groundwater, river water and seawater.

Because our region depends on these sources for our drinking water supply, it is important to take action to conserve water and protect our drinking water sources. The Water Conservation and Protection Grant Program is a great way for the community to get involved in keeping our environment and drinking water supplies plentiful and safe for years to come.



What is Water Conservation?

Water conservation includes a wide variety of actions and activities aimed at using water efficiently to ensure there is enough water for our community and the environment. The Earth has only so much water and conservation is key to making sure we all have enough.

Tampa Bay Water is seeking projects that conserve our drinking water and protect the amount of water available to the region now and in the future.

What is Source Water Protection?

Source water protection includes a wide variety of actions and activities aimed at safeguarding, maintaining, or improving drinking water sources and their contributing areas.

Tampa Bay Water's wellfields are located in and around area wetlands and all of our sources are located within watersheds. Watersheds function like large funnels, so everything that happens on the ground eventually makes its way into the water. This is how trash, chemicals or contaminants miles away can still end up in our waterways. Tampa Bay Water is seeking projects that protect, preserve or improve these sources and their contributing areas.

About the Grant Program

Tampa Bay Water has been involved with water conservation and source water protection since its creation in 1998. The Water Conservation and Protection Grant Program is an important component of our outreach efforts. Everyone plays an important role in keeping our drinking water sources clean, safe and plentiful. By partnering with community organizations that share our commitment to conserving and protecting our drinking water sources, we can reach more of the citizens we serve and have a greater impact.

Program Goals

Education

Educate the Tampa Bay community on water conservation and source water protection.

Awareness

Build public awareness about drinking water sources and how personal actions impact our drinking water.

Impact

Support hands-on activities that conserve water and protect, clean and/or restore drinking water sources and contributing areas.

Diversity

Award projects that present a wide range of solutions and include representation from Tampa Bay's diverse population and locations.

Grant Guidelines

Applicant Eligibility

The program is available to nonprofit organizations, universities, colleges, community groups or school groups located within Hillsborough County, Pasco County or Pinellas County. Community groups that are not legal entities must partner with a legal entity or fiduciary agent such as, but not limited to, a homeowner's association or parent teacher association for purposes of receipt and accounting of funds.

Grant Amount

Tampa Bay Water has $50,000 in grant funding available for the current program. Grant awards range from $2,000 to $10,000 per organization.

Awards are announced in January and funds are available between January and December. Awardees must fully implement and complete the project within the grant calendar year.

Project Eligibility Criteria

Projects must relate to conserving water and/or protecting drinking water supply sources in the Tampa Bay region. Projects including the following key components are encouraged.

- Community involvement and education
- Environmental and water source impacts
- Opportunities for Tampa Bay Water staff and/or board to be involved
- Tangible community impact
- Public recognition opportunities

Examples of eligible projects

- Local public awareness and outreach campaigns related to source water protection or water conservation
- River and stream clean-ups, including restoration and stabilization of riverbanks
- Protection and preservation of the region's watersheds and aquifer recharge zones
- Innovative solutions to reduce pollution in wetlands, rivers and coastal areas
- Educational resources such as trainings, workshops, signage or exhibits, and the development of Florida-standards-based curriculum about drinking water and the environment
- Innovative ideas to reduce water consumption

Evaluations and Scoring Criteria

Applications submitted to Tampa Bay Water will be evaluated using a scoring system as a guide. Reviewers will individually evaluate and score eligible projects and assign 1-5 points in the categories listed below. The program manager will make the final decision based on his or her individual review of the applications, the reviewers' scores, and how the applications promote the program's goals identified on page 2. Eligible projects that do not receive awards may be resubmitted in future years. The detailed **evaluation and scoring guide** is available to view or download.

- Mission Alignment (related to water conservation and/or source water protection)
- Engagement (public outreach, education and involvement)
- Impact (tangible outcomes and community impact)
- Project Management (qualifications and costs)

Technical Assistance/Pre-award Consultation

Tampa Bay Water is interested in building relationships with a broad range of community organizations that share our commitment to conserving water and protecting our water resources. Any organization or group that would like to apply, but needs additional guidance, is encouraged to schedule a call or meeting to get initial feedback prior to the submission deadline. Requests for consultation must be emailed to Malique Rankin at **mrankin@tampabaywater.org**. To ensure schedule availability prior to the deadline, we recommend submitting requests as early as possible and no later than October 30.

Application Process

How to Apply

- Complete and submit the application form:
  - **Apply online**
  - **Download the form**
- Complete and submit the budget worksheet
  - **Download the worksheet**
- Attach **W-9**
- If applicable, attach a **letter of commitment** from partners

Online applications are preferred and will be submitted electronically with all attachments.

Downloaded applications and all attachments can be emailed to Malique Rankin at **mrankin@tampabaywater.org**.

Important Dates

Application deadline:
5 p.m. on November 13, 2026

Board of Directors meeting and check presentation (awardees only):
January 2027

Awardees will be invited to attend our January board meeting for the official award announcement and ceremonial check presentation. Please hold this date on your calendar.

Award notifications:
December 2026

Signed funding agreement (awardees only):
January 31, 2027

Grant Awardee Requirements

Awardees must:

- Implement the project and scope of work as described in the application.
- Submit any changes in the program or scope of work to Tampa Bay Water in writing before making changes. Significant program changes may not be approved.
- Implement and complete the project within the grant period year.
- Participate in periodic update calls.
- Coordinate, together with Tampa Bay Water, a public announcement or launch event.
- Publicly recognize Tampa Bay Water as a funder, partner or sponsor on grant-funded projects in accordance with our branding guidelines. Details are provided at the time of award.
- Provide opportunities for Tampa Bay Water staff or board members to be involved.
- Provide the required documentation for fund disbursement, which includes an updated budget worksheet, invoice and proof of payment within 30 days of project completion and no later than October 31 of the grant year.
- Provide a final written report with photos and documented outcomes within 30 days of project completion and no later than October 31 of the grant year. Project activities may continue after the **final report**.

Financial Documents and Fund Disbursement Options

Required Tax Forms

Please provide a current **W-9 Form**.

Community Groups

- If you are a member of a club or community group that does not have a legal status, please partner with a group that can serve as your grant administrator to receive and administer funds. Examples include but are not limited to homeowner's associations, church groups, chambers of commerce, local associations, schools, parent teacher associations, Boy/Girl Scouts and 4-H.
- Tampa Bay Water will submit information regarding the grant dollars as required to the Internal Revenue Service. If you are not tax exempt, you may be subject to federal income taxes.

Payment Options

- Reimbursement Post-Project (most common)
  - Email an invoice and letter requesting reimbursement for the grant amount that you have expended to **accountspayable@tampabaywater.org** with a copy to the grant program administrator at **mrankin@tampabaywater.org**.
  - You must include documentation of completion of the project and receipts, paid invoices or copies of checks as proof of money spent on the project for which you are requesting reimbursement.

- Reimbursement Pre-Project.
  - Pre-project funding may be available for all or part of the project costs for projects that require funding upfront for implementation. Please indicate on your budget worksheet the costs for which you are requesting pre-project funding.
  - Send an invoice detailing the project expenditure type and the amount of money required. Include a detailed description, cost and quantity of the products you intend to purchase and copies of invoices, purchase orders or screen shots from the product webpage. Please allow at least two weeks for us to process the funding request.
  - After completion of the project:
    - Within 30 days, send documentation of completion of the project and provide receipts for money spent in accordance with the invoice and project budget worksheet.
    - Pre-approval is required to spend funds on any items that were not listed on the budget worksheet, original invoice and request letter. Unapproved items may not be reimbursed.
    - If there were unspent funds after completion of the project, attach a check or money order for the remaining balance.