Request for Statements of Interest
Funding Opportunity Announcement

Federal Awarding Agency:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Engineer Research and Development Center
3909 Halls Ferry Road
Vicksburg, MS 39180-6199

Funding Opportunity No: W81EWF-20-SOI-0035
CFDA No: 12.630
Statutory Authority: 10 USC 2358
Project Title: Northwestern Pond Turtle Study, Willamette Valley, Oregon
Announcement Type: Initial announcement
Issue Date: 22 June 2020
Statement of Interest/Qualifications Due Date: 21 July 2020, 1300 CDT
Full Application Package Due Date, if Invited: 14 August 2020, 1300 CDT
Estimated Award Ceiling: $60,000
Estimated Total Program Funding **(optional)**: $60,000
Expected Number of Awards: One

Section I: Funding Opportunity Description

Background:

Important habitat for the Northwestern Pond Turtle (Actinemys marmorata) (NWPT) exists throughout the Willamette Valley Project (WVP), which is comprised of 13 dams and associated reservoirs spread across six watersheds that feed into the Willamette River. These locations include Detroit and Big Cliff on the North Santiam River; Green Peter and Foster on the South Santiam River; Blue River and Cougar on the McKenzie River; Fall Creek, Lookout Point, Dexter, and Hills Creek on the Middle Fork Willamette River; Dorena and Cottage Grove on the Coast Fork Willamette River; and Fern Ridge on the Long Tom River. The Fern Ridge Project also includes a 26-mile river channel downstream of the dam.

The dams were built between 1940 and 1969, with the primary authorized purpose of flood risk management. The WVP is comprised of nearly 55,000 acres, of which almost half is seasonally inundated lakebeds. Eleven of the reservoirs are drained from October through January to collect seasonal precipitation and slowly release the waters downstream, while two re-regulating dams maintain steady reservoir elevations year-round. The lakes are held as full as possible each summer to maximize recreational opportunities. Additional authorized purposes include hydropower, irrigation, navigation, and fish and wildlife enhancement.

Turtles are found in multiple habitats, including rivers, lakes and wetlands, as well as upland prairies, savannas and woodlands. These ecosystems host many other species, including some listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), such as Chinook salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and Fender's blue butterfly. Currently, NWPT are proposed for federal listing, with a decision by US Fish and Wildlife Service expected in 2023. Listing would require ESA Section 7 consultation on land management activities, dam operations, and maintenance, which could potentially conflict with Terms and Conditions outlined in previous WVP Biological Opinions (BIOP) for other listed species.

The WVP has been monitoring and collecting data on NWPT and their habitats for the previous 30 years. There is some data from all lakes, with the majority of recent efforts focused at Fern Ridge, Fall Creek, and Hills Creek Reservoirs. The data are in multiple electronic formats, and some exists only as paper records. The data include information on nesting surveys, nest excavations and hatchling measurements, trapping and telemetry studies, habitat improvements, non-native red-eared slider removal, and predator prevention strategies.

While various conservation measures and study efforts have yielded information on NWPT and supplied some degree of protection to nesting areas, USACE understanding of species location occurrence, population age structure, reproductive success, and effects of reservoir water level management is limited. The WVP has a tremendous amount of data; however, most has not been sufficiently summarized or analyzed statistically to make it valuable for regional species recovery, or for future Corps land management.

Brief Description of Anticipated Work:

This research study will compile, organize, analyze, and summarize decades' worth of NWPT scientific data in advance of the 2023 listing decision. The research results will be presented in publicly available peer-reviewed publications and presentations. The analysis of existing data will attempt to address recovery actions from the 2019 draft Western Pond Turtle Range-wide Management Strategy, specifically:

- Conduct distribution and abundance surveys of known, historical, and potential NWPT habitat, and demography surveys in targeted areas to determine long-term trends
- Scientific investigation of threats to facilitate and enhance recovery efforts
- Ameliorate and manage threats to NWPT populations and habitat, particularly in priority conservation areas.

Data will be entered into the most appropriate program (such as Excel, Access, or ArcGIS) to facilitate analysis and future data collection. Existing files, folders, and other data will be digitized (in collaboration with USACE) and organized to the fullest extent possible to create a streamlined and logical digital file structure. Renaming existing and naming new files will adhere to best practice standardization structure (e.g. use of succinct names that identify date of creation, abbreviated description of file, etc.), and a document will be created that outlines naming and organization protocol for digital files, and the history of and issues encountered with data organization undertaken by the investigator.

Additionally, the investigator will develop a multi-year research study design on NWPT distribution, population densities, and habitat use that is prioritized between, and within each watershed. The research study design will focus on filling data gaps that ensure long term WVP operations while developing guidelines to minimize negative impacts to turtles and their habitats. The focus of this research will not be known until existing data are reviewed; however, some potential research areas include:

- Identify the role WVP reservoir water level management (for flood risk reduction, for dam maintenance, or to satisfy the 2008 fisheries BIOP flow targets) plays in NWPT reproduction, life history processes, dispersal, habitat use, and/or population viability.
- Determine whether NWPT are successfully moving through dams, spillways, and other water control structures.
- Understand the regional connectivity of NWPT populations upstream and downstream of dams.
- Create a strategy for NWPT genetic sample collection for future analysis of population genetic structure, including connectivity.
- Determine NWPT response to vegetation management treatments intended to improve aquatic or terrestrial habitat.
- Define the threats that non-native species, such as red-eared sliders, bullfrogs, or largemouth bass, pose to NWPT recovery, and quantify NWPT response to invasive species removal programs.

Public Benefit:

The results of this study are essential to guide natural resource management decisions affecting resource protection into the foreseeable future. The primary objectives of this study will be to compile information to protect special status species from the threat of extinction and develop research objectives for priority ecological communities for habitat restoration or protection. The public will benefit from the identification, protection and restoration of these critical habitats for special status species as well as additional native fauna and flora, so that these lands will continue to provide natural ecosystem functions and services for future generations.

Little data is publicly available on the impacts of managed waterways on NWPT. The results of this study would include peer-reviewed publications and presentations that increase public knowledge in key areas. This information can be used by private, state, and other federal land managers to advance species monitoring and habitat improvement

treatments, which can increase NWPT populations. The research study design will be informed by analyzing existing data and can lead to improved turtle population viability while retaining USACE flow management options central to recovery of federally listed fish species through the Pacific Northwest. Finally, this information will be extremely important to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in their listing decision, and potentially remove the need for ESA listing. The publications and presentations will help formulate future sensitive species recovery actions by state wildlife agencies in Washington, Oregon, and California.

Section II: Award Information

Responses to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential investigators for studies to be sponsored by the Portland District and the Engineer Research and Development Center to provide Northwestern Pond Turtle data compilation, analysis, and research study design. The estimated level of funding for FY20 is approximately $60,000, to the successful Recipient/Awardee to support this project for one (1) year.

Government Involvement:

The WVP will work cooperatively with the investigators to review and develop field and study methodologies, identify key variables, review research designs, evaluate data as it becomes available, and adjust methods accordingly. Key staff are located at the Fern Ridge office, west of Eugene, Oregon. WVP will provide existing knowledge and databases, background material as available, and participate in technical meetings for planning purposes and where the results of this work are discussed. WVP personnel may accompany researchers in the field and participate in data collection as appropriate. The Government may also assist in data analysis review and provide workspace and equipment as necessary.

Section III: Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants – This opportunity is restricted to non-federal partners of the Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit (CESU).

2. Cost Sharing – This action will be 100% funded by USACE.

Section IV: Application and Submission Information – Two Phase Process

Phase I: Submission of a Statement of Interest/Qualifications.

1. Materials Requested for Statement of Interest/Qualifications:
    a. Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to: Chelsea.M.Whitten@usace.army.mil
    (Maximum length: 2 pages, single-spaced 12 pt. font).

        1. Name, Organization and Contact Information

        2. Brief Statement of Qualifications (including):
            - Biographical Sketch,
            - Relevant past projects and clients with brief descriptions of these projects,

- Staff, faculty or students available to work on this project and their areas of expertise,
- Any brief description of capabilities to successfully complete the project you may wish to add (e.g. equipment, laboratory facilities, greenhouse facilities, field facilities, etc.).

Note: A proposed budget is NOT requested at this time.

The administrative point of contact is Chelsea Whitten, 601-634-4679; Chelsea.M.Whitten@usace.army.mil

2. Statement of Interest/Qualifications shall be submitted NO LATER THAN 21 July 2020, 1300 CDT

Based on a review of the Statements of Interest received, an investigator or investigators will be invited to move to Phase II which is to prepare a full study proposal. Statements will be evaluated based on the investigator's specific experience and capabilities in areas related to the study requirements.

Phase II: Submission of a complete application package to include a full technical proposal including budget, if invited.

1. Address to Request Application Package

The complete funding opportunity announcement, application forms, and instructions are available for download at Grants.gov.

The administrative point of contact is Chelsea Whitten, 601-634-4679; Chelsea.M.Whitten@usace.army.mil

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

All mandatory forms and any applicable optional forms must be completed in accordance with the instructions on the forms and the additional instructions below.

a. SF 424 R&R - Application for Federal Assistance
b. Full Technical Proposal – Discussion of the nature and scope of the research and technical approach. Additional information on prior work in this area, descriptions of available equipment, data and facilities, and resumes of personnel who will be participating in this effort should also be included.
c. Cost Proposal/Budget – Clear, concise, and accurate cost proposals reflect the offeror's financial plan for accomplishing the effort contained in the technical proposal. As part of its cost proposal, the offeror shall submit cost element breakdowns in sufficient detail so that a reasonableness determination can be made. The SF 424 Research & Related Budget Form can be used as a guide. The cost breakdown should include the following, if applicable:
    1. Direct Labor: Direct labor should be detailed by level of effort (i.e. numbers of hours, etc.) of each labor category and the applicable labor rate. The source of labor rates

shall be identified and verified. If rates are estimated, please provide the historical based used and clearly identify all escalation applied to derive the proposed rates.

2. Fringe Benefit Rates: The source of fringe benefit rate shall be identified and verified.
3. Travel: Travel costs must include a purpose and breakdown per trip to include destination, number of travelers, and duration.
4. Materials/Equipment: List all material/equipment items by type and kind with associated costs and advise if the costs are based on vendor quotes and/or engineering estimates; provide copies of vendor quotes and/or catalog pricing data.
5. Subrecipient costs: Submit all subrecipient proposals and analyses. Provide the method of selection used to determine the subrecipient.
6. Tuition: Provide details and verification for any tuition amounts proposed.
7. Indirect Costs: Currently the negotiated indirect rate for awards through the CESU is 17.5%.
8. Any other proposed costs: The source should be identified and verified.

3. Application package shall be submitted NO LATER THAN 14 August 2020, 1300 CDT.

4. Submission Instructions

Applications may be submitted by mail, e-mail, or Grants.gov. Choose ONE of the following submission methods:

a. E-mail:
Format all documents to print on Letter (8 ½ x 11") paper. E-mail proposal to Chelsea.M.Whitten@usace.army.mil

b. Grants.gov: https://www.grants.gov/:
Applicants are not required to submit proposals through Grants.gov. However, if applications are submitted via the internet, applicants are responsible for ensuring that their Grants.gov proposal submission is received in its entirety.

All applicants choosing to use Grants.gov to submit proposals must be registered and have and account with Grants.gov. It may take up to three weeks to complete Grants.gov registration. For more information on registration, go to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html.

Section V: Application Review Information

1. **Peer or Scientific Review Criteria:** In accordance with DoDGARs 22.315(c), an impartial peer review will be conducted. Subject to funding availability, all proposals will be reviewed using the criteria listed below (technical and cost/price). All proposals will be evaluated under the following two criteria which are of descending importance.

    a. **Technical (items i. and ii. are of equal importance):**
        i. Technical merits of proposed R&D.
        ii. Potential relationship of proposed R&D to DoD missions.

    b. **Cost/Price:** Overall realism of the proposed costs will be evaluated.

2. **Review and Selection Process**

a. **Categories:** Based on the Peer or Scientific Review, proposals will be categorized as Selectable or Not Selectable (see definitions below). The selection of the source for award will be based on the Peer or Scientific Review, as well as importance to agency programs and funding availability.

i. **Selectable:** Proposals are recommended for acceptance if sufficient funding is available.

ii. **Not Selectable:** Even if sufficient funding existed, the proposal should not be funded.

Note: The Government reserves the right to award some, all, or none of proposals. When the Government elects to award only a part of a proposal, the selected part may be categorized as Selectable, though the proposal as a whole may not merit such a categorization.

b. No other criteria will be used.

c. Prior to award of a potentially successful offer, the Grants Officer will make a determination regarding price reasonableness.

Section VI: Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

Written notice of award will be given in conjunction with issuance of a cooperative agreement signed by a Grants Officer. The cooperative agreement will contain the effective date of the agreement, the period of performance, funding information, and all terms and conditions. The recipient is required to sign and return the document before work under the agreement commences. **Work described in this announcement SHALL NOT begin without prior authorization from a Grants Officer.**

2. Administrative Requirements

The cooperative agreement issued as a result of this announcement is subject to the administrative requirements in 2 CFR Subtitle A; 2 CFR Subtitle B, Ch. XI, Part 1103; and 32 CFR Subchapter C, except Parts 32 and 33.

3. Reporting
   See 2 CFR Sections 200.327 for financial reporting requirements, 200.328 for performance reporting requirements, and 200.329 for real property reporting requirements.

Section VII: Agency Contact

Chelsea Whitten, Grants Officer
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