



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Contractor to Support Implementation of Future Water Leasing Opportunities in the Middle Rio Grande Native Water Leasing Pilot Program and Other Southwest Rivers Watersheds

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Contractor to assist us in the co-management, development and implementation of future water leasing opportunities for the Middle Rio Grande Native Water Leasing Pilot Program and other focal watersheds within the Southwest Rivers Program. The Southwest Rivers Program is designed to improve riparian habitat for native species in the Rio Grande and Pecos River watersheds and restore Chihuahuan Desert grasslands to benefit migratory grassland birds. You can obtain a copy of the Program's Business Plan on [NFWF's website](#).

BACKGROUND

While the program includes a variety of goals, the scope of work under this contract is in support of the Pilot Leasing Program described in Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Cooperative Agreement R17AC00119, specifically development of future water leasing opportunities and associated program development activities to conserve populations of Rio Grande silvery minnow within the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. NFWF intends to use the work products to continue development of the Middle Rio Grande Native Water Leasing Program into a sustainable water management and species conservation tool for stakeholders in the Middle Rio Grande Valley in New Mexico. The target date to complete the goals of the Pilot Water Leasing Program is September 2023.

The Contractor may additionally be asked by NFWF to contribute to the development of conservation strategies for other aquatic and riparian species within focal watersheds of the greater Southwest Rivers landscape.

Program goals to be addressed through this contract include:

- Development of a native water leasing pilot program in the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) that secures water for Rio Grande silvery minnow conservation.
- Provision of infrastructure improvements within the MRGCD to facilitate water conservation, leased water delivery and riparian habitat enhancement.
- Restoration and enhancement of habitat within the MRGCD to benefit Rio Grande silvery minnow.
- Application of water leasing strategies for species conservation in the wider Southwest Rivers Program landscape.

SCOPE OF WORK

The contractor will serve as Co-Project Manager, supporting and assisting Southwest Rivers Program Manager Kirstin Neff in implementation of the Middle Rio Grande Native Water Leasing Pilot Program activities for program Year 5 (FY22) with the potential to extend into year 6 (FY23), subject to funding availability.

Specific responsibilities are presented in the list of contract tasks below.

Tasks:

- Support design and implementation of leasing program guidelines, pricing options and communication materials for irrigation season 2022 (and 2023, subject to funding availability) based on participation, pricing and irrigator survey results from the 2020 and 2021 seasons.
- Support NFWF subgrantees in pilot program development, including implementation of structural and policy changes associated with development of MRGCD’s Conservation Advisory Committee (CAC).
- Support NFWF subgrantees in designing and implementing habitat restoration activities and infrastructure improvement projects.
- Track and support regulatory and institutional compliance activities led by Reclamation as well as those at the state and local levels.
- Support program outreach and communications activities
- Develop strategies for adaptive management and leasing program refinement based on implementation experience.
- Support NFWF staff in refining program activities in collaboration with Reclamation and subgrantees.
- Support NFWF staff in completing programmatic reporting.
- Travel to New Mexico as needed for program meetings with stakeholders when safe and appropriate.
- Track New Mexico state water law and policy developments that may impact program implementation.

Deliverables: Design and implementation of 2022 (and 2023, subject to funding availability) Pilot Leasing Program guidelines, pricing options and communication materials; Analysis of 2021 and 2022 leasing program success and strategies for adaptive management of subsequent leasing seasons based on species priorities and funding availability; Attending, setting agenda, and taking notes at bi-weekly meetings with NFWF and Reclamation staff to keep program development and implementation activities on track; Attendance and programmatic support at monthly MRGCD Conservation Advisory Committee Meetings; regular meetings with NFWF subgrantees; Review of and reporting back to NFWF staff regarding MRGCD Board of Directors meeting minutes and/or audio; Support refinement of programmatic budget.

Table of Deliverables	
Task	Due Date
Assistance with FY21 annual programmatic reporting	10/30/2021
Coordinate regulatory compliance for FY21 infrastructure, habitat restoration and monitoring projects	10/30/2021
Assistance with FY22 semiannual programmatic reporting	4/30/2022
2022 Leasing Season Plan and NEPA compliance	5/1/2022
Assistance with FY22 annual programmatic reporting	10/30/2022
Coordinate regulatory compliance for FY22 infrastructure, habitat restoration and monitoring projects	10/30/2022



Schedule: The Middle Rio Grande Native Water Leasing Pilot Program has a finite term of implementation which will end on September 18, 2023. This solicitation seeks support for the third season of native water leasing, to take place during summer irrigation season 2022 with the potential to extend into season four (2023 season, subject to funding availability).

REQUIRED EXPERTISE AND PROPOSED STAFF

Required expertise of the team includes advanced skills in natural resources or agricultural economics and water market design. Offerors should have experience working in New Mexico's Rio Grande watershed and with the Bureau of Reclamation, and should have familiarity with New Mexico water law and policy, water infrastructure and operations in the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and the *Final 2016 Biological Opinion for the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*. Offerors should have demonstrated ability in implementation of complex resource management programs through collaboration and relationship-building, and working within cross-jurisdictional relationships between local, state, and federal water management agencies. Preferred expertise includes seasonal forbearance agreements, rotational fallowing techniques and market research methods, including survey techniques. Experience working in or knowledge of other Southwestern watersheds with the native species conservation needs, for example the Gila River, Salt River, or Virgin River watersheds, is also of particular interest to NFWF.

CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Offerors should organize their Proposal Narrative based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** The Scope of Work must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved. This section should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and program stakeholders and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach for conducting the tasks should clearly describe the proposed methods necessary to conduct the project. The section must demonstrate that those methods are robust and appropriate for conducting the project and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty associated with conducting the project. Weight: 20%
3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** This section should clearly describe which tasks each member of the team will conduct and how their training and experience provide the requisite experience to do so successfully. Weight: 15%
4. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience in the requested field and/or closely related work. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered. If subcontractors are to be used, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well. Describe how that past performance is applicable to this evaluation. Weight: 25%
5. **Budget.** The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. You must use attached Contractor Budget Template. You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed, but should



not make any other changes. If applicable, please include the proposed budget for equipment purchase in the proposal separate from the Contractor Budget Template. Weight: 30%

ELIGIBLE OFFERORS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, and local, state and Indian tribal governments.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the offeror warrants and represents that it does not currently have any apparent or actual conflict of interest, as described herein. In the event an offeror currently has, will have during the life of the contemplated contract, or becomes aware of an apparent or actual conflict of interest, in the event an award is made, the offeror must notify NFWF in writing in the Statement of Quotations, or in subsequent correspondence (if the issue becomes known after the submission of the Statement of Quotations) of such apparent or actual conflicts of interest, including organizational conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the contractor, the contractor's employees, or the contractor's subcontractors in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests, or otherwise. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the offeror, the offeror's employees, or the offeror's future subcontractors in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the NFWF Contracting Officer will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the offeror to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies NFWF may result in the proposal not being selected for award.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the Offeror warrants and represents that it is eligible for award of a Contract resulting from this solicitation and that it is not subject to any of the below circumstances:

Has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an Contract with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Was convicted (or had an officer or agent of such corporation acting on behalf of the corporation convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal or State law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Is listed on the General Services Administration's, government-wide System for Award Management Exclusions (SAM Exclusions), in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 C.F.R Part 180 that implement E.O.s 12549 (3 C.F.R., 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 C.F.R., 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and



Suspension, ” or intends to enter into any subaward, contract or other Contract using funds provided by NFWF with any party listed on the SAM Exclusions in accordance with Executive Orders 12549 and 12689. The SAM Exclusions instructions can be found here: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in three distinctly labeled and separate documents: 1) Technical Proposal, 2) Budget, and 3) Evidence of Financial Stability. Interested parties should submit proposals electronically to Southwest Rivers Program Manager Kirstin Neff (Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org) using the requirements below:

1. Technical Proposal

- Format: Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF with a font size no smaller than 11 pt.
- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, DUNS number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Narrative: Concise (6-page limit) description of the work plan and a summary of the applicant’s expertise and experience, organized by the Criteria for Competitive Applications.
- Biographies: Resumes and/or Vitae of key staff and their role in the proposed work area.
- References: List two clients who have received services from the applicant that is similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.

2. Budget: The budget proposal must be submitted using the following NFWF [budget template](#).

3. Evidence of Financial Stability: The applicant shall provide proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements, credit ratings, a line of credit, or other financial arrangements sufficient to demonstrate the applicant’s capability to meet the requirements of this solicitation.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

A panel of NFWF staff, and Bureau of Reclamation staff will review the proposals. Offerors may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Only one award will be made for this project. If multiple institutions are involved, they should be handled through subcontracts.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

July 16, 2021 Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Kirstin Neff (Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org). NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all offerors have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be sent to NFWF **no later than 5:00 PM MST on July 16, 2021**.

July 19, 2021 NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website at [this site](#).

July 26, 2021 Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to Kirstin Neff (Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org) by **5:00 PM MST on July 26**,



NFWF

2021. Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.

Late August 2021

Contract award to selected Offeror

October 30, 2022

Deliverables Due