



REQUEST FOR QUOTATIONS

Methods and Protocols for Calculating the Water Quantity and Quality Benefits of Conservation Projects

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Contractor to develop a tool that its staff can use to calculate the water quantity and quality benefits of NFWF-funded projects. This work will involve updating NFWF's current VEC (volume equivalent calculator), adding a new water-quality module to the tool (i.e. nitrogen, phosphorous, and sediment), and redesigning the tool to leverage spatial data within the ESRI ArcGIS Enterprise platform. This "water calculator" must incorporate a broad range of conservation practices (e.g. acquisitions and easements, restoration, habitat management practices) and habitat types (e.g. forests, grasslands, shrublands, wetlands, agriculture). The calculator also needs to allow aggregate accounting of annualized water benefits across the Foundation's grant portfolio.

BACKGROUND

Since its founding in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest private conservation grant maker. It supports conservation efforts in all 50 states and U.S. territories. The Foundation's projects are selected through a rigorous evaluation process and awarded to some of the nation's largest environmental organizations, as well as some of the smallest. These projects protect and restore imperiled species, promote healthy aquatic and terrestrial habitat, improve working landscapes for wildlife, and advance sustainable fisheries. Through a variety of existing programs and landscape-level initiatives, many of NFWF's investments address water-quantity challenges in both water-scarce and flood-prone regions, and water-quality improvements in regions with point and nonpoint pollution sources.

NFWF would like to better understand and quantify how these projects conserve and improve water quantity (e.g. reduced runoff, reduced evapotranspiration, groundwater recharge, etc.) and quality (e.g. reduced nutrient and/or sediment pollution). The Scope of Work under this contract is for the updating and expansion of NFWF's current VEC, built in 2018. The tool must be based on well-established, scientifically sound methods and protocols. Due to NFWF's nationwide scope, the tool must be applicable across the diverse climates and habitat types of the United States. In contrast to NFWF's current GUI-based VEC tool, NFWF seeks a code-based tool with batch-run capabilities implemented in R or Python with a bridge to the ESRI environment to integrate project footprints and any spatial datasets needed for parameterization. NFWF intends to use the water calculator to assess project-level and Foundation-wide impacts for the purposes of strategic planning, development, and project and program evaluation.

SCOPE OF WORK

The following tasks constitute the Scope of Work for this Request for Quotations. The Contractor should anticipate bi-weekly check-in calls with NFWF throughout the duration of the project and a demonstration and training session near project completion. Please provide time and cost quotes for each Task using the Contractor Budget template provided. The deliverable for each Task will be time and resource dependent, and one or more tasks may be added or removed from the contract SOW at NFWF's discretion due to funding limitations, time constraints, the results from earlier tasks or other reasons.

Task 1: Kick-off meeting and initial portfolio orientation

- Kick-off meeting via phone in January 2026.
- Review key documents and summaries of NFWF's conservation programs to become familiar with the types of projects that will be assessed with the water calculator.
- Become familiar with NFWF's current VEC and the available data; identify any additional data sets and/or quality-control steps needed for the updated development of the water calculator.
- Target Dates: Jan. 12-19, 2026
- Deliverable: None

Task 2: Methods and protocols assessment

- Review readily available methods and protocols for application to the development of the water calculator. Methods should be grounded in corporate, agency and NGO standards and best practices as well as the contractor's experience and expertise. The review should consider the data and expertise NFWF staff will need to use the calculator.
- Target Dates: Feb 9-13, 2026
- Deliverable: Memo with recommendations on methods and protocols for use in the water calculator; conference call with NFWF to review and discuss recommendations

Task 3: Select methods and protocols for habitat restoration and management practices implemented through NFWF funded projects; use them to quantify the annual and long-term water quality and quantity benefits of a sample of representative projects

- Using the agreed upon methods and protocols for habitat-restoration projects and projects that implement best management practices, estimate the water-quantity and quality benefits of approximately 30-50 projects funded through NFWF programs.
- Leverage NFWF's existing data taxonomy and ontology for project metrics for water-benefit estimates, identifying any new water-specific metrics that may need to be added.
- NFWF will select the projects and provide basic information about them (land type, size and location, restoration activities) as well as all available spatial-data files depicting project locations
- The contractor will be responsible for obtaining additional spatial data (e.g., land cover) as needed and supplying all additional information required to implement the selected methods and protocols.
- Target Dates: March 9-20, 2026
- Deliverable: Written summary that outlines the quantitative water-quantity and quality benefits of these projects and the methods used to calculate them.

Task 4: Development of the water calculator and associated guidance

- Meeting at the beginning of this task to review and finalize the methods and protocols to be used in the water calculator, based on lessons learned through Tasks 2 and 3.
- Develop the water calculator (or adapt the existing tool to meet NFWF's needs) using the methods and protocols agreed upon at the end of Task 3. The calculator should allow NFWF staff to assess projects' water benefits in an efficient and cost-effective manner. This task will include the refinement of methods and protocols (as needed) based on the lessons learned from Tasks 2 and 3. It will also include the development of guidance for NFWF staff and grantees on how to use the calculator.
- Integrate tool within NFWF's existing data architecture (e.g., access vector spatial data via ESRI platform, outputs ingested to NFWF's data lake).
- Target Dates: May 18-25, 2026

- Deliverables: Water calculator with draft user manual for NFWF staff.

Task 5: Training for NFWF staff

- Training session for NFWF staff on how to use the calculator
- Target Dates: June 15-19, 2026
- Deliverables: Training materials as needed to supplement the draft user manual developed in Task 4.

Task 6: Final water calculator and user manual

- Finalize the water calculator and user manual/guidance.
- Target Dates: June 30, 2026
- Deliverables: Written report, final version of the water calculator (tool/program), and final version of the user manual.

MISCELLANEOUS

- NFWF staff will assist Contractor with access to NFWF data, information, in-house analyses and other relevant information, as available.
- Contractor shall treat all such information as CONFIDENTIAL without express written permission to share, disclose, or otherwise utilize that information for purposes beyond this project.
- All data, code, models, and information developed during this project shall be the property of NFWF at the conclusion of this project unless express written permission to the contrary has been provided.

REQUIRED EXPERTISE

The successful offeror will have significant expertise in the following areas:

- Water-quantity and quality accounting methods, tools and protocols for the land types and land uses associated with the types of projects NFWF funds (e.g. forests, grasslands, shrublands, wetlands, agriculture). This includes deep familiarity with the Volumetric Water Benefit Accounting (VWBA) 1.0 and 2.0 Guidance, the Water Quality Benefit Accounting (WQBA) Guidance, and any comparable water-quantity and quality guidance.
- Analyzing spatial data in a GIS to summarize raster-attribute data (e.g., land cover) for a vector dataset of NFWF project footprints.
- Working with IT and Conservation Data teams to integrate tool within NFWF's existing data architecture.
- Working with project-level metrics (e.g. acres of forest planted) and related information when quantifying water-quantity and quality benefits.
- Developing user-friendly tools that calculate the changes in water-quantity and quality resulting from environmental restoration or conservation projects.
- Working closely and constructively with end users.
- Adhering to contract timelines and budgets.

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.** This section must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved under this contract. It should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach for 1) developing the water calculator and 2) quantifying the changes in water-quantity and quality resulting from the subset of NFWF projects included in the Scope of Work. This section should clearly describe the proposed methods and demonstrate that they are robust and appropriate for conducting the project and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty. 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 skills to do so successfully. Weight: 20%
4. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience quantifying water-quantity and quality benefits, particularly those associated with conservation and environmental practices. 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: 20%
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 the attached Contractor Budget Template. You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed but should not make any other changes. 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 Ernie Newborn (ernest.newborn@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 (10-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 (no page limit).

- References: List at least two clients who have received services from the applicant that are similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.
2. **Budget:** The budget proposal must be submitted using the provided Contractor 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 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

November 21st, 2025	Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Ernie Newborn (ernest.newborn@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 EST on November 21st, 2025.
November 25th, 2025	NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website .
December 5th, 2025	Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to Ernie Newborn (Ernest.Newborn@nfwf.org) by 5:00 PM EST on December 5th, 2025. Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.
Mid December 2025 to Early January 2026	Contract award to selected offeror
June 30th, 2026	Final Deliverables Due Interim deliverables are due at the times specified in the Statement of Work