

Notice for Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Fish River Watershed Management Planning Baldwin County Alabama

The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District seeks a qualified environmental planning, engineering, natural resource planning or other similar firm to prepare a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (WMP) for the Upper Fish River (HUC 031602050304), Middle Fish River (HUC 031602050305), and Lower Fish River (HUC 031602050306) Watersheds in Baldwin County, Alabama. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process is being used to select a firm who can develop such a conceptual engineering master plan based on new and available data. RFQ's must be sent to the attention of Rhonda Bryars and received no later than **3:00 p.m. CST, Friday, September 30th, 2015.**

Summary of Offering

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) has secured funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund to develop WMPs for several intertidal watersheds along the Alabama coast. MBNEP has partnered with The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District to develop these plans, which will provide a roadmap for restoring or conserving watersheds and improving water and habitat quality in areas where resources could have been damaged by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. These plans will chart a conceptual course for improving/protecting the things people value most about living along the Alabama coast.

- **Water Quality:** Identify actions to reduce point and non-point source pollution (including stormwater runoff and associated trash, nutrients, pathogens, erosion and sedimentation) and remediate past effects of environmental degradation thereby reducing outgoing pollutant loads into Mobile Bay, Mississippi Sound, and the Gulf of Mexico
- **Fish:** Identify actions to reduce the incidence and impacts of invasive flora and fauna and improve habitats necessary to support healthy populations of fish and shellfish.
- **Environmental health and resiliency:** Identify vulnerabilities in the watershed from increased sea level rise, storm surge, temperature increases and precipitation and improve watershed resiliency through adaptation strategies.
- **Access:** Characterize existing opportunities for public access, recreation, and ecotourism and identify potential sites to expand access to open spaces and waters within the watershed.
- **Culture and Heritage:** Characterize customary uses of biological resources and identify actions to preserve culture, heritage and traditional ecological knowledge of the watershed
- **Shorelines:** Assess shoreline conditions and identify strategic areas for shoreline stabilization and fishery enhancements;

In addition to the six values identified above, these plans should provide a strategy for conserving and restoring coastal habitat types providing critical ecosystem services and identified by the MBNEP's Science Advisory Committee as most threatened by anthropogenic stressors. These habitat types- **freshwater wetlands; streams, rivers and riparian buffers; and intertidal marshes and flats**, were classified as most stressed from dredging and filling, fragmentation, and sedimentation, all related to land use change. These habitats and the ecosystem services they provide are related to many, if not each, of the six identified values.

The firm selected must be able to develop a comprehensive plan to maximize environmental health and public benefit by identifying actions to improve local governance of the environment, promote community ownership, knowledge and involvement in watershed management, and restore and conserve priority habitats beneficial to those resources that were or could have been damaged by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

An RFQ process is being used to select a Planner instead of a more traditional RFP, in recognition of the need for sustained collaboration between the selected **Respondent**, municipal and county officials, local stakeholders, the Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the MBNEP to successfully achieve the stated wide-range of planning needs. Implementation funding is not currently identified in local, state or federal budgets or from other sources. However, restoration projects identified in the watershed plans will be evaluated for future NFWF funding proposals as appropriate.

EPA's Nine Key Elements: (http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/upload/watershed_mgmnt_quick_guide.pdf)

Proposals responding to the RFQ should delineate how the project team will address the following objectives in the development of the watershed plan. These **objectives** conform to the U.S. EPA's nine elements of watershed planning:

- Build Partnerships, including identification of key stakeholders and solicitation of community input and concerns (1)
- Characterize the Watershed, including creation of a natural and cultural resource inventory, identification of causes and sources of impairments, identification of data gaps and estimation of pollutant loads (2)
- Set Goals and Identify Solutions including determination of pollutant reduction loads needed and management measures to achieve goals (2-3)
- Design Implementation Program including implementation schedule, interim milestones, criteria to measure progress, monitoring component, information/education program, and identification of technical and financial assistance needed to implement plan (4-9)

Request for Qualifications Inquiries, Contact Information, Timeline

Potential **Respondents** interested in this RFQ should contact The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District and request placement on the RFQ mailing list to ensure receipt of amendments and other relevant information. Inquiries should be directed to: Rhonda Bryars, Rhonda.bryars@al.nacdn.net 251-937-3297.

Proposed Time Line:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Solicitation Issue/Advertising Date | Wednesday, September 2 nd , 2015 |
| Pre-Submittal Conference | Tuesday, September 15 th , 2015 |
| Statement Receipt Closing Date | Wednesday, September 30 th , 2015 |
| Shortlist Notification | Friday, October 9 th , 2015 |
| Shortlist Interviews | Thursday, October 22 nd , 2015 |
| Award Exclusive Negotiating Right | Monday, October 26 th , 2015 |
| Delivery of Final Product | Monday, October 31 st , 2016 |

Pre-Submittal Conference

The most current RFQ document is available at the MBNEP website (www.mobilebaynep.com).

A mandatory pre-submittal conference will be conducted at 10:00 a.m. CST on Tuesday, September 15th, at the Baldwin County Central Annex building, located at 22251 Palmer St. Robertsdale, AL 36567.

Statement Contents

The Statement of Qualifications should be no more than **fifteen 8.5” X 11” pages, Times New Roman 11 point font (inclusive of the cover letter, conceptual approach, experience & background and project team/level of participation)**, and should be divided by section, with Table of Contents (**cover pages and table of contents do not count against the 15 page limit**). All Statements shall be submitted in **electronic format** as a PDF. PDFs can be submitted on CD and mailed to **Rhonda Bryars 207 Faulkner Dr, Ste 107, Bay Minette, AL 36507** or emailed to Rhonda.bryars@al.nacdnet.net

Statements submitted in response to this RFQ shall include a complete response to the requirements in the order presented below. Statements should be a straightforward delineation of the **Respondent's** capability to satisfy the intent and requirements of this RFQ, and should not contain redundancies or conflicting statements. An officer authorized to make a binding commitment for the **Respondent** making the Statement shall sign the Statement Form. Contents of the submitted Statements must include the following to be deemed responsive for evaluation:

A. Cover Letter

The Statement must include a cover letter accompanying the Statement and acknowledging receipt of any and all issued amendments to the RFQ. The letter should be addressed to: **Roberta Swann, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, 118 North Royal St., Suite 601, Mobile, AL 36602.**

- The letter should indicate a primary contact for the Statement and that person's title, address, phone number, and email address.
- The letter should introduce the **Respondent's** project team. The Project Team is defined as the lead plus any key team members who are critical for consideration by the evaluation team, and include relevant professional certifications (e.g., Professional Engineer, Certified Wetland Scientist, etc.) for each.
- The letter should include a general statement of approach distinguishing why the **Respondent** is the most suitable choice for this planning effort.
- The letter should include the statement that the Project Team is willing to complete the Project in a timely manner.
- The letter must include a statement that the firm is not in arrears in the payment of any obligation due and owing to the State of Alabama, including tax payments and employee benefits and that it shall not become so during the term of the agreement if selected; a statement that the proposing **Respondent** will negotiate in good faith with the MBNEP, and a statement that the firm grants to the MBNEP a non-exclusive right to use, or cause others to use the contents of its Statement, or any part thereof, for any purpose.

B. Conceptual Approach & Methodology

Respondents are requested to demonstrate their understanding of this process by submitting a conceptual approach and methodology for project implementation. This narrative should articulate the **Respondent's** methods and approach of engaging both partners and area stakeholders to create a feasible watershed management plan and conceptual implementation strategy that advances the intent of this RFQ. In addition, the Respondent shall include a project schedule of major planning milestones.

The narrative must include, at a minimum, a conceptual approach for: watershed characterization (including assessment of climate change vulnerabilities), stakeholder outreach and engagement, prescription of management measures, regulatory evaluation and adaptation, long-term financing, prioritizing and scheduling implementation activities, and monitoring and evaluation of success.

C. Experience and Background

Given the unique nature of the Project and its importance to local stakeholders, it is essential to fully understand the experience and capabilities of all key members of the Project Team. **Respondent** should include the following information about the Project Team:

- Describe your team's experience in specific projects relevant to watershed and community-scale engineering and planning projects (including public/private developments) relative to storm water management, site preparation, stream modification and diversion or environmental restoration.
- Demonstrate the ability and experience of key individuals on the **Respondent's** proposed Project Team to complete projects of the scale and complexity envisioned in this RFQ on budget and on schedule.
- Provide up to three examples of projects that incorporated LID concepts or cultural preservation and public access into implementation activities.
- Describe key Project Team members' involvement in above projects including project conception and financing, through the design and implementation phase and leading to project completion and assessment.
- Provide details of any experience working in the Fish River area and surrounding communities in Baldwin County, AL.
- Relate how past projects have successfully engaged diverse communities of stakeholders and engendered community ownership of the project.
- Please provide the names and phone numbers of references for at least **two** completed projects for which the Project Team acted as Consultant and that may be considered comparable to the project envisioned in this RFQ. For each reference, indicate the contact person's role in the completed project and the time period of their involvement.
- Respondents should identify with specificity any other relevant organizational, consulting or other available resources that will be committed to the Project.

D. Project Team / Level of Participation – Given the complex nature of the Project, the Evaluation Team and MBNEP must understand the roles of key Project Team members, their availability to complete specific Project tasks in a timely manner and the overall organization and decision making process of the Project Team.

- Identify key Project Team members with responsibility for leading main project tasks, including the percentage of time each is expected to commit through the duration of the planning process.
- Include an organization chart of the Project Team showing lines of communication, clearly defined roles, availability and decision-making hierarchy.

Selection of Planner

Statements will be reviewed by an Evaluation Committee composed of representatives from the MBNEP, state and federal agencies and other watershed stakeholders. The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District reserves the right to contact **Respondents** with requests for clarification or additional information, or to arrange other follow up activities it deems appropriate. Selection of a Planner will be based on: the quality, clarity and thoroughness of the submitted Statement and its compatibility with the RFQ's stated objectives, statements of intent, and submission requirements, plus the results of information gathered from interviews with shortlisted **Respondents** and client reference checks.

The following criteria, corresponding to the categories set forth in the Submittal Instructions will be used to evaluate **Respondents'** Statements. The weighted score for each category is indicated in parentheses:

A. Cover Letter / Comprehensive Project Team (5%)

1. Completeness of information on proposed project team.
2. Succinctness and ingenuity of the statement of approach.
3. Timeliness of approach.

B. Conceptual Approach & Methodology (50%)

1. Strategy for addressing the EPA's nine key elements.
2. Overall approach to literature review, field assessment, and data analysis, including willingness to generate additional data sets, to supplement existing water quality, ecosystem, cultural, and demographic data.
3. Strategy for using watershed modeling including but not limited to build-out, water quality and climate change vulnerability assessments to achieve project goals.
4. Demonstration of innovative methods for soliciting, assessing, and using community input, comments and suggestions during project development and for working with diverse stakeholders to achieve project goals.
5. Strategy for identifying implementation activities to support the six things people value and EPA's nine key elements, including but not limited to identification of opportunities to celebrate culture and connect community to water resources and install best management practices for reducing pollutant loads.
6. Innovative approaches for long-term financing, including cost/benefit analyses for BMPs.
7. Innovative approaches for driving regulatory change.
8. Strategy for monitoring system changes effected by management measures and generating measurable results.
9. Approach for promoting completed plan and engaging locally elected and State of Alabama officials in adopting plan recommendations.
10. Strategy for completing the work in a timely manner.

C. Experience and Background (25%)

1. Diversity of expertise of key team members.
2. Years of experience in undertaking similar planning efforts by key team members.
3. Demonstrated team experience working in local watershed community.
4. Demonstrated team experience working with public entities to structure and implement watershed-scale LID projects, stream modification and diversions, environmental restoration, cultural preservation and expansion or provision of public access.
5. Demonstrated team experience engaging diverse communities.
6. Demonstrated team experience in completing projects of the scale and complexity envisioned, from project conception through completion and assessment, on budget and on schedule.
7. Provision of at least two references.

D. Project Team / Level of Participation (20%)

1. Roles, availability and time allocation of key Project Team members are clearly defined and reasonable.
2. Provided organizational chart of key Project Team members clearly delineates roles/responsibilities, lines of communication and decision-making hierarchy.

Shortlist Consideration

The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, acting as an agent for the MBNEP, reserves the right to accept, reject, and/or interview any or all qualified **Respondents** and intends to select a limited number of **Respondents** for interviews. **Respondents** shortlisted for interviews include those who submit Statements initially judged by the Evaluation Committee to be reasonable. Shortlisted **Respondents** selected for interview shall be notified of the time, date and location for oral presentations. Upon completion of the interview process, MBNEP reserves the right to immediately enter into negotiations with a selected **Respondent** and execute the standard MBNEP Professional Services Contract.

Once it has completed this solicitation process, The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District will be available to debrief **Respondents** who have submitted statements. The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District and the MBNEP will not share information from Statements made by other **Respondents**.

Supplemental Materials to this RFQ

For a detailed description of the components expected in the final WMP, refer to the document titled “**Expected Watershed Plan Components**” on the MBNEP’s website: <http://www.mobilebaynep.com/library> in the Watershed Plans section.

Disclaimer

This RFQ is conducted under applicable provisions of *Alabama Bid Law*. Please note that Statements in response to this RFQ are sought only from experienced consultants and developers of large scale environmental planning and construction projects. **Respondents** who submit a Statement of Qualification (Statement) are responsible for becoming fully informed regarding all circumstances, information, laws and any other matters that might, in any way affect the **Respondent**’s submitted Statement.

Any inspection or other on-site investigation during this RFQ process must be coordinated through The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District. **Respondents** are responsible for acquainting themselves with all available information and documented conditions of or affecting the watershed. The MBNEP, federal, state or local agencies, Baldwin County, local municipalities and participating individuals make no representations about the environmental conditions, or presence or absence of contaminated materials within the watershed referenced in this solicitation.

MBNEP, Federal, state or local agencies, Baldwin County, local municipalities and individuals assume no responsibility for any interpretations made by **Respondents** on the basis of information provided in this offer or through any other sources. The Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, the MBNEP, and its employees, and/or agents shall not be liable at any time for any costs associated with or related to this Request, which are incurred by any Respondent to the RFQ, subsequent amendments or cancellation.