

Notice for Request for Qualifications Invasive Species Control Plan for the Three Mile Creek Watershed Mobile County, Alabama

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program seeks a qualified environmental or natural resource planning, engineering, or other similar firm or professional to prepare an Invasive Species Control Plan for the Three Mile Creek Watershed (HUC 031602040504) in Mobile County, AL. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process will be used to select a contractor who can develop an implementable plan to eradicate or control invasive plant and animal species based upon available and new data. Statements of Qualification should be directed to the attention of Tom Herder (therder@mobilebaynep.com) and received no later than 3:00 p.m. CST, Friday, February 2, 2018.

Summary of Offering

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) has secured funding from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council and the RESTORE Act to develop an Invasive Species Control Plan focused on, but not limited to, aquatic and riparian vegetation in the Three Mile Creek Watershed. This plan will provide a roadmap for controlling invasive, exotic nuisance species of plants and animals to conserve or restore the Watershed and improve water and habitat quality. The Three Mile Creek Watershed drains an area of 30.1 square miles and stretches approximately 14 miles from west of the University of South Alabama east across northern Mobile and portions of the City of Prichard to its confluence with the Mobile River. The watershed includes residential sections of the city, habitat-rich wooded wetlands supporting a broad diversity of both marine and freshwater species, and highly urbanized areas. Three Mile Creek is fed by six significant tributaries:

- Twelve Mile Creek – approximately three miles in length
- Central Northern Tributary (TWEM) – approximately two miles in length
- Toulmins Spring Branch (TSB) – approximately 2.5 miles in length
- Unnamed Tributary to TMC (UTTM) – approximately one mile in length
- One Mile Creek – approximately two miles in length
- Industrial Canal (INCM) – length approximately one mile

Figure 1 (below) shows Watershed boundaries, the location of the six tributaries, and urban and undeveloped areas of the Watershed in 2013, although the extent of wooded wetlands surrounding the historic Three Mile Creek streamway (east of the Bypass Channel between MLK Jr. Avenue and Conception Street Road) and One Mile Creek appears underrepresented, and the Hickory Street Landfill is classified as urban.

This plan will chart an implementable course for Three Mile Creek for improving or protecting the things identified in the MBNEP's 2013-2018 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) that people value most about living along the Alabama coast (Values), including:

- **Water quality:** While non-native aquatic vegetation can assimilate nutrients during growth periods, decaying vegetation releases excess nutrients and exerts a substantial oxygen demand, contributing to low dissolved oxygen concentrations and increased nutrient concentrations consistent with eutrophic condition. Heavy growth of floating species, such as duckweed, will shade sunlight required for oxygen synthesis and fish productivity.
- **Fish:** Invasive species disrupt trophic dynamics, often outcompeting native species established in local food webs and eliminating traditional habitats preferred by native fish and wildlife species. Island apple snails (aka, giant or maculata snails) have the potential to compete with native

species for limited resources and have been shown to eat 95 percent of the aquatic vegetation in some natural systems, leaving behind murky, algae-filled water. The snails' preferred food items include some of Alabama's most common and important native aquatic plants. Many species of aquatic vegetation in Three Mile Creek are introduced, non-native species that displace native vegetation along stream banks.

- **Access:** Thick aquatic vegetation growing on the creek bottom and along its margins, including *Myriophyllum* sp., *Hygrophila* sp., etc., discourage recreational access, and the density of submerged and emergent vegetation makes paddling and water-related recreational opportunities difficult.
- **Environmental Health and Resilience:** Severe weather events, including flooding, high winds, and habitat disturbance, may damage native systems, providing opportunities to invasive species, and exacerbating reductions in species diversity and richness.
- **Heritage and Culture:** Although Three Mile Creek was "abandoned" in the mid-20th Century as the City's drinking water source, it remains a center for low-income, minority, subsistence anglers, who will benefit from conscientious management of the invasive species that impact the water quality, fisheries resources, and access to the Creek.
- **Shorelines:** Invasive plant species outcompete native vegetation over a significant portion of the banks of Three Mile Creek and its tributaries. Alligator weed and other littoral-oriented species accelerate ecological succession, promoting sediment deposition and accrual and rapidly converting open water shorelines to dense mats of invasive wetland vegetation and marshland.

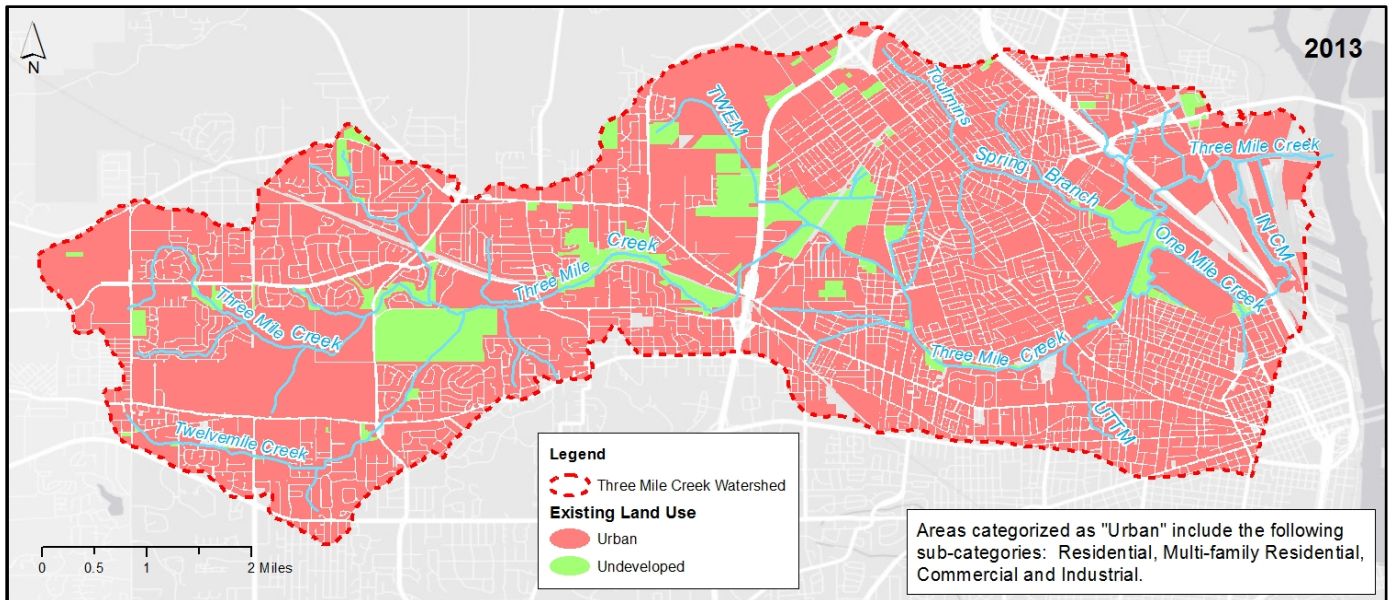


Figure 1. Three Mile Creek Watershed boundaries, the six significant tributaries, and urban and undeveloped areas in 2013.

In addition to the six values identified above, this plan will provide a strategy for conserving and restoring coastal habitat types providing critical ecosystem services identified by MBNEP's Science Advisory Committee and the CCMP as most threatened by anthropogenic stressors. These habitat types, including **freshwater wetlands and streams, rivers, and riparian buffers** and the ecosystem services they provide are related to several, if not all, of the six identified values.

The five-year Ecosystem Restoration and Protection Strategy of the CCMP includes Goal ERP-1: *Improve trends in water quality in priority watersheds with impairments discharging into priority nursery areas.* Three Mile Creek, with a designated use classification of Agricultural and Industrial, is currently

listed on the State 303(d) List of Impaired Waterbodies for pathogens, but Total Maximum Daily Loads have been developed for organic enrichment and low dissolved oxygen. CCMP Objective ERP-1.1 is to restore conditions, including hydrology, from headwaters to intertidal zone, in at least five such watersheds through watershed management plan (WMP) implementation.

The Three Mile Creek WMP identifies an abundance of invasive species and submerged aquatic vegetation (dominated by invasive species) as major ecological challenges facing the Three Mile Creek Watershed. A primary ecological management action recommended in this WMP is to remove invasive species. Development and implementation of an Invasive Species Control Plan will, therefore, provide a roadmap to implementation of both the CCMP and Three Mile Creek WMP, to undertake invasive species control measures strategically and guided by surveys and scientific deliberation.

The contractor selected must be able to develop a comprehensive plan to identify, locate, and recommend prioritized measures to most effectively and economically direct limited resources to eradicate or control the non-native species most contributing to impairments of the critical habitats mentioned above. An RFQ, rather than a more traditional request for proposals (RFP) process, will be used to select the **Respondent** most qualified to prepare the plan.

Request for Qualifications Inquiries, Contact Information, Timeline

Potential **Respondents** interested in this RFQ should contact the MBNEP and request placement on the RFQ mailing list to ensure receipt of any amendments and other relevant information. Inquiries should be directed to: Tom Herder, therder@mobilebaynep.com or at 251-380-7937.

Proposed Time Line:

Solicitation Issue/Advertising Date	Tuesday, December 11, 2017
Pre-Submittal Conference *	Tuesday, January 9, 2018
Statement Receipt Closing Date	Friday, February 2, 2018
Shortlist Notification	Monday, February 12, 2018
Shortlist Interviews	Tuesday, February 27, 2018
Award Exclusive Negotiating Right	Monday, March 5, 2018
Delivery of Final Product	Monday, December 31st, 2018

*Attendance at the Pre-Submittal Conference is mandatory for **Respondents**.

Pre-Submittal Conference

The most current RFQ document with any edits or modifications will be available at the MBNEP website (www.mobilebaynep.com). Amendments will be posted there for review by all **Respondents**. A mandatory pre-submittal conference will be conducted at the Killian Room, International Trade Center, 250 N. Water St. Mobile, at 1000 a.m., Tuesday, January 9, 2018.

Statement Contents

The Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) should be not more than fifteen (15) 8.5" X 11," single-sided pages, Times New Roman 11-point font (inclusive of the cover letter, conceptual approach, experience and background, and project team with 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 SOQs shall be submitted in electronic format as a PDF. PDFs must be submitted on CD or jump drive to

the **Mobile Bay National Estuary Program C/O Tom Herder, 118 N. Royal Street Suite 601, Mobile, AL 36602** or emailed to therder@mobilebaynep.com, with receipt prior to 3:00 PM, Friday, Feb. 2, 2018.

Statements of Qualification shall include a complete response to the requirements in the order presented below. They should offer 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** submitting the SOQ shall sign the Cover Letter. Contents of the submitted SOQs must include the following to be deemed responsive for evaluation:

A. Cover Letter

The SOQ must include a cover letter accompanying it and acknowledging receipt of all issued amendments to the RFQ. The letter should be addressed to

Roberta Swann, Director
Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
118 North Royal Street, Suite 601
Mobile, AL 36602.

- The letter should indicate a primary contact for the **Respondent** and the 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 to consideration by the evaluation team and should 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 **Respondent** 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 **Respondent** will negotiate in good faith with the MBNEP; and a statement that the **Respondent** grants to the MBNEP a non-exclusive right to use, or cause others to use, the contents of the SOQ or any part thereof for any purpose.

B. Conceptual Approach and Methodology

Respondents are requested to demonstrate their understanding of this process by submitting an approach and methodology for project implementation. A narrative should articulate the **Respondent's** methods and approach of addressing elements of the scope and engaging stakeholders, as necessary, to create a feasible Invasive Species Control Plan for the Three Mile Creek Watershed. In addition, the **Respondent** shall include a project schedule of major planning milestones. Elements of the scope include the following:

1. Identify target non-native, invasive, nuisance plant or animal species, including, but not limited to **alligator weed** (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*), **Asian clam** (*Corbicula fluminea*), **Chinese privet** (*Ligustrum sinense*), **Chinese tallowtree** (*Triadica sebifera*), **cogon grass** (*Imperata cylindrica*), **common salvinia** (*Salvinia minima*), **East Indian hygrophila** (*Hygrophila polysperma*), **Eurasian watermilfoil** (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), **island apple snails** (*Pomacea maculata*), **kudzu** (*Pueraria robusta*), **parrot feather** (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), **tilapia** (*Oreochromis* spp.),

torpedo grass (*Panicum repens*), **water hyacinth** (*Eichornia crassipes*), and **wild taro** (*Colocasia esculenta*) - heretofore referred to as “target species” – located within the Watershed and impacting Values, as described above.

2. Identify priority areas to direct implementation of control measures that offer the best opportunity to use limited resources to most effectively address problems related to extent and potential spread of target species.
3. Identify the risks to Values posed by identified target species within the Three Mile Creek Watershed.
4. Describe existing conditions within the Three Mile Creek Watershed, including:
 - a. Baseline inventory of target species.
 - b. Relative abundance or distribution of target species.
 - c. Baseline map showing the extent of the target species.
5. Identify control or management options for each target species, including biological, mechanical, and chemical.
6. Identify the preferred control or management strategy for each target species:
 - a. Summarize the techniques, including any organic tissue or chemical disposal methods, if necessary.
 - b. Identify any constraints (e.g., federal, state, or local regulatory or site conditions that impact practicable solutions).
 - c. Prescribe schedule of control activities.
 - d. Identify required resources, including:
 - i. Personnel qualifications.
 - ii. Equipment.
 - iii. Sanitation/re-contamination considerations.
 - e. Prescribe monitoring component to include:
 - i. Inventory target species in the Three Mile Creek Watershed.
 - ii. Using baseline map, compare species abundance with baseline condition.
 - iii. Reassess/evaluate effectiveness of management strategy.
 - iv. Refine management strategies, as needed.
 - f. Determine total anticipated cost.

A narrative must include, at a minimum, a conceptual approach for watershed survey of target species, risk assessment of target species, description of target species, the range of appropriate management options, prescription of preferred control or management strategies for each target species, description of appropriate post-implementation monitoring strategy, and determination of anticipated costs.

C. Experience and Background

Given the importance of this project to the health of Three Mile Creek Watershed receiving waters, 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 development of an Invasive Species Control Plan in urban watersheds with significant natural landscapes, including coastal habitat types identified by MBNEP’s Science Advisory Committee and its CCMP as most threatened by anthropogenic stressors.
- Demonstrate the ability and experience of key individuals on the **Respondent’s** 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 involved developing strategies for eradication or control of invasive species impacting waters and their drainage areas.

- Describe key Project Team members' experience in projects involving development of strategies for eradication or control of invasive species impacting waters and their drainage areas.
- Provide details of any experience working in the Three Mile Creek Watershed to effect ecological improvements or restoration.
- Provide names and phone numbers of references for at least two completed projects for which the Project Team acted as Consultant and may be considered comparable to the project envisioned in this RFQ. For each reference, indicate the contract person's role in the completed project and 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 organizational chart of the Project Team showing lines of communication, clearly-defined roles, availability, and decision-making hierarchy.

Selection of Planner

All SOQs will be reviewed by an Evaluation Committee composed of representatives from MBNEP's Management Conference, state and federal agencies, and other Watershed stakeholders. The MBNEP 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 SOQ and its compatibility with the RFQ's stated objectives, statements of intent, and submission requirements, plus the results of information gathered from interviews with short-listed **Respondents** and client reference checks.

The following criteria, corresponding to the categories set forth in the submittal instructions, will be used to evaluate **Respondents'** SOQs. The weighted score for each category is indicated in parenthesis:

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 and Methodology (50%)

1. Overall approach to literature review, field assessments, and data analysis, including willingness to generate additional data sets to supplement existing data.
2. Strategy for surveying the watershed to determine extent of target species.
3. Development of suite of management techniques to effectively control or eradicate target species.
4. Recommended strategies for employing control measures, addressing/overcoming identified constraints to control or management strategies, and developing effective schedule and prescription of necessary resources required for implementation.
5. Prescription of potential cost-savings approaches for implementation of plan.
6. Strategy for monitoring reductions in target species post-implementation.
7. Strategy for completing the work in a timely manner.

C. *Experience and Background (25%)*

1. Diversity of experience of key Project Team members.
2. Experience in undertaking similar planning efforts by key Project Team members.
3. Demonstrated Project Team experience working with diverse groups of stakeholders, including property owners; local, state, and federal agency representatives; academics; nongovernmental organizations, etc.
4. Demonstrated team experience in completing projects of the scale and complexity envisioned, from project conception through completion and delivery, on budget and on schedule.
5. 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 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 will include those who submit SOQs 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 negotiations with a selected **Respondent** and execute the standard MBNEP Professional Services Contract.

Once it has completed this solicitation process, The MBNEP will be available to debrief **Respondents** who have submitted SOQs. The MBNEP will not share information from SOQs made by other **Respondents**.

Disclaimer

This RFQ is conducted under applicable provisions of *Alabama Bid Law*. Please note that SOQs in response to this RFQ are sought only from experienced consultants and developers of large scale environmental planning and construction projects. **Respondents** who submit an SOQ 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 SOQ.

Any inspection or other on-site investigation during this RFQ process must be coordinated through the Mobile 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, Mobile County, the cities of Mobile and Prichard, 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, Mobile County, the cities of Mobile and Prichard, and individuals assume no responsibility for any interpretations made by **Respondents** based on information provided in this offer or through any other sources. The MBNEP, 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.