

Notice for Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
Science in Residence
Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program seeks qualified individuals, environmental service firms, post-doctoral candidates, scientists in transition, and scientists who have recently retired, to submit for the Science in Residence Professional/Team. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process will be used to select an individual or team who can best meet the requirements set forth in this document. Statements of Qualifications (Statements) must be sent to the attention of Roberta Swann and received no later than **3:00 P.M. Central Time, Thursday, June 1, 2023.**

Summary of Offering

In September 2022, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) conducted a review of its current organizational structure to better align staff and enhance program delivery of its services. One recommendation was the creation of a Science in Residence position which would rotate annually (or bi-annually) and provide expertise in synthesizing scientific information in support of MBNEP activities and supporting project management needs where appropriate. Several mission-critical activities are in process or on the horizon, including the next State of Alabama’s Estuaries and Coast, a Mobile Bay watershed comprehensive study, and a comprehensive shoreline management plan for the western shore of Mobile Bay. This offering presents an opportunity to enhance the scientific expertise provided by the MBNEP related to project management and science communication efforts and improve support for the work of the Science Advisory Committee.

A Science in Residence professional or team will be primarily responsible for four areas of work, including but not limited to:

1. Publish the next State of the Alabama’s Estuaries and Coast (timeline for completion up to one year).
2. Lead the team who will develop the Western Shoreline Comprehensive Management Plan (timeline to completion up to two years).
3. Elevate the work of the Comprehensive Mobile Bay Watershed Study being led by Dr. John Lehrter within the SAC (ongoing).
4. Assist with the refinement/expansion of the SAC.

1. State of Alabama’s Estuaries and Coast

It has been fourteen years since the MBNEP published a comprehensive “State of the Bay” report for public consumption. After ten years of implementing [Respect the Connect: A Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for Alabama’s Estuaries and Coast \(CCMP\)](#), and as we plan for the third CCMP, taking the time to publish another status and trends document (The State of the Bay) associated with the plethora of work accomplished and data collected over this ten-year period will prove valuable and informative as strategies are developed to continue improving coastal resource management.

The Science in Residence professional/team will be responsible for working with the SAC to facilitate consensus around selection of indicators of environmental health, assignment of authors/teams to address each indicator, manage scopes to ensure timely submission of data/written products, and participate in SAC discussion and follow-through related to report development, publication, and distribution. The Science in Residence professional/team will be expected to edit all submissions for consistency of voice, fill in gaps of narrative where necessary, bring the authors together periodically to discuss and measure progress, and identify any inconsistencies/gaps in knowledge with plans to address.

MBNEP Support: The MBNEP Science and Monitoring Lead will be the manager and point person for this activity.

2. Western Shoreline Comprehensive Management Plan Project Advisor

This past fall, MBNEP received a grant to develop a Comprehensive Shoreline Management Plan for the Western Shore of Mobile Bay - a priority recommendation identified in the [Western Shore Watershed Management Plan](#); this plan will serve as a tool to evaluate, plan, and implement appropriate management strategies based on the shoreline environment instead of property lines. The Plan will incorporate scientific data and analyses to assist waterfront property owners, local governmental agencies, and natural resource managers with strategies to promote appropriate nature-based solutions to shoreline management across similar habitat extents.

The Science in Residence professional/team will act as MBNEP project advisor for this planning effort to ensure the Plan is developed using the best science and incorporates the concerns of the Western Shore property owners. The Plan itself will be contracted out, so the Science in Residence professional/team will be available to advise the contractor team as needed and participate in the planning process.

MBNEP Support: The MBNEP Restoration Lead will be the point person for this activity.

3. Elevating the work of the Comprehensive Mobile Bay Watershed Study led by Dr. John Lehrter within the SAC

In the [Building Resilience for Oysters, Blue Crab, and Spotted Seatrout to Environmental Trends](#), Comprehensive Mobile Bay Watershed Study (CMBWS) awarded by NOAA, proposed research has been targeted towards the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and the Ecosystems Status and Trends strategy, including: EST-1: Increase availability and use of data related to how coastal ecosystems and their services respond to man-made stresses; EST-2: Establish a process for measuring, analyzing and communicating change in marine, estuarine, and freshwater ecosystem conditions; and EST-3: Model and predict connections between ecosystem condition and the ecosystem services people value. Specifically, the CMBWS goals focus on:

- Increasing data related to how the estuarine ecosystem responds to anthropogenic stressors.
- Improving understanding of the relationship between biological condition and provision of ecosystem services resulting from improvements in resources.
- Improving ecosystem function and resilience through protection, restoration and conservation of habitats including beaches, bays, backwaters, and rivers.
- Supporting the measurement of ecosystem response to watershed management planning and implementation.

The Science in Residence professional/team, supported by the MBNEP Science and Monitoring Lead, will be charged with working with the CMBWS team (John C. Lehrter (lead investigator, University of South Alabama, Dauphin Island Sea Lab), Ronald Baker (University of South Alabama, Dauphin Island Sea Lab), Just Cebrian (Mississippi State University, Northern Gulf Institute), Brian Dzwonkowski (University of South Alabama, Dauphin Island Sea Lab), Latif Kalin (Auburn University), Lisa Lowe (North Carolina State University), Dan Petrolia (Mississippi State University), Sean Powers (University of South Alabama, Dauphin Island Sea Lab), Di Tian (Auburn University), and Seong Yun (Mississippi State University) and will work closely with the them to incorporate their work into the work of the SAC, recruiting research team members to participate in the SAC and use the SAC to both vet and communicate data and outputs from the study more actively. The Science in Residence professional/team will also incorporate what is learned from the study into the development of the SAC's strategy for the next five years.

4. Expand the SAC participation of scientists including facilitating refinement of the SAC's charge within the MBNEP.

The Science Advisory Committee is a key committee within the MBNEP Management Conference. Its purpose is to bring together experts from various scientific disciplines to assess and communicate the health of the estuary and coastal resources; identify areas of data availability and gaps, as well as research priorities; and provide science-based support to the other MBNEP committees in their decision-making processes. The committee representation is open to all scientists and government agency staff interested in monitoring, assessing, and communicating ecosystem health. (CCMP, p. 141)

Given the vital involvement of the SAC with the work needed to produce the State of Alabama's Estuaries and Coast, launch, and complete the Western Shoreline Comprehensive Management Plan, and integrate the Comprehensive Mobile Bay Watershed Study into specific management actions, there is an opportunity to revitalize the make-up of the SAC through strategic recruitment of new or renewal of existing members on the committee. The Science in Residence professional/team will work with the SAC and Science Lead to refine the charge of the SAC and to actively recruit or reengage targeted expertise to the SAC to better advise the MBNEP and Management Conference.

Percentage of Effort: This contract will be for a one-year term with an option to renew for an additional year.

Expectations of professional/team: It is expected the professional/team will be familiar with coastal Alabama and its estuaries and be willing to focus on the scientific needs of the Program. MBNEP anticipates candidates will include but not be limited to environmental service firms, post-doctoral candidates, scientists in transition, and scientists who have recently retired.

Procurement Process: This RFQ will be widely distributed through email, posted on our website, and promoted through social media.

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: Bethany Hudson, bhudson@mobilebaynep.com 251-431-6409.

Proposed Timeline:

Solicitation Issue/Advertising Date	May 5, 2023
Submission Deadline	June 1, 2023
Proposal Review and Shortlist Notification	June 7, 2023
Interviews	Week of June 12, 2023
Contract Start	July 1, 2023

Statement Contents

The Statement of Qualifications should be no more than **seven 8.5” X 11” single-sided pages, Times New Roman 11-point font (not including the cover letter)**. The proposal will include **experience and background, levels of participation, and conceptual approach for providing services**, and should be divided by section. All Statements shall be submitted in **electronic format** as a PDF and emailed to tengland@mobilebaynep.com and rswann@mobilebaynep.com with subject title, “ Response to MBNEP Science in Residence Request”.

Selection of Science in Residence Professional/Team

Statements will be reviewed by a Proposal Review Committee composed of representatives of the MBNEP and two members of the MBNEP Science Advisory Committee. Top candidate(s) will be asked to provide a presentation (20-30 minutes) with questions and answers. These “webinar” style interviews will be open to all SAC members. The review team will make final recommendations to the Director.

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. **Respondents** short-listed for interviews will include those who submit Statements initially judged by the Review Committee to be reasonable. Short-listed **Respondents** selected for interview shall be notified of the time and date and type of virtual meeting to be used presentations. Selection of a Professional/Team will be based on the quality, clarity, and thoughtfulness of the submitted Statement and its compatibility with the RFQ’s stated objectives, statements of intent, and submission.

The MBNEP reserves the right to accept, reject, and/or interview any or all qualified **Respondents**. 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 were not selected. The MBNEP will not share information from Statements made by other **Respondents**.

Supplemental Materials to this RFQ

Additional resources are available on the MBNEP’s website: <http://www.mobilebaynep.com/library> .

Disclaimer

This RFQ is conducted under applicable provisions of *2006 Alabama Code – Section 41-16-72 - Procurement of professional services*. 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 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.

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,, 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, local municipalities, 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 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.

MBNEP reserves the right to reject all proposals, negotiate further with any entity submitting proposals, or seek additional proposals. Selection is estimated to occur on or before **Monday, June 26, 2023**.

The selected Respondent will be required to register with www.sam.gov to confirm debarment/suspension status as applicable.

Non-Discrimination. The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, age, gender, pregnancy, national origin, genetic information, veteran status, or disability in its hiring or employment practices nor in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities.

Open Trade. By submitting a proposal, the Submitter represents that he/she and the business entity he/she represents is not currently engaged in the boycott of a person or entity based in or doing business with a jurisdiction with whom the State of Alabama can enjoy open trade, as defined in Act 2016-312.

Non-Commitment of Funds. Any contract related to this proposed project is subject to the availability of funds and/or the needs of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and therefore the MBNEP, at its discretion, may or may not issue a final contract as a result of this RFQ. Further, even in the event an initial selection is made by the MBNEP, no selection is final until full execution of a written agreement detailing an agreed upon scope of work. If the MBNEP deems, at its sole discretion, that a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached in accordance with an initial selection; the MBNEP reserves the right to proceed with efforts to make another selection based upon proposals submitted pursuant to this RFQ.

Open Records Act. All responses received will be subject to the Alabama Open Records Act, Ala. Code § 36-12-40, (1975), as amended, and may be subject to public disclosure upon request.