

## **Notice for Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Eight Mile Creek Watershed Management Planning Mobile County, Alabama**

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program seeks a qualified environmental or natural resource planning, engineering, or other similar firm to prepare an update to the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (WMP) for the Eight Mile Creek Watershed (HUC 031602040304), in Mobile County, Alabama. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process will be used to select a firm that can develop such a conceptual engineering master plan based on new and available data. Statements of Qualifications (Statements) must be sent via email to Christian Miller [cmiller@mobilebaynep.com](mailto:cmiller@mobilebaynep.com) and received no later than **3:00 p.m. CST, Thursday, June 1, 2023.**

### **Summary of Offering**

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) is currently implementing a comprehensive watershed management approach for protecting Alabama's estuaries and coast. With funding secured through the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the U.S. EPA through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law MBNEP intent is to develop a WMP for the Eightmile Creek watershed. MBNEP has partnered with constituents to develop these WMPs throughout Mobile and Baldwin counties. These Plans will chart a conceptual course for improving or protecting the things people value most about living along the Alabama coast, including:

- **Water Quality** – The coastal community continues to desire water that is drinkable, swimmable, and able to support aquatic and marine life.
- **Fish and Wildlife** – Fishery resources are valued as an industry, a primary recreational pastime, and a staple of the diets of residents and visitors.
- **Environmental Health and Resilience** – The coastal community relies upon coordinated actions to reduce vulnerability to and recover from the range of hazards we face, natural and otherwise.
- **Access** – Having access to coastal waters and natural resources is something about which people care deeply.
- **Heritage and Culture** – Preserving heritage and culture is important due to concerns that the bountiful waters that provided such pleasure through our lifetimes will not be available to our grandchildren.
- **Beaches and Shorelines** – They provide critical edge habitat to aquatic and terrestrial animals and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

In addition to the six values identified above, these Plans 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 several, if not each, of the six identified values.

MBNEP's watershed planning process also conforms to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendment (CZARA) Section 6217 (g) Management Measures. As the State lead on water quality, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management's (ADEM's) Alabama Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (ACNPCP) must conform to Section 6217(g) requirements to be compliant for funding under Section 306 of the Coastal Zone Management Act and Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. These 6217 (g) requirements include geographic scope of the program; the pollutant sources to be addressed; the types of management measures used; the establishment of critical areas; and technical assistance, public participation, and administrative coordination.

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.

An RFQ, instead of a more traditional request for proposals (RFP), process is being used to select a Planner, in recognition of the need for sustained collaboration between the selected **Respondent**, municipal and county officials, local constituents, and the MBNEP to successfully achieve the wide-range of planning needs described herein. Implementation funding is not currently identified in local, state, or federal budgets or from other sources. However, the Respondent should demonstrate its ability to produce conceptual plans for restoration projects identified in WMPs in the event funding is secured during the planning process.

**EPA's Nine Key Elements:** (<http://www.mobilebaynep.com/images/uploads/library/9elements-WtrshdPlan-EpaHndbk.pdf>)

Respondents 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 key elements (listed parenthetically) of watershed planning:

- Build partnerships, including identification of key constituents 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 and success, monitoring prescription, information/education programs, and identification of technical and financial assistance needed to implement plan (4-9).

## **Background of Existing Eight Mile Creek Watershed Management Plan (WMP), Goals, and Other Considerations for the WMP Update**

The Eight Mile Creek Watershed Management Plan (WMP), which was completed in 2011 [https://www.mobilebaynep.com/assets/pdf/Eight-Mile\\_Creek\\_Watershed\\_Plan\\_final.pdf](https://www.mobilebaynep.com/assets/pdf/Eight-Mile_Creek_Watershed_Plan_final.pdf), characterized the current conditions in the Watershed and recommended actions focused on improving water quality, with the main pollutant of concern being pathogenic bacteria primarily associated with failing wastewater infrastructure.

In addition to the WMP several studies have been conducted throughout the Watershed that will provide useful information for the development of the WMP Update.

- A [source assessment for the Watershed](#) was completed in 2008 to collect, assimilate, and compile information about potential pollutant-loading sources and infrastructure located in the Watershed and discharging to impaired water bodies.
- A [model was developed in 2013 to identify flood generating areas in the Watershed](#) and potential impacts associated with land conversion.
- [Comprehensive infrared mapping of the Watershed](#) was completed in 2014 to identify areas with concentrations of failing septic systems.

The primary goal of the WMP Update is to produce a supplement to the 2011 WMP that will serve as a revised guide for stormwater management and implementation of recommended WMP management measures within the Eight Mile Creek Watershed for the upcoming decade. To accomplish this goal, information related to WMP implementation activities since 2011 will be reviewed (restoration and stormwater management projects, monitoring and assessment data, changes in local ordinances and regulations, community involvement, etc.). Additional information pertaining to various watershed characteristics will be acquired as needed to update pertinent information in the 2011 WMP. It is intended that the WMP update include a review of the goals and objectives of the original WMP and quantify which recommendations have been successfully implemented. However, the update should not only document the successes, but also assess limitations and describe associated challenges and lessons learned.

It is envisioned that the WMP Update will be a new, separate document that supplements the original Eight Mile Creek WMP (but does not replace it). That is, applicable information in the original WMP that has not materially changed may be referenced but will not need to be repeated in the Update/Supplement document. The recommended management measures need to be re-thought and revised as appropriate. This will be based on an evaluation of management measure successes, as well as challenges and lessons learned. The revised management measures for the WMP Update/Supplement should be developed with community engagement and input.

The Eight Mile Creek WMP Update should also include new components that have since become standard practice in the development of contemporary WMPs including:

- A climate vulnerability assessment of critical infrastructure and habitats within the Watershed.
- A comprehensive assessment of recreational access throughout the Watershed and recommendations for additional access opportunities.
- An assessment of historically and culturally significant resources.

## **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: Christian Miller, [cmiller@mobilebaynep.com](mailto:cmiller@mobilebaynep.com) 251-459-8871.

### **Proposed Timeline:**

Solicitation Issue/Advertising Date	Wednesday, May 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2023
Statement Receipt Closing Date	Thursday, June 1 <sup>st</sup>
Shortlist Notification	Friday, June 9 <sup>th</sup>
Shortlist Interviews	Thursday, June 15 <sup>th</sup>
Award Exclusive Negotiating Right	Friday, June 16 <sup>th</sup>

## **Statement Contents**

The Statement of Qualifications should be no more than **ten 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/level of participation)**, and should be divided by section, with Table of Contents (**cover pages and table of contents do not count against the 10-page limit**). All Statements shall be submitted in **electronic format** as a PDF. PDFs should be emailed to [cmiller@mobilebaynep.com](mailto:cmiller@mobilebaynep.com)

Statements submitted in response to this RFQ shall include a complete response to the requirements in the order presented below. Statements should provide 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 that acknowledges receipt of 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**, and include the following:

- 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 project 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 a statement asserting 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, that it shall not become so during the term of the agreement if selected; that the proposing **Respondent** will negotiate in good faith with the MBNEP, and 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 for engaging both partners and area constituents to create a feasible WMP and conceptual implementation strategy that advances the intent of this RFQ. In addition, the **Respondent** shall include a project schedule of major planning milestones.

Development of a comprehensive watershed plan is currently ongoing in the adjacent [Western Delta Watershed](#) and has engaged constituents in communities located in the Eight Mile Creek Watershed. The **Respondent** should provide a strategy for complementing this existing effort in a manner that avoids confusion and duplication of efforts to the maximum extent practicable.

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

### *C. Experience and Background*

Given the unique nature of the Project and its importance to local constituents, 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 stormwater 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/green infrastructure concepts, climate adaptation, cultural preservation, and public access into implementation activities.
- Provide details of any experience engaging diverse communities of constituents in projects that incorporated concepts of climate change, sea level rise, community resilience, and adaptation planning.
- Describe key Project Team members' involvement in previous 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 Prichard/Mobile area and surrounding communities in Mobile County, AL.
- Relate how past projects have successfully engaged diverse communities of constituents and created 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 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 constituents. 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 thoughtfulness 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 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'** 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, when necessary, to supplement existing water quality, ecosystem, cultural, and demographic data.
3. Strategy for using available watershed data and 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 constituents to achieve project goals, including strategies for addressing concepts related to community resilience and adaptation planning.
5. Strategy for identifying implementation activities to support the six things people value, Section 6217 (g) management measures, 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 improving habitat and water quality.
6. Innovative approaches for long-term financing, including strategies for partnering/leveraging resources and cost/benefit analyses for best management practices.
7. Innovative approaches for driving regulatory change.
8. Strategy for monitoring system changes effected by management measures and generating measurable results that incorporates a meaningful volunteer monitoring program.
9. Approach for promoting completed WMP and engaging locally-elected and State officials in adopting plan recommendations.
10. Strategy for complimenting the ongoing watershed planning process in the Western Delta Watershed.
11. 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, community resilience and adaptation, 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. Provision of organizational chart of key Project Team members that clearly delineates roles/responsibilities, lines of communication, and decision-making hierarchy.

**Short List Consideration**

The MBNEP reserves the right to accept, reject, and/or interview any or all qualified **Respondents** and may select a limited number of **Respondents** for interviews. **Respondents** short-listed for interviews will include those who submit Statements initially judged by the Evaluation Committee to be reasonable. Short-listed **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 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> and <http://www.mobilebaynep.com/watersheds/eight-mile-creek-watershed>

**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](http://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.