

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System**

Habitat Enhancement by Youth Crews

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 15.676
Youth Engagement, Education, and Employment Programs

Notice of Funding Availability and Application Instructions

I. Single Source Information

This is a Notice of Intent to award a Single Source Cooperative Agreement to Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa for the purpose of restoring and managing native habitat on federal lands, and areas of interest in support of the USFWS youth program located throughout the states of Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming.

The tasks to be performed under this agreement are as follows: the recipient intends to provide youth crews to restore both native prairies, wetland, riparian, and forest habitat; in addition to other stewardship services such as invasive species removal, hazardous fuel reduction, fence line removal, seed collection, tree cutting and/or planting, conducting prescribed burns, habitat mapping and installation of fencing and gates to provide for and direct public access. These actions will help conserve and protect native plants and wildlife for not only their benefit, but also for the public good derived from such conservation efforts. Through the activities provided through this Cooperative Agreement, the Service will be better able to manage grassland, wetland, riparian and forest habitat. Many of these activities will be projects completed by working side-by-side with Service staff in the field.

This Single Source Award is being awarded in accordance with Department of the Interior Policy 505 DM 2.14 B Iowa under justifications 1 & 4 which allows for award without competition to an applicant. The Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization which has youth crews in place specifically for working on public lands in remote locations and a successful track record of completing trail improvements, invasive species management, herbicide application, erosion control, fence construction and/or removal, hazardous fuel reduction, seed collection, among others. The Corps' area of work includes Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming, which covers a large number of remote Service field stations in the Mountain-Prairie Region.

II. Award Information

For the period of March 30, 2015 through March 30, 2019, the recipient and the Service agree to cooperatively provide the personnel, materials services, facilities and funds needed to accomplish the purposes of this funding opportunity. The Service anticipates

awarding one recipient and obligating approximately \$2,000,000 over the five-year period via individual agreements ranging from \$2,000 to \$80,000. Each agreement issued under this Funding Opportunity will include the recipient's proposal and budget for the identified Statement of work project. Each agreement written under this Funding Opportunity shall be completed on or before March 30, 2019. The standard reimbursement rate will be the recipient's established crew member hourly rate, plus Service-authorized travel expenses. This program uses cooperative agreements as the primary assistance instrument.

The recipient will:

1. Provide appropriate transportation and an appropriately-sized youth crew ages 15-18 with adult crew leaders (typically 6-8 persons), or young adult crew ages 18-25 (typically 4-6 persons) 10 hours per day, four days per week (unless otherwise specified in the Statement of work) up to 12 days in a row to complete each identified project, as outlined in the applicable Statement of work. Projects may include, but are not limited to, restore both native prairies, wetland, riparian, and forest habitat; in addition to other stewardship services such as invasive species removal, hazardous fuel reduction, fence line removal, seed collection, tree cutting and/or planting, conducting prescribed burns, waterfowl banding, habitat mapping and installation of fencing and gates to provide for and direct public access.
2. Provide equipment and supplies needed by each crew to adequately perform the identified task, including, but not limited to, chainsaws, brush saws, handheld chemical applicators, as well as all federally-required safety and personal protective equipment.
3. Conduct good stewardship practices for the purpose of controlling invasive species (e.g. Russian olive, saltcedar, leafy spurge, houndstongue, phragmites, etc.) to assist with the restoration of native prairie, wetland, riparian, forest and oak savanna habitat. This may include necessary chemical spraying.
4. Remove fence-lines and associated trees and shrubs to improve native grasslands and cool season pastures for grassland birds, rare and protected species and other native wildlife species. This may include necessary chemical spraying.
5. As mutually agreed to by both parties, the recipients will improve native prairie, wetland, riparian, and forest habitat project sites for at-risk species by use of methods such as woody plant control, prescribed burning, tree shearing, land clearing, seed harvest, weed control, timber stand improvement, tree planting, native grass and forb species planting and other approved management practices, all while providing youth crew members with developmental guidance and job skills.
6. Install fencing and/or gates to specifications provided by the Service in order to limit vehicle trespass on native habitats.

The Service will:

1. Provide maps and technical expertise, or specialized instruction in the use of equipment for the removal of invasive species. Provide instruction and training on the

identification of invasive species, including reasons for control and appropriate timing and methods of control techniques.

2. As needed, provide chemicals for spot treatment of invasive species.
3. Provide equipment and vehicle storage location for the recipient's crew during the work period.
4. Provide instruction and training on the proper restoration of native prairie, wetland, riparian, and forest habitat.
5. Work alongside recipient crews to identify and properly harvest various native prairie grass and forb species.
6. Provide direction and project locations to maximize grassland bird benefits derived from invasive species control and tree removal through the creation of large blocks of grassland. As needed and available, provide GIS analysis of project sites to maximize grassland blocks.
7. Complete neighbor contacts and discussions to coordinate removal of trees and invasive species on common fence lines. When needed, in partnership with the recipient, provide operator and equipment to work with fence line removal projects.
8. Provide instruction and training on riparian restoration techniques and trout management.
9. Provide locations and specifications for the installation of fencings and/or gates; and complete necessary permits and "utility locate" calls. When needed, provide operator and equipment to recipient to complete fencing and/or gate projects.

Total Amount of Award: \$2,000,000.00

Total Awards: Multiple over 5 years

Floor Amount: \$100,000.00

Ceiling Amount: \$80,000.00

III. Basic Eligibility Requirements

Cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not required.

IV. Agency Contacts

For more information on this assistance opportunity, contact Amy Thornburg at amy_thornburg@fws.gov, (303) 236-4345.