Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Outreach of Interest (OOI) Announcement
INSTRUCTIONS

Wildlife Habitat Fencing

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Award Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (FS)

Outreach of Interest Announcement Title: Wildlife Habitat Fencing

Opportunity/Announcement Number: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-01

Assistance Listing Number: 10.699 Partnership Agreement Outreach

Instrument Type: Other (Non-Funded)

Key Points

- OOI response deadline: **February 7, 2025; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)**.
- USDA Forest Service will send an auto-response upon receipt of your package submission.
- USDA Forest Service will send each applicant a follow-up message within one month of package receipt.
- Contact us: opega@usda.gov.

✓ **Please ensure that when you complete your forms for this proposal (SF-424, Narrative Statement…etc.) that you "Save As" and give your file a new name. DO NOT "Print to PDF". Once you have saved your forms under a new name, you will upload those forms into the attachment document.**

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I. Outreach of Interest Overview

A. Objective

This outreach of interest (OOI) functions as an outreach mechanism to cultivate relationships and connect with potential partners. This OOI is intended to solicit responses to explore future projects meeting the needs and interests of potential partners through partnership agreements within legislative authority with USDA Forest Service.

USDA Forest Service would like to increase capacity to improve wildlife habitat through removal, modification and or addition of wildlife friendly fence by engaging partnerships from local communities who have a vested interest in management outcomes. This OOI seeks to increase their representation -including from diverse and underserved backgrounds. New partnerships will foster co-stewardship between the USDA Forest Service through better representation of the public the agency serves, and with a shared commitment to wildlife conservation on USDA Forest Service lands.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you your ideas/projects/programs and potential partnership opportunities. USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering a strong, collaborative partnership that benefits our fisheries and wildlife resources, and their habitats. Collaborative efforts are vital to wildlife conservation.

B. Funding

This OOI is non-funded and non-competitive. The intent of this OOI is to gauge your interest, feedback and/or your proposed projects ideas and concepts.

II. Agency Overview

A. Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service delivers world-class science, technology, and land management to sustain the Nation's forests and grasslands in collaboration with communities and our partners. USDA Forest Service manages 193 million acres of land, including 154 national forests, 20 national grasslands, 1 national tallgrass prairie, 7 research stations, and 81 experimental forests and ranges, as well as other special areas, in support of its' mission "to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

As the lead federal agency in natural resource conservation, USDA Forest Service provides leadership in the protection, management, and use of the nation's forest, rangeland, and aquatic ecosystems. Through implementation of land and resource management plans, the agency ensures sustainable ecosystems by restoring and maintaining species diversity and ecological productivity that helps provide recreation, water, timber, minerals, fish, wildlife, wilderness, and aesthetic values for current and future generations of people. For FY 2024, the goals of USDA Forest Service are to: 1) Sustain our Nation's Forests and Grasslands Working Environment; 2) Deliver Benefits to the Public; 3) Apply Knowledge Globally; 4) Excel as a High-Performing Agency. The Forest Service's National Priorities are: 1) Providing Economic Relief; 2) Tackling Climate Change; 3) Advancing Racial Equity; 4) Improving Our Workforce and Work Environment and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." As a values-based, purpose driven and relationship-focused

organization, USDA Forest Service emphasizes working in collaboration with communities and our partners; providing access to resources and experiences that promote economic, ecological, and social vitality; connecting people to the land and one another; and delivering world-class science, technology, and land management. USDA Forest Service believes in service — to each other and the planet; the interdependency of people and nature; that conservation means we protect, preserve, and restore public lands for the people and enjoyment; that diversity is key—people and cultures, experiences, and ecosystems; and safety underpins everything we do.

B. Partnership Agreements with the USDA Forest Service

Partnership agreements are entered into in support of USDA Forest Service mission. The USDA Forest Service may approach or be approached by a potential partner to enter into a partnership agreement that results in a joint accomplishment of work benefiting both organizations. The principal purpose of partner agreements is the creation of partnerships in support of projects of mutual interest and mutual benefit to each party. Mutual interest exists when both parties benefit in the same qualitative way from the objectives of the agreement. If one party independently has an interest in a project that is shared by the other party, and both parties pool resources to obtain the result of the project, mutual interest exists. Most of FS authorities requires a mutual interest agreement.

Partnership agreements are considered non-assistance agreements and are not considered grants or cooperative agreements as those terms are used in the Federal Grants and Cooperative Agreements, 31U.S.C. 6301 et seq. USDA Forest Service engages partnership work through a range of legislative authorities (see Section IV, Legislative Authorities).

Award Procedures

The Forest Service has general authority to negotiate and enter into different types of partnership arrangements, including but not limited to Stand-Alone Agreements, or Master Agreements with tiered Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs) or a combination thereof. Partnership agreements and their supporting documentation are both negotiated and drafted in collaboration with prospective partners prior to entering into a funding arrangement. Discussions cover at a minimum, the appropriate statutory authority; a description of the project, including methodology and technical specifications; contributions and the responsibilities of the parties; financial plan; the period of performance; monitoring and accomplishments reporting. Regardless of who initiates discussions, all elements of a project are subject to negotiation. Any party may terminate the agreement at any time.
Except for provisions necessary for legal compliance, all elements of a partnership agreement are subject to negotiation and modification. Both parties are expected to negotiate, resolve, and document differences in cost and/or proposed work in writing. None of the parties should perform work outside the scope of the existing instrument or in excess of the funding prior to the execution of a formal modification.

Project Length

Awards under this announcement are typically 1 to 5 years in length. Projects of greater complexity may be awarded for a longer period, not to exceed 5 years.

Cost Share Match Requirements and Match Reductions or Waivers

For partnership agreements, the partner's contribution should not be less than 20 percent of

the total project cost, unless allowable under a reduction or waiver (see below). The matching amount should be consistent and commensurate with the project scope, size, and/or benefits received. The partner may satisfy the matching requirement by providing cash, real or personal property, services, and/or in-kind contributions, such as volunteer labor. Cash and third-party in-kind matches must consist of eligible costs.

Cash match is from the applicant's budget, such as personnel salary, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies, or cash provided by another party. Source of cash match cannot be derived from another Federal award. Cash donated or provided to a cooperator, specifically for that project is an in-kind contribution.

In-Kind match is a non-cash contribution of value. A non-Federal entity's in-kind match must meet the following criteria:

- Are verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records;
- Are not included as contributions for any other Federal award;
- Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives;
- Are not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost-sharing requirements of other Federal programs;
- Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and
- Conform to the Forest Service handbook (FSH1509.11), manual (1580) and/or other applicable federal laws and regulations.

Supplemental Guidance for Match Waivers and Match Reduction: The Forest Service may reduce or waive the minimum 20 percent cooperator match requirement for a project that serves an underserved/disadvantaged community or is a tribal sovereign.

Indirect Cost

Indirect costs are approved for reimbursement or as a cost-share requirement and have an effective period applicable to the term of master and supplemental agreements. Expenses that are necessary for the operation of an organization, but not specifically identified with or traceable to a specific program or output, that is, not a direct cost but rather a cost distributed across many programs or outputs. Often referred to as "overhead," or in the Forest Service as "burden," indirect costs are incurred as part of general management and administrative support of an organization, and may include office and personnel expenses, computers, and utilities.

III. Initiative Overview and OOI Intent

A. Program Overview

Wildlife habitat improvement for terrestrial and aquatic species is a key focus area for the USDA Forest Service. One way this is accomplished is through the addition or removal of fences. Fences can be ecologically beneficial or detrimental depending on site specific conditions, design, project objectives, and affected species. For example, small scale exclosures may be designed to protect sensitive aquatic species or pollinator habitat from ungulate, recreational or other impacts, while removing old livestock fencing that's no longer in use, can increase connectivity for wide ranging species. Fences that are improperly placed or poorly constructed without current wildlife friendly specifications in mind can also lead to fragmented wildlife

populations and habitat, as well as direct mortality to species moving across the landscape.

This project supports the USDA Forest Service's 2012 Planning Rule which emphasizes an "all lands" approach to managing ecosystems that transcends land ownership boundaries. Cooperation and collaboration among the USDA Forest Service, other agencies, tribes, and private landowners can help to enhance wildlife connectivity and ecologically resilient habitat. It also supports the USDA Forest Service's National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change and Secretarial Order 3362 "to improve habitat quality of big game migration corridors and winter range on lands administered by the Department of the Interior in the 11 western states." The order is intended to improve collaboration with state fish and wildlife agencies and private landowners to identify, conserve, and restore priority winter range and migration corridors. Current workload for wildlife habitat related fencing projects exceeds capacity. The project would engage community members and cultivate a vested interest in long term success and shared ownership in final outcomes; provide opportunities for job training, personal development, conservation service, and natural resource appreciation while cultivating the next generation of natural resource stewards.

B. Statement of Work

The purpose of partnerships would be to conserve and enhance wildlife habitat (including terrestrial and aquatic habitat) through fence removal, maintenance and or upgrades and replacements. Selection of areas would be of mutual interest to local USDA Forest Service units and partners, but ultimate site selection and approved design would be the responsibility of the agency. The USDA Forest Service would provide project oversight and facilitate cross program coordination with other program areas as needed, such as watersheds, botany, and rangeland management.

The objectives for potential projects would include:

- Installing Protective fencing (enclosures/exclosures) to protect and restore natural waterbodies (e.g., vernal pools, springs, wetlands etc.) and or other areas such as those undergoing active revegetation or plantings to alleviate negative impacts from browsing, herbivory, invasive species, and trampling.
- Replacement and or modification of existing fences to most current wildlife friendly design specifications. For example, smooth bottom wire, addition of "goat bars "or replacement of mesh fencing.
- Installation and/or removal of Right of way/fencing setbacks (removal and or installation)- installation and/or removal.
- Removal and disposal of old fencing that is no longer needed (i.e., legacy fencing).

Resources:

Secretarial Order 3362
2012 Planning Rule
Forest Service Reforestation Plan Overview
Confronting the Wildfire Crisis | US Forest Service (usda.gov)
Achieving our mission through keystone agreements | US Forest Service (usda.gov)
Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: A USDA Forest Service Action Plan
Forest Service Equity Action Plan (usda.gov)
Climate Adaptation Plan

Forest Service Climate Risk Viewer (arcgis.com)
Catalyst Fund - Network for Landscape Conservation
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (nfwf.org)
The Partnerships | National Fish Habitat Partnership

C. Project Priorities

Priority will be given to projects that are designed to support USDA Forest Service in the following areas:

- Improve water quality and quantity and integrity for wildlife;
- Support the conservation of indigenous species;
- Restore resilient landscapes; nurture thriving communities;
- Enhance sustainable recreation opportunities;
- Build diversity and inclusion; and identify workforce development opportunities in conservation stewardship and natural and cultural resources;
- Support, benefit, or engage communities that are historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality (pursuant to Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).
- Informs fuels reduction activities under the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and revegetation under the Reforestation Act.
- Informs or complements ongoing habitat enhancement work including projects supporting migratory joint ventures, grassland restoration, bat conservation and nonnative invasive species removal.
- Benefits special status species and or culturally significant species.

IV. Legislative Authorities

USDA Forest Service engages partnership work through a range of Legislative Authorities.

- Cooperative Funds and Deposits Act of 1978, Public Law 94-148 as amended. 16 USC 565a-1
- Wyden Amendment (Public Law 105-277, Section 323 as amended by Public Law 109-54, Section 434, and permanently authorized by Public Law 111-11, Section 3001)
- Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 1992, Public Law 102-154
- Public Land Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act, Public Law 109-154, 16 U.S.C. 1701 638 Tribal Forestry Protection Act, Title 2018 Farm Bill P.L. 115-334, Section 8703, 25 U.S.C. 3115.
- Stewardship End Result Contracting, Public Law 108-148 §604. 16 USC 6591c.
- Good Neighbor Authority: Agricultural Act of 2014, Pub. L. 113-79, section 8206 as amended, 16 USC 2113a
- Agriculture Conservation Experienced Service (ACES) Program, 2014 Farm Bill, Public Law 113-79, Section 8302
- Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986, Public Law 96-480, 15 U.S.C. 3710a
- National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, Public Law 95-113, 7 US Code 3318 and 3319a
- The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 (Pittman- Robertson; 16 U.S.C. §§669 et seq.).
- North American Wetlands Conservation /reauthorization Act of 2006.

- The Duck Stamp Act, 1934, chapter 71, 48 Stat. 451, subchapter IV (§718 et seq.)
- Sikes Act, 1960 (16 USC 670a-670o, 74 Stat. 1052).
- Endangered Species Act of 1973: 16 U.S.C. §§1531-1544
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act: 16 U.S.C. 668 - 668d
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. § 703-711 and Executive Order 13186 (Responsibilities of Federal Agencies To Protect Migratory Birds)
- Fish And Wildlife Coordination Act: 16 USC 661-666c

V. How to Respond

A. Eligible Responders

Eligible applicants include for profit; non-profits; institutions of higher education; federal, state, local, and Native American tribal governments; foreign governments and organizations and special purpose districts (public utility districts, fire districts, conservation districts, school districts, and ports).

B. Content and Grants.gov Submission

- Submit SF 424, Narrative Statement form, and the attachment form through grants.gov or the opega@usda.gov Inbox. Submissions should be in .pdf or .doc format. **Section VI: Forms** section of this document includes forms for your use. For other feedback, use the grants.gov "attachments" form.
- Respond by: **February 7, 2025; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)**.
- Grants.gov submission is **preferred**. A grants.gov applicant account is required for submitting interest through grants gov Home | Grants.gov. See Grants.gov organization registration page for registration guidance.

Note: After registering, please choose "subscribe" in grants.gov. By subscribing to OOI Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-01 you will be notified of any updates and notifications.

Grants.gov provides customer support 24/7 via toll-free number **1-800-518-4726** and email at support@grants.gov. In addition, grants.gov has video tutorials available.

- Once registered in Grants.gov search for OOI Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-01 United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

  Note: System for Award Management (SAM) registration is required to submit any application across the federal government through grants.gov. SAM registration is a lengthy process. If you are not currently registered in SAM, we strongly recommend registration.

- No hardcopy applications will be accepted.
- For questions related to OOI opportunity: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-01, please contact USDA Forest Service: opega@usda.gov.

C. System for Award Management (SAM) Registration

SAM.gov registration is required for submitting responses in SAM.gov (SAM.gov | Home), registration is free. The approval process for a new or renewal SAM registration can take several months. If you are awaiting SAM registration and cannot submit through grants.gov, please send

your application to: opega@usda.gov.

VI. OOI Announcement

USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering strong, collaborative partnerships benefitting the environment and local communities These collaborations are vital for understanding habitat restoration and wildlife needs, establishing shared priorities, expanding capacity, and ensuring the growth of resilient and healthy forests. By working together, we all can maximize the impact on national forests and strengthen community connections that are grounded in place base conservation.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you the ideas/projects/program in your submittal and your feedback.

Submission: For submission procedures, please see Section **V: How to Respond.**

A. Forms

If you would like to provide interest or feedback, you can respond using the forms located within the Grants.gov website. In addition, direct links are provided below.

- SF-424 Form: Application for Federal Assistance (OMB 4040-0001)
- Attachments Form: "Attachments Form" (attach documents for submission into Grants.gov using this form)
- Narrative Statement Form: Home | Grants.gov. Search using the following opportunity number USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-01.
- Please ensure that when you complete your forms for this proposal that you **"Save As"** and give your file a new name. **DO NOT** "Print to PDF". Once you have saved your forms under a new name, you will upload those forms into the attachment document.

Note: If you receive an error when opening a form, it may indicate that you have either opened the PDF file with an incompatible version of Adobe PDF software or you have opened the PDF file with a browser that has a built-in PDF viewer that is not compatible with Grants.gov. Save the form on your computer and then open the most up-to-date Adobe PDF software and open the saved file on your computer.

If you do not have a compatible version of Adobe PDF software, please reference the steps below to download a compatible version.

1. Go to http://get.adobe.com/reader/otherversions/
2. Under STEP 1, select your operating system.
3. Under STEP 2, select your preferred language.
4. Under STEP 3, select the version of compatible software you want to download.
5. Under OPTIONAL OFFERS, you may check or uncheck these offers based on your preference.
6. Click on the DOWNLOAD NOW button to begin the download of the software.

VII. Response Notice Timeline

A. The agency will send an auto-response when response submissions have been received.

B. The agency will send a personalized follow-up message within one month of receiving responses to this OOI.

This is not a grant announcement. It is a non-funded, non-competitive outreach of interest (OOI) announcement to gauge applicants' interest in the Forest Service program of work. Responding to this OOI will not give an advantage to any organization or individual for any possible subsequent award action. Not responding to this OOI does not preclude participation in any future funding opportunity announcement, if any is issued.