

PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT

**US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC)**

**Title: Interior Least Tern Monitoring on the McClellan Kerr Arkansas River
Navigation System in the Little Rock Corps District.**

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: W81EWF-25-SOI-0006

Assistance Listing Number: 12.630

Date Issued: 25 June 2025

Key Dates: Phase I announcement will be open to receive statements of interest continuously until 1:00pm Central Time (CT), 25 July 2025, at which point all statements of interest must be received.

If invited to Phase II, full proposal applications will be due at 1:00pm Central Time (CT), 13 Aug 2025.

Estimated Award Ceiling: \$48,000 of Initial Funding for the first year

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$240,000.00 of Total Funding including options

Agency Contact: Phoebe Fuller (phoebe.v.fuller@usace.army.mil)

I. Program Description

A. Short Description of Funding Opportunity

ERDC seeks applications for Interior Least Tern Monitoring on the McClellan Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System in the Little Rock Corps District.

B. Background

Least terns (*Sternula antillarum*) are fish-eating birds that nest in a variety of open habitats on rivers and coasts (Thompson et al. 1997). The interior population of the Interior Least Tern (ILT) is defined as all Least Terns nesting >50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico on rivers of the Great Plains and in the Lower Mississippi Valley (USFWS 1985, 1990). Most individuals of this population nest on sandbars with little to no vegetation that are located on large rivers, primarily the Mississippi, Red, Arkansas, Canadian, Missouri, and Platte (Lott 2006).

ILT was listed as endangered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1985 due to concerns about breeding habitat loss and degradation associated with water resource development projects, which affect a large proportion of this population (USFWS 1985). Large multi-purpose dams, engineered navigation systems, bank stabilization projects, and wells or canals that remove water for irrigated agriculture affect ILT nesting habitat across much of their range (USFWS 1990). Many of the large dams and navigation systems in the range of ILT are operated by USACE (U. S. Army Corps of Engineers 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) as detailed in the incidental take statement of the 2016 PBO in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (USFWS 2016).

Historically, sandbar nesting habitat on many rivers throughout the range of ILT has been lost or strongly degraded due to channel responses to large dam placement or channelization for navigation (Friedman et al. 1998, Funk and Robinson 1974, Williams 1978, Stinnett et al. 1988, Tommelleri 1984, and Knoll 2006). In addition to this initial (and in some cases, ongoing) pulse of habitat loss during channel adjustment to large-scale river engineering, multi-purpose dam operations continue to have direct effects on ILT reproductive success (e.g., nest and chick mortality due to flooding) that are strongest directly below 8 large multi-purpose dams on the Arkansas, Red, Canadian, and Missouri Rivers (USFWS 2003, 2005a).

Habitat restoration efforts and monitoring has been ongoing on the Arkansas River since 2016 to present. Restoration efforts have included the use of dredge material to re-establish sandbars, removing vegetation from existing sandbars and collaborating with state and federal partners and shareholders to ensure that the species habitat needs are met.

In January 2021, the ILT was removed from the list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife species with assurances from the Corps of Engineers to U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, that habitat restoration efforts and monitoring will continue as laid out in the 2019 Southwestern Division Conservation Plan for the Interior Least Tern in Arkansas,

Canadian and Red River Basins; Part IV: pages 17-24.

For this project all efforts will be concentrated on the Arkansas River between Fort Smith and the Mississippi River. In addition to the Arkansas River, least terns have been documented nesting on rooftops within the Arkansas River Valley. These are flat rooftops, fully or partially covered with small river rock or pea gravel, at least superficially resembling riverine, island/sandbar nesting habitat of Least Terns (Forys and Borboen-Abrams 2006). These sites are also monitored with the appropriate permissions.

C. Program Description/Objective: (brief description of the anticipated work)

It was determined that traditional navigation and hydroelectric operations on the Arkansas River from Oklahoma to Arkansas has had detrimental effects on the ILT population. Once we understood how our actions were impacting the ILT bird population we needed to ascertain through research, how badly as well as exploring different conservation measures that would stabilize and support the remaining birds.

While the data suggest that the conservation efforts are working, time, consistent monitoring and reporting is necessary for certainty, which requires continued field work. This effort will involve conducting breeding season, nest monitoring and inventorying as well as habitat assessments of the interior least terns. The research will cover monitoring at least 12 river colony locations and 3-5 rooftop colonies within the Arkansas River Valley from downstream of Wilbur D. Mills Dam at river mile (RM) 10 to roughly RM 285 of the MKARNS in Arkansas.

- **Public Benefit:** Birds including the interior least terns are vital environmental indicators, telling us about the health of our ecosystems thus, conservation of the bird species and protection of their habitat improves biodiversity and ultimately the ecological health of the local watersheds in our communities. Determination of population status and trends for the species at local and regional levels, will more adequately reflect habitat and ecosystem quality than does simple presence or absence of bird species. These species are sensitive to changes in diverse habitats and can tell us about the impacts; both good and bad occurring in watersheds that encompasses the Arkansas River. A healthy watershed provides clean and increased volumes of water for recreation, supports thriving populations of wildlife valued by the public, and strengthens sensitive wildlife and plant species' ability to survive.

Other benefits will include the sharing of data through a variety of strategies and audiences including nonfederal entities to increase public awareness, knowledge and support for conservation and natural resources stewardship of the species habitat wherever they exist.

Project results/outputs will add to the scientific literature/knowledge base, with applicability and utility beyond the scope of the project study area and external to USACE.

D. Authorization: 10 USC 4001

E. Legal Requirements

Each Cooperative Agreement awarded under this announcement will be governed by 2 CFR 200,

“Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”, 2 CFR 1100 Subchapter D—Administrative Requirements Terms and Conditions for Cost-Type Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Nonprofit and Governmental Entities and the most current DoD research general terms and conditions located at <https://www.onr.navy.mil/work-with-us/manage-your-award/manage-grant-award/grants-terms-conditions>.

F. Program-Specific Requirements

The resulting agreement will be subject to the following:

1. The award recipient shall be solely responsible for obtaining any necessary licenses and permits, and for complying with any Federal, State, and municipal laws, codes, and regulations applicable to the performance of the work. The recipient will be expected to comply with all environmental regulations and obtain all necessary licenses and permits for the selected operational setting.
2. All use of vehicles in the performance of this agreement, whether manned or unmanned, shall be in accordance with applicable state, Federal, and local laws, executive orders, rules and regulations, USACE policy, and university policy regarding the use and operation of vehicles. This applies to both recipient(s) and any subrecipients.
3. See Appendix C to Part 1122—Terms and Conditions for NP Article III, “National Policy Requirements Concerning Live Organisms” for requirements regarding research involving human subjects and animals and the following program-specific requirements:
 - a. Prohibition of Human Subjects Research: You will not commence performance of research involving human subjects that is covered under 32 CFR Part 219 or that meets exemption criteria under 32 CFR 219.104, or expend funding on such effort, until and unless the conditions of either the following paragraph (1) or (2) have been met:
 - (1) You furnish to the ERDC liaison to the Human Research Protection Official (HRPO), with a copy to the Grants Officer, an assurance of compliance, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and associated research documents. You receive written notification from the Grants Officer that the HRPO has accepted the assurance as appropriate for the research under the agreement and also that the HRPO has reviewed the research and associated documents and accepted the IRB approval for compliance with the Department of Defense (DoD) component policies.
 - (2) You furnish to the ERDC liaison to the HRPO, with a copy to the Grants Officer, documentation as required by DoD R&D General Terms and Conditions, NP Article III, Section A.1.c., and receive written notification from the Grants Officer that the exemption is determined acceptable. The determination will include citation of the exemption category under 32 CFR 219.104 and associated study documents.
 - (3) The ERDC Liaison to the HRPO is:
Name: [To be Provided at Time of Award]

Phone: [To be Provided at Time of Award]

Email: [To be Provided at Time of Award]

- b. Prohibition of the Use of Animals: Notwithstanding any other terms and conditions contained in this award or incorporated by reference herein, the recipient is expressly forbidden to use or subcontract for the use of animals in any manner subject to Department of Defense Instruction 3216.01, Use of Animals in DoD Programs (20 March 2019) and Defense Health Agency-Multi-Service Regulation 6025.02, The Care and Use of Animals in DoD Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) or Training Programs (1 September 2022), without the express written approval of the Animal Research Compliance & Oversight Office (ARCOO), Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army Medical Command. Written authorization to begin research under applicable protocol(s) proposed for this award will be issued in the form of an approval letter from ARCOO to the recipient with a copy to the ERDC Grants Officer. Furthermore, modifications to already approved protocols require approval by ARCOO prior to implementation. For each fiscal year, the recipient must maintain, and upon request from ARCOO, submit animal usage information. The recipient must promptly inform ARCOO of adverse events regarding animals under applicable protocol(s) associated with this award. These requirements are defined in the approval letter from ARCOO. Noncompliance with any of these terms and conditions may result in withholding of funds and/or the termination of the award. Questions regarding ARCOO protocol review processes should be directed to ARCOO at the following:

Phone: [To be Provided at Time of Award]

Email: [To be Provided at Time of Award].

II. Federal Award Information

The following information applies to awards issued under this announcement:

- This is a new program.
- The Government anticipates 1 Federal award(s) from this announcement, but reserves the right to award more or less
- The total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this announcement is \$240,000
- The expected amount of funding for each award is approximately \$48,000
- The expected award structure is by **Year**: Year 1 = \$48,000; Year 2 = \$48,000; Year 3 = \$48,000; Year 4 = \$48,000, Year 5 = \$48,000.
- Award(s) from this announcement will be Cooperative Agreement(s)
- The anticipated period of performance is 5-years.
- Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards
- The government reserves the right to accept only portions of an application and to negotiate with potential awardees
- Government's substantial involvement includes: The Little Rock District anticipates it will provide substantial involvement through the life of the project by: (1) provide access

to study sites and participate in the development of study and sampling requirements; (2) participate in site visits as appropriate; (3) general close monitoring or operational involvement during performance period under the award. The SWL District will also participate in technical meetings and final report preparation. The District will also ensure distribution of data for public, other resource managers, as well as academic use.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

This opportunity is restricted to non-federal partners of the **Great Rivers** or **Gulf Coast** Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit (CESU).

Disclosures of current and pending support made in this application may render an applicant ineligible for funding. Prior to award and throughout the period of performance, ERDC may continue to request updated continuing and pending support information, which will be reviewed and may result in discontinuation of funding.

Religious organizations are entitled to compete on equal footing with secular organizations for Federal financial assistance as described in E.O. 13798, "Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty."

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

This action will be 100% funded by USACE.

C. Conflict of Interest

a) General Requirement for Disclosure

You and your organization must disclose any potential or actual scientific or nonscientific conflict of interest(s) to us. You must also disclose any potential or actual conflict(s) of interest for any identified sub recipient you include in your application. We may have to ask you more questions if we need more information.

At our discretion, we may ask you for a conflict-of-interest mitigation plan after you submit your application. Your plan is subject to our approval. Refer to 2 CFR §§ 200.112 and 200.318.

b) Scientific Conflict of Interest

Scientific collaborations on research and development projects are generally the result of close collaboration prior to the submission of applications for support. Accordingly, these collaborations should be considered when considering potential conflicts of interest. The potential conflict is mitigated by the disclosure of these collaborations, and the list of current and pending support you provide for

senior and key researchers. Therefore, you must include in your list of current and pending support all collaborators, even if they did not formally provide support.

D. Certifications, representations, and assurances

1. To apply for grants and other funding opportunities the applicant entity must have an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). Applications will not be accepted through Grants.gov or other methods unless the entity is registered in SAM. Registration in SAM now includes the acceptance of Certifications and Assurances. See <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/grantors/grantor-standard-language.html> for details on how to register in SAM, and Grants.gov
2. The Federal Assistance Certifications Report is an attestation that the entity will abide by the requirements of the various laws and regulations; therefore, as applicable, you are still required to submit any documentation, including the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if award value exceeds \$100,000.00), and, if applicable, informing DoD of unpaid delinquent tax liability or a felony conviction under any Federal law.
3. Certification Regarding Disclosure of Funding Sources. By checking "I Agree" on the SF 424 (R&R) block 17 you agree to abide by the following statement: "By signing this application, I certify the proposing entity is in compliance with Section 223(a) of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 which requires that: (a) the PI and other key personnel certify that the current and pending support provided on the proposal is current, accurate and complete; (B) agree to update such disclosure at the request of the agency prior to the award of support and at any subsequent time the agency determines appropriate during the term of the award; and (c) the PI and other key personnel have been made aware of the requirements under Section 223(a)(1) of this Act. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. code, Title 218, Section 1001)."

IV. Application and Submission Information (2 Phase Process)

A. Phase I: Submission of Statement of Interest (SOI)

1. Materials Requested for Statement of Interest/Qualifications:
 - a. Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to: **Phoebe Fuller** (phoebe.v.fuller@usace.army.mil) & **Stacy Thurman** (stacy.d.thurman@usace.army.mil) (Maximum length: 2 pages, single-spaced 12 pt. font).
 - i. Name, Organization and Contact Information
 - ii. Brief Statement of Qualifications (including):

- Biographical Sketch,
- Relevant past projects and clients with brief descriptions of these projects,
- Staff, faculty or students available to work on this project and their areas of expertise,
- Any brief description of capabilities to successfully complete the project you may wish to add (e.g. equipment, laboratory facilities, greenhouse facilities, field facilities, etc.).

Note: A proposed budget is NOT requested currently.

The administrative point of contact is Phoebe Fuller (phoebe.v.fuller@usace.army.mil) & Stacy Thurman (stacy.d.thurman@usace.army.mil).

2. ERDC will only accept SOIs submitted on or before 25 July 2025, 1:00pm Central Time (CT).

Based on a review of the Statements of Interest received, an investigator or investigators will be invited to move to Phase II which is to prepare a full study proposal. Statements will be evaluated based on the investigator's specific experience and capabilities in areas related to the study requirements.

B. **Phase II** (if invited): Submission of Full Application Package

1. Address to Request Application Package

The complete funding opportunity announcement, application forms, and instructions are available for download at Grants.gov.

The administrative point of contact is Phoebe Fuller (phoebe.v.fuller@usace.army.mil).

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

All mandatory forms and any applicable optional forms must be completed in accordance with the instructions on the forms and the additional instructions below.

a. **SF 424 R&R: Application for Federal Assistance**

- b. **Full Technical Proposal:** Discussion of the nature and scope of the research and technical approach. Additional information on prior work in this area, descriptions of available equipment, data and facilities, and resumes of personnel who will be participating in this effort should also be included. Specifically identify any anticipated requirement to use unmanned aircraft system(s).

Data Management Plan:

A data management plan is a document that describes which data generated

through the course of the proposed research will be shared and preserved, how it will be done, or explains why data sharing or preservation is not possible or scientifically appropriate, or why the costs of sharing or preservation are incommensurate with the value of doing so. See also: DoD Instruction 3200.12.

<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/issuances/dodi/>

Data management plans are generally 2 pages in length, and must include the following considerations:

- (1) The types of data, software, and other materials to be produced.
- (2) How the data will be acquired.
- (3) Time and location of data acquisition, if scientifically pertinent.
- (4) How the data will be processed.
- (5) The file formats and the naming conventions that will be used.
- (6) A description of the quality assurance and quality control measures during collection, analysis, and processing.
- (7) A description of dataset origin when existing data resources are used.
- (8) A description of the standards to be used for data and metadata format and content.
- (9) Appropriate timeframe for preservation.
- (10) The plan may consider the balance between the relative value of data preservation and other factors such as the associated cost and administrative burden. The plan will provide a justification for such decisions.
- (11) A statement that the data cannot be made available to the public when there are national security or controlled unclassified information concerns (e.g., “This data cannot be cleared for public release in accordance with the requirements in DoD Directive 5230.09.”)

When preparing the Data Management Plan, it must be numbered to coincide with the above criteria that shall be included.

- c. **Cost Proposal/Budget:** Clear, concise, and accurate cost proposals reflect the offeror’s financial plan for accomplishing the effort contained in the technical proposal. As part of its cost proposal, the offeror shall submit a full budget in sufficient detail so that a reasonableness determination can be made. A recommended template will be included in the invitation to Phase II. The SF 424 Research & Related Budget Form can be used as a guide but is required if the sub-recipient uses it. The cost breakdown should include the following, if applicable:

1. **Direct Labor:** Direct labor should be detailed by level of effort (i.e. numbers of hours, etc.) of each labor category and the applicable labor rate. The source of labor rates shall be identified and verified. If rates are estimated, please provide the historical based used and clearly identify all escalation applied to derive the proposed rates.
2. **Fringe Benefit Rates:** The source of fringe benefit rate shall be

identified and verified.

3. Travel: Travel costs must include a purpose and breakdown per trip to include destination, number of travelers, and duration.
4. Materials/Equipment: List all material/equipment items by type and kind with associated costs and advise if the costs are based on vendor quotes and/or engineering estimates; provide copies of vendor quotes and/or catalog pricing data.
5. Subrecipient costs: Submit all subrecipient proposals and analyses. Provide the method of selection used to determine the subrecipient.
6. Tuition: Provide details and verification for any tuition amounts proposed.
7. Indirect Costs: Currently the negotiated indirect rate for awards through the CESU is 17.5%.
8. Any other proposed costs: The source should be identified and verified.

d. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile

1. Biographical Sketch
2. Disclosure of Current and Pending Support:
 - i. A list of all current projects the individual is working on, in addition to any future support the individual has applied to receive, regardless of the source.
 - ii. Title and objectives of the other research projects.
 - iii. The percentage per year to be devoted to the other projects.
 - iv. The total amount of support the individual is receiving in connection to each of the other research projects or will receive if other applications are awarded.
 - v. Name and address of the agencies and/or other parties supporting the other research projects.
 - vi. Period of performance for the other research projects.

e. SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if award value exceeds \$100,000.00)

f. R&R Other Project Information

3. ERDC will only accept full application packages submitted on or before 13 August 2025, 1:00pm Central Time (CT).

4. Submission Instructions

Choose **ONE** of the following submission methods:

a. E-mail:

Format all documents to print on Letter (8 ½ x 11”) paper. E-mail proposal to phoebe.v.fuller@usace.army.mil.

b. Grants.gov: <https://www.grants.gov/>:

Applicants are not required to submit proposals through Grants.gov. However, if applications are submitted via the internet, applicants are responsible for ensuring that their Grants.gov proposal submission is received in its entirety.

All applicants choosing to use Grants.gov to submit proposals must be registered and have an account with Grants.gov. It may take up to three weeks to complete Grants.gov registration. For more information on registration, go to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>.

Organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and active System for Award Management (SAM) registration to apply for Federal financial assistance.

C. Application Withdrawal:

An applicant may withdraw an application at any time before award by written notice via email. Notice of withdrawal shall be sent to the agency point of contact identified in this announcement and are effective upon receipt.

D. Funding Restrictions

Per 2 CFR § 200.216, funds may not be used to procure telecommunications equipment or video surveillance services or equipment produced by entities identified therein.

Funds from an award may not be used to attain fee or profit.

V. Application Review Information

A. Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria, listed in descending order of importance:

- Technical merits of the proposed research and development; and
- Potential relationship of the proposed research and development to Department of Defense missions
- Any other criteria: Investigator’s specific experience and capabilities in areas related to the study requirements.

B. Review and Selection Process:

Each application will be reviewed based on the selection criteria above rather than against other applications submitted under this Announcement.

Based on the Peer or Scientific Review, proposals will be categorized as Selectable or Not

Selectable (see definitions below). The selection of the source for award will be based on the Peer or Scientific Review, as well as importance to agency programs and funding availability.

- i. Selectable: Proposals are recommended for acceptance if sufficient funding is available.
- ii. Not Selectable: Even if sufficient funding existed, the proposal should not be funded.

Note: The Government reserves the right to award some, all, or none of proposals. When the Government elects to award only a part of a proposal, the selected part may be categorized as Selectable, though the proposal as a whole may not merit such a categorization.

In addition to the technical/program review, the DoD performs a budget review and a risk review as directed by 2 CFR 200.206, including a review of the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS). Applicants may review information in FAPIIS and comment on any information entered into that system. Comments made by applicants will be taken into account in addition to other information in considering applicants’ integrity, business ethics, and record of performance.

VI. Federal Award Administration Information

The notification e-mail regarding a selection is not authorization to commit or expend DoD funds. A DoD grants officer is the only person authorized to obligate and approve the use of federal funds. This authorization is in the form of a signed Notice of Award. Applicants whose applications are recommended will be contacted by a DoD grants officer to discuss any additional information required for award. This may include representations and certifications, revised budgets or budget explanations, or other information as applicable to the proposed award. The award start date will be determined at this time.

VII. Reporting Requirements

The terms and conditions of the award will provide the specifics on how to submit the reports and any required sections for those reports.

The following is required in accordance with 2 CFR 200.328 (Financial Reporting) and 2 CFR 200.329 (Program Performance):

Report	Requirements/Form	Frequency	Means of Submission
ERDC Progress Report	Progress during the period covered by the corresponding SF 270	Upon SF-270 submission	E-mail
Research Performance Progress Reports (Interim and Final)	OMB 0690-0032	Annually	E-mail
Financial Report	SF 425	Quarterly	E-mail

Payment Report	SF 270	Monthly	E-mail
Invention/Patent (IP) Report, if applicable & IAW 37 CFR 401.14 (c)	Form DD882	Annually	E-mail
Annual Inventory of Federally Owned Property, if applicable	See REP Article III.C of DoD R&D General Terms and Conditions	Annually	E-mail
Notification of Loss, Damage or Theft of Federally Owned Property, if applicable	See REP Article III.C of DoD R&D General Terms and Conditions	Upon occurrence	E-mail
Closeout Report	See OAR Article VI of DoD R&D General Terms and Conditions	Once	E-mail

Awardees will need to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR 170: Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information.

The terms and conditions of the award will provide the specifics on how to submit the reports and any required sections for those reports.

VIII. Federal Contacts

Questions should be directed to:

Phoebe Fuller
 Grants Specialist
Phoebe.v.fuller@usace.army.mil

Stacy Thurman
 Grants Specialist
Stacy.D.Thurman@usace.army.mil

Zavien Beal
 Grants Officer
Zavien.t.beal@usace.army.mil

Questions regarding Grants.gov should be directed to: the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov.

IX. Other Information

The Federal government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of the announcement. Only grants officers can bind the Federal government to the expenditure of fund.

Applicants are advised to monitor Grants.gov for potential amendments to this Notice of Funding Opportunity. You can also elect to be automatically notified by Grants.gov whenever there is a

change to the opportunity.

Applications must not include any information that has been identified as classified national security information under authorities established in Executive Order 12958, Classified National Security Information.

General Site Monitoring Locations

