

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System - Division of Biological Services

Adaptive Science
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 15.670

Notice of Funding Availability and Application Instructions

I. Description of Funding Opportunity

Playa wetlands are the most important ecological feature in the southern shortgrass prairie (Haukos and Smith 1994). They are extremely ephemeral and, when flooded, very shallow. They provide critical fall, winter, and spring habitat to migrant birds, particularly waterfowl, shorebirds and Sandhill Cranes (Davis and Smith 1998, Smith 2003, Baar et al. 2008).

Playa wetlands have suffered tremendous loss from sedimentation (that is, siltation from erosion of surrounding croplands), agricultural related excavation (e.g., construction of tail-water pits), and other modifications (Lou et al. 1997, Smith 2003). Federal, state, and non-government partners recently embarked on a modeling effort to develop a decision support tool for playa conservation, and embarked on a subsequent conservation initiative to conserve and restore playas. The decision support tool was used to identify high value “clusters” of playas; the initial phase of conservation delivery within these high value “clusters”, or playa focal areas, is addressed through this proposal. Playa wetlands will be restored by backfilling pits on private lands in the playa region of the Texas Panhandle, Texas. Back-filling pits is a cost effective means to restore playas. This region includes some of the highest densities of playa wetlands in North America, many of which are historically important areas for wintering waterfowl.

Restoration will occur on playas that have 1) established vegetation buffers and 2) minimal siltation (that is, hydrology can be restored without sediment removal). Playa wetlands that meet these criteria will be identified by the award recipient using the decision support tool. The Playa Lakes Joint Venture was the organizational lead on developing and refining the decision support tool, although there was strong input from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other conservation partners. Further prioritization of playas that meet these categories, if needed, will be performed by the award recipient’s GIS staff with cooperation from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff and other partners.

Conservation delivery (pit filling) will be done on private lands. The award recipient, working with an expansive partnership that includes state (e.g., Texas Parks and Wildlife Department), Federal (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service), and non-government organizations, will target playas for restoration using the aforementioned decision support tool, contact private landowners that own targeted playas, promote funding availability through outreach activities, and promote playa conservation. Of these agencies, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will be the lead in reaching landowners, and the award recipient will be the lead in tracking/reporting accomplishments and monitoring efficacy of pit-filling. The award recipient is expected to handle financial instruments/contracts used to deliver funds to private landowners, and will hold funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (funds from this grant) that will be used to reimburse landowners for restoring playa wetlands. Additional cost share for this project may be provided by other Federal, state, or non-government organizations, but this funding agreement is

not contingent on support from these partners. Even so, match from other conservation partners, as well as the conservation activities supported by any additional match, should be reported as accomplishments. Leveraging playa conservation in focal areas with additional match may enhance chances of future support for this effort from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but it will in no-way guarantee continued/future financial support by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additionally, there is an expectation that an attempt will be made to leverage any non-federal cost share contributed to this by playa conservation initiative by pursuing additional Federal and/or non-federal grants.

All conservation delivery needs to be couched in terms of its energetic contributions to wintering/migrant waterfowl and shorebird objectives (...in a Strategic Habitat Conservation-type framework), in terms of contributions to regional North American Waterfowl Management Plan goals, in terms acreage contributions, in terms of hydroperiod restoration (or increased duration of surface water), and in terms number of playa wetlands restored. It is expected that playas with filled pits should have longer hydroperiods than neighboring or similar playas with pits. Satellite or aerial imagery of from historic flooding events and post-project flooding events may be used in monitoring efforts. It is expected that the award recipient will engage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners in preparing reports/publications related to the efficacy of filling pits to restore playa wetlands.

Informal updates will be required once every three months. A final report will be due at the end of the agreement period.

Authorizations: The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-57); Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C 703-712).; The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j, not including 742 d-1; Stat. 1119), as amended; Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 2901-2911; 94 Stat. 1322); Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, 87 Stat. 884).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) uses a science-based, adaptive framework for setting and achieving broad-scale conservation objectives that strategically address the problems fish and wildlife will face in the future. This framework, called Strategic Habitat Conservation, is based on the principles of adaptive management and uses population and habitat data, ecological models, and focused monitoring and assessment efforts to develop and implement strategies that result in measurable fish and wildlife population outcomes. This process uses the best available scientific information to predict how fish and wildlife populations will respond to changes in the environment, thus enabling the Service to focus habitat conservation and other management activities where they will be most effective. In addition, the Service needs focused, applied science directed at high impact questions surrounding threats to fish and wildlife resources for which management and/or mitigation is required to maintain species at healthy, sustainable, desired levels. The Service must base its decisions on the best science available, in order to defend its regulatory decisions, biological opinions and species conservation recommendations to land managers.

II. Award Information

This program will use a grant agreement as the financial assistance instrument. The Service will be responsible for the following: 1) assisting the award recipient with further prioritization of playa wetlands for restoration using the decision support tool developed by the Playa Lakes Joint Venture

and partners; 2) assisting the award recipient with designing a monitoring effort and with interpreting results; and 3) reviewing the final report, in a timely manner, in advance of the due date. The Service will not provide access to the decision support tool mentioned above; the award recipient must have access to the decision support tool or secure access to decision support tool from the Playa Lakes Joint Venture or an agency represented by its management board (<http://pljv.org/about-us/management-board/>). There is only ONE expected award and the estimated total program funding is \$40,000.

III. Basic Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants:

This Single Source Award is being awarded in accordance with Department of the Interior (DOI) Policy 505 DM 2.14 B(1) Unsolicited Proposal: The recipient, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, is actively working on playa wetland conservation in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and other partners. The Playa Lakes Joint Venture works throughout the Southern Great Plains (or Southern Shortgrass Prairie ecological region). Because of their long-term experience planning, promoting, and delivering playa wetland restoration and conservation through a network of partners, the Playa Lakes Joint Venture is uniquely qualified to meet the goals and monitoring requirements of this grant. Additionally, the Playa Lakes Joint Venture is a conservation delivery arm of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) [<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP>]; thus, The Playa Lakes Joint Venture is charged with working with government and non-government partners to achieve the conservation goals of NAWMP, and with tracking and measuring the efficacy of conservation efforts. This effort will contribute to the goals of NAWMP. Moreover, the playa wetlands restoration activities that are proposed through this grant were cooperatively developed by the Playa Lakes Joint Venture, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the other partners. The Playa Lakes Joint Venture will not charge any overhead or administrative fees – all funds will go directly toward playa restoration.

U.S. non-profit, non-governmental organizations must provide a copy of their Section 501(c)(3) or (4) status determination letter received from the Internal Revenue Service.

Federal law mandates that all entities applying for Federal financial assistance must have a valid Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). See Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 25 for more information. Exemptions: The SAM registration requirement does not apply to individuals submitting an application on their own behalf and not on behalf of a company or other for-profit entity, state, local or Tribal government, academia or other type of organization.

A. DUNS Registration

Request a DUNS number online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. U.S.-based entities may also request a DUNS number by telephone by calling the Dun & Bradstreet Government Customer Response Center, Monday – Friday, 7 AM to 8 PM CST at the following numbers:

U.S. and U.S. Virgin Islands: 1-866-705-5711

Alaska and Puerto Rico: 1-800-234-3867 (Select Option 2, then Option 1)

For Hearing Impaired Customers Only call: 1-877-807-1679 (TTY Line)

Once assigned a DUNS number, entities are responsible for maintaining up-to-date information with Dun & Bradstreet.

B. Entity Registration in SAM

Register in SAM online at <http://www.sam.gov/>. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly urged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure that their information is up to date and in synch with changes that may have been made to DUNS and IRS information. Foreign entities who wish to be paid directly to a United States bank account must enter and maintain valid and current banking information in SAM.

C. Excluded Entities

Applicant entities or their key project personnel identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program.

D. Cost Sharing or Matching:

No cost sharing or matching is required

IV. Application Requirements

To be considered for funding under this funding opportunity, an application must contain:

- A.** A completed, signed and dated Application for Federal Assistance form. The SF-424 form is available online at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. Do not include other Federal sources of funding, requested or approved, in the total entered in the “Federal” funding box on the Application for Federal Assistance form. Enter only the amount being requested under this program in the “Federal” funding box. Include any other Federal sources of funding in the total funding entered in the “Other” box.

B. Project Summary

Project Title: *Playa Conservation Initiative -- Playa Wetland Restoration*; Project Location: playa region of the Texas Panhandle, Texas. Summary: Playa wetlands are the most important ecological feature in the Southern Shortgrass Prairie (Haukos and Smith 1994). They provide critical fall, winter, and spring habitat to waterfowl, shorebirds and Sandhill Cranes (Davis and Smith 1998, Smith 2003, Baar et al. 2008). Playas have suffered tremendous loss from sedimentation, agricultural related excavation, and other modifications (Lou et al. 1997, Smith 2003). Recently, Federal, state, and non-government partners embarked on an effort to develop a decision support tool for playa conservation, and embarked on a subsequent conservation initiative to restore playas. The decision support tool was used to identify high value “clusters” of playas. The initial phase of conservation delivery within these high value areas is addressed through this proposal; playa wetlands will be restored by backfilling pits on private lands.

Restoration will occur on playas that have 1) established vegetation buffers and 2) minimal siltation. Playa wetlands that meet these criteria will be identified using the decision support tool. The Playa Lakes Joint Venture was the organizational lead on developing and refining the decision support tool, with input from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other conservation partners. Conservation delivery (pit filling) will be done on private lands, utilizing an expansive conservation partnership that includes state, Federal, and non-government organizations. The award recipient, working with and through partners (e.g., Texas Parks and Wildlife Department), will contact private landowners that own targeted playas,

promote funding availability through outreach activities, and promote playa conservation. The award recipient will be the lead in tracking/reporting accomplishments and monitoring the efficacy of pit-filling. The award recipient will handle financial instruments/contracts used to deliver funds to private landowners, and will hold funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that will be used to reimburse landowners for restoring playa wetlands. Additional cost share for playa restoration may be provided by other Federal, state, or non-government organizations, but this funding agreement is not contingent on cost share. Even so, match from other conservation partners, as well as the conservation activities supported by any additional match, should be reported as accomplishments.

All conservation delivery needs to be couched in terms of its energetic contributions to wintering/migrant waterfowl and shorebird objectives (...in a Strategic Habitat Conservation-type framework), in terms acreage contributions, in terms of hydroperiod restoration (or increased duration of surface water), and in terms number of playa wetlands restored. It is expected that playas with filled pits should have longer hydroperiods than neighboring or similar playas with pits. Satellite or aerial imagery of from historic flooding events and post-project flooding events may be used in monitoring efforts. It is expected that the award recipient will engage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners in preparing reports/publications related to the efficacy of filling pits to restore playa wetlands.

C. Project Narrative

- 1. Statement of Need:** Playa wetlands are the most important ecological feature in the southern shortgrass prairie; they are extremely ephemeral and, when flooded, very shallow. Playa wetlands provide critical fall, winter, and spring habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and Sandhill. Playa wetlands have suffered tremendous loss from sedimentation (that is, siltation from erosion of surrounding croplands), agricultural related excavation (e.g., construction of tail-water pits), and other modifications. Federal, state, and non-government partners recently embarked on a new conservation initiative to conserve and restore playas. The initial phase of conservation delivery will focus on filling (or backfilling) man-made pits on private lands.

Pits have been excavated in playas for two main reasons. One is to form deeper catch basins (tailwater pits or tailwater-irrigation pits) to concentrate water for furrow-type irrigation systems. Furrow-irrigation is antiquated and has been largely replaced by modern center-pivot systems that do not utilize playas; however, the excavated tailwater pits remain in place. The second reason playas have been pitted is to concentrate water for livestock; these pits tend to be shallower than those excavated for irrigation, but still degrade playa functions and hydrology. Playas have clay floors that are relatively thin (a few feet thick), and when pits are excavated into these floors they compromise the ability of playas to hold water after flooding events.

Back-filling pits is a cost effective means to restore playas. Funds from this award will be used solely for filling pits.

- 2. Project Goals and Objectives:**

State the long-term, overarching goal(s) of the program/project. State the objectives of the project. Objectives are the specific outcomes to be accomplished in order to reach the

stated goal(s). The project objectives must be specific, measurable, and realistic (attainable within the project's proposed project period).

Overall Goals: These funds will help jump start a new, partner driven playa conservation initiative by providing funding for playa restoration. Decision support tools developed as the initial step of a landscape conservation design for playas will be used in targeting restoration activities. These funds should be instrumental in leveraging both state and non-government (non-profit) funds to continue and expand the playa conservation initiative. Additional financial contributions from state and non-government partners, as well as restoration accomplishments resulting from these contributions, will be tracked and reported.

Playa Restoration Goals: The number of playas expected to be restored with these funds will likely be 6 to 13; this estimate is based on the Playa Lakes Joint Ventures recent work in New Mexico. The variation is based on the relative sizes of pits and thus the relative volume of soil needed to be moved. "Acres of pits" to "acres of playas" is not 1 to 1; for example: each pit might have a foot-print of 1 acre (or less); however, the pits negatively affect the hydroperiod of the entire playa. So assuming only 1 pit would be restored to per playa and that all playas restored would be of average size (about 15 acres), hydrology would be restored on 90 to 190 acres of playas while only 6-13 acres of pits would be back-filled. These are very rough estimates, as some playas have >1 pit and the size of prioritized playas may be smaller or larger than the average size of 15 acres. Acreage of pits back-filled, and acreage of playas restored, will be tracked and reported.

Associated Goals: This project will contribute to North American Waterfowl Management Plan goals for wintering waterfowl in the Playa Lakes Joint Venture area. This project will also contribute to shorebird goals for the Playa Lakes Joint Venture region. This project should increase the hydroperiod of playas and increase the period that playas are usable as foraging and roosting areas in the project area. Contributions to waterfowl and shorebird objectives will be tracked and reported.

Monitoring Goals: All delivery would be couched: **1)** in terms of energetic contributions to wintering/migrant waterfowl and shorebird objectives (the energetic contribution could be estimated from published carrying capacity values of playa wetlands and/or surrounding cropland, or from values traditionally used in joint venture planning exercises); **2)** for waterfowl, in particular, accomplishments will be further described in terms of regional and overall Playa Lakes Joint Venture habitat objectives (such as those in the joint venture planning documents; **3)** in terms acreage contributions; **4)** in terms of hydroperiod restoration (or increased duration of surface water); and, **5)** in terms number of playa wetlands restored.

- 3. Project Activities, Methods and Timetable:** List the proposed project activities and describe how they relate to the stated objectives. Activities are the specific actions to be undertaken to fulfill the project objectives and reach the project goal(s). The proposed project activities narrative must be detailed enough for reviewers to make a clear connection between the activities and the proposed project costs. For projects being conducted within the United States, the narrative must provide enough detail so that reviewers are able to determine project compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Section 7 of the

Endangered Species Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. For projects being conducted on the high seas, the narrative should provide enough detail so that reviewers are able to determine project compliance with Section 7 of Endangered Species Act. Provide a detailed description of the method(s) to be used to carry out each activity. Provide a timetable indicating roughly when activities or project milestones are to be accomplished. Include any resulting tables, spreadsheets or flow charts within the body of the project narrative (do not include as separate attachments). The timetable should not propose specific dates but instead group activities by month for each month over the entire proposed project period.

The award recipient will work with conservation partners, such as Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, to deliver wetland restoration projects on private lands. Specifically, conservation partners will work with willing landowners to backfill man-made pits and/or man-made trenches that alter the natural hydrology of playas. Participating landowners will sign an instrument, similar to the Playa Lakes Joint Venture Conoco Phillips agreement, stating that they will maintain the project playas in their restored state for at least 10 years.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the award recipient will make payments to landowners after the following three criteria have been fulfilled: 1) completion of the restoration work, 2) after the restoration work has been inspected by a cooperating agency (for example, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) to insure it was completed according to plan; and, 3) after either receipts or an invoice is provided to the cooperating agency. The cooperation agency will forward the receipt to the award recipient of this grant.

Actual restoration work (earth moving) may be done by participating landowners or by landowner secured contractors. Payment may be made to either landowners or directly to landowner secured contractors, based on the instructions of the cooperating landowner. Landowners may be reimbursed for up to 100% of the playa restoration costs.

Timeline:

Summer – Fall 2016: Effort will be made to start reaching potential cooperating landowners immediately upon receipt of grant funds by the award recipient. Landowners will be reached by 1) announcements/descriptions of funding availability traditional media outlets and through the award recipient's web-page, 2) landowner workshops to promote playa conservation, wildlife conservation, and funding availability, 3) and direct calls/contacts with potential landowner cooperators. Conservation partners that will be assisting with delivery should have a history of working with landowners in the area.

Summer 2016 – Summer 2018: For private landowners that agree to the restore playas, work will commence as soon as practical. The timetable for actual earth moving will be dependent on how long it takes to negotiate agreements, how long it takes to secure estimates/bids, and on soil conditions of playas (e.g., work cannot take place when playas are flooded). Before any restoration work can go forward in playas, regulatory agencies that oversee both wetlands and government backed agriculture/crop programs (for example: USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services) will have to be notified and necessary clearances/permits will have to be secured.

August 2018: Final Report Due. Final report requirements:

- 1) Coordinates of filled pits and project playas,
- 2) Acres of playas impacted, size of pits filled (backfilled)
- 3) Pictures of playas pre- and post-project
- 4) Expected energetic contributions of project playas to wintering/migrant waterfowl and shorebird objectives; these estimates may come from published values for playa wetlands and/or cropland, or from values previously used in joint venture planning documents. Waterfowl contributions should be couched in terms of how the grant helped contribute to regional and overall Playa Lakes Joint Venture habitat objectives.
- 5) Additional financial contributions to the overall playa conservation initiative, and a description of subsequent accomplishments, should be included in the report.
- 6) Additional monitoring results that are available at the time of the final is due should be included.

Note: It is expected that monitoring will be a long-term endeavor that extends well past August 2018, which is the final report deadline. Results pertaining to the effects of pit filling on playa hydrology/hydroperiods will not be ready by August 2018 and are not expected at that time. To understand the effects of pit filling on playa hydroperiods, it will be necessary to for the immediate area of the project to receive multiple large rainfall events that are capable of filling playas (generally over 3+ inches in a single event). The US Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to work with recipient after the final report is received to monitor the effects of pit filling.

4. **Stakeholder Coordination/Involvement:** As applicable, describe how you/your organization has coordinated with and involved other relevant organizations or individuals in planning the project, and detail if/how they will be involved in conducting project activities, disseminating project results and/or incorporating your results/products into their activities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service participated in development of decision support tool for playa conservation along with multiple partners (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Playa Lakes Joint Venture). This decision support tool was then used to inform efforts of a newly formed playa conservation initiative. This initiative is led by Texas Parks and Wildlife, and includes various other organization interested in playa wetland and migratory bird conservation, including Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Texas Tech University, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Texas Agricultural Land Trust. These partners met in early May 2015, in Lubbock, to develop the initial phase of playa conservation. It was at this meeting that the targeted counties and targeted method of conservation (pit filling of playas) was chosen.

5. **Project Monitoring and Evaluation:** Detail the monitoring and evaluation plan for the project. Building on the stated project objectives, which must be specific and measurable, identify what you will measure (i.e., quantitative/quantifiable indicators) and how you will measure (i.e., methods, sample size, survey tools). Reference the stated project timetable (i.e., process indicators) and budget information (i.e., input indicators). Identify the products/services to be delivered and how/to whom they will be delivered (i.e., output indicators). Detail the expected direct effect(s) of the project on beneficiaries (i.e., outcome

indicators). Include any available questionnaires, surveys, curricula, exams/tests or other assessment tools to be used for project evaluation. Describe the resources and organizational structure available for gathering, analyzing and reporting monitoring and evaluation data. If applicable, describe how project participants and beneficiaries will participate in monitoring and evaluation activities. Describe how findings will be fed back into decision making and project activities throughout the project period.

The monitoring effort will be led and coordinated by the award recipient. All conservation delivery (filling of pits) will be couched: **1)** in terms of its energetic contributions to wintering/migrant waterfowl and shorebird objectives (these estimates may come from published values for playa wetlands and/or cropland, or from values previously used in joint venture planning documents.); **2)** for waterfowl, in particular, accomplishments will be further described in terms of regional and overall contributions to Playa Lakes Joint Venture habitat objectives; **3)** in terms acreage contributions; **4)** in terms of hydroperiod restoration (or increased duration of surface water); and, **5)** in terms number of playa wetlands restored.

The effect of filling pits on playa hydroperiods will be evaluated by using satellite or aerial imagery; this effort will be led by the award recipient's GIS staff. Restored playas will be paired with one or more similar playas (similar size, similar watershed conditions, similar rainfall events, etc.), and the duration of flooding after significant rainfall events will be compared. Associations will include intact, non-pitted grassland playas, pitted/modified playas, and playas restored through this initiative. Additional, historical imagery will be used to compare hydroperiods of playas pre- and post-restoration. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will work with the recipient on project design, interpretation of results, and reporting of results.

Note: It is expected that monitoring will be a long-term endeavor that extends well past August 2018, which is the final report deadline. Results pertaining to the effects of pit filling on playa hydrology/hydroperiods will not be ready by August 2018 and are not expected at that time. To understand the effects of pit filling on playa hydroperiods, it will be necessary to for the immediate area of the project to receive multiple large rainfall events that are capable of filling playas (generally over 3+ inches in a single event). The US Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to work with the recipient after the final report is received to monitor the effects of pit filling.

- 6. Description of Entities Undertaking the Project:** Provide a brief description of the applicant organization and all participating entities and/or individuals. Identify which of the proposed activities each agency, organization, group, or individual is responsible for conducting or managing. Provide complete contact information for the individual within the organization that will oversee/manage the project activities on a day-to-day basis. If eligibility for funding is based in whole or in part on the qualifications of key personnel, provide for each key person a brief (**1-2 pages**) but descriptive overview of their education, experience and other skills that make them qualified to carry out the proposed project. To prevent unnecessary transmission of Personally Identifiable Information, ***do not include Social Security numbers, the names of family members, or any other personal or sensitive information including marital status, religion or physical characteristics on the description of key personnel qualifications.***

7. **Sustainability:** As applicable, describe which project activities will continue beyond the proposed project period, who will continue the work or act on the results achieved, and how and at what level you expect these future activities will be funded.

Participating landowners will sign an instrument, similar to the Playa Lakes Joint Venture Conoco Phillips agreement, stating that they will maintain the restored playas for at least 10 years. Once restored, there is little risk of the pits being “re-excavated” beyond the 10 year term of the agreement, as the original agricultural related drivers of playa modification are no longer a factor. Irrigation practices, which were the agricultural driver of playa modification, are now more efficient and no longer utilize playa wetlands as part of the irrigation system. This project should help the playa conservation initiative succeed, secure additional funding, and expand its overall footprint.

8. **Literature Cited**

- Baar, L., R. S. Matlack, W. P. Johnson, and R. B. Barron. 2008. Migration chronology of waterfowl in the Southern High Plains of Texas. *Waterbirds* 31(3):394-401.
- Davis, C. A., and L. M. Smith. 1998. Ecology and management of migrant shorebirds in the Playa Lakes Region of Texas. *Wildlife Monographs* 140: 1-45.
- Gurdak, J. J., and C. D. Roe. 2009. Recharge rates and chemistry beneath playas of the High Plains aquifer: a literature review and synthesis. US Geological Survey, Fort Collins, Colorado, Circular 1333. 39 pp.
- Haukos, D. A., and L. M. Smith. 1994. The importance of playa wetlands to biodiversity of the Southern High Plains. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 28(1):83-98.
- Luo, H. R., L. M. Smith, B. L. Allen, and D. A. Haukos. 1997. Effects of sedimentation on playa wetland volume. *Ecological Applications* 7(1):247-252.
- Smith, L. M. 2003. Playas of the Great Plains. Number 3 in Peter T. Flawn Series in Natural Resource Management and Conservation. University of Texas Press, Austin. 257 pp.

D. Budget Form

Complete the Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF 424A) or Budget Information for Construction Programs (SF 424C) form. Use the SF 424A if your project does not include construction and the SF 424C if the project includes construction or land acquisition. The budget forms are available on the Internet at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. When developing your budget, keep in mind that financial assistance awards and subawards are subject to the Federal cost principles in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, as applicable to the recipient organization type. Links to the full text of the Federal cost principles are available on the Internet at <http://www.ecfr.gov/>.

Multiple Federal Funding Sources: If the project budget includes multiple Federal funding sources, you must show the funds being requested from this Federal program *separately* from any other requested/secured Federal sources of funding on the budget form. For example, enter the funds being requested from this Federal program in the first row of the Budget Summary section of the form and then enter funding related to other Federal programs in the subsequent row(s). Be sure to enter each Federal program’s CFDA number in the corresponding fields on the form. The CFDA number for this Federal program appears on the first page of this funding opportunity.

E. Budget Justification

In a separate narrative titled “**Budget Justification**”, explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the SF 424 Budget Object Class Category totals were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the Service’s approval and estimate its cost.

Required Indirect Cost Statement: All applicants except individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she may operate must include in the budget justification narrative one of the following statements and attach to their application any required documentation identified in the applicable statement:

“We are:

1. A U.S. state or local government entity receiving more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding each year with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We submit our indirect cost rate proposals to our cognizant agency. A copy of our most recently approved rate agreement/certification is attached.
2. A U.S. state or local government entity receiving less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We are required to prepare and retain for audit an indirect cost rate proposal and related documentation to support those costs.
3. A [insert your organization type; U.S. states and local governments, please use one of the statements above or below] that has previously negotiated or currently has an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. A copy of our most recently approved rate agreement is attached.
4. A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. In the event an award is made, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award is made.
5. A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. However, in the event an award is made, we will not be able to meet the requirement to submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after award. We request as a condition of award to charge a flat *de minimus* indirect cost rate of 10% of modified total direct costs as defined in [Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, section 200.68](#). We understand that the 10% *de minimus* rate will apply for the life of the award, including any future extensions for time, and that the rate cannot be changed even if we do establish an approved rate with our cognizant agency at any point during the award period
6. A [insert your organization type] that is submitting this proposal for consideration under the [insert either “Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program” or “Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Network”], which has a Department of the Interior-approved indirect cost rate cap of [insert program rate]. If we have an approved

indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that we must apply this reduced rate against the same direct cost base as identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement. If we do not have an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that the basis for direct costs will be the modified total direct cost base defined in 2 CFR 200.68 “Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC)”. We understand that we must request prior approval from the Service to use the MTDC base instead of the base identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement, and that Service approval of such a request will be based on: 1) a determination that our approved base is only a subset of the MTDC (such as salaries and wages); and 2) that use of the MTDC base will still result in a reduction of the total indirect costs to be charged to the award.

7. A [insert your organization type] that will charge all costs directly.

All applicants are hereby notified of the following:

- Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award. Accepting the 10% *de minimus* rate as a condition of award is an approved rate.
- Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award.
- Only the indirect costs calculated against the Federal portion of the total direct costs may be charged to the Federal award. Recipients may not charge to their Service award any indirect costs calculated against the portion of total direct costs charged to themselves or charged to any other project partner, Federal and non-Federal alike.
- Recipients must have prior written approval from the Service to transfer unallowable indirect costs to amounts budgeted for direct costs or to satisfy cost-sharing or matching requirements under the award.
- Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.”

Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.

For more information on indirect cost rates, see the Service’s **Indirect Costs and Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements** guidance document on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/grants/>.

Negotiating an Indirect Cost Rate with the Department of the Interior: Entities that do not have a NICRA must first have an open, active Federal award before they can submit an indirect cost rate proposal to their cognizant agency. The Federal awarding agency that provides the largest amount of direct funding to your organization is your cognizant agency, unless otherwise assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). If the Department of the Interior is your cognizant agency, your indirect cost rate will be negotiated by the Interior Business Center (IBC). For more information, contact the IBC at:

Indirect Cost Services
Acquisition Services Directorate, Interior Business Center
U.S. Department of the Interior
2180 Harvard Street, Suite 430
Sacramento, CA 95815
Phone: 916-566-7111
Email: ics@nbc.gov
Internet address: <http://www.aqd.nbc.gov/Services/ICS.aspx>

- F. Single Audit Reporting Statements:** As required in [Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200](#), Subpart F, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System. All U.S. state, local government, federally-recognized Indian tribal government and non-profit applicants must provide a statement regarding if your organization was/was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the organization's most recently closed fiscal year and, if so, state if that report is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse Single Audit Database website (<http://harvester.census.gov/sac/>) and provide the EIN under which that report was submitted. Include these statements at the end of the Project Narrative in a section titled "**Single Audit Reporting Statements**".
- G. Assurances:** Include the appropriate signed and dated Assurances form available online at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. Use the **Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF 424B)** for construction and land acquisition projects. Use the **Assurances for Construction Programs (SF 424D)** for all other types of projects. Signing this form does not mean that all items on the form are applicable. The form contains language that states that some of the assurances may not be applicable to your organization and/or your project or program.
- I. Conflict of Interest Disclosures:** Applicants must notify the Service in writing of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that are known at the time of application or that may arise during the life of this award, in the event an award is made. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the recipient, the recipient's employees, or the recipient's subrecipients in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the applicant, the applicant's employees, or the applicant's future subrecipients in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the Service Project Officer in consultation with their Ethics Counselor will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the applicant to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in the project not being select for funding.

Application Checklist

- ☐ **Evidence of non-profit status:** If a non-profit organization, a copy of their Section 501(c)(3) or (4) status determination letter received from the Internal Revenue Service.
- ☐ **SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance:** A complete, signed and dated SF 424, SF 424-Mandatory, or SF 424-Individual form.
- ☐ **Single Audit Reporting statement:** If a U.S. state, local government, federally-recognized Indian tribal government, or non-profit organization, statements regarding applicability of and compliance with Single Audit reporting requirements.
- ☐ **SF 424 budget form:** A complete SF 424A or SF 424C Budget Information form.
- ☐ **Budget justification**
- ☐ **NICRA:** When applicable, a copy of the organization's current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.
- ☐ **SF 424 Assurances form:** Signed and dated SF 424B or SF 424D Assurances form.

Failure to provide complete information may cause delays, postponement, or rejection of the application.

V. Submission Instructions

SUBMISSION DEADLINE 8 September 2016.

Intergovernmental Review: Before submitting an application, U.S. state and local government applicants should visit the following website (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/) to determine whether their application is subject to the state intergovernmental review process under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372 "Intergovernmental review of Federal Programs." E.O. 12372 was issued to foster the intergovernmental partnership and strengthen federalism by relying on state and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development. The E.O. allows each state to designate an entity to perform this function. The official list of designated entities is posted on the website. Contact your state's designated entity for more information on the process the state requires to be followed when applying for assistance. States that do not have a designated entity listed on the website have chosen not to participate in the review process.

Download the Application Package linked to this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov to begin the application process. Downloading and saving the Application Package to your computer makes the required government-wide standard forms fillable and printable. Completed applications may be submitted by mail, by email, electronically through Grants.gov, or as otherwise described in the Grants.gov funding opportunity. Please select **ONE** of the submission options:

To submit an application by e-mail:

Format all of your documents to print on Letter size (8 1/2" x 11") paper. Format all pages to display and print page numbers. Scanned documents should be scanned in Letter format, as black and white images only. Where possible, save scanned documents in .pdf format. E-mail your application to the Service program point of contact identified in the Grants.gov funding opportunity.

The required SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance and Assurances forms and any other required standard forms MUST be signed by your organization's authorized official. The Signature and Date fields on the standard forms downloaded from Grants.gov are pre-populated with the text "Completed by Grants.gov upon submission" or "Completed on submission to Grants.gov". Remove this text (manually or digitally) before signing the forms.

To submit an application through Grants.gov:

Go to the Grants.gov Apply for Grants page (http://www07.grants.gov/applicants/apply_for_grants.jsp) for an overview of the process to apply through Grants.gov. You/your organization must complete the Grants.gov registration process before submitting an application through Grants.gov. Registration can take between three to five business days, or as long as two weeks if all steps are not completed in a timely manner.

Important note on Grants.gov application attachment file names: Please do not assign application attachments file names longer than 20 characters, including spaces. Assigning file names longer than 20 characters will create issues in the automatic interface between Grants.gov and the Service's financial assistance management system.

VII. Award Administration

Award Notices: Following review, applicants may be requested to revise the project scope and/or budget before an award is made. Successful applicants will receive written notice in the form of a notice of award document. Notices of award are typically sent to recipients by e-mail. If e-mail notification is unsuccessful, the documents will be sent by courier mail (e.g., FedEx, DHL or UPS). Award recipients are not required to sign/return the Notice of Award document. Acceptance of an award is defined as starting work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Awards are based on the application submitted to, and as approved by, the Service. The notice of award document will include instructions specific to each recipient on how to request payment. If applicable, the instructions will detail any additional information/forms required and where to submit payment requests.

Domestic Recipient Payments: Prior to award, the Service program office will contact you/your organization to either enroll in the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system or, if eligible, obtain approval from the Department of the Interior to be waived from using ASAP.

Transmittal of Sensitive Data: Recipients are responsible for ensuring any sensitive data being sent to the Service is protected during its transmission/delivery. The Service strongly recommends that recipients use the most secure transmission/delivery method available. The Service recommends the following digital transmission methods: secure digital faxing; encrypted emails; emailing a password protected zipped/compressed file attachment in one email followed by the password in a second email; or emailing a zipped/compressed file attachment. The Service strongly encourages recipients sending sensitive data in paper copy to use a courier mail service. Recipients may also contact their Service Project Officer and provide any sensitive data over the telephone.

Award Terms and Conditions: Acceptance of a financial assistance award (i.e., grant or cooperative agreement) from the Service carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and comply with the terms and conditions applicable to the award. Acceptance is defined as the start of work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Awards are based on the

application submitted to and approved by the Service and are subject to the terms and conditions incorporated into the notice of award either by direct citation or by reference to the following: Federal regulations; program legislation or regulation; and special award terms and conditions. The Federal regulations applicable to Service awards are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/grants/>. If you do not have access to the Internet and require a full text copy of the award terms and conditions, contact the Service point of contact identified in the Agency Contacts section below.

Recipient Reporting Requirements:

Financial and Performance Reports: Interim financial reports and performance reports may be required. Interim reports will be required no more frequently than quarterly, and no less frequently than annually. A final financial report and a final performance report will be required and are due within 90 calendar days of the end date of the award. Performance reports must contain: 1) a comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives of the award as detailed in the approved scope of work; 2) a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and 3) any other pertinent information relevant to the project results.

Significant Developments Reports: Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the supported activity. In such cases, recipients are required to notify the Service in writing as soon as the following types of conditions become known:

- Problems, delays, or adverse conditions that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of any corrective action(s) taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation.
- Favorable developments that enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

The Service will specify in the notice of award document the reporting and reporting frequency applicable to the award.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Recipients are responsible for notifying the Service Project Officer in writing of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of this award. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the recipient, the recipient's employees, or the recipient's subrecipients in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under this award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the Recipient, the Recipient's employees, or the Recipient's subrecipients in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the Service Project Officer in consultation with their Ethics Counselor will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the Recipient, the Recipient's employee(s), or the Recipient's Subrecipient(s) that could reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in

any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.338, Remedies for Noncompliance, including termination of this award.

Other Mandatory Disclosures: Recipients and their subrecipients must disclose, in a timely manner and in writing, to the Service or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting this award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.338, Remedies for noncompliance, including suspension or debarment (See 2 CFR 200.113, 2 CFR Part 180, and 31 U.S.C. 3321).

VIII. Agency Contacts

Technical Point of Contact:

Bill Johnson, Biologist
US Fish and Wildlife Service
NWRS-Division of Biological Services
PO Box 277
Canyon, Texas 79015
Email: bill_johnson@fws.gov
Phone: (806) 200-1773

Administrative Point of Contact

Clair Dutton
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 2 Science Applications
500 Gold Ave SW
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102
Email: clair_dutton@fws.gov
Phone: (505) 248-6411