

Request for Statements of Interest
Funding Opportunity Announcement

Federal Awarding Agency:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Engineer Research and Development Center
3909 Halls Ferry Road
Vicksburg, MS 39180-6199

Funding Opportunity No: W81EWF-20-SOI-0019

CFDA No: 12.630

Statutory Authority: 10 USC 2358

Project Title: SAV Restoration in Anacostia / Potomac River

Announcement Type: Initial announcement

Issue Date: 8 May 2020

Statement of Interest/Qualifications Due Date: 8 June 2020, 10am central time

Full Application Package Due Date, if Invited: 13 July 2020, 10am central time

Estimated Award Ceiling: \$165,000

Estimated Total Program Funding **(optional)**: \$165,000

Expected Number of Awards: One (1)

Section I: Funding Opportunity Description

Background:

Historically, SAV covered much of the littoral areas of the Chesapeake Bay extending from the mouth of the Bay all the way up through the waters of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. Estimates from old aerial photographs estimate that almost 200,000 acres of SAV grew in the Chesapeake Bay (Orth and Moore 1984). In the 1930's, eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) beds were decimated by disease with upwards of 90 percent of beds disappearing. Throughout the next few decades beds began to reestablish; however, new invasive SAV began to fill in the gaps and to compete with native SAV, often completely replacing native SAV. Large scale losses in SAV and continued changes in SAV bed composition occurred throughout the Chesapeake Bay in the 1960s and 1970s (Orth and Moore 1983). These die-offs occurred in marine, brackish, and freshwater systems as a result of increasing inputs from non-point source pollutants in the form of nutrients and sediments from development and agricultural production (Twilley et al. 1985).

Bay wide SAV restoration efforts began in 1983 under the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program, with out-plantings of eelgrass using plugs of the entire plant. Since that time bay-wide restoration efforts have primarily focused on eelgrass plantings in mesohaline environments where salinity is between five and 18 parts per thousand (ppt), and polyhaline environments where salinity is between 18 and 30 ppt. The results have been mixed, with more success occurring in recent years utilizing seed based planting methods that allow for lower costs and use of natural cycles in the process (Pickerell et al. 2006). Recently there have been a few studies and restoration efforts using other species of SAV in tidal freshwater environments (Moore and Jarvis 2007). SAV provides critical habitat for a diversity of fish species, including important sport fish such as largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and channel catfish. Observations in the District show a direct correlation between gamefish species abundance and SAV presence. With the recent significant loss of historic SAV beds and the fluctuating natural recovery rate, native restoration is needed.

SAV declines in the freshwater tidal systems of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers have been dramatic and steep. Levels have fallen precipitously since the 1930's with major declines occurring since the 1970s (Moore and Jarvis 2007). In the 1990s, SAV beds in the upper tidal Potomac showed some movement towards growth which continued in staggered steps until 2002. Since 2003, SAV communities have declined or disappeared in once prosperous sites in the District of Columbia's portion of the Potomac River. This decline was most likely due to poor growing conditions which occurred from heavy rains and high levels of turbidity. In the Chesapeake Bay, wild celery was historically the dominant SAV in freshwater and in brackish systems (Davis 1985). Wild celery has only made up a fraction of the SAV in the beds in the Potomac (excluding the historic beds of the Washington Channel) in the past decade or more, with an increasing percentage or complete coverage by the invasive *Hydrilla verticillata* (hydrilla). In recent years the remaining beds in the Potomac have continued to become increasingly dominated by invasive species of SAV such as *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Eurasian watermilfoil) and hydrilla.

Efforts to restore SAV beds to historic locations and to historic levels are part of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement which was signed by each of the six states in the bay watershed and the District.

Brief Description of Anticipated Work:

The objective is to create healthy beds of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) which will in turn lead to dispersal of SAV in areas adjacent to the plots. The prospective partner will select site(s) for restoration, install plants and exclosures, and then monitor the installed plants cover density at the peak of the growing season to determine efficacy of planting methodology. By monitoring

both adult plants and seeding success, the partner can determine best practices and modify procedures if necessary. In addition to plant monitoring, Contractor biologists also will monitor fish species diversity to determine if there are community changes related to SAV presence/absence. The findings shall be documented for publication and use by others.

Public Benefit:

This project will play a critical role in determining how best to install submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), a natural resource that is increasingly under pressure to survive due to human activity, and monitor its recovery in the Anacostia River and provide the results to managers, decision makers, and the public. SAV improves water quality and creates habitat for aquatic life. Improved water quality leads to improved recreational benefits for public use.

Section II: Award Information

Responses to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential investigators for studies to be sponsored by the Baltimore District, the Engineer Research and Development Center, and the National Park Service to provide SAV planting and research in the Anacostia / Potomac River around Washington D.C. The estimated level of funding for FY20 is approximately \$165,000 for five years.

Government Involvement:

USACE / NPS technical personnel may participate in field data collection efforts as appropriate, review annual reports, and provide input prior to submission of final reports. USACE / NPS personnel will collaborate with the grant recipient on data analysis and participate in technical meetings.

Section III: Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants – This opportunity is restricted to non-federal partners of the Chesapeake Watershed Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit (CESU).
2. Cost Sharing – This action will be 100% funded by USACE / NPS.

Section IV: Application and Submission Information – Two Phase Process

Phase I: Submission of a Statement of Interest/Qualifications.

1. Materials Requested for Statement of Interest/Qualifications:
 - a. Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to:
Chelsea.M.Whitten@usace.army.mil
(Maximum length: 2 pages, single-spaced 12 pt. font).
 1. Name, Organization and Contact Information
 2. 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 at this time.

- b. The administrative point of contact is Chelsea Whitten, 601-634-4679;
Chelsea.M.Whitten@usace.army.mil

2. Statement of Interest/Qualifications shall be submitted NO LATER THAN 8 June 2020, 10am central time.

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.

Phase II: Submission of a complete application package to include a full technical proposal including budget, if invited.

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 Chelsea Whitten, 601-634-4679;
Chelsea.M.Whitten@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.
- 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 cost element breakdowns in sufficient detail so that a reasonableness determination can be made. The SF 424 Research & Related Budget Form can be used as a guide. 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.
3. Application package shall be submitted NO LATER THAN 13 July 2020, 10am central time
4. Submission Instructions
- Applications may be submitted by mail, e-mail, or Grants.gov. 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 Chelsea.M.Whitten@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>.

Section V: Application Review Information

1. **Peer or Scientific Review Criteria:** In accordance with DoDGARs 22.315(c), an impartial peer review will be conducted. Subject to funding availability, all proposals will be reviewed using the criteria listed below (technical and cost/price). All proposals will be evaluated under the following two criteria which are of descending importance.

- a. **Technical (items i. and ii. are of equal importance):**
 - i. Technical merits of proposed R&D.
 - ii. Potential relationship of proposed R&D to DoD missions.
- b. **Cost/Price:** Overall realism of the proposed costs will be evaluated.

2. Review and Selection Process

a. **Categories:** 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.

b. No other criteria will be used.

c. Prior to award of a potentially successful offer, the Grants Officer will make a determination regarding price reasonableness.

Section VI: Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

Written notice of award will be given in conjunction with issuance of a cooperative agreement signed by a Grants Officer. The cooperative agreement will contain the effective date of the agreement, the period of performance, funding information, and all terms and conditions. The recipient is required to sign and return the document before work under the agreement commences. **Work described in this announcement SHALL NOT begin without prior authorization from a Grants Officer.**

2. Administrative Requirements

The cooperative agreement issued as a result of this announcement is subject to the administrative requirements in 2 CFR Subtitle A; 2 CFR Subtitle B, Ch. XI, Part 1103; and 32 CFR Subchapter C, except Parts 32 and 33.

3. Reporting

See 2 CFR Sections 200.327 for financial reporting requirements, 200.328 for performance reporting requirements, and 200.329 for real property reporting requirements.

Section VII: Agency Contact

Chelsea Whitten, Grants Officer

US Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer Research and Development Center

3909 Halls Ferry Road
Vicksburg, MS 39180-6199
Chelsea.M.Whitten@usace.army.mil
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