

PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Title: Technical Support for Species-at-Risk Surveys and Analyses in Support of Army Environmental Conservation

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: W81EWF-24-SOI-0013

Assistance Listing Number: 12.630

Date Issued: 06 February 2024

Key Dates: Phase I announcement will be open to receive statements of interest continuously until 2:00pm Central Time (CT), 07 March 2024, at which point all statements of interest must be received.

If invited to Phase II, full proposal applications will be due at 2:00pm Central Time (CT), 08 April 2024.

Estimated Award Ceiling: \$50,000.00

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$50,000.00

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

I. Program Description

A. Short Description of Funding Opportunity

ERDC seeks applications for Technical Support for Species-at-Risk Surveys and Analyses in Support of Army Environmental Conservation

Background:

Many of the land bases where US Army installations reside are ecologically significant – providing refuge for a large number of the nation's threatened and endangered plants and animals. The benefits of biodiversity to the public and the environment have long been recognized and the Army's role as land managers can influence the floral and faunal diversity both within the installation and on nearby lands. Proactive surveys and management of at-risk species, prior to federal listing, can provide critical information for land managers and conservation biologists to make more effective conservation and management decisions and to reduce probability of listing.

Certain taxa, such as freshwater mussels and herpetofaunal (reptile and amphibian) species, have experienced precipitous population declines across the globe and are particularly vulnerable to habitat loss and degradation. As such, land managers, such as the US Army, conducts planning level surveys to understand distribution, relative abundance, and population health of these vulnerable taxa. Work under this proposal will provide research and analytical support to assess distribution of aquatic freshwater mussel and herpetofaunal communities, with the work to take place at two southeastern US Army installations. Information garnered under this proposal is aimed at improving management and conservation of at-risk freshwater mussel and herpetofaunal species throughout their ranges.

Program Description/Objective:

The government seeks research and technical support for planning level surveys and analyses of freshwater mussel and herpetofaunal species occurrence, distribution and relative abundance. Surveys will take place at Fort Johnson, Louisiana and Fort Cavazos, Texas. It is anticipated that results from these analyses will be relevant for improved conservation and management of the focal species, throughout their respective geographic ranges. Details of primary tasks are as follows:

Task 1: Freshwater aquatic mussel community surveys and analyses

Freshwater mussels are known to be one of the most imperiled taxa (Strayer et al. 2004). As such, a large number of mussel species are either federally listed under the endangered species act (ESA) or being considered for federal listing. In particular, there are two freshwater mussel species, the Louisiana Pigtoe (*Pleurobema riddelli*) and the Texas heelsplitter (*Potamilus amphichaenus*), currently under review for federal listing that occur near Fort Johnson, Louisiana, with critical habitat that has been proposed within 20 miles of the installation. Understanding the potential occurrence and distribution of the species on Fort Johnson is critical for potential future Section 6 ESA consultation with USFWS. However, due to their cryptic behaviors and challenges associated with taxonomic identification, freshwater mussels are notoriously difficult to survey.

Work under this task will include freshwater mussel surveys throughout Fort Johnson in summer and fall 2024. A minimum of two surveys (summer and fall) will be conducted across a minimum of 8 streams on

the installation. Specific survey timing and locations will be decided based on focal mussel species life history, previous survey efforts, and coordination with ERDC-CERL and Fort Johnson Conservation Branch. All survey data, including locations and numbers of individuals of all detected mussel species, will be compiled into a report. Photos and/or voucher specimens will be collected to verify species identities.

Task 2: Herpetofaunal community surveys and analyses

Globally, an estimated 36% of reptiles and 41% of amphibians (collectively “herpetofauna”) are considered at risk of extinction (IUCN 2019) due to a variety of causes including habitat loss, disease, introduced species, and environmental contaminants (Gibbons et al. 2000). As such, an increasing number of herpetofauna have been listed or petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Previous herpetofaunal survey effort on Fort Cavazos, Texas documented a diverse community of reptiles and amphibians of 48 species, including several declining species and one state listed species. An updated survey is required to understand current distribution of herpetofaunal species across the installation and document any potential trends in population status. Work under this task will include a combination of visual encounter, trapping, artificial cover object, and acoustic surveys for herpetofauna on Fort Cavazos during spring and summer 2024. Survey results should be assembled into a final report summarizing and interpreting the results of these surveys, which can be extrapolated to guide species management and facilitate incorporation into the Fort Cavazos Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan.

Monthly surveys will be conducted across the general active season (April - July) for reptiles and amphibians in 2024. Survey locations will be determined in consultation with ERDC-CERL and Fort Cavazos Natural Resources branch staff, based on each species’ natural history and availability of suitable habitat. A variety of methods will be employed to detect herpetofauna including timed visual encounter surveys, road cruising survey, aural (frog call) surveys, and artificial cover objects.

All survey data, including locations, numbers of individuals and detection method of all detected reptile and amphibian species, will be compiled into a final report.

D. Public Benefit

The benefits of biodiversity to public good have long been recognized. This work will aid in the maintenance of biodiversity by providing critical information for natural resource management efforts and conservation of at-risk wildlife. DoD has the highest density of endangered species of any other federal agency and overall United States biodiversity is highly dependent on effective conservation and management on military lands. Both target taxa in this project, freshwater mussels and herpetofaunal species, have experienced precipitous population declines and are of substantial conservation concern not just in the United States, but also around the globe. The public will benefit as data from the research and surveys will be disseminated to the public and scientific community through final reports and published peer-reviewed journal articles for use in more effective conservation and management.

E. Authorization: 10 USC 4001

F. 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 DoD research general terms and conditions located at <https://www.nre.navy.mil/work-with-us/manage-your-award/manage-grant-award/grants-terms-conditions>.

G. Program-Specific Requirements

II. Federal Award Information

The following information applies to awards issued under this announcement:

- This is a one-time initiative
- The Government anticipates one Federal awards 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 \$50,000
- Award(s) from this announcement will be Cooperative Agreement(s)
- The anticipated period of performance from award to 31 December 2024.
- 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
- The Government’s technical contributions toward this project include 1) Provision of previous survey data and reports, 2) expertise in military installation natural resource management, 3) coordination between installation personnel and university researchers and 4) participation in study design and execution.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

This opportunity is restricted to non-federal partners of the Great Rivers 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.

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. Other

a) Licensure or Certification

You must include the Acknowledgment of Support and Disclaimer on all materials created or produced under our awards. This language may be found in the Terms and Conditions included in the award documents.

E. 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, Grants Specialist (phoebe.v.fuller@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 at this time.

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

2. ERDC will only accept SOIs submitted on or before 07 March 2024, 2:00pm 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, Grants Specialist (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.
- 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. 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.

3. ERDC will only accept full application packages submitted on or before 08 April 2024, 2:00pm 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 Fuller, Grants Specialist (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
- Huawei Technologies Company,
- ZTE Corporation Hytera Communications Corporation,
- Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company,
- Dahua Technology Company
- any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities

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
- Experience with the focal species and region including freshwater mussel and herpetofaunal communities on/near Fort Johnson and Fort Cavazos. Experience must be sufficient to attain all required federal and local permits.

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.

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		Monthly or concurrent with invoices	E-mail
Research Performance Progress Reports (Interim and Final)	OMB Control Number: 0704-0527	Annually	E-mail
Financial Report	SF 425	Bi-annually	E-mail
Payment Report	SF 270	Monthly	E-mail
Closeout Report		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

Tim Black
Grants Officer
Timothy.d.black@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.