

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
USDA-NRCS-IA-10-01
FLOODPLAIN WETLAND RESTORATION ASSISTANCE

AGENCY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Des Moines, Iowa

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER

10.923 – Emergency Watershed Protection Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Iowa is requesting applications to provide implementation of restoration activities on eligible Emergency Watershed Protection – Floodplain Easement (EWP-FPE) properties. Restoration on floodplain easements will include all necessary conservation practices, measures and activities required to restore the floodplain functions and values to the natural conditions to the greatest extent practicable. This may include removing dikes to allow flood waters to access the historic floodplain and vegetation establishment. Applicants will be providing technical assistance necessary to implement EWP-FPE restoration plans. Performance may include any part or all operations necessary for inspection, installation, and construction management activities for various floodplain wetland restorations practices that meet NRCS standards and specifications.

Applications are being requested from eligible non-government organizations, tribes, or individuals for competitive consideration of cooperative agreement awards with a base year and up to four, one-year option periods.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE AND ADDRESSES: Proposals must be received in the Iowa NRCS State Office by **4:30 p.m., Central Time (CT) on February 16, 2010**. The address for hand-delivered applications or applications using express mail or overnight courier service is: Contracting Section, ATTN: Matthew Harvey, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut St, Room 693, Des Moines, IA 50309.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Emergency Watersheds Protection Program-Floodplain Easements (EWP-FPE) was authorized in American Recovery and Reinvestment act of 2009, Public Law 111-5; Section 215 of the Flood Control Act of 1950, Public Law 81-516; the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978, Section 403, Public Law 95-334, 33 U.S.C. 701B01, as amended by the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Section 382, Public Law 104-127, 16.U.S.C. 2203 authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to provide technical assistance under this program to eligible producers. The Secretary may request the services of non-

Federal entities to assist the Secretary in providing the technical assistance necessary implement conservation programs under this title. The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EWP-FPE to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977 (31 U.S.C. 6301-6308, Public Law 95-224) is authorized to enter into grants and cooperative agreements to accomplish a public purpose or stimulation of an activity authorized by statute. The NRCS may do this through entering into cooperative agreements with a service provider or other cooperator to stimulate the availability of technical assistance.

B. Overview

The purpose of the Emergency Watersheds Protection – Floodplain Easement Program is to provide for restoration, protection, maintenance and enhancement of the functions of the floodplain, conserve natural values include fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge and safeguard lives and property from floods. Through EWP-FPE, landowners may receive financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural and/or vegetative restoration practices on eligible land. EWP-FPE provides that the Secretary may request the services of, and enter into cooperative agreements with, non-Federal entities to assist in providing technical assistance necessary to implement conservation programs under this program. The agency is directing resources toward the restoration of floodplain hydrology and function across the state of Iowa.

The NRCS is requesting proposals from qualified individuals, organizations, and tribal governments that share a common interest in the conservation and restoration of floodplain wetland resources throughout Iowa.

C. Project Description

The objective of EWP-FPE is to restore the floodplain functions and values to the natural conditions to the greatest extent practicable and reduce the impacts of flooding. Applicants will be responsible for assisting NRCS by providing technical assistance necessary implement EWP-FPE restoration plans that have been developed by NRCS staff. Performance may include any part or all operations necessary to perform vegetative and hydrology restoration in a timely and effective manner. Work shall include any or all of the following activities: Vegetative plantings, obstruction removal, fencing, levee opening includes grading and stabilization; and other related conservation practices that meet NRCS standards and specifications. See Attachment A for Vegetative Treatment of Floodplain Easements (EWP). Additional practices may be added at NRCS discretion and costs will be negotiated at that time. All services shall be provided in accordance with applicable NRCS policy and criteria that can be found at the following websites: NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: <http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov>; and NRCS National Engineering Handbook, and

National Engineering Manual References:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ENG>.

Service providers will perform all work in close coordination with the NRCS WRP Specialist, District Conservationist (DC) and Area Engineer. Once a project is received the awardee will complete the assigned task during the performance period identified in each task order.

FPE restoration practices may include but are not limited to the following Conservation Practices: Conservation Cover (327), Tree/Shrub Establishment (612), Fence (382), Obstruction Removal – Debris Removal (500), Well Decommissioning (351), Obstruction Removal – Dike/Levee Work (500) and Obstruction Removal – Existing Drainage Tiles (500); and others as deemed necessary and applicable by the Iowa NRCS. All practices are described in the NRCS electronic FOTG, which can be found at:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>.

Location of Services: Throughout Iowa

USDA Service Center Location: All Iowa Field Offices

Equipment: Vehicles, computers, surveying equipment, etc.

Iowa NRCS anticipates the following involvement, which is deemed substantial, in carrying out projects funded with Federal assistance provided through a cooperative agreement under this announcement.

Iowa NRCS will:

- Conduct an initial briefing at the Iowa NRCS State Office in Des Moines, Iowa prior to award to discuss the goals and objectives of the project and items of work to be conducted under the agreement.
- Designate a liaison to participate in the planning and management of the cooperative agreement and coordinate activities between the awardee and Iowa NRCS.
- Identify and prioritize work assignments at the Iowa State Office level with consultation from the Iowa NRCS Field Offices.
- Provide for state level coordination/guidance of the technical specialists.
- Provide quality assurance for services provided under the agreement.
- Provide access to NRCS technology and technical tools to the maximum extent possible.

- Approve all new technologies and innovative practices, including applicable standards and specifications, prior to the applicant applying technical services for those and practices.
- For each project district the Iowa Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (ASTC), State and Area Specialist, FO and the District Conservationist(s) (DC) will participate in the planning and managing of the cooperative agreement(s) and coordinate activities between the awardee and the NRCS.
- The NRCS will identify and prioritize work assignments for completing activities required to implement the floodplain wetland and associated upland restoration components of each conservation plan.
- The NRCS will monitor the awardee's progress and suspend work if agreement or task order requirements are not met.

D. Funding Availability

All awards are subject to the availability of sufficient funds being appropriated by Congress and apportioned by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to support the addition and full cost of service to implement technical assistance activities. Cooperative agreements will be awarded competitively to applicants passed on the attached evaluation criteria. Cooperative agreements have been determined to be the appropriate funding instrument because of the substantial involvement of NRCS in providing technical oversight and coordination of planning, designing and implementing floodplain wetland and associated upland restoration activities. It is anticipated that approximately **\$6.0 million** will be available for implementing floodplain wetland and associated upland restoration plans in Fiscal Year 2010. The amount of funds available for this program is not fixed and may vary considerably from the current funding level. Amendments to the agreement(s) may be developed upon availability of funding in future years (approximately a 5-year period). The work will be performed statewide. Project districts have been designated on the attached map (Attachment B). Applicants should review the map and number of easements and submit a bid according to which districts they are willing to provide services. Work will be divided into 3 project areas (Attachment B). The awardee will supply pricing data on Exhibit B for which project areas they wish to perform the work specified.

The cooperative agreements will include one base-year and four, one-year option periods. Work under this cooperative agreement is subject to satisfactory negotiation of individual task orders. There will be no minimum or maximum price on any single task order. The maximum order amount for each cooperative agreement period (base-year and each option-year) shall be determined by available funds. There shall be no guaranteed minimum task orders for the base year or for the option periods, if exercised. Multiple cooperative agreements may be awarded as a result of this announcement. Projects will be ordered on an as-needed basis beginning from the date of the award of the agreement for a period not to exceed five years.

E. Indirect Costs

Section 708 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, limits indirect costs under cooperative agreements between USDA and nonprofit institutions, including institutions of higher education, to ten (10) percent of the total direct costs of the agreement. Section 708 authorizes an exception to the ten-percent limit for institutions that compute indirect cost rates on similar basis for all agencies for which the Act makes appropriations. If requested, indirect costs must be justified and may not exceed the ten percent limitation or the current rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal-negotiating agency. Applications from colleges and universities must provide a statement in the budget narrative verifying that the indirect costs requested are in accordance with institutional policies. Iowa NRCS will identify and consider the value of federally supported facilities, supplies, vehicles and equipment in negotiating allowable indirect costs for Conservation Districts or other Partners currently operating within USDA Service Centers.

F. Eligible Applicants

Organizations that share a mutual interest in floodplain conservation and who have the highest probability of providing in-kind contributions and other sources of financial or technical support are encouraged to submit a proposal. A listing of possible eligible applicants is as follows:

- Nonprofits having a 501(c) (3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c) (3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
- Individuals
- For profit firms and organizations other than institutions of higher education
- Institutions of higher learning
- Tribal governments

G. Application and Submission Information

1. How to Obtain Application Materials

All OMB standard forms necessary for proposal submission are posted on the following site: http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp

Standard Form 424	Application for Federal Assistance (submit with proposal)
Standard Form 424A	Budget Information – Non-construction Programs (will be used on future orders.)
Standard Form 424B	Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (submit with proposal)
SF-LLL	Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (after award)
SF-425	Financial Status Report (After award)
SF-270	Request for Advance or Reimbursement (after award)
AD-1 047	Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Responsibility Other Matters – Primary Covered Transactions
AD-1 048	Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion – Lower Tier Covered Transactions

2. Proposal Content and Format

Proposals must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for an award. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the work described in the application. Applications must be submitted in the following format: Proposals are to be typewritten on 8 ½” x 11” white paper, double spaced and on one side only. The text of the proposal must be typewritten in a font no smaller than 12-point, with one-inch margins.

Proposal must include all required forms and narrative sections described below; incomplete applications will not be considered. Do not include letters of support, endorsement or recommendations for award.

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to complete the grant or cooperative agreement application. Applicants should refer to <http://www.grants.gov> to apply. Further, the applicant must respond to the Evaluation Factors for Award, provide a detailed cost breakdown to support the proposed budget and include project narratives with a detailed discussion of the project and methodology used.

- 3. Cover Sheet.** Applications must use Standard Form 424, including SF 424A and 424B) with the required information filled in and the certified assurance signed as the cover sheet for their proposal. NOTE: All applicants must provide DUNS number in Block 5. By signing the application form the applicant is providing the required certifications set forth in 7 CFR Part 3017 regarding Debarment and

Suspension and Drug Free Workplace, and 7 CFR Part 3018, regarding Lobbying.

- 4. Project Funding.** Separate price proposal for the overall project period. In Block 15 of the SF 424, show the percent of funding to be provided by each source. Attached to the SF 424 a spreadsheet including rates for the following: personnel listed by labor category, equipment, materials and supplies, travel, all other costs and indirect costs. The agreed to rates will be incorporated into the agreement and be the basis for future orders.

Show all funding sources. Funds may be required from the NRCS under any of the line items listed above provided that the item or service for which support is required is identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed project, is allowable under the authorizing legislation and the applicable Federal cost principles and is not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute. Salaries of project personnel who will be working on the project may be requested in proportion to the effort that they will devote to the project. Show any costs that the applicant will contribute in support of the project, including the organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the project.

- 5. Project Description.** The application shall include a narrative statement that addresses the following as a minimum:
- a. A description of the resources and experience of the organization necessary to successfully perform implementing floodplain wetland and associated upland restoration activities.
 - b. The proposed price for implementing floodplain wetland and associated upland restorations in conservation plans.
 - c. The organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the cooperative agreement.
 - d. A brief description of the capabilities to perform the terms of the cooperative agreement, including a brief description of the organizational entity and of the qualifications, employment status, current responsibilities, and proposed level of effort for the project coordinator, and staff responsible for implementation. Resumes for key personnel should be included in an appendix to the application.
 - e. A list of past experiences with implementing floodplain wetland and associated upland restorations for conservation contracts.
 - f. The application shall include an appendix. Material should be included only when necessary to support information provided in the narrative. Copies of

documents, brochures, etc. are encouraged to demonstrate experience, knowledge, skills and abilities.

6. **Certifications.** All applicants must include a signed SF 424B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs. By signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with following from 7 CFR:

- a. **Part 3017, Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement);**
- b. **Part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying;**
- c. **Part 3021, Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).**

7. **DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Therefore, potential applicants should verify that they have a DUNS number or take the steps needed to obtain one. For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestDUNS> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

8. **Required CCR Registration:** The Central Contractor Registry (CCR) is a database that serves as the primary Government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the Government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants or cooperative agreements from the Government. Applicants must register with CCR. To register, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

9. **How to Submit a Written Proposal**

Applicants must submit one signed original and five complete copies of each project application. Electronic proposals submitted via Grants.gov are acceptable. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left-hand corner. Applications submitted via facsimile or e-mail will not be accepted.

Submit written proposals to:
Matthew Harvey, Contract Specialist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309

10. Proposal Due Date

Proposals must be received no later than February 16, 2010, 4:30 p.m. Central Time. Proposals received after that time will not be considered. A proposal's postmark date is not a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in proposal delivery. Proposals will not be accepted by facsimile machine submission.

AGENCY CONTACTS

Matthew Harvey, Contract Specialist, (515) 284-4506 or Michelle Bales, Supervisory Contract Specialist, (515) 284-4506.

11. Acknowledgment of Submission

Proposals received by the due date will be acknowledged with an official letter. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgment within 30 days of the submission, the applicant must contact the administrative contact (see "Agency Contacts" above) immediately. Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding.

12. Evaluation Criteria:

The Iowa NRCS anticipates the possibility of multiple awards for this announcement.

Prior to the evaluation review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice by the appropriate NRCS staff. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the provisions of this notice will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be evaluated by an evaluation team against the evaluation criteria. The evaluation team will make recommendations to the State Conservationist for final selection and award.

The applications will be evaluated using the following criteria that are listed in descending order of importance:

A. Specialized experience and technical competence in the type of work required (45%)

Evaluation will be based on the extent of related experience in implementing floodplain wetland and associated upland restorations. Consideration will be given to those applicants with knowledge of and direct experience implementing floodplain wetland and associated upland restorations in Iowa. Some key areas of expertise that will be evaluated include, but are not limited to:

- Organizational capabilities. The adequacy of organizational resources and experience to successfully install wetland restoration projects. Share in a common mission that supports the natural resource conservation efforts with private landowners.
- Project personnel. The reasonableness and feasibility of the applicant's approach and expertise for successfully achieving the objectives of the project within the required time frame.
- Understanding the intent of EWP-FPE. The applicant's recognition of the value and need of the project and the full understanding of the intent of EWP-FPE.
- Ability to demonstrate successful past history and credibility of working with private landowners.
- Experience working on floodplain wetland restoration in the State of Iowa or similar ecosystems. Examples of previous work shall be documented for review.

B. Cost Effectiveness (25%)

Evaluation will be based on the best value to the government.

C. Capacity to accomplish the work (15%)

Evaluation will be based upon the number of qualified personnel, the quantity of existing work under contract and the schedules for completion of the existing work.

D. Past performance regarding work of this nature (15%)

- Past experience with other government agencies and other organizations in regards to work of this nature.
- Quality and timeliness of performance of work performed.

13. Selection

Each proposal will be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the evaluation factors listed above. Discussions may be held with each applicant regarding the applicant's experience and operational methods. After selection, NRCS will enter into negotiations with the selected applicant(s) to discuss cost and the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement to be signed. The cooperative agreement will identify the USDA Field Office(s) to be served. NRCS has the option to cancel the announcement if there no qualified applicants or limit the number of awards made from this announcement.

14. Award Information

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected will be notified by the State Conservationist. Applicants whose proposals have not been selected will be notified by official letter.

B. Cooperative Agreement

The NRCS will use a cooperative agreement with selected applicants to document the agreement parameters. The cooperative agreement will include:

- Project purpose;
- Project objectives and deliverables;
- Project progress and budget reporting requirements;
- Award amount and budget information;
- Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement;
- Other requirements and terms deemed necessary to protect the interests of the United States.

Neither the approval of any application nor the award of any cooperative agreement commits or obligates the United States to provide further support of a project or any portion thereof or implies any endorsement.

C. Reporting Requirements

Awardees must submit a Financial Status Report (SF-425) no later than 30 days of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project.

Awardees will be required to comply with 2 CFR 176 for all awards made under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) of 2009. More specifically as follows:

- Reporting and Registration Requirements under Section 1512 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Public Law 111-5 which requires the recipient to report on use of Recovery Act funds as part of the award.
- Comply with Transparency Act, Public Law 109-282
- Required Use of American, Iron, Steel and Manufactured Goods – Section 1605 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – which requires that all iron, steel and manufactured goods used in the project are produced in the United States except as otherwise provided.
- Wage Rate Requirements under Section 1606 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – which requires that all laborers and mechanics employed by contractors and subcontractors on projects funded directly by or assisted in whole or in part with Recovery Act funds shall be paid wages in accordance with the Davis-Bacon Act (40 USC 31).
- Recovery Act Transactions Listed in Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards and Recipient Responsibilities for Informing Sub-Recipients – which requires the recipient to separately identify each sub-recipient and document the sub-award and disbursement of funds.

The NRCS will designate a Government Representative and an Administrative contact for the agreement. These individuals will have technical oversight and administrative oversight responsibility for the agreement. The awardee must comply with any requests for information from these individuals. NRCS recommends that the awardee work closely with these individuals throughout the course of the agreement.

15. Terms and Conditions of the Award

- 1) This announcement is subject to “Variations in Quantity” and “Variations in Delivery”.
- 2) By accepting an award, the applicant assures the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that the program or activities provided for under this agreement will be conducted in compliance with all applicable Federal civil rights laws, rules, regulations, and policies.

- 3) Successful applicants will attend an initial briefing prior to award to discuss the goals and objectives of the project and items of work to be conducted under the agreement.
- 4) The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders and other generally applicable requirements, including those set out in 7 CFR 3015, 3016, 3017, 3018, 3019 and 3052 which will be incorporated into the agreement by reference and such statutory provisions as are specifically set forth in the agreement.
- 5) The OMB Circulars will be incorporated by reference and made a part of each agreement awarded under this process. Applicants are encouraged to review the appropriate circulars prior to requesting federal funds. OMB circulars may be viewed online at http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp. CFR's may be found at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/CFR/>. Failure of an applicant to comply with any provision may be the basis of withholding payment for proper charges made by the applicant and for termination of support. Federal Statutes and regulations that apply to this program include, but are not limited to the following:
 - 7 CFR Part 3 – USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-129 regarding debt collections;
 - 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A – USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act;
 - 7 CFR Part 15, Subpart A – USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
 - 7 CFR Part 3015 – USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., Circular Nos. A-102, A-110, A-21, A-87, A-122) and incorporating provisions of the 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308, as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance;
 - 7 CFR Part 3016 – USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments;
 - 7 CFR Part 3017 – USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (non-procurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace;
 - 7 CFR Part 3018 – USDA implementation of New Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements and loans;
 - 7 CFR Part 3019 – USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-Profit Organizations;
 - OMB Circular A-21 – Cost Principals for Educational Institutions;
 - OMB Circular A-87 – Cost Principals for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments;

- 7 CFR Part 3052 – USDA Implementation of Audits of States and Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations;
- 5 CFR part 2635 – Standards of Ethical Conduct;
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

6) Comply with the “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons.”

7) Comply with the “Privacy Act.”

Additional information related to the Emergency Watersheds Protection Program – Floodplain Easements can be found at the following links: Emergency Watersheds Protection Program-Floodplain Easements:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/Floodplain/index.html>