



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## Outreach of Interest (OOI) Announcement INSTRUCTIONS

### Bioacoustics Monitoring for Wildlife Management

#### SUMMARY INFORMATION

**Federal Award Agency Name:** U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (FS)

**Outreach of Interest Announcement Title:** Bioacoustics Monitoring for Wildlife Management

**Opportunity/Announcement Number:** USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-03

**Assistance Listing Number:** 10.699 Partnership Agreement Outreach

**Instrument Type:** Other (Non-Funded)

#### Key Points

- OOI response deadline: **February 7, 2025; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST).**
- USDA Forest Service will send an auto-response upon receipt of your package submission.
- USDA Forest Service will send each applicant a follow-up message within one month of package receipt.
- Contact us: [opegas@usda.gov](mailto:opegas@usda.gov).

- ✓ **Please ensure that when you complete your forms for this proposal (SF-424, Narrative Statement...etc.) that you "Save As" and give your file a new name. DO NOT "Print to PDF". Once you have saved your forms under a new name, you will upload those forms into the attachment document.**

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## **I. Outreach of Interest Overview**

### **A. Objective**

This outreach of interest (OOI) functions as an outreach mechanism to cultivate relationships and connect with potential partners. This OOI is intended to solicit responses to explore future projects meeting the needs and interests of potential partners through partnership agreements within legislative authority with USDA Forest Service.

USDA Forest Service would like to increase capacity to monitor wildlife including potential response to management actions by engaging partnerships from local communities who have a vested interest in management outcomes. This OOI reflects efforts to increase representation, including from diverse and underserved backgrounds. Future partnerships will help to address monitoring needs, adaptive management, and USDA Forest Service ability to course correct as needed. Partnerships will foster co-stewardship between the USDA Forest Service through better representation of the communities we serve and reflect a shared commitment to wildlife conservation on USDA Forest Service lands.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you your ideas/projects/programs and potential partnership opportunities. USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering a strong, collaborative partnership that benefits our fisheries, plants, and wildlife resources, and their habitats. Collaboration is vital for collecting monitoring data that will inform management and wildlife conservation.

### **B. Funding**

This OOI is non-funded and non-competitive. The intent of this OOI is to gauge your interest, feedback and/or your proposed projects ideas and concepts.

## **II. Agency Overview**

### **A. Background**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service delivers world-class science, technology, and land management to sustain the Nation's forests and grasslands in collaboration with communities and our partners. USDA Forest Service manages 193 million acres of land, including 154 national forests, 20 national grasslands, 1 national tallgrass prairie, 7 research stations, and 81 experimental forests and ranges, as well as other special areas, in support of its' mission "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

As the lead federal agency in natural resource conservation, USDA Forest Service provides leadership in the protection, management, and use of the nation's forest, rangeland, and aquatic ecosystems. Through implementation of land and resource management plans, the agency ensures sustainable ecosystems by restoring and maintaining species diversity and ecological productivity that helps provide recreation, water, timber, minerals, fish, wildlife, wilderness, and aesthetic values for current and future generations of people.

As the lead federal agency in natural resource conservation, the USDA Forest Service provides leadership in the protection, management, and use of the nation's forest, rangeland, and aquatic ecosystems. Through the implementation of land and resource management plans, the agency ensures sustainable ecosystems by restoring and maintaining species diversity and

ecological productivity that helps provide recreation, water, timber, minerals, fish, wildlife, wilderness, and aesthetic values for current and future generations of people.

For FY 2024, the goals of USDA Forest Service are to: 1) Sustain our Nation's Forests and Grasslands Working Environment; 2) Deliver Benefits to the Public; 3) Apply Knowledge Globally; 4) Excel as a High-Performing Agency. The Forest Service's National Priorities are: 1) Providing Economic Relief; 2) Tackling Climate Change; 3) Advancing Racial Equity; 4) Improving Our Workforce and Work Environment and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." As a values-based, purpose driven and relationship-focused organization, USDA Forest Service emphasizes working in collaboration with communities and our partners; providing access to resources and experiences that promote economic, ecological, and social vitality; connecting people to the land and one another; and delivering world-class science, technology, and land management. USDA Forest Service believes in service — to each other and the planet; the interdependency of people and nature; that conservation means we protect, preserve, and restore public lands for the people and enjoyment; that diversity is key—people and cultures, experiences, and ecosystems; and safety underpins everything we do.

## **B. Partnership Agreements with the USDA Forest Service**

Partnership agreements are entered into in support of USDA Forest Service mission. The USDA Forest Service may approach or be approached by a potential partner to enter into a partnership agreement that results in a joint accomplishment of work benefiting both organizations. The principal purpose of partner agreements is the creation of partnerships in support of projects of mutual interest and mutual benefit to each party. Mutual interest exists when both parties benefit in the same qualitative way from the objectives of the agreement. If one party independently has an interest in a project that is shared by the other party, and both parties pool resources to obtain the result of the project, mutual interest exists. Most of FS authorities requires a mutual interest agreement.

Partnership agreements are considered non-assistance agreements and are not considered grants or cooperative agreements as those terms are used in the Federal Grants and Cooperative Agreements, 31U.S.C. 6301 et seq. USDA Forest Service engages partnership work through a range of legislative authorities (see Section IV, Legislative Authorities).

## **Award Procedures**

The Forest Service has general authority to negotiate and enter into different types of partnership arrangements, including but not limited to Stand-Alone Agreements, or Master Agreements with tiered Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs) or a combination thereof. Partnership agreements and their supporting documentation are both negotiated and drafted in collaboration with prospective partners prior to entering into a funding arrangement. Discussions cover at a minimum, the appropriate statutory authority; a description of the project, including methodology and technical specifications; contributions and the responsibilities of the parties; financial plan; the period of performance; monitoring and accomplishments reporting. Regardless of who initiates discussions, all elements of a project are subject to negotiation. Any party may terminate the agreement at any time. Except for provisions necessary for legal compliance, all elements of a partnership agreement are subject to negotiation and modification. Both parties are expected to negotiate, resolve, and document differences in cost and/or proposed work in writing. None of the parties should perform work outside the scope of the existing instrument or in excess of the funding prior to

the execution of a formal modification.

### **Project Length**

Awards under this announcement are typically 1 to 5 years in length. Projects of greater complexity may be awarded for a longer period, not to exceed 5 years.

### **Cost Share Match Requirements and Match Reductions or Waivers**

For partnership agreements, the partner's contribution should not be less than 20 percent of the total project cost, unless allowable under a reduction or waiver (see below). The matching amount should be consistent and commensurate with the project scope, size, and/or benefits received. The partner may satisfy the matching requirement by providing cash, real or personal property, services, and/or in-kind contributions, such as volunteer labor. Cash and third-party in-kind matches must consist of eligible costs.

Cash match is from the applicant's budget, such as personnel salary, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies, or cash provided by another party. Source of cash match cannot be derived from another Federal award. Cash donated or provided to a cooperator, specifically for that project is an in-kind contribution.

In-Kind match is a non-cash contribution of value. A non-Federal entity's in-kind match must meet the following criteria:

- Are verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records;
- Are not included as contributions for any other Federal award;
- Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives;
- Are not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost-sharing requirements of other Federal programs;
- Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and
- Conform to the Forest Service handbook (FSH1509.11), manual (1580) and/or other applicable federal laws and regulations.

Supplemental Guidance for Match Waivers and Match Reduction: The Forest Service may reduce or waive the minimum 20 percent cooperator match requirement for a project that serves an underserved/disadvantaged community or is a tribal sovereign.

### **Indirect Cost**

Indirect costs are approved for reimbursement or as a cost-share requirement and have an effective period applicable to the term of master and supplemental agreements. Expenses that are necessary for the operation of an organization, but not specifically identified with or traceable to a specific program or output, that is, not a direct cost but rather a cost distributed across many programs or outputs. Often referred to as "overhead," or in the Forest Service as "burden," indirect costs are incurred as part of general management and administrative support of an organization, and may include office and personnel expenses, computers, and utilities.

## **III. Initiative Overview and OOI Intent**

## **A. Program Overview**

The USDA Forest Service is tasked with maintaining ecological integrity to support diverse and viable wildlife species. One way this is achieved is through survey and monitoring, an important tool used in wildlife management and conservation. Robust information on species abundance, occupancy and habitat is an ongoing need for the agency. This need will only increase as the pace and scale of forest management actions (e.g., fuels reduction) accelerates under the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and related initiatives such as Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership and Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, among others. In addition to routine survey needs that document presence/absence and population trends, there is a growing need for effectiveness monitoring such as post-treatment assessments following restoration (or other) activities (e.g., recreation) across the country. Through adaptive management, monitoring data help guide and inform future management and also support and inform the agency's Climate Adaptation Strategy and provisions of the 2012 planning rule.

Advances in acoustical monitoring using automated recordings units (ARUs) provide unprecedented opportunities for the USDA Forest Service and partners to survey and monitor at broad, spatial, temporal, and taxonomic scales through continuous recording of wildlife sounds. ARUs offer the potential to significantly increase staff capacity, coverage, and identification of a broad range of wildlife taxa including birds, bats, frogs, and more recently insects. This bioacoustics data can also complement other remotely based information such as vegetation structure/composition and climate across broad landscapes. Other benefits include minimizing safety risks associated with survey work in challenging terrain, season, or time of day (e.g., winter, night surveys). ARUs can be deployed during the day and programmed to record at night and can increase efficiency using standardized approaches over large areas.

Proposed project scope and ideas would help the USDA Forest Service meet its stewardship responsibilities for conserving both common and at-risk species. The project would engage community members and cultivate a vested interest in long term success and shared "ownership" in final outcomes; provide opportunities for job training and using new technology, personal development, conservation service, and natural resource appreciation while cultivating the next generation of natural resource stewards.

## **B. Statement of Work**

The purpose of potential project scope is to increase understanding of wildlife occupancy, abundance, distribution, habitat use and management effectiveness. ARU placement and sample design would be informed by current science using statistically robust protocols and sampling frameworks developed and or vetted by the agency (e.g., North American Bat Grid). Data management and analyses would also be the responsibility of USDA Forest Service. Partner responsibilities would include navigating to predetermined locations to deploy and retrieve ARU units and swapping out data cards. Some general descriptive data collection may also be needed such as data on site conditions and pictures. USDA Forest Service would provide overall project oversight and facilitate cross program coordination with other program areas as needed such as forestry, fire, silviculture, rangeland management, tribal relations and with other relevant partners.

The objectives for potential projects would include:

- Monitoring of certain USDA Forest Service focal species, at-risk species, or other species of interest to the agency and its partners.

- Monitoring for invasives (e.g., bullfrog) or incipient (early detection) or nuisance species (e.g., bark beetles) that may have negative effects on ecological integrity for desirable wildlife species and habitat.
- Surveillance or reconnaissance surveys for species of interest that may not have special protections but are still socially or ecologically important such as rare endemics, culturally important species, or species less commonly surveyed or otherwise typically difficult to survey.
- Effectiveness monitoring (before-after) in highly managed landscapes undergoing vegetation removal, terrestrial or riparian restoration, habitat enhancement, fuels reduction, and prescribed burning.

#### **Resources:**

[Confronting the Wildfire Crisis | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

[Forest Service National Strategic Framework for Invasive Species Management | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

[Attributed North American Bat Monitoring Program \(NABat\) Master Sample and Grid-Based Sampling Frame | U.S. Geological Survey \(usgs.gov\)](#)

[Avian Knowledge Network](#)

[A technical guide for monitoring wildlife habitat | US Forest Service Research and Development \(usda.gov\)](#)

[2012 Planning Rule-Monitoring](#)

[Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: A USDA Forest Service Action Plan](#)

[Forest Service Equity Action Plan \(usda.gov\)](#)

[Climate Adaptation Plan](#)

[Forest Service Climate Risk Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](#)

#### **C. Project Priorities**

USDA Forest Service is interested in projects that:

- Support the conservation of indigenous species;
- Restore resilient landscapes; nurture thriving communities;
- Build diversity and inclusion; and identify workforce development opportunities in conservation stewardship and natural and cultural resources;
- Support, benefit, or engage communities that are historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality (pursuant to Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government).
- Informs fuels reduction activities under the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and revegetation under the Reforestation Act.
- Informs ongoing habitat enhancement work including projects supporting migratory joint ventures, grassland restoration, bat conservation and nonnative invasive species removal.
- Informs forest plan monitoring, special status species and or culturally significant species.

## **IV. Legislative Authorities**

USDA Forest Service engages partnership work through a range of Legislative Authorities.

- Cooperative Funds and Deposits Act of 1978, Public Law 94-148 as amended. 16 USC 565a-1
- Wyden Amendment (Public Law 105-277, Section 323 as amended by Public Law 109-54, Section 434, and permanently authorized by Public Law 111-11, Section 3001)
- Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 1992, Public Law 102-154
- Public Land Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act, Public Law 109-154, 16 U.S.C. 1701
- 638 Tribal Forestry Protection Act, Title 2018 Farm Bill P.L. 115-334, Section 8703, 25 U.S.C. 3115.
- Stewardship End Result Contracting, Public Law 108-148 §604. 16 USC 6591c.
- Good Neighbor Authority: Agricultural Act of 2014, Pub. L. 113-79, section 8206 as amended, 16 USC 2113a
- Agriculture Conservation Experienced Service (ACES) Program, 2014 Farm Bill, Public Law 113-79, Section 8302
- Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986, Public Law 96-480, 15 U.S.C. 3710a
- National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, Public Law 95-113, 7 US Code 3318 and 3319a
- The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 (Pittman- Robertson; 16 U.S.C. §§669 et seq.).
- North American Wetlands Conservation /reauthorization Act of 2006.
- The Duck Stamp Act, 1934, chapter 71, 48 Stat. 451, subchapter IV (§718 et seq.)
- Sikes Act, 1960 (16 USC 670a-670o, 74 Stat. 1052).
- Endangered Species Act of 1973: 16 U.S.C. §§1531-1544
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act: 16 U.S.C. 668 - 668d
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. § 703-711 and Executive Order 13186 (Responsibilities of Federal Agencies To Protect Migratory Birds)
- Fish And Wildlife Coordination Act: 16 USC 661-666c

## V. How to Respond

### A. Eligible Responders

Eligible applicants include for profit; non-profits; institutions of higher education; federal, state, local, and Native American tribal governments; foreign governments and organizations and special purpose districts (public utility districts, fire districts, conservation districts, school districts, and ports).

### B. Content and Grants.gov Submission

- Submit SF 424, Narrative Statement form, and the attachment form through grants.gov or the [opega@usda.gov](mailto:opega@usda.gov) Inbox. Submissions should be in .pdf or .doc format. **Section VI: Forms** section of this document includes forms for your use. For other feedback, use the grants.gov “attachments” form.
- Respond by: **February 7, 2025; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST).**
- Grants.gov submission is **preferred**. A grants.gov applicant account is required for submitting interest through grants gov [Home | Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). See Grants.gov organization registration page for registration guidance.

Note: After registering, please choose “subscribe” in grants.gov. By subscribing to OOI



Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-03 you will be notified of any updates and notifications.

Grants.gov provides customer support 24/7 via toll-free number **1-800-518-4726** and email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). In addition, grants.gov has video tutorials available.

- Once registered in Grants.gov search for OOI Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-03 United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

Note: System for Award Management (SAM) registration is required to submit any application across the federal government through grants.gov. SAM registration is a lengthy process. If you are not currently registered in SAM, we strongly recommend registration.

- No hardcopy applications will be accepted.
- For questions related to OOI opportunity: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-03, please contact USDA Forest Service: [opegas@usda.gov](mailto:opegas@usda.gov).

### **C. System for Award Management (SAM) Registration**

SAM.gov registration is required for submitting responses in SAM.gov ([SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) | [Home](#)), registration is free. The approval process for a new or renewal SAM registration can take several months. If you are awaiting SAM registration and cannot submit through grants.gov, please send your application to: [opegas@usda.gov](mailto:opegas@usda.gov).

## **VI. OOI Announcement**

USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering strong, collaborative partnerships benefitting the environment and underserved communities. These collaborations are vital for understanding forest restoration and wildlife habitat needs, establishing shared priorities, expanding capacity, and ensuring the growth of resilient and healthy forests. By working together, we all can maximize the impact of restoration and habitat enhancement efforts on national forests.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you the ideas/projects/program in your submittal and your feedback.

**Submission:** For submission procedures, please see Section V: [How to Respond](#).

Note In addition to wildlife monitoring, USDA Forest Service is interested in exploring further opportunities for collaboration with underserved communities (see additional project descriptions for wildlife habitat enhancement and wildlife fencing).

### **A. Forms**

If you would like to provide interest or feedback, you can respond using the forms located within the Grants.gov website. In addition, direct links are provided below.

- [SF-424 Form](#): Application for Federal Assistance (OMB 4040-0001)
- [Attachments Form](#): "Attachments Form" (attach documents for submission into Grants.gov using this form)
- Narrative Statement Form: [Home](#) | [Grants.gov](#). Search using the following opportunity number USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-22-WLF-03.

- Please ensure that when you complete your forms for this proposal that you **"Save As"** and give your file a new name. **DO NOT** "Print to PDF". Once you have saved your forms under a new name, you will upload those forms into the attachment document.

Note: If you receive an error when opening a form, it may indicate that you have either opened the PDF file with an incompatible version of Adobe PDF software or you have opened the PDF file with a browser that has a built-in PDF viewer that is not compatible with Grants.gov. Save the form on your computer and then open the most up-to-date Adobe PDF software and open the saved file on your computer.

If you do not have a compatible version of Adobe PDF software, please reference the steps below to download a compatible version.

1. Go to <http://get.adobe.com/reader/otherversions/>
2. Under STEP 1, select your operating system.
3. Under STEP 2, select your preferred language.
4. Under STEP 3, select the version of compatible software you want to download.
5. Under OPTIONAL OFFERS, you may check or uncheck these offers based on your preference.
6. Click on the DOWNLOAD NOW button to begin the download of the software.

## **VII. Response Notice Timeline**

- A. The agency will send an auto-response when response submissions have been received.**
- B. The agency will send a personalized follow-up message within one month of receiving responses to this OOI.**

*This is not a grant announcement. It is a non-funded, non-competitive outreach of interest (OOI) announcement to gauge applicants' interest in the Forest Service program of work. Responding to this OOI will not give an advantage to any organization or individual for any possible subsequent award action. Not responding to this OOI does not preclude participation in any future funding opportunity announcement, if any is issued.*