

# Request for Proposals

RFP Number 2011-001

Opens immediately and closes 9.15.2011 at 8:00 p.m. EDST. Proposals received after this time may not be considered.

## **Coordinating State Forest Action Plans (State Forest Resource Assessments) and State Wildlife Action Plans: *A Pilot Approach for the South***

### **Statement of Purpose**

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment), in partnership with the Southern Group of State Foresters, the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Southern Region of the U.S. Forest Service, and the Southeast Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, seeks proposals from qualified service providers who can undertake a pilot project that will analyze the potential benefits of coordinating State Forest Action Plans ([www.forestationplans.org](http://www.forestationplans.org)) and State Wildlife Action Plans ([www.wildlifeactionplans.org](http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org)). The overall goal of this project is to enhance cooperation and coordination within and between states with regard to implementation of these plans, and to increase the effectiveness of on-the-ground conservation outcomes.

This project will be owned by and be for the benefit of the respective state agencies with the goal of better marshalling and deploying limited resources to achieve shared, priority objectives. By demonstrating the benefits of collaboration, this process would help usher in a new era of cooperation between state forestry and state wildlife agencies, and could lead to additional resources and/or better direction of limited funds to meet priority needs.

States to be included in the pilot project: Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

### **Background**

With financial resources diminishing, and interest in and concern for natural resources peaking, the partners promoting this project believe that enhanced communication and cooperation within and between states is more urgent than ever.

The purpose of this project is to examine the opportunity to increase the efficiency of programs, enhance their impacts, and attract additional resources to state agencies and their partners, through enhanced coordination between the plans.

### **We envision this pilot project as consisting of three phases:**

- 1) A detailed analysis and comparison of Forest and Wildlife Action Plans for each of the interested states, including identification of actual and potential geographic and programmatic areas of mutual interest, and an analysis of state plans relative to other appropriate regional and national plans to identify gaps and overlaps;

- 2) An assessment of management needs and strategies necessary to initiate and implement enhanced cooperation and communication, with specific recommendations on a state-by-state basis; and
- 3) Recommendations for public and private funding opportunities for the specific opportunities identified in #2 above.

Potential applicants may conduct each phase themselves or use subcontractors for specific phases; either way, proposals should include strategies for addressing the entire project.

***It is recommended that the successful applicant pilot this project first in one state, and apply the lessons learned to the remaining states.***

**Specific objectives to be included in the proposal:**

**Phase 1**

- Identification of common (e.g. cross-cutting/mutually beneficial) priority issues affecting forestry and wildlife resources within a state;
- Identification of important gaps in natural resource conservation between the two plans;
- Creation of maps of priority areas important to both agencies;

**Phase 2**

- Opportunities to increase collaboration between agencies, resulting in more resources being available for priority activities;
- Opportunities to enhance agency efficiencies on joint work planning, implementation, and staffing;
- Recommendations for how existing regional and national strategies may play a role in moving joint state priorities forward (e.g. Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, America's Great Outdoors; Southern Forest Futures Report, State NRCS Plans, Rangewide Plan for Longleaf Pine; other landscape plans, etc);
- Development of complementary, and more cost-effective strategies for state forestry agencies and state wildlife agencies to use to address priority issues;
- Strategies to encourage interstate collaboration on issues of mutual interest;
- Recommendations for metrics to be used to guide progress in areas of mutual interest;
- Recommendations to strengthen long-term working relationships between state forestry agencies and state wildlife agencies, and other key partners, as appropriate;
- Opportunities to demonstrate the economic and natural resource benefits of cross-agency collaboration;
- Strategies to communicate co-benefits of aligning plan priorities to key decision makers;

**Phase 3**

- Opportunities to enhance agency competitiveness to capture state, federal, and private sources of funding to support strategy implementation;
- Processes to increase the likelihood of measurable outcomes in both plans;
- Opportunities for positive public relations outreach to the conservation community, general public, and key influencers;

- Recommendations for a system and process to track and report to the Administration and Congress, as well as the general public, the successful outcomes of each project and the benchmarks for meeting Action Plan goals to make the case for increases in further federal and/or other funding; and
- Recommendations for a system and process to communicate projects and achievements to state and federal policy makers so that they gain a better understanding of how the success of Action Plans will create real and measured change, resulting in benefits to forestland and wildlife habitat.

**Project oversight:** An Oversight Committee will guide this project and work closely with the successful applicant, and will include representatives from the Southern Group of State Foresters, the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the pilot states, and the Endowment. The successful applicant will be expected to work closely with this committee on project implementation, including frequent conference calls to update the group on progress. This committee will also be available to help with questions or concerns, where appropriate. The Endowment will be responsible for financial and administrative management of the project.

**Stakeholder’s Meeting:** Applicants should consider the merits of organizing a 1-2 day stakeholder’s meeting, to include the Oversight Committee and other relevant participants. If additional meetings are considered necessary by the applicant, these should be justified in the proposal and funds for the meeting(s) should be included in the budget.

**State Agency Personnel Resources:** Each agency in each state will designate one primary contact person who will commit to supporting the successful applicant throughout the process. Representatives from other appropriate organizations and agencies may be engaged as needed.

**Presentation of Final Results:** At a minimum, the successful applicant should plan to present the final results in person to the Oversight Committee. Additional presentations may be scheduled for meetings of the Southern Group of State Foresters and the Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Project budgets should include travel for each of these three presentations.

### **Scope of Work**

Each proposal should:

- **Define Process/Mean:** Describe in detail the process by which this analysis would take place, including partners to be included, if any. This section should specifically address the objectives listed in the Background section above and should include clearly described outcomes (5-7 pages);
- **Primary Benefits:** Describe advantages to your proposed approach, as well as any previous experience you, your team, or organization may have with similar or related analyses (1-2 pages). For example, why would state agencies see participation in your approach as superior to alternatives?
- **Budget:** Include the total proposed cost and an itemized budget for components of each Phase;
- **Timeline:** Describe in detail the process and timeline necessary to complete the project as described. It is anticipated that the project should require less than a year to complete, from the

time the contract is signed. Initial results from the pilot state project will be expected in 2-3 months.

### **Process Schedule**

The Endowment will coordinate review of all proposals with the oversight committee and will engage the successful applicant at the earliest possible time.

- Proposal Deadline: September 15, 2011
- Proposal Review Completed: October 15, 2011
- Applicants notified: No later than October 20, 2011
- Finalize contract: November 15, 2011

### **Outcome and Performance Standards**

The successful applicant will work closely with the Oversight Committee in the performance of this agreement to yield a product that serves the shared interest of the partners and the pilot states. Work will progress from a detailed work plan agreed to by the applicant and the Oversight Committee, and will include monthly updates on progress leading to the final product. The applicant and the Oversight Committee will work closely to develop and make revisions leading to a final, acceptable report.

### **Method of Work Agreement/Funding Source/Funds Available**

The services agreement will be by written contract between the Endowment and the successful applicant. Funds for this project are likely to be one-half federal and one-half private. No matching funds are required. Up to \$100,000 is available for this pilot phase.

### **Evaluation and Award Process**

The Endowment and its partners will rate proposals on the following criteria:

- i. Relevant work experience
- ii. Quality and breadth of prior work in related areas
- iii. Ability to meet desired timelines
- iv. Proposed methods and products
- v. Total project price

### **Contract and Questions**

For questions or clarification please contact Peter Stangel ([peter@usendowment.org](mailto:peter@usendowment.org); 803-725-8158).

### **Proposal Submission**

Only proposals submitted through the Endowment's electronic process will be considered. Please follow this link to the electronic application form: <http://www.usendowment.org/pendingrfps.html>