
REQUEST FOR STATEMENTS OF INTEREST

Project Assessment Coordinator Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Gulf of Mexico coast is an ecologically-, socially-, and economically-valuable region of the U.S., with deeply-rooted human history, a thriving seafood and coastal recreation industry, and some of the most ecologically important coastal landscapes in the nation. However, the susceptibility of coastal resources in this region to both natural and manmade disturbance has increased over time, and these resources were particularly affected by the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010. The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Restore Council) was founded in 2012 to manage a portion of the funds available through the Gulf Restoration Trust Fund as established by the RESTORE Act to recover Gulf Coast ecosystems and economies following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The Restore Council is comprised of the Governors from the five Gulf States, Secretaries from the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Commerce, Agriculture, Homeland Security, and Army, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. On December 9, 2015, the Restore Council approved the Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes as one among a suite of projects approved in the 2015 final Funded Priorities List. The Strategic Conservation Assessment aims to develop a suite of conservation planning tools that provide science-based decision support for Restore Council members in prioritizing land conservation strategies, opportunities, and projects in the Gulf Coast Region.

The Gulf Coast Region already has a strong conservation foundation that can be further strengthened by implementing a strategic approach to Gulf-wide conservation to support broader ecological function of Gulf systems, while incorporating critical social and economic values and future threats in a multi-criteria decision framework. With leadership from the network of Gulf Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and a Core Working Group representing Restore Council member institutions, the Strategic Conservation Assessment aims to provide the Restore Council with a multi-scale, broad-perspective, and a non-regulatory, voluntary decision support system that integrates Gulf conservation partner priorities and values into a transparent, defensible and dynamic framework from which strategic conservation investments can be made. The Strategic Conservation Assessment has three main objectives: 1) collation of shared multi-scale priorities and objectives across the broader conservation community from existing conservation planning efforts; 2) use of multi-criteria decision analysis to translate these priorities into a conservation planning tool that supports Restore Council land conservation decisions and incorporates partner and stakeholder-based valuations on ecological, social, and economic criteria into a flexible decision support framework; and, 3) development and distribution of a spatial prioritization layer incorporating conservation planning tool valuations and future threats of sea-level rise and urbanization in a geospatial environment to aid the Restore Council and Gulf coast stakeholders in identifying high priority lands for voluntary conservation efforts. The Strategic Conservation Assessment will provide the Restore Council with a process- and product-based mechanism to support future decisions.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The project will require extensive coordination of stakeholders representing federal, state, local and tribal governments, private citizens, non-profit organizations, industry, and public-private partnerships working together toward development of a shared conservation vision along the Gulf Coast Region. **Through this request for statements of interest we are seeking a qualified Assessment Coordinator to lead the Strategic Conservation Assessment project.** The Assessment Coordinator will serve as overall project lead for the Strategic Conservation Assessment, working under direction of the project Core Working Group, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Gulf Restoration Program Project Officer, and Mississippi State University (MSU) Principal Investigators. The Assessment Coordinator must be experienced in landscape-level natural resource conservation planning (ideally in the Gulf Coast Region), and will be responsible for development and coordination of several stakeholder group meetings in coastal communities across the Gulf. The Assessment Coordinator will serve as lead on collation of shared partner priorities, development of the conservation planning tool and geospatial framework, and administration/co-administration of a project team including an Ecological Modeler, GIS Analyst, Outreach and Extension Specialist, and other administrative and support staff as appropriate. The Assessment Coordinator is expected to serve in a leadership role in developing and reporting on elements of each project objective and will also be responsible for regular and timely progress reports in the form of in-person meetings, conference calls/webinars, and written reports to the Core Working Group, USFWS Project Officer, and MSU Principal Investigator.

We expect the Assessment Coordinator to commit 100% full-time equivalent for the duration of the 3-year project. The Assessment Coordinator position will be funded in the form of a contractual services agreement, institutional subaward, or as a time-limited Program Coordinator position employed by Mississippi State University. Depending on the mechanism, the full amount of award, including direct and indirect costs, will not exceed \$108,000 annually for 3 years, with the contract/subaward amount or salary commensurate with experience. The Assessment Coordinator will ideally be physically based out of one of the Gulf Coast States, with preference given to the Northern Gulf Coast Region. This position requires extensive travel within the Gulf Coast Region, but may also require travel to meetings in other states or countries. The Assessment Coordinator must be available to start work July 1, 2017.

QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants for the Assessment Coordinator position must hold a Bachelor's, Master's degree, or Ph.D. in natural resource management or planning, or related field; those with advanced degrees, or equivalent experience, are particularly encouraged to submit a SOI. The applicant must have experience in working across geo-political boundaries to develop large-scale conservation planning products in coastal environments, organizing and facilitating diverse stakeholder groups, and interacting with diverse audiences. The Coordinator must have excellent project management skills, including oral and written communication and organizational skills, with demonstrated ability to deliver large-scale and complex projects, preferably along the Gulf Coast. The Coordinator must be self-motivated, able to work independently and effectively, and willing to travel extensively within the Gulf Coast Region (minimally one multi-night trip per month). In addition to required qualifications above, preferred qualifications include breadth and depth of experience working with the Gulf of Mexico coastal conservation and planning community, including federal, state and local governments, non-profit, private entities, and academic institutions; familiarity with the Restore Council activities and funding mechanisms; experience supervising and managing project teams comprised of individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives; experience managing/administering fiscal budgets for large conservation planning projects; experience in creating, managing, and prioritizing a multi-scale portfolio of land conservation projects, particularly along the Gulf of Mexico, that incorporates ecological, social, and economic valuation, as well as landscape threats into strategic prioritization of land conservation decisions;

familiarity with Strategic Habitat Conservation or adaptive resource management concepts, and demonstrated evidence of implementation of these concepts in previous employment; knowledge of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, landscape conservation design, and partnership-driven decision support; experience with Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis, Simple Multi-Attribute Rating Technique (SMART), system-level “scorecard” development, or assessment of alternative conservation planning scenarios; understanding of existing conservation priorities along the Gulf of Mexico coast, including those developed by states (e.g., State Wildlife Master Plans, Coastal Master Plans, etc.), partnerships (e.g., Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, Gulf of Mexico Alliance, LCCs, Joint Venture initiatives, etc.), and other entities (e.g., National Estuary Programs, etc.); and experience and/or understanding of incorporating geospatial data elements into a spatial conservation planning framework or geospatial decision support system to identify priority areas for land acquisition, easement, or other incentives. Familiarity with GIS and other related software applications and technologies is highly desirable.

STATEMENT OF INTEREST FORMAT

Statements of interest for the project Assessment Coordinator must be <5 pages in length and must include: 1) an outline of capabilities and prior experience for each element defined in the project description and required/preferred qualifications; 2) a statement of experience in managing large-scale projects involving extensive coordination and stakeholder interactions; 3) a comprehensive resume or Curriculum Vitae; and 4) a list of 5 references. **Please follow the Statement of Interest Template below when formatting your submission.** Resume/CV and references are not included in the page limit.

TIMELINE

Review will begin May 15, 2017, and continue until a candidate is identified. We expect the Assessment Coordinator to start work no later than July 1, 2017, with the potential to start in June depending on contracting mechanism.

CONTACT

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with a member of the project team (USFWS Project Officer, John Tirpak [John_tirpak@fws.gov], or MSU project lead Kristine Evans [kristine.evans@msstate.edu]) prior to statement of interest submission.

SUBMISSION

Please email a cover letter and the Statement of Interest in the provided template format to Kristine Evans [kristine.evans@msstate.edu] with the following subject line “**YOUR NAME - SCA Assessment Coordinator Statement of Interest**”. Review of Statements of Interest will begin May 15, 2017.

Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes

Project Assessment Coordinator

Statement of Interest Template

Section 1. Contact Information

Name, Title and Affiliation:

Address:

Email:

Secondary Email (if appropriate):

Phone number:

Section 2. Please outline your capabilities and prior experience for each element defined in the project description and required/preferred qualifications in the space below (limit 3 pages):

Section 3. Please provide a statement of experience in managing large-scale projects involving extensive coordination and stakeholder interactions in the space below (limit 2 pages):

Section 4. Please provide a comprehensive resume or Curriculum Vitae in the space below or attach to email as separate file in PDF format (no page limit):

Section 5. Please provide 5 references (name, affiliation, email, phone number) in the space below:

