



## **Request for Proposals: The New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary Islands for Waterbirds Adaptive Restoration Project**

### **1. Background on the Harbor Estuary Program and NEIWPCC**

Designated as an Estuary of National Significance in 1987 by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary is a complex ecological system in the midst of a major urban center. The NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program (HEP) is one of 28 National Estuary Programs in the country. The Program is an ongoing effort to develop and implement a plan to protect, conserve, and restore the estuary. As asserted in its mission statement, “the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program works to shape policy and implement actions that positively impact the health of the Estuary by convening a partnership of interested stakeholders, utilizing sound science to analyze the issues, and working to carry out recommendations that are environmentally and economically responsible.” Participants in the Program include representatives from local, state, and federal environmental agencies; scientists; citizens; businesses; and environmentalists, among others.

New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) is a not-for-profit interstate agency that serves and assists its member states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont) by coordinating activities and forums that encourage cooperation among the states, educating the public about key water quality issues, supporting research projects, training environmental professionals, and providing overall leadership in water management and protection. NEIWPCC is a partner of the NY-NJ HEP and supports its efforts by helping to manage HEP’s Grants Programs, and by performing other activities.

### **2. Schedule:**

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Call for project proposals | May 18, 2011             |
| b) Full proposals due         | June 29, 2011            |
| c) Projects selected          | July 22, 2011            |
| d) Project period             | August 1-August 15, 2012 |
| e) Final report               | August 15, 2012          |

### **3. Overview**

The New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program, in partnership with the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, is requesting proposals for the development of habitat restoration plans. Proposals should focus on *Islands for Waterbirds* habitat, one of the eleven Target Ecosystem Characteristics (TECs) in the 2009 Draft Hudson-Raritan Estuary (HRE) Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP): <http://www.harborestuary.org/watersweshare/resources.htm>.

The *Islands for Waterbirds* TEC focuses on restoring and protecting roosting, nesting, and foraging habitat for long-legged wading birds on islands in the HRE study area.<sup>1</sup> The short-term objective for this

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<sup>1</sup> Bain, M, J Lodge, DJ Suszkowski, D Botkin, A Brash, C Craft, R Diaz, K Farley, Y Gelb, JS Levinton, W Matuszeski, F Steimle, and P Wilber. 2007. *Target Ecosystem Characteristics for the Hudson Raritan Estuary*:

TEC is to enhance islands highlighted in the CRP (see pages 41-43 of Volume 1). These waterbirds have been the focus of the Harbor Herons Subcommittee of HEP, which has been monitoring nesting, foraging, and other behaviors of Ibis, Great and Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Black- and Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Tricolored Herons, Green Herons, and Cattle Egrets in the harbor for the past 25 years. Most recently, the Harbor Herons Subcommittee completed a Conservation Plan highlighting the status and threats facing harbor herons, and the action, outreach, and research needs to ensure long-term best management of these species, available online at: <http://www.harborestuary.org/harborherons.htm>.

#### 4. Project Objectives

This grant will provide funding for the initial launch of an *Islands for Waterbirds* Pilot Project, ultimately supporting the actual restoration, monitoring, and management of exclusively roosting and nesting habitat on a pilot island in the estuary. This pilot will provide a critical case study for future restoration efforts throughout the estuary.

#### 5. Funds available and eligibility

A total of \$142,000 is available and HEP and NEIWPCCC expect to fund one project. Any organization or agency is eligible to apply, with the exception of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. No matching funds are required, but contribution of in-kind services, *pro bono* work, or other match will be favorably reviewed. Proposals that present a strong commitment toward the completion of habitat restoration as a result of the project will be favored in review.

If the project costs exceed available funds for this grant program, please be sure to demonstrate in your **budget** section how this will be addressed. This information, if applicable, will help us assess your ability to complete the full scope of your proposal. All or some combination of the following phases will be eligible underneath this grant category (see section 8: *Deliverables*, for more details):

- **Phase I: Feasibility report and conceptual restoration project**
- **Phase II: Restoration project design and monitoring/adaptive management plan**
- **Phase III: Implementation**

#### 6. Proposal Package

Each package should not exceed the equivalent of 15 single spaced pages (12-pt standard font and 1-in margins). **Letters of support do not count towards the page total.** The proposal **must** include the following information under these headings:

1. **Project Title:** Provide both a short and a descriptive title for your project.
2. **Contact Information:** For the primary and alternative contact(s). Please include the name, title, address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address.
3. **Potential Conflict of Interest Disclosure:** Please indicate if you or your organization are involved with (or have been previously involved with) HEP or NEIWPCCC and in what capacity (e.g. participate in HEP's Citizens Advisory Committee). Note: this is only for the purpose of open disclosure; it will **not** preclude a potential applicant from submitting and will **not** affect scoring.
4. **Goals and Rationale:** Summarize the major goals of the proposed habitat restoration project. What will it specifically accomplish? How will the TEC (*Islands for Waterbirds*) be addressed and how will the goals of the NY-NJ HEP be met – how will you measure success?
5. **Site Identification and Location:** Provide the specific location of the site proposed for the project, including a map of the area to be addressed, a recent aerial image of the site (e.g. from Google Earth), and documentation of ownership. Clearly state if the area is within one of HEP's

priority sites for restoration – you may determine this via the OASIS online map:

<http://www.oasisnyc.net/map.aspx>

6. **Site Photos:** provide four to six color photos (with captions) of the proposed project site. Photos shall be at a minimum 4" x 6" in size.
7. **Target Ecosystem Characteristics (TEC) & Site Selection:** Explain why this site is appropriate for restoration planning in general and the specific TEC selected.<sup>2</sup> Description of the ecological value and recovery potential of the site is essential. Priority will be given to proposals for projects that will conduct restoration activities within areas where prior data have been collected, thereby building upon prior knowledge. State how the project will benefit waterbirds at the site, extend its influence beyond the site, and serve as a model for future restoration efforts. In order to take a low-risk approach to restoration in the estuary, selected sites should have **little to no current nesting activity** so that currently functioning habitat is not disturbed. A history of past nesting on the island of choice is needed unless a significant case can be made for its potential. The proposal should also include a **disclosure of short and long-term potential risks associated with** the implementation and maintenance of the defined level of success in the near and long-term. Identification of any risks should include constraints – physical, biological, and social, as well as funding, interaction with public, partnerships, regulatory, and other factors that could affect the project. For example, a site may be currently or likely to be affected by predators, contaminants, non-native species, vulnerability to storm surge, disturbance due to human activity, or other impacts that might result in reduced fecundity. Further, any foreseen risks to the success of the project due to any other potential human development (adjacent land development, planned projects that might affect herons, etc.) should be considered. If potential risks are highlighted, please address your plan for assessing/addressing them in the Work Plan.
8. **Adequacy of Site Data:** Provide a list of all data that will be needed to develop the proposed project and clearly indicate whether these data have already been collected and are available or if additional data collection will be necessary. For data collection and/or the use of secondary data, please address the need and development of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) (See Appendix A). Please note that it is almost certain that a QAPP will be required for this grant program as any habitat restoration plan would need to take into account environmental conditions at the site and thus rely on data analysis (whether the data are/were collected by the award recipient or are already available). QAPP development may be funded as part of the project provided that the applicant has properly accounted for it and included it in the budget and timeline. Failure to account for the need for a QAPP in the timeline and budget when a QAPP would be needed will negatively impact the score of the proposal.
9. **Professional Merits:** Provide information on the qualifications and experience of the applicant and project team.
10. **Work Plan:** Describe the approach for developing the adaptive habitat restoration pilot project with specificity. **Do not discuss the merits of the project in this section** as this should be explained in section 4: *Goals and Rationale*. Please be sure to :
  - **Clearly define the roles of the project manager and partners** in the project (making distinctions concerning who will be working on what tasks, etc.).
  - Address how each expected deliverable will be produced (use section 8: *Deliverables* to guide this response - what steps will be needed to achieve the restoration goal, and to establish a monitoring and adaptive management plan).
  - Incorporate actual restoration activity into the work plan, or make a strong case in #11 below (*Project Assurance*) for how the plans created as a result of this grant will ultimately result in **measurable outcomes** (e.g. physical increase in habitat).

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<sup>2</sup> For information on the Target Ecosystem Characteristics, please refer to the 2009 Draft Hudson-Raritan Estuary Comprehensive Restoration Plan: [http://www.harboestuary.org/watersweshare/resources.htm](http://www.harborestuary.org/watersweshare/resources.htm)

- Describe how you will accommodate evaluation and response to any unforeseen challenges throughout the project (e.g. increased predation or other change).
  - Orient all data collected for this project toward supporting the goal of restoring habitat.
  - Expect to meet periodically with the Harbor Herons Steering Committee, a subset of HEP's Restoration Work Group, to discuss methods, progress, goals, the details behind the development and application of success criteria, and facilitate site visits as necessary (this should be incorporated into your budget if there are associated costs).
  - Address any public outreach or workshop needs that might be associated with the selected site.
11. **Project Assurance:** What steps will be taken to ensure that the project is implemented? How will you secure support to bring the project to full completion? Include a list of potential funders for the plan implementation as well as any indications from the potential funding source(s) as to their willingness to support the project.
  12. **Project Schedule:** Include a complete proposed timeline for the project period.
  13. **Project Budget:** Please provide an itemized budget in the table format provided at the end of this document, clearly indicating what types of expenses are covered under each expense category. Indicate in separate columns and for each category: total costs, amount requested from HEP, and any matching funds. Please indicate the source of any matching funds and whether they will be provided as in-kind services or *pro bono* work. If matching funds are included, please specify if these have been secured or are being sought. If staff time is included in the budget, please clarify tasks in terms of percent time or hourly effort.
  14. **Letters of Support:** Letters of support for and commitment to the project (both restoration and ongoing monitoring) from the landowner are required. Additionally, a letter(s) of support from one or more of the participating agencies or other partners, public officials, or other organizations is required.

Applicants are welcome to contact HEP with questions, including inquiries regarding the suitability of a particular project and QAPP guidance (please see *Time, date, place, and manner of requested response*).

## 7. Proposal evaluation procedures

All proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by an external Review Panel. Applications will be evaluated based solely on the project's merits. In addition, any given member of the Review Panel will not review an application where a conflict of interest may arise. After all proposals have been reviewed separately and as a group, revisions may be required before or after reaching a final decision before a contract may be executed. Criteria for project evaluation include:

- A clear link to the TEC – *Islands for Waterbirds*
- Practicability
- Professional Merits
- Expected Benefits
- Cost Effectiveness

## 8. Deliverables

The award recipient will be required to submit quarterly progress reports throughout the duration of the project and periodically meet with the Harbor Herons Subcommittee. The final deliverables for the funded project are listed as follows, dependent on the phase at which the applicant is entering the process. The award recipient shall also assess existing conditions and needs and formulate recommendations that blend best management practices with innovation and context-specific solutions.

The award recipient shall produce the following deliverables for at least the first and potentially all or part of the following phases (dependent on the current status of the project). The applicant may propose to address any phase of the project, provided that sufficient work supporting the previous phase can be submitted to the panel at the time of application.

**A. Phase I – Feasibility report and conceptual restoration project**

1. Assess and document existing conditions including:
  - Narrative description of existing site conditions
  - Existing and created maps and diagrams used for analysis
  - Photos of existing site and conditions
2. Discussion of methodologies used to assess the site, collect any data, or perform any analysis.
3. References to all sources of information
4. Develop an overall vision for the improved site and establish a framework of recommendations.
5. Proposed conceptual restoration project and analysis, including investigation of alternatives (the depth of the latter will depend on the project)
  - Data collection and analysis required to support the feasibility of the proposed project.
  - Justification of the intended restoration design vs. alternatives
  - Disclosure of any potential risks and constraints associated with implementing the proposed project.

**B. Phase II – Restoration project design and monitoring/adaptive management plan** (the level of detail required for the design itself will largely depend on the project proposed).

1. Identify specific techniques to be used to meet restoration goals, including a detailed full design that contains narrative text and illustrative schematic drawings to depict final plans.
2. Approved monitoring plan – the applicant should expect to work with the Harbor Herons Subcommittee and evaluate the full range of possible benefits of the restoration, so that **not one single metric determines success** (e.g. defined solely by nesting use by harbor herons).
  - Definitions and metrics of success
  - A plan for collecting metrics over time
  - If applicable, identify existing monitoring efforts that could complement the project.
3. Develop a plan for minimizing disturbance to bird activity or other natural resources over time for during both implementation and monitoring. The proposal should also reflect the need to develop a longer-term work plan that minimizes disturbance to the site in the future (e.g. buffer zones, regular survey patterns, planting and maintenance during the non-breeding season).
4. If relevant, include plans for managing non-native species, predators, and otherwise maintaining the defined level of success over time.
5. Draft timeline to construct and estimated materials cost.
6. List of funding opportunities that have been pursued or are planned for the future.
7. Identify any permits or consistency findings required and hold pre-application meetings, if applicable.

### **C. Phase III – Implementation**

1. Timeline and strategy to achieve implementation:
  - Objectives for completion of the project.
  - Partners and roles in the completion of the project
  - Timeline to achieve certain levels of completion of the project
2. Receive approved applications for any permits required for the full design (designed in *Phase II*).
3. Full installation of project, setting of any necessary monitoring equipment and/or beginning of monitoring activities.
4. Final report, including an outlined plan for continued management and monitoring.

The award recipient will be required to attend a pre-award meeting to determine scale, format, and review procedures for deliverables along with a preliminary schedule for interim project reports at 50 percent and 90 percent completion levels. The restoration plans will be due by August 15, 2012. HEP may post online or otherwise disseminate the conceptual restoration plans to foster and facilitate the implementation of similar projects by other organizations throughout the Estuary. The plan will be reviewed by HEP and NEIWPC prior to being finalized.

## **9. Collection and Use of Environmental Data**

**Environmental data collection and/or data analysis require the applicant to have an EPA/NEIWPC-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) before the start of work (see Appendix A).**

**QAPP development may be funded as part of the project provided that the applicant has properly accounted for it and included it in the budget and timeline. Guidance is provided in Appendix A. Please note that almost certainly a QAPP will be required for this grant program, as any habitat restoration plan would need to take into account environmental conditions at the site and thus rely on data analysis (whether the data are/were collected by the award recipient or are already available). If you have any questions regarding the necessity of a QAPP for your project, please contact HEP or NEIWPC prior to submitting your application.**

## **10. Postponement/Cancellation**

The NY-NJ HEP and NEIWPC reserve the right to postpone or cancel this solicitation and to reject all responses. Awards are contingent upon NEIWPC's receipt of federal funding.

## **11. Time, Date, Place, and Manner of Requested Response**

Responses to this solicitation must be submitted electronically at <http://www.neiwpc.org/rfp/index.asp> no later than 4 pm EST on June 29, 2011. Please submit your proposal as one complete pdf file. **You must go to this website and register for a user account at least 24 hours in advance of the submission deadline (i.e., by 4 pm EST on June 28, 2011).**

**For inquiries related to suitability of projects or proposal content, contact:**

Kate Boicourt, Restoration Coordinator

P: 212-637-3869

E: [habitat@harborestuary.org](mailto:habitat@harborestuary.org)

**For inquiries related to proposal submission, contact:**

Susy King, Watershed Manager

P: 978-349-2521

E: [sking@neiwpc.org](mailto:sking@neiwpc.org)

## **12. Tips for a Successful Application**

1. When planning your project and preparing your proposal, please **keep in mind the project objectives** listed in **Section 4**.
2. Please carefully follow the list provided in Section **6. Proposal Package** and **provide all information** required under each heading. This is extremely important as it will determine the rating of your proposal. Reviewers can only evaluate your project based on the information provided; if it is incomplete, it will impact your score. Closely follow the directions and answer directly any questions posed.
3. **Be concise and focused, and get to the point.** A successful application can be complete and succinct at the same time. Provide only the information that is requested. Remember that reviewers will not evaluate pages beyond the 15-page limit, so do not waste precious space with irrelevant information.
4. **Be organized.** Follow the structure provided in the Proposal Package and include all requested information in the section where it is requested. This will increase your chances of success and speed up the evaluation. Consider that reviewers will evaluate specific aspects of your proposal (see next bullet point). **Keep the rating criteria in mind.** They tell you how each section of your proposal will be graded. Make sure to adequately cover all aspects, and look for those worth the highest number of points.

## **13. More information and resources**

The following resources may be helpful in developing your proposal:

- Harbor Estuary Program Website: [www.harborestuary.org](http://www.harborestuary.org) (click “About the Program”)
- Grant writing tools (these might help with general issues, but remember to address what is requested in this particular RFP):
  - Grant Proposal Writing Tips from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting: [www.cpb.org/grants/grantwriting.html](http://www.cpb.org/grants/grantwriting.html)
  - Non-Profit Guides: [www.npguides.org](http://www.npguides.org)
  - EPA’s Tips On Writing a Grant Proposal: <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/recipient/tips.htm>
  - Minnesota Council on Foundations’ Writing A Successful Grant Proposal: <http://www.mcf.org/mcf/grant/writing.htm>
- Program evaluation tools
  - UW Extension Program Development & Evaluation: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/>
  - An Interactive Teleconference on Using Logic Models in Program Evaluation (CYREFnet) - [www.cyfernet.org/interactrain/logicmodels.htm](http://www.cyfernet.org/interactrain/logicmodels.htm)

## **APPENDIX A: QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN (QAPP)**

Proposed projects that involve the collection, analysis, or manipulation of environmental data, which are selected for funding, will require an EPA/NEIWPCC-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). The use of “secondary data” to make environmental decisions also requires a QAPP. The term “secondary data” refers to previously collected data describing environmental conditions (which may have been collected by other entities, not just the current grantee). Secondary data can include (but are not limited to) historical data, information from computer databases, computer models, research projects, and surveys.

Preparation of a QAPP requires a level of planning and documentation greater than is needed for other projects. QAPP preparation is intended to facilitate the project planning and development process and to assure that the data used or provided (both grantee-generated and secondary data) are of known and adequate quality.

Grantees need to include preparation and implementation of this plan into their budgets and timelines. Keep in mind that it usually takes several months to complete the QAPP writing and approval process. In no case should environmental data activities proceed before the QAPP is submitted to and approved by both NEIWPCC and EPA.

If your project requires a QAPP, or if you are unsure whether a QAPP is needed, we encourage you to contact us prior to submitting your proposal, so we can better assist you and point you to useful resources. Guidance materials are available from the EPA ([http://www.epa.gov/region02/qa/qa\\_documents/air\\_h20\\_qapp04.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/region02/qa/qa_documents/air_h20_qapp04.pdf)) and NEIWPCC (<http://www.neiwpcc.org/quality/quality-docs/qapp31march06.pdf>)

<b>BUDGET CATEGORY</b> <i>(Add/remove itemizing lines below major categories as necessary, but please do NOT delete major categories)</i>	<b>FUNDS REQUESTED FROM HEP</b>	<b>FUNDS FROM OTHER SOURCES*</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>
<b>A. PERSONNEL</b> (list individual staff member – specifically define roles/tasks in # <b>hours</b> or % <b>time</b> ) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>B. FRINGE BENEFITS</b> % of (e.g., 10% of total personnel costs) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>C. TRAVEL</b> (estimate number/purpose of trips below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>D. EQUIPMENT</b> (itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>E. SUPPLIES</b> (itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$

<b>F. CONTRACTS</b> (identify & itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>G. OTHER</b> (identify & itemize below) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
	\$	\$	\$
<b>H. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (SUM OF A-G)</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>I. INDIRECT COSTS</b> % of      (e.g., 10% of total direct costs) <b>TOTAL:</b>	\$	\$	\$
<b>J. TOTAL PROJECT COST (SUM OF H+I)</b>	\$	\$	\$

\* Please list the source(s) of these funds and if they are in-hand, expected, or will be sought: