NEIWPCC

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Northeast Regional Floristic Quality Assessment Database
May 2016

The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC), in cooperation with its partners, is inviting proposals to develop a regional floristic quality assessment database for the Northeast. The purpose of this project is to develop a regional, centralized floristic quality assessment database. The results of the project will provide the New England and New York states with a tool and centralized database to use as a method to assess the health of wetlands in their state.

This request for proposals (RFP) includes information on:

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I. Overview

NEIWPCC

NEIWPCC is a not-for-profit interstate organization, established by Congress in 1947 to serve and assist its member states individually and collectively by providing coordination, research, public education, training, and leadership in the management and protection of water quality in the New England states and New York. NEIWPCC strives to coordinate activities and forums that encourage cooperation among the states, educate the public about key water quality issues, support research projects, train environmental professionals, and provide overall leadership in the management and protection of water quality.

II. Project Goal

Under a FY2008 EPA Wetland Program Development Grant completed in 2011, NEIWPCC conducted a project to develop Coefficient of Conservatism (CoC) values for vascular plants in the New England states and New York (“the states”) by adapting the Wilhelm method (Swink and Wilhelm 1979, 1994\(^1\)) to the region. Floristic quality assessment (FQA) is one of many botanical assessment methodologies that are essential to establishing a robust wetland monitoring program. These methods can be used to monitor mitigation projects, identify high quality wetlands, and report on the overall health of wetlands. FQA is a widely used method for ecological condition assessments in the United States and is utilized by many state wetland monitoring programs. The states are interested in applying FQA, or more generally termed, plant-based indices of biological integrity (IBI), to assess wetland health because this plant community composition has been demonstrated to be a reliable indicator of condition that is more cost effective and logistically easier to sample than other biotic communities. The foundation of FQA is the conservatism concept, which estimates a species’ ecological sensitivity or propensity to occur in areas least-altered by humans. Plant species are assigned coefficients of conservatism (CoC) where ruderal and exotic species receive the lowest scores, competitors and matrix species intermediate scores, and remnant-dependent species the highest scores. These scores form the basis of measurements that are used in FQA. The objective of this project is to develop these scores, using the expertise of botanists’ in the region, so that the states can use this tool as one method to assess the health of wetlands in their state.

With the completion of the assignment of CoC scores for the vascular flora in New England and New York, the states are one step closer to being able to apply this method. There remains a need to continue researching the application of FQA in the region before it is established as a scientifically defensible methodology for assessing wetland health. The states are interested in applying FQA, or more generally termed, plant-based IBIs, to assess wetland condition because this taxon has been demonstrated as a reliable indicator of condition that is more cost effective and logistically easier to sample than other biotic communities. As a result, we are supporting our member states by conducting this project to develop a centralized regional database.

III. Scope of Work

This RFP is for services to: Northeast (via contractual support) to compile existing Northeast plant data and reevaluate the existing Northeast state CoC lists from the Level III Ecoregion perspective. The ecoregions of 58, 59, 82, 83, and 84, within the boundaries of New England and northern New York, are the expected regions to be evaluated for CoC values. The selected contractor will work with an identified lead at each state program and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to review existing wetland plant data and determine data needs.

As well as managing the reevaluation of the current state plant lists into their ecoregion CoC lists, the selected contractor will work to develop and build a centralized database of wetland plant data for the Northeast. A calculator face for visitors to input plot data and receive a CoC-score based on the ecoregion will also be a required component of the database. Preference will be given to entities with the capacity to maintain the database once completed.

**Project Tasks**

Task 1. The selected contractor will meet with the TAC to refine the workplan.
Task 2. The selected contract will develop/update the quality assurance project plan (QAPP)
Task 3. The selected contractor will collect and compile existing Northeast plant data.
Task 4. The selected contractor will reevaluate the data with the existing Northeast state CoC lists from the Level III Ecoregion perspective to cover the ecoregions of 58, 59, 82, 83, and 84, within the boundaries of New England and northern New York.
Task 5. The selected contractor will build a regional database with an FQA calculator function and identify potential locations capable of housing the database.
Task 6. The selected contractor will be expected to present the results at forums typically attended by representatives from state/tribes/local government wetland programs, and conducting a free webinar designed for similar audiences. This outreach will be coordinated with NEIWPCC. The contractor must notify NEIWPCC of planned activities 30 days in advance of any such event.

**Anticipated Project Meetings**

The selected contractor should anticipate meetings and conference calls with NEIWPCC and the TAC to be scheduled as needed.

**Desired Outcome**

A centralized regional floristic quality assessment database for the Northeast based on Level III Ecoregions.

**IV. General Guidelines for Applicants**

**Eligibility**

Applicants who are eligible to submit proposals in response to this RFP include: federal (non-EPA), state, or local government agencies; interstate agencies; private non-profit organizations and institutions; for-profit organizations; and academic or educational institutions. Partnerships are allowed.

**Schedule**

The project should take no more than 12 months, with all final reports and paperwork received by August 1, 2017. However, it is desirable for projects to be completed earlier.

The schedule* for this RFP is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposals Due to NEIWPCC</td>
<td>June 30, 2016, 12:00 PM EST (noon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants Notified of Funding Decisions</td>
<td>July 11, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Project Work Plans Due</td>
<td>July 20, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Start Date</td>
<td>August 1, 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Schedule is subject to change.

**Funding**
There is $100,000 available for this project and it is anticipated that one successful proposal will be chosen. Proposals with budgets that exceed the identified funding cannot be considered. Awarded funds may be used for expenses specifically related to the proposed project, including wages and consultant fees. Indirect costs are allowed, but must be in line with the following procedures: Applicants with a valid Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with their cognizant federal agency must use that rate, and must provide documentation of the negotiated rate. Applicants that do not have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement may charge a maximum indirect rate of 10 percent of direct costs.

**Match**
**Applicants must provide a non-federal match that will equal or exceed 40 percent of requested funds.** Funds from other federal sources or grants, and funds committed to match other federal grants, are not eligible to be used as matching funds.

Cost share or match can be satisfied with cash or in-kind services, or a combination of both. Cash contributions are those funds used to purchase goods or services associated with the project. In-kind contributions represent the value of non-cash contributions provided by the applicant. Any contributions must be clearly explained in the proposal and must be documented.

**Deliverables**
The primary deliverables for this project will be the following:

1. **Quarterly reports** delivered to the NEIWPCC project manager no later than the 10\textsuperscript{th} day of January, April, July, and October during the duration of the project.
2. **Approved Quality Assurance Project Plan.** See below for additional information about this deliverable.
3. **Summary report of Task 3** in Adobe .pdf format with associated datasheets/database in a reviewable format:
   a. Summary of existing information and additional site assessment as needed.
4. **Summary report of Task 4** in Adobe .pdf format with associated datasheets/database in a reviewable format.
5. **Summary report of Task 5** in Adobe .pdf format and database/datasheets.
   a. Temporary/beta site for TAC to test deliverable.
6. **Final report** in Adobe .pdf format and finalized database with beta site to be migrated to housing institution.
   a. Webinar presentation and showcase/training on database function and use.
7. **Project team calls and meetings** as described in Task 6
8. If data are collected under this grant, the successful applicant must ensure all data generated in accordance with an EPA/NEIWPCC-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan, either directly or by subcontract.

All deliverables are to be submitted in draft form in Microsoft Word format for review by project partners and approval by the project manager (See Contact Information in Section IX). All final reports are to be delivered in Adobe .pdf format upon approval by the project manager.
Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements
The NEIWPCC Quality Management Plan requires that Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) are developed and approved for all projects involving environmental data operations (i.e., collection, analysis, and/or manipulation of environmental data). For projects that involve environmental data operations, the contractor will be responsible for developing the project QAPP and submitting it to EPA and NEIWPCC staff for review immediately after the start of the contract period. NEIWPCC will provide guidelines for QAPP development. The QAPP must be approved by the EPA, the NEIWPCC Project Manager, and the NEIWPCC Quality Assurance Program Manager prior to any data collection or analysis. If your proposed project will include environmental data operations, development of the QAPP can be completed as a task under this project and should be included in the proposal narrative, timeline, and budget. While preparing your proposal, please account for the additional time and resources necessary for QAPP development. Allow a minimum of 30 days for the development of your QAPP and 90 days for the review and approval of your QAPP by NEIWPCC and EPA QA officers. It is appropriate for an applicant to utilize or build upon an existing, relevant, approved QAPP if one exists.

For more information about QAPPs, see http://www.neiwpcc.org/quality/ and http://www.epa.gov/quality/qapps.html.

Questions regarding the QAPP process or the necessity of a QAPP for a proposed project should be directed to the NEIWPCC Project Manager (see contact information in Section IX) by June 29, 2016 at noon EST.

Deliverables, Ownership, and Credit Due
All materials, software, maps, studies, reports, and other products or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, produced as a result of this solicitation and funded, in whole or in part, under an agreement with NEIWPCC shall be made available to NEIWPCC, and the U.S. EPA in the formats in which it is stored or maintained. NEIWPCC and the U.S. EPA shall have an unrestricted right to use any materials, software, maps, studies, reports, and other products or data generated using assistance funds or specified to be delivered. The contractor shall not obtain, attempt to obtain, or file for a patent, copyright, trademark or any other interest in any such materials, software, maps, reports, and other products or data without the express, written consent of NEIWPCC and subject to any other approvals required by state or federal law. Reports and other deliverables will credit NEIWPCC and U.S. EPA for any work completed under the grant award.

Geographic Information System (GIS) Data Requirements
GIS data produced under this project must adhere to the requirements of EPA’s National Geospatial Data Policy (see http://www.epa.gov/geospatial/docs/National_Geospatial_Data_Policy.pdf). Specifically, the selected contractor must provide documentation for all produced data, including source information for each digital data layer (i.e., scale and accuracy, map projection, coordinate system, etc.), and specific information about the data layer itself (i.e., method used, geographic extent of data layer, file format, date of creation, staff contact, description and definition of data fields and their contents, related files, if any, and description of data quality and quality assurance methods used). The EPA Metadata Editor (EME) was developed to simplify and standardize metadata development and is a recommended tool for streamlining production of required metadata. The EME and related training materials can be downloaded from https://edg.epa.gov/EME/. Specific technical guidance on geospatial deliverables and acceptable formats can be found at https://www.epa.gov/geospatial/epa-region-2-gis-deliverables-guidance. If GIS data is produced under this project, the data will be submitted to NEIWPCC as a deliverable.

Insurance Requirements
NEIWPCC requires its contractors to maintain workers compensation and liability insurance. More details will be provided to applicants selected for funding. Note this applies for all contractors, including sole proprietors. If you cannot provide proof of insurance, please do not apply for this funding opportunity.
V. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include a (1) cover letter, (2) title page with abstract, (3) narrative with citations, (4) timeline, (5) budgets (both overall and task-based budget formats), (6) budget justification, (7) description of qualifications, and (8) letters of commitment or support. Page limits for each of these components are provided in the individual descriptions below. Proposals that do not contain all of the information requested and/or do not meet the format requirements will be eliminated from consideration. Pages that exceed the maximum number specified for each section will not be reviewed.

Cover Letter
Please include a one-page cover letter, printed on official letterhead and signed by an authorized representative of the lead agency, firm, or institution, with each proposal. The cover letter must state that:
- You are applying for funds under this program.
- You commit to the match you are proposing.
- You acknowledge that funding is provided on a reimbursement basis.

Title Page
For your convenience, an electronic version of the title page is available as a Microsoft Word document at http://www.neiwpcc.org/contractors/opportunities.asp. The title page must adhere to the format provided in Appendix A and include all of the following information, using a maximum of one single-spaced, one-sided, typed 8.5" x 11" page with 11-point font and 1-inch margins:
- Project Name: Use the exact project name as it appears throughout the proposal.
- Primary Investigator Name and Contact Information: Provide the name, title, and affiliation of the primary investigator, as well as mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- Financial Contact Name and Contact Information (if applicable): Provide the name, title, and affiliation of the individual responsible for financial/contractual negotiations (if different from primary investigator), as well as mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- Project Partners (if any): Provide the names, titles, affiliations, for each of the additional investigators or support staff who will significantly contribute to the project (if any).
- Funds Requested: Provide the amount of money you are requesting from NEIWPCC for the project.
- Matching Funds: Provide the amount of matching funds you and/or your partners will be contributing to the project (if any).
- Federal Tax Identification Number (FID)
- DUNS Number2: A DUNS number is a unique, non-indicative 9-digit identifier that verifies the existence of a business entity globally. Contractors must provide NEIWPCC with a DUNS number to comply with an administrative condition of NEIWPCC’s EPA grant (individuals are exempt).
- Certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE): Indicate if your organization is a DBE.
- Abstract: The abstract must accurately describe the project being proposed and include: (1) the objectives of the project, (2) the methodology to be used, and (3) the expected outputs and outcomes of the project and how it addresses this RFP, including environmental benefits. The abstract must fit within the title page.

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2 Obtaining a DUNS number is free for all entities doing business with the Federal government. Under normal circumstances the DUNS number is issued within 1-2 business days when using the web form process (http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform).
Proposal Narrative
The proposal narrative must not exceed 10 consecutively numbered, single-spaced, typed 8.5" x 11" pages with 11-point font and 1-inch margins. The 10-page narrative must include all of the following information:

- **Problem Description**: Briefly describe the project and its relevance to Regional FQA Database. This section can also include brief background or introductory information.
- **Objectives**: Outline how the project will achieve the goal of this RFP.
- **Methodology**: Outline the project’s design and describe the methods and techniques that will be used to meet the project’s goal and tasks.
- **Expected outputs and outcomes**: Describe the project’s expected outputs and outcomes, and list and describe each of the specific deliverables and end-products.
- **Briefly discuss the process to be used to evaluate the effectiveness and success of the project.**
- **Roles and Responsibilities**: Define the roles and responsibilities of all project participants.
- **Citations**: Include references as appropriate within the proposal narrative.

Timeline
Provide a detailed timeline for meeting identified tasks and completing deliverables, with a completion date no later than August 1, 2017. All timelines should be stated in terms of Month #1, #2, #4, etc. rather than specific dates, e.g. “March 5, 2012.” Although the project start date is anticipated to be on or about August 1, 2016 this date may change based on the time the actual agreement is established. The timeline must be no more than one 8.5” x 11” page with 1” margins and 11-point font.

Budget
The project budget must be provided in two formats:

First, provide a complete, detailed budget using the format provided in Appendix B. For your convenience, an electronic version of the budget form is available at http://www.neiwpcc.org/contractors/opportunities.asp. The budget must be no more than one 8.5” x 11” page with 1” margins and 11-point font. Along with this budget, provide a brief justification (one page maximum) for the proposed costs in terms of meeting project objectives. Include an explanation of how indirect costs are calculated. Justify subcontracts, if any. Identify and describe current and pending financial resources (including the source) for non-federal cost share or matching funds that are intended to support the project. Entities intending to use a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate must provide documentation of their rate. This documentation does not count toward the page limit.

Second, prepare a budget that is broken down by project tasks as shown in Appendix C. For your convenience, an electronic version of the budget form is available at http://www.neiwpcc.org/contractors/opportunities.asp. As you develop this budget, keep in mind that contractual payments will be made based on this budget. This budget must be no more than two 8.5” x 11” pages with 1” margins and 11-point font. Matching funds should not be included in the task-based budget.

Qualifications
The applicant chosen for this project should possess the academic and/or professional expertise and certifications in the relevant subject areas, and have a strong track record in delivering projects of this nature and facilitating successful working relationships with municipal and state government. Applicants must be able to demonstrate extensive experience in botany, wetland plants, plant taxonomy, knowledge of plant survey
protocols, and calculator and database construction and maintenance. Attention to detail in documenting qualifications that meet the scoring requirements is strongly advised. The qualifications section, including resumes, CVs, descriptions of past projects, etc. must not exceed five (5) pages.

**Letters of Support**
Letters of support addressed to Kimberly Roth, NEIWPCC to document organizational, state legislative, and/or community support for the project may also be attached. If your project includes matching funds and the match is to be provided by partners, letters of commitment for the match from those partners must be included. There is no page limit for letters of support.

OR

Projects undertaken in partnership with other organizations, particularly where the partner will provide a service or action must include support letters from each partner stating their specific commitments. If your project includes matching funds and the match is to be provided by partners, letters of commitment for the match from those partners must be included. General “letters of support” should not be included with the application.

**VI. Submission Process**

Proposals must be submitted by no later than **12:00 PM EST (noon) on June 30, 2016**. No late submissions will be considered. Applicants must submit their proposals electronically through the NEIWPCC website. Unless prior approval is given, proposals received through e-mail, postal delivery, or any other delivery method will not be accepted.

To submit your proposal, go to [www.neiwpcc.org/rfp2/](http://www.neiwpcc.org/rfp2/) and follow the instructions provided for uploading your file(s). It is highly preferred that the proposal and all supporting information are submitted as a single PDF document. This requires Adobe Acrobat or similar Adobe product (the free Adobe Reader does not allow the conversion of documents into PDF format), or a scanner. If multiple files are to be submitted, you will need to create an archive file (.zip, or .rar) containing all of the files you wish to submit. The file name should be in the following format: “Regional FQA Database_NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION.” Once you have clicked the “submit” button, please allow adequate time for your submission to process and do not hit the back button or close your browser window. The process is not considered complete until you have reached the confirmation page. If submitted successfully, you will receive an email from NEIWPCC ([mail@neiwpcc.org](mailto:mail@neiwpcc.org)) with the subject line “RFP Submission Confirmation” confirming your submission. For questions regarding submission of proposals, contact Kimberly Roth, NEIWPCC, [kroth@neiwpcc.org](mailto:kroth@neiwpcc.org), (978)349-2525.

**VII. Proposal Evaluation Process**

NEIWPCC will screen all proposals to ensure that they meet all requirements of this RFP. If a proposal is found to be incomplete, the proposal will be eliminated from the competition and NEIWPCC will notify the applicant. To be considered complete, proposals must include all of components described in Section V. Proposal Requirements. Pages in excess of the limits specified for each component will not be reviewed. Complete and eligible proposals will be reviewed by a panel composed of scientists and managers from partner agencies. Proposals may also be submitted for external peer reviews.
VIII. Notification of Awards

Award notification to applicants is expected by July 11, 2016. Award recipients may be asked to submit a revised work plan, timeline, and budget at this time. Projects cannot start until the contract is signed by both parties. If your project includes environmental data operations, this work may not begin until the QAPP is approved. NEIWPCC will not pay for expenses incurred prior to the contract start date. Payment for costs incurred will be on a reimbursement basis per the contract payment schedule and contingent upon completion of quarterly progress reports and project deliverables.

IX. Contacts

NEIWPCC will accept questions about this RFP by email or phone through June 29, 2016 at noon EST.

For information regarding the application process, contact Kimberly Roth, the NEIWPCC Project Manager:

Kimberly Roth
New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission
650 Suffolk Street, Suite 410
Lowell, MA 01854
(978) 349-2525
kroth@neiwpcc.org