



PENSACOLA
& PERDIDO BAYS
ESTUARY PROGRAM

Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program, Inc.

Request for Qualifications

#P2324-01

Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative

Design and Permitting Services

Release Date: December 12, 2023

Response Deadline: 11:59 pm January 26, 2024

PLEASE NOTE: The negotiated contract will be between the selected firm and Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program, Inc., subject to the approval of the PPBEP Board of Directors.

Respondent is hereby notified that Section 287.05701, Florida Statutes, requires that the PPBEP may not request documentation of or consider a vendor's social, political, or ideological interests when determining if the vendor is a responsible vendor. PPBEP will abide by the statutory provision and not seek or consider those interests.

Overview

The Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program’s (herein after referred to as “PPBEP” or “the Estuary Program”) mission is to restore and protect the Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds through restoration, education, and unbiased monitoring of the health of our bays, estuaries, and watersheds.

PPBEP is seeking to retain the services of a qualified vendor to provide design, engineering, modeling, and permitting services for the Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative. The Initiative is a ten-year goal to restore 600 hectares of oyster habitat in the Pensacola Bay System. For more information, please see Exhibit A – Scope of Services.

The PPBEP will competitively select a vendor in accordance with Florida Statutes 287.055. Final award will be contingent upon approval of the PPBEP Board of Directors. The PPBEP reserves the right to reject any and all responses, and to withdraw this Request for Qualifications before or after responses are received.

Funding Sources

Up to \$1 million is available to complete planning, design, engineering, modeling, and permitting associated with the 600-hectare Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative. Funding is made available through Florida Department of Environmental Protection Grant Agreement No. OWP02 and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Cooperative Agreement No. NA23NMF4630079. Both agreements are included as attachments on the PPBEP website. All applicable federal and state terms and conditions will carry forward in the contract between the PPBEP and the selected vendor.

Contact Information

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Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program
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Timeline

Please note the timeline is subject to change.

RFQ Release Date	December 12, 2023
Questions Due	January 15, 2024
RFQ Response Deadline	11:59 pm central time January 26, 2024
Evaluation Committee Shortlist Meeting	February 12, 2024
Decision/Ranking Meeting	February 27, 2024
1 st Negotiation Meeting	March 5, 2024
Board of Directors Meeting Approval	March 20, 2024

Questions

Questions should be submitted by email to info@ppbep.org no later than 9:00 am central time on January 15, 2024. Please include "RFQ #P2324-01 Question" in the subject line. All questions will be collated, presented anonymously, and answered in a document posted on the PPBEP website by January 19, 2024.

Submittal Requirements

All responses must be received no later than 11:59 pm central time January 26, 2024. Responses shall be submitted via email to info@ppbep.org. Please include "RFQ #P2324-01 Oyster Restoration Initiative Response" in the subject line.

Responses, including all supplemental material, shall not exceed 30 pages. At a minimum, an 11-pt typeface, 1" margins, and 1.0-line spacing shall be used throughout the body of the text. Response shall be submitted as a single PDF file.

The response shall include the following sections:

1. Cover/Transmittal Letter
 - a. Include the RFQ title, the company name, company UEID, address, and primary point of contact, including name, telephone number, and primary email contact.
 - b. State the names and titles of persons who will be authorized to make representations for the Respondent and the name of the person who will be authorized to bind the Respondent.
 - c. Summarize the Respondent's understanding of the services requested under this announcement, and why the Respondent is the best suited to carry out the scope of this project.
 - d. Describe quality control procedures and state whether the Respondent has been involved in a government contract that ended in termination or litigation.
 - e. State whether the Respondent has or anticipates a conflict of interest if the project is awarded.
2. Qualifications and Experience
 - a. Include a chart of the Project Team.
 - b. Identify project team members, their proposed roles on this project, their proposed time associated with this project, and their previous experience, education, and certifications.
 - c. Describe firm and project team's experience designing, permitting, and implementing similar type and scale habitat restoration projects.
3. Project Approach
 - a. Provide a detailed scope of work that describes the approach that will be used to accomplish the tasks in the RFQ.
 - b. Provide a schedule of initiation and completion of each proposed task and subtask, project milestones, and deliverables.
4. References
 - a. Provide names, and contact information of client references for three (3) completed or ongoing projects. Provide a summary description of work conducted, key objectives, and outcomes for the three projects submitted.

5. Certificate to do Business
 - a. Respondent shall provide their Certificate to do Business/Certificate of Status in the State of Florida. Respondents must be in good standing in the State of Florida and not be suspended nor debarred from Federal contracting or receiving Federal funds. Any respondent listed on the Excluded Party List System will be eliminated from further consideration.
6. Minority and Women Owned Enterprises
 - a. PPBEP encourages minority and women owned business enterprises to respond to all applicable procurement opportunities in accordance with 2CFR 200.321 and Florida Statutes 287.09451. If the project team includes a minority and/or women owned business enterprise, please include the certification in the response package.

Evaluation Criteria

The following evaluation criteria will be used to assess proposal responsiveness.

No.	Evaluation Criteria	Scoring Method
1.	<p>Qualifications and Experience of the Respondent The Respondent shall demonstrate ability and experience with similar type and size projects. The Respondent should submit qualifications of the prime and subcontractors, including qualifications and experience of individual team members.</p> <p>(Limit response to a maximum of ten (10) pages)</p>	0-40 Points
2.	<p>Project Approach Provide an organized and clear proposal describing the respondent’s project approach and workflow to complete the scope of services, and address PPBEP’s needs, local conditions, and Plan goals and objectives. Please specifically identify what makes the firm uniquely qualified to carry out the proposed scope of services.</p> <p>(Limit response to a maximum of ten (10) pages)</p>	0-45 Points
3.	<p>Previous Client References Provide three current and/or previous client references.</p>	0-10 Points
4.	<p>Firm Availability Firm should demonstrate through submittal of a proposed project schedule their ability to complete the project scope of services within 24 months of contract execution.</p>	0-5 Points
	Maximum Possible Score	100 Points

Evaluation Process

An Evaluation Committee shall meet for the purpose of discussing, scoring, and ranking proposals. All meetings of the Evaluation Committee are subject to, and must comply with, Florida’s Sunshine Law. Members of the Evaluation Committee will have demonstrated that they have no existing or anticipated conflict of interest in the project which they are evaluating.

Prior to the Evaluation Committee review meeting, PPBEP staff will contact references listed in proposals for information concerning performance history. To ensure that respondents are not suspended or

debarred from Federal contracting or receiving Federal funds, PPBEP staff will check the Excluded Party List System (<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM>). Any respondent listed on the Excluded Party List System will be eliminated from further consideration. This information will be provided at the Evaluation Committee meeting.

The Evaluation Committee will review and evaluate all proposals based on the evaluation criteria and will shortlist a minimum of three Respondents. If three or less responses are received, interviews will be scheduled with all submitting firms so long as the submittal requirements have been met. Shortlisted firms will be invited for an interview with the Evaluation Committee. Following interviews with all shortlisted firms, the Committee will rank firms according to the firm's response and presentation and vote to enter contract negotiations with the top ranked firm.

Following successful contract negotiations, the final contract, scope, fee, and budget will be recommended to the PPBEP Board of Directors for approval.

EXHIBIT A
STATEMENT OF WORK
PENSACOLA BAY SYSTEM OYSTER RESTORATION INITIATIVE
DESIGN AND PERMITTING SERVICES

Program Overview

The Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program’s (herein after referred to as “PPBEP” or “the Estuary Program”) mission is to restore and protect the Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds through restoration, education, and unbiased monitoring of the health of our bays, estuaries, and watersheds.

The Estuary Program serves as a trusted source for residents, businesses, industry, and the community on issues relating to preserving, restoring, improving, and maintaining the natural habitat and ecosystem of the bays, estuaries, and watersheds of Pensacola and Perdido Bays. PPBEP strives to achieve a healthy and collaborative environment by:

1. Elevating and increasing the importance, awareness, and understanding of environmental quality.
2. Employing rigorous, unbiased, and scientifically sound science to inform and guide decisions, policies, and initiatives.
3. Funding programs and projects that protect the environment and increase ecological resilience.
4. Building a network of inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships that takes into account factors affecting the environment, the economy, and the community-at-large for the benefit of improving the quality of life for all.

PPBEP is guided by a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), a ten-year roadmap for the restoration and protection of the Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds. The CCMP can be viewed at <https://www.ppbep.org/the-plan/ccmp>.

Project Background

In 2019, the State of Florida, PPBEP, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Florida championed a new approach to oyster recovery via the [Oyster Fisheries and Habitat Management Plan for the Pensacola Bay System](#). The Plan is a new model for oyster restoration and management as a cooperative process with state and community stakeholders. While oysters were once a critical resource to communities across Florida, most oyster populations in Florida waters are now functionally extinct. Hence, oyster restoration is an imperative step to bring back oysters to Florida systems and restoration must happen across the entire bay to support the recovery of the fishery. The Plan is an approach that recognizes the need for oyster habitat to be restored at the bay scale and to improve effective management of the habitat to ensure recovery of lost ecosystem services and recovery of the wild harvest fishery and in coordination with the burgeoning oyster aquaculture market. Achieving sustainable fisheries and a healthy environment requires a holistic approach that integrates a community’s environmental, economic, and social well-being goals.

The Plan was professionally facilitated and developed over the course of two years using a transparent, inclusive, and consensus-based decision-making process that encouraged collaboration and support from all sectors across the community. More than 75 members of the community, including state natural resource management agencies, were interviewed prior to the planning process to gauge their level of interest and support for development of an oyster fisheries and habitat management plan; 100% of the respondents were supportive. Based on this strong community approval a Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) was convened comprised of 27 members representing state and local resource management agencies, wild harvesters, aquaculture farmers, academia, scientists, non-governmental and community-based organizations, and economic and development interests and businesses. The goal of the SWG was to develop a package of consensus recommendations informed by the best available science, data, and stakeholder experiences for the management and restoration of the Pensacola Bay System (PBS).

The Plan serves as the framework for enhancing oyster habitat resiliency in the PBS over the next ten years with goals, strategies, and actions identified under four major themes or pillars: A. Ecology, B. Wild Harvest and Aquaculture, C. Economy, and D. Public Education and Communication. The Plan provides the PBS community with a roadmap for long-term and sustainable restoration and management of oysters in the PBS. It can also serve as a model for management of oyster resources throughout Florida's estuarine systems, the Gulf of Mexico, and beyond. Actions needed to achieve the Plan's goals will also benefit other bay habitats (e.g., seagrass and salt marsh) and the community's economic and social well-being.

The Plan and the PPBEP have established a strong foundation for successfully restoring PBS oysters. The health of the oyster fishery and habitat are a core of the PPBEP's CCMP as metrics for measuring the health of the PBS. Upon completion of the Plan in 2021, the PPBEP immediately convened an Oyster Sub-Committee to provide technical guidance to staff on the implementation of the Plan. The Sub-committee is composed of many of the same members from the Plan's SWG and others in the community. The Sub-Committee's purpose is to implement the strategies and actions identified in the Plan.

The PBS Oyster Restoration Initiative

The Pensacola Bay System Oyster Restoration Initiative ("Initiative") establishes a transformational vision to restore 600-hectares (1,482 acres) of oyster habitat in the PBS over the next ten years to enhance ecosystem resilience, rebuild a sustainable fishery, and improve economic vitality.

Historically, the PBS supported over 12,140 hectares (30,000 acres) of oyster habitat, based on an interpretation of the first known oyster coverage map produced by the United States Fish Commission in 1883. Due to a variety of anthropogenic factors, including sedimentation, wastewater and stormwater inputs, overharvesting, and loss of suitable substrate, 95% of oyster habitat in the PBS has been lost since the 1950s. The massive loss of a dominant ecosystem component has left the PBS more vulnerable to other ecological and human perturbations, significantly reducing the amount and value of ecosystem services provided by oysters, and negatively affecting the oyster-dependent livelihoods and economy of the region, especially in the face of accelerating sea level rise and other climate impacts. Significant progress has been made, and continues to be made, to remedy these threats such that restoration of estuarine habitat, including oyster habitat, is now possible.

The PPBEP and its partners propose utilizing a watershed-based approach to undertake estuary-scale restoration of the oyster fishery to enhance ecosystem and community resilience.

Specifically, the selected firm will complete design and permitting for the entire estuary-scale Oyster Restoration Initiative (600 hectare. oyster habitat restoration target), including Phase I of the Initiative, which targets up to 100 hectares of oyster restoration in the PBS. The Initiative is a community supported and driven restoration goal. As such, construction of the Initiative is expected to be completed by marine contractors and community partners, including oyster farmers and volunteers.

The Initiative sustains productive fisheries and strengthens ecosystem resilience by instituting an unprecedented and transformational approach to oyster restoration through the design and permitting of estuary-scale restoration, as one project, utilizing multiple restoration techniques. The approach will accommodate oyster harvest and non-harvest, ecosystem services (e.g., water filtration, seagrass growth, shoreline protection), larval distribution and other benefits. The creation and/or enhancement of oyster habitat in the PBS will increase available juvenile and adult foraging and structural habitat for several Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) species, including red drum, snapper, grouper, shrimps, and crabs.

The Initiative aligns with the Oyster Fisheries and Habitat Management Plan of the PBS and the PPBEP's CCMP.

Completed Work

The project builds on a foundation of significant investments by the project partners to inform science-based habitat restoration siting and inform community-led goal setting, resulting in the PBS Oyster Restoration Initiative. Over the last two years, TNC, PPBEP, FWC, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have completed the following products:

I. Bottom Type Mapping: Between 2020 and 2021, PPBEP and TNC contracted with a Gulf Coast marine surveying firm to map known and suspected areas of subtidal and intertidal oyster reef habitat within the PBS using a combination of side-scan sonar, poling, and diving techniques. Where exposed oyster reef habitat was found, sampling was conducted to assess the condition of the oysters on these reefs as well as the areal dimensions of the reefs. The sampling results included percent live versus dead oysters, oyster size and density, as well as type of cultch material and invertebrates present. From the information collected on live oysters, the number of harvestable bags was estimated to provide quantitative data on fishery potential. The results of this assessment provide valuable and precise information on where addition of hard substrate is practical for supporting oyster reef creation, where more extensively engineered reef structure may be required to support live oysters, and where oyster habitat restoration should be avoided. This was the first bottom type mapping completed post-Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

II. Habitat Suitability Model: The project design will utilize the Oyster Habitat Suitability Model (HSM) developed during the Oyster Fisheries and Habitat Management Plan for the PBS development. The HSM utilized nine criteria for spatially characterizing areas most appropriate for oyster reef restoration: contemporary oyster beds, dissolved oxygen, historical oyster beds, larval recruitment, salinity, seagrass presence, substrate type, aquaculture leases, and shipping lanes. Project design will build on the HSM by incorporating more recently collected data and stakeholder preferences.

III. Spatially Explicit Water Filtration Model: Project siting and restoration priority will be informed by a spatially explicit water filtration potential model of oysters in the PBS. The model combines the HSM, a hydrodynamic model, and an oyster filtration model. Variation in filtration service was estimated based on changes in biotic and abiotic conditions during the model run period. Different bay-level restoration scenarios were modeled to explore the extent to which filtration services could be affected in all available habitats that are predicted to support oysters, and that gave oysters prolonged access to suspended particles. By virtually placing oysters throughout the estuary, we sought to determine the rank order of restoration priority, by delineating the locations that provide the greatest level of filtration services. Furthermore, we can estimate the maximum proportion of the bay that could be cleared by oysters, and thus the maximum restoration effectiveness to achieve the highest filtration. The modeled outputs also allow us to quantify the localized impacts of each individual location restored, which is an important communication tool when working toward long-term, large-scale goals. Given that filtration scales with the size and abundance of oysters, we also established reasonable reef-level demographic parameters (density and size classes) that can be used as “successful” restoration targets and inform post restoration monitoring.

IV. Vision Mapping: Utilizing the outputs from the three products above, PPBEP hosted an Oyster Restoration Site Selection or “Vision Mapping” Workshop in June 2022 with wild harvesters, aquaculture operators, Tribe members, resource managers, and academic experts to begin identifying priority locations for siting restoration based on fishery, habitat, and ecosystem service benefits.

Scope of Services

PPBEP is seeking to retain the services of a firm or local entity to provide the following services: design services, modeling, and permitting services. Final award will be contingent upon approval of the PPBEP Board of Directors. The PPBEP reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to withdraw this Request for Proposals before or after proposals are received.

Timeline: PPBEP intends to enter into a contract with a single successful respondent on or before April 1, 2024. The project shall be completed within 24 months of contract execution.

Budget: Approximately \$1 million has been budgeted for design, permitting, and associated modeling and surveying.

The selected firm will complete the following services:

1. Design Services

The selected firm will produce 100% design plans for the Initiative, including Phase I of the Initiative which will target 100-ha of restoration/creation. The selected firm will be responsible for producing a Basis of Design Report, which should include but not be limited to prioritized habitat restoration/creation locations, explanation of restoration techniques, a phasing plan, modeling results, and a coastal conditions analysis. The selected firm is expected to produce approximately three standard design options that can be used across the Initiative’s project area. When developing design concepts, the firm should keep in mind construction will be completed by a combination of marine contractors and community partners, including oyster farmers and volunteers. The Basis of Design Report should address any constructability risks and identify mitigation measures.

The selected firm will produce 30%, 60%, 90%, and 100% design documents. Design documents should be compiled into one master design file; however, the design documents should be able to be broken out by project phase.

The selected firm should view the Initiative as a partnership. Throughout the project, the selected firm will work in conjunction with the Project Team to select sites, restoration techniques, preferred alternatives, phasing, stakeholder coordination, and permitting. It is anticipated that monthly standing meetings will be held with the Project Team, with quarterly meetings being held with the PPBEP Oyster Sub-Committee.

Anticipated deliverables include, but are not limited to:

- Basis of Design Report
 - Prioritized Habitat Restoration/Creation Locations
 - Explanation and Justification of Proposed Restoration Techniques
 - Phasing Plan
 - Modeling Results
 - Coastal Conditions Analysis
 - Ecological Resource Assessment – Desktop Analysis
- Design Plans
 - 30%, 60%, 90%, and 100% Plans

2. Modeling and Surveying

In tandem with design services, the selected firm will be responsible for completing required modeling and surveying.

Anticipated deliverables include, but are not limited to:

- Hydrodynamic Model and Report
- Sediment Transport Model and Report
- Bathymetric Survey, including:
 - Depth
 - Sediment Characteristics
- Cultural Resource Survey (if required)
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Survey (if required)

3. Permitting Services

The selected firm will be responsible for completing permitting services. It is anticipated that a regulatory working group will be established for the Initiative to streamline permit review and minimize requests for additional information from the permitting agency. The selected firm will be expected to engage in these working group meetings. Agencies anticipated to be engaged include Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Department of State Division of Historical Resources, US Army Corps of Engineers, National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Protected Resources, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Anticipated deliverables include, but are not limited to:

- Permit Applications
 - Florida Environmental Resource Permit
 - US Army Corps of Engineers – General or Individual Permit
 - NOAA NMFS/Protected Resources/US FWS Consultation
 - US Coast Guard – Private Aids to Navigation (PATON)
- Permits
 - Florida Environmental Resource Permit
 - US Army Corps of Engineers General or Individual Permit
 - PATONS Permit

4. Monitoring

The selected firm will work with the Project Team to develop a Monitoring Plan in compliance with NOAA Monitoring Guidance.

5. Bid Package

The selected firm will be responsible for producing the bid package.

6. Project Coordination

The selected firm will be responsible for engaging the Project Team through design and permitting, including participating in monthly meetings, reviewing deliverables with the Project Team, and participating in Board, Committee, and workshop meetings as needed.

7. Construction Oversight

The selected firm will be responsible for construction oversight and producing as-built drawings and certification.

8. Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR)

The selected firm will be responsible for assisting the Project Team in evaluating if a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) is warranted for the project, and if so, assisting the Project Team with developing a CMAR scope of work.