

**WCS-NOAA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANT:
CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY WITH THE LOWER BRONX RIVER
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is seeking to fund projects through NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program. The goals of the WCS-NOAA partnership are to restore living marine resource habitats such as salt marshes, intertidal flats, riverine floodplain and riverbanks, and to acquire lands to facilitate enhancement or restoration of the lower Bronx River, while additionally improving public access to the river. Projects funded through this 3-year partnership will foster a broad-based participation by and benefits to the local community. The partnership promotes a collaborative process involving citizen groups, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and government agencies to develop strategies and implement projects for the benefit of the lower Bronx River ecosystem and the local community living along and benefiting from the river. Over time, this organizational cooperative is expected to strengthen ongoing working partnerships and create new relationships and innovative approaches towards living marine resource habitat restoration and land conservation involving the lower Bronx River community.

This WCS-NOAA partnership has been established specifically to benefit the lower Bronx River ecosystem. The geographical scope of this grant is the coastal waters and bordering lands of the lower Bronx River within the 16th Congressional District of New York. Projects sought for funding include (1) restoring aquatic habitats and other coastal ecological communities benefiting marine, estuarine and anadromous fisheries; and (2) acquiring lands or securing easements for coastal habitat restoration and greenway development while additionally providing public access. Projects will be selected through a competitive process developed by the WCS in cooperation with NOAA, and conducted by a Waterfront Steering Committee comprised of local community representatives, WCS and NOAA. Priority will be given to those projects resulting in actual on-the-ground restoration of living marine resource habitats and land conservation of riverfront sites through acquisition or conservation easements.

Grant recipients will be responsible for producing regular updates during the grant period including semi-annual performance reports and quarterly financial reports. WCS and NOAA strongly encourage grantees to evaluate their projects in terms of outcomes. Grantees may be asked to attend a workshop on outcome-based evaluation as part of their obligation to their grant.

Schedule and Submission Deadlines

The WCS-NOAA partnership grant extends through July 2005. It is anticipated that proposals will be accepted on a semi-annual basis through this period or until all available funds have been expended. This current request for proposals extends through close of business, **August 8, 2003**. All proposals, *including supporting documentation*, must be **post-marked** by this deadline for review and consideration during this open solicitation period. Any proposals post-marked after this deadline will not be considered during this open grant period. All proposals will be reviewed, evaluated, and selected within 60 days after the submittal deadline.

Proposal Submissions

All proposals, including narratives and budgets, must follow the format of the proposal outlined below. The form is also available at www.wcs.org/noaa or by contacting WCS as indicated at the end of this document. Only complete applications will be considered for funding.

Applicants must: 1) email the proposal narrative and budget to jkaderly@wcs.org and 2) submit (5) hard copies of the proposal and any supporting documentation to:

Jan Kaderly
Project Manager, WCS/NOAA Regional Partnership
Wildlife Conservation Society
2300 Southern Boulevard
Bronx, New York 10460

No facsimile applications will be accepted.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants may include non-governmental organizations, institutions of higher education, local public and private elementary and secondary schools, churches, other citizens groups, businesses, and state and local agencies.

Geographical Scope

The geographical scope of this grant is the waters of and lands bordering the lower Bronx River from the northern limit of the New York Botanical Gardens to the confluence of the Bronx River and East River within the 16th Congressional District of New York.

Availability of Funds

Through an appropriation secured by Representative Josè E. Serrano, a projected \$5 million will be available in this second round of grants for lower Bronx River habitat restoration and land acquisition projects. Funding levels requested may vary greatly and will be available on a highly competitive basis to projects that best address the goals and selection criteria of the grant. The number of awards will depend on the number of applications received, the amount of funds requested by each applicant, and the completeness and technical merit of the proposal. The final amount of funds awarded for a selected project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and WCS. Funds shall only be awarded to specific projects, and cannot be used to fund other sub-granting programs.

Up to \$3 million is available to fund acquisition projects. Of these funds, \$1.5 million is designated to fund the acquisition of property in which a public entity holds the title. A 1:1 match is required for these projects.

Approximately \$2 million is available to fund restoration projects. There is no matching fund requirement for restoration projects, but applicants are encouraged to leverage as much investment as possible to strengthen the merit of their application.

Allowable Costs and Cost Share

All applicants should review CIRCULAR NO. A-122 (Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations), located at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a122/a122.html>, and CIRCULAR NO. A-110 (Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations), located at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a110/a110.html>. Because these are federal funds, these guidance documents apply. Unallowable costs include alcohol, entertainment, lobbying, and advertising. There are sections in these two circulars that describe property (including real property) and equipment and their dispositions after the award period. Applicants are encouraged to contact the grant sponsor(s) prior to application submission to determine whether the costs can be considered for these funds and what inventorying and reporting requirements may then be in effect.

For more information on allowable cost share, applicants are strongly encouraged to consult CIRCULAR NO. A-110 SUBPART C, 23 Cost Sharing or Matching (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a110/a110.html>).

Project Duration

The WCS-NOAA partnership extends through July 31, 2005, or until such time grant funds are fully expended. The duration of funded projects is anticipated to range from less than 1 year to 2 years, depending on the size and complexity of the project and the work tasks and issues involved in accomplishing the project.

Proposal Guidelines

Proposals will include: 1) Cover Page and Checklist; 2) Project Narrative of no more than 6 pages in the format detailed below; 3) Project Schedule that outlines the chronology of activities; 4) Budget Form; 5) Supplementary Documentation; and 6) Locus and Project Boundary Maps.

PROJECT NARRATIVE (*identify each section using numbered headings and bold type*)

A narrative of no more than 6 single-spaced, one-sided pages must address the evaluation criteria listed below. *Identify the discussion of each criterion within the narrative using section headings and bold type.* Follow the order listed in the criteria where possible. Do not exceed the 6-page limit. The narrative should explain restoration, access and community needs the project is designed to meet. It should also provide sufficient information for reviewers to evaluate all criteria. Please note: incomplete narratives will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

Section I: Project Goals

A. Habitat Restoration

Such projects may include, among others: restoration of salt marshes and intertidal flats, stabilization of riverbank and river channel applying bioengineering techniques, construction of artificial reefs and fishways, restoration or enhancement of vegetated riparian and floodplain habitat, and rehabilitation of coastal lands to re-establish native vegetation and improve water quality.

Proposed projects must demonstrate how work activities will result in restoration or enhancement of habitats of living marine resources benefiting marine, estuarine and/or anadromous fish of the lower Bronx River. Provide results from any prior assessments that establish the need for your project. Where possible document the compatibility of the project with existing agency or local group plans addressing habitat restoration.

B. Acquisition

Such projects may include, among others: purchase of private lands, construction of greenways and boardwalks, and securing access easements. In rare cases and where clear links to habitat restoration goals are documented, proposals focusing on or including site planning and design for potential land acquisition and site development that will create or enhance public access to the river will also be considered. These funds cannot cover costs pertaining to economic development or those involving construction or restoration of buildings.

Acquisition projects must demonstrate that they will result in providing the local community and other users with free access to the lower Bronx River to restore, enhance, and monitor habitats benefiting living marine resources, and provide opportunities for education, fishing and other environmentally-sound passive recreation. Where possible document the compatibility of the project with existing agency or local group plans addressing land acquisition and public access. *Please note that \$1.5 million in acquisition funding is slated for projects in which a public entity holds title to the land and these funds must be matched on a 1:1 basis.*

Section II: Project Design

Please provide evidence that the project designers have identified clear restoration or conservation goals, performed formal or informal assessments of restoration or conservation needs, and have designed this project as the best solution to answer those needs. The project should demonstrate efficient, effective, and successful approaches to accomplish specific goals and objectives. The proposal should explain the context of the proposed project: what relevant work has been done (including citations as appropriate) and what the proposed project will contribute. The proposal should utilize existing or emerging standards or best practices in the technical area to which the project relates.

Proposals should indicate that all project partners will secure all applicable federal, state or local regulatory permits and approvals prior to the use of the funds. Because these are federal funds,

projects may require proof of Federal and state permits and formal and informal assessment in order to comply with National Environmental Policy Act compliance requirements prior to awarding funds from WCS. These activities will be done by NOAA or other Federal agencies but may require the assistance of the applicant.

A. Habitat Restoration projects should also include the following information:

- Description of habitat type(s) and amount (e.g., acres of wetlands, length of stream) to be restored or enhanced;
- Cost-effective techniques and construction practices that will be used to complete the project;
- Expected sustainability of or maintenance requirements for the project;
- The number and hours of volunteers if utilized on the project; and
- Methods for and duration of monitoring the project to determine performance and progress.

B. Acquisition projects should include the following additional information:

- Description of the property or project that will result in conservation and/or restoration of the lower Bronx River, as well as increased public access to the Bronx River;
- Discussion of the appraisal and/or market analysis for proposed property acquisition (a valid or summary appraisal should be included as an attachment to the proposal);
- Indication and/or proof that an agreement of sale has been reached for a proposed land acquisition (an acquisition agreement should be included as an attachment to the proposal);
- Indication of the entity that will be vested with the title to the property (\$1.5 million in acquisition funding must go towards the acquisition of property by a public entity— indicate in bold if the proposed owner is a public entity)
- Detailed plan that names the parties responsible for the maintenance of property;
- Any indication of the presence and/or extent of contamination of the property (copy of Environment Assessment(s) should be included as an attachment to the proposal); and
- For proposals including site planning, a detailed scope of work (e.g., plan design, preliminary engineering, landscape renderings) and budget breakdown should be included. Proposals must provide evidence that the site has been secured or is in the final stages of negotiations, e.g. appraisals, proof of sale, environmental assessments etc.

Section III: Sustainability

Application should provide evidence that the project's benefits will continue beyond the grant period, either through ongoing institutional support of project activities or products, development of institutional expertise and capacity, or through broad access to project findings. The proposal should also demonstrate the capacity and experience of applicant organization to manage grants of the requested funding level and overview of project personnel that will be responsible for the financial management and routine reporting of the grant.

For acquisition projects, applicants must describe plans for the long-term maintenance of a property or project. This discussion should include plans for the management as well as ownership of the grounds.

Section IV: Community Partnerships

Proposals must describe how projects would ensure participation within the local community. This is a very important criterion that can be satisfied in a variety of ways ranging from formal partnerships with local community organizations to involving local residents in restoration activities such as clean-ups or plantings. Applicants should include letters of support/involvement from community partners.

Proposals should define the extent and nature of their partnerships and anticipated benefits to the local community. Proposals with strong community partnering and well-developed, complementary roles for each project partner are highly encouraged.

Section V: Budget Justification

Proposals must provide details regarding their anticipated project duration, amount and expected timing of funds requested, and potential non-federal match (especially for acquisition projects).

Using the budget form, the Project Budget must include a detailed breakdown by category of projected costs as they relate to specific, justified aspects of the project. All direct costs should be itemized such as by unit cost and item quantity, contractual needs or specific fees. Any funding requests for administrative costs for personnel and fringe benefits should be accompanied by a manhours breakdown and hourly rates or annual salary and percentage of time committed for each person or labor category required for the project. Indirect costs, expenses that relate to the project but cannot be directly tied to project activities, will be allowed as part of the proposal, but will be restricted to no more than 10 percent of salary and fringe benefits. Applicants should provide a total for the project budget including the direct and indirect costs requested for funding through this grant, other federal fund sources, and any matching funds and in-kind services.

The Budget Justification contained in the narrative should explain all elements of the budget. For example, the Budget Justification should discuss the role and work tasks that each person listed in the project will provide. Applicants should also provide justification for all proposed equipment, supplies, travel, services and other expenses, requisite for completing the project. The Budget Justification should also explain the role and projected costs of any outside consultants or third-party vendors to be involved in the project, and how each was or will be identified and selected. Costs for third-party service providers should be documented by copy of official bids or quote, signed contract or other documentation.

Section VI: Personnel and Management Plan

While not required, organizations with a successful track record in completing community-based projects on the river are highly desired. Please describe: the organizational structure of the lead organization or partnership; evidence that the project personnel are qualified to accomplish

project goals and activities; and the extent to which personnel commit adequate time to manage and implement the project activities.

For the current funding round, proposals must provide evidence that the applicant institution is capable of carrying out the project to its successful conclusion through the deployment and management of resources including money, facilities, equipment, and supplies, and that financial management will be sound. This criterion is especially important for organizations already funded through the WCS-NOAA Partnership.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

The applicant must provide a Project Schedule that indicates when each major project activity or task is projected for completion, and how the project partners anticipate expending the grant funds over the duration of the project. The Project Schedule should closely correspond to the activities described in the Project Narrative, and be detailed to the extent that the proposal evaluators can clearly understand the project and activity time frame.

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

All projects must submit locus and project boundary maps. Applicants should include any additional documentation that specifically relates to the justification for the project. WCS encourages inclusion of conceptual design schematics, needs assessments, reports from planning activities, products or evaluations from previously completed or ongoing projects of a similar nature or other documents for the full evaluation of the proposal. Land acquisition projects should include a valid appraisal or market analysis of the property, an acquisition agreement or agreement of sale, and copies of documentation of potential site contamination (e.g., Phase I, II Environmental Assessments).

Selection Process

The awarding of sub-grants will be on a highly competitive basis and will support cost-effective partnerships for achieving the intending goals of the WCS-NOAA partnership. Applications will be initially screened to determine if proposals are complete and in accordance with instructions detailed in this solicitation notice. Eligible proposals will then undergo a technical review, rating, and selection process. The Waterfront Steering Committee will review and evaluate the proposals. As part of the proposal review, NOAA will provide WCS and the Steering Committee with technical assistance, as necessary, to fully evaluate the adequacy and completeness of the proposed project plan in completing the project and achieving the goals of this partnership. The Waterfront Steering Committee will provide its funding recommendations to WCS, and WCS will make the final project selections in consultation with NOAA. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award.

Notification of approved project proposals is expected to occur within 60 days after complete applications are submitted to WCS.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

In addition to the criteria outlined in the project narrative, proposals submitted to the WCS for funding will be reviewed, evaluated, and selected according to the following criteria:

- Completeness of the proposal and thoroughness in addressing criteria;
- Timeliness for completing the project within the partnership grant period;
- Technical merit of the proposal;
- Cost-effectiveness of the budget including adequacy and justification of the project budget breakdown and any additional matching funds or in-kind services.

The WCS looks forward to receiving proposals based on the above-indicated **post-mark** deadline. For further information, please contact Ms. Jan Kaderly, Project Manager, WCS/NOAA Regional Partnership, Wildlife Conservation Society at (718) 220-6394 or Charles Vasser, Director of Community Affairs, at (718) 220-5186.