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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Northeast Regional Office
1234 Market Street, 20th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107



Request for Letters of Research Interest (LOI)

Project Title: Science Communication for Regional Resource Initiatives in Northeastern National Parks

Background

The Northeast Region of the National Park Service is working to tackle the challenges created by climate change and other stressors through regional initiatives targeting key resources. With funding from the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), these initiatives are moving forward as funded projects. Each initiative is working to bring the best available science and indigenous knowledge to bear on restoring or enhancing the resilience of cultural and natural resources entrusted to the National Park Service. The initiatives are:

- Vulnerability assessments and planning – Identify infrastructure and resources threatened by sea level rise, altered storm frequency and severity, and other impacts of climate change along the coast and for interior parks (e.g., national battlefields), and assist park managers with making climate-smart management decisions.
- Two-eyed seeing – Integrate indigenous knowledge into resource management throughout the region.
- Forest resilience – Address impacts from invasive species and over-abundant deer that are creating regeneration debt in northeastern forests, and where necessary direct park forests towards a composition appropriate for the expected future climate.
- Grassland resilience – Improve grassland ecological health by managing invasives and restoring native species, and where appropriate facilitating migration of species better adapted to conditions expected in the future.
- Coastal nature-based solutions – Explore and implement a variety of solutions for protecting coastal resources from sea level rise and more frequent severe storms, including salt marsh restoration, dune revegetation, oyster bed restoration, and other appropriate strategies.
- Stream flow restoration – Remove restrictions and barriers to stream flow to promote resilience to climate change, protect infrastructure, and allow fish passage for federally endangered Atlantic salmon and other species.
- Seagrass restoration – Protect critical seagrass habitat by identifying climate resilient genotypes suitable for use in future seagrass restoration efforts across parks.

Because of the high profile and impact of IRA and BIL projects aligned with these initiatives, the Northeast Region of the National Park Service wants to go beyond the basic communications (briefing statements, short web articles, and press releases) that are part of IRA-funded projects. Our overall goal is to engage key audiences to encourage broader participation in the initiatives and attract internal funding and external support. We have developed a strategic communications plan that outlines our goals, audiences, key messages, and potential tasks (see attachment).

Objective and Products

The objective of this project is to develop science communication products for the initiatives and key projects. Potential products include social media content, short web posts, videos, ArcGIS StoryMaps, and in-depth articles. NPS will work with the cooperator to identify the best products to meet the goals in the strategic communications plan. The initial work will focus on forest resilience and fish vulnerability to climate change.

Project Timeline

Funds for this project will be obligated between 1 July and 30 September 2024. Once initiated, this project is expected to last for at least two years, with potential extension to five years depending on available funding.

Funds Available

\$100,000 to \$150,000 is available for the first two years of this project, inclusive of the CESU overhead rate of 17.5%. NPS is actively seeking additional funds for this effort, and the cooperator needs to be able to scale up or extend the project if additional funds become available. Non-federal partners within the North Atlantic Coast CESU, Chesapeake Watershed CESU, and Great Lakes-Northern Forest CESU networks with a current NPS master cooperative agreement are eligible to apply.

Materials Requested for Letters of Interest

Letters of interest (limit 3 pages) must include:

1. Name, Organization and Contact Information
2. Pre-Proposal: Description of the proposed approach for conducting the project, including capacity for developing science communication products identified in the strategic communications plan. NPS welcomes suggestions for alternative or additional products that will meet the communication goals.
3. Brief Statement of Qualifications (including):
 - a. Biographical Sketch(s) for key personnel (faculty, staff), including a description of discipline(s) of expertise. Curriculum vitas can be submitted as an attachment.
 - b. Relevant past science communication projects.

Evaluation Letters of Interest

Based on a review of the Letters of Interest received, and contingent on funding, a partner will be invited to prepare a full proposal and detailed budget. Letters will be evaluated based on the following criteria and scoring:

1. Soundness and validity of the proposed approach for meeting project objectives (15 points maximum)
2. Demonstrated experience with science communication (10 points maximum)
3. Demonstrated ability to produce products within schedule and budget (5 points maximum)

Contact

Direct questions and letters of interest to Dr. Brian Mitchell, brian_mitchell@nps.gov, 401-318-5165. The deadline for responding to this request for LOI is 22 March 2024.