



LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

ENHANCEMENT AWARD PROGRAM 2010 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (PART I)

January 2010

The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) is inviting proposals for the development of a GIS-based eelgrass habitat suitability model. This project is intended to aid Long Island Sound Study (LISS) partners in the implementation of LISS program objectives, particularly in the protection and restoration of a vulnerable species and its habitat.

This request for proposals (RFP) includes information on:

- I. Background of Long Island Sound Study (LISS)
- II. Overview of the Enhancement Award Program
- III. Enhancement Award Program General Guidelines
- IV. Guidelines for Proposal Preparation
- V. Proposal Content
- VI. Submission Process
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Appendix A. 2010 Enhancement Award Program Priority Topic:
Creation of a GIS-based Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Index Model

Appendix B. Title Page Format

Appendix C. Budget Format

I. Background of Long Island Sound Study (LISS)

Long Island Sound is one of North America's most urban and biologically diverse estuaries. Although the Sound is a resource of extraordinary productivity, it is under significant stress. Accordingly, in 1985 the states of Connecticut and New York and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognized Long Island Sound as an Estuary of National Significance. In 1994, the state and federal partners approved the Long Island Sound Study Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (LISS CCMP), which established an overall plan to restore and protect the Sound.

On December 4, 2002, the LISS Policy Committee executed the *Long Island Sound 2003 Agreement* (LIS2003), which established 30 environmental and management goals with specific targets, extending over a five-year period. LIS2003 is the result of a comprehensive stakeholder-driven process involving more than 300 scientists, resource managers, policymakers and citizens from all parts of the LIS watershed. LIS2003 consolidates prior commitments and establishes new goals and deadlines for protecting and restoring the Sound's living resources, water quality, and vital habitats, promoting sound land use, and engaging the public, educators and communities beyond 2003. The LISS CCMP and LIS2003 still are being implemented today and serve as the basis for this RFP.

The Long Island Sound Study has consistently identified the health of living marine resources and habitat degradation as priority areas of concern. Eelgrass is a keystone species that serves as important habitat and nursery ground for a large number of fish and shellfish species, as a source of food, as a contributor to nutrient cycling and as an absorber of wave energy. Eelgrass is also highly sensitive to the effects of eutrophication, and as such is commonly used as an indicator of water quality in estuarine ecosystems. Eelgrass beds were historically widely distributed throughout Long Island Sound embayments but in recent years a combination of disease, physical disturbance and poor water quality has reduced their distribution to the easternmost areas of Long Island Sound.

The Long Island Sound Study has begun to address the problem of declining eelgrass beds in the Sound by funding a combination of research and mapping programs. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has been funded to inventory, map and groundtruth Long Island Sound eelgrass acreage on a triennial basis since 2002. The most recent survey was completed in 2009, and results will be made available in 2010. Additional research projects funded by the Long Island Sound Study have resulted in the development of recommendations for habitat and water quality requirements for eelgrass beds in the Sound.

An important next step towards eelgrass restoration is the evaluation of Long Island Sound coastal areas to assess their potential to support eelgrass survival and growth. A GIS-based, site suitability index model is needed to target future restoration sites and identify areas in need of water quality and/or habitat improvements before eelgrass restoration will be feasible.

The award recipient will work with the NY and CT eelgrass workgroups as well as other identified partners and potential sources of information to:

- Map areas meeting preliminary developed habitat and water quality requirements for eelgrass establishment in Long Island Sound.
- Test preliminary developed habitat and water quality requirements by identifying areas where eelgrass should (according to the preliminary developed requirements) be present and compare to survey documented current and historic eelgrass distribution.
- Identify areas where eelgrass restoration and/or revegetation is possible.
- Identify primary and secondary factors limiting eelgrass presence and restoration.
- Identify areas of potential habitat where restoration may be possible if habitat or water quality parameters change/improve.
- Identify what improvements and to what level they must be made to support eelgrass in areas where restoration is not currently recommended.
- Identify areas where eelgrass may migrate to or thrive with sea level rise and climate change symptoms.
- Make recommendations for improving the data upon which the analysis and prioritization are based, recommendations for improvement of site or resource data in the future, and a system for collecting, organizing, and incorporating future data enhancements.

It is hoped that the results of this work will provide important methods and data useful for the development of nutrient criteria for adoption into both NY's and CT's water quality standards programs. This will ensure future protection of eelgrass habitat in Long Island Sound from the effects of excess nutrients.

II. Overview of the Enhancement Award Program

The LISS CCMP Enhancement Award Program is administered by NEIWPC. This RFP solicits project proposals that support the mission and goals of the LISS CCMP and LIS 2003 Agreement. Further, project proposals submitted in response to this year's RFP must address the priorities outlined

in **Appendix A**. Enhancement awards are designed to help the LISS partners implement actions consistent with the CCMP and to meet the LIS 2003 Agreement goals. Innovative, cost-effective proposals are sought to accomplish these goals. Proposals that do not address the specific outcomes desired will be eliminated from competition.

Applicants are encouraged to review the LISS website (<http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net>) for general information about the LISS program. Information on the LIS 2003 Agreement is available at http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net/ccmp/liss_agreement_03.htm. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to discuss their project plans with the priority topic contact identified in Section VIII).

III. Enhancement Award Program General Guidelines

The timeline for the 2010 LISS Enhancement Award Program (Part 1) is as follows:

Proposals Due to NEIWPCC	March 19, 2010
Applicants Notified of Funding Decisions	May 21, 2010
Detailed Project Work plans Due	June 18, 2010
Project Start Date	July 19, 2010

Eligibility

Applicants that are eligible to submit proposals in response to this RFP include: state or local government agencies, interstate water pollution control agencies, private non-profit organizations and institutions, for-profit organizations, and educational institutions, including colleges, universities, and public or private elementary and secondary schools. Eligible applicants located outside of the Long Island Sound watershed may submit a proposal as long as the proposal documents that its objectives support the technical requirements and management priorities of the LISS.

Funding

There is \$110,000 available for this project. Proposals with budgets that exceed the identified funding need to provide justification for why the funding request is warranted to accomplish the stated objectives. Although cost share or match is not required, projects providing non-federal cost share or match will receive favorable consideration over projects without cost share or match. Cost share may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, but must be clearly explained in the proposal and must be verifiable. Awarded funds may be used for expenses directly related to the proposed project, including wages and consultant fees. Expendable and non-expendable equipment directly related to the proposed project qualify for funding; however, the purchase of high-cost items (e.g., computers, boats, etc.) is not allowed.

Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements

The project involves the collection, analysis, and/or manipulation of environmental data; it therefore will require a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). No work by the award recipient can begin before the QAPP is approved by quality assurance managers from both NEIWPCC and EPA. Keep in mind that the preparation of a QAPP requires an additional level of planning, documentation, and time. While preparing your budget and work plan, please account for the additional time and resources necessary for QAPP development. For more information about QAPPs, please visit http://www.epa.gov/quality/qa_docs.html, or contact NEIWPCC's Long Island Sound Program Coordinator (contact information in Section VIII).

Notification of Award

Award notification to applicants is expected by May 21, 2010. Funding 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. NEIWPCCC will not reimburse any expenses incurred prior to the contract start date. Recipients will be required to submit quarterly reports documenting the project's progress to date. Guidelines for preparing quarterly reports will be provided to award recipients. Recipients may be asked to prepare public-friendly articles on the project results for LISS-related publications. Recipients may also be asked to make presentations on the project results at LISS meetings after the conclusion of the project.

IV. Guidelines for Proposal Preparation

Proposals are due on Friday, March 19, 2010, at Midnight EST. Each proposal must include a title page, a narrative, and a budget form. Proposals that do not contain all of the information requested in Section V and/or do not meet the format requirements will be eliminated from the competition. Please include a cover letter, printed on official letterhead and signed by an authorized representative of the lead agency, with each proposal.

The title page must adhere to the format provided in **Appendix B**. For your convenience, an electronic version of the title page is available as a Microsoft Word document on NEIWPCCC's website (<http://www.neiwpc.org/lisseqp.htm>).

The proposal narrative must address all of the information requested in **Section V.2** of this RFP, using a maximum of five single-spaced, one-sided typed 8.5" x 11" pages with 11-point font and 1" margins. The five pages must include all required information, including literature cited. Proposals with narratives exceeding five pages will be eliminated from the competition. The required title page and standard budget form are not included in the five page limit. Optional supporting materials, such as resumes and brief descriptions of relevant experience are not included in the five page limit for the narrative, but should also not exceed five pages.

The budget page must adhere to the format provided in **Appendix C**. For your convenience, an electronic version of the budget form is available as a Microsoft Word document on NEIWPCCC's website (<http://www.neiwpc.org/lisseqp.htm>).

V. Proposal Content

1. **Title Page.** The title page must adhere to the format provided in Appendix B 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" margins:
 - Title: Use the exact project title as it appears throughout the proposal.
 - Project Leader: Provide the name, title, and agency affiliation of the project leader (i.e., lead principal investigator).
 - Lead Agency Contact Information: Provide the complete contact information for the Project Leader, including mailing address, phone and fax numbers, email address, and agency web site address.
 - Project Support: Provide the names, titles, affiliations, and complete contact information for each of the additional investigators or support staff who will significantly contribute to the project.
 - Project Cost: Provide the total project cost (i.e., funding request), as well as total project match (if any).

- **Abstract:** The abstract must accurately describe the project being proposed and include: (1) the objectives of the project, (2) the methodology to be used (which should give an accurate description of the project as described in the proposal), and (3) the expected outputs and outcomes of the project and how it addresses this RFP, including environmental benefits to Long Island Sound. **The abstract must fit within the title page.**

2. **Proposal Narrative.** The proposal narrative must not exceed five consecutively numbered (bottom right), single-spaced, one-sided typed 8.5" x 11" pages with 11-point font and 1" margins. The five pages must include all of the following information and literature cited.

- **Problem Descriptive:** Briefly describe this RFP's topic and the Long Island Sound management need your project will address. This section can also include brief background or introductory information.
- **Objectives:** Outline the project's objectives.
- **Methodology:** Outline the project design and describe the tasks (i.e., methods and techniques) that will be conducted to meet the project's objectives. QAPP development must be identified as a task.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Define the roles and responsibilities of all project participants.
- **Expected Outputs and Outcomes:** Describe the project's expected outputs and outcomes, including environmental benefits to Long Island Sound. List and describe each of the specific deliverables and end-products. An example environmental output/outcome table is below. In addition to a discussion of the environmental outcomes and outputs associated with your projects, briefly discuss the process to be used to evaluate the effectiveness and success of the project and your plans to disseminate projects results and end-products (see Appendix A for more detail on expected tasks and deliverables).

SAMPLE Environmental Outputs/Outcomes				
Project Element	Work Plan Activity/Task	Target Date(s)	Environmental Output	Environmental Outcome
Coordination Outreach Program	Sound Health Report	Month 8	Full-color, 16-page report that highlights environmental trends impacting Long Island Sound.	Provide the general public with an informative report on the progress in the effort to restore and protect Long Island Sound.
	Web Site	Ongoing	Weekly updates on general information and current news about LISS and Long Island Sound; mechanism for accessing LISS reports and documents.	Communicate the state of the LIS environment and programs to protect the Sound to a large number of citizens, community organizations, and school children; more than 70,000 web site visitors a year.
	Outreach Material	Month 12	New polluted runoff brochure, habitat restoration brochure, update habitat restoration map, update LISS general brochure, reprint curbing polluted runoff brochure and posters.	Provides citizens with information about the state of LIS environment and citizen efforts to control polluted runoff; items also feature LISS contact information to encourage people to seek out more information about the program.

- **Timeline:** Provide a detailed timeline for meeting project objectives and identified tasks and listed deliverables. Projects should be completed within the period identified for this RFP. All timelines should be stated in terms of Month #1, #2, #4, etc. rather than specific dates, e.g. "July 19, 2010." Although project start dates are anticipated to be July 19, 2010, this date may change based on the time the actual agreement is established.

Within the first half of the project period, the award recipient should develop a QAPP and submit it to EPA. The award recipient should additionally compile available data, shape files, etc. related to eelgrass in Long Island Sound and propose the components and layout of the suitability index model.

By the end of the project period, the award recipient should deliver and explain the site suitability index model. The recipient should provide maps of areas in Long Island Sound that could be currently targeted for restoration, as well as maps of potential eelgrass habitat in Long Island Sound that could be targeted for restoration if water quality is improved. The recipient should deliver and explain recommendations for improvement of site or resource data in the future, and a system for collecting, organizing and incorporating future data enhancements into the suitability index model (see Appendix A for more detail on expected tasks and deliverables).

- **Budget:** State the total project budget. Provide a brief justification 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) that are intended to support the project.
3. **Project Budget Form.** Attach a detailed, itemized budget form for the entire project in the format provided in Appendix C. The budget must fit on one single-spaced, one sided typed 8.5" x 11" page with 11-point font and 1" margins.
 4. **Suggested Peer Reviewers.** Applicants must provide the names and complete contact information for three potential peer reviewers with knowledge in the area of the work being proposed, and who are not directly associated with the applicant's organization. This information must be provided on a separate page from the title, narrative, and budget. Attach this separate page at the end of the proposal package.

VI. Submission Process

Applicants must submit both an electronic and hardcopy of their proposal as follows:

1. An electronic submission as an e-mail attachment sent to cwhittet@neiwpsc.org by no later than **Midnight, EST, on Friday, March 19, 2010**. There are two acceptable electronic formats (both forms may be submitted):
 - A PDF document is highly preferred. This requires Adobe Acrobat or similar Adobe product (the free Adobe Reader does not allow the conversion of documents into PDF format). NEIWPC realizes that not all applicants will have these software applications.
 - Microsoft Word format (Office 2003 or 2007 versions are acceptable).

2. Two signed hard copies (single-sided, unbound, and unfolded) with a post mark no later than **Friday, March 19, 2010**. Please mail the hard copies to NEIWPCC's Long Island Sound Program Coordinator, Clair Whittet, whose complete contact information is provided in Section VIII of this RFP.

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. Complete and eligible proposals will be reviewed by a panel composed of scientists and managers from LISS partner agencies. Proposals will also be submitted for external peer reviews. The review team will evaluate the proposals based upon the following criteria:

1. **Addresses Desired Outcome (0-25 points)**. Degree to which the proposal can accomplish the desired outcomes. Clarity and measurability of deliverables/outputs within specific and reasonable time frame(s), including relationship of expected results/benefits to addressing this RFP's topic and improving management of LIS.
2. **Technical Merit (0-25 points)**. Adequacy of the proposed methodology, project design, and/or technical approach to accomplish stated project objectives. If appropriate, inclusion of a technically valid, specific performance assessment plan describing measurement and reporting of outputs and outcomes.
3. **Performance Capability (0-15 points)**. Ability of the applicant to accomplish the proposed project given its history of past performance, experience, qualifications, facilities, and resources.
4. **Appropriate and Cost-Effective Budget (0-15 points)**. Proposals with costs up to \$110,000 will be considered, but cost and the relative value of work products will be a factor in evaluating submissions. Adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish objectives, and adequacy of justification in explaining the need for resources for this project. If reviewing similar projects, is this project cost-effective compared with other similar projects under review? Indication of leveraged funds from other organizations. Provision of matching non-federal funds.
5. **Transferability of Results to Similar Projects and/or Dissemination to the Public (0-10 points)**. Degree of transferability of data or project results to the LISS program partners. If applicable, inclusion of a public outreach or public education component that documents and/or distributes results of the project to the appropriate audience or summarizes data for LISS distribution.
6. **Coordination with Ongoing Efforts (0-10 points)**. Degree to which the project builds upon existing efforts. Demonstration of knowledge of similar efforts occurring in the watershed.

Proposals will be ranked and evaluated based upon the review teams' recommendations, external peer reviews, and the relative priority of commitments in LIS2003 and the CCMP. NEIWPCC will present the recommended project proposals to the LISS Management Committee. In turn, the Management Committee will approve or disapprove of the recommendations. Award notification is expected by Friday, May 21, 2010.

Section VIII. Contacts

For information regarding the application process, please contact **Clair Whittet**, NEIWPCC's Long Island Sound Program Coordinator, at:

Clair Whittet
New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission
116 John Street
Lowell, MA 01852
(978) 349-2522
cwhittet@neiwpc.org

For information regarding the eelgrass priority topic, please contact **Julie Rose**, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration liaison to the Long Island Sound Study, at:

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