**REQUEST FOR STATEMENTS OF INTEREST**

**NUMBER W81EWF-20-SOI-0005**

**PROJECT TO BE INITIATED IN 2020**

**Project Title: Wading Bird Colony Location, Size, and Timing in the Everglades**

Responses to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential investigators for a project to be funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Jacksonville District and the Engineer Research Development Center (ERDC) which provides information regarding changes in wading bird colonies in the Everglades region in response to restoration efforts under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) program. Approximately $125,076.00 is expected to be available to support this project for one (1) year. Additional funding may be available for follow on work in subsequent fiscal years up to 4 years at $125,076.00 per year for a total of $625,380.00 over 5 years.

**Background:**

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2000 authorized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) as a framework for modifications and operational changes to the Central and Southern Florida Project needed to restore the south Florida ecosystem. Provisions within WRDA 2000 provided for specific authorization for an adaptive assessment and monitoring program. The CERP Monitoring and Assessment Plan (MAP) was developed as a framework for measuring and understanding system responses to CERP, determining how well CERP is meeting its goals and objectives, and identifying opportunities for improving the performance of CERP where needed.

Wading birds are a dominant predator in the Everglades ecosystem and breeding population responses are considered to be integrative and reflective of many aspects of the wetland habitat; thus wading birds have been identified as a key indicator of restoration success. Restoration has been centered on several trophic hypotheses regarding wading birds (e.g., appropriate hydrologic conditions will increase fish and macroinvertebrate populations, enhanced foraging opportunities will increase wading bird breeding, and the return of flow to coastal regions will restore wading bird nesting in those areas). Without the appropriate monitoring of wading bird colonies, these hypotheses cannot be evaluated and CERP may not achieve its goals. Coverage of nests in the South Florida ecosystem has in the past been a patchwork effort, however, and incomplete data over a broad geographic area limits inferences about whether effects are system-wide or local. Thus, it is necessary to monitor all “patches” of the South Florida ecosystem. This SOI will complement existing aerial coverage in the Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) 1, 2, 3 and Everglades National Park (ENP) with new ground coverage where needed, as well as expand coverage to include Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP). This project will draw upon prior research conducted in WCA 1, 2, 3 and ENP and continue to study how CERP restoration translates into impacts on wading bird populations and reproductive success.

**Brief Description of Anticipated Work:**

The purpose of this research is to monitor changes in population densities and reproductive success in wading bird populations in the Everglades region. Specifically, the objectives include:

Objective 1: Provide for annual monitoring of size, location, and species composition of nesting aggregations by long-legged wading birds including but not limited to: Great Egrets, White Ibis, Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills, and Snowy Egrets. In addition, provide for enhanced monitoring in Everglades National Park (e.g., ground and aerial surveys, analysis of turnover and super-population estimates)

Objective 2: Provide annual quantitative information on nest success and nest productivity of wading birds in the Everglades

Objective 3: Standardize methods and integrate results from all survey projects monitoring wading birds in the South Florida ecosystem

Objective 4: Provide an annual report with species-specific estimates of breeding wading birds in each colony

**Public Benefit:**

This project will play a critical role in building the knowledge base for understanding wading bird communities in the Everglades region. This information is important to the public as wading birds act as ecosystem indicators for the Everglades ecosystem, hence providing information on ecosystem health. Improvements in ecosystem health provide a direct benefit to the public. Recreational benefits provided include outdoor recreation opportunities and improved access to Everglades marshes for tourists and Floridians.

**Vendor Requirements:**

The Vendor must be a non-federal partner of the South Florida – Caribbean CESU Unit willing to accept the negotiated CESU indirect cost rate of 17.5%. Successful applicants should have expert knowledge of wading bird population dynamics in the Everglades region, and a record that demonstrates relevant applied research experience. The candidates should have prior experience with monitoring populations of wading birds, conducting aerial and ground surveys, analyzing population and reproductive data, and relating wading bird responses (i.e., foraging, breeding, and nesting) to hydrological conditions. The candidates will be required to prepare a Statement of Work and Work Plan regarding the research to be conducted. The candidates will also be required to submit three (3) quarterly status reports, one (1) annual report each year, and one (1) final report for all years of the contract to provide updates on monitoring, data collection and analyses, and assessments regarding the impacts of CERP implementation on wading bird communities in the Everglades.

**Government Participation:**

The USACE will participate in study site selections, design, and work plan development. USACE will participate in field data collection efforts as appropriate, will review quarterly status reports, and will provide input to data interpretation for final reports, as well as review annual and final reports. USACE will incorporate the data and analysis into a system-wide database that assesses and evaluates ecosystem restoration efforts in central and southern Florida. Scientific and technical information generated from the project will be utilized to evaluate project/restoration performance and system responses to be used in the development of assessment reports describing and interpreting those responses.

**Materials Requested for Statement of Interest/Qualifications:**

Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to:

Deberay.R.Carmichael@usace.army.mil

(Maximum length: 2 pages, single-spaced 12 pt. font).

1. Name, Organization and Contact Information
2. Brief Statement of Qualifications (including):
	1. Biographical Sketch,
	2. Relevant past projects and clients with brief descriptions of these projects,
	3. Staff, faculty or students available to work on this project and their areas of expertise,
	4. Any brief description of capabilities to successfully complete the project you may wish to add (e.g. equipment, laboratory facilities, greenhouse facilities, field facilities, etc.).

**Note:** A proposed budget is NOT requested at this time.

**Review of Statements Received:** Based on a review of the Statements of Interest received, an investigator or investigators will be invited to prepare a full study proposal. Statements will be evaluated based on the investigator’s specific experience and capabilities in areas related to the study requirements. Additionally, the evaluation method and selection criteria for research and development awards must be: (1) The Technical merits of the proposed research and development; and (2) Potential relationship of the proposed research and development to the Department of Defense missions.

**Please send responses or direct questions to:**

Deberay Carmichael

U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC)

ERDC Contracting Office (ECO)

3909 Halls Ferry Road

Vicksburg, MS 39180

Deberay.R.Carmichael@usace.army.mil

**Availability of Opportunity:**

Statements of Interest must be received by December 17, 2019 to be eligible for consideration.