



**FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
COMMISSION**

FWC 15/16-020

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

**MECHANICAL REMOVAL OF AQUATIC PLANTS
AND ASSOCIATED ORGANIC MATERIAL FROM FLORIDA WATERBODIES
UNDER INUNDATED CONDITIONS**

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1. STATEMENT OF NEED

This is a Request for Information (RFI) as defined in Section 287.012(22), Florida Statutes, for informational and planning purposes only. This RFI is issued by the State of Florida, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (“Commission”), to solicit information regarding the services described herein.

A RFI is not a method of procurement. Responses to a RFI are not offers and shall not be accepted by the Commission to form a binding Contract. This RFI and responses to it shall not result in the execution of a Contract with the Commission. By submitting a response to this RFI, a vendor is not prohibited from responding to any related subsequent solicitation. This RFI may be used for purposes of determining whether or not to competitively procure a commodity or contractual service, determining what solicitation process to use, or researching general, special, and/or technical specifications for a project or solicitation. The Commission reserves the right to utilize the information gathered through the RFI process to develop a scope of services, which may be incorporated into a Contract using a statutorily approved method of procurement.

The COMMISSION is seeking information on aquatic plant harvesting or removal methodologies from vendors that are experienced in the removal and disposal (both in-lake as permitted islands or off-lake as upland disposal) of noxious aquatic plants and associated organic detrital material. These plant communities may be described as tussocks (defined as floating rafts of herbaceous vegetation) and floating islands (defined as floating rafts from a few inches to several feet thick of peat or muck supporting aquatic, herbaceous and woody plants, and/or trees) for the purpose of enhancing valuable fish and wildlife habitat and maintaining public access/navigation. Examples of noxious aquatic plant species often required to be removed include, but are not limited to, primrose willow (*Ludwigia* spp.), cattail (*Typha* spp.), spatterdock (*Nuphar advena*), burhead sedge (*Oxycaryum cubense*), knotweed (*Polygonum densiflorum*), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), Carolina willow (*Salix caroliniana*), and wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*); however, other plant species present within the work areas must also be harvested. The Commission is requesting this information in order to analyze and determine the most effective approach regarding noxious aquatic plant removal including the application of new and/or alternate technologies.

All interested partners are invited to participate in the RFI by submitting a written response as indicated in this RFI document. The information provided as a result of this RFI is intended to be used to develop a future solicitation that utilize the technologies described herein.

The Commission reserves the right to use or reject any information supplied in response to this RFI.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Overabundance of noxious aquatic plants and associated organic sediments can be a nuisance and can reduce surface area available for recreational use of a lake or stream for boating, fishing, or swimming. These problems are commonly the result of either excessive nutrient input, which can increase the rate of eutrophication, or stabilization of the water level in a lake, stream, or wetland, which can lead to increased rates of littoral succession and organic sediment

accumulation. Various biological and physical methods and technologies can be employed to remove aquatic plants and associated organic sediments.

Aquatic vegetation with associated organic detrital material in inundated water bodies is accomplished by gathering, cutting, and collecting the vegetation and organic material using large mechanical machines and equipment. The equipment and method of removal is based on the diversity of plants and characteristics of the local environment, as well as the equipment's sediment re-suspending potential. Examples of mechanical harvesting equipment used include harvesters, barge-mounted excavators, and other shore-based equipment.

The Commission is currently evaluating the use of innovative technologies to address removal of aquatic vegetation with associated organic detrital material using mechanical methods. The Commission is proposing to evaluate conventional and innovative methods included in the response to this RFI.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

Removal of noxious aquatic vegetation means removal of all floating, emergent, and submerged portions of all plants within the designated work area, as well as their roots, rhizomes and organic material attached or associated with the plants, unless specific plants or areas within the work area are excluded from removal by the Commission Project Manager. Projects also require the removal of any plant and detrital material from the lake bottom that drops from the removal equipment, transport barges or aquatic harvester platform. Methodologies for the removal of aquatic vegetation and associated organic sediments, as well as their disposal, should minimize disturbance to both the water and substrate. Equipment used must be capable of removing both floating, submersed, and rooted vegetation (including large rooted trees) and organic detrital material to the degree specified above, as well as transporting the material to the off-loading point, regardless of water conditions.

Past harvesting methodologies include the use of 1) amphibious/barge-mounted excavators with a rake attachment or bucket/grapple that allows excess water to be decanted to remove dense vegetation, often with trees, and a thick (up to 3') layer of organic material and 2) traditional floating aquatic harvesters to remove herbaceous vegetation and semi-woody vegetation with light-to-moderate associated organic material and to perform clean-up of plant and organic material that is floating or that has been dropped to the bottom during the removal process. Respondents need to provide information on the desirability of each methodology or any additional methodologies to be considered.

Methodologies for vegetation and organic material disposal also need to be addressed. Past projects have required the Commission to find in-lake or off-lake upland disposal sites and recently we have begun requiring the contractors locate off-lake disposal sites. These options pose issues to both the contractor and the Commission. Respondents need to provide information on the limitations and desirability of each disposal method.

The Commission historically determined the method of procurement (by the hour, acre or the project) based on the following metrics:

- A. If the targeted aquatic vegetation was fixed in place and a definite project boundary

could be established and maintained, the method of procurement was by the project or, in limited cases when the project budget was flexible or additional fixed sites were identified following initial project work, by the acre.

- B. If the targeted aquatic vegetation was floating, mobile and no fixed project boundary could be established, the procurement method was by the hour.

The respondents are required to discuss the application of these metrics and also provide suggestions on marking project boundaries.

4. RFI RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

Responses to this RFI shall include the following:

- A. The vendor's complete name, address, telephone number, email address, FEID number and the vendor's point of contact for this RFI.

- B. Commitment from the respondent to provide requested information by no later than **Tuesday, September 15, 2015.**

- C. The vendor's history and experience in the aquatic plant harvesting/removal business, including number, type and contracting entity for projects conducted over the last two (2) years.

D. Provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What traditional harvesting equipment is available in the industry and what are the capabilities/limitation of each type of equipment?
- 2) What new or innovative technologies are available in the industry and what are their limitations/benefits?
- 3) What aquatic vegetation/organic material disposal options are available, feasible and preferred, such as Commission-supplied in-lake disposal sites, Commission-supplied off-lake upland disposal sites or contractor-supplied upland disposal sites?
- 4) What are the problems and benefits of procuring harvesting services by the hour, acre or by the project?
- 5) Is there a better way of procuring harvesting/removal services than by those listed in Question 4, above?
- 6) What methods could be used to adequately mark or delineate the boundaries of a project area such that there would be no confusion on job completion requirements?
- 7) Would your company be interested in a face to face meeting with FWC to discuss your responses provided to this RFI?

5. INFORMATION EFFECTS

The Commission will use the information gained from this RFI to determine the best way to proceed, estimate the level of funding required, and develop the appropriate procurement process to address desired aquatic vegetation removal projects within the level of resources available.

6. QUESTIONS

Written questions are invited and may be submitted in writing via fax, e-mail or mail **until 5:00 P.M. EST, Friday, September 4, 2015**. Questions **MUST** be received by the Procurement Manager (listed on page 1) via email on or before this date and time to ensure they are answered. Written responses to questions will be posted on the Vendor Bid System on **Tuesday, September 8, 2015**.

7. WRITTEN RESPONSE TO RFI

Written responses to this RFI must be submitted to the Procurement Manager by **5:00 P.M. EST, Tuesday, September 15, 2015**. Vendors may fax, e-mail, mail or hand-deliver their response. If sent by mail or hand delivery, please send to the attention of the Procurement Manager at the address listed on Page 1. The Commission reserves the right to use any information supplied in any manner.

After the Commission has received all responses to this RFI, the Commission, in its sole discretion, shall determine if a meeting with respondents is necessary to clarify the information received. In the event that the Commission decides to hold a meeting, the respondent(s) will be notified via email.

8. PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Any portion of the submitted response which is asserted to be exempt from disclosure under Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, shall be clearly marked "exempt", "confidential", or "trade secret" (as applicable) and shall also contain the statutory basis for such claim on every page containing such exempt information. Pages containing trade secrets shall be marked "trade secret as defined in Section 812.081, Florida Statutes". Failure to segregate and identify such portions shall constitute a waiver of any claimed exemption and the Commission will provide such records in response to public records requests without notifying the respondent. Designating material simply as "proprietary" will not necessarily protect it from disclosure under Chapter 119, Florida Statutes. An entire response should not be considered "trade secret".

PLEASE NOTE: Any submitted material that is not clearly marked as stated in Section 8, Proprietary Information, is subject to Florida Statute 119, Public Records.

9. VENDOR COSTS

Vendors are responsible for all costs associated with preparing a response to this RFI. The State of Florida and the Commission will not be responsible for any vendor costs associated with preparing a response to this RFI.

The Commission appreciates your time and interest in responding to this Request for Information.

THIS IS NOT A COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH S. 287.057(1). PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SUBMIT A BID, PROPOSAL OR OTHER PRESENTATION.