



## REQUEST FOR QUOTATIONS

### *Contract(s) to Support Development of a Rio Grande Native Riparian Bird Habitat Implementation Plan within the Middle and Lower Rio Grande Valleys in New Mexico to Identify Priority Habitat Restoration Sites for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Yellow-Billed Cuckoo*

#### OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) seeks a qualified Contractor or Contractors to assist in the development of a Rio Grande Native Riparian Bird Habitat Implementation Plan for the Rio Grande Focal Area of the Southwest Rivers Program. The Southwest Rivers Program is designed to improve riparian habitat for native species in the Middle and Lower Rio Grande Valleys in New Mexico. You can obtain a copy of the Program's [Business Plan](#) on NFWF's website.

#### BACKGROUND

While the program includes a variety of goals, the scope of work under this contract is to support NFWF in development of a Rio Grande Native Riparian Bird Habitat Implementation Plan (BHIP) described in USBR Cooperative Agreement R24AC00490 to guide the creation and enhancement of riparian habitat above and below the Elephant Butte Reservoir to benefit populations of Southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL; *Empidonax traillii extimus*) and Yellow-billed cuckoo (YBCU; *Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*). The purpose of the BHIP is to develop a vision and long-term plan to create habitat that encourages endangered and threatened avian species to nest beyond the Elephant Butte Reservoir full pool area. Currently, the reservoir is low and the majority of SWFL and YBCU persisting within the Rio Grande system nest within the full pool area. If the pool were to fill, a large amount of habitat for these species would be eliminated. NFWF and USBR seek to develop an implementation plan that integrates current regulatory requirements for USBR's Middle Rio Grande and Rio Grande Projects, as well as efforts being taken by other federal, state, local governments, and non-governmental organizations to allow for the creation of riparian habitat above and below the Elephant Butte Reservoir that allow threatened and endangered avian species to thrive throughout the Rio Grande system.

#### PROJECT AREA

This effort will seek to produce an implementation plan that leverages avian population and habitat data to guide, prioritize, and coordinate habitat improvement and monitoring efforts that support the federally endangered SWFL and threatened YBCU within the Rio Grande Basin between Cochiti Dam (as the northern boundary) and Leasburg Diversion Dam (as the southern boundary; Figure 1).

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Project is to support development of a Bird Habitat Implementation Plan which will identify suitable habitat sites for development to benefit SWFL and YBCU populations, recommend best practices for habitat management/restoration projects, and provide resources that could help stakeholders implement projects. The contractor(s) will characterize and inventory existing SWFL and YBCU populations and habitat within the project area using stakeholder expertise and available data, assist stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing areas for improving habitat, provide best practices and resources for habitat projects, and support USBR in establishing a data portal where all stakeholders can upload their population and habitat data for enabling future collaboration and implementation of priority habitat improvement projects. Primary activities for Plan development include:



- Inventory and characterize SWFL and YBCU populations and habitat
- Identify and prioritize areas for habitat creation/management
- Collect and describe best practices and resources for habitat development projects
- Verify monitoring protocols are standardized and available
- Support coordination and accessibility of population and habitat data to target audiences
- Coordinate with USBR

This list represents potential activities and may not be exhaustive; overall it represents the types of activities that the contractor will engage in as part of developing the BHIP.

Southwest Rivers Program Business Plan goals to be addressed through this contract include:

- Restoration and enhancement of habitat within the Middle and Lower Rio Grande Valleys to benefit SWFL.



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RECLAMATION

## RIO GRANDE NATIVE RIPARIAN BIRD HABITAT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

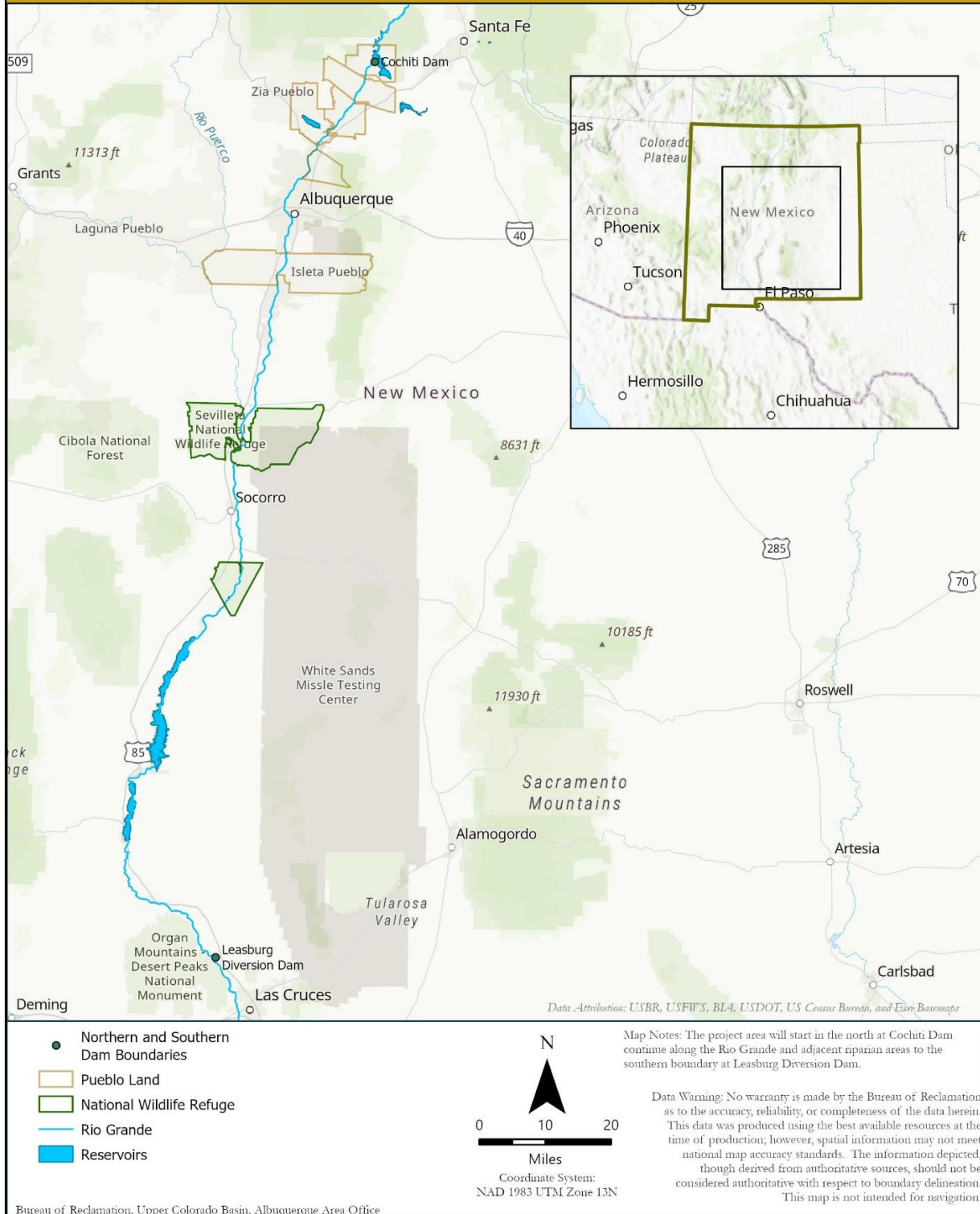


Figure 1. Map of the project area for the Rio Grande Native Riparian Bird Habitat Implementation Plan.

## SCOPE OF WORK

Specific responsibilities are presented in the list of tasks below.

### Tasks:

- Inventory and characterize existing SWFL and YBCU populations and habitat within the Rio Grande floodplain between Cochiti and Leasburg Diversion Dams using stakeholder expertise and data. Offeror(s) will coordinate the collection of authoritative data from stakeholders to summarize the status of species populations and their habitat within the project area including geographic data. Examples of avian and habitat variables of interest include population trends, population distribution, patch size, and vertical and horizontal structure. Some examples of questions that this effort seeks to answer are:
  - What is the status of the SWFL and YBCU with and without the individuals residing within the full pool footprint of Elephant Butte Reservoir?
  - How much SWFL and YBCU habitat exists within the project area?
  - What percentage of the existing habitat resides within the full pool footprint of the Elephant Butte Reservoir?
  - What percentage of the existing habitat is the result of human intervention (i.e., grading, planting, water management)?
  - Where are previous habitat creation/management projects located?
  - How many organizations have contributed to riparian bird habitat with the project area?
- Based on the bird population inventory, characterization of habitat, and independent spatial analysis, work with stakeholders to identify areas where habitat efforts would likely benefit SWFL, YBCU, or both. The Plan will identify any important limitations, such as depth to groundwater, connected floodplain, backwaters, outfalls, or tributaries, saline soils, landownership, proximity to other habitat, etc. that impact site suitability. This analysis will be done in coordination with stakeholders on any existing or pending management plans that might inform potential habitat site identification.
- Offeror(s) will conduct analysis that accounts for changes in site conditions due to extreme conditions, such as protracted periods of drought and will provide a table of prioritized potential project sites that are likely to be resilient to extreme conditions, such as protracted periods of drought. The table will be accompanied by geographic data that maps out the prioritized sites.
- Review past habitat projects and the best available science to inform prioritizing project activities to improve riparian bird habitat within the project area. The Plan will recommend best practices for habitat development projects and provide resources that could help stakeholders more easily implement projects (e.g., plant material sources).
- Verify that stakeholders are using standardized monitoring protocols developed and provided by the Fish and Wildlife Service; compile information on the frequency of and responsibility for monitoring at geographically defined monitoring sites that will enable coordination among stakeholders.

- Support Reclamation in establishing a data portal where all stakeholder entities can upload their population and habitat data to enable future collaboration and implementation of priority habitat improvement projects.

**Deliverables:** The contractor shall provide the following deliverables according to the designated schedule:

Table of Deliverables	
Task	Due Date
Task 1. Summarize existing regulatory requirements for <u>USBR's Middle Rio Grande and Rio Grande Projects, as well as efforts being taken by other federal, state, local governments, and non-governmental organizations.</u> This summary will inform subsequent tasks and be incorporated into the Implementation Plan document.	6/30/25
Task 2. Inventory of SWFL and YBCU populations and <u>habitat.</u> Work with stakeholders to collect and organize existing data on SWFL and YBCU populations and habitat and conduct an analysis to summarize the status of species populations and their habitat within the Project Area, including geographic data.	9/30/25
Task 3. Conduct an analysis that accounts for changes in <u>site conditions due to extreme conditions, such as protracted periods of drought.</u> Inform project prioritization by identifying sites that are likely to be resilient to extreme conditions, such as protracted periods of drought.	10/31/25
Task 4. Produce a prioritized table and map of proposed <u>habitat development sites.</u> Using the inventory produced in Task 2 and incorporating results of Task 3, work with stakeholders to identify and prioritize areas where habitat efforts would likely benefit SWFL, YBCU, or both. Identify any important limitations, such as depth to groundwater, connected floodplain, backwaters, outfalls, or tributaries, saline soils, landownership, proximity to other habitat, etc. that impact site suitability. Table and map will be included in the Implementation Plan.	2/28/26
Task 5. Provide best practices and resources for <u>habitat development projects.</u> Produce an appendix to the Plan that describes best practices and resources for current and future partners who will implement prioritized projects identified in the Plan.	3/31/26

Table of Deliverables	
Task	Due Date
<u>Task 6. Verify monitoring protocols are standardized and available and coordinate collection and accessibility of population and habitat data.</u> To ensure future monitoring efforts support implementation of the Plan, work with stakeholders to ensure that standardized monitoring protocols are used, and monitoring efforts are coordinated in time and space. Produce recommendations for future monitoring efforts and coordination to be included in the Plan.	3/31/26
<u>Task 7. Provide all geospatial data to USBR in an organized format compatible with ArcGIS online.</u> By the end of the contract, all geospatial data will be provided in a format that enables USBR staff to set up and populate an ArcGIS Online database that staff and stakeholders can access. Contractor(s) will work with USBR GIS staff to build the data repository over the course of the contract.	4/30/26

**Schedule:** All tasks should be completed by April 2026.

#### REQUIRED EXPERTISE AND PROPOSED STAFF

Offerors may propose to complete all or some subset of the tasks outlined above. For example, the analysis of resilience of sites to extreme conditions, such as protracted periods of drought may be best completed by an Offeror other than that which is conducting the specialized population and habitat inventory. The successful Offeror(s) will have significant expertise in study design, statistics, population biology, desert riparian zone ecology, data management, spatial data analysis, and Southwestern willow flycatcher and Yellow-billed cuckoo ecology. For the extreme conditions analysis, the Offeror(s) should have significant expertise in ecohydrology and hydrologic modeling using meteorological inputs. The Offeror(s) should have familiarity with historic and current management approaches to SWFL and YBCU in the Rio Grande Basin and be able to incorporate a practical understanding of riparian habitat development and species response.

#### CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Offerors should organize their Proposal Narrative based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** The Scope of Work must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved. This section should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and program stakeholders and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach for conducting the *tasks* should clearly describe the proposed methods *necessary to conduct the project*. The section must demonstrate that those methods are robust and appropriate for conducting the *project* and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty associated with *conducting the project*. Weight: 20%



3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** This section should clearly describe which tasks each member of the team will conduct and how their training and experience provide the requisite experience to do so successfully. Weight: 20%
4. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience in *the requested field*. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered. If subcontractors are to be used, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well. Describe how that past performance is applicable to this evaluation. Weight: 20%
5. **Budget.** The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. You must use attached Contractor Budget Template. You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed, but should not make any other changes. If applicable, please include the proposed budget for equipment purchase in the proposal separate from the Contractor Budget Template. Weight: 30%

#### **ELIGIBLE OFFERORS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, and local, state and Indian tribal governments. Small and minority businesses, and women's business enterprises are strongly encouraged to apply.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the offeror warrants and represents that it does not currently have any apparent or actual conflict of interest, as described herein. In the event an offeror currently has, will have during the life of the contemplated contract, or becomes aware of an apparent or actual conflict of interest, in the event an award is made, the offeror must notify NFWF in writing in the proposal, or in subsequent correspondence (if the issue becomes known after the submission of the proposal) of such apparent or actual conflicts of interest, including organizational conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the contractor, the contractor's employees, or the contractor's subcontractors in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests, or otherwise. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the offeror, the offeror's employees, or the offeror's future subcontractors in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the NFWF Contracting Officer will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the offeror to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies NFWF may result in the proposal not being selected for award.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the Offeror warrants and represents that it is eligible for award of a Contract resulting from this solicitation and that it is not subject to any of the below circumstances:

Has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant



to an Contract with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Was convicted (or had an officer or agent of such corporation acting on behalf of the corporation convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal or State law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Is listed on the General Services Administration's, government-wide System for Award Management Exclusions (SAM Exclusions), in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 C.F.R Part 180 that implement E.O.s 12549 (3 C.F.R., 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 C.F.R., 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension," or intends to enter into any subaward, contract or other Contract using funds provided by NFWF with any party listed on the SAM Exclusions in accordance with Executive Orders 12549 and 12689. The SAM Exclusions instructions can be found here: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Proposals must be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in three distinctly labeled and separate documents: 1) Technical Proposal, 2) Budget, and 3) Evidence of Financial Stability. Interested parties should submit proposals electronically to Southwest Rivers Program Director Kirstin Neff (Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org) using the requirements below:

#### **1. Technical Proposal**

- Format: Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF with a font size no smaller than 11 pt.
- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, DUNS number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Narrative: Concise (10-page limit) description of the work plan and a summary of the applicant's expertise and experience, organized by the Criteria for Competitive Applications.
- Biographies: Resumes and/or Vitae of key staff and their role in the proposed work area.
- References: List two clients who have received services from the applicant that is similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.

#### **2. Budget:** The budget proposal must be submitted using the following NFWF budget template, found [here](#).

#### **3. Evidence of Financial Stability:** The applicant shall provide proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements, credit ratings, a line of credit, or other financial arrangements sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's capability to meet the requirements of this solicitation.

### **SELECTION PROCEDURE**

A panel of NFWF staff, USBR staff, and cooperating stakeholders with interest in SWFL and YBCU habitat development will review the proposals. Offerors may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets





prior to final approval of the award. Up to two awards will be made for this project. If multiple institutions are involved in a single submission, they should be handled through subcontracts.

## SUBMISSION DEADLINES

<b>March 24, 2025</b>	Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Kirstin Neff ( <a href="mailto:Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org">Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org</a> ). NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all offerors have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be sent to NFWF <b>no later than 5:00 PM MST on March 26, 2025.</b>
<b>March 31, 2025</b>	NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the main <a href="#">Southwest Rivers Program</a> page on the NFWF website by March 28, 2025.
<b>April 4, 2025</b>	Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to Kirstin Neff ( <a href="mailto:Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org">Kirstin.Neff@nfwf.org</a> ). by <b>5:00 PM MST on April 4, 2025.</b>
<b>May 2025</b>	Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF. Contract award to selected Offeror
<b>April 2026</b>	Deliverables Due 4/30/26