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# REQUEST FOR STATEMENTS OF INTEREST

## Conservation Applications Specialist Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Strategic Conservation Assessment (SCA) of Gulf Coast Landscapes is a 3-year collaborative project funded by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council) via the U.S. Department of the Interior. This project will develop a suite of tools that can be used to identify and evaluate land conservation opportunities in the Gulf Coast Region that offer the greatest potential for shared economic and ecosystem benefits. This project is led through a cooperative partnership between Mississippi State University and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in direct collaboration with a Core Working Group composed of RESTORE Council agency representatives. The Project Team will engage with the broad community of stakeholders representing non-governmental conservation organizations, academia, tribal/federal/state/local agencies, business entities, and private landowners with interest in the conservation of the Gulf coast.

The Gulf Coast Region already has a strong conservation foundation that can be further strengthened by fostering a strategic approach to Gulf-wide conservation to support broader ecological function of Gulf systems, while incorporating critical social and economic values and future threats in a multi-criteria decision framework. The SCA aims to provide the RESTORE Council with a multi-scale, broad-perspective, but non-regulatory and voluntary decision support system that integrates Gulf conservation partner priorities and values into a transparent, defensible and dynamic framework from which strategic conservation investments can be made. The SCA has three main objectives: 1) collation of shared multi-scale priorities and objectives across the broader conservation community from existing conservation planning efforts; 2) use of multi-criteria decision analysis to translate these priorities into a comprehensive conservation planning tool; and, 3) development and distribution of a spatial prioritization layer incorporating conservation planning tool valuations and future change in a geospatial environment.

### SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The project will require extensive interaction with stakeholders representing the RESTORE Council staff and member agencies, federal, state, local and tribal governments, private citizens, non-profit organizations, industry, and public-private partnerships working together toward implementation of their shared conservation vision along the Gulf Coast Region. **Through this request for statements of interest we are seeking a qualified Conservation Applications Specialist to lead user support and communications efforts for the Strategic Conservation Assessment project.** The Conservation Applications Specialist's primary responsibility will be to work directly with RESTORE Council representatives and their partners to use the Conservation Prioritization Tool (CPT) and Strategic Conservation Assessment (SCA) Tool in their planning efforts. Through this targeted work on these tools with key partners, the Conservation Applications Specialist will identify ways that tools can be

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customized to individual users to address their specific needs, streamline and improve the user interface and experience, and solicit structured feedback on content.

The Conservation Applications Specialist will be required to:

- ✓ Work directly with stakeholders to demonstrate potential uses of Conservation Prioritization Tool (CPT) and Strategic Conservation Assessment (SCA) Tool and customizes applications based on individual's needs;
- ✓ Solicit structured feedback on the Conservation Prioritization Tool (CPT) and Strategic Conservation Assessment (SCA) Tool, including designing survey and interview protocols, preparing materials, conducting in-person user interviews, and administering surveys;
- ✓ Respond to help requests from users and produce GIS maps, written narratives, and infographics supporting CPT and SCA users;
- ✓ Support development and implementation of project charrettes by helping design and co-facilitate charrettes in each of the five Gulf states, and by developing feedback materials and analytics that will elicit user feedback on the utility of the Conservation Planning Tool and optimized geospatial Strategic Conservation Assessment products;
- ✓ Assist the Project Team to prioritize CPT and SCA improvements based on user recommendations;
- ✓ Develop outreach efforts to provide a direct feedback loop to inform and adapt the CPT and other project deliverables to ensure their utility to target stakeholder audiences;
- ✓ Work directly with stakeholders to develop case-studies and other educational materials that will aid other users in implementing the CPT and optimized geospatial tool;
- ✓ Communicate CPT and SCA changes to the broader cooperative community;
- ✓ Facilitate implementation of the SCA to guide conservation action and investment in the northern Gulf of Mexico;
- ✓ Fulfill collateral administrative and logistics responsibilities as needed to organize meetings and workshop materials and to facilitate communicate within and amongst SCA Project Team and Core Working Group;
- ✓ Represent SCA Project Team on CWG and PMT calls and contributes to overall SCA Outreach products as needed;
- ✓ Coordinate with partner communication efforts, such as the RESTORE Council's collaborative meetings, Monitoring and Assessment Project (CMAP), and other related projects;
- ✓ Assist with the preparation of SCA Interim Progress reports;
- ✓ Track involvement of individuals in charrettes and using tools over time; and
- ✓ Develop and share consistent messages on the CPT and SCA Tools and the SCA Project.

The Conservation Applications Specialist will be an integral component to a large Project Team consisting of a project coordinator, ecological modeler, GIS analyst, graduate student, lead project investigators from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Gulf Restoration Office and Mississippi State University, and a Core Working Group representing members of each RESTORE Council agency. The Conservation Applications Specialist will preferably be experienced in landscape-level natural resource conservation planning (ideally in the Gulf Coast Region). Excellent communication and problem-solving skills are a must. This will be a full-time term-limited position (2 years in duration) and funded in the form of a contractual services agreement, institutional sub-award, or as a term-limited position employed by Mississippi State University. Salary will be commensurate with experience. The Conservation Applications Specialist must be physically based out of one of the Gulf Coast States. This

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position requires extensive travel within the Gulf Coast Region, but may also require travel to meetings in other states or countries. The Conservation Applications Specialist must be available to start work no later than October 1, 2018.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

The Conservation Applications Specialist must hold at minimum a Bachelor's degree (Master's degree preferred) in natural resource management or planning, or related field plus >2 years' experience working in planning and project implementation. The Conservation Applications Specialist must have experience working directly with a variety of audiences in a conservation or natural-resources topic area. The Conservation Applications Specialist must have excellent oral and written communication and organizational skills, with demonstrated ability to communicate across a spectrum of different audience types. The Conservation Applications Specialist must be self-motivated, and willing to work independently and effectively, and must be willing to travel extensively within the Gulf Coast Region (minimally two multi-night trips per month). In addition to the required qualifications above, preferred qualifications include skills in GIS, web and print content development, analytics, and stakeholder meeting facilitation. A breadth and depth of experience working with the Gulf of Mexico coastal conservation and planning community, including federal, state and local governments, non-profit, private entities, and academic institutions is preferred. Past experience with landscape conservation design, partnership-driven decision support, multi-criteria decision analysis, system-level "scorecard" development, or assessment of alternative conservation planning scenarios is a plus.

## **STATEMENT OF INTEREST FORMAT**

Statements of interest for the project Conservation Applications Specialist must be <3 pages in length and must include 1) an outline of capabilities as related to the project description and required/preferred qualifications; 2) a comprehensive resume or Curriculum Vitae; and 3) a list of 3 references. Resume/CV and references are not included in the page limit.

## **TIMELINE**

Review will begin June 30, 2018 and continue until a candidate is identified. We expect the SCA Conservation Applications Specialist to start work by October 1, 2018, depending on contracting mechanism.

## **CONTACT**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with the SCA project coordinator, Jennifer Roberts ([jennifer.roberts@msstate.edu](mailto:jennifer.roberts@msstate.edu); 985-373-0377) prior to statement of interest submission.

## **SUBMISSION**

Please email a cover letter and the Statement of Interest in the provided template format to Jennifer Roberts [[jennifer.roberts@msstate.edu](mailto:jennifer.roberts@msstate.edu)] with the following subject line "**YOUR NAME - SCA Conservation Applications Specialist Statement of Interest**". Review of Statements of Interest will begin June 30, 2018.