

Release Date: December 11th, 2012

Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement

Request for Proposals

Aerial Cover Crop Seeding in the Lake Champlain Basin

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for services for an aerial cover crop seeding program for a minimum of 1,500 acres of agricultural land in the Missisquoi River, St. Albans Bay, Chazy, or other impaired watersheds with high nonpoint source phosphorus loads within the U.S. portion of the Lake Champlain Basin. Up to \$100,000 is available for this project. This project will support the management of phosphorus and sediment loading and contaminants generated from agricultural lands by aiding pollution prevention efforts as outlined in the LCBP's long-term management plan - *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*.

This Request for Proposals is available from the Lake Champlain Basin Program website. Look for the link on our homepage at www.lcbp.org. To receive a copy of the RFP via US Postal Service, contact the Lake Champlain Basin Program office at (802) 372-3213 or toll free at (800) 468-LCBP in New York and Vermont.

To facilitate the review process, applicants must submit proposals in both paper and electronic format. Please see the RFP and the attached proposal format information for complete details.

DEADLINE NOTICE:

Hardcopy (10 copies) and electronic versions (no facsimiles) of proposals must be RECEIVED by the Lake Champlain Basin Program office by 4:30pm on:

January 18th, 2013

LATE OR INCOMPLETE PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

The successful applicant will be notified by early March 2013. LCBP anticipates granting one (1) award from this RFP.

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Request for Proposals

Aerial Cover Crop Seeding Program for the Lake Champlain Basin

I. Background

Proper management of agricultural runoff is a high-priority step toward improving water quality. Most agricultural nonpoint source pollution is due to erosion of soil particles containing high levels of nutrients. A successful way to mitigate soil erosion is through cover cropping, whereby fast-growing, small-grained crops such as wheat, rye and barley, among others, are planted between regular growing cycles of feed crops. Research suggests that cover crops prevent soil erosion and effectively reduce nutrient and sediment pollution to waterways. Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs), including cover cropping, have received a great deal of attention in recent years in pollution reduction efforts, but few resources have been allocated toward more efficient methods of cover cropping. Aerial seeding of cover crops can effectively seed large areas of agricultural land, be more cost effective, and have less impact on the landscape than traditional seeding techniques.

The scope of this Request for Proposals is to develop an effective, cost-efficient aerial cover crop program in an impaired watershed in the Lake Champlain Basin for the 2013 growing season that adheres to the recent USDA-NRCS (code 340) cover cropping practice standards adapted as needed to the jurisdiction in which the target watershed is located (hyperlinks: <http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/VT/VT340-0411.pdf> or <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NHQ/practice-standards/standards/340.pdf>). Successful proposals will include efforts to make area farmers aware of the cover crop project and the solicitation of voluntary enrollment of private farmland with a cost-share conservation incentive. Farmer support for the program should be well documented. Any land currently under contract to receive payment for cover cropping from any other state or federal program will be ineligible to receive payments through this program. The program should draw on the experience of other successful aerial cover crop seeding programs, but should be carefully crafted to address the unique needs of the selected watershed.

The aerial cover crop seeding program for the targeted watershed should include the acquisition of seed and use of a vehicle for aerial broadcasting, marketing of the program to local farmers, and a cost-share incentive for agricultural landowners. Photographic documentation of selected areas before, during and after seeding will gauge the success of the program. In addition to reducing nutrient runoff from agricultural lands, the project also will help decrease pollution to Lake Champlain as outlined in LCBP's long term management plan: *Opportunities for Action: an Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*. The final project deliverable will be a report documenting the outcome of the program and degree of interest from the agricultural community. Success of the program also will be measured by how many acres were covered and if the planted areas were located in critical source areas (CSAs), which contribute disproportionate quantities of phosphorus to nearby waterways. Applicants identifying potential cover cropping acreage adjacent to an EPA listed 303d impaired waterway within the Lake Champlain Basin will be given priority.

II. Project Tasks and Deliverables

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) seeks proposals for technical services to develop an aerial cover crop seeding program in a Lake Champlain watershed impaired by nonpoint source phosphorus pollution. The program should be set up as a cost-share incentive to agricultural landowners. This program may eventually be expanded to other watersheds depending on interest and availability of funds. Proposals should include the following workplan components:

1. Identify agricultural lands with potential for cover cropping that are near or adjacent to a U.S. EPA listed 303d impaired waterway
2. Gather spatial data and farm conservation plans or access the LCBP Critical Source Area mapping tools for the Missisquoi River watershed (www.lcbp.org/missisquoicsa.htm) to identify priority areas for aerial cover cropping
3. Work with landowners to maximize voluntary participation in the project with a cost-share program and promote awareness of agricultural BMPs
4. Aerially seed a minimum of 1,500 acres in the selected watershed following the appropriate USDA NRCS practice standard for multi-species cover cropping, by September 2013
5. Document the success of cover crop plantings with photographs of a subset of selected sites prior to seeding, after germination, and more than 30 days post-seeding
6. Provide outreach to the farm community to build support for future funding efforts
7. Develop final report documenting the outcomes of the preceding steps

III. Summary of Other Requirements for the Selected Proposal

The selected applicant will be required to complete the following additional tasks:

1. Following initial notification of the award, a workplan must be approved by the LCBP before a grant agreement can be executed and the work begun. The workplan will detail the logistical elements of the project, including deliverables, project timeline, proof of pilot credentials and insurance and budget. Information about the LCBP grant process, workplan development guidelines, and reporting requirements can be found on the LCBP website at: www.lcbp.org/granttool.html. The project timeline should be scheduled with an expected start date no sooner than June 1, 2013.
2. The successful applicant will prepare brief quarterly reports documenting progress on each objective and task in the project (see attached Proposal Format Requirements). A final report fully documenting the project's results will be required at project completion, no later than March 1st, 2014.
3. When approved, the final report will be edited for content and style in consultation with the successful respondent and may be published as part of the Lake Champlain Basin Program's Technical Report Series, located here: http://www.lcbp.org/publication_search.aspx. Some aspects of this report may be used for future LCBP public outreach materials.

IV. Eligibility

Eligible organizations include colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, and non-federal government agencies. The selected contractor will be responsible for the completion of all project tasks, though subcontracted work may be permitted by the LCBP Project Officer upon written request. Individuals and representatives from organizations that participated in the development or review of this RFP and its contents are ineligible to apply.

V. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Proposals will be judged according to the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated knowledge of existing cover crop and other agricultural BMP programs.
2. Demonstrated familiarity with agricultural community in the selected watershed.
3. Proximity of identified areas to U.S. EPA listed 303d impaired waterways:
VT: http://www.vtwaterquality.org/stormwater/docs/sw_2010impairedwaters.pdf
NY: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/303dlistpropfnl2012.pdf
4. Technical merit and applicability of the proposed product toward priority objectives identified in this RFP.
5. Potential for the project to enhance the technical capabilities to support cover crops within the Lake Champlain Basin. Proprietary products are not acceptable project deliverables.
6. Clarity, conciseness and adherence to the proposal guidelines.
7. Demonstrated ability to create documents and products that are accessible to and can be used by local partners working to address nutrient loading and cycling issues within the Lake Champlain Basin.
8. Appropriateness of budget and budget justification, describing how the funds awarded and how funds contributed by participating farmers will be used to produce the set of deliverables described in Section II.

VI. Available Funds and Match Requirements

A total of \$100,000 may be made available for this project. No direct match is required. However, it is anticipated that the successful applicant will engage local farmers in cost share for the program. LCBP anticipates granting one (1) award from this RFP.

VII. Period of Performance

Work is to be completed no later than March 1st, 2014.

VIII. Schedule and Requirements for Proposal Submission

1. Please follow the format outlined in the attached Technical Proposal Format Requirements.
2. Ten (10) paper copies of each proposal must be RECEIVED by the LCBP office by 4:30pm on **January 18th, 2013**. Please submit paper copies bound only with a single staple or binder clip.

3. *In addition*, an editable ELECTRONIC VERSION of the proposal, either on disk or via e-mail must be submitted. Electronic versions also must be RECEIVED by 4:30pm on **January 18th, 2013**.

IX. Contact Information

Direct all proposals and other inquiries to:

Stephanie Castle
Technical Associate
Lake Champlain Basin Program
54 West Shore Road
Grand Isle, VT 05458
(802) 372-3213
scastle@lcbp.org

Technical Proposal Format Requirements

Proposals should adhere to the following format and should not exceed a 10 page maximum length (font size 12), NOT including budget information, references cited and investigator resumes.

TITLE: - Concise and descriptive.

POINT OF CONTACT: Name, position, organization, address, telephone, fax and email of the person who will be the point of contact.

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Name, position, organization address, telephone, fax and email of the person who is authorized to sign the contract.

ABSTRACT: Brief description of proposed work.

INTRODUCTION: Overview of what the project is and what it will accomplish in relation to the RFP.

OBJECTIVES AND TASKS: List the project's objectives and describe in detail the tasks that will be performed relative to each objective, including methods and approaches.

DELIVERABLES: Detailed description of the planned products from each task of the project. Quarterly progress reports and a final report are required deliverables.

SCHEDULE: Timeline showing anticipated dates for completion of the major tasks and deliverables. Quarterly progress reports are due on the last day of December, March, June, and September. Work is to be completed within the specified performance period in the RFP.

DETAILED BUDGET JUSTIFICATION: Cost breakdown by major budget categories (i.e. personnel, equipment), linking costs to specific tasks/deliverables wherever possible. Breakdown should show costs to be covered by the LCBP award and other sources (if applicable), as well as any match amounts and totals. (1 page, not included in the 10 page maximum total for the proposal).

TECHNICAL REFERENCES CITED: List all references used for the proposal (not included in the 10 page maximum total for the proposal).

CURRICULUM VITAE/RESUME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Include up to 3-5 references for prior work pertinent to the proposed project. Please limit to one page per investigator; not included in the 10 page maximum total for the proposal.