

COPY

Division of Procurement Services
CNMI GOVERNMENT
Request for Proposals

RFP NO.: RFP21-BECQ/DEQ-011

SUBMISSION DATE: DECEMBER 09, 2020

TIME: 09:30 A.M.

**“SOIL SPECIALIST FOR THE 2021 NATIONAL WETLAND
CONDITION ASSESSMENT FOR THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL
COASTAL QUALITY, DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY”**

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

****FOR YOUR SAFETY & OURS: ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS ARE REQUIRED TO USE A FACE MASK & ARE REQUIRED TO REGISTER UPON ENTRY****

ALL QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP **MUST** BE SUBMITTED VIA-EMAIL TO MR. LARRY MAURIN AT larrymaurin@becq.gov.mp, **NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS NOVEMBER 25, 2020**. ALL QUESTIONS SUBMITTED AFTER THE GIVEN DEADLINE WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SHALL BE SHARED WITH ALL PERSPECTIVE PROPOSERS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ELI D. CABRERA
ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality

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COPY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RFP21-BECQ/DEQ-011

“Soil Specialist for the 2021 National Wetland Condition Assessment”

The Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality – Division of Environmental Quality (BECQ-DEQ) is soliciting proposals from qualified environmental firms to fill the Soil Specialist role for the 2021 National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) in the CNMI as part of the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) led National Aquatic Resource Survey (NARS). The NWCA will be a comprehensive study of the wetlands of the CNMI including collection of high-quality soil, hydrology, water chemistry, biological, and stressor data in accordance with the Field Operations Manual provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Questions regarding this project can be made to **Larry Maurin** by email at larrymaurin@becq.gov.mp, no later than the **close of business, November 25, 2020 Chamorro Standard Time.** Responses to questions shall be shared with all prospective proposers. The questions from prospective applicants and the responses from BECQ-DEQ will also be posted to the websites that listed the RFP, in an addendum. All questions submitted after the given deadline will NOT be entertained.

Sealed proposals for this project shall be submitted with **one (1) original and four (4) copies** to the Office of the Director of Procurement Services, located at the former Emergency Management Office, Ascencion Drive, Building No. 1301, Capitol Hill, **no later than 09:30 a.m., local time, Chamorro Standard Time, December 09, 2020** and must be marked **“RFP21-BECQ/DEQ-011”**.

Proposers located outside of the Commonwealth **MUST** fill out the Notice of Intent Form (**Page 4**) in order to receive this additional seven (7) working days for receipt of the actual proposal documents. This Notice of Intent to Bid form may be submitted to the Director of Procurement Services via facsimile to (670) 664-1515 or emailed to a.magofna@dof.gov.mp but must be received no later than **09:30 a.m., local time, December 09, 2020.**

Note that failure to submit this Notice of Intent Form will be subject to the rejection of proposal. All prospective applicants who send their Notice of Intent by this date will receive a copy of all questions from other prospective applicants and the reply.

Proposals submitted by firms outside the Commonwealth, **one (1) original and four (4) copies** of sealed proposals must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official postal service of a foreign Country by **December 09, 2020** and mailed to the Office of the Director of Procurement Services to P.O. Box 10008 C.K., Saipan , MP 96950 and the proposal documents must be received by the Director of Procurement Services, no later than the **close of business, December 18, 2020.** *Note that failure to submit the required number of copies of the proposal may be cause for rejection of a proposal.*

Procurement of these goods is made in accordance with NMIAC Section 70-30.3-210 of the CNMI Procurement Regulations. Proposals for the project will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Qualifications	30%
2. Demonstrated experience in wetland delineation and soil classification in accordance with US EPA methodology and requirements	30%
3. Proposed Methods and Timeframe Consistent with the Scope of Work	30%
4. Cost	10%
Total	100%

Technical merit and experience will be given greater importance than overall cost, and the Government reserves the right to award this RFP to a bidder other than the lowest cost applicant. For proposals of equal merit, the overall cost will gain greater importance for a final decision.

Discussions may be conducted with applicants who submit proposals determined to be reasonably credible of being selected for award, for the purpose of clarification. Discussions may also be conducted and to ensure full understanding and fulfillment of solicitation requirements. Applicants shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. Revision of proposals may be permitted after submission, and prior to award date for the purpose of obtaining the best final offer. In conducting discussions, there shall be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing applicants.

All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the applicant awarded a contract. The applicant selected will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with NMIAC Section 70-30.03-245 of the CNMI Procurement Regulations.

Award shall be made to the responsible proposer whose proposal is determined in writing to be most advantageous to the government, taking into consideration price and the evaluation factors set forth in this request for proposal. No other factors or criteria shall be used in the evaluation.

The provisions of the Procurement Regulations, NMIAC Section 70-30.3-725 and 70-30.3-730 prohibiting Gratuities and Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

BREACH OF ETHICAL STANDARDS

(To be part of Solicitation for quotes, ITBs and RFPs)


- **Gratuities.** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for any person to offer, give or agree to give any employee or former employee, or for any employee or former employee to solicit, demand, accept or agree to accept from another person, a gratuity or an offer of employment in connection with any decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, preparation of any part of a program requirement or a purchase request, influencing the content of any specification or procurement standard, rendering of advice, investigation, auditing or in any other advisory capacity in any proceeding or application, request for ruling, determination, claim or controversy, or other particular matter, pertaining to any program requirement or a contract or subcontract or to any solicitation or proposal therefore. NMIAC Section 70-30.3-725(a).
- **Kickbacks.** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for any payment, gratuity or offer of employment to be made by or on behalf of a subcontractor under a contract to the prime contractor or higher tier subcontractor or any person associated therewith as an inducement for the award of subcontractor or order. NMIAC Section 70-30.3-725(b).
- **Contingent Fees.** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for a person to be retained, or to retain a person, to solicit or secure government contracts upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage or contingent fee, except for retention of bona fide employees or bona fide established commercial selling agencies for the purpose of securing business. NMIAC Section 70-30.3-730.

The government reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any imperfection in a proposal if in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All proposals shall become property of the CNMI government upon submission.



ELICEO D. CABRERA

Administrator, Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality



FRANCISCO C. AGUON

Acting Director, Division of Procurement Services

NOTICE OF INTENT

(This ONLY applies to Bidders/Proposers located outside of the CNMI)

Dear Mr. Francisco C. Aguon,

_____, is submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid/Propose
Company Name

FOR RFP21-BECQ/DEQ-011,
ITB No. / RFP No.

Provide the Following Information:

Last Name, First Name M.I. Position Title:

Address:

Email:

Telephone No.

Fax No.

Signature:

Date:

Notice to all Proposers/Bidders located outside of the Commonwealth Northern Mariana Islands. This Notice of Intent **MUST** be filled out and submitted on or before the given ITB/RFP submission deadline to the Acting Director of Procurement Services via email to a.magofna@dof.gov.mp or via facsimile to (670) 664-1515. Note that failure to submit this required document will be subject to rejection of bid/proposal.

RFP21-BECQ/DEQ-011

SCOPE OF WORK

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality – Division of Environmental Quality (BECQ-DEQ) is soliciting proposals from qualified environmental firms to fill the Soil Specialist role for the 2021 National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) in the CNMI as part of the National Aquatic Resource Survey. The NWCA will be a comprehensive study of the wetlands of the CNMI including collection of high-quality soil, hydrology, water chemistry, biological, and stressor data in accordance with the Field Operations Manual (FOM) produced by the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The NWCA involves delineation of wetland assessment areas and buffers, classification of wetland soils, assessment of water chemistry, and collection of biological and stressor data. The 2021 NWCA in the CNMI will be a probabilistic survey of 55 total sample sites (50 sites, 5 revisits) on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. A Soil Specialist is required by DEQ to lead the Assessment Area-Buffer Team (AB Team), which will be responsible for the duties detailed for the AB Team in the Field Operations Manual. (Note the 2021 NWCA FOM will not be available until spring 2021, however it is expected to be nearly identical to the 2016 FOM.)

The AB Team consists of two individuals, a Soil Specialist and Field Technician. While the Soil Specialist role will be filled by the selected contractor, the Field Technician role will be filled by one or more individual BECQ staff. The Soil Specialist and Field Technician(s) will need to work closely together throughout the project period, and it is hoped that the knowledge imparted by the Soil Specialist on the Field Technician will help build technical capacity for wetland assessment within BECQ. The Soil Specialist will report directly to the Water Quality Surveillance/Nonpoint Source Program Manager at DEQ and will need to communicate directly with US EPA and their contractors for logistical coordination.

The bulk of the wetland assessment field work is expected to occur from July – September 2021, coinciding with the season when CNMI wetlands are likely to contain some surface water, wetland plants at peak growing season, and within the April – September index period specified by US EPA in the FOM. Additional preparations will be needed prior to the field season in April-June, as well as some post-season field activities through the end of October.

BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality (BECQ), Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) under the Office of the Governor, is mandated by the Commonwealth Environmental Protection Act to develop and administer programs, including where appropriate, a system of standards, permits, or prohibitions, to prevent or regulate activities concerning the discharge of pollutants to the air, land, water, wetlands and submerged lands (CNMI statute). US Federal environmental laws also apply in the Commonwealth. With regard to water quality, the CNMI has a statutory mandate to

protect, monitor, and assess all waters of the CNMI, including marine, ground and surface waters. When water bodies are considered impaired, in that they do not meet their designated uses, DEQ is tasked with identifying the source and type of pollutants and implementing plans to restore or remediate those waters. As the CNMI territorial environmental protection agency, DEQ receives United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) grant funding on an annual basis to carry out mandated responsibilities for water quality.

In FY2021, DEQ has received Monitoring Initiative funding from US EPA under Section 106 of the Clean Water Act to conduct the National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA). The NWCA occurs every five years as part of the National Aquatic Resources Surveys (NARS). DEQ has conducted the National Coastal Condition Assessment (NCCA) on Reef Flats three times previously, most recently in 2020, however, 2021 will be the first time that the CNMI has participated in the NWCA.

DELIVERABLES

The work to be performed will yield the following deliverables; all of which will be completed within specified time frames as described in more detail below, and will include the following tasks:

Task 1 – Conduct Training and Preparation for Field Season (April – June 2021)

The Soil Specialist will need to prepare well in advance of the field season by thoroughly reviewing the NWCA Reference Documents provided by US EPA; the Field Operations Manual, Site Evaluation Guidelines, and Quality Assurance Project Plan. The Soil Specialist will be responsible for all procedures required for the AB Team in the Field Operations Manual. Mandatory training on the field procedures will be provided by US EPA. Areas of responsibility for the AB Team include:

- Site Evaluation of 50 sites (Desktop and/or Field)
- Assessment Area Establishment
- Buffer Characterization
- Soil Plot Layout and Profile Description
- Hydrology
- Water Chemistry and Chlorophyll-A Sampling
- Sample Shipping and Tracking

Please note that soil sample collection (standardized soil depth core, soil isotope, and soil horizon samples) will not be included in the NWCA for CNMI in 2021. Water samples will be collected only if surface water is present on the day that wetland is surveyed. A planned schedule for all field season activities will also be required.

Any field sampling equipment needed for the NWCA will be provided by DEQ or US EPA, however the contractor will be responsible for supplying their individual clothing items including gloves, boots and waders.

Deliverables

Signature Page acknowledging review of NWCA Reference Documents (1) – Copy to BECQ

Attendance at Mandatory US EPA Training on NWCA

Planned Schedule for all field sampling (1) – Copy to BECQ

Task 2 – Conduct Field Surveys in accordance with FOM (July – September 2021)

All duties required for the AB Team in the FOM will be conducted at 55 locations (50 sites, 5 revisits) on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Sampling will be done in coordination with the Vegetation Team and with the Planned Schedule created in Task 1. Overnight or extended travel will be required for locations on Tinian and Rota. All travel, data collection and sampling will be done with a DEQ Field Technician.

Data will be collected in the field and entered electronically on a tablet supplied by US EPA via a NWCA App developed by US EPA. Data will need to be entered completely and accurately in the field and submitted to US EPA and DEQ through the app once all sampling and shipping has been completed at each site.

All water chemistry and Chlorophyll-A samples will be shipped to the DEQ Laboratory on Saipan. Chlorophyll-A Samples must be shipped to Guam for further forwarding to WRS Lab in Corvallis, Oregon. Custody of samples shipped to the DEQ Laboratory must be accountable and in accordance with the Quality Assurance Project Plan. The cost of shipping all samples and field instruments will be covered by DEQ or US EPA. Note that all Chlorophyll-A samples must be received by the WRS lab by September 30, 2021.

Deliverables

Data sent to US EPA and BECQ via NWCA App

Chain of custody records for samples - (1) electronic copy to BECQ

Task 3 – Conduct Quality Assurance Review in coordination with US EPA

During the field season, US EPA and their contractors will require Quality Control Evaluations and will review data submitted via the NWCA App. The Soil Specialist will need to coordinate directly with US EPA and their contractors to address any questions or issues that arise during and immediately after the field season.

It is expected that data and quality control checks will continue to the end of October 2021. This task and the project will be concluded once EPA or their contractors have reviewed approved all NWCA data submissions.

Deliverables

Quality Control Evaluations - (1) electronic copy to BECQ

Any corrected data and relevant communications with US EPA - (1) electronic copy to BECQ

QUALIFICATIONS

The successful contractor should have:

1. Extensive demonstrated experience in the U.S. Pacific Islands for the implementation of water/wetland/sediment monitoring and assessment plans;
2. Previous experience conducting wetland delineations and measuring or describing physical characteristics of wetland soils;
3. Proficiency in field work and preparation of data that demonstrate the ability to satisfy regulatory data quality objectives and reporting requirements;

4. Experience conducting Quality Assurance reviews of analytical results;
5. Successful completion of projects similar in scope and complexity to the work described herein;
6. Specific work experience in CNMI is preferred;
7. And due to travel restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, contractors based in the CNMI during the project period are preferred.

PROPOSALS

Interested contractors shall prepare and submit a proposal and cost estimate that responds to the objectives and deliverables of the Scope of Work.

Proposals submitted by applicants must contain at a minimum:

1. Name and address of the applicants and their organization, including the name and telephone or email address of the person to be contacted relative to this proposal;
2. Narrative of the methodology and anticipated output, which shall include as much detail as practical for accomplishing the required objectives and deliverables;
3. The name and resume of the individual to participate in the project. Resumes' shall describe in detail the individuals' educational background and professional experience relevant to the project;
4. A schedule for completing the project in accordance with the timeframes specified in this RFP. This schedule should include the duration of the tasks and submittal dates for deliverables;
5. A cost estimate for completion of the project including direct and indirect costs.

TIMING OF SERVICES AND PAYMENT

1. 20% Payment following the completion of Task 1.
2. 40% Payment following completion of Task 2.
3. 40% Payment following completion of Task 3.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by a selection team appointed by the BECQ Administrator. All proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Qualifications	30%
2. Demonstrated experience in in wetland delineation and soil classification in accordance with US EPA methodology and requirements	30%
3. Proposed Methods and Timeframe Consistent with the Scope of Work	30%
4. Cost	10%
Total	100%

Technical merit is more important than price, and the Government reserves the right to award to other than the lowest proposer. As proposals become more equal in technical merit, the importance of price will increase.

KEY PERSONNEL

It is essential that the successful applicant provide an adequate staff of experienced personnel, capable of and devoted to the successful accomplishment of the work to be performed for the project. The contractor must assign a specific individual to the position. Once assigned to work under the contract, this individual will not be removed or replaced without consideration of impact on the contract, or without written approval from BECQ-DEQ.

CANCELLATION OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality – Division of Environmental Quality reserves the right to cancel this solicitation, and any or all proposals may be accepted, modified, or rejected in whole or part.

The government reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any imperfection in a proposal if in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All proposals shall become the property of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands government.