



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Climate Commitment Act Carbon Offset Projects: Feasibility and Impacts to Treaty Resources

Description

The Nooksack Indian Tribe Natural Resources Department (NIT) is seeking proposals to study the future of carbon offset projects in the Nooksack watershed under Washington State's Climate Commitment Act (CCA). The successful respondent will clearly articulate an approach to answer the following questions: (1) what is the feasibility of using forest or wetland restoration to produce carbon credits for the CCA carbon market? (2) under the CCA, what kinds of carbon offset projects may occur in the Nooksack basin and what are the potential impacts to Treaty Resources?

Background

Nooksack Indian Tribe was formally recognized under the 1855 Point Elliot Treaty. The Tribe and Tribal Reservation is located in Deming, WA, approximately 15 miles east of Bellingham, WA. Additional Tribal trust properties and individual allotments are scattered along the shores of the Nooksack River in the vicinity of Deming and Everson, WA. Traditional cultural significance of land, however, extends far beyond legal ownership. Tribal members exercise cultural practices throughout the Usual and Accustomed (U&A) territories of the Nooksack Tribe located in the Nooksack River watershed and adjacent watersheds in WR1A1 and beyond to the estuary and the Salish Sea.

Increasing temperatures, decreasing water availability, and extreme weather events as a result of climate change present significant danger to treaty resources and threaten the ability of Tribal members to practice cultural traditions. The Tribe's Natural Resources Department includes robust monitoring and restoration programs aimed at preserving and restoring critical areas in the Tribe's U&A as well as buffering against future impacts. Much of this work already offsets carbon, such as modifying forest management approaches, preventing conversion, and reforestation. The Tribe is also in the beginning stages of developing a wetland program that will likely include a restoration component. Research shows the capacity of wetlands to also capture and hold large amounts of carbon. Many of these activities closely mirror carbon offset projects that may be proposed under the CCA.

However, before NIT invests in a restoration-based carbon offset program, it is important to have a strong understanding of what that program would entail in terms of both financial and labor capacity. Is such a program even feasible and at what scale? By answering these and other questions staff will be better able to understand how the carbon offset market can be leveraged to support Tribal restoration goals. Staff will also be more informed to present potential projects to Council, funding agencies, and potential partners.

Additionally, the CCA also includes a requirement of consultation with Tribal governments prior to authorization of CCA funding decisions. Before the Tribe can contribute meaningful comments, staff must have a strong understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of market-based carbon emission control. This also requires a familiarity with the science behind carbon sequestration and effectiveness of various strategies. Much of the work related to the quantification of carbon is early in development and thus

there is substantial uncertainty with certain approaches. Staff will need to understand which approaches have greater rates of success and which best protect resources important for Treaty Rights. By fostering relationships and promoting discussion of the CCA within the Nooksack basin and the greater network of involved parties, the Tribe will be able to be an early and active participant in determining which projects get funded and where.

Presumably as an effort to increase Tribal engagement, funding was allocated in the CCA for Tribes to initiate planning and program development for carbon offset project planning and consultation on CCA funding decisions. Given the limited staff capacity and the funding's short time frame (complete by June 30, 2023), NIT is seeking assistance to summarize key elements of the CCA and implementation, support Tribal consultation for proposed CCA projects, and evaluate feasibility of Tribal participation in the carbon marketplace

Design Goals and Objectives

NIT is seeking development of three projects with the following characteristics, *to the extent possible*:

A. Summarize relevant information on the CCA

- Overview of the CCA and other carbon markets, including annotated list of resources
- Timeline of CCA implementation updated as needed

B. Describe potential carbon offset projects, and evaluate associated impacts in the Nooksack Basin

- Various types of carbon offset projects that might be implemented in the Nooksack watershed by other parties, with an emphasis on project types with approved protocols and a likelihood of implementation in the basin.
- Potential impacts to treaty resources of the various project types. Report should also include potential ways these impacts might be mitigated or avoided.
- Specific case studies if carbon offsets proposals are submitted within the funding window.
- User-friendly guide to carbon offset project types to efficiently and effectively evaluate and respond to future proposals.

C. Feasibility of utilizing forest or wetland restoration to produce carbon credits under the CCA

- Report should address the following questions:
 - What kinds of projects have been shown to sequester carbon in forests and wetlands? Are these kinds of projects feasible given our current capacity?
 - Where would these projects ideally be located? Where can they feasibly be located?
 - What are the effectiveness monitoring requirements?
 - What methodologies/protocols exist and which are approved for quantifying carbon sequestration in forests and wetlands?
 - How labor intensive are these measurements? Do they require special equipment, software and/or training?
 - How complicated are these calculations? Do we have the knowledge to do this in-house or would we have to contract this work out?
 - How are these measurements verified? How long does a project need to be actively maintained?
 - What are the risks associated with undertaking these projects both financially and to Tribal sovereignty?

- What is the procedure for submitting carbon credits into the marketplace? How much labor is required to manage these contracts?
- What can we learn from similar efforts?
 - What are the key elements for success for similar efforts in the California/Quebec, New England, and other carbon markets? What have been the challenges?
 - Which other Tribes/agencies are working on similar restoration-related carbon offset projects?
- In addition, this report should include the following components and/or characteristics:
 - Identification and prioritization of potential project types and locations.
 - Use existing geospatial information to identify locations within the watershed where restoration carbon credits may be produced.
 - Have sufficient spatial resolution to support restoration planning.
 - Accommodate available local data, and substitute reference data where necessary.
 - Include descriptions of the scale and timeframe at which restoration efforts become financially sustainable, including quantified uncertainty.
 - Reflect existing protocols where relevant (forestry) and evaluate the process and feasibility of introducing new protocols (wetlands).
 - Usable by appropriately qualified and/or trained co-manager staff.

Scope of Work

This project is subject to limited funding timeframe. All work must be completed by June 30, 2023. There is \$25,000 available to complete the Feasibility Report. There is an additional at least \$30,000 available for the Carbon Offset Impacts Report. Engagement with NIT staff throughout the project is expected.

Anticipated project tasks and deliverables may include:

- Summarize key elements of the CCA and implementation.
 - Report
 - Presentation/Training for NIT and co-manager staff
- Support Tribal consultation for proposed CCA projects
 - Report
 - User-friendly primer on potential CCA projects including impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives
 - Workshop for NIT and co-manager staff to understand carbon offset project impacts and potential mitigation
 - Presentation for NIT and co-manager staff
- Evaluate feasibility of Tribal participation in the carbon marketplace
 - Report
 - Presentation/Training for NIT and co-manager staff

Submittal of Proposals

Proposals must be submitted by close of business (5 pm) on Friday December 16, 2022, and should be uploaded to a file storage site or emailed to the address below:

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Notification of probable award, pending approval by Management, will be made by December 22, 2022.

Submittal Requirements

Proposals should be as concise as possible while including the following:

1. An organizational flow chart identifying all project personnel and describing their anticipated roles in the project.
2. Description of relevant expertise/experience by project personnel, and a list of clients who can be contacted as references for past work. Relevant expertise and experience include: (1) familiarity with carbon markets, ideally with specific knowledge of the CCA; (2) experience quantifying carbon sequestration and working with carbon calculators; (3) knowledge of forest and wetland carbon cycles and sequestration capacity; (4) an understanding of Tribal Treaty Rights and the role of consultation in decision making; (5) a familiarity with the natural and human history of the Nooksack River watershed.
3. Proposed approach to developing the three carbon offset reports, presenting, and training NIT and other partner staff.
4. Scope of work for producing the required deliverables, detailed by task, with cost estimates and timeline for each task. A reminder that both tasks must be completed by June 30, 2023, with no possibility of extension.

Evaluation Criteria

All qualified responses will be reviewed by a committee of NIT staff. The three highest qualified firms may be asked to provide a presentation of their proposals to the selection committee. All responses will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Experience/Qualifications (50%):
 - Familiarity with: (1) carbon markets, ideally with specific knowledge of the CCA; (2) quantifying carbon sequestration and carbon calculators; (3) forest and wetland carbon cycles and sequestration capacity; (4) Tribal Treaty Rights and the role of consultation; (5) the natural and human history of the Nooksack River watershed
 - Prior experience and proven success with environmental project feasibility studies and technical reports
 - Demonstrated ability/experience to accomplish proposed tasks
- Deliverables/Schedule (35%).
 - Completeness and sequencing of proposed approach
 - Timeline to produce deliverables (including commitment to complete by 6/30/23).
- Cost-effectiveness (15%).
 - Cost relative to deliverables produced