



**Eno River Association  
Request for Qualifications  
Strategic Conservation Planning Consultant  
June 2023 – October 2024**



## **I. Project**

The Eno River Association (ERA) is soliciting qualifications from professional consulting firms and independent consultants for services associated with the preparation of a comprehensive strategic conservation plan (SCP) for the Eno River watershed.

## **II. Eno River Association Background**

The ERA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to conserve and protect the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the Eno River basin. As one of the oldest nonprofit land trusts in NC, the ERA, founded in 1966, has a history of success in advocating for and protecting our environment and communities. Through advocacy and the protection of over 7,600 acres of land, we led the establishment of public parks and natural areas including Eno River State Park, Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area, West Point on the Eno Durham City Park, NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail Section 10, Penny's Bend Nature Preserve, the Little River Regional Park, Panther Branch Natural Area, and Confluence Natural Area. We actively steward the 7,600 acres of lands we have protected by recruiting and managing 500+ volunteers who provide 1,500+ hours annually of stewardship work. The ERA is one of 437 land trusts nationwide to have been awarded accredited status by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

ERA also engages in a variety of other activities, ranging from environmental education to community outreach. Since the 1970s, the ERA has used education programming as a critical step in building the next generation of environmental stewards, aiming to provoke thought and awareness of the importance of conservation and our effect on climate issues – locally and beyond. We offer guided and interpreted hikes, the Festival for the Eno, and summer camps. We publish journals, calendars, and articles exploring the Eno's historic roads, mills, communities, and food ways – ensuring that we are protecting the historical and cultural treasures of our river, in addition to the natural ones. Most of these programs are presented at little or no cost to participants. ERA is also working with communities to advocate for climate resilience and environmentally just solutions such as stream buffers, increases in conserved areas, access to open space, and community appropriate development.

## **III. Project Background and Description**

The Eno River watershed is 260 square miles, rising in northern Orange County and extending into northern Durham County. The watershed includes the Little River and its catchment area. The Eno River stretches for 40 miles and passes through a diverse landscape on its journey to form the Neuse River at Falls Lake: suburbs, rural areas, farming communities, historic sites including Historic Downtown Hillsborough, and urban centers including the City of Durham, as well as water treatment facilities, quarries, and industrial sites. The Eno River and its tributaries provide drinking water for 600,000 users

from populations in Durham, Orange, and Wake counties, and over a million when accounting for downstream users along the Neuse River.

Since 1966, ERA has approached protection work primarily in reaction to the Eno River State Park Master Plan, land-owner requests, and outreach to properties directly adjacent to the river and major tributaries. With the expanding urban communities of nearby Durham and Raleigh, development pressure is moving deeper into our watershed. A strategic planning process begun in 2021 uncovered an essential and fundamental need for building our capacity to proactively support key resources across the basin, while incorporating expanded environmental justice and climate change goals.

The SCP will center environmental justice and climate resilience goals within a prioritized plan for proactive natural, cultural, and historic resource protection across the entire Eno River basin. This plan will incorporate updated outcomes from past processes and incorporate new data to create the first comprehensive plan for the watershed. Key strategies should be used to engage the community and partnership organizations in helping prioritize for conservation - especially focusing on communities traditionally underrepresented in conservation planning and overrepresented in the impacts of climate change. The SCP should take into consideration the region's growing demand for housing, development, and urban expansion.

#### **IV. Project Budget**

The budget for the scope of services for developing the SCP is \$100,000.

#### **V. Project Scope**

The Eno River Association hereby requests qualification packages from consultants for providing all services required to satisfactorily complete the SCP. The consultant shall serve as the project manager. The consultant will be directly supported by ERA's Director of Conservation and Stewardship. Other ERA staff and committees will be engaged throughout the process as needed. The scope of work associated with this project generally includes but is not limited to the following:

##### **Requested Services**

- Review all existing conservation plans, master plans, and other relevant partnership plans within the watershed and identify conservation related resources
- Collect existing GIS data including but not limited to the built environment (current and future), natural environment, conservation resources, corridor plans, cultural and historical resources, recreational resources, and vulnerability indexes
- Conduct interviews, focus groups, or other collection strategies with key ERA staff, Board, and committee members and partner organizations
- Facilitate community engagement and input – especially with underserved and overburdened communities
- Prioritize conservation targets
- Develop a GIS prioritization model
- Provide a technical appendix with methodology, workflow, input parameters, and outputs
- Provide a report of study findings and recommendations

## VI. Project Schedule

<b>Task/Activity</b>	<b>Completion Date*</b>
RFQ Published and Distributed	May 15, 2023
Deadline for Respondent Questions in writing	June 2, 2023
<b>Proposal Submission Deadline</b>	<b>June 9, 2023</b>
Interviews with short list	June 19-21, 2023
Consultant Selection	June 22, 2023

\*Dates are tentative and subject to change

## VII. Consultant Qualifications

The consultant and their staff must be experienced in all aspects of the project assignment as described herein and have a proven capability to effectively and efficiently manage a project of this complexity.

## VIII. Qualifications Submission Requirements

Submittals shall be emailed no later than June 9<sup>th</sup> to [kim@enoriver.org](mailto:kim@enoriver.org) as a PDF formatted for 8 ½" x 11" paper with Table of Contents. The package shall not exceed (20) pages (front/back covers and Table of Contents are excluded from these totals). Complete responses to each of the following categories are required:

**A. Organization:**

1. List of team member(s) and responsibilities to be filled by each member who will be assigned to the project.

**B. Qualifications and Experience:**

1. Summary of at least two (2) similar planning projects for which the consultant or firm was responsible. Each of the project summaries shall include the following:
  - a) Description of the project including size and scope
  - b) Description of services rendered
  - c) Degree of involvement
  - d) Brief summary of client's program and how consultant addressed key elements
  - e) Project references and contact information

**C. Project Approach and Project Management**

1. Provide a detailed approach and process for preparing the SCP
2. Explain the process you would use for ERA staff, partners, and public input and participation in the development of the SCP
3. Explain the process you would use to identify and prioritize conservation targets
4. Explain the management tools, techniques and procedures you would use to maintain the project schedule
5. Explain why you believe you are the most qualified to provide the requested services for this project

**D. Consultant Professional Fees**

1. Submit an hourly billing rate schedule for all personnel who will work with ERA in providing professional services required for the Project.

**IX. Selection Process**

**Stage One: Request for Qualifications** – A Request for Qualifications is being sent to planning firms and independent consultants throughout the Triangle region of North Carolina. ERA staff will review all submissions and select a “short-list” of consultants or firms for further consideration who appear to be most favorable to provide services for the Project.

**Stage Two: Interviews-** Separate interview sessions will be scheduled with the “short-listed” firms or consultants to ERA Executive Director and Director of Conservation and Stewardship to further evaluate each consultant’s qualifications and proposal. Promptly after the interviews, the ERA selection team will make their determination.

**Stage Three: Contract Negotiations-** The ERA Director of Conservation and Stewardship will begin negotiations with the selected firm or consultant. In the event negotiations of specific contract terms, conditions and fees prove unsuccessful with any firm or consultant, ERA will select another firm or consultant with which to begin negotiations.

**X. Evaluation Criteria**

- A. Specialized or appropriate expertise for this particular type of project
- B. Proposed project approach for this type of project
- C. Past performance of similar projects
- D. Ability to complete the work within the proposed timeline
- E. Proximity to and familiarity with the area
- F. Consultants proposed hourly rates
- G. Compliance with the proposal format requirements

**XI. Attached Exhibit**

Eno River watershed map with existing protected lands

