

Release Date: July 1, 2010

Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement

Request for Proposals

Targeted Watershed Implementation Initiative Development of Farm-Specific Action Plans

(LCBP anticipates funds to become available in Summer, 2010)

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a project to provide technical services for development of farm and field-level best management practices (BMPs) on as many as 20 Vermont farms in a sub-watershed of the Rock River in the Missisquoi Bay Basin of Lake Champlain. Up to \$100,000 is available for this project, which supports the over-arching goal of reducing phosphorus pollution into Lake Champlain, as outlined in the LCBP long-term management plan, *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*.

The LCBP seeks proposals for a contractor to initiate on-farm assessments of opportunities to improve water quality protection on as many as 20 farms in a designated sub-watershed of the Rock River drainage basin to Lake Champlain. The contractor will work directly with farm operations to develop farm-specific Action Plans for each participating farm, and provide an evaluation of project results and recommendations for future efforts around the Lake Champlain Basin. Great Lakes Fishery Commission funds supporting this project were secured by Senator Leahy.

This Request for Proposals is available from the Lake Champlain Basin Program website. Look for the link on our homepage at www.lcbp.org/research.htm. 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:

July 30, 2010

LATE OR INCOMPLETE PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

The successful applicant will be notified by **September 17, 2010**.

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I. Background

Land within the Rock River watershed contributes some of the highest per unit area phosphorus pollution loads of any place in the Lake Champlain Basin. Further, the watershed is one of the most agriculturally-intensive landscapes in the basin.

A sub-watershed within the Vermont-portion of the Rock River Basin has been identified by the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) for targeted implementation of needed best management practices (BMPs) on agricultural land. This sub-watershed consists of 3500 acres of primarily agricultural lands within the towns of Highgate and Franklin, VT (refer to appended map for the targeted area).

Approximately 16 to 20 farmers operate in this sub-watershed. Water sampling was conducted in 2008 by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources at the upstream and downstream boundaries of this sub-watershed. Data from this sampling effort, and other biotic data, indicate a significant degradation of water quality through this sub-watershed.

This pilot initiative is intended to demonstrate that when agricultural producers implement a suite of priority conservation practices in a short period of time, measurable progress in water quality can be achieved. A goal of this initiative is to provide sufficient financial incentives and technical assistance to gain a high level of producer participation. The discrete project area and limited number of potential participants is designed to allow the pilot initiative to meet the conservation challenges of each individual farm. Necessarily, this objective requires site visits and identification of specific resource needs.

The selected contractor will provide local farmers the necessary technical assistance to identify priority conservation projects and develop farm-specific action plans that rank projects and recommend conservation practices for implementation. A high priority for this project is to maximize the number of participating farms, with a goal of at least 80% of producers in the target sub-watershed completing one (or more) priority conservation projects. Financial incentives will be developed and available for both participation and project implementation. It is anticipated that a separate request for proposal will be issued for the administration of financial incentives and disbursements to participating farmers.

II. Targeted Watershed Needs Survey and Project Development

The LCBP is seeking proposals for technical services to develop voluntary farm-specific action plans which identify farm and field level BMPs for as many as 20 farms in an approximately 3,500 acre sub-watershed of the Rock River in the towns of Highgate and Franklin, VT (refer to appended map for the targeted area). The contractor will be responsible for routine contact with the farmers, completing an on-farm assessment of opportunities for improved water quality protection, developing farm-specific

action plans for each participating producer, and assisting with oversight of practice implementation. More complex practices requiring engineering skills or other special skills will be designed by state or federal agency employees and/or by private consultants according to the preference of participating farms. The contractor will also be responsible for conferring regularly with a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to insure that project objectives are met in a timely manner. The contractor will provide semi-annual written project updates, meet routinely with the PAC, and will also provide a final project report that includes an evaluation of project results and recommendations for future efforts.

The contractor will be responsible for the following specific tasks, in cooperation with farms recruited to participate in this voluntary program:

- Complete a “desktop survey” (spatial data, farm conservation plans, implemented practices, etc.) of all agricultural lands within the target sub-watershed that uses the highest quality data available to identify opportunities to improve water quality protection on lands in active agricultural use.
- Work with producers in the target sub-watershed, in order to specifically:
 - Maximize voluntary farm participation in the project
 - Secure necessary permissions to undertake an on-farm assessment
 - Review any needs identified from the assessment with producers
 - Work with producers to identify priority practices and strategies and propose an implementation timeline
 - Facilitate producer interaction with cost-share programs
- Complete an on-farm assessment for each of the participating farms in the target sub-watershed; ideally, by the end of the project, every farm in the target sub-watershed will have an action plan. The action plan should identify opportunities for the following practices:
 - Livestock exclusion fencing
 - Riparian buffers
 - Filter strips
 - Cover crops
 - Strip cropping
 - Manure injection
 - Tile outlet and gully stabilization
 - Conservation tillage
 - Access road improvement
 - Grassed waterways and associated grade control structures
 - Aeration for manure application
 - Sediment basins
 - Ditch maintenance
 - Critical area seeding/planting
 - Drainage (tile) water management
- Submit to the LCBP an action plan for each farm in the target sub-watershed, which:
 - Comprehensively discusses water quality improvement needs
 - Identifies priority concerns and possible solutions, taking into account input received from the producer

- Identifies best practice(s); modifies practice design, as needed, for agronomic practices such as filter strips, grassed waterways, livestock exclusion and ditch maintenance
 - Proposes an implementation timeline
 - Identifies existing programs and resources to be used for practice implementation
 - Estimates costs, where possible
- Develop quarterly progress reports and a final project report that evaluates success of the project.
 - Routinely meet with the project advisory committee and LCBP Project Officer to discuss priority strategies and implementation challenges.

III. Summary of Other Requirements for the Selected Proposal

- For the selected proposal, following initial notification of the award, an approved workplan will be required before a grant agreement can be executed and the work begun. This workplan should be submitted to the LCBP Project Officer for review by **October 15th, 2010**.
- The successful applicant will be required to prepare a Secondary Data Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). This Secondary Data QAPP must be approved by the LCBP before work can begin on this project.
- The successful applicant will be required to periodically meet with the LCBP Project Officer and the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to be established by the LCBP for the purpose of engaging LCBP partners in the role of advising and guiding this task.
- The successful applicant will be required to provide quarterly reports documenting progress on each objective and task in the project (see attached Proposal Format Requirements) to the LCBP Project Officer. A final report fully documenting the project's results will be required at project completion, no later than **November 30, 2012**.
- When approved, the final report will be edited for content and style in consultation with the contractor and made available for publication as part of the Lake Champlain Basin Program's Technical Report Series.
- The contractor will be required to present interim and final project results to the appropriate LCBP committees, such as the Technical Advisory Committee and/or the LCBP Steering Committee, for their review.

IV. Eligibility

Eligible organizations include colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, and 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 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 how well they address the following points:

- Experience working directly with agricultural producers.
- Demonstrated ability to use GIS-based resource information, aerial photography and other digital or map-based information for agricultural land resource assessments and the ability to produce digital maps and other analysis products.
- Demonstrated knowledge of agricultural/agronomic practices and associated best management practices for water quality improvement, with particular emphasis on practices typically employed by conventional dairy operations.
- Familiarity with state and federal technical standards including: NRCS's Conservation Practice Standards, Vermont's *Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAPs)*, and Vermont's on-farm *Best Management Practices (BMP) Program*.
- Familiarity with state and federal water quality regulations, and other environmental regulations.
- Demonstrated ability to achieve desired outcomes when working in highly-charged situations, driven by competing priorities and resource limitations.
- Technical merit and feasibility of the proposed methods for identifying and prioritizing on-farm improvements to abate non-point source agricultural waste discharges into the waters of the state.
- Clarity, conciseness and adherence to the proposal guidelines.
- Demonstrated ability to create documents and products that are accessible to and can be used by local partners working to reduce nutrient pollution in the Rock River watershed.

VI. Anticipated Availability of Funds and Match Requirements

LCBP anticipates that a total of \$100,000 will become available for this project. Separate funding will be used to provide financial incentives to support project implementation. Match is not required.

VII. Period of Performance

Work is to be completed no later than November 30, 2012.

VIII. Schedule and Requirements for Proposal Submission

Please follow the format outlined in the attached Technical Proposal Format Requirements.

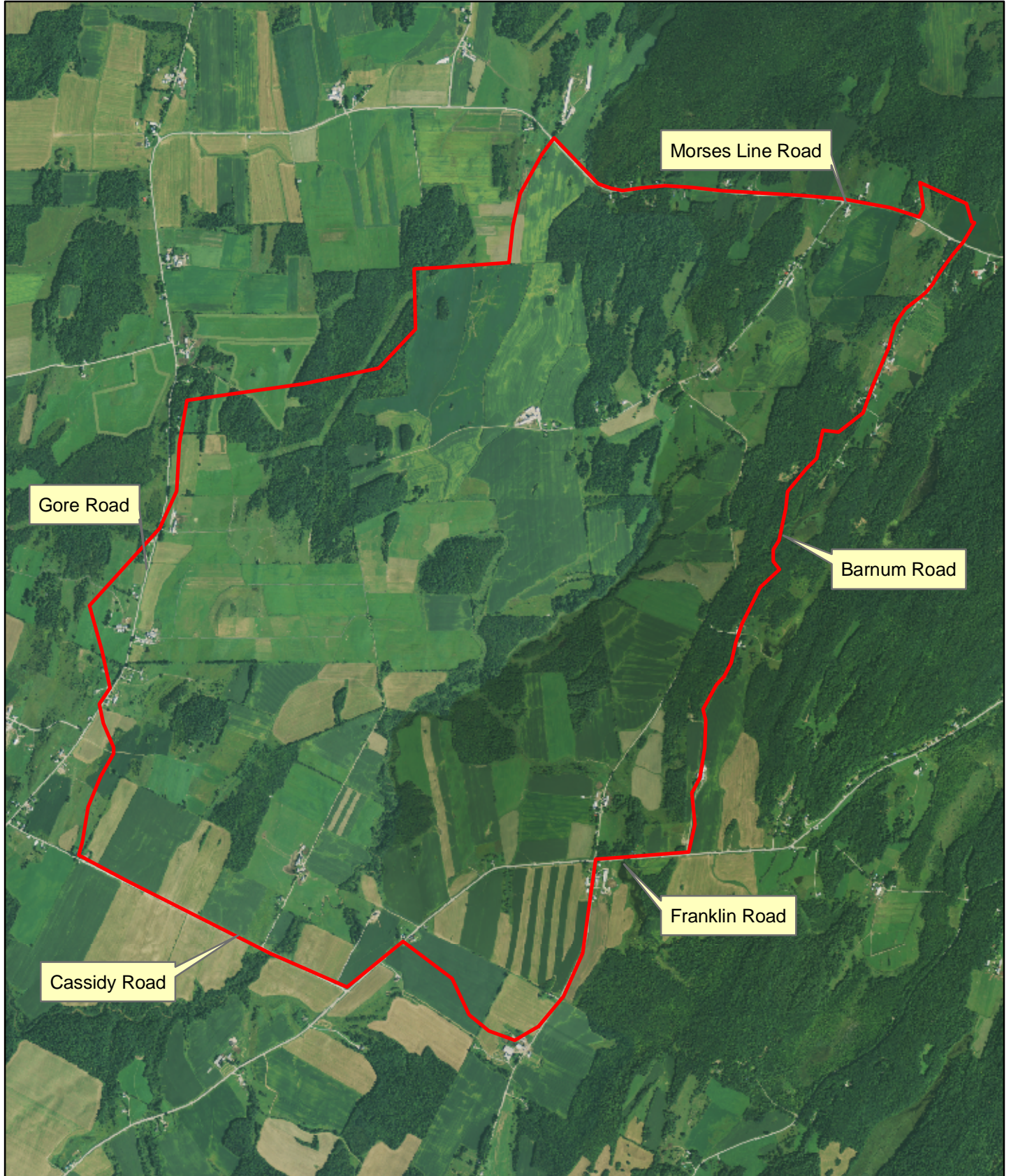
- Ten (10) paper copies of each proposal must be RECEIVED by the LCBP office by 4:30pm on **July 30, 2010**. Please submit paper copies bound only with a single staple or binder clip.
- *In addition*, an ELECTRONIC VERSION of the proposal, either on disk or via e-mail must be submitted. Electronic versions must also be RECEIVED by 4:30pm on **July 30, 2010**.

IX. Contact Information

Direct all proposals and other inquiries to:

Eric Howe, Technical Coordinator
 Lake Champlain Basin Program
 54 West Shore Road
 Grand Isle, VT 05458
 (802)372-3213
ehowe@lcbp.org

Project Rock Proposed Project Area



1 inch equals 0.5 miles

2/12/2010

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 fifteen (15) months after the execution of a contract or grant.

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.