

Request for Proposals

Subject: Lower Colorado River Watershed Restoration and Access Plan

**Request for
Proposal Issued:** Monday, June 30, 2025

Proposers are responsible for periodically visiting Great Springs Project's website at www.greatspringsproject.org for any updated information on this RFP.

**Deadline for
Questions:** 5:00 p.m. (CT), Monday, July 14 2025

Questions will only be accepted in writing by e-mail to Darcie Schipull at rfp@greatspringsproject.org. Responses to questions will be posted on GSP's website www.greatspringsproject.org by 5:00 p.m. (CT) Friday, July 18, 2025.

Proposal Due: 12:00 noon (CT), Monday, July 28, 2025

Number of Copies: One electronic document (pdf) less than 10 MB e-mailed to RFP@greatspringsproject.org.

Purpose:

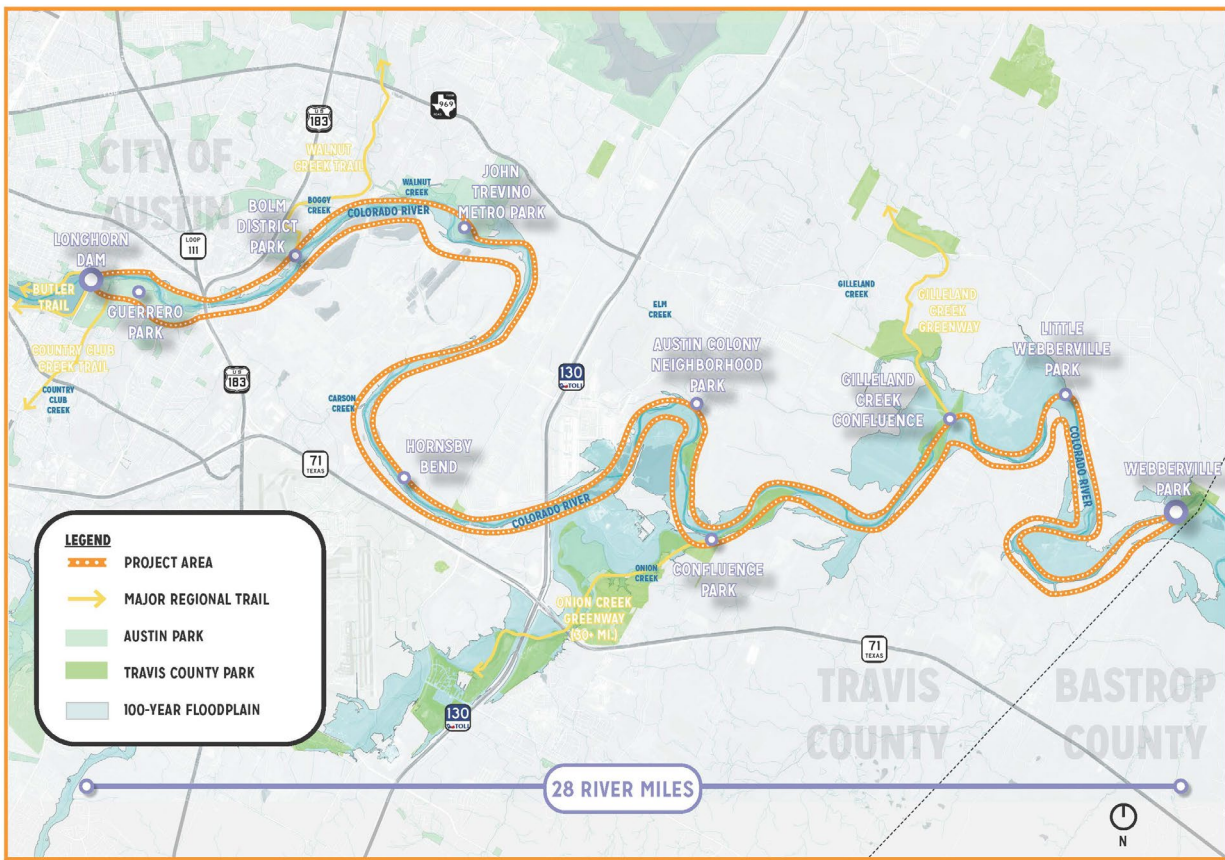
Great Springs Project ("GSP") is seeking proposals from qualified firms to develop the Lower Colorado River Watershed Restoration and Access Plan (WRAP). In partnership with the Trail Conservancy and the Travis County Parks Foundation, and with the support of the City of Austin and Travis County, GSP is leading this community planning effort to support a variety of community priorities in the Lower Colorado River corridor, between Longhorn Dam and the Travis County Line in Austin and Eastern Travis County (TX). The WRAP will guide the implementation of a range of strategic projects—including those that center restoration, public access, land development, resource extraction, and infrastructure needs—for balancing multiple needs along the river in the context of Austin's rapidly changing demographic and climatic conditions. In addition to this action plan, the planning process will result in increased capacity of, and strengthened relationships among a powerful coalition of partners with the resources to implement a range of multi-beneficial restoration and access projects.

Background

In Summer 2024, Great Springs Project, in partnership with the Trail Conservancy and the Travis County Parks Foundation, submitted a proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART grant program to develop a Watershed Restoration and Access Plan. Generally, the premise of the proposal was to bring local and regional stakeholders to 1) articulate a vision for projects and programs that support healthy ecosystems and enable appropriate public access to the Travis County section of the lower Colorado River corridor below Longhorn Dam and 2) recommend specific strategies (projects and programs) for achieving these outcomes. That proposal was awarded funding in June 2025; this RFP is to identify a consultant team to help deliver the grant-funded scope of work and produce the Lower Colorado River Watershed Restoration and Access Plan (WRAP).

Figure 1: Project Area

LOWER COLORADO RIVER PROJECT AREA



Scope of Work

The following Scope of Work identifies the major components of the study effort.

Task 1. Project Administration

The consultant will manage all their project activities and work. This task involves continuous project coordination and administration between GSP and supporting GSP's grant reporting responsibilities. Project coordination and administration includes the preparation of monthly progress reports, monthly invoices, and billings; meetings and coordination activities; preparation of meeting minutes; quality assurance/quality control and other project management activities.

Deliverables:

- Management Plan
- Monthly progress reports, maintaining a project schedule with key milestones, and deliverables.
- Monthly invoices and billings
- Meeting minutes

Task 2. Coalition Building: Expanding the Watershed Group (approximately 15% total project scope)

The initial phase of the project focuses on outreach and engagement to build a diverse and inclusive partnership of watershed stakeholders to shape and ultimately implement the recommendations of the plan. Activities in this phase will include formalizing an engagement plan, which will specify outreach and engagement responsibilities for each organization. The team will also develop meeting materials such as maps, illustrative graphics, and online content to succinctly convey the project's purpose, background,

and overview to interested stakeholder participants. Finally partners will conduct informal stakeholder meetings with a wide cross-section of stakeholders.

Conversations during this phase will be structured to identify preliminary priorities, concerns, and opportunities, and establish buy-in and participation throughout the more intensive stakeholder engagement activities in future phases. Examples of input collected at this phase might include high-level aspirations, recommendations, or factors to consider in future phases, such as:

- the need to coordinate riparian restoration implementation with green workforce development objectives;
- the importance of key recreation activities, such as fishing or large gatherings, for the communities in the project area;
- potential destinations that would be connected by active transportation routes in the project area;
- sites of ecological interest in the project area, like areas of high-quality habitat, existing bottomland forest, or springs.

Additionally, this initial engagement phase will identify the stakeholder groups that have the capacity and willingness to serve on the WRAP steering committee. Comprised of organizations whose interests and missions are aligned with the planning effort, and who are willing and able to offer a sizable time commitment to the project, the WRAP steering committee will play an outsized role in leading subsequent phases in the planning process. This includes facilitating stakeholder engagement and providing technical expertise for recommended actions.

This task is anticipated to take no more than five months. Though the final schedule for this phase will depend on the selected consultant proposal, there will be at least two major milestones in this phase, each culminating in an in-person group meeting (eg., workshop, river site visit, etc) with the entire partnership.

Deliverables:

The deliverables from this phase include documentation of the engagement plan, production of meeting materials and online content to support engagement activities, summary materials to capture the outcomes of individual and group exercises with stakeholders, and detailed contact information to follow up with participants and ensure their ongoing participation in future phases of the WRAP process.

Task 3. Priorities: Voicing Aspirations and Establishing Consensus (approximately 25% total project scope)

Once the core stakeholder group has been identified, the project team will facilitate a range of activities with this group to articulate specific issues and opportunities in the project area. The intention during this phase is to develop general watershed management project concepts that can be further detailed in subsequent phases. As priorities emerge in Phase 3, the team will use the planning process to build consensus around strategies for resolving potential conflicts among differing perspectives, and identify preliminary solutions for balancing the needs of diverse user groups. This task will lay the foundation for more extensive consensus-based project development in Phase 4.

Phase 3 engagement leverages the outcomes of earlier planning efforts, including mobility-related plans (eg., Austin’s “Urban Trails Plan”), park and recreation plans (eg., Austin’s “Long Range Parks Plan”) land use plans (eg., Travis County’s “Land, Water, and Transportation Plan”), and wider community-based plans (eg, “Discovering the Colorado: Austin to Bastrop Corridor”). Using these previous projects as a jumping off point, engagement during this phase will prompt stakeholders to consider issues and needs related to water quality, water quantity, and restoration within the river corridor.

Engagement activities might include a combination of traditional methods (such as public meetings and online surveys), as well as more interactive ones, like:

- guided hikes, bike rides, or paddling trips to discuss the issues and opportunities facing the project area while outdoors and enjoying it
- pop-up engagement activities at existing public events in the project area, such as Del Valle Day, the Tejas Trails trail race in Southeast Metro Park, or the For the Love of Parks celebration
- joint engagement activities coordinated with Travis County's ongoing Park and Recreation Vision Plan update

Generally, the premise will be to ensure that WRAP engagement is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Since it will be shaped by its participants, the consensus building work is flexible enough to meet people where they are, and authentic enough to solicit meaningful insights to shape the final plan. Depending on steering committee guidance, engagement activities and materials may be bilingual, and/or accessible for stakeholders with different physical and cognitive abilities.

During this phase, dialogue will initially be structured around the following driving questions:

- What are the most vulnerable ecosystem and habitat areas of the project?
- What are the ecological and climatic challenges that the project should anticipate and resolve?
- What are appropriate levels and modes of public access to the river corridor?
- What are the functional requirements for utility providers and resource extraction users?
- Where are the most important community nodes that need to be connected through the river corridor?
- What are the displacement implications of watershed restoration and increased access?

It is expected that additional prompts will emerge in the preceding phases of the project, which will be incorporated into the workflow as needed.

This task is anticipated to take no more than nine months. Though the final schedule for this phase will depend on the selected consultant proposal, it is anticipated that there will be three major milestones in this phase, each culminating in an in-person group meeting with the entire partnership.

Deliverables:

The final deliverable for this phase includes a summary of the stakeholder engagement activities, and a synthesis of the input received, organized around the responses that were provided to the driving questions in this phase. This synthesis is structured as the partnership's Restoration and Access Principles, and provides the basis for engagement in the next phase.

Task 4. Strategies: Identifying Actions for Meaningful Change (approximately 20% total project scope)

In Phase 3, stakeholders participated in a range of activities to identify needs, priorities, challenges, and opportunities for balancing multiple needs in the project area. In Phase 4, stakeholders will pivot to identifying and prioritizing discrete solutions to these needs and challenges, before detailing them in the next phase. Like in the previous phase, the decisions made during Phase 4 will be collaborative and consensus-based, and the engagement program to derive this consensus will be determined through a process guided by the WRAP Steering Committee. Accordingly, like with Phase 3, the overall engagement program for Phase 4 will include a mix of traditional and more dynamic activities that the Steering Committee identifies as effective and compelling.

Throughout the Phase 4 engagement program, participants will be asked to evaluate and recommend specific actions for implementing the Restoration and Access Principles detailed through the preceding engagement work. WRAP achieves this through exercises that rank various programs, policies, and

projects of interest to stakeholders. Candidate recommendations will come from a variety of sources, including:

- local plans related to trails, active transportation, and connectivity
- local plans related to riparian restoration, land management, climate adaptation, and water conservation/use
- watershed-specific best management practices established by Federal, state, and local government agencies;
- dialogue and discussion with stakeholders during Phases 2 and 3
- review of regional and national WRAP-precedent plans

Examples of recommended actions might be specific segments of trail with conceptual alignment/route; well-formed citizen science programs; riparian restoration activities at strategic sites; or future technical studies to improve available data for future implementation actions. Participants will evaluate potential Restoration and Access actions, and prioritize them based on a set of criteria. Criteria will be determined by the steering committee and consultant team, but factors that are likely to be considered include:

- impact // how effective is an action at achieving the Restoration and Access Principles?
- implementability // how pragmatic and cost effective is an action?
- timeliness // how rapidly can an action be implemented and its benefits begin to accrue?

This task is anticipated to take no more than five months. This phase is anticipated to have one major milestone, which will be a combined in-person workshop and online survey to identify priority strategies.

Deliverables:

The deliverable for this phase includes narrative descriptions for 30-50 discrete actions, a description of their scores using the evaluation criteria, and a prioritized list of Restoration and Access actions to be developed and detailed in the following phase.

Task 5. Execution: Describing and Assigning the Next Steps (approximately 35% total project scope)

Having determined Restoration and Access Principles and identified priority actions for achieving them, Phase 5 focuses on advancing priority projects so that they are primed for implementation. Led by the consultant team and with technical expertise from the steering committee as needed, the project team will provide action-specific details for the Tier 1 recommendations (eg, the highest scoring actions from Phase 4) that will equip the project team to execute the activities necessary to achieve WRAP's principles.

The level of detail generated in this phase will depend on the actions that are determined to be the highest priority. Since this determination will occur through the planning process, the specific materials that accompany each action are not yet known. Resources that are anticipated to be developed through the planning process include:

- major design criteria
- recommended project elements, including plant species, hardscaping materials, and/or amenities
- illustrative concept-level drawings
- preliminary schedules and cost estimates
- restoration monitoring and maintenance considerations
- construction considerations, such as necessary equipment and site access
- site-specific environmental compliance

Regarding compliance, each construction project will include a permitting strategy, including a narrative description of the local, state, and federal regulatory pathways necessary to implement the project. Along with preliminary cost estimates, the project team will also develop a funding strategy, which will identify

specific philanthropic, local, state, and federal funding opportunities (including potential Bureau of Reclamation grants) to support priority recommendations.

This task is anticipated to take no more than 6 months. The primary milestone for this task will be when the technical materials are presented to the partnership for approval. However, the consultant agreement will require monthly reviews of draft materials throughout this phase to ensure that technical materials reflect the needs and priorities of WRAP participants.

Deliverables:

The deliverable for this phase includes a package of the conceptual design materials and cost estimates, supplemented with narrative materials to support compliance and implementation for each Tier 1 recommendation.

Task 6. Synthesis: Production and Approval (approximately 5% total project scope)

During the final phase, the consultant team will synthesize the deliverables produced in Phases 2-5 into a cohesive, compelling Watershed Restoration and Access Plan that encapsulates each step of the planning process. This is in alignment with *Activity 1 (“Completing a watershed restoration plan...”)* in *Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning*. The final deliverable will be submitted to the Steering Committee for their final review and approval, prior to submission for adoption by and/or formal support from the Travis County Commissioner’s Court, Austin City Council, and Lower Colorado River Authority Board of Directors.

This task is anticipated to take no more than eight months. The primary milestone for this phase will be in when the final WRAP is approved, though there will be numerous reviews of the draft document throughout the phase.

Deliverables:

The deliverable for this phase is the completed Watershed Restoration and Access Plan, with presentations and approvals from the municipal partners as needed.

Proposal Content

The proposal will contain at least the following documentation:

1. Cover Letter - This should include a summary of the key points of the proposal and the approach to accomplishing the study. The name, address, and telephone number of the firm, as well as the primary contact person’s name and that person’s e-mail address, should also be included.
2. Study Methodology - This should include the Consultant's approach to tasks to accomplish the work outlined in the Scope of Work. This Section should demonstrate an understanding of the project, the conditions and context, and clearly reflect the proposed vision for carrying out the project’s tasks. This section is limited to 12 pages (8.5” x 11”) set to no less than 0.5” margins and no less than 11-point font.
3. Key Personnel - One paragraph summaries of qualifications and experience should be submitted for all personnel assigned to the project. The assignment of personnel must specifically contain the percentage of time by personnel for each task included in the Scope of Work. The successful responder to this RFP must understand that they are expected to provide qualified personnel to accomplish each portion of the work in this study. GSP and/or its representative(s) will maintain the right to request the removal of

any personnel found, in their opinion, during the course of work on this project, to be unqualified to perform the work.

4. Management Plan - The management plan must contain a schedule of work that reflects the timing of deliverables and other significant milestones in the completion of the project; a percent of time by task for the Prime and each subconsultant; and how the project would be coordinated with other related work. The management plan's purpose is to specify the distribution of emphasis between tasks and participation between the Prime and each subconsultant for each task described in the Scope of Work. (Refer to the form in Attachment A. This form is available on the GSP website as an Excel document, and it must be completed and submitted with the proposal for the proposal to be considered.)
5. Related Work - Work that closely relates to that described in the Scope of Work which has been performed by the specific personnel assigned to this project should be briefly outlined in the proposal. Emphasis should be placed on work undertaken in the past five years only.

Criteria for Evaluation

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria with relative weights in parenthesis:

1. Qualifications and previous related experience of key personnel to be assigned to this study. Highlight staff members' successful experience on comparable projects, both in the WRAP region and elsewhere. (25%)
2. Track record for conducting comparable planning initiatives that have or are currently leading to implementation of watershed restoration and access projects. (25%)
3. Demonstrated knowledge of the study area, as well as a mastery of related topics such as park and trail planning in sensitive environmental areas, working with large partnerships of stakeholders, and urban climate adaptation strategies (especially those related to water quality and quantity). (25%)
4. A detailed Management Plan demonstrating the ability to meet time schedules in the contract for this study and the ability to complete the effort based on the required schedule. (25%)

Budget

The source of funding for this study is Federal funding from the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART grant program. The budget shall not exceed \$300,000.

Consultant Selection Committee

The responsibility of the consultant selection committee is to make a recommendation to Great Springs Project's Board on the consultant selection. Once the project is underway, the WRAP steering committee will provide oversight for the conduct of the study.

Selection Procedure

The consultant selection committee will review proposals based on the evaluation criteria. Their recommendations will be forwarded to the GSP Board. Firms, at the discretion of the consultant selection committee, may be selected for oral presentations and interviews. The contract award will be made by the GSP Board; however, GSP reserves the right to reject all proposals. The consultant selection committee may be comprised of one or more representative from each of the following entities, and is subject to change:

- Great Springs Project
- The Trail Conservancy
- Travis County Parks Foundation
- City of Austin
- Travis County
- Lower Colorado River Authority

Other stakeholders will be invited to participate in the consultant selection committee as determined by GSP.

Duration of Contract

This contract will cover no more than a period of approximately eighteen (18) months from the date of the Notice to Proceed. Proposals for scopes of work that are shorter than 18 months will be considered, provided the proposed scope of work adequately achieves the tasks laid out in this Request for Proposals.

Compliance with Federal Regulations

The Proposer's attention is called to the fact that this contract is subject to a financial assistance contract between GSP and the Bureau of Reclamation. The contract to be let, therefore, is subject to the terms of the contract between GSP and the Bureau of Reclamation. The successful Proposer will be required to comply with, in addition to other provisions of the Request for Proposal, the conditions required by all applicable Federal regulations, including the following:

1. Equal Employment Opportunity - Successful Proposer will be required to comply with all applicable Equal Employment Opportunity Laws and Regulations.
2. Title VI Assurances - Successful Proposer will be required to comply with all requirements imposed by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (49 U.S.C. Section 2000d) and the Regulations of DOT issued thereunder (49 C.F.R. part 21).

Attachment A: [Management Plan](#)