

HOUSATONIC RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES RESTORATION PROJECT
CONNECTICUT SUBCOUNCIL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RECEIVED
JAN 17 2007
INLAND FISHERIES

Part A: RESPONDER AND PROJECT SUMMARY FORM

Please read "RFP: Overview of Selection Process" before completing this form.

Part A must be completed using Submittal Form A.

Responses may be entered electronically using the Microsoft Word version of Part A of this form available on the Housatonic River Basin Natural Resource Restoration Project in Connecticut website (www.housatonicrestoration.org), saved and printed. Alternatively, the responder may print the form and complete it with black ink.

An Adobe Acrobat version of the entire form (Part A and Part B) is also available on the Housatonic River Basin Natural Resource Restoration Project in Connecticut website

Project Name Provide a brief working name.

Increased Law Enforcement Patrols at Bull's Bridge and Other Problem Areas.

Responder – if there is more than one party involved in the project, please provide the information for the primary or lead party.

Connecticut DEP Inland Fisheries Division and Law Enforcement Division, attn: Michael Humphreys

Name

Fisheries Biologist

Title

DEP Field Office

Address

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Address

Litchfield

CT

06759

City

State

Zip

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Michael.Humphreys@PO.State.CT.US

Email

Type of Entity

Check the box that best describes the primary respondent.

Private individual

Non-profit organization

Municipal government

State government

County government

Federal government

Tribal government

Corporation or Business

Academic Institution

Other (explain)

Project Implementation

Does the responder plan to be the Project Sponsor and respond to the Request for Supplemental Information (RSI) pending approval of this Proposal?

Yes No

If yes, please list any other project participants. Housatonic Fly Fisherman's Assoc., Trout Unlimited, unaffiliated anglers and outdoor recreationists

If the responder does **NOT** plan to be the Project Sponsor and does **NOT** intend to respond to the Request for Supplemental Information (RSI), is the responder interested in being a project participant and assisting a different Project Sponsor on this project?

Request for Proposals:

Yes No

Request for Proposals:

Restoration Priority Funding Category See Sec. 3 of "RFP: Overview of Selection Process" for category descriptions.

Primary Restoration Category. Check the restoration category that is the primary goal of the project.

Check one box.

- Aquatic Natural Resources Restoration/Enhancement
 Riparian & Floodplain Natural Resources Restoration/Enhancement
 Restoration/Enhancement of Recreational Uses of Natural Resources

Secondary Categories. Check all relevant boxes.

- Aquatic Natural Resources Restoration/Enhancement
 Riparian & Floodplain Natural Resources Restoration/Enhancement
 Restoration/Enhancement of Recreational Uses of Natural Resources

List Specific Injured Natural Resources and/or Impaired Natural Resource Services to Benefit from Project

1) Trout and bass populations, as well as other aquatic species 2) Quality of recreational angling, 3) Riparian Zone flora and fauna

Project Location (if known) See directions and "RFP: Overview of Selection Process" for additional materials to provide (maps, aerial photographs)

Municipality/ies:

New Milford, Sherman, Kent, Sharon, Cornwall, Salisbury, Canaan, North Canaan

Longitude for approximate center of project area: 73o 25.484' W

Latitude for approximate center of project area: 41o 46.388' N

Project Budget Estimate (if known)

Total Project Cost Estimate: \$ 75,000

Housatonic River NRD Fund Estimate: \$ 75,000

PART B

Item 1. – Project Narrative

This project will provide direct, significant, measurable, and potentially long-term improvements to aquatic natural resources and recreational angling quality within the riverine portions of the upper Housatonic River mainstem in Connecticut. Improvements will be accomplished by altering human behavior to comply with existing laws and regulations. Law enforcement patrolling will be increased at problem areas and special management areas from the upper end of Lake Lillinonah (Bleachery Dam) in New Milford northward to the Mass/Conn state line. The section of the Housatonic River between Bull's Bridge Dam and the rte 7 bridge in Gaylordsville (Bull's Bridge Management Area) has been managed and studied intensively in recent years and will serve as a focus point for project assessment.

The Bull's Bridge Management Area has been stocked by the DEP and managed with catch-and-release regulations for trout (since 2002) and bass (since 2003) in a effort to restore natural balance to the fish populations by eliminating the negative effects of over-harvest. This active management is also intended to provide higher angler catch rates of larger bass and trout which would likely result in increased angler use and angler satisfaction. Both angler use and angler satisfaction have suffered as a direct result of PCB contamination.

During a recent angler survey of this management area conducted by DEP Inland Fisheries (March-October 2006), creel agents documented extensive illegal activity, including significant harvest of bass and trout, use of gillnets to harvest fish, harvest and depletion of trout from an important thermal refuge, and extensive littering. DEP Law Enforcement has been kept abreast of this situation for several years, but acknowledges that they are unable to adequately address this overwhelming problem due to manpower limitations and other important commitments and duties.

Annual electrofishing surveys to assess fish populations show that illegal harvest is having substantial negative effects on trout and bass populations preventing full realization of benefits of catch-and-release management. For example, smallmouth bass, which have very low natural mortality rates in this river, have the potential to reach at least 17 years of age and 18+ inches in length. However smallmouths over age 4 (10 inches) are severely depleted by harvest, and fish over age 9 (16 inches) are rarely encountered. Restoration of more natural population structures of top-level predators in this ecosystem would have cascading effects on populations of other species, generating a more natural balance and trophic structure. Ecosystem benefits provided in this way constitute direct and measurable restoration and enhancement of natural resources that were injured by PCB contamination.

This project will also help restore critical riparian habitat and aesthetic qualities. It is well known that unmonitored and unrestricted use of the gorge at Bull's Bridge, as well as other areas downstream and upstream, is having significant negative impacts on the integrity of riparian habitat, including rare habitat types essential for the support of several State-listed plant species. During the summertime these areas attract large numbers of picnickers, and bathers, many of whom appear to have little regard for cleaning up their litter before they leave. During the 2006 angler survey at Bull's Bridge, creel agents who conducted angler interviews approximately three times a week were

instructed to bring garbage bags and remove trash as time permitted. Agents regularly encountered more new trash than they could carry out.

The proposed remedial action is likely to have long-term and far-reaching effects. Cursory and qualitative observations, as well as anecdotal reports from anglers indicate that these enforcement issues are not restricted to the Bull's Bridge Management Area. Providing funding for an increased level of law enforcement for three years will allow officers to become more familiar with all sections of the upper River (especially less accessible sections), and the volume, nature, location, and timing of illegal activities. Increased involvement will foster a vested interest in protecting and enhancing these resources that is likely to carry over beyond the three-year period. In addition, three years of increased patrols may be enough to catch and discourage habitual offenders. Increased enforcement support of the new and promising fisheries management initiative at Bull's Bridge will help to demonstrate significant benefits which will have broad applications for the rest of the upper Housatonic River in Connecticut in the future. Increased patrolling and responsiveness in less well studied sections of the upper River will identify and address less well documented problems.

The tasks necessary to implement the project are clear and simple. Once funding is established, law enforcement supervisory staff will develop protocols and adjust scheduling. Increased patrolling and enforcement actions will be accomplished with existing staff who will take on this additional work and will be paid overtime as necessary. Conservation Officers will record detailed information on patrolling and enforcement actions in each section of the upper River. The law Enforcement Division has expressed a willingness to take this on, and has already provided an outline of their preferred approach. The requested funds (\$25,000/year for three years) will provide approximately 250 additional hours of dedicated patrol time per year. The Inland Fisheries Division (IFD) fully intends to provide background information and guidance at no cost to the project. The IFD also intends to analyze and summarize enforcement records, and continue annual assessment of fish populations by electrofishing to assess potential changes resulting from this project. The IFD also intends to conduct another angler survey, at no cost to this project, during the last year of this project to assess direct benefits to anglers.

Both organized and unaffiliated anglers, as well as passive recreationists have expressed strong and unsolicited approval of this proposal. Many have offered their help (e.g. calling the "TIP Hotline"), especially if there is a greater likelihood of initiating a law enforcement response. It is anticipated that major owners of adjacent lands (CT DEP, National Park Service, Northeast Generation Services, River Oaks Golf Course Association) will be fully supportive of this initiative as well. The relationship between proposed costs and likely benefits of this project is very favorable.

Item 2. – Project Location Entire upper Housatonic River in Connecticut, from the Bleachery Dam in New Milford upstream to the Massachusetts state line (see attached map).

Item 3. – Criteria Statements

1.) This submittal includes one original copy and six additional hard copies of the required items (Part A, and Part B) in the “Instructions for the Preparation and Submission of Restoration Project Proposals”.

2.) This project provides multiple, significant, direct, and appropriate benefits to injured natural resources *and* natural resource services within the upper mainstem of the Housatonic River.

a) A recent angler survey, combined with annual fish population assessments has clearly demonstrated that illegal harvest is severely hampering special management goals to restore a more natural population structure to top level predator populations (smallmouth bass and trout). Restoration of top level predators through increased enforcement of catch-and-release regulations will have cascading effects on populations of other species, generating a more natural balance and trophic structure. Ecosystem benefits provided in this way constitute direct and measurable restoration and enhancement of natural resources that were injured by PCB contamination.

b) Increases in abundance of large trout and bass effected through additional law enforcement presence will provide higher angler catch rates of larger fish, which will likely result in increased angler use and angler satisfaction. Both angler use and angler satisfaction have suffered as a direct result of PCB contamination.

c) A reduction in littering and in unregulated riparian habitat destruction will improve the recreational value of this resource, as well as habitat for riparian species, both of which were injured by PCB contamination.

3) The Law Enforcement Division of the DEP is required to provide a reasonable level of law enforcement spread over many resources, at many locations over the entire State. The level of enforcement that has been available to support the above outlined goals has proven insufficient. An extra three-year effort, above and beyond the call of duty, appears necessary to bring the level of illegal activity down to a manageable level for the long term. Much of the upper River is remote and inaccessible by vehicle. Effective patrolling will require that conservation officers venture out of sight of their vehicles for up to an hour at a time. This is currently beyond the normal scope of routine law enforcement activities.

4) The proposed project is consistent with enforcement of State laws, regulations, and policies.

5) The proposed project is completely consistent with, and supportive of other efforts to restore multiple natural resources, as well as multiple active and passive recreational uses. Indeed, recently completed biological and recreational surveys show unequivocally that in the absence of the proposed remedial law enforcement measures, other restoration and enhancement initiatives may not achieve their goals.

