

## **Request for Proposal (RFP) Facilitator for Collaborative Watershed Restoration Planning**

### **Summary:**

The Nature Conservancy, on behalf of restoration partners working in Canaan Valley, WV, is seeking a strategic planning facilitator (“Facilitator”) to aid in the development of an **Upper Blackwater Watershed Freshwater and Dynamic Forest Restoration Block management plan** (“Plan”). The Plan is one of the first steps in a larger effort by partners to increase the pace of ecosystem restoration in Canaan Valley, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grant Agreement No. 0407.24.081720. The Facilitator will work with the project planning team to solicit participants for the planning process, facilitate group meetings to achieve planning goals, and drive the process to complete the Plan. The Plan will set forth a vision for priority restoration and resource needs across private, state and federal lands managed by partners participating in the project.

### **Plan Overview:**

Our objectives are to pioneer a new approach to the Dynamic Forest Restoration Block (DFRB) framework with a holistic ecosystem-based approach aligning outcomes and treatments for both freshwater and forests across multiple land ownerships. DFRBs are a widely used forestry-focused framework that aims to diversify forest age classes and structure at landscape scales (>1,000 acres) to benefit healthy forests and abundant wildlife. The framework includes collaborative planning, typically across public and private lands, to establish desired conditions, assessments of current conditions, implementation to achieve desired conditions, and monitoring of wildlife species and vegetative conditions. Our project will include a watershed assessment for aquatic organism passage barriers and stream quality (existing water chemistry, water temperature, habitat, and species composition in key areas) and use the results, along with the vegetation priorities, to develop a single comprehensive ecosystem restoration plan. The Plan will consider spatial alignment of stream and vegetation outcomes as well as outline any efficiencies in treatments that achieve both goals, such as canopy release treatments that would improve stream quality by dropping trees in streams. The Plan will be informed by existing and newly collected data on freshwater and terrestrial conditions, and by existing private, state, federal management plans. We will aim to have a plan that outlines a scope of work for a period of years that will achieve the desired goals.

### **Overview of Partner Collaborative:**

In addition to the current [CASRI partners](#) we will invite local organizations that have an interest in the Upper Blackwater watershed to be part of the process as relevant to their missions. Lead project partners are the Friends of the Cheat, The Nature Conservancy, and the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Current project supporters include Trout Unlimited, White Grass, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, West Virginia DNR, Canaan Valley State Park Foundation, Mountaineer Trail Network Recreation Authority, Friends of the 500<sup>th</sup> Canaan Valley NWR, Tucker County Development Authority, Timberline Association, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, West Virginia Land Trust, and the Kitzes Lab at the University of Pittsburgh.

### **Collaborative Process:**

The project planning team will work with the Facilitator to design a process that will achieve the desired goals of the Plan, but not put undo burden on participants. The process should aim to include group

climate-informed goal-setting, existing management plan evaluation, incorporation of existing and new site data, spatial analysis, group assessment, and a final plan that can guide management for a set number of years. The Facilitator will be responsible for maintaining the collaborative nature of the process with help from the project planning team.

**Deliverables:**

The facilitator, with help from the project team when relevant, will be expected to:

- solicit participants for planning meetings;
- prepare meeting agendas and lead planning meetings;
- help guide and drive decision making for the group;
- ensure that participants maintain progress on agreed upon steps to developing the Plan (i.e., providing data analyses and summaries); and
- write, with help from participants, the final Plan.

Funding for this project is being provided by the U.S. Forest Service through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the successful bidder will be subject to all relevant Federal terms and conditions pertaining to such funds.

**Selection Process and Timeline:**

The Facilitator will be selected by the project planning team lead by FOC and TNC.

- RFP released 25 March 2024
- Deadline to submit proposal by 24 May 2024
- Contractor selection by 7 June 2024
- Develop and agree on contract deliverables by 28 June 2024
- Sign contract by 12 July 2024
- Complete contract by 30 March 2025

**Proposal Requirements:**

Proposals should be no more than 3 pages including a cover letter, budget, and resume. Cover letter should contain your proposed high level work plan and how you plan to achieve the deliverables, qualifications (i.e. group facilitation) and experience/understanding of conservation practices, availability for in person meetings in Canaan Valley over the course of the planning process, and any references you chose to provide.

**Submission and Contact Information:**

Please email your questions and proposal to [katy.shallows@tnc.org](mailto:katy.shallows@tnc.org).