

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwest Region 2

### Management of Exotics for Recovery of Endangered Species (MERES)

#### FY06 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

This is the first notice of Request for Proposals (RFRP) for the Management of Exotics for Recovery of Endangered Species (MERES) habitat restoration program, Federal fiscal year 2006 (FY06). This program was established to encourage partners to collaborate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in habitat restoration to benefit endangered species. The focus area for MERES FY06 funds is the Middle Rio Grande watershed. Submission of proposals for on-the-ground habitat restoration projects is requested (Note: Multi-year proposals (up to 3-years) will be considered for FY06 funds).

**Proposals should be submitted no later than MONDAY, June 5, 2006.** Proposals received by this date that meet the MERES criteria will be scheduled for presentation at the meeting of the MERES Proposal Review Committee, scheduled for **MONDAY, June 12, 2006, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm**, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM. Proposal presentations will be limited to 15 minutes per proposal. Reviews of proposals will be arranged by an Advisory Council for this program. Proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the MERES Proposal Review Committee following the meeting. Projects will be selected by June 30, 2006.

#### A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to “work with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people”. MERES is a new funding initiative for invasive species control and habitat restoration to benefit threatened and endangered species on both federal and non-federal lands. The FY06 funding is to be used for tamarisk and other invasive plant species removal and riparian habitat restoration activities in the Middle Rio Grande watershed in close cooperation with state and local government partners, tribes, pueblos, non-profits and the private sector, and will support approved recovery plans for listed species.

The document “*Strategy for Long-term Management of Exotic Trees in Riparian Areas for New Mexico’s five River Systems, 2005-2014*” (Parker, D.L., et al., 2005) ([http://www.fws.gov/southwest/mrgbi/Strategy\\_for\\_Mgmt\\_of\\_Exotic\\_Trees.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/mrgbi/Strategy_for_Mgmt_of_Exotic_Trees.pdf)) addresses the strategy for the long-term management of saltcedar (*Tamarix spp.*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolius*), and Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) in belts of riparian vegetation along five New Mexico river systems, including the Rio Grande. This scientifically based strategy should be considered by proposal proponents and used as a

blueprint to assist in development of protection and restoration efforts and management concepts. The strategy identifies 3 ultimate goals: 1) prevent the spread of exotic tree infestations; 2) control existing infestations; and 3) maintain and improve the health of native plant communities. Proper implementation of the strategy will result in invasive species control and habitat restoration that will ultimately benefit threatened and endangered species.

## **TEAM TAMARISK APPROACH AND FY06 PROJECT AREA**

MERES principles and priorities support the guiding principles of the Team Tamarisk initiative <http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/docs/news/teamtam/guideprin.pdf> . Team Tamarisk is “an inclusive alliance of cooperating agencies, tribes, diverse organizations, and individuals devoted to the control of tamarisk and associated non-native invasive plants”. The FY06 MERES focus is on implementing Team Tamarisk guiding principles while carrying out the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Tamarisk removal/control projects combined with habitat restoration/enhancement projects that will significantly benefit endangered species will be most competitive. An integrated, interdisciplinary, landscape-level approach that will support approved recovery plans for listed species will be given priority. In FY06, proposals are strongly encouraged that address key habitat restoration issues within the Middle Rio Grande watershed including 1) the bosque ecosystem along the Rio Grande, and 2) major upland drainage/watershed(s). The Middle Rio Grande watershed is defined as the drainage area between Cochiti Dam and Elephant Butte Reservoir. Listed species within the defined project area include southwestern willow flycatcher, Rio Grande silvery minnow, Pecos sunflower, and bald eagle. Recovery plans for these species may be found at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/recovery/index.html> .

## **OTHER RELEVANT PROGRAMS**

Proposals may also be relevant if they implement and/or support other major habitat restoration strategies and priorities within the Middle Rio Grande watershed including:

- *Middle Rio Grande Ecosystem: Bosque Biological Management Plan* (Crawford, C.S., et al., 2003) (<http://mrgbi.fws.gov/> )
- Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Act Collaboration Program, “*Habitat Restoration Plan for the Middle Rio Grande*” (Tetra Tech EM INC, 2004) [http://mrgesacp.fws.gov/pdf/Habitat\\_Restoration\\_Plan.pdf](http://mrgesacp.fws.gov/pdf/Habitat_Restoration_Plan.pdf)
- Relevant reasonable and prudent alternative (RPA) elements, measures, and conservation recommendations identified in “*Biological and Conference Opinions on the Effects of Actions Associated with the Programmatic Biological Assessment of Bureau of Reclamation’s Water and River Maintenance Operations, Army Corps of Engineers’ Flood Control Operation, and Related Non-Federal Actions on the Middle Rio Grande, New Mexico*” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2003)
  - Main Text – [http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL\\_Middle\\_Rio\\_Grande\\_Water\\_Ops\\_BO\\_2003-2013.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL_Middle_Rio_Grande_Water_Ops_BO_2003-2013.pdf) )

- Appendices A, B, C –  
([http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL\\_Middle\\_Rio\\_Grande\\_Water\\_Ops\\_BO\\_Appendices\\_A\\_B\\_C.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL_Middle_Rio_Grande_Water_Ops_BO_Appendices_A_B_C.pdf) )
- Appendix D –  
([http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL\\_Middle\\_Rio\\_Grande\\_Water\\_Ops\\_BO\\_Appendix\\_D\\_Figures.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL_Middle_Rio_Grande_Water_Ops_BO_Appendix_D_Figures.pdf) )
- Appendix E –  
([http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL\\_Middle\\_Rio\\_Grande\\_Water\\_Ops\\_BO\\_Appendix\\_E\\_Tables.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/ifw2es/Documents/R2ES/FINAL_Middle_Rio_Grande_Water_Ops_BO_Appendix_E_Tables.pdf) )
- *Conceptual Restoration Plan, Active Floodplain of the Rio Grande, San Acacia to San Marcial, NM, Vols. 1-4* (Save Our Bosque Task Force, 2004)  
(<http://www.sobtf.org/> ) – Click on “PDF documents on this site”
- Southwest Strategy (<http://www.swstrategy.org/> ),
- National Invasive Species Management Plan  
(<http://www.invasivespecies.gov/council/nmp.shtml> ) and
- Sevilleta Long Term Ecological Research Plan (<http://sev.lternet.edu> )

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Eligible funding recipients include:

- Federal, tribal, state, county, and local government agencies
- Not-for-profit organizations
- For-profit organizations, and
- Private landowners

## **REQUIREMENTS**

1. Proposal project areas must be located within the Middle Rio Grande watershed. This includes all federal, state, municipal, tribal and private lands along river reaches from Cochiti Dam to Elephant Butte Reservoir, and watersheds that drain into the Middle Rio Grande from National Forests, Bureau of Land Management lands, Research National Areas, private ranches, and reserves.
2. Projects should be conducted in habitat or potential habitat for listed species (southwestern willow flycatcher, Rio Grande silvery minnow, Pecos sunflower, and bald eagle) that would benefit from invasive species control and site restoration.
3. If any of the proposed work is to be performed on land(s) not owned by the proposal sponsoring agency or institution, a Landowner Permit or Letter of Support should be submitted with the proposal. Regulatory NEPA requirements must be addressed if needed to conduct study.
4. Proposed restoration sites should be sustainable through natural processes. Project considerations may include: 1) areas that are adjacent to or contiguous with occupied habitat; 2) properties that have conservation easements in place; and 3) re-treatment

on follow-up sites previously treated in combination with restoration to benefit the listed species.

5. Habitat restoration projects should have an integrated ecosystem focus (i.e. species biology, hydrology, habitat restoration, invasive species management), preferably at the watershed level, and should be interdisciplinary. Partnerships with matching funds and/or in-kind contributions are encouraged.
6. Proposals should include a long-term maintenance plan and a monitoring that will provide for measurement of project success. Costs and cooperator/partner contributions for long-term funding for maintenance and monitoring should be identified.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Project selection will consider the following criteria:

1. Is the proposal addressing a federally listed species habitat?
2. Does the proposal create significant blocks of federally listed species habitat or enlarge existing blocks of suitable or occupied habitat?
3. Does the proposed site have a conservation easement?
4. Will the project result in positive steps toward species recovery?
5. Are the qualifications of the proposal proponent(s) adequate to do the proposed work?
6. Does the proposed work include an interdisciplinary approach?
7. Does the proposal demonstrate relationships to other major strategies and priorities appropriate for the Middle Rio Grande watershed such as those identified in the "OTHER PROGRAMS" section above?
8. Did the proposal contents adhere to the Request for Proposal requirements?
9. Is the project achievable with the proposed design and quantity of funds requested?
10. Does the proposal include partners and cooperators, matching funds, or leveraged activities?
11. Does the proposal include landowner support letters or permits, if needed?
12. Does the proposal include feasible long-term maintenance and monitoring plans that are supported by other cooperators and partnerships?

## **PROPOSAL CONTENT REQUIREMENTS**

Proposals should be no more than 10 pages in length (not including maps, landowner letter(s) of support, and proposal proponent(s) qualifications/resume) and should include the following sections:

1. Project title
2. Sponsoring institution
3. Primary contact (principle proponent) information (name, title, mailing address,

- phone, fax, and e-mail address)
4. Proposal team member(s) (name, institution, phone, email).
  5. Purpose/Objectives
  6. Background
  7. Scope (list project tasks, etc.)
  8. Project coordinates, in degrees, minutes, seconds (where applicable); provide map of project area
  9. Acreage or river miles affected
  10. Project or Institutional website (where applicable)
  11. Period of Performance--will this be a multi-year project (limit is 3 years)? If so, list years. Note: project should "begin on the last signature date of the fully executed agreement".
  12. Cooperators/Partners (cooperators/partners are not mandatory but are encouraged). Cooperators may be organizations that contribute matching funds. Partners may be organizations that contribute assistance, in-kind service, treatments, or land access. List all participants.
  13. Project benefits (how will project results benefit federally listed species in the Middle Rio Grande watershed?)
  14. Expected products and delivery dates. (These should include: on-the-ground restoration (removal of exotics and replanting of native vegetation), annual progress reports, and a final report documenting project activities and accomplishments)
  15. Detailed budget for each year (list details such as salaries, vehicles, travel, equipment, supplies, and matching funds, including in-kind and indirect costs). Budget should include costs for total project period-of-performance (including multi-year costs).
  16. Proposal proponent(s) qualifications/resume -- limit 2 pages per proponent.
  17. Landowner letter(s) of support and permits (if applicable).
  18. Describe required NEPA documentation.

## **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

Proposals may be sent via mail, fax or e-mail to:

Cyndie Abeyta  
Middle Rio Grande Coordinator/Hydrologist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
2105 Osuna Road, NE  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113

(505) 761-4738  
(505) 346-2542 (FAX)  
Cyndie\_Abeyta@fws.gov

Please contact Cyndie Abeyta if you have any questions or need additional information.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MERES PROGRAM**

Name of Program: Management of Exotics for Recovery of Endangered Species (MERES)

Sponsor: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Program Description: MERES is a new funding initiative for invasive species control and habitat restoration to benefit threatened and endangered species on both federal and non-federal lands. The FY06 funding is to be used for tamarisk and other invasive plant species removal and riparian habitat restoration activities in the Middle Rio Grande watershed in close cooperation with state and local government partners, tribes, pueblos, non-profits and the private sector. Final products include on-the-ground restored and/or enhance habit that will benefit listed species. This is the first Request for Proposals for the MERES program.

Limitations: Project areas must be located within the Middle Rio Grande watershed between Cochiti Dam and Elephant Butte Reservoir

Funds Available: \$995,000.

Maximum dollar request: \$900,000. Funding request should be for total project period-of-performance (including multi-year costs). Cost share is encouraged and will be added weight during selection process.

Partners: Preferred, but not required, although, projects that include partners that contribute matching funds or in-kind contributions will be given priority. Projects with partners providing long-term maintenance costs and labor will be considered superior.

Deadline for proposal submission: Monday, June 5, 2006