

**Request for Proposals**  
**Tonto Invasive Species Background Study**  
**Tonto National Forest, Arizona**

**Background and Statement of Work:** Tonto National Forest (TNF) and the National Forest Foundation (NFF) are investing in invasive species control measures across the forest to reduce wildfire risk, improve habitat, and promote native species. To use resources most effectively, TNF and NFF are requesting proposals for an intensive background study and development of treatment and monitoring plans for Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus bifrons*), stinknet (*Oncosiphon pilulifer*), and buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*).

**Information Requested**

If interested in submitting a bid for this project, please provide a proposal for the above statement of work by providing:

- Technical approach
- Work experience
- Cost
- Capacity for this project
- Experience in similar projects

Specific requirements are detailed below.

**I. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS**

**General Specifications**

(a) Description of Work – This Request for Proposals is for services related to an invasive species control background study, including the following tasks:

1. Initial coordination: Meet with TNF and NFF staff to confirm understanding of project scope, deliverables, and intended subjects of review.
2. Complete background study and develop a treatment and monitoring plan for Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus bifrons*), stinknet (*Oncosiphon pilulifer*), and buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*).
  - i. The background study will include a detailed review of each species' ecology, distribution, current and past treatment methods utilized for these species, and any cost/benefit analysis available. The background

- study will include a description of existing invasive treatment projects on TNF and ecologically similar landscapes, and recommendations on treatment approaches for these species on the TNF. This will involve, at a minimum, a review of the literature and other technical reports; compiling and summarizing existing invasives data through FS database or other sources as needed; and coordination with other partners that are currently implementing invasive species projects on the TNF and lands that are similar ecologically. The information needed for each species' background study differs slightly; see Appendix A for itemization of needs.
- ii. The treatment and monitoring plan will include treatment recommendations (from task 2.i.) and development of a monitoring plan to quantify treatment effectiveness. This will involve coordination with FS and NFF staff to establish treatment areas, a treatment schedule, and a monitoring plan (subsequent implementation of the monitoring phase will be handled through a separate contract or agreement with the TNF and NFF).
3. Report first draft: Delivery of a report summarizing the results of the above study according to the specifications outlined in Appendix A: Report Organization and Contents. This report will be reviewed by TNF and NFF staff and comments/revisions will be provided.
  4. Report final draft: Comments and revisions from Task 3 will be addressed and corrected; a final polished draft will be submitted in PDF format.
  5. Data folder: Delivery of any data associated with the background study in its original format (maps, shapefiles, excel, etc.) will be uploaded to a digital folder provided by NFF.
  6. Presentation: Delivery of a 1-2 hour presentation of the above results to TNF, NFF, and invited partners. Can be remote, in-person, or hybrid but format and venue must be agreed upon by all parties in advance.

The Contractor shall identify what they can supply in terms of materials, labor, equipment, supplies, supervision, quality control, and incidentals required to complete the work described. The Contractor shall perform all work in a safe and conscientious manner.

(b) Project Location – Remote and at multiple locations within TNF, Arizona (Gila County, Maricopa County, Yavapai County).

(c) Work Schedule – Work will be initiated no later than March/April 2024. Proposed schedule for each task above is as follows; but is negotiable:

1. March/April 2024: Initial coordination meetings (Task 1)
2. March – October: Write draft background study and develop treatment and monitoring plans (Task 2)
3. End of October: Submit draft for TNF and NFF review (Task 3)
4. November – December: Complete final report and submit data (Tasks 4 and 5)
5. January 2025: Deliver presentation (Task 6)

## **Other Project Requirements and Specifications**

- I. Utilities – In many locations there will be no or limited sanitation, water, electrical or housing services available. The Contractor shall make its own arrangements for temporary facilities if needed.

## **Insurance Requirements**

Upon selection of the winning bid, the Contractor agrees that it has and shall maintain the following insurance coverage indicated below. The effective date of all coverage shall precede the start of any work.

- a. State minimum workers' compensation insurance coverage for its employees, if any.
- b. Broad form general liability, property damage, and automotive liability insurance in the minimum amount of \$1,000,000 for bodily injury, death, or damage to property of any person and \$2,000,000 for bodily injury, death, or damage to property of more than one person. The Contractor shall name NFF an Additional Named Insured and provide NFF with a certificate of insurance evidencing such coverages, prior to the initiation of the Scope of Services.
- c. If the Scope of Services includes professional services as identified herein, Contractor shall also provide professional errors and omissions liability insurance. Professional services for purposes of this section include, but are not limited to performing architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, land surveying or planning, preparation and signing or stamping of drawings, maps, surveys or construction specifications, or design and development of computer software, programs or websites by the Contractor or by subcontractors on behalf of the Contractor, for which professional liability insurance would typically be required. The minimum coverage limits required are \$1,000,000 for each claim and \$1,000,000 annual aggregate.

## **Prohibited Telecommunications Services and Equipment**

The Contractor is responsible for compliance with the prohibition on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment identified in 2 CFR 200.216.

## **Payment/Performance Security**

Contractor shall post cash, a letter of credit, bond, or other financial security that is easily convertible into cash in a form acceptable to the NFF, in its sole determination, to assure completion of the work required under any subsequent agreement and payment of all amounts lawfully due to all persons supplying or furnishing to the Contractor or Contractor's subcontractors with labor, laborers, materials, rental machinery, tools or equipment used or to perform the work. Contractor may incorporate required associated costs into mobilization costs or other approved expenses.

- a. Work that is classified as construction in accordance with the Miller Act or Little Miller Act or if required per conditions of the funding source, payment and performance

bonding will be required in the full amount of any Agreement. For the purposes of this Request for Proposal, construction is defined as “any contract greater than \$100,000 for the construction, alteration, or repair of any public building or public work where the federal government is the owner”, or

- b. If Contractor is not self-performing at least 85% of the total contract value or if the cost of materials is in excess of the larger of \$100,000 or 50% of the contract total, payment and performance bonding will be required in the full amount of the agreement, or
- c. If the value of the agreement is in excess of \$250,000, Contractor will be required to post financial security in a form acceptable to the NFF in the amount of 5% of the total agreement value up to \$250,000 in total financial security.

**American Made Products.** The work associated with this RFP is subject to Build America, Buy America Act. P.L. 117-58, Secs 70911-70917, and as such, domestic content procurement preference requires all iron and steel, manufactured products and construction materials used within the scope of this Agreement, be produced in the United States.

### **Federal Exclusion Verification**

The selected Contractor will be required to affirm that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency.

### **Federal Flowdown Provisions**

Flowdown Requirements: Any Agreement associated with this RFP may be subject to flowdown requirements under associated federal or state funding agreements, which are included and made part of by this reference.

## **II. REQUIRED COMPONENTS**

### **Technical Proposal**

Please provide a detailed technical approach to the work.

### **Contractor Qualifications**

- I. Past Experience – Please provide a brief explanation of previous work experience with land management agencies.
- II. References – Please provide three professional references that can speak to past performance.

### **Pricing Schedule**

Contractor shall price work according to the schedule below. Prevailing wages are required per conditions of funding sources.

<b>Task Number</b>	<b>Task/Item</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Unit Cost</b>	<b>Total Item Cost</b>
1	Initial coordination/ mobilization cost (site visits etc.)	1		
2	Background Study/First draft development	-		
2a	Blackberry study	1		
2b	Stinknet study	1		
2c	Buffelgrass study	1		
3	Submit Report First Draft	1		
4	Submit Final Report	1		
5	Data delivery	1		
6	Presentation	1		
			<b>Total Bid</b>	

### III. SUBMISSION, EVALUATION, AND CONTACTS

#### Contractor Selection Process

This is a request for proposals only and bids furnished are not offers from the National Forest Foundation. This request does not commit the National Forest Foundation to pay any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of the proposal or to contract for supplies or services.

The NFF will use the Evaluation Factors below to review each submitted bid. Based on the outcomes of that selection process, the NFF will notify successful and unsuccessful bidders by February 16, 2024, and will prepare a separate contract document.

#### Evaluation Factors and Relative Importance

The following criteria will be used in the evaluation of submitted proposals, ordered from highest weighting (level 3) to lowest weighting (level 1).

##### Level 3 Criteria

- Price / cost
- Equipment, software, technical approach, and

- contractor capability
- Timing of when contractor can begin and/or finish the project

- Past performance, references, and USFS feedback

### Level 2 Criteria

- Technical proposal / proposed approach to project
- Overall strategic benefits to meeting NFF goals and grant needs, requirements, and timelines

### Level 1 Criteria

- Benefits to the local community
- Relationship to local community

### **Point of Contact**

Please submit any questions about the project in writing to the Point of Contact.

Shannon Smith

National Forest Foundation Tonto Stewardship Coordinator

ssmith@nationalforests.org

Responses will be shared with known interested parties by email or otherwise posted at <https://www.nationalforests.org/rfp>.

### **Bid Submission**

Submit bids via email to [ssmith@nationalforests.org](mailto:ssmith@nationalforests.org) by February 2, 2024.

### **Equal Opportunity Provider**

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, the National Forest Foundation is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability.

## APPENDIX A: REPORT ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS

The Final Report shall adhere to the outline below unless agreed upon in advance by NFF, TNF, and the Contractor. Items in **bold** indicate differing reporting needs among the focal species. Potential data sources include:

- Forest Service inventory and treatment records available; FS collected data and partner/volunteer collected data including GIS layers and tabular data
- Location and description of existing invasive treatment projects
- Forest Service technical guides for invasive species treatment of priority species
- Other reference GIS data for the TNF including vegetation maps, soils data, Lidar, special areas, or other data.

1) Introduction: background on the three focal invasive species' ecology, phenology, and history on TNF and surrounding area.

- a) General Himalayan blackberry ecology and history .
- b) General stinknet ecology and history.
- c) General buffelgrass ecology and history.

2) Himalayan Blackberry Study

- a) Compile information on past treatment/management efforts for this species regionally, including but not limited to a robust literature review, identification of data gaps, outcomes from outside experts, land managers, etc.
  - i) Treatment techniques and methods (mechanical, herbicide, reseeding, **outplantings**, etc.), sequence of treatment, effectiveness of treatment types, and estimated costs of different treatment approaches.
- b) **Develop a treatment plan for priority areas.** TNF has identified Chase Creek (Payson Ranger District), Reynolds Creek (Pleasant Valley Ranger District), as priority sites, and may include additional streams/reaches at these sites.
- c) **Monitoring plan** with quantifiable measurements of success/effectiveness.

3) Stinknet Study

- a) Review existing **phenology and distribution data. Sources will include data from TNF and outside organizations.** Potential need to ground-truth existing data.
- b) Compile information on current and past treatment/management efforts for this species regionally, including but not limited to a robust literature review, outcomes from outside experts, land managers, etc.
  - i) Treatment techniques and methods (mechanical, herbicide, reseeding, etc.), sequence of treatment, effectiveness of treatment types, and estimated costs of different treatment approaches.
  - ii) **Identify gaps in knowledge.**
  - iii) Review and propose new treatment techniques/combinations, management approaches, and their potential effectiveness.
  - iv) Recommend priority areas for future treatment and management strategies based upon site factors including, but not limited to: population sizes, site logistics (access

to locations), proximity to other restoration efforts, etc.

- c) Identify how to implement a phenology tracking/monitoring plan, such as via satellite, drone, aerial photography, photo points, etc.

4) Buffelgrass study

- a) The buffelgrass study will focus on a landscape-scale management approach; focus on buffers and fuel breaks to mitigate fire risk around priority areas. TNF is seeking a strategy for maximum return on investment for acreage treated versus ecological assets protected.
- b) Review existing **phenology and distribution data. Sources will include data from TNF and outside organizations.**
- c) Compiled information on past treatment/management efforts for this species regionally, including but not limited to a robust literature review, outcomes from outside experts, land managers, etc.
  - i) Treatment techniques and methods (mechanical, herbicide, reseeding, etc.), sequence of treatment, effectiveness of treatment types, and estimated costs of different treatment approaches. **Trade-offs of maximizing treatment acreage in one year as opposed to smaller acreage with multiple revisits.**
  - ii) **Identify gaps in knowledge.**
  - iii) Review and propose new treatment techniques/combinations, management approaches, and their potential effectiveness.
  - iv) Recommend priority areas for future treatment and management strategies based upon site factors including, but not limited to: population sizes, site logistics (access to locations), proximity to other restoration efforts, etc.
- d) Identify how to implement a phenology tracking/monitoring plan, such as via satellite, drone, aerial photography, photo points, etc.