



The Freshwater Trust preserves and restores freshwater ecosystems. Using science, technology, and incentive-based solutions, we're changing the course of conservation on a timeline that matters.

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## Request for Information (RFI) – Mid-Snake Cultural Resources

**Project Name:** Mid-Snake Coordinated Runoff Reduction Program

**Project Area:** Snake River Basin, Oregon and Idaho

**Issue Date:** August 20, 2024

**Deadline for Responding:** September 30, 2024

### All communications concerning this RFI must be directed to:

The Freshwater Trust

Hilary Cosentino, Initiatives Program Manager

PO Box 9205

Portland, OR 97207

[Hilary@thefreshwatertrust.org](mailto:Hilary@thefreshwatertrust.org)

### Description of Need

This is a request for information only. The Freshwater Trust (TFT) is requesting information for planning purposes associated with cultural resources review and documentation of agricultural lands within the Mid-Snake basin (the Owyhee and Malheur watersheds in Oregon, and the Payette, Weiser, and Lower Boise watersheds in Idaho). This RFI is intended to understand how potential contractors would complete, and bill for, work prior to TFT issuing a Request for Proposals and contract competition. This RFI does not commit TFT to contract for any service. Respondents are advised that TFT will not pay for information or costs incurred in responding to this RFI. By responding to this RFI, you will be added to TFT's list of potential contractors for delivery of the RFP.

### Introduction

Founded in 1983, The Freshwater Trust (TFT) is a nonprofit conservation organization committed to accelerating the pace and scale of watershed restoration through the design and implementation of data-driven, science-based, performance-based solutions. TFT has a track record using insight-driven approaches to help design, develop and deploy watershed-scale solutions to some of the nation's biggest water challenges. Further information about these programs can be found at [www.thefreshwatertrust.org](http://www.thefreshwatertrust.org).

### Project Background

The Mid-Snake watershed has a significant methylmercury water quality challenge. Methylmercury is easily absorbed by fish and can lead to brain disorders and heart disease in humans who consume fish. Accumulation in fish tissue has forced downstream tribes to place a moratorium on eating culturally significant white sturgeon. Robust scientific analysis in the region has identified upstream runoff as a key driver of methylmercury production (phosphorus from fertilizer runs off agricultural land, fuels aquatic plant growth, depletes oxygen creating anoxic conditions, which convert



inorganic mercury into toxic mercury). Large-scale conversion of agricultural fields from gravity-fed flood irrigation to pressurized sprinkler or drip irrigation will reduce runoff, including the inorganic mercury and phosphorus load driving methylation, reduce groundwater nitrate percolation, and minimize greenhouse gas production.

In 2023, TFT received \$5.6M in EPA funding to organize the funders, procurement system, project prioritization analytics, and supply chain into a leveraged regional funding and implementation effort that aims to deliver ~\$200M to priority irrigation upgrade projects in the Mid-Snake (see attached Figure 1 for an overview map). Over a 10-year period, we anticipate implementing ~2000 projects across the Mid-Snake (roughly 25% in each of four sub-basins: Malheur, Owyhee, Payette/Weiser, and Lower Boise). We expect these projects will be funded with a mix of USDA, Clean Water Act compliance, and other state and federal sources.

Because NRCS funding is expected to be a critical part of the leveraged funding stack, TFT will need to ensure that all projects are designed and implemented consistent with NRCS standards. TFT is currently finalizing a TA agreement with Oregon NRCS to conduct the outreach, screening, design, cultural resources, and compliance on irrigation upgrades in the Malheur/Owyhee to build up a large queue of funding-ready, high-impact projects ready to implement. We are working with irrigation supply companies to align efforts and have contracted TSPs to deliver good projects through the system.

One critical piece in scaling up and operating at this level is cultural resource services. Within each of these basins, there could ultimately be 50-75 individual projects implemented each year, with most likely 40 to 160 acres in size, all on privately owned lands and likely under different ownership. It is anticipated that ground disturbance will be limited to trenching pipeline through existing row-crop agricultural fields to a center pivot location; thus, the Area of Potential Effect (APE) on each project is expected to be relatively small. In some cases, more intensive surveying may be required (e.g., if new electrical lines require digging, a historic ditch crossing is required, or a sufficient volume of cultural objects, resources or historic structures are found).

### **Anticipated Solicited Services**

TFT anticipates soliciting “bundled” services for cultural resources review and documentation of multiple projects. TFT anticipates working with irrigation supply companies to recruit and develop multiple projects at the same time in geographically concentrated areas. Our intent is to minimize mobilization costs and move multiple projects through the process together. Accordingly, TFT will need to secure time and cost efficiencies in performing this work. At this project volume, TFT will not be able to pay per-project individual fees; contractual approaches with cultural resource providers that better scale will be necessary. TFT desires to work with a single or small number of archaeological firms and bundle and contract for multiple project locations at once.

### **Anticipated Timelines or Schedules**

TFT is in the planning stage; however, anticipates the cultural resource evaluation to begin in summer or fall 2024 through 2031.



## **Confidentiality**

Respondent acknowledges and agrees that all information obtained or produced in relation to this RFI is considered TFT's confidential information, regardless of whether marked as "CONFIDENTIAL," and shall not be released or disclosed to any person or entity for any purpose nor used for any purpose other than providing a response to TFT, without the express written consent of TFT. Respondent agrees it will take affirmative steps to protect and safeguard TFT's confidential information and at a minimum use the same degree of care it uses to prevent the unauthorized use, dissemination, or publication of its own confidential information and, in any event, not less than the level of care standard in Respondent's industry.

The confidentiality obligations under this section will not apply to TFT confidential information that: (a) is or becomes publicly known or available other than by the Respondent's act or fault or the Respondent's breach of this section; (b) is rightly received by the Respondent from a third party who was authorized to disclose such information and who is not subject to similar confidentiality obligations; (c) is proven by written evidence to have been independently developed by the Respondent; or (d) is approved for disclosure by written authorization from TFT. Additionally, TFT's confidential information may be disclosed by Respondent pursuant to law or any governmental or court order, provided that Respondent shall first give notice to TFT of such order and give TFT a reasonable opportunity to obtain a satisfactory protective order.

Respondent agrees to limit disclosure of TFT's confidential information to its officers, directors, employees, or subcontractors of Respondent who need to know such information to assist Respondent in providing a response hereunder ("Representatives") and will notify anyone with access to TFT's confidential information in writing that it is confidential. Respondent will be responsible for any breach of this section by any of its Representatives. Respondent's obligations of nondisclosure and confidentiality shall continue for so long as IPC's confidential information remains confidential.

Respondent agrees not to make any public comments or disclosures, including statements made for advertising purposes, regarding the RFI to the media or any other party without the prior written consent of TFT. In the event Respondent receives any inquiries regarding the RFI from the media or any other Party, said inquiries shall be forwarded to TFT.

Respondent shall specifically designate and clearly label as "CONFIDENTIAL" any and all material(s) or portions thereof that are provided to TFT pursuant to this RFI that Respondent deems to contain its own proprietary information.



## Requested Information and Procedure for Responding

Please respond to the questions presented below by providing numbered responses corresponding to each numbered inquiry below. Responses should be provided in Microsoft Word format attached to an email to Hilary Cosentino at [Hilary@thefreshwatertrust.org](mailto:Hilary@thefreshwatertrust.org). The subject line should read: Response to Mid-Snake Cultural Resources RFI.

1. Please provide the name, mailing address, phone number and email of Respondent and designated point of contact.
2. Please describe Respondent's business type (large or small, disadvantaged, woman-owned, etc.) and how many archaeologists are on your team?
3. Briefly describe your experience working in the referenced geographies within Oregon (Malheur and Owyhee) and/or Idaho (Lower Boise and Payette/Weiser Flats). Have you experienced any unique challenges working in those areas?
4. Please describe your experience undertaking cultural resources work on working lands (row crop fields, minimal pasture), and whether you have done any of that work pursuant to federal agency funding (in particular USDA conservation programs).
5. How would you propose completing cultural resource work for multiple project locations that are tightly grouped in the same geography? Please speak to logistics, mobilization, travel, etc.
6. At this anticipated project volume, it would be financially infeasible for us to pay for each project location at consulting rates. If we contracted with your firm for multiple years of work, how might you work with us to develop a payment structure allows your business to comfortably scale but does not compound into unsustainable per-project costs for us (e.g., bulk pricing, contracting for direct expenses and a portion of your FTE costs plus margin, retainer pricing, TFT directly hiring technicians that support the scaling of your services but do not pass on those hours to us at market rates)?
7. How would you propose preparing reports (e.g., single or multiple reports) where multiple project locations are in the same geographic area and occurring on roughly the same timeline? Would you be open to developing a standard watershed report and then bundling project results into those reports?
8. Do you have the staff capacity for working at this scale? If so, please describe. If not, how would you propose scaling up to meet this need?

## RFI Review and Evaluation Process

TFT appreciates your interest in providing responses to this RFI and for supporting our efforts to restore watershed health. We will review all responses submitted by the deadline and may pursue discussions with one or more entities responding to this RFI to discuss further.

**Figure 1: overview map**

