

## **Request for Proposals Professional Conservation Planning and GIS Services**

### **Contact Person:**

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### **Budget:**

Not to exceed \$15,000

### **Timeline:**

September 2024 – September 2025

### **Purpose**

The Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) seeks the services of a GIS consultant with strong analysis and mapping skills to support developing a Countywide Conservation Plan (“Plan”) for Columbia County, New York. The Plan will update an existing Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), and then inventory and analyze both ecological and cultural resources present in Columbia County. The plan will also incorporate public input to determine the lands and spaces most critical to protect through conservation actions. Consultants will compile large data sets of natural and cultural resources, create maps to provide a visual depiction of resources to be included in the Plan, analyze compiled data to index and create conservation priorities, and assist with creating materials for the public.

### **Background**

CLC's new strategic plan includes a commitment to develop a Countywide Conservation Plan (Open Space Plan) that will outline a vision and priorities for CLC's and other local actors (municipalities, citizen groups, conservation organizations, etc.) future land protection efforts in Columbia County. CLC is committed to ensuring that this process includes the participation of our community members in order to gain insight into the places and spaces that are viewed as most important to our constituents and broader community. This resulting plan will: 1) update an inventory of existing ecological and cultural data that catalogue important natural resources and cultural values in the county; 2) analyze and index that data by creating a ranking system to determine which properties in the county contain significant values and should be prioritized for conservation; and 3) outline a vision and identify action steps that CLC and other local actors can take to protect our most vulnerable and valued resources. Consultants, with assistance from CLC staff, will update an existing natural resources inventory, develop a method for analyzing and indexing data to create conservation priorities and determine what properties and resources are most worth of protection, and assist with the development of action steps and strategies to achieve conservation goals in priority areas.

### **The Planning Process**

CLC will engage a broad coalition of community partners to create this plan, which will update the existing Natural Resources Inventory, identify natural and cultural resources present in the county, index and assess which lands contribute most to those identified values and resources, and identify priorities for proactive pursuit of conservation projects. The plan will also incorporate community feedback around these shared resources and values. Important land use issues will also be addressed in this plan, such as the siting of renewable energy as well as the siting of affordable housing.

CLC will be responsible for recruiting participants for the planning effort and will contract additional services of a facilitation consultant to assist with the collaborative community engagement process.

The GIS consultant will complete spatial data analysis and mapping of natural and cultural resources present in Columbia in support of the creation of an Countywide Conservation Plan by completing the following actions:

- Updating the existing Columbia County Natural Resources Inventory to incorporate any updated data layers and gather new data to ensure that the plan includes all relevant and recent data regarding ecological and cultural resources in the County.
- Performing a spatial analysis that will identify those locations in Columbia County, and within each municipality, that support the highest quality examples of each of these resources, and locations that support high-quality examples of multiple resources. A weighted ranking analysis will result in a set of lands that contribute the most to the County's and municipalities' quality of life and environmental health, and thus are of the highest priority for conservation.
- Collaborate with the facilitation consultant and CLC staff to support in the publication of the results of the inventory and analysis into the Countywide Conservation Plan. The Plan will include methodology for establishing priority lands and will include mapping of ecological resources.
- Work with CLC staff and an additional facilitator to develop a communications piece (story map or similar tool) to convey the results of the above actions in a simple form to be shared with the community alongside the resulting plan.

Deliverables:

1. Update data from the existing Natural Resources Inventory. This does not need to be in the form of a new NRI, but rather a package of data available for use by CLC staff for future property evaluation and mapping.
2. An index of the ecological and cultural resources and corresponding methodology for how the prioritization was established.
3. Maps that represent various ecological and cultural resources to be published in the Plan. These may include individual resources maps, as well as composite maps to determine which properties in the County contain multiple important resources.
4. Provide CLC with all updated data layers and datasets compiled in the planning process, as well as the methodology for indexing and prioritization of conservation data.

## **Consultant Selection Process (with dates)**

- RFP issued: June 7<sup>th</sup>
- Questions due by June 24<sup>st</sup>.
- Questions and answers posted by CLC on June 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Proposals due: July 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Interviews with selected candidates will be scheduled by July 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Selection of preferred candidate(s) will be completed by August 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Negotiation of contract and final scope of work by September 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Work to be completed between September 9<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2025.

## **Submittal**

Cover letter including expression of interest, name, location, and contact information.

Proposal should include:

- I. Approach. Describe the approach to the project, including staffing and coordination with CLC, with enough detail to distinguish the unique strengths of the consultant for this effort.
- II. Project timeline, based on the approach and identifying completing dates for deliverables. The project must be completed by September 30<sup>th</sup> 2025. Note the majority of the GIS will need to be completed with enough time to integrate results into the Plan by the due date above. Include any insights on the potential challenges or obstacles that may be reasonably anticipated and any suggestions as to approaches to keep the project on track.
- III. Statement of qualifications, including names of staff for the project, their professional experience and educational background and any other relevant qualifications.
- IV. Describe relevant experience with community-based conservation planning projects, including client names and at least two references.
- V. Submission of any examples of similar work that has been completed, any other relevant work product or any material you deem relevant to the proposal, and directly related to the services sought in this RFP.

## **Questions?**

Questions regarding this RFP may be submitted via e-mail to [sam.calhoun@columbialand.org](mailto:sam.calhoun@columbialand.org) on or before June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Questions will be compiled and will be posted on CLC's website, with answers, on June 28<sup>th</sup> 2024. No phone calls.

## **Evaluation criteria**

The firm must be available to execute the project during the period described (September 2024 and September 2025). CLC may request further information including a list of project commitments during that time frame and end dates. Respondents must be a NYS – certified minority or woman-owned business enterprise (MWBE) or be in process of becoming a certified MWBE. CLC’s NYS grant funding established a goal of at least 30% participation by MWBEs. Consultant should identify whether they intend to employ a NYS-certified MWBE for a significant role in the project.

Proposals will be scored by CLC’s selection committee on a scale of 1-4 (1 being the lowest, 4 being the highest) on the following criteria:

- Project Approach
- Qualifications / Experience of Project Team / Experience on Similar Projects
- Clarity and responsiveness to RFP
- References / Past Performance

Maximum Points - 16

### **Statement of Rights**

The Columbia Land Conservancy reserves the right, and may at its sole discretion, exercise the following rights and options with respect to this Request for Proposals:

1. to reject any and all proposals;
2. to issue additional solicitations for proposals and/or amendments to this Request for proposals;
3. to waive any irregularities in proposals received after notification to proposers affected;
4. to select any proposal as the basis for negotiations of a contract, and to negotiate with proposers for amendments or other modifications to their proposals;
5. to conduct investigations with respect to the qualifications of each proposer;
6. to exercise at its discretion and apply its judgment with respect to any aspect of this Request for Proposals, the evaluation of proposals, and the negotiation and award of any contract;
7. to enter into an agreement for only portions (or not to enter into an agreement for any) of the services contemplated by the proposals;
8. to select the proposal that best satisfies the interests of CLC and not necessarily on the basis of price or any other single factor.

### **Cost of Proposal Preparation**

No reimbursement will be made for any costs incurred for preparation of proposals and/or interviews.

### **Contract**

If CLC selects a proposal, a formal written contract shall be entered into between CLC and the successful proposer. The proposal or any part thereof submitted by the successful

proposer may be attached or become a part of the contract. The contract shall not become binding until signed by both parties.

Contractors are required to obtain a certificate of insurance for \$1 million general liability listing CLC and any sub-contractors as additionally-insured parties and provide proof of worker's compensation insurance coverage.