

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL ALTERNATIVES TO PRESCRIBED FIRE ON WILDLANDS

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1.0 Background

The Western Governor's Association (WGA), in conjunction with federal, state, tribal and local entities, has formed an organization known as the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP). The purpose of the WRAP is to build on the work of the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission (GCVTC) in developing and planning programs that can contribute to reducing emissions and improving visibility throughout the West. The WRAP can recommend regional approaches to improving air quality and reducing regional haze. Ultimately, the responsibility for implementing any or all recommendations of the WRAP lies with individual states and tribes.

The WRAP is composed of one principal planning group, the Initiatives Oversight Committee (IOC), and one principal technical group, the Technical Oversight Committee (TOC). Beneath the IOC and TOC are several Forums whose job it is to develop technical and policy options for the specific area of interest. One such forum is the Fire Emission Joint Forum (FEJF) which reports to both the IOC and TOC. Among other things, FEJF is responsible for making recommendations on strategies and methods to manage emissions from prescribed fire. The Wildland Alternatives Task Team (WATT) is part of the FEJF and is issuing this Request for Proposal.

The use of prescribed fire to improve the ecological health of the land and to reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels is increasing on public and to a lesser degree on private lands throughout the West. The use of fire as the primary or preferred method raises concerns about increased smoke emissions and the potential impacts on air quality with respect to public nuisance, health and visibility (plume blight and regional haze). There is also concern for managing this increased risk related to other potentially affected resources (water quality and quantity, soils, biota, etc.) and maintaining fires use for fuels reduction and health objectives within defined objectives and project boundaries. Thus, it is important that landowners and land managers of wildlands clearly state their goals and objectives for the land, and that they demonstrate that they have considered all reasonable methods and associated risks of achieving those goals. These methods should include non-burning treatments, such as mechanical treatments to reduce the amount of fuel to be burned.

1.1 Project Objective

The use of alternatives to prescribed burning on wildlands¹ when feasible will result in fewer emissions. The objectives of this project are to develop a reference document and internet site that will (1) provide landowners and land managers with comprehensive information on alternatives to prescribed burning, including marketing of forest materials, and a “decision-tree” for different options that can be pursued;

¹ See definition of “wildland” in Section 1.1.4 of the WRAP Fire Emissions Joint Forum Workplan available on the WRAP web page at www.WRAPAIR.org

and (2) assist air quality regulators, environmental organizations, and the general public in understanding the risk versus benefit decision-making process related to use of alternatives to prescribed burning.

It is expected that the contractor will coordinate closely with the Fire Emissions Joint Forum, through its Wildland Alternatives Task Team.

1.2 WGA Authority

The WGA is responsible for the initial design, implementation, and overall performance for this RFP and any subsequent contract. The WGA is authorized to enter into a contract with a contractor to provide the services outlined below. Determination of the successful completion of the contract tasks and assignments shall be at the sole discretion of the WGA.

1.3 RFP Terminology

Any firm that submits a proposal to the WGA pursuant to this RFP is hereinafter referred to as “Proposer”. Any proposal in response to this RFP submitted by a Proposer is hereinafter referred to as a “Proposal”. Any Proposer with which the WGA contracts for the program is hereinafter referred to as the “Contractor”. The contract between the WGA and the Contractor with respect to any tasks outlined in this RFP is hereinafter referred to as the “contract”.

The use of “shall”, “must”, and “will” in this RFP indicates a requirement or condition from which a material deviation may not be made. A deviation is material if, in the WGA’s sole discretion, the deficient response or action is not in substantial accord with the RFP requirements, provides an unfair advantage to one proposer over another, or has a potentially significant adverse effect on the quality or quantity of items or services proposed or on the cost to the WGA. However, proposers are encouraged to propose innovative or creative designs or features that would tend to have a favorable impact on program costs or technical integrity. Such designs or features, however, must be in substantial accord with the RFP requirements.

2.0 Work Tasks

There are seven tasks associated with this project. The primary task is the development of a comprehensive reference document for alternatives to prescribed burning. The reference document shall be attached to and summarized in a final report that will also contain Tasks 2.2 through 2.6 described below. Following completion of these tasks the Contractor shall present its findings to the WATT and FEJF, as identified in Task 2.7.

2.1 Develop a Comprehensive Alternatives Reference Document

The Contractor shall prepare a comprehensive reference document for landowners and land managers that will assist them in expanding and promoting the use of non-burning alternatives on wildlands. This document will serve as a “how to” guide to help overcome the economic, technical, political, social and

administrative barriers that presently exist. The document will be applicable to all wildlands in the West, and will identify practical alternatives to prescribed fire that could be considered by landowners and land managers. Not only will it serve as a general reference document, but also as a compilation of specific “success stories” in the West where non-burning alternatives are successfully being practiced. It will emphasize expanding existing markets and developing new markets for utilizing small diameter and underutilized forest materials. Much of the benefit of this document will be as a “one-stop” source of economic and technical information to promote effective use of non-burning alternatives, and would be updated periodically to include new information.

The following information shall be included in the reference document:

- 1) A description of non-burning alternatives such as mechanical treatments (harvesting, fire risk reduction through mulching, chipping, etc.), and other alternatives consistent with Section 4.3.1.1 of the FEJF Workplan
- 2) Examples of numerous utilization projects and programs that have been successfully implemented in the West;
- 3) Identification of existing markets and potential new markets for utilizing forest materials in the West, such as wood products, energy, and innovative uses, including a reference of market feasibility studies that have been conducted;
- 4) A detailed list of equipment typically used in non-burning land management projects and programs, such as wood chippers, grinders, excavators, etc., including purchasing and rental costs, operation costs, etc.;
- 5) A list of potential funding sources for non-burning alternative projects and programs;
- 6) A description of ongoing federal, state, and local programs and plans to reduce hazardous fuel levels and increased fire risk hazards in “urban/wildland interface” areas of the West, with specific references to these programs and contact information;
- 7) A list of potential sources of volunteer, skilled labor, community service, Department of Correction projects, and business development opportunities that could be used for non-burning projects and programs;
- 8) A description of non-profit organizations that could be of assistance;
- 9) A “decision-tree” for landowners and land managers on how to get started, showing different options or approaches that can be pursued, including cost/benefit analysis, utilization versus disposal considerations, economic and environmental tradeoffs, etc.; and

- 10) Visual examples illustrating historical fuel levels, photo point documentation of increased fuel levels and encroachment of non-native and climax species, current situation, desired effects of fuels reduction efforts, variety of excess fuel loads by geographic area and matching treatment options.

2.2 Creating an Internet Site

The Contractor shall include in the final report an outline of how an internet site could be set up using the information contained in the reference document and other results from this project. The report should describe the basic details of how internet sites are set up, maintained, and cost, as well as provide several examples of how landowners and land managers seeking information on alternatives would interact with such a site.

2.3 Develop Criteria for Selecting Non-Burning Alternatives

In accordance with Section 4.3.1.3 or the FEJF Workplan, the Contractor shall include in the final report proposed criteria for selecting non-burning alternatives, based on technical, economic, financial, social, political and environmental considerations, and provide examples on how such criteria could be used and assess potential outcomes.

2.4 Describe How Barriers will be Overcome

In accordance with Section 4.3.1.5 of the FEJF Workplan, the Contractor shall include in the final report a description of non-statutory administrative barriers to the use of non-burning alternatives to fire on wildlands, describe how each barrier inhibits the use of alternatives, and recommend solutions to overcoming these barriers.

2.5 Identify Accountability Mechanisms

In accordance with Section 4.3.1.7 of the FEJF Workplan, the contractor shall include in the final report different mechanisms that would provide for accountability in decisions regarding use of non-burning alternatives. In conjunction with the development of the reference document, the contractor shall evaluate the legal, regulatory, and other potential issues related to the possibility of incorporating this document into the NEPA process. This report shall include a recommendation how to accomplish this objective, and provide examples of how the reference document would be consulted when evaluating non-burning alternatives as required by NEPA.

2.6 Implementation and Outreach

In accordance with Section 4.3.1.9 of the FEJF Workplan, the contractor shall include in the final report an implementation plan for use by the FEJF. This plan shall include (1) a description of what to do with the products of this project, especially the reference document, (2) set out responsibilities for implementation, and (3) suggest methods such as workshops for disseminating information to

landowners, air regulators, local governments, environmental organizations, and the general public.

2.7 Progress Reports, Draft Report, and Presentation to the FEJF

The Contractor shall provide the WATT with three progress reports, beginning two months after the contract award date. Progress reports shall be 1-2 pages in length. The Contractor may be asked to attend regularly scheduled FEJF meeting to present progress reports. Following completion of Tasks 2.1 through 2.6 above, the Contractor shall prepare a draft report and distribute to the FEJF for comment. The Contractor shall also make a presentation on the draft report to the FEJF, at a date to be determined. Where needed the Contractor shall make revisions to the draft report based on feedback from the WATT and FEJF.