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| Contracts Database System |

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| **Filing Summary** |
| Approval - Contract should be filed a minimum of 10 working days prior to the proposed start date of services. |

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| **Agency:** | 477 - Department of Fish and Wildlife |
| **Filing Number:** |  |
| **Reference Number:** | 90549 |
| **Agency Contract Number:** | 24-24529 |
| **Filed By:** |  |
| **DES Decision Date:** |  |
|  | |
| **Contractor Information** | |
| **Legal Name** | Mount Hood Environmental |
| **DBA** |  |
| **UBI** | 604016442 |
| **Address** | PO Box 744, Boring, OR USA 97009 |
| **Contract Information** | |
| **Procurement** | Sole Source |
| **Service Description** | CF Technical Research Services |
| **Contract Purpose** | Contractor will continue to provide services for WDFW as they relate to Integrated Population Model (IPM) for the Columbia River chum salmon. |
| **Fund Source** | |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Filing Number** | **Federal** | **State** | **Other** | **Total** | | This Filing |  | $140,000 |  | $140,000 | | **Contract Total** | **$140,000** | | | | | |
| **Contract Dates** | |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Filed Date** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | |  | 04/01/2024 | 06/30/2025 | | |
| **Contacts** | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | | | Theresa Walker | (360)902-2439 | walketjw@dfw.wa.gov | In Process | | Theresa Walker | (360)902-2439 | walketjw@dfw.wa.gov | Processed | | |
| **Current State Employees** | |
| Not Applicable | |
| **Former State Employees** | |
| Not Applicable | |
| **Filing Justification** | |
| **Specific Problem or Need** | |
| **What is the business need or problem that requires this contract?** | |
| For over five years, we (WDFW) have been iteratively building a customized integrated population model (IPM) for Columbia River (CR) chum salmon. In short, an IPM is an analytical platform used for parameterizing structured population models. We are building this customized IPM so that it can ultimately serve as the cornerstone for population assessment, adaptative management, and restoration planning for CR chum. Our ability to build the chum IPM has relied on establishing and maintaining a partnership with Eric Buhle, a leading expert on IPMs, through a sub-contract with his employer, which is currently Mt. Hood Environmental (MHE). By partnering with Eric, we have bridged a capacity and expertise gap that stalled earlier efforts to build this IPM. By working specifically with Eric, we have also been able to leverage and build upon an existing IPM framework and R package (salmonIPM) that was developed by Eric (Buhle et al. 2018) ultimately saving time and money. We are proposing to continue our partnership with Eric by renewing a contract with MHE that would continue through June 30, 2025. Buhle, E.R., M.D. Scheuerell, T.D. Cooney, M.J. Ford, R.W. Zabel, and J.T. Thorson. 2018. Using Integrated Population Models to Evaluate Fishery and Environmental Impacts on Pacific Salmon Viability. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-NWFSC-140. https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/17731 | |
| **Sole Source Criteria** | |
| **Describe the unique features, qualifications, abilities or expertise of the contractor proposed for this sole source contract.** | |
| Eric Buhle who, again, works for Mt. Hood Environmental is a quantitative ecologist who specializes in Bayesian hierarchical and state-space approaches that are used to build integrated population models (IPMs). Despite the growing demand for IPMs in the field of fisheries and wildlife, there is a very small number of people with the necessary skills to build them let alone the capacity to work on an individual IPM project such as ours through a “part-time” contract. Eric’s coveted skillset and employment status provide a unique opportunity for WDFW to build these much-needed IPMs. | |
| **What kind of market research did the agency conduct to conclude that alternative sources were inappropriate or unavailable? Provide a narrative description of the agency’s due diligence in determining the basis for the sole source contract, including methods used by the agency to conduct a review of available sources such as researching trade publications, industry newsletters and the internet; contacting similar service providers; and reviewing statewide pricing trends and/or agreements. Include a list of businesses contacted (if you state that no other businesses were contacted, explain why not), date of contact, method of contact (telephone, mail, e-mail, other), and documentation demonstrating an explanation of why those businesses could not or would not, under any circumstances, perform the contract; or an explanation of why the agency has determined that no businesses other than the prospective contractor can perform the contract** | |
| When WDFW started exploring options for building a customized IPM for Columbia River (CR) chum salmon, we reached out to several colleagues and topic experts. We ultimately pursued a relationship/contract with Eric Buhle (who at the time worked for a company named BioMark) because he had already built an analysis framework that we could leverage as opposed to starting from scratch. Specifically, we were able to easily and efficiently build upon an existing IPM framework and R package (salmonIPM) to construct a customized model for CR chum. While there were certainly a few other people that we knew with the skillset to build a similar analysis framework, we would had to pay for that initial development that already existed with Eric’s R package. Through conservations and research, we could not find any other existing analysis frameworks that were as developed as Eric’s. Also, as mentioned briefly in section 4.2.1, finding someone who could work on our project was another challenge as most individuals with IPM expertise work for state and federal Agencies and are fully funded on other projects (and thus cannot be contracted). | |
| **What considerations were given to providing opportunities in this contract for small business, including but not limited to unbundling the goods and/or services acquired.** | |
| Mount Hood Environmental is a small business in Oregon. We are contracting with them for Eric Buhl (statistician) only. No substitute employee will be accepted. | |
| **Provide a detailed and compelling description that includes quantification of the costs and risks mitigated by contracting with this contractor (i.e. learning curve, follow-up nature).** | |
| WDFW has been working with Eric Buhle for the past five years on building a customized IPM for chum salmon. In addition to Eric’s highly specialized expertise on the topic of IPMs, Eric has also amassed an in-depth understanding of the nuances and intricacies of our specific IPM project. Eric has been instrumental to the progress we’ve made to date and his role could not be replaced without incurring a severe setback in both timeline and cost. For the past two years, Eric has worked for Mt. Hood Environmental (MHE). WDFW has worked with MHE on several different projects over the past five years and we’ve established a great working relationship. | |
| **Is the agency proposing this sole source contract because of special circumstances such as confidential investigations, copyright restrictions, etc.? If so, please describe.** | |
| N/A | |
| **Is the agency proposing this sole source contract because of unavoidable, critical time delays or issues that prevented the agency from completing this acquisition using a competitive process? If so, please describe. For example, if time constraints are applicable, identify when the agency was on notice of the need for the goods and/or service, the entity that imposed the constraints, explain the authority of that entity to impose them, and provide the timelines which work must be accomplished.** | |
| N/A | |
| **Is the agency proposing this sole source contract because of a geographic limitation? If the proposed contractor is the only source available in the geographical area, state the basis for this conclusion and the rationale for limiting the size of the geographical area selected.** | |
| N/A | |
| **What are the consequences of not having this sole source filing approved? Describe in detail the impact to the agency and to services it provides if this sole source filing is not approved.** | |
| The statistician's (Eric Buhl) role on our chum IPM project cannot be replaced without incurring a severe setback in both timeline and cost. Even if we could hypothetically find another contractor to fill Eric’s role at a cheaper rate, we would undoubtedly end up paying more to duplicate work we have already completed and/or training that would be necessary to get a new contractor up to speed on the inherently complicated topic of IPMs. Additionally, working with another contractor would delay the development of the IPM and our ability to use it to guide time sensitive management decisions. Specifically, in the coming year, we are planning on using the IPM to determine whether to continue operating several conservation hatchery programs through a detailed scenario analysis. Overall, if this sole source filing is not approved, our decision on whether to continue operating these hatchery programs will undoubtedly be delayed, which will results in several cascading effects on our operating budgets and recovery strategies. | |
| **Sole Source Posting** | |
| **Agency Website Information** | |
| Posted to Agency Website on 3/5/2024. | |
| **WEBS Information** | |
| Posted to WEBS on 03/05/2024. | |
| **Response(s) to Posting on WEBS** | |
| Time has NOT expired for responding to posting and will notify DES when time expires. | |
| **Reasonableness of Cost** | |
| **Since competition was not used as the means for procurement, how did the agency conclude that the costs, fees, or rates negotiated are fair and reasonable. Please make a comparison with comparable contracts, use the results of a market survey, or employ some other appropriate means calculated to make such a determination.** | |
| While the procurement process did not involve competition, we have ensured that the associated costs of this contract are both fair and reasonable through several alternative methods. Firstly, Mt. Hood Environmental (MHE) is offering a reduced rate for Eric's time on our chum IPM project compared to what they typically charge for senior scientists within their organization. This negotiated lower rate is based on MHE “honoring” a rate that Eric’s previous employer (BioMark) charged for his time during his first few years working with WDFW. Secondly, we have surveyed several other consultants in the field and this has revealed that rates for individuals in a similar role to Eric's are ~15-50% higher than what MHE is charging for Eric's time. This comparison provided valuable insight into the competitiveness of MHE's pricing. Lastly, it's crucial to consider the holistic value proposition offered by MHE beyond just the upfront cost. While it's possible that another consultant could offer a cheaper rate, the potential cost savings would likely be outweighed by losses in expertise, institutional knowledge, reliability, efficiency, and potentially the quality of work. Given Eric's extensive experience and intimate familiarity with our project's intricacies, the benefits of retaining his services at MHE justify the negotiated costs. | |
| **Attachments**   |  | | --- | | 24-24529 Contract - Mt Hood Environmental -draft.docx - 87903kb | | 24-2424529 WEBS Notification.docx - 84483kb | | |
| Are any documents being sent that are not attached via this system? No | |
| Is the contract or amendment document attached or listed above? Yes | |