



**World Wildlife Fund  
Northern Great Plains Program**

**Rangeland Ecological Monitoring for Ranch Systems and Viability Planning**

**Request for Proposals**

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is inviting experienced rangeland monitoring consultants to submit proposals for a 4-year contract that will include conducting baseline and repeat ecological monitoring across 1 million acres of rangeland in the Northern Great Plains. Surveys will be focused on ranches in northcentral Montana, northwest South Dakota, and the Nebraska sandhills, but may extend outside these regions as well. The ecological monitoring will be a component of a larger project that WWF is embarking on which aims to promote grassland conservation by engaging with ranchers to design, document, and implement ranch plans. Baseline measurements will serve as a starting point to help inform ranchers of changes that can be made to improve ecological function and viability of their operation. Follow-up monitoring will occur 2- and 3-years post baseline surveys to track progress towards goals. The consultant will be expected to not only conduct ecological monitoring, but also engage with technical advisors and ranchers on monitoring metrics, protocols, and deliverables. Additional details of the project and expectations can be found below.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the format described and received no later than **Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020**. Proposals will be reviewed as they are received, and a decision will be made by mid-October.

***Scope of Work***

See attached Terms of Reference (TOR). The TOR is intended to be a guideline, and the consultant(s) may suggest alternative approaches. The project will begin **November 2020-December 2021** and extend through **February 2025**. In addition to rangeland monitoring, contractors will be expected to work closely with WWF staff to coordinate logistics, engage with landowners and technical assistance providers to ensure clear communication of methodologies used, and provide reports on all data collected, which will need to be maintained in a secure manner.

***General Evaluation Criteria***

Applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Expertise and experience/capability related to the tasks, problems, or issues identified in the Terms of Reference (TOR)
- Previous experience in related fields
- Availability and ability to meet deadlines
- Reputation and references
- Requested fee and price breakdown, as appropriate

***Preparation of Proposals***

All applications will be evaluated based on the following sections of the proposal:

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| I.   | Applicant contact information:   | The name and contact information of the applicant (address, phone, and email), date of submission, and the lead person to contact   |
| II.  | Consultant and capabilities:   | A brief description of the company and/or consultant(s) who will be responsible for implementing the activities. A clear explanation of contractor capacity to conduct the work at scale and under time constraints is expected.  |
| III. | Proven experience in monitoring methodology:                               | A description of proposed metrics and methods to achieve the given objectives. Multiple approaches and costs are welcome for comparison. An example of data collected, analysis conducted, and report format is desired.  |
| IV.  | Proposed budget: (up to a 1-page description, if needed, and budget table) | A budget outlining the costs of the consultancy. Because the exact number of surveys to be conducted is unknown at this time, a per survey cost will be needed. A list of desired metrics can be found in section II. Fees will be inclusive of data collection, all travel expenses, data analysis, and reporting. |
| V.   | References:  | The contact information for three references. <i>Note: Additional references may be requested.</i>  |

Proposals must be no more than five pages in length, excluding attached CV/resume(s).

***Application Submission***

Please submit one electronic copy of the proposal by **Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020** to Patrick Lendrum at **patrick.lendrum@wwfus.org**. In the text of the email, please include the name and contact information of the lead person who will be involved with the application process.

***Application Review Process***

WWF will select the applicant by mid-October 2020. Notification will be provided to all applicants, regardless of selection.



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**Terms of Reference**

***I. Background and Introduction***

The Northern Great Plains (NGP) is one of the few remaining, largely intact temperate grasslands in the world. Within the ecoregion, conversion of grassland to cropland continues to occur due to high crop prices, government incentives and a growing global human population. Conversion of grasslands leads to loss of habitat and threatens the ability of the land to provide ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and storage, increased biodiversity, water filtration and reduced erosion. Grass-based economies are a critical component of combating grassland conversion thereby maintaining intact grasslands and the ecosystem services they provide.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) supports ranching in the NGP as it provides livelihoods and conserves intact grasslands. Sustainable grazing management facilitates the coexistence of livestock with native wildlife, promotes vegetation productivity, ensures healthy root and microbial systems, and protects soil from erosion. Ranchers use grazing management plans to manage grasslands while also managing emissions, promoting carbon sequestration, and improving soil health and water infiltration. This can also have positive effects on ranch profitability.

Beginning in the winter of 2020/21, WWF will embark on a large-scale project to engage ranchers on private and tribal lands and provide educational workshops, ongoing technical expertise, cost share and ecological monitoring to help ranchers design, document, and implement ranch plans. Ranch plans help ranchers establish goals and adapt management over time to build more successful businesses, improve ecological health, conserve wildlife, and build stronger communities. WWF will establish the basic elements that must be part of a ranch plan, including a grazing management plan and monitoring plan, recognizing that each rancher may want to pursue this project somewhat differently. Each rancher will customize their plan and align it with the outcomes outlined by WWF and partners. It will focus on achieving improvements in management that result in improved carbon sequestration, water infiltration, biodiversity, and overall success of the ranching business.

By 2025, WWF plans to engage ranchers that manage 1 million acres of rangeland in the NGP. Rancher engagement will be focused in northcentral Montana, northwest South Dakota, and the Nebraska sandhills, but may extend outside these regions as well. We expect to enroll around 150-200 ranches. A key component to successful ranch planning is maintaining and improving the ecological condition of the range, which needs to be measured and monitored to ensure outcomes are achieved or to adjust as needed if the plan is falling short of its goal(s). During the development of the ranch plan, a baseline ecological assessment will be conducted. Baseline values will then help guide how ranch plans can be designed to improve the ecological condition of the ranch. Each monitoring plan will be specific to the respective ranch but will, at a minimum, measure soil organic carbon, soil stability, ground cover and vegetation characteristics, and water infiltration. Follow-up surveys will occur 2- and 3-years post baseline surveys (see table for estimated total surveys). A more detailed list of metrics is provided below. WWF seeks an experienced contractor to conduct the baseline assessments and ongoing monitoring and synthesize the data to be shared with the ranchers as well as anonymously with WWF and funding partners.

**II. Scope of Work**

As part of this project, WWF anticipates engaging approximately 150-200 ranches. Estimates for ranches monitored each season are outlined below. Average ranch size across all three geographies is estimated at 5,500 acres.

Survey Type	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Baseline	21	34	45	0	100
2-year repeat	0	0	21	34	55
3-year repeat	0	0	0	21	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>176</b>

The project will involve the following activities:

**Planning:** After a landowner is engaged, the next step towards improved outcomes is providing the technical assistance needed to develop and implement their plan. WWF will fund technical advisors and partner biologists to support the landowner. They will need to be fully briefed by the monitoring contractor on the metrics and methods being employed. It is anticipated that this will happen in the early phases of project implementation in three discussions, once for each of the three geographies, unless major methodological changes occur. The contractor will also be expected to be available for follow up conversations as needed for the duration of the project. The contractor and WWF will agree to an hourly rate and contractor will invoice WWF on a monthly basis for these hours.

**Monitoring:** As ranches are identified and enrolled, each ranch participant will provide locations of the pastures to be surveyed. The contractor will develop a full sampling and ecological monitoring plan to be submitted to WWF for approval. The plan will include:

- Proposed soil and vegetation sampling locations to be representative of the soil and topographic
- Location and number of surveys per site
- Map of the stratification at the site
- Proposed monitoring plan, including where possible, repeated baseline sampling methods 2- and 3-years post baseline measurements
- Metrics measured will include, but need not be limited to:

Ecological Indicator Category	Metric
<b>Soil</b>	Soil organic carbon
	Soil stability
	Soil compaction (e.g., bulk density)
	Ground cover (e.g. bare ground, litter depth)
<b>Water</b>	Water infiltration
	Condition of lotic channels (if applicable)
<b>Vegetation</b>	Cover, abundance, and/or diversity of native plants

	Cover, abundance, and/or diversity of non-native and invasive plants
	Extent & condition of riparian systems (if applicable)
	Forage Productivity

- A Project plan outlining activities, deliverables timeline, and total cost per deliverable to be paid out upon approved completion by WWF’s Technical Director (template to be provided by WWF).

**Analysis & Reporting:** In early winter following the sampling season, monitoring reports will be developed and should include the following:

- Details of standardized sampling protocols utilized
- Analyzed data compiled in tables and charts
- Summary of data interpretation, management recommendations where appropriate, and any other pertinent information
- Data compiled and managed in a secure location.

### III. Timeline

Activities will take place from November 2020 to February 2025 based on the timeline below.

**Activity 1:** Disseminate monitoring techniques and data collection with project technical advisors and partner biologists as they come on board in preparation for rancher engagement workshops. Provide ongoing support as needed for the duration of the project. The expectation is that ongoing support will be sporadic, but the contractor is expected to be available for consultation if needed.

**Activity 2:** Conduct ecological monitoring. This consists of the pre-monitoring plan that includes survey site stratification. Upon completion of monitoring for each site provide a qualitative summary description of the site including key characteristics and general condition.

**Activity 3:** Conduct follow-up monitoring. Site selection will follow the protocol identified in the baseline survey. Upon completion of the follow-up monitoring for each site provide a qualitative summary description of the site including key characteristics and general condition.

**Activity 4:** Provide full reports on data collection for each season including qualitative description and quantitative measurements.

	2020					2021					2022					2023					2024					2025														
	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F
Activity 1																																								
Activity 2																																								
Activity 3 (Year 2 Repeat)																																								
Activity 3 (Year 3 Repeat)																																								
Activity 4																																								

#### ***IV. Budget and Payment***

WWF will pay a minimum of \$350,000 and maximum of \$500,000 to achieve the objectives described in this RFP.

**Activity 1:** Payments will be based on a pre-determined hourly rate, invoiced monthly, and upon approval from WWF's Technical Director.

**Activities 2-4:** Ranches identified for monitoring will be assigned to the contractor by WWF's Technical Director on a rolling basis. Prior to beginning work, the contractor will submit a Project Plan to WWF outlining proposed activities, a timeline, and associated costs. Project Plan totals will be based on an agreed upon fee per survey type (soil carbon and range transects unless combined) cost structure. Fees per survey type will be inclusive of data collection, travel expenses, data analysis, and reporting. Project plans will be broken down into deliverables to be paid out over the course of the project pending approved completion by WWF's Technical Director and submission of corresponding invoice.