



## Facilitation Services for Casco Bay Nutrient Council Request for Proposals

### BACKGROUND

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) invites proposals to provide Facilitation Services for a newly created Casco Bay Nutrient Council.

CBEP mobilizes collective action to strengthen the Bay's ecological and economic vitality, fostering a shared commitment to Casco Bay. It focuses scientific expertise and financial resources on helping watershed communities address regional challenges such as water pollution, habitat degradation, and adaptation to climate change. Since 1990, when Casco Bay was named an "estuary of national significance," the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has supported CBEP's regional work through its National Estuary Program. CBEP is affiliated with the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine in Portland, Maine. Further information on CBEP is available on our website, <http://www.cascobayestuary.org>.

During Casco Bay Estuary Partnership's strategic planning effort (completed this past spring, and culminating in publication of *The Casco Bay Plan 2016-2021*) nutrient pollution was identified as one of the most significant long-term threats to the health of Casco Bay, particularly in its inshore waters.

While nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus are essential for plant growth, elevated levels in coastal waters can trigger a cascade of negative consequences—such as algal blooms, low dissolved oxygen and fish kills. Excess nutrients also aggravate coastal acidification, which threatens shellfish and other marine organisms. It is also thought that nutrient enrichment will act synergistically with other stressors affecting the Bay, including climate change, to degrade ecosystem health, and threaten the value of the Bay to our communities.

Although today Casco Bay shows only limited evidence for significant negative environmental impacts of excess nutrients, nutrient concentrations in portions of the Bay are high. More importantly, nutrient pollution is likely to increase in coming decades with population growth and changes in land use. Nutrient pollution from land based sources such as waste water treatment plants, stormwater, and septic systems is one of the most widespread and difficult to manage water quality challenges in coastal waters around the world.

CBEP sees nutrient pollution as a critical long-term issue to address. Goal 2 of the *Casco Bay Plan 2016-2021* ("Reduce nutrient pollution and its impacts, including coastal acidification") focuses on addressing the threat of nutrient pollution.

### THE CASCO BAY NUTRIENT COUNCIL

Experience around the country and around the world has shown that controlling nutrient inputs to coastal waters is a complex, often contentious and expensive process. While the data to support estimates of nutrient loading to Casco Bay is incomplete, best estimates suggest that nutrients entering the Bay come roughly equally from wastewater, stormwater, and atmospheric sources, with other sources like agriculture playing a smaller role. This poses a significant policy and management challenge, because no one source dominates, and so the strategies that can most cost-effectively reduce the impact of nutrients on the health of the Bay are not obvious.

Communities are unlikely to make significant investments to reduce coastal nutrient inputs without trust in the scientific, technical, and financial information underlying control efforts. One effective way to build that trust is through a public process in which multiple stakeholders participate on an equal footing to construct a shared understanding of



issues and solutions. Action 2.3.A in the *Casco Bay Plan 2016-2021* ("Form a stakeholder-based group to study impacts of nutrients and costs of nutrient management") aims to establish such a process.

CBEP is therefore convening a regional "Casco Bay Nutrient Council" that brings together representatives of municipalities (including towns where septic tanks are common), wastewater treatment plant operators, environmental groups, government agencies and businesses. It will collectively study and evaluate the costs and potential benefits of different approaches to limiting nutrients entering the Bay, or reducing the harm that they cause.

The Council's goal will be to work together as a community to avoid both the long-term ecological harm and the political gridlock that emerges when nutrient pollution issues are addressed in a crisis atmosphere. We anticipate that the work of the Council will take two to three years to complete.

CBEP has funding available to kick off the first year of the Nutrient Council process in 2016-2017 and anticipates being able to dedicate funds to continuing the effort in future years. Successful completion of the Council's work may well require additional resources beyond those available through our base Environmental Protection Agency funding, but CBEP is committed to working to raise those funds.

CBEP anticipates supporting the Council by allocating staff time to supporting its deliberations. CBEP will staff the Council, and gather available scientific, technical and other information as needed.

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CBEP seeks proposals from individuals or firms able to provide neutral facilitation services to manage the development of consensus around strategies for nutrient management for Casco Bay. We anticipate that the Nutrient Council process may take up to three years.

CBEP will contract with the successful bidder for work to be completed in the first year, but we anticipate renewal of the contract in future years with the same contractor, assuming successful completion of the work and available funding.

CBEP assumes the Council will meet on a quarterly basis, at least initially, but facilitators may suggest alternative schedules based on their experience and understanding of the task at hand. We further recognize that the process is likely to evolve in response to input from the participants, making future costs difficult to estimate. The first meeting of the Nutrient Council should be held no later than January 2017.

CBEP envisions that the Council, upon completion of its deliberations, will develop a consensus report on its findings. In addition, the Council will produce annual status reports on its deliberations and preliminary findings. While content of the reports will be shaped by the Council's deliberations, CBEP anticipates that the consensus report will, at a minimum, address three issues:

- Impacts of nutrients on Casco Bay;
- Costs, benefits and opportunities for nutrient reduction in the Casco Bay watershed; and
- Key scientific and technical questions that need to be answered to help us develop a cost-effective regional response to the long-term control of nutrients entering the Bay.

#### PROPOSAL FORMAT

**Proposals are due via email to [cbep@maine.edu](mailto:cbep@maine.edu) by midnight (12:00 a.m.) on Wednesday, November 30, 2016.**

The proposal shall contain the following:

- Letter of transmittal including complete contact information, signed by an authorized representative of the firm.



- Narrative describing proposed approach to organizing and managing a multiple-meeting, potentially multi-year effort to develop consensus around issues of nutrient management in the Casco Bay region. The narrative should lay out an approach for three parts of leading the process:
  - (1) Quarterly Nutrient Council meetings, including suggested frequency of meetings, agenda-setting, meeting facilitation, record-keeping, reporting progress, decision-making, and an overall framework for making progress;
  - (2) Supplementary services as needed to support facilitation of the Nutrient Council, such as developing and managing the Nutrient Council process, working with CBEP and others between meetings to ensure preparations for each meeting are complete, preparing supporting information, discussing issues of concern to the Council, and other requested assistance.
  - (3) Proposed process for developing a first year status report.
- Proposed project timeline for the first year.
- Project budget through December 30, 2017, divided into three tasks: meetings of the Council; supplementary services; annual report. Based on costs and available funding, CBEP may choose to award limited tasks in the first year. The budget should indicate hourly rates by task, estimated hours per task, and estimated travel costs.
- Statement of billing rates and policies, and whether and how rates would change in future years.
- Statement of qualifications of the principal staff assigned to the project as well as the qualifications of the firm, 1 page maximum per person. The statement of qualifications should include facilitation experience as well as any scientific or policy experience that will help the contractor attain credibility with the group and understand the complex issues involved.
- Identification and qualifications of any subcontractor(s), 1 page maximum per subcontractor.
- Examples of similar projects conducted by the firm, 1 paragraph maximum per project.
- References including contact information, in the form of a list of references or letters of reference, 1 page maximum per reference letter, no more than 3 references.
- Any exceptions to the requirements of this RFP.
- The total proposal package should not exceed 15 pages

Prospective bidders are welcome to contact CBEP staff for more information or feedback before submitting a proposal.

- Curtis Bohlen, CBEP Director, 207-780-4576, [curtis.bohlen@maine.edu](mailto:curtis.bohlen@maine.edu)
- Marti Blair, CBEP Program Coordinator, 207-780-4306, [marti.blair@maine.edu](mailto:marti.blair@maine.edu)

## OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS

The expected outcomes and products to be provided to CBEP, based on the tasks awarded, will include:

- Facilitation of four meetings (or more, if recommended as part of the response to this Request for Proposals) of the Casco Bay Nutrient Council.
- Documentation supporting four (or more) meetings of the Casco Bay Nutrient Council, including agendas, invitations, preparation of supporting information in advance of meeting, detailed notes of meeting discussions, list of attendees, list of follow-up actions, as well as any other necessary documentation.
- Supplementary services to CBEP and/or members of the Council as necessary to support facilitation of the Nutrient Council meetings including preparing supporting information, discussing issues of concern to the Council, and other requested assistance.
- Nutrient Council first year status report. Two hard copies of the Consensus Report. Electronic versions of the report, both as a Word document and as a PDF suitable for posting on the CBEP website.
- Detailed, itemized invoices.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used in reviewing the proposals and selecting the firm:



- Understanding of the project.
- Methodology for conducting the project.
- Qualifications and past experience of firm and individuals proposed to work on project.
- References.
- Timeline and availability – the project needs to commence as soon as possible.
- Fees and rates.
- Other criteria as identified by the review committee.

The review committee may request further information or an interview before making a final selection.

#### **AWARD AND FOLLOW-UP**

An announcement of award is anticipated by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, December 5, 2016.

A contract agreement will be entered into between Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, University of Maine System, and the successful firm prior to work commencing. The successful contractor will be required to enroll as a supplier in the University of Maine eProcurement system, Maine Street Marketplace. Timing of payments will be negotiated depending on the project timeline.

A condition of the award is that Casco Bay Estuary Partnership and EPA award information be acknowledged in any reports, articles, press releases, newsletters, or other materials where descriptions of the project may appear. An electronic copy of CBEP's logo will be provided for this purpose.