



TO: Prospective Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Planning and Trails Firms

FROM: Eric Stechschulte, PLA, ASLA
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District

DATE: April 5th, 2024

RE: Request for Proposal
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District Trail Master Plan

RESPONSE DUE: April 25th, 2024

The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) is soliciting proposal statements from firms interested in providing comprehensive trail master planning services for the above-referenced project. This solicitation consists of the following steps:

1. Proposal (RFP) – The responses will be evaluated based on the criteria specified herein, and the MWCD selection committee will rank firms. The selection committee reserves the right to select a firm based on these selection criteria directly.
2. Interviews – Based on the content and ranking of the proposals, interviews may be conducted. The selection committee reserves the right to directly select a firm based on the selection criteria for interviewing as deemed necessary.
3. Term- The initial authorization will include general public focus groups seeking input for the master plan and specific trail user groups input (Hikers, Bikers, Equestrian Riders, and Paddlers) and developing a comprehensive planning process leading to the adoption of MWCD’s first Trail Master Plan.
4. MWCD reserves the right not to select or execute a contract for all or any part of this work.

Project Information:

Background

The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) is a political subdivision of the State of Ohio created in 1933 to develop and implement a plan to reduce the effects of flooding and conserve water for beneficial public uses. Spanning part of 27 counties in eastern Ohio, this watershed covers more than 8,000 square miles and includes the area that drains into the Muskingum River and its tributaries.

The MWCD includes a system of reservoirs providing flood reduction and water conservation benefits for the property owners and residents of the region and covers approximately 20% of the

State of Ohio. The MWCD is a partner with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in the operation of the system of dams and reservoirs in the watershed, as the USACE operates the dams. The MWCD manages most of the reservoir areas behind the dams, 44,000 acres of public lands and more than 16,000 acres of public waters in and around 10 USACE flood control reservoirs.

The MWCD has jurisdiction for its operations in all or portions of 18 counties, including Ashland, Belmont, Carroll, Coshocton, Guernsey, Holmes, Harrison, Knox, Licking, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Richland, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas, Wayne, and Washington.

Trails Blueprint

Over the past decade, the development of trails has been gaining more attention and support. MWCD recognized the growing need for trails and released the Trails Blueprint in 2019. This document lays out the foundation for MWCD to improve its trail system to be recognized within the region, state, and nation. Since 2020, MWCD has hired full-time staff dedicated to planning, building, and maintaining trails. The staff has worked to improve the existing trail system while designing new trails and facilities for different user groups.

In 2021, as part of the MWCD Park Amenity and Activity Report, an online survey was distributed, and focus groups were solicited for feedback from the public. 87% of survey respondents believe trails are important. Many other parks and recreation surveys have yielded similar responses. Per “The Ohio Trails Vision, 2019” by ODNR, 82.34% of Ohio survey respondents indicated that trails are extremely important or very important to their daily lives. The 2024 Ohio Department of Natural Resources Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) shows that Ohioans are also requesting more trail amenities. The SCORP shows that trail amenities were 5 of the top 10 outdoor amenities the public would like to see more of. These trail facilities include natural surface, improved surface, hiking, biking, and water trails.

The main goals in producing the Trail Master Plan are to:

- Establish a shared vision of the future of trails within Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District for the next 10 years and beyond.
- Develop an implementation plan that puts us on a path toward realizing the vision; and, that will enable us to begin implementation in 2025 through 2035.

Scope of Services

The MWCD intends to select one qualified firm/team to produce a Trails Master Plan. The scope of work encompasses the following services outlined below. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and further refinement may be required during the contract negotiation process. Excluding the alternate services specified below, MWCD expects completion of the following services by the end of 2024 for adoption by the Board of Directors in January 2025:

1. Project Management
2. Overview of Existing Conditions/Trails
3. Public Participation
4. Destination Inventory and Analysis
5. Trail Design Considerations and Route Recommendations

6. Cost Estimates and Implementation Program, including Maintenance Cost
7. Final Report, Executive Summary and Presentations

Alternate Services:

1. Corridor Feasibility and Design Studies
2. Trail and Signage Design Guidelines
3. Additional Authorized Services
 - A. Upon acceptance of the Trails Master Plan, MWCD may authorize the detailed design for subsequent trail projects. Based upon satisfactory performance by the firm/team, a supplemental agreement with a fee will be negotiated. MWCD reserves the right to make any decision regarding whether to authorize the firm/team for the future detailed design of trails and corridor studies based on past performance or any other reason deemed appropriate and in the best interests of MWCD.

Service 1: Project Management

- Lead all project activities, including assigning tasks to staff, monitoring progress, overseeing budget, and ensuring quality control.
- Organize coordination meetings to update stakeholders on project status, address issues, and determine additional requirements.
- Prepare meeting agendas and materials and record meeting minutes.
- Issue monthly invoices and deliver written progress reports.
- Maintain a visual representation (such as a Gantt chart) to illustrate project progress.

Service 2: Overview of Existing Conditions/Trails

- Evaluate the current trail network, producing a map illustrating its layout.
- Review pertinent planning documents such as:
 1. Trails Blueprint
 2. MWCD Park Amenity and Activity Report
 3. Atwood Lake Regional Trail Plan
 4. Carroll County, Harrison County, and Tuscarawas County Trail Plans
 5. The Buckeye Trail
 6. Existing and Proposed Trail Data Files
 7. Existing Trail Maps

Service 3: Public Participation

- The contractor is tasked with developing and executing a comprehensive community outreach strategy aimed at ensuring broad public participation in the trail master plan development process. This strategy shall encompass, at a minimum, the following elements:
 1. Identification of stakeholders and the proposal of methods to encourage inclusive public participation, ensuring equitable opportunities for input in shaping the master plan.
 2. Implementation of community engagement strategies that reflect the diverse demographics of the Muskingum Watershed, capturing input from all recreation user groups and relevant government agencies, including land management bodies and municipalities.
 3. Implementation of strategies to gather insights from visitors to MWCD parks and facilities.

4. Organization and facilitation of public meetings, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and other outreach events to solicit input from the community.
 5. Provision of recommendations for survey development and assistance in administering public surveys to gauge short and long-term community needs, preferences, and values.
 6. Analysis and synthesis of feedback gathered from all outreach activities and surveys to inform the development of the master plan.
 7. Development of a web presence to promote community engagement and encourage participation in the planning process.
- Coordinate and participate in gathering input in at least one meeting with the Trails Implementation Group (TIG), MWCD's internal stakeholder group, and the Development Advisory Committee Trails Subcommittee Group (DAC), MWCD's external stakeholder group.
 - Coordinate and participate in gathering input in at least one meeting with Park and Marina Managers.

Service 4: Destination Inventory and Analysis

- Assess and identify existing trail destinations both within MWCD lands and assess regional destinations.
- Assess, evaluate, and propose connections to existing regional, state, and national trail corridors, including but not limited to:
 1. The Buckeye Trail/North Country Trail
 2. The Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail
 3. Conotton Creek Trail
 4. Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition
 5. The Great American Rail Trail
 6. The Ohio to Erie Trail
 7. National Road Bikeway

Service 5: Trail Design Considerations and Route Recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive trail master plan map outlining future corridors/alignments, considering various factors such as opportunities, constraints, and environmental sensitivities.
- Create typical cross-sections for different surface materials and widths (e.g., asphalt, crushed concrete) and establish landscape and hardscape design standards for a uniform appearance across all Town trail corridors.

Service 6: Cost Estimate and Implementation Program

- Present a cost estimate for implementing the master plan, covering engineering and professional services, construction, and materials. Include breakdowns of estimated costs per mile for different surface types and widths.
- Propose an implementation plan for the master plan, including recommendations for segment prioritization and discussions on funding strategies, partnerships, easement acquisition, and policy adjustments.
- Project future maintenance expenses by forecasting yearly costs associated with the implementation of the trails master plan.
- Conduct an evaluation and offer recommendations regarding the necessary staffing levels for the planned trails master plan.

Service 7: Final Report, Executive Summary, and Final Presentations

- The final report and executive summary should provide the
 1. Project Overview:
 - Provide a comprehensive overview of the trail master plan project, including its objectives, scope, and methodology.
 2. Existing Conditions Analysis:
 - Summarize findings from the assessment of existing trail networks, including mapping and inventory data.
 3. Public Engagement:
 - Describe the community engagement process, highlighting stakeholder input and feedback received during public meetings, surveys, and other outreach activities.
 4. Trail Design and Recommendations:
 - Present recommended trail alignments, configurations, and design considerations based on analysis and stakeholder input.
 - Include maps, cross-sections, and conceptual renderings to illustrate proposed trail layouts and amenities.
 5. Environmental and Regulatory Considerations:
 - Discuss environmental impact assessments, permitting requirements, and compliance with relevant regulations and standards.
 6. Cost Estimates and Implementation Plan:
 - Provide detailed cost estimates for trail construction, maintenance, and other associated expenses.
 - Outline a phased implementation plan with prioritized projects, funding strategies, and timelines.
 7. Stakeholder Collaboration:
 - Acknowledge contributions from project stakeholders, partners, and community members.
 - Highlight opportunities for ongoing collaboration and partnerships in trail development and management.
- Executive Summary:
 1. Project Highlights:
 - Concisely summarize the objectives, process, and key findings of the trail master plan project.
 2. Stakeholder Engagement:
 - Highlight the importance of community involvement and stakeholder collaboration in shaping the master plan.
 3. Recommended Actions:
 - Outline the main recommendations and priorities for trail development and implementation.
 4. Benefits and Impacts:
 - Discuss the anticipated benefits of the proposed trail improvements, including economic, recreational, and environmental impacts.
 5. Next Steps:
 - Provide guidance on the next steps for implementing the master plan, including funding, partnerships, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
 6. Conclusion:
 - Conclude with a summary statement reaffirming the significance of the trail master plan and the commitment to its successful implementation.

- Final Presentations-The Final Report will be presented to the following groups:
 1. The MWCD Executive Team in December 2024
 2. The Board of Directors Meeting in January 2025 for adoption.
 3. MWCD Staff via an online presentation, to be determined on a specific date.

Alternate Services

Alternate #1-Trail and Signage Design Guidelines

1. Trail Layout and Configuration:
 - Determine appropriate trail widths, alignments, and surface materials. Consider factors such as terrain, accessibility, and user preferences. Define guidelines for trail amenities such as benches, shelters, and rest areas.
2. Signage Standards:
 - Establish consistent signage design elements for wayfinding and information.
 - Define placement guidelines for trailhead signs, directional signs, and informational kiosks.
 - Ensure signage complies with relevant regulations and promotes user safety.
3. Environmental Considerations:
 - Incorporate environmentally sensitive design practices to minimize ecological impact. Specify erosion control measures and vegetation management guidelines.
 - Identify opportunities for interpretive signage to educate users about local ecosystems.
4. Accessibility and Inclusivity:
 - Ensure trails and signage are accessible to users of all abilities.
 - Provide guidance on the design of accessible trail features and signage formats.
 - Consider inclusive design principles to accommodate diverse user needs and preferences.
4. Branding and Identity:
 - Develop a cohesive visual identity for trail signage that reflects the character of the area.
 - Define branding elements such as logos, colors, and typography for consistent implementation.
 - Incorporate community input to ensure signage aligns with local identity and culture.
5. Maintenance and Sustainability:
 - Establish maintenance standards for signage durability and longevity.
 - Recommend sustainable materials and practices for signage fabrication and installation.
 - Outline maintenance responsibilities and schedules to ensure trails and signage remain in good condition over time.

Additional Authorized Services

Upon acceptance of the Trails Master Plan, MWCD may authorize the detailed design for subsequent trail projects. Based upon satisfactory performance by the firm/team, a supplemental agreement with a fee will be negotiated. MWCD reserves the right to make any decision regarding whether to authorize the firm/team for the future detailed design of trails and corridor

studies based on past performance or any other reason deemed appropriate and in the best interests of MWCD.

Additional Information Available Upon Selection

- Trails Blueprint
- MWCD Park Amenity and Activity Report
- Existing and Proposed Trail Data Files
- Trail Maps
- Aerial photographs
- Kucera aerial mapping
- Historical Lake Pool Level data

Contract Type

Anticipate the use of a MWCD Standard Agreement for Engineering Services (to be provided), with compensation based on approved standard hourly rates.

Schedule

1. Submit a proposal by 12:00 PM EST on April 25th, 2024, to:

Eric Stechschulte, PLA, ASLA, Deputy Chief- Planning and Projects
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
2050 Reiser Ave. SE
New Philadelphia, Ohio 44663
2. MWCD will review submittals and select a consultant by May 10th, 2024. MWCD reserves the right to proceed with scope and fee negotiations immediately after consultant selection.
3. MWCD also reserves the right to request consultant interviews, which will be scheduled during the week of April 29th, 2024.
4. Fee Proposal and Negotiation: Week of May 6th, 2024
5. Anticipated Authorization to Proceed: May 28th, 2024.
6. Anticipated Completion of Trails Master Plan: December 20th, 2024
7. Master Plan Adoption by the Board of Directors: January 2025, exact date to be determined.

Instructions for Preparing and Submitting Proposal

1. Minimum 11-point font
2. A signed cover letter shall be included, exclusive of the page limit. A cover page is also permitted in addition to the signed letter (exclusive of the page limit).
3. Include 7 hard copies and 1 electronic copy saved as a PDF.

Request for Proposal Content

1. Company Background: Provide a brief and concise history of the firm, listing corporate officers, general experience, and specific capabilities. State the location of the office in which each component of work for this project will be accomplished or originate. (1 page max.)

2. Identify your Project Manager: Identify previous experience on similar projects and ability to coordinate and manage projects with compressed design schedules. Provide a listing and description of similar projects designed and/or managed by the project manager within the past ten years. (1 page)
3. Project Team Qualifications/Project Experience:
 - b. Identify key technical staff members and include a listing of education, professional registrations, and pertinent experience. (3 pages max)
 - c. List the team's relevant design experience and describe similar projects performed by the team within the past ten years. (5 pages max)
4. Approach:
 - a. Provide a technical project approach. (2-page limit)
5. References: provide five client references other than the MWCD with which your firm has completed similar services in the last ten years. (1 page)

Selection Criteria

The MWCD follows a Qualifications-Based Selection Process. Submittals will be ranked according to the following criteria:

1. Background: (20 points)
 - a. Company services applicable to project requirements (1-5)
 - b. Team office is located within the Muskingum Watershed (1, 3, or 5 points):
 - i. All work performed from offices within the Watershed (5)
 - ii. A portion of the work performed from offices within the Watershed (3)
 - iii. No work performed from offices within the Watershed (1)
 - c. MWCD staff experience with the firm (1-5)
 - d. MWCD contract history (1, 3, or 5 points)
 - i. Currently under contract (1)
 - ii. Performed contract work within the last six years (3)
 - iii. No contract work within the last six years (5)
2. Project Manager (20 points)
 - a. Project Management/Coordination Experience (1-10)
 - b. Similar Project Types Involvement Experience (1-10)
3. Project Team Expertise and Experience: (15 points)
 - a. Previous Amenity/Activity Design Experience
4. Approach (20 points)
5. References (5 points)

Where specific criteria are not identified, submittals will be scored in comparison to each other.

Request for Proposal Submittal

Proposals shall be submitted no later than 12:00 PM on the response due date listed above. Responses received after the above deadline will not be considered. Submittals shall be made to the attention of:

Eric Stechschulte PLA, ASLA
Deputy Chief- Planning and Projects
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
2050 Reiser Avenue SE
New Philadelphia, OH 44663-0349

Questions regarding this request shall be submitted via email to:

Eric Stechschulte PLA, ASLA
Deputy Chief- Planning and Projects
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
234-801-7028
erics@mwcd.org