

Question for Council

Authorize the April 8 submittal of a pre-proposal to the National Coastal Resilience Fund for Project Site Assessment of the Accreted Lands. Set a date for review of a full proposal concept for first week in June 2020.

Background

Biohabitats reached out to Town Administrator Andy Benke, Mayor O'Neil and Councilman Chauncey Clark to make them aware of an opportunity and offer to draft a brief pre-proposal, which allows NFWF to screen projects before issuing invitations for a full proposal (draft below).

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has announced the National Coastal Resilience Fund Request for Proposals for 2020. Applications are welcome from municipalities who want to restore and strengthen natural systems so they can protect coastal communities from the impacts of storms, floods, and other natural hazards and enable them to recover more quickly and enhance habitats for fish and wildlife. Priority is given to projects that are innovative or replicable, use nature-based designs and have habitat implications. These criteria are reflected in the draft text. NFWF will allocate \$32 million this year, and the grant requires a 1:1 non-federal match, which can be in the form of in-kind services. Although this year's NFWF budget has already been approved, Biohabitats does *not* expect a similar level of investment in this funding source by NFWF and the federal government next year.

Timeline

Pre-Proposal Due Date:	April 8, 2020
Full Proposal by Invite Only Due Date:	June 25, 2020
Awards Announced:	November, 2020
Approximate Project Completion:	December, 2021

Considerations

- The pre-proposal process is very easy
- Pre-proposal or full proposal can be withdrawn or altered
- Site Assessment and preliminary design would provide appropriate documentation for specific decision-making, future grant applications, or communicating with regulators
- Plan might not be approved in time for June 25 full submittal
- Decision on pre-proposal must be made before April 8

Draft PreProposal Text – for Feasibility Track which has ~\$125K average

Description: 1000 of 1000 character maximum

The Town of Sullivan's Island is assessing the feasibility of managing our marshland and publicly owned accreted land to improve resilience and reduce the risks posed by sea level rise and storms. The feasibility assessment will examine 1) thin-layer sediment addition to the marsh to the north 2) realigning beach and dune topography to enhance protection 3) restoring maritime wetlands and natural flow patterns 3) using the accreted land to reduce future flooding from increasingly intense rainfall events (or rain bombs) on the island. The feasibility assessment will allow the Town to evaluate and select which elements to advance. The chosen options will be taken to preliminary (~60%) design including cost estimates.

This grant would fund a coastal engineering and restoration design team in developing preliminary design that can be fully evaluated by regulatory agencies, the Land Trust that manages the deed restriction protecting the accreted land, the Town Council, and the community.

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This proposal is an opportunity to invest in replicable nature-based solutions that combine ecological restoration and coastal engineering to enhance the resilience of natural landscapes that protect communities while providing habitat.

As in many barrier islands, the marshland on the opposite side from the beach is low and vulnerable to flooding, and we want to examine the possibility of thin-layer sediment addition or other strategies to reduce this threat. On the beach side, the feasibility assessment will focus on management of a zone of rapid sand accretion along most of the island's length. The accreted land is protected by a deed restriction from development, but it can be managed to improve island resilience.

Driven by man-made and coastal dynamics, sand has accreted so quickly in recent decades that the island's back dune, typically the highest in unaltered systems, has not developed into a taller ridge that offers storm surge protection. Informal beach paths and emergency access routes perforate the dune system and create berms that impede flow in maritime wetlands. Also, the wetlands could be enhanced to accommodate more water during flood events, which are becoming more frequent.

The Town has been involved in an active conversation about management of this land for several years. We are now prepared to undertake a more technical examination of project costs and benefits to better understand obstacles and considerations in advancing one or all four concepts.

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Sullivan's Island, a historically important barrier island in the Charleston Harbor Watershed, scores high in CREST's threat and terrestrial habitat indices. It is under scrutiny at the state and local level, so sensitive, nature-based resilience work here could serve as a regional model.