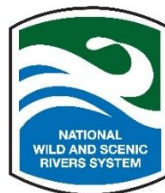


Request for Proposals



Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council River Corridor Overlay District Ordinance Development

OVERVIEW

The Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) seeks a qualified consultant to develop a model ordinance for a River Corridor Overlay District which will be adapted for the needs of the Town of Westerly (Town) and will be able to function as a template for other towns within the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed. The Stewardship Council is providing this form of Technical Assistance to the Town to support their effort to implement specific action items of the Westerly 2020-2040 Comprehensive Community Plan. The selected consultant will develop a model ordinance consistent with the objectives of both the [Stewardship Council](#), the [Wood-Pawcatuck Stewardship Plan](#) and the [Town's Comprehensive Plan](#).

Services provided by the consultant under this contract will be coordinated and managed by a team consisting of representatives of the Town and the Stewardship Council and directed by Lauren Bonatakis of the National Park Service.

This project will begin upon contract and should be completed by June 30, 2022.

Background:

In March 2019, seven rivers within the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed (Watershed) became federally designated as Wild and Scenic. The designation originates from the 1968 Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and is intended to preserve certain rivers found to have outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational value. Management and stewardship of the Watershed is guided by the Wood-Pawcatuck Stewardship Plan (Plan), which is implemented by the locally led Stewardship Council. The Plan was developed in partnership with local stakeholders, town planners, conservation commissions, residents, state agencies from Connecticut and Rhode Island, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It provides a blueprint for the long-term

protection of the watershed’s outstanding resources. Though not a regulatory document, the Plan describes a management approach that ensures watershed protection efforts are maintained by 12 municipalities within the Watershed as well as the two state governments.

To implement the Plan, it is imperative that the Stewardship Council work alongside the towns to protect, enhance, and promote the preservation of natural resources. The Town of Westerly is one of the 12 towns within the Watershed and its Comprehensive Plan identifies the need for the protection of several natural resource-based priority areas. To protect and enhance those priority areas and the “outstandingly remarkable values” of the Pawcatuck River that borders Westerly to the north and west, the Town and the Stewardship Council seek to develop and implement a River Corridor Overlay District (RCOD).

The purpose of the RCOD would be to assess and mitigate the impacts of development on the river, assure safe public access to the river for passive recreation, preserve the natural, historical, and cultural resources located along the river, protect water quality, and achieve long-term resiliency from inland flood events. The Town’s RCOD would also include the six (6) or more perennial tributaries that enter the Pawcatuck River along its path to Little Narragansett Bay and the Atlantic Ocean – resources most vulnerable to impacts from development within the corridor.

Specifically, the RCOD would be used to protect and enhance the following values of the Pawcatuck River, tributaries, and downstream estuary as identified in the Plan as well as the Town’s priorities:

- Water quality
- Streambank stability
- Aquatic & terrestrial wildlife habitat
- Stream flow
- Aesthetics
- Coldwater fisheries
- Free flowing water
- Recreation
- Cultural and historic characteristics
- Economic development district (downtown Westerly/Pawcatuck)

River Corridor Overlay District Description:

The corridor provides rivers and streams with the lateral space necessary to maintain or reestablish floodplain access, preserve or establish vegetated riparian buffers, and minimize erosion hazards through natural, physical processes. A River Corridor Overlay District is a zoning tool used to strengthen protection for a river corridor. The RCOD is superimposed on the existing zoning districts within the identified boundaries of the river corridor. Usually, the

performance standards and requirements of the RCOD apply to all new development or redevelopment within the identified area. There are typically few permitted uses and a limited list of uses requiring a special permit. RCODs can reinforce and enhance existing local and state regulations by adding an extra layer of protection for resources within the river corridor by reiterating buffer zone setbacks and addressing gaps that may exist within current rules. RCODs can also be tailored to include provisions that fit within a Town's comprehensive plan and zoning code. Existing uses and the future potential use of property within the corridor can also be addressed in the RCOD.

SCOPE OF WORK

Tasks are outlined numerically while subtasks are outlined under each main task.

TASK 1.

Westerly Existing Conditions Assessment:

- i. Existing zoning designations within RCOD area
- ii. State and local freshwater wetlands regulations applicability in Westerly (RIDEM & CRMC)
- iii. Other river-related ordinances (aquifer overlay, floodplain protections, historic mill, etc.)
- iv. Zoning and river protection ordinances in surrounding towns (Stonington, CT; Hopkinton, RI)
- v. The extent to which existing conditions support the values of the Pawcatuck River, tributaries, and downstream estuary as identified in the Wood-Pawcatuck Stewardship Plan; and the policies set forth in the Town of Westerly Comprehensive Plan.

TASK 2.

River Corridor Overlay District Ordinance Draft:

- i. Development an Ordinance for Town of Westerly (Section 260-56 Westerly Town Code)
 - a. Recommendations for specific items to include in ordinance:
 - i. Maintain new state-issued setbacks found in the [revised Freshwater Wetlands Rules \(250-RICR-150-15-2\)](#), effective 1/5/2022
 - ii. Allow existing and new public access to the Pawcatuck River and establish standards for maintenance and use
 - iii. Establish starting point for buffers (all setbacks/buffers begin from OHW mark)
 - iv. Pawcatuck River & Tributaries below Urban Region (in CRMC jurisdiction): 100 ft setback/buffer from OHW
 - v. Require vegetated riparian buffers where able/appropriate. Use only native vegetation appropriate for soil type

- vi. Consider separate floodplain overlay or incorporate floodplain protections in RCOD (100-yr floodplain) (See attached map)
- vii. Include development standards / BMPs (Low impact development)
- viii. Develop a “designated center” through downtown Westerly/Pawcatuck (an area appropriate for infill/development to meet housing & economic development needs)

TASK 3.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- i. Work collaboratively with Wood-Pawcatuck Stewardship Council and the Town of Westerly on preparation of the River Corridor Overlay.
- ii. Participate in a hybrid public information and listening session as part of early stakeholder engagement.
- iii. Participate in a public workshop on draft of the River Corridor Overlay District Ordinance hosted by the Town of Westerly Planning Board.

TASK 4.

Develop a model ordinance that has the potential to be adopted by all 12 towns within the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed.

PROJECT SCHEDULE:

- 1. RFP Submitted: November 19, 2021
- 2. Bids Due: December 17, 2021.
- 3. Consultant retained by: January 2022
- 4. Early stakeholder engagement: February 2022
- 5. Existing Conditions Assessment Completed: February 15, 2022
- 6. Draft Ordinance presented at Planning Board: March 2022
- 7. Refine draft based on partners and Planning Board feedback: April 2022
- 8. Town Council lead work sessions and public hearing: May 2022
- 9. Model Ordinance developed for Wild & Scenic: June 2022

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES:

- [FRCOD River Overlay Toolkit & Model Ordinance](#): *Model RCOD developed by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (Massachusetts)*
- [Vermont Model Ordinance](#): *Model ordinance focused primarily on flood hazards & reducing erosion*

- [Barkhamsted, CT on Farmington River](#): *Example RCOD from a Connecticut town also located along a Wild & Scenic River*
- [Salem, CT on Eightmile River](#): *Example RCOD from a Connecticut town also located along a Wild & Scenic River (Section 25A)*
- [Woonsocket RI on Blackstone River](#): *Example RCOD from a Rhode Island municipality*

PROPOSAL FORMAT:

Provide a concise proposal that includes the following information:

- Business Name
- Contact Information
- Qualifications/Similar projects completed
- Brief overview of how you will approach the project
- Proposed Budget/Cost Estimate
- Proposed deliverables

SUBMISSION:

Email your proposal and any questions to:

Lauren Bonatakis (she/her)
Natural Resource Specialist
Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Program
National Park Service
Interior Region 1 - North Atlantic-Appalachian
lauren_bonatakis@nps.gov

DEADLINE:

December 17, 2021

Note:

These funds will be provided by the National Park Service under CFDA 15.962 – National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. As a sub-recipient, the contractor will be responsible for compliance with federal laws and regulations, and the parent grant agreement, the provisions of which are available upon request.

PROSPECTIVE RIVER CORRIDOR OVERLAY DISTRICT (RCOD) ALONG THE PAWCATUCK RIVER IN WESTERLY, RI

