

July 28, 2008

Dr. Richard Huber  
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Organization of American States  
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Dear Richard,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the request for proposals that address the need to develop integrated Value Added Tools for IABIN. In response to your letter dated June 18, 2008, we would like to provide additional clarification on the two points that the selection committee has identified:

1. In your proposal you offer an “Internet-based Ecosystem Assessment and Reporting tool” (see proposal pg 1). In the answer submitted to question two of the first clarification letter, you state that users will be able to download the tool for a) installation and use on a local machine use; or b) access the on-line version that queries a remote database of ecosystems and protected areas. Thus, would TNC develop a desktop version as well as an on-line version? If you propose a desktop version, will this version need commercial software to run it such as ESRI, and could you please provide us with more information about the capabilities of this desktop version?

Yes, TNC would like to build flexibility for the users of this tool. For this reason, we plan to design and build an ArcGIS Server version which will provide the users the option of accessing the tool on-line using a web browser or other thin client, or the ability to download the program and install the tool locally. Users who choose to download the tool must have ArcGIS 9.x software to operate the tool. The advantages of running the tool locally is that users will be able to take advantage of their own local resources and will only have to rely on internet connectivity to download the software. Both versions will be coded in .NET and have the same capabilities, only slight modified difference in the user interface.

2. IABIN also has Thematic Networks collecting data on Species and Specimens, Invasive Species and Pollinators; would any of these networks or types of data be able to provide additional capabilities/functionality to the tool?

This is an excellent recommendation and one that we originally tried to develop but decided it was too ambitious given the current requested funding level and timeline. The tool we are proposing to build seeks to integrate the spatial information that has been compiled in the Ecosystem and Protected Area Thematic Networks (TNs) in order to provide a cross-query decision-support tool for reporting and visualizing the level of effective conservation across a variety of scales. Since the goal of this tool is to report back the most important areas to do conservation work and what actions are needed to improve biodiversity, that next logical step is to expand the tool to include Invasive Species, Species/ Specimens, and Pollinators TNs to the extent that these data are spatial. In regards to IABIN's interest and the conservation community as a whole, we propose to follow your recommendation and suggest completing this tool in two phases. The first phase would integrate the Ecosystems and Protected Areas TNs into the tool based on the current funding level and within the proposed component three schedule. The second phase would require additional support funding to address two primary objectives: 1) training and outreach; and 2) conduct and inventory of the spatial data that is available in the other TNs and design a way to integrate these data into the tool's existing data model to provide additional decision-support reporting. Given the level of spatial data that we may find available in the other TNs, we would conceptualize and execute a plan to integrate these other data and deliver a superior tool that covers the full spectrum of IABIN's mission.

3. Since TNC is co-financing this proposal, who would own the code for this tool? Would it be an Open Source Code?

Both versions of the tool (on-line ArcGIS Server and ArcGIS local) will be public domain and freely available for anyone wishing to use them. We plan to host a website specific for this tool, similar to what we have built for the IABIN-funded Protected Area Tools (<http://www.gispatools.org>). The .NET code will be made freely available to anyone wanting to further adapt the code or customize the program to fit their needs.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to respond to this important matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,



Steven R. Schill, Ph.D.  
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The Nature Conservancy  
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