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TEXAS COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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Open Call for Proposals  
for  
Texas Endangered Species Management Research  
Fiscal 2025

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| <u>Anticipated Schedule of Events</u> | <u>Date</u>      |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Call for Proposals Issued             | Sept. 25, 2024   |
| Deadline for Questions                | Oct. 23, 2024    |
| Proposals Due                         | Dec. 11, 2024    |
| Contract Execution                    | Summer/Fall 2025 |

Email questions about the Call for Proposals to  
[nat.res.research@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:nat.res.research@cpa.texas.gov) by 5 p.m. on Oct. 23, 2024

Email proposals to [nat.res.research@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:nat.res.research@cpa.texas.gov) by  
5 p.m. on Dec. 11, 2024.

## **General Information**

### **Purpose**

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts Natural Resources program funds research to support data-driven Endangered Species Act decisions and voluntary conservation efforts. The program awards interagency contracts for services (“Contracts”) pursuant to Chapters 403 and 771 of the Texas Government Code to Texas public universities to conduct research on species of interest including candidate, petitioned or listed species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

### **Eligibility**

Eligibility for a primary contract is restricted to Texas public universities. With the approval of the Comptroller’s office, the primary contractor can subcontract portions of the work to other entities such as government agencies, private consulting firms or other universities. However, Texas public universities must encumber the majority of the contract's funding and responsibilities.

### **Number of Contracts Awarded**

Multiple contracts may be awarded from this Call for Proposals (CFP) to single or multiple universities or university groups. University groups may submit multiple different proposals.

### **Selection**

Proposals will be evaluated according to their responsiveness to the research goals and objectives listed in the CFP, with consideration of feasibility and completion of tasks within the proposed budget and timeline.

Successful proposals will not be redundant to other ongoing research, projects or conservation efforts.

Feedback will not be provided for submitted proposals to ensure equal opportunity of selection for all respondents in future calls.

### **Contract Term and Funding**

The contract term and budget listed in the CFP are the maximum duration and budget per proposal. Proposals for smaller projects with shorter duration and lower budgets are welcome.

### **Proposal Due Dates**

Proposals may be submitted any time before the deadline listed on the CFP cover page.

The Natural Resources program will send verification of proposal receipt the day following the proposal’s due date. It is recommended that respondents add a “read receipt” request to their email submissions.

### **Contract Description**

Natural Resources program contracts are not grants and shall not be administered as such. Grants are flexible agreements designed to provide funding for a public purpose, while contracts are binding agreements for provision of specific goods or services, with payments contingent on performance and submission of deliverables.

## **Payment Administration**

The Comptroller's office is committed to financial and procedural transparency and provides Texas taxpayers ready access to information on how their tax dollars are spent. The Comptroller's office is accountable for ensuring tax dollars are spent responsibly. Expenses reimbursed under a Comptroller's office research contract must directly relate to the contract research objectives, and must be justifiable, reasonable and necessary for work under the contract during the contract term.

Payments are distributed as quarterly reimbursements for expenditures and will require itemized expenses accompanied by specific, appropriate documentation which will be reviewed in detail by the Comptroller's office before payment. Reimbursement requests must adhere to Natural Resources Program Reimbursement and Invoice Preparation Guidelines located on the [Calls for Proposals webpage](#). Potential respondents should review and consider the reimbursement requirement burden before submitting a proposal.

## **Confidential Data Requirements**

Private landowner information is protected by the Comptroller's office and its contractors in compliance with Texas Government Code Section 403.454:

*Information collected under this subchapter by an agency, or an entity acting on the agency's behalf, from a private landowner or other participant or potential participant in a habitat conservation plan, proposed habitat conservation plan, candidate conservation plan, or proposed candidate conservation plan is not subject to Chapter 552 (Public Information) and may not be disclosed to any person, including a state or federal agency, if the information relates to the specific location, species identification, or quantity of any animal or plant life for which a plan is under consideration or development or has been established under this subchapter. The agency may disclose information described by this section only to the person who provided the information unless the person consents in writing to full or specified partial disclosure of the information.*

## **Data Repository**

Shareable data generated from a Comptroller's office contract must be uploaded to a Comptroller's office-approved, publicly accessible data repository before the close of contract. The contractor must conduct appropriate data review and obtain private landowner's written consent prior to upload to ensure compliance with confidentiality code. Restricted access to the data repository (e.g., access for state and federal agencies) is allowable for a limited timeframe to allow for academic publications; however, the contractor must make the data publicly available and searchable within an agreed upon timeframe.

## **PART 1**

### **Scope of Work**

#### **1.1 Non-game Animal and Plant Species of Interest**

1. species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) as threatened or endangered and petitioned or candidate species;
2. species listed as state threatened or endangered, or as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN);
3. species included in voluntary conservation efforts (*e.g.*, conservation plans, monitoring programs);
4. species likely to be included in the above categories in the future due to data deficiency; and/or
5. species endemic to Texas.

#### **1.2 Geographic Area**

1. State of Texas (regardless of species occurrence outside of Texas).

#### **1.3 Project Timeline**

1. 36 months.

#### **1.4 Maximum Budget per Proposal**

1. \$280,000.

#### **1.5 Research Goals**

1. Address knowledge gaps for one or multiple species of interest to inform voluntary conservation plans or efforts that will support science-based management decisions.
2. Inform ESA decisions including species status assessments, petition findings, proposed and final listings, critical habitat or recovery activities.
3. Provide accessible data and methodologies to FWS or NMFS, TPWD and other potential end-users including state, federal or local government; natural resource managers; river authorities; public utilities; environmental consultants; private landowners and businesses.

#### **1.6 Research Objectives**

Objectives specific to meeting the research goals will be provided and justified by the respondent in their proposal. Examples of objectives include, but are not limited to:

1. create or improve survey techniques and methodology;
2. provide training and/or manuals to end-users on survey techniques;
3. establish methodology and guidelines for a long-term monitoring program;
4. determine baseline habitat associations;
5. coordinate with other research and/or conservation efforts;
6. incorporate citizen science or in-kind services;
7. perform literature review, consolidate, compile and analyze existing data;

8. address specific unknown (*e.g.*, taxonomy, genetics, range and distribution, behavior, or life cycle);
9. identify or improve species recovery strategies and techniques;
10. evaluate effectiveness of conservation measures, best management practices/Reasonable and Prudent Measures; and
11. conduct public outreach/evaluate human dimensions of endangered/SGCN species conservation.

## **PART 2 PROPOSAL FORMAT**

### **2.1 Respondent Identifying Information**

#### **2.1.1 Proposal Title Page**

1. Proposal title.
2. Responding university's full name.
3. Responding university's principal offices address.
4. Principal Investigator (PI) name and co-PI names (including subcontractors) and affiliations.

**2.1.2 Key Contact Page:** Provide name, title, email address and phone numbers for primary contacts including:

1. PI and co-PIs.
2. Administrative/financial.

**2.1.3 Personnel Summaries:** Abridged curriculum vitae for principal investigators and key personnel, including subcontractors. Limit one to two pages per person.

1. Project role.
2. List of accessible publications most closely related to the proposed research.
3. Description of knowledge and experience:
  - a. conducting research on the species of interest;
  - b. working with state and federal wildlife agencies; and
  - c. outlining their particular duties in the project.

### **2.2 Project Description**

Organize proposed project description by section, as shown below. Page limits for each section are maximum numbers, not suggested numbers.

**2.2.1 Project Summary:** Limit one page. Provide a summary/abstract of the proposed project.

**2.2.2 Background Information:** Limit four pages. Include the following:

1. Summary of existing scientific literature and data on the species of interest throughout its entire historic range.
2. Current status of focal species in Texas. See Section 1.1.
3. Description of how deliverables from the proposed study would fill knowledge gaps to inform species status, management or recovery.

**2.2.3 Research Tasks and Methods:** No page limit. Include the following:

1. methods to address each research objective;
2. assumptions made in the proposed design;
3. description and high-level map of the areas within the species' Texas range that will be addressed by the project (*e.g.*, general areas where field work or other data collection will occur. Attachment B exemplifies the level of detail and information to display in the map);
4. description of permitting requirements to conduct the proposed work, existing permits meeting these requirements or plan to obtain such permits prior to commencement of work. (The Comptroller's office must receive a valid permit copy before executing a contract for a selected

proposal);

5. description of access to or plan to obtain permission to access publicly and/or privately owned property where necessary to perform research. Describe contingency plans if the desired access cannot be obtained;
6. description of expected challenges to the research and appropriate solutions to each challenge;
7. description of deliverables to the Comptroller’s office at the conclusion of the contract; and
8. proposed publicly accessible repository for project data, to be uploaded before contract close. If applicable, describe any restricted access/data embargo needs and the maximum timeframe for data to become publicly accessible.

## 2.2 Project Management

**2.2.1 Schedule of Work:** Provide a schedule of work for each of the research tasks and deliverables described in this section using a format similar to the example below. Beginning and end fiscal years may include less than 12 months. Respondents may format the schedule with their preferred start date.

|      | FY 1                                  |                |                |                | FY 2                             |                |                |                | FY 3                                   |                |                |                |
|------|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|      | Contract execution -<br>Aug. 31, 2025 |                |                |                | Sept. 1, 2025 -<br>Aug. 31, 2026 |                |                |                | Sept. 1, 2026 -<br>Contract expiration |                |                |                |
| Task | Q <sub>1</sub>                        | Q <sub>2</sub> | Q <sub>3</sub> | Q <sub>4</sub> | Q <sub>1</sub>                   | Q <sub>2</sub> | Q <sub>3</sub> | Q <sub>4</sub> | Q <sub>1</sub>                         | Q <sub>2</sub> | Q <sub>3</sub> | Q <sub>4</sub> |
|      |                                       |                |                |                |                                  |                |                |                |  |                |                |                |
|      |                                       |                |                |                |                                  |                |                |                |  |                |                |                |
|      |                                       |                |                |                |                                  |                |                |                |  |                |                |                |

Figure 1. Example format of quarterly work schedule by fiscal year.

A fiscal year begins Sept. 1 and ends the following Aug. 31. Quarters are as follows:

- Q1: Sept. 1 – Nov. 30.
- Q2: Dec. 1 – Feb. 29.
- Q3: Mar. 1 – May 31.
- Q4: June 1 – Aug. 31.

The proposed schedule should address the following:

1. submission of Research Plan to the Comptroller’s office for review prior to commencement of work;
2. obtaining necessary scientific collection permits;
3. procurement of permissions necessary to access sites;
4. specific milestones for research tasks and project deliverables;
5. meeting with the Comptroller’s office (in person or virtual) prior to commencement of work;
6. quarterly status updates with the Comptroller’s office (email or virtual);
7. annual public presentation on research plans or progress (in person or virtual);
8. submission of annual and final reports to the Comptroller’s office, FWS and TPWD; and
9. submission of shareable project data to the Comptroller’s office-approved publicly accessible data repository prior to contract conclusion.

### **2.3 Confidential Data Management Plan**

Provide a description of steps that will be taken to protect confidential information collected during this project (*e.g.*, training for research staff and students, encryption, controlled access).

### **2.4 Budget, Justification and Explanation**

Attachment A details the proposal budget section. The budget should demonstrate an efficient use of project funds. Costs, including personnel and subcontractors, must be justifiable, reasonable, necessary and directly relate to the research objectives.

In the event the respondent is funded for other research projects related to the species of interest, the respondent must identify the funding source and percentage of salary, time and other resources dedicated to the other project. The respondent must describe plans for leveraging the proposed funding such as collaborating with other researchers, institutions and agencies to avoid duplication of effort and ensure funds are used efficiently.

*Note:* Expenses generally not eligible for reimbursement by the Comptroller's office are computers, software, vehicles, vehicle maintenance or repairs, journal publications, laundry services, registration or cancellation fees and out-of-state conferences or in-state conferences unless personnel are presenters. If requesting any of these items, include a detailed explanation of the item's value to the project.

Examples of other allowable and non-allowable expenses are listed in the Comptroller's office Natural Resources program's Reimbursement Guidelines located on the [Calls for Proposals webpage](#).



## **ATTACHMENT A Budget**

The maximum budget per proposal is contingent upon the availability of legislated funds provided to the Comptroller's office for endangered species research.

Enter budget costs in the Project Budget spreadsheet posted on the Natural Resources program [Calls for Proposals webpage](#) (CPA-NR Project-Budget-By-Fiscal-Year). Green cells are fillable. In Attachment A to the proposal, include narratives for each Direct Cost category as noted below.

**A.1 Contractual:** Costs for services under contract with third parties. Proposals that subcontract a significant amount of work must include a detailed justification of why the work cannot be done in-house.

1. Excel "Contractual" tab: list each subcontractor name, contact information and cost per contract year.
2. Proposal narrative: Describe subcontractor work and include clarifying comments.

**A.2 Personnel:** All individuals receiving pay for work on project from project budget. Budgeted amounts should be based on and clearly describe the amount of effort each individual contributes to the project.

1. Excel "Personnel" tab: list names (if known), roles, compensation rates (including benefits and tuition), months dedicated to project per year and cost per contract year.
2. Proposal narrative: include clarifying comments on personnel roles and justify any tuition requested.
  - A. The Comptroller's office will consider tuition reimbursement only if a student's thesis or dissertation research directly addresses project goals and the student works at least 20 hours/week on the project during the semester for which reimbursement is sought.

**A.3 Travel:** Lodging, transportation and meal reimbursement in accordance with State of Texas travel guidelines. Meals are reimbursed for actual expenses with receipts. The Comptroller's office does not pay a per diem amount.

1. Excel "Travel" tab: list trip type and annual cost per trip type.
2. Proposal narrative: justification for conferences and other clarifying comments.

**A.4 Supplies:** Routine costs for items requiring replenishment throughout the project.

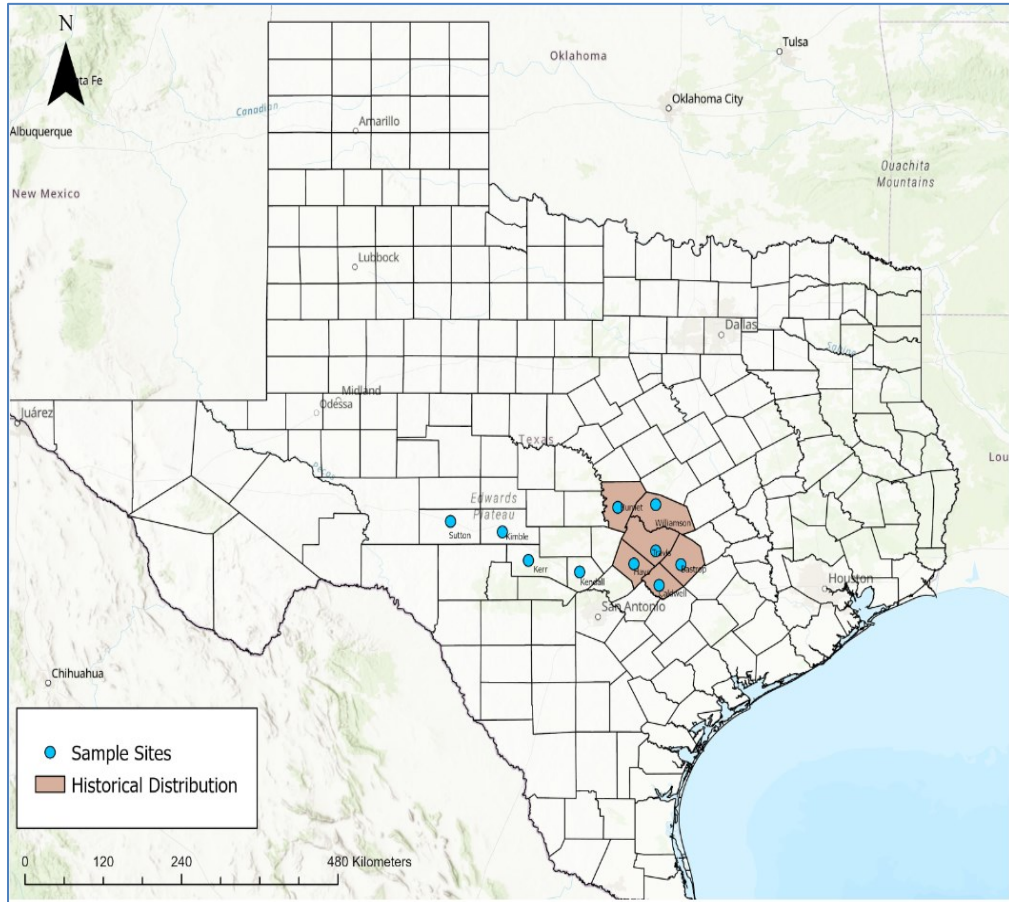
1. Excel "Supplies" tab: list supply type and cost per contract year.
2. Proposal narrative: include clarifying comments.

**A.5 Equipment:** Capital expenses for equipment costing over \$1,000 per item.

1. Excel "Equipment" tab: include name of item, make and model, and cost per contract year.
2. Proposal narrative: include item purpose, direct benefit to the project and other clarifying comments.

**A.6 Indirect Costs:** Indirect costs must be capped at 10 percent (10%) of direct costs. A proposal will be disqualified if indirect costs are not capped at 10 percent (10%). The Comptroller's office does not reimburse the contractor for indirect costs calculated on subcontractor-billed indirect costs.

## ATTACHMENT B



*Figure 2. Example of map of species range and sample sites.*