

# State of Maine Procurement Justification Form

This form must accompany all contract requests and sole source requisitions (RQS) over \$5,000 submitted to the Division of Procurement Services.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please provide the requested information in the white spaces below. All responses (except signatures) must be typed; no hand-written forms will be accepted. See the guidance document posted with this form on the Division of Procurement Services website (Forms page) for additional instructions.

## PART I: OVERVIEW

Department Office/Division/Program:		Inland Fisheries and Wildlife/Wildlife Resource Assessment Section		
Department Contract Administrator or Grant Coordinator:		Adrienne Leppold, Wildlife Biologist Brenda Lord, Wildlife Secretary		
(If applicable) Department Reference #:		N/A		
Amount: (Contract/Amendment/Grant)	\$23,698.00	Advantage CT / RQS #:	CT-09A-20210401*2629	
CONTRACT	Proposed Start Date:	04/30/2021	Proposed End Date:	9/30/2021
AMENDMENT	Original Start Date:		Effective Date:	
	Previous End Date:		New End Date:	
GRANT	Project Start Date:		Grant Start Date:	
	Project End Date:		Grant End Date:	
Vendor/Provider/Grantee Name, City, State:		Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District, 70 East Madison Rd., Skowhegan, ME		
Brief Description of Goods/Services/Grant:		Laura Suomi-Lecker, and the Ag Allies program shall be responsible for working with grassland habitat landowners to manage for and subsequently increase nesting success of target grassland bird species of concern in the state.		

## PART II: JUSTIFICATION FOR VENDOR SELECTION

Mark an "X" before the justification(s) that applies to this request. (Check all that apply.)			
	A. Competitive Process		G. Grant
	B. Amendment		H. State Statute/Agency Directed
X	C. Single Source/Unique Vendor		I. Federal Agency Directed
	D. Proprietary/Copyright/Patents		J. Willing and Qualified
	E. Emergency		K. Client Choice
	F. University Cooperative Project		L. Other Authorization

## PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Please respond to ALL of the following:

- Provide a more detailed description and explain the need for the goods, services or grant to supplement the response in Part I.**

The Ag Allies program focuses on the protection and enhancement of habitat for grassland bird species, most of which are species of special concern in Maine, as well as throughout their North American range. Grassland habitat is disappearing fast (*State of the Birds Report, 2016*, [www.stateofthebirds.org](http://www.stateofthebirds.org), and the birds of our grasslands are disappearing just as fast, with an overall decline of 53% in the last 50 years, the most dramatic loss experienced by any of the major bird families (Rosenberg et al., 2019, *Science*). One third of all grassland species in North America, including the Bobolink (*Dolichonyx*

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*oryzivorus*), are on the 2016 State of the Birds *Watchlist*. This list includes species most at risk of extinction without significant conservation action. In Maine, Bobolinks have declined at a rate of -2.97% annually between 1966 and 2005. This annual decline increases to -3.28% when considering just the most recent decade of data, 2005-2015. Due to these steep declines, Bobolinks and other grassland birds were identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in Maine's 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP, MDIFW).

Grassland birds are adversely affected by habitat loss, vulnerable to human disturbances on both their breeding and wintering grounds, and in need of intervention if we are to reverse these declines. This project aims intervention at breeding grounds in Maine, and in doing so, addresses components of many conservation actions prioritized by the state's 2015 SWAP.

Many of the grassland birds are iconic sights in fields and meadows of Maine in the spring and summer. Bobolinks and other grassland birds are true agricultural allies to Maine farmers, as these birds consume large quantities of both insect and weed pests each growing season. In addition to threats to grassland habitat through re-forestation and development, however, changes in timing and frequency of hay harvesting are hastening grassland bird species decline. Bobolinks, meadowlarks and sparrow species require undisturbed fields for nesting. Early and more frequent haying in recent decades, even on fields not used for hay production, are coinciding with the nesting period, resulting in widespread nesting failure across much of Maine's grassland habitat each year. As such, there is a need for working directly with landowners to find ways to avoid or minimize this impact.

The timing and funding of this project is important because grassland bird species are of immediate conservation concern.

### 2. Provide a brief justification for the selected vendor to supplement the response in Part II.

Since 2016, the provider has worked with local landowners and farmers to increase nesting success of grassland birds through technical assistance, outreach, education, and, when necessary, on-farm incentive payments. The pilot year in 2017 protected 400 acres of inhabited grassland habitat for grassland nesting birds. The program has operated every year since, continuing momentum and enrolling over 600 acres and 29 participants in 2020. Protection of all these acres since 2017 has resulted in the fledging of an estimated 1600 Bobolinks, 475 Savannah Sparrows, and the confirmed fledging of 10 meadowlarks, demonstrating success of this project and the provider.

Farmer and landowner participation are critical to the success of this program, necessitating effective communication to balance competing needs of the landowners while adjusting practices to benefit grassland birds. Landowner participation is completely voluntary, and this provider has a demonstrated history of success effectively working with a variety of participants of varying backgrounds and interests, including land trusts, dairy, beef, horse, and sheep farmers, as well as non-agricultural landowners in Maine.

Given the working relationships with a growing number of farmers across the state, as well as the momentum of several years during which the program was refined to best mesh the needs of land managers and grassland birds, the provider is uniquely suited for this task. Outreach in recent years has also produced a list of landowners state-wide that are interested in participating in the Ag Allies program, with personnel and financial resources being the limiting factor in pursuing expansion of this program until now.

In addition, the provider is contributing the full match amount (35%) required by the funding source (State Wildlife Grants), which eliminates our need to dedicate any state match for the work on this project.

# State of Maine Procurement Justification Form

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### 3. Explain how the negotiated costs or rates are fair and reasonable; or how the funding was allocated to grantee.

The costs for lime, fertilizer, and seeding were given as an average by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Dairy specialist. Mileage is charged at state reimbursement rates. Our staff time was discounted from our usual going rate of \$45/hr to \$40/hr. Furthermore, the provider is supplying nearly \$16,000 in funds for use as match to the grant.

### 4. Describe the plan for future competition for the goods or services.

No other entity has been identified that is undertaking anything similar to this program in the state. If the Department becomes aware of new resources that may be able to complete the tasks associated with this contract in an equally cost-effective manner, we will seek competitive proposals in the future.

## PART IV: APPROVALS

<b>Signature of requesting Department's Commissioner (or designee):</b>	<i>By signing below, I signify that I approve of this procurement request.</i>		
			
<b>Printed Name:</b>	James M Connolly	<b>Date:</b>	4/22/2021
<b>Signature of DAFS Procurement Official:</b>	DocuSigned by: 		
<b>Printed Name:</b>	1DFA565D481F42E... Debbie Jacques	<b>Date:</b>	5/4/2021