

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:		Cory Stearns, Wildlife Biologist Brenda Lord, Wildlife Secretary			
(If applicable) Department Reference #:		N/A			
Amount: (Contract/Amendment/Grant)		\$78,802	Advantage CT / RQS #:	CT09A-20210505*3085	
CONTRACT	Proposed Start Date:	06/14/2021	Proposed End Date:	12/31/2023	
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:		Adrienne Kovach University of New Hampshire 51 College Road Durham, NH 03824			
Brief Description of Goods/Services/Grant:		Technical Support (NEC Survey)			

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:

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

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PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The primary mission of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) is to ensure that wildlife populations in Maine are maintained for future generations of Maine citizens and visitors to enjoy. As such, the recovery of state endangered species is a high priority for our Department. Maine law gives the Commissioner of MDIFW authority to establish programs to recover the population of endangered species to the point where they are no longer endangered. The New England cottontail (NEC) is a Maine State Endangered species and is a former candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. MDIFW is a member of the New England Cottontail Rangewide Initiative, whose members include the state wildlife agencies for the 6 states within the current range of NEC, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service, non-profits, and university researchers. Through the Rangewide Initiative, the Conservation Strategy for the New England Cottontail strategy was established to set priorities and strategies to restore the species.

A critical component of the Conservation Strategy is monitoring the status of the species across its range. To that end, a rangewide monitoring program has been established, and is funded via a regional Pitman-Robertson Grant. However, the monitoring program doesn't meet all of MDIFW's monitoring needs for the species, because it is intended to monitor the same sites (about 60 in Maine) through time to determine the trend in the range-wide population. Therefore, any surveys (e.g. searches for currently unknown populations, monitoring for eastern cottontail expansion, or for review of development projects) conducted outside of the sites included in the range-wide monitoring program must be funded separately. Also, the range-wide monitoring program is based on occupancy modeling in which NEC are determined to be present or absent at a site, with no estimate of the actual number of rabbits being obtained. MDIFW is interested in obtaining population estimates at a subset of sites known to have NEC, which requires additional genetic analysis than species identification. Furthermore, the standard species identification analysis is unable to document hybridization between NEC and eastern cottontails (EC). Two NEC/EC hybrids were confirmed in 2019 in Cape Elizabeth, so MDIFW is interested in monitoring for those individuals and any potential offspring they may have produced. Standard occupancy monitoring also does not provide information on the genetic diversity of the NEC population. Genetic diversity is relatively low in Maine's NEC population, and therefore MDIFW is interested in monitoring genetic diversity to inform management decisions, such as releasing captive bred NEC into existing populations to bring additional genes to our rabbit populations.

Captive breeding of NEC is a core function of the New England Cottontail Initiative. In Maine, captive bred rabbits began being released into the wild in 2017. Determining genetic profiles of captive bred source populations, effective population sizes, founders effects, estimating gender ratios, and monitoring the relatedness of released populations are important needs in managing populations because they inform management decisions concerning when additional rabbits are needed to supplement the population or improve genetic diversity in translocated populations. A captive breeding pen at Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge is jointly managed by New Hampshire Fish and Game and the Refuge. NEC young produced in the pen are released into the wild in Maine and New Hampshire. Genetic analysis for pellets collected during winter surveys, and for rabbits captured in the pen are necessary for management of the population within the pen, and for determining the number and destination of individual rabbits that will be released into the wild.

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

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PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Adrienne Kovach of the University of New Hampshire is the principal investigator of the project. Adrienne and her graduate students have pioneered the techniques to use fecal pellets to identify individual New England cottontail rabbits and identify NEC/EC hybrids, and was the first researcher to confirm hybridization between the species. MDIFW has worked closely with Adrienne for many years, and her research has provided great insight into the status of NEC populations in Maine. Her past research has identified individual rabbits at several locations in Cape Elizabeth and our translocated population at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. These locations are of continued interest to MDIFW for abundance monitoring. Already having data from previous years will allow tracking of rabbits through time, which will provide information on their survival, and reproductive success. Therefore, Adrienne is uniquely qualified to conduct this work.

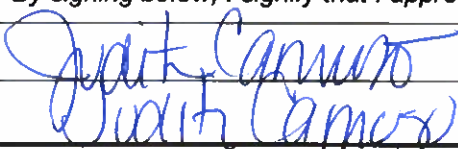

3. Explain how the negotiated costs or rates are fair and reasonable; or how the funding was allocated to grantee.

Researchers at the University of Rhode Island conduct similar work for other parts of the species range, and their fees are similar to the rate proposed by the University of New Hampshire. However, as described above they do not have the extensive research history with Maine's NEC populations.

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

MDIFW will periodically consult with other researchers that provide similar services to ensure that the rates proposed by the University of New Hampshire are reasonable.

PART IV: APPROVALS

Signature of requesting Department's Commissioner (or designee):	<i>By signing below, I signify that I approve of this procurement request.</i>		
			
Printed Name:	Mark Camuso	Date:	6/26/21
Signature of DAFS Procurement Official:	<small>DocuSigned by:</small> 		
Printed Name:	<small>1DFA565D481F42E...</small> Debbie Jacques	Date:	6/10/2021

