

of the U.S. industry, and foreign third parties; and

- How well the proposed technical assistance component assures that performance trials will effectively demonstrate the intended end-use benefit.

Highest priority for funding under this announcement will be given to meritorious proposals that target countries meeting either of the following criteria:

- Per capita income less than \$11,115 (the ceiling on upper middle income economies as determined by the World Bank [World Development Indicators, July 2007]); and population greater than 1 million. Proposals may address suitable regional groupings, for example, the islands of the Caribbean Basin; or

- U.S. market share of imports of the commodity identified in the proposal of 10 percent or less.

Proposals will be evaluated by the applicable FAS Commodity Branches in the Market Development and Grants Management Division. The Commodity Branches will review each proposal against the factors described above. The purpose of this review is to identify meritorious proposals, recommend an appropriate funding level for each proposal based upon these factors, and submit proposals and funding recommendations to the Deputy Administrator, Office of Trade Programs.

2. *Anticipated Announcement Date:* Announcements of funding decisions for QSP are anticipated during October 2008.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. *Award Notices:* FAS will notify each applicant in writing of the final disposition of its application. FAS will send an approval letter and agreement to each approved applicant. The approval letter and agreement will specify the terms and conditions applicable to the project, including the levels of QSP funding, and any cost-share contribution requirements.

2. *Administrative and National Policy Requirements:* The agreements will incorporate the details of each project as approved by FAS. Each agreement will identify terms and conditions pursuant to which CCC will reimburse certain costs of each project. Agreements will also outline the responsibilities of the participant, including, but not limited to, procurement (or arranging for procurement) of the commodity sample at a fair market price, arranging for transportation of the commodity sample within the time limit specified in the agreement (organizations should

endeavor to ship commodities within 6 months of the effective date of agreement), compliance with cargo preference requirements (shipment on United States flag vessels, as required), compliance with the Fly America Act requirements (shipment on United States air carriers, as required), timely and effective implementation of technical assistance, and submission of a written evaluation report within 90 days of expiration of the agreement.

QSP agreements are subject to review and verification by the FAS Compliance, Security and Emergency Planning Division. Upon request, a QSP participant shall provide to CCC the original documents which support the participant's reimbursement claims. CCC may deny a claim for reimbursement if the claim is not supported by adequate documentation.

3. *Reporting:* A written evaluation report must be submitted within 90 days of the expiration of each participant's QSP agreement. Evaluation reports should address all performance measures that were presented in the proposal.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

For additional information and assistance, contact the Grants Management Branch, Foreign Agricultural Service, phone: (202) 690-4058, fax: (202) 690-0193, e-mail: emo@fas.usda.gov.

Signed at Washington, DC on the 2nd of July, 2008.

Michael W. Yost,

Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.

[FR Doc. E8-16368 Filed 7-15-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-10-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Commodity Credit Corporation

Notice of Funds Availability; Inviting Applications for the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program

Announcement Type: New.
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.604.

SUMMARY: The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) announces that it is inviting proposals for the 2009 Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program. The intended effect of this notice is to solicit applications from the private sector and from government agencies for FY 2009 and award funds in October 2008. The TASC program is administered by

personnel of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

DATES: See paragraph IV.4 below for a detailed description of relevant dates.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Entities wishing to apply for funding assistance should contact the Grants Management Branch, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, phone: (202) 720-0866, fax: (202) 690-0193, e-mail: emo@fas.usda.gov. Information is also available on the Foreign Agricultural Service Web site at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/mos/tasc/tasc.asp>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Authority: The TASC program is authorized by section 3205 of Pub. L. 107-171. TASC regulations appear at 7 CFR part 1487.

Purpose: The TASC program is designed to assist U.S. organizations by providing funding for projects that address sanitary, phytosanitary, or related technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops. U.S. specialty crops, for the purpose of the TASC program, are defined to include all cultivated plants, or the products thereof, produced in the United States, except wheat, feed grains, oilseeds, cotton, rice, peanuts, sugar, and tobacco.

As a general matter, TASC program projects should be designed to address the following criteria:

- Projects should address a sanitary, phytosanitary, or related technical barrier that prohibits or threatens the export of U.S. specialty crops;
- Projects should demonstrably benefit the represented industry rather than a specific company or brand; and
- Projects must address barriers to exports of commercially-available U.S. specialty crops for which barrier removal would predominantly benefit U.S. exports.

Examples of expenses that CCC may agree to reimburse under the TASC program include, but are not limited to: Initial pre-clearance programs, export protocol and work plan support, seminars and workshops, study tours, field surveys, development of pest lists, pest and disease research, database development, reasonable logistical and administrative support, and travel and per diem expenses.

II. Award Information

In general, all qualified proposals received before the specified application deadlines will compete for funding. The limited funds and the range of barriers affecting the exports of U.S. specialty

crops worldwide preclude CCC from approving large budgets for individual projects.

Applicants may submit multiple proposals, and applicants with previously approved TASC proposals may apply for additional funding. Please see 7 CFR part 1487 for additional restrictions.

FAS will consider providing either grant funds as direct assistance to U.S. organizations or technical assistance on behalf of U.S. organizations, provided that the organization submits timely and qualified proposals. FAS will review all proposals against the evaluation criteria contained in the program regulations.

Funding for successful proposals will be provided through specific agreements. These agreements will incorporate the proposal as approved by FAS. FAS must approve in advance any subsequent changes to the project. FAS or another Federal agency may be involved in the implementation of approved projects.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants: Any United States organization, private or government, with a demonstrated role or interest in exporting U.S. agricultural commodities may apply to the program. Government organizations consist of Federal, State, and local agencies. Private organizations include non-profit trade associations, universities, agricultural cooperatives, state regional trade groups, and private companies.

Foreign organizations, whether government or private, may participate as third parties in activities carried out by U.S. organizations, but are not eligible for funding assistance from the program.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching: FAS considers the applicant's willingness to contribute resources, including cash, goods, and services of the U.S. industry and foreign third parties, when determining which proposals are approved for funding.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Application through the Unified Export Strategy (UES): Organizations are encouraged to submit their applications to FAS through the UES application Internet Web site. Using the UES application process reduces paperwork and expedites FAS' processing and review cycle. Applicants planning to use the UES Internet-based system must contact FAS Program Policy Staff on (202) 720-4327 to obtain site access information including a user ID and password. The UES Internet-based application, including a help file

containing step-by-step instructions for its use, may be found at the following URL address: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/cooperators.html>.

2. Application through electronic and hard copies: Applicants also have the option of submitting electronic versions in the UES format (along with two paper copies) of their applications to FAS by e-mail or on compact disc. The application format is available on the Internet at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/mos/tasc/proposals.html>.

3. Content and Form of Application Submission: All TASC proposals must contain complete information about the proposed projects as described in § 1487.5(b) of the TASC program regulations. In addition, in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's policy directive (68 FR 38402 (June 27, 2003)) regarding the need to identify entities that are receiving government awards, all applicants must submit a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. An applicant may request a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS number request line on 1-866-705-5711.

Incomplete applications and applications which do not otherwise conform to this announcement will not be accepted for review.

4. Submission Dates and Times: TASC funding is limited, and in order to assure sufficient resources are available to meet unanticipated needs during the fiscal year, TASC proposals will, generally, only be evaluated on a semi-annual basis. That is:

- Proposals received prior to, but not later than, 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, August 15, 2008, will be considered for funding with other proposals received by that date;
- Proposals not approved for funding during the review period will be reconsidered for funding after the review period only if the applicant specifically requests such reconsideration in writing, and only if funding remains available;
- Proposals received after 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, August 15, 2008, will be considered for funding only if funding remains available.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a proposal may be submitted for expedited consideration under the TASC Quick Response process if, in addition to meeting all requirements of the TASC program, a proposal clearly identifies a time-sensitive activity. In these cases, a proposal may be submitted at any time for an expedited evaluation.

FAS will track the time and date of receipt of all proposals.

5. Funding Restrictions: Although funded projects may take place in the United States, all eligible projects must specifically address sanitary, phytosanitary, or technical barriers to the export of U.S. specialty crops.

Certain types of expenses are not eligible for reimbursement by the program, such as the costs of market research, advertising, or other promotional expenses. CCC will also not reimburse unreasonable expenditures or any expenditure made prior to approval of a proposal.

6. Other Submission Requirements: All Internet-based applications must be properly submitted by 5 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time, on August 15, 2008, to be considered.

All applications on diskette (with two accompanying paper copies) and any other applications must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, on August 15, 2008, at the following address:

Hand Delivery (including FedEx, DHL, UPS, etc.): U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Grants Management Branch, Portals Office Building, Suite 400, 1250 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20024.

V. Application Review Information

1. Criteria: FAS follows the evaluation criteria set forth in § 1487.6 of the TASC regulations.

2. Review and Selection Process: FAS will review proposals for eligibility and will evaluate each proposal against the factors referred to above. The purpose of this review is to identify meritorious proposals, recommend an appropriate funding level for each proposal based upon these factors, and submit the proposals and funding recommendations to the Deputy Administrator, Office of Trade Programs and the Administrator, FAS. FAS may, when appropriate, request the assistance of other U.S. government subject area experts in evaluating the merits of a proposal.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices: FAS will notify each applicant in writing of the final disposition of its application. FAS will send an approval letter and agreement to each approved applicant. The approval letter and agreement will specify the terms and conditions applicable to the project, including levels of funding, timelines for implementation, and written evaluation requirements.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements: The agreements will incorporate the details of each project as approved by FAS. Each agreement will

identify terms and conditions pursuant to which CCC will reimburse certain costs of each project. Agreements will also outline the responsibilities of the participant. Interested parties should review the TASC program regulations found at 7 CFR part 1487 in addition to this announcement.

3. *Reporting:* TASC participants are required to submit a written report(s), on no less than an annual basis, and a final report, each of which evaluates their TASC project using the performance measures presented in the approved proposal.

VII. Agency Contact

For additional information or assistance, contact the Grants Management Branch, Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, phone: (202) 720-0866, fax: (202) 690-0193, e-mail: emo@fas.usda.gov.

Signed at Washington, DC, on the 2nd of July, 2008.

Michael W. Yost,

Administrator, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Kalispell Line Valve 5 to 6 Loop Natural Gas Pipeline Project, Flathead National Forest, Flathead County, MT

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice: Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a proposal by NorthWestern Energy (NWE) to construct and operate a loop natural gas pipeline on the Hungry Horse Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest. The new loop pipeline would be installed underground and generally parallel Highway 2 and an existing natural gas transmission line currently authorized to NWE under a Forest Service special use permit (SUP). NWE proposes to construct approximately 12 miles of 12-inch diameter steel pipe from an existing natural gas valve station near Marias Pass on the Continental Divide westward to another existing valve station near the junction of Bear Creek and the Middle Fork Flathead River. The SUP would be amended to include the new loop pipeline. The project area is

approximately 25 miles SW of Browning, Montana and approximately 50 highway miles SE of Columbia Falls, Montana.

DATES: Substantive comments regarding the proposal and the scope of the analysis should be received in writing on or before July 31, 2008. The draft EIS (DEIS) is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and made available for public review in October 2008. When the DEIS is available a Notice of Availability (NOA) will be published in the **Federal Register**. The final EIS (FEIS) is expected to be published in February 2009.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Jimmy DeHerrera, District Ranger. The mailing address is Hungry Horse Ranger District, P.O. Box 190340, Hungry Horse, Montana 59919. Electronic comments may be e-mailed to comments-northern-flathead-hungry-horse-glacier-view@fs.fed.us with "Kalispell Line Valve 5 to 6 Loop Natural Gas Pipeline Project" in the subject line and must be submitted in MS Word (*.doc), rich text format (*.rtf), or portable document format (*.pdf). Comments received in response to this request will be available for public inspection and will be released in their entirety if requested, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Ondov, Project Manager, Flathead National Forest, 650 Wolfack Way, Kalispell, MT 59901, (406) 758-5364.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose and need for this project is to increase capacity and supply and to maintain reliable natural gas service to the Kalispell and Flathead Valley area of northwestern Montana. The integrity of the existing 10-inch diameter pipeline, constructed in 1962, is good, but NWE projects that its capacity will be reached within two years due to the continuing strong population growth in the Flathead Valley area. The existing pipeline is the Flathead Valley's only source of natural gas. During the past several years, the demand for natural gas has increased in western Montana as a result of steady population and economic growth. Kalispell, the largest town to be serviced by the proposed pipeline, grew from a population of 11,917 in 1990 to 19,432 in 2006.

Proposed Action

The proposed action includes construction and the long-term operation and maintenance of approximately 12 miles of 12-inch

diameter steel pipe from an existing natural gas valve station near Marias Pass on the Continental Divide westward to another existing valve station near the junction of Bear Creek and the Middle Fork Flathead River. Approximately 11 miles of the new pipeline would be on National Forest System land and one mile would be on private lands in the central portion of the project area. The project area lies within the Hungry Horse Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest.

The new loop pipeline would be installed underground and generally parallel the existing natural gas pipeline that is currently authorized under a SUP to NWE. NWE would attempt to build the new pipeline as close as feasibly and technically possible to the existing line, but may have to diverge in some locations due to terrain, BNSF railroad tracks, highway right-of-way (ROW), environmental concerns, other utilities, engineering needs, or other technical factors. A portion of the new pipeline may need to be constructed in an inventoried roadless area due to a combination of these factors.

The authorized ROW for the existing pipeline in this area is 50 feet wide. The proposed action would require up to an additional temporary 50-foot wide working ROW to construct the new pipeline, with a final 50-80 foot total long-term operational ROW. The proposed action would, wherever possible, utilize the existing cleared, authorized 50 foot ROW to minimize the amount of new vegetation clearing and to combine maintenance access points. Pipeline operations require that the ROW remain free of heavy tree cover. Within the ROW, native forbs and shrubs would be maintained for the lifespan of the pipeline. Noxious weeds would be monitored and abated throughout the lifespan of the authorized use. The total new area affected for the 11 miles of ROW on National Forest land would be less than approximately 70 acres.

Underground installation would be conducted to comply with Department of Transportation (49 CFR 192.327) and NWE standards. Pipeline burial depths would allow for 42 inches of soil cover in normal soil, 60 inches at stream crossings, and 48 inches near public roads and railroads. Bedrock installations would be covered to a depth of 30 inches.

Areas of temporary disturbance would include temporary use areas for equipment and materials staging and construction access routes. Some of these would be on private lands. Native grasses and herbaceous plants would be restored in all areas where ground