COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNIT
REQUESTS FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST

To conduct a project entitled
Monitoring Bird Communities at Parks in the Northern Great Plains

April 24, 2026

Responses to this request for Statement of Interest (SOI) will be used to identify a lead for a project to be funded by the National Park Service (NPS) for purposes of bird community monitoring at the Northern Great Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network (NGPN).

PROJECT TITLE

Monitoring Bird Communities at Parks in the Northern Great Plains

DEADLINE

We request that Statements of Interest be submitted by Friday, May 08, 2026, 5:00 pm MT. This Request for Statements of Interest will remain open until that time.

CONTACT

Direct questions and statements of interest to: Jonathan Harris, jonathan_harris@nps.gov, 605-341-2807.

BACKGROUND

The Northern Great Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network (NGPN) supports natural resources monitoring for 13 parks located in the northern Great Plains (ND, SD, WY, NE). Landbirds are considered an important indicator (or "vital sign") of habitats because they are sensitive to changes in their environment, such as alterations in vegetation structure. All 13 parks have been surveyed for landbirds annually since 2013. In 2027 and 2028, we are continuing this work by completing repeat surveys within each park under a standard sampling protocol developed by NGPN. The data collected will be used be used by park resource managers to understand their landbird communities, current habitat conditions, and potentially identify habitat management actions that are likely to increase bird abundance and species richness.

Key questions this work will inform include:
-What is the current composition of the landbird community?
-What are the differences in occupancy and density among species?
-What habitat covariates significantly affect landbird occupancy, abundance/density, species richness, and evenness?

Deliverables to parks include raw data, species-specific estimates in occupancy and density, identification of environmental covariates that meaningfully impact species-specific (e.g., occupancy, abundance) and community-level (e.g., richness, evenness) metrics, and reports on landbird community composition.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ANTICIPATED WORK

The NGPN requires landbird monitoring surveys at 13 parks in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and eastern Wyoming during each breeding season (May-August). Surveys will occur at pre-determined sampling locations and will follow a formal sampling protocol developed by NGPN. The estimated total effort per field season will be 12-14 weeks of data collection across the 13 park units. Data collected will include detections of birds by sight and sound, detection covariates (e.g., wind, time of day), and habitat data, including overstory, shrub, and herbaceous cover. Data collected under the sampling protocol will produce estimations of species-specific occupancy and abundance, and community level metrics (e.g., species richness, evenness), while accounting for habitat covariates. Modeling frameworks are flexible but may include time-to-detection models for estimations of species-specific occupancy and hierarchical distance sampling to estimate species- and community-level abundances.

Key component:

-Data collected at 13 parks in the northern Great Plains in 2027 and 2028.
-Data undergo QA/QC and made available to all parks and NGPN
-Data summary reports will be provided to NGPN by November 30th of each survey year (annual reports) and at the end of the period of performance (final report).

KEY PRODUCTS

-Tabular data collected using the NGPN Landbird Monitoring Protocol meeting NPS QA/QC standards (NPS Data Publication Best Practices - Home). Data files should include metadata that provides overview information (title, abstract, authors, and content begin/end dates), along with the field names, definitions, and lookup values for each dataset column.

-An annual data summary report each year, outlining a project narrative, detailed methods, results (i.e., data summaries), and a brief discussion of notable findings (for an example see: North Coast and Cascades Network landbird monitoring: Report for the 2023 field season).

-Workspaces, model objects, and/or code necessary to independently reproduce results. d. Scripts as separate standalone files (R, Python, or other) used to analyze the data and the scripts used to produce figures and estimates in the report. Include datasets (raw or preliminary is fine) used by the submitted scripts.

- A final report using Microsoft Word Science Report Series template (Science Report Template and User Guide) documenting the project narrative, methods, and results and, if relevant, discussing implications of findings in relation to park management issues addressed by the project. The methods should have sufficient detail that readers can determine if the resulting data are suitable for their intended purposes, and so that the park could repeat this survey in the future to estimate changes over time including criteria used for project site selection. All figures used should be embedded in the document, include alt-text, and be submitted as standalone files. Preferred stand-alone file types are .jpg/.jpeg or .tif for photos and .pdf, .eps, or .ai for all other figures.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

Each field season will be reported by November 30th of each year in the form of Annual Reports, but the full period of performance for this Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Cooperative Agreement will be up to November 30, 2028.

MATERIALS REQUESTED FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST

Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to jonathan_harris@nps.gov
(Maximum length: 7 pages, single-spaced 12 pt. font).

1. Name, affiliation and contact information.
2. Brief Statement of Qualifications including:
    a. Biographical Sketch
    b. Relevant past projects and clients with brief descriptions of these projects - demonstrated results including links to published works.
    c. Staff, faculty or students available to work on this project and their areas of expertise.
3. A detailed study proposal that summarizes strategy, approach, and special capabilities, timelines, roles and responsibilities of personnel, specific tasks to be conducted, and deliverables. Please be as specific as possible.
4. A detailed cost estimate of the proposed work to include a breakdown of all labor, materials, and travel (see attached worksheet).

FUNDS AVAILABLE AND ELIGIBILITY

We are intending to use fiscal year 2026 funds for this project. A total budget of $225,000–275,000 inclusive of 17.5% Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) indirect costs is anticipated to be available to fund 2026 and 2027 work. NPS is actively seeking additional funds for this effort, which likely will be available in subsequent years, and the cooperator needs to be able to scale up or extend the project if additional funds become available. Non-federal partners of any CESU network are eligible to apply. Entities that are eligible and willing to join a CESU network prior to the final award are also eligible to apply.

REVIEW

Statements of Interest will be evaluated based on qualifications and experience of the principal investigator, and project team and proposed approach. Based on review of the Statements of Interest, a principal investigator will be invited to prepare a full application.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Sought

- Knowledge of avian ecology and the species commonly found in the northern Great Plains.
- Experience in surveying birds by sight and sound, particularly for species occurring in the northern Great Plains.
- Demonstrated ability to work as part of a large team of scientists and land managers to communicate project findings in a way that results in actionable management strategies.
- Special experience and knowledge of modeling occupancy, density, and other statistical approaches that account for imperfect detection.
- Special experience and knowledge of bird survey methodology and experimental design.
- Data visualization and R Markdown experience are preferred but not required.