



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF TRIBAL + ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY & TULARE BASIN

TRIBAL FACILITATOR & CONTENT CREATOR SERVICES

River Partners seeks a qualified contractor(s) to provide Tribal facilitation and content creator services for the San Joaquin & Tulare Basin Tribal Land Stewardship Vision Project. Our goal is to expand our engagement and craft a strategy to align and elevate Tribal priorities around land and water access, conservation goals, geographic focus, and long-term stewardship of natural lands. This initiative centers on understanding the deep connections Tribes have to floodplains, riverways, and the native plants and animals of the San Joaquin and Tulare Basins and supporting Tribal aspirations to grow in their role as long-term stewards of these lands.

Products from this project are expected to be communications tools for general or specific audiences, but the specific form of such tools (for example video, art, story map, writing, etc.) will be driven by the Tribal participants' vision, strictly adhering to desired confidentiality of participants.

Our goal is to deepen articulation and collective knowledge about:

- 1) the historical interdependence and sustaining stewardship of Tribes and Native Californian cultures with San Joaquin Valley rivers and tributaries, wetlands and other natural ecosystems;
- 2) historic and desired future Tribal cultural uses of floodplains and wetlands, native plants and animals, and rivers and streams; and
- 3) opportunities and limitations for Tribal-led ecological and cultural stewardship on conserved and restored natural lands in the San Joaquin and Tulare Basins.

Respondents will be familiar with Tribal relationships in the San Joaquin and Tulare Basin regions and will have a deep understanding of Tribal customs and communication styles. All participants will be empowered to enter into non-disclosure agreements as desired. Respondents can submit a proposal for either Tribal facilitator services, Tribal content creator services, or both.

Understanding the sensitivity of Tribal knowledge, the project manager and contractor(s) will ensure the data and information generated from the project includes clear Tribal permissions for

distribution, handling, storage, and public availability.

Upon hiring, River Partners and the selected contractor(s) will identify an outreach strategy that includes potential participants and goals of engagement as well as a strategy to define the target products from this project which may include story map(s), video(s), writings, art or other media. River Partners' communications, acquisition, and restoration planning teams will assist with the project and provide conservation overlays, connection to wildlife and ecosystem experts, and knowledge about the multi-benefit floodplain reconnection potentials along SJV and Tulare Basin rivers and streams.

River Partners will enter into a contract with a selected contractor(s) based on their response to this RFP. The contract will have a term not to exceed March 30, 2026. River Partners is seeking contractors to work under the terms and conditions of a prime funding agreement provided by the California Wildlife Conservation Board (which can be provided on request). The total available funding for this work is \$125,000. Additional funds may be available to compensate participants in the project. Costs for preparing the RFP are the sole responsibility of the respondent. River Partners will not be responsible for reimbursement for time or expenses incurred in the preparation of responses to this RFP.

The contractor(s) selected through this RFP solicitation will prepare a detailed Scope of Work describing the specific services and deliverables to be provided during the initial period of performance.

Contractor services sought under this RFP may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Plan Tribal outreach and stewardship vision for the San Joaquin Valley
Within the first quarter of the project, work with River Partners and Tribal partners to develop a project plan. The plan will include data and information gathering, participant invitations and compensation negotiation, recruiting participation from recognized and unrecognized tribes, developing clear goals for participation, identifying product(s) to be created, and articulating a strategy for parallel engagement.
- Execution of Tribal stewardship vision project
Upon approval of the Plan described above, the contractor(s) will execute the plan, which is expected to include activities such as: outreach to tribes and partners, data and information sharing, facilitation of meetings with Tribes and other participants, regular in-person and virtual meetings, meeting facilitation including agendas, notes and action items, creation of draft and intermediary communications pieces, soliciting review and feedback for draft products, and creation of final product(s).
- Project Management:
The contractor(s) will negotiate a funding agreement with River Partners subject

to the terms and conditions of the prime funding agreement (with the Wildlife Conservation Board) and including such items as a scope, budget, timeline, and description of deliverables. Throughout the term of the project, the contractor(s) will invoice for work performed and provide progress reports per the negotiated agreement. In addition, the contractor(s) will comply with necessary organizational and project management requirements including tracking hours and expenses, communicating regularly with River Partners regarding progress and obstacles, and complying with labor codes and other employment regulations.

1. Background and Geographic Focus

[River Partners](#) gives new life to rivers. Our mission is to bring life back to rivers by creating wildlife habitat for the benefit of people and the environment. River Partners envisions interconnected, thriving floodplains that sustain abundant wildlife, support productive farmland, preserve freshwater resources, enhance surrounding communities, and serve as the first line of ecological defense in a changing climate. Since 1998 River Partners has pioneered the use of agricultural techniques combined with ecological science to re-introduce critical habitat in California on a scale not undertaken by any other organization. Our practices establish self-sustaining forests from seeds in just three years. We are a 501c3 nonprofit organization with expertise in conservation land and water acquisition, habitat restoration and management, natural lands management, and public agency coordination.

There is little disagreement that ecosystem restoration and water sustainability for the San Joaquin Valley and Tulare Basin requires considerable retirement of irrigated agricultural land, and that such landscape transformation provides an opportunity for community enrichment improving air and water quality, recovering lost biodiversity, increasing community access to natural spaces, and increasing Tribal access to natural resources that underpin Native Californian cultural practices such as basketry and art, food, regalia, ceremony, and song. River Partners has been working amongst many regional collaboratives for two decades to identify and entitle willing-seller land transactions along river corridors and floodplains in the San Joaquin Valley to meet multiple objectives of public interest such as flood safety, groundwater recharge, and recovery of threatened and endangered species. Often, River Partners works with state and federal agencies that have the capacity and funding to manage restored lands as part of their existing network of public lands, such as the National Wildlife Refuge system, California State Parks, and regional river parkways. Typically, these agencies will have funding structures in place to facilitate long-term operational needs and manage public access. River Partners seeks to broaden the network of possible long-term land and water stewards for restored areas and build interest and strategies for long-term stewardship with San Joaquin Valley Tribes. Riverside lands are often the most important lands to Native people – rivers serving as the transportation pathways, supermarkets, and gardens for thousands of years and countless generations of families and Tribes. But Native Californians have been removed from these areas systematically and often violently to make room for our current land and water uses – many of which have damaged ecological health and constrained the rivers' natural functions of flooding and aquifer recharge. Tribal stewardship of

restored riverside lands is a vital long-term strategy for recovering river ecosystems and Native Californian cultures as Tribal land and water use can be closely aligned with or even dependent upon natural ecosystem health.

In the past 20 years, River Partners and our project partners working across the San Joaquin Valley have struggled to find productive relationships with tribes to discuss and entitle long-term stewardship options not because of lack of interest but because of lack of capacity. Renewed communication from State leaders in recent years is creating more Tribal interest and identifying new partnerships in the SJV. Through this project, we hope to compensate San Joaquin Valley and Tulare Basin Tribes and Tribal representatives for their time to engage in developing a vision and strategy for long-term stewardship of restored riverside and wetland ecosystems.

The amount of publicly available data regarding California Tribes' historic use of floodplain lands, riverways, and plants and animals native to these lands in the SJV & Tulare Basin is limited. This project aims to collect data needed to make informed decisions about land use and possible transfer. The project will establish a Tribal outreach strategy that includes potential participants and goals of engagement. The outreach strategy will include outreach to all Tribes (both recognized and unrecognized) in the project area, including but not limited to the affiliated Tribes of the Miwok, Northern Valley Yokuts, Southern Valley Yokuts, Foothill Yokuts, Kitanemuk, and Kawaiisu. The content creator will generate a final deliverable that is both data-driven, visually engaging, and approved by Tribes for public audiences.

Mapping has been a very sensitive topic and approach to strategic planning for ecosystem restoration and cultural preservation across the San Joaquin Valley – there are simultaneously concerns about identifying the locations of known historic sites and resources, known populations of endangered species, and known locations of high priority conservation lands and river reaches for fear of what little remains being targeted for development or over-use, degradation, or for conservation planning to be identified as a potential property taking. The willingness of private landowners to participate in conservation transactions requires discretion and trust, which can be harmed by specific mapping exercises. Despite these fears, visual representations of riverside lands and their functions and values can be a very powerful tool to bring many groups, including conservationists and public lands managers, into alignment about a future condition of the valley that centers on connected restored ecosystems and cultures.

1. Desired Qualifications

Specific desired qualifications include:

- Exceptional subject matter expertise
- A solid understanding of Tribal relationships in this San Joaquin and Tulare Basin regions, Tribal customs and communication styles
- Experience providing effective presentation of complex information to the public and general audiences
- Experience in graphic design, layout, illustration, photo and video editing
- Examples of project success
- Sound judgement
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in both internal corporate practices, as well as in a commitment to workforce equity in the selection of subcontractors and procurement

2. Instructions for Submittals

Respondents must submit proposals in digital (i.e. PDF) format. Hard copy submittals will not be accepted. Proposals must be submitted to: info@riverpartners.org with the Subject Line: "Tribal Facilitator & Content Creator RFP Response."

Proposals must be received electronically by **November 22nd, 2024**. A response will be provided for all proposals received successfully.

The proposal package shall include:

1. Cover letter indicating a primary contact for the proposal and that person's title, address, phone number and email address.
2. List of references including names, titles, addresses and phone numbers, preferably clients (not including River Partners) for whom similar work has been performed within the past three (3) years. Not to exceed one (1) page.
3. Resume not to exceed two (2) pages.

3. RFP Questions

River Partners staff will not respond to telephone questions about the RFP. Questions concerning this RFP must be submitted via email to info@riverpartners.org. Questions must be submitted by **November 6, 2024**, and must have the Subject Line: "Envisioning Tribal Stewardship RFP Questions." If you have a question, please follow this procedure to ensure consistency of answers. Any information obtained by speaking one-on-one with a staff person is not considered an official response for the purposes of this process.

4. Selection Process

River Partners will evaluate submittals based on the following criteria:

	SELECTION CRITERIA	MAXIMUM POINTS
1.	Professional experience in performing services of similar nature and scope as those described in the RFP	30
2.	Quality and relevance of recently completed or ongoing work and associated references.	15
3.	Cost Competitiveness	35
4.	Qualifications, education, and experience	10
5.	Demonstrated clarity, high-quality writing, and polished presentation in proposal submission.	10
	Total Possible Points	100

5. Timeline:

October 25, 2024	RFP Release
November 6, 2024	Deadline for submittal of questions on RFP (by 5:00 PM Pacific Time)
November 13, 2024	Deadline for responses to questions
November 22, 2024	Deadline for receipt of responses to RFP (by 5:00 PM Pacific Time)
December 4, 2024 <i>(anticipated)</i>	Final selection and notification to all applicants