

Beaverhead Conservation District

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Request for Proposals Elkhorn Mine and Mill Remediation

Notice is hereby given pursuant to this Request for Quotation (this “RFQ”) that proposals/bids for the project described below (the “Project”) will be received by the Beaverhead Conservation District (“BCD”) up to the hour of 1:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time on 4/17/2025, following which the proposals/bids will be evaluated by the Beaverhead Conservation District pursuant to their Procurement Policy.

Background: The U.S. Forest Service manages the historic Elkhorn Mine and Mill CERCLA Site located on National Forest System (NFS) lands in the Pioneer Mountains approximately 21 miles south of Wise River, Montana. The Elkhorn Mine was discovered in 1872 and included over 24,000 feet of underground workings by its initial closure in the 1930s. During operation, the nine vein systems produced 1,013 ounces of gold, 180,843 ounces of silver, 4,100 pounds of zinc, 370,799 pounds of copper, and 851,725 pounds of lead.

Following a period of renewed interest and exploration drilling in the 1980s, the Elkhorn Mine was completely abandoned by the mid 1990’s and constituted both an important cultural resource and an environmental and human health liability.

From 1998 – 2005, the Forest Service completed a series of actions to reduce human health and environmental hazards at the site. Phase I focused on stabilization of the waste rock dump and removal of mill tailings from the historic stream channel and floodplain adjacent to the mill site. The tailings were placed in an engineered repository located approximately 3 miles north of the mine. Phase II removed additional floodplain tailings and reconstructed 3,320 feet of Elkhorn Creek to a low gradient, meandering channel. Phase III included removal of contaminated building materials, creosote containing barrels, and mill tailings in and around the former mill building. Not all of the tailings were removed because the mill building was being demolished by its private owner, complicating the removal effort. Phase IV (2005) addressed safety concerns associated with the 1000-Level Adit by stabilizing the portal (underground entrance) and installing a locking gate to reduce public endangerment.

In 2008, the Elkhorn-Coolidge Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since that time, the site has remained a popular attraction for tourists on the Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway. Some of the remaining mine and mill facilities have deteriorated to a point where they pose physical safety hazards. In addition, the area and floodplain surrounding the mill is largely devoid of vegetation and contaminated with heavy metals. This poses a public health risk and contributes substantial pollutant loads (arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, zinc, etc.) to Elkhorn Creek. In addition, the soil capped waste rock pile and acid mine drainage (AMD) from the 1000-Level Adit continue to degrade surface and groundwater resources in the watershed. Additional cultural resource enhancement and CERCLA removal and restoration work is needed to reduce human exposure to contaminants, improve the visitor experience in terms of interpretation and interaction with the historic resources at the site, and improve water quality and fisheries in Elkhorn Creek and the Wise River.

Responsibilities of the Contractor: The purpose of this work is to support and advise the Forest Service and coordinate and manage their ongoing work to characterize contamination at the Elkhorn Mine and Mill site (Project). This work involves the design and construction of an appropriate remedy to remove contamination sources from entering nearby Elkhorn Creek and from areas easily accessible to the recreating public. This includes fully implementing the Project as more specifically described in the USFS Environmental Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA), the applicable Action Memorandum, and any amendments thereto, to remediate the release or threatened release of hazardous substances at the Site. The following work items will lead to final cleanup plans, drawings, specifications, and costs estimates that can be used to implement the work.

Contractor will:

- 1). Continue to review, compile, organize, archive, and make available existing site records.
- 2). Conduct ongoing stakeholder and community outreach.
- 3). Conduct cultural resource studies, assessments, and consultation in support of site characterization activities and development of removal action alternatives, which may include pilot projects of innovative remedy alternatives.
- 4). If necessary, refine or expand upon previous solid waste characterization efforts to document nature and extent of waste rock, residual and dispersed mill tailings, and contaminated sediments in streams, floodplains, settling ponds, etc.

- 5). As necessary, conduct water resource monitoring and research to identify impacts to water quality as well as the physical stream characteristics and biota in Elkhorn Creek.
- 6). Complete additional technical studies, investigations, engineering evaluations / cost analysis, etc. which will lead to the development of a preferred removal and restoration action.
- 7). Complete additional technical studies, investigations, engineering assessments, etc. which will lead to the development of an accurate site model depicting water movement through the underground mine system and discharge from the 1000-Level Adit.
- 8). Based on the additional information, hire a qualified environmental engineering firm to develop conceptual and final engineering designs and cost estimates for future removal and restoration actions, including any cultural resource mitigations or enhancements that are developed during the CERCLA process.
- 9) Coordinate with Forest archaeologist and State Historic Preservation Office to ensure remedy design complies with and adequately mitigates for the integrity of cultural resources on the site.

Additional Duties include:

- a) Perform ongoing community relations activities in consultation and coordination with the U.S. Forest Service.
- b) Continue to seek outside funding to complete work at Elkhorn which furthers the development of reclamation and restoration plans.
- c) Attend and actively participate in project planning and coordination meetings which are held 2-3 times per year.
- d) Work with the U.S. Forest Service to develop statements of work and contracting documents for technical studies, investigations, engineering evaluations / cost analysis reports, or removal and restoration engineering design work
- e) Assist Beaverhead Conservation District with grant reporting and subcontractor procurement.
- f) Provide, as requested and as needed by the U.S. Forest Service, programmatic, contracting, and field support for activities including but not limited to:
 - i. contamination characterization (soils, sediments, surface water, groundwater) and treatability studies
 - ii. surface water and groundwater monitoring, including biological surveys

- iii. cultural resource inventory, assessments, and coordination/consultation with agencies
- iv. geological and water resource mapping
- v. technical hydrogeologic or other groundwater investigations to understand fate and transport of contaminants
- vi. georeferencing of historic mine maps and development of 3-D model of underground mine workings
- vii. development of engineering plans, drawings, specifications, and other bid package documents necessary to contract for completion of the preferred removal and restoration activities.

Tasks:

Task 1: Improve water quality of Elkhorn Creek.

Objective 1: Mechanically remove 51,000 bank cubic yards of metals contaminated soils and waste rock from the 3 identified AOCs. Project oversight will ensure that the designed volume of contaminated sediments is excavated from the site.

Objective2: Establish native vegetative cover on excavated soils, returning the site to a naturalized state following construction.

Task 2: Prevent the future release of hazardous compounds into the air, soil or water.

Objective 1: Dig out a repository adjacent to existing repository following designed specifications

Objective 2: Haul and dump waste material into repository site, lined and capped as described in design specifications.

Task 3: Ensure a safe and educational visitation experience for the general public.

Objective 1: Assess integrity/safety of Mill building structure. Design and oversee stabilization of structure to withstand mechanical removal of waste below and around structure as well as high volume of visitation from general public.

Objective 2: Reopen Elkhorn Mine and Mill to the public with improved wayfinding, trails systems and interpretive signage explaining the site's past, and its remedy.

Work Dates and Requirements

Project must be completed by August 30, 2027

Proposals must include:

1. Cost per task (1-3)
2. Narrative explanation of your approach to the project, design considerations and estimated schedule for completing the work, including a start and end date for each task.
3. Description of projects of similar scope completed and/or relevant experience that qualifies you or your firm's ability to complete the work.
4. A brief description of your project team members and their qualifications.

Proposals may be submitted electronically to: Jess Fields at BeaverheadCD@gmail.com by 1 p.m. Mountain Time on 4/17/2025