REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Title: Haw River State Trail Master Plan Corridor Study

RFQ: 27-Q003

Issue Date: October 19, 2026

Submittal Deadline: November 24, 2026, 4:00PM

Issuing Agency: Alamance County Recreation and Parks Department

Contract Amount: Up to $150,000

Purchasing Contact: Charles Bullard. Purchasing Manager

Email: Charles.Bullard@alamancecountync.gov

Phone: 336-570-4072

Introduction

Alamance County and the Friends of the Haw River State Trail are seeking qualifications from experienced consulting firms to develop a comprehensive Master Plan corridor study for paddle and land trails along the Haw River. The study area encompasses portions of Rockingham, Guilford, Alamance, Orange, and Chatham counties. Haw River State Trail project partners include local and county governments, non-profit organizations and advocacy groups. Alamance County has made significant progress over the past 20 years and currently has approximately 23 miles of hiking trail along the river and 12 paddle access locations. The study will largely focus on closing the gaps between different sections of trail and any other paddle access opportunities. Chatham County does not have any trail built but they do have paddle access locations. They had a feasibility study completed in 2024 and this additional study would revisit opportunities and adjust recommendations based on progress that has occurred since then. For Rockingham, Guilford, and Orange County, this study will assess trail opportunities, length of potential trails, number of paddle accesses, and identify any other opportunities for land and paddle trail

amenities. Most of these counties have inventories of existing resources and amenities that can be shared to support and expedite the planning process.

Project Purpose

The Master Plan corridor study will serve as a guiding document to enhance recreational access, connectivity, environmental stewardship, economic development and regional collaboration along the Haw River.

Scope of Work

The selected consultant will be responsible for delivering a comprehensive, data-driven study including assessments of existing conditions, stakeholder engagement, concept development, interjurisdictional coordination, and full final deliverables. The selected consultant shall provide all labor, materials, analysis, mapping, stakeholder engagement, facilitation, reporting, and related professional services necessary to complete the project.

Task 1: Facilitation of Meetings

Consultant will facilitate a series of meetings with project partners. Facilitation of meetings includes scheduling, engaging participants, preparing meeting agendas, and summaries and ensuring that meetings are productive and yield results that serve to advance the final study and plan. Meetings may be held both in person and virtually.

At a minimum, the consultant shall facilitate:

- One project kickoff meeting;
- Three to five project partner working sessions;
- Public engagement opportunities as determined by project partners;
- One final presentation of findings and recommendations.

Task 2: Assessment of Current Conditions

Consultant will conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions along the Haw River Corridor across Rockingham, Guilford, Alamance, Orange and Chatham counties. This assessment should provide a clear baseline understanding of current recreational, environmental, and infrastructural assets and constraints for both paddle and land trail opportunities. This assessment shall include, at a minimum:

- Inventory of existing paddle access points, portages, navigational hazards, signage and related amenities.

- Evaluation of existing land-based trails, trailheads, rights-of-way, easements, public lands, and connectivity gaps.
- Identification and mapping of environmental, ecological, cultural, historical, and scenic resources relevant to trail planning.
- Analysis of river conditions including flow characteristics, safety considerations, paddling difficulty zones, and bank stability.
- Review of local and regional plans, previous studies, and jurisdictional regulations or constraints affecting the corridor.
- GIS-based mapping of current assets, conditions, ownership, and opportunities to enhance future trail development. GIS data, maps, and associated files shall be delivered in formats compatible with ESRI ArcGIS Pro and other commonly used GIS platforms.

Task 3: Analysis, Planning and Implementation

Consultant will assist project partners with generating realistic ideas, concepts, and strategies that will lead to successful implementation of actionable items identified throughout study. This task will result in a planning framework that is actionable, realistic and grounded in community needs and interjurisdictional collaboration. This task should include:

- Needs Analysis and Opportunity Mapping
    - Evaluate gaps, opportunities, constraints, and potential enhancements for trail connectivity, access, safety, and user experience. Assess the feasibility of proposed trail segments considering land ownership, environmental conditions, regulatory requirements, and community priorities.
    - Assess feasibility of proposed trail segments considering land ownership, environmental conditions, regulatory constraints and community priorities.
- Concept Development and Planning
    - Develop a prioritization matrix evaluating proposed projects based on connectivity, feasibility, community benefit, environmental considerations, implementation readiness, and anticipated cost.
    - Produce maps and visual representations of proposed corridors, access improvements, and priority project areas.
- Implementation and Phasing
    - Recommend short-, mid- and long-term priorities based on feasibility, cost, available funding sources, partnerships and community benefit.
    - Develop preliminary cost ranges for recommended improvements and identify potential funding sources.
    - Provide guidance on permitting requirements, land acquisition strategies and partnerships understanding the requirements related to a designated state trail.
- Interjurisdictional Coordination and Governance Strategies

    - Outline cooperative strategies for multi-county and municipal coordination, shared maintenance, branding, marketing, and stewardship.
- Actionable Deliverables
    - A clear, practical implementation plan identifying specific projects, timelines, responsible parties, resource requirements, and next steps.
    - Supporting GIS datasets, maps, decision-making tools, and summary materials for stakeholders and public distribution.

Task 4: Economic Impact Analysis

Consultant will examine the potential economic impacts of developing trails along the Haw River throughout the study area. The results of the economic impact analysis will allow the consultant to assist the partners in making strategic recommendations about what portions of the Haw River should be prioritized from an economic development standpoint and deliver the most feasible opportunities for outdoor tourism growth. This task should include:

- Baseline economic assessment evaluating current outdoor recreation tourism levels, visitor spending patterns, local business activity and existing economic contributions associated with the Haw River State Trail access points and trail segments.
- Economic modeling and forecasting estimating future economic impacts of proposed trail infrastructure including projected increases in visitation, spending, job creation and business opportunities with demand for lodging, outfitter services, retail and hospitality-related industries.
- Regional market analysis comparing conditions with similar river corridors and trail systems in NC and the Southeast to establish benchmarks and realistic growth expectations.
- Provide potential return-on-investment estimates for key recommendations and assist project partners in prioritizing projects based on anticipated economic impact and implementation feasibility.

Task 5: Summary Report

Consultant will generate a summary report that assembles the results of tasks 1-4 that present this information in an organized manner. The final deliverable shall include both a printable PDF report and an online interactive format, such as an ESRI StoryMap or equivalent platform. The purpose of this report is to serve as a resource guide for decision making of future implementation efforts and to communicate progress and planned projects to community members and NC State Trails.

Final deliverables shall include:

• Final report in PDF format;

• Editable report files;

• GIS datasets and mapping files;

• Presentation materials;

• Online StoryMap or equivalent interactive product.

Consultant Qualifications

Consultants must demonstrate experience in trail planning, river corridor studies, community engagement, and similar master planning projects. The selected candidate will have experience working with local government(s) and should have geospatial analysis capabilities. Preference may be given to firms demonstrating experience with:

• State trail planning;

• River trail and Blueway planning;

• Multi-jurisdictional planning efforts;

• GIS-based planning and analysis;

• Public engagement and facilitation;

• Outdoor recreation and tourism development projects.

Contents of RFQ Response

Responses to this RFQ must include, at a minimum, the following information:

1. Letter of Interest
2. Qualifications Statement
3. Description of organizations relevant experience
4. Project team organization and qualifications
5. Project understanding and approach
6. Examples of similar completed projects
7. References (at least 3)
8. Proposed project schedule and milestone timeline;
9. Identification of key personnel and their anticipated roles;
10. Identification of proposed subconsultants and scope of services;
11. Description of GIS capabilities and relevant software platforms.

Evaluation Criteria

The selection committee will review each RFQ response for completeness and content. Each response will be evaluated based upon the relevant qualifications and experience of the agency. Staff may conduct interviews if necessary. References will also be verified as desired. Review will focus on the following criteria. In evaluation of proposals, additional consideration may be given to firms with direct experience along the Haw River and familiarity with planning, design or implementation within the North Carolina State Trails System.

Evaluation Criteria	(2) Weight	(b) Score 1-5	(a) x (b) Weighted Score
Agency Experience with Similar Scope and Size of Projects	25%		
Project Team Qualifications	25%		
Demonstrated understanding of the Haw River corridor and project objectives	15%		
Innovative Project Approach	15%		
Project Team Location	10%		
Proposed Schedule for Completing Identified Tasks	10%		
Total	100%		

Rating System will be as follows

Submissions will be evaluated using a standardized scoring system. Each criteria component will be assigned points ranging from 1-5. Points will be assigned as follows:

- 5 points: Fully Meets stated requirements
- 4 points: Meets stated requirements with minor gaps (no significant compromise required)
- 3 points: Meets with moderate gaps (some compromise required)
- 2 points: Partially meets requirements with significant gaps (significant compromise required)
- 1 point: Does not meet

Evaluation / Award Process

The Selection Committee will evaluate qualifications submitted in response to this RFQ and may conduct interviews with one or more firms.

Alamance County reserves the right to request clarification of submitted information and to conduct reference checks as part of the evaluation process.

Following evaluation, the County intends to enter negotiations regarding scope, schedule, and compensation with the highest-ranked firm. If an agreement cannot be successfully negotiated, the County reserves the right to terminate negotiations and commence negotiations with another qualified firm.

Selection pursuant to this RFQ does not constitute a contract award. Contract award is subject to successful negotiations and all required County approvals.

RFQ Instructions

1. Proposal Deadline: All responses must be received by Alamance County no later than **November 24, 2026, by 4:00 PM EST**. Responses must be submitted by mail and include three (3) printed copies and one (1) USB drive containing a pdf copy of the submittal.

   The address for mailing is:
   Alamance County Purchasing Department
   124 W Elm Street
   Graham, NC 27253
   Attn: Charles Bullard

   The name and address of the firm should appear on the outside of the submittals, and the package should reference the project, i.e., "**RFQ 27-Q003 Haw River Trail Master Plan Corridor Study**

2. Questions: All questions should be submitted in writing via email to **Nolan Carter, Haw River Trail Coordinator, at nolan.carter@alamancecountync.gov**, no later than **Friday October 30, by 4:00 PM EST**. Responses will be posted to the RFQ as an addendum on the Alamance County website: https://purchasing.alamancecountync.gov/bidding/ by **Friday November 6th, 2026**.

3.

Submission Schedule and Key Dates

RFQ Issued	**October 19, 2026**
Deadline for Questions	**October 30, 2026 4:00 pm**
RFQ Responses Due	**November 6, 2026 4:00 pm**
RFQ Proposals Due	**November 24, 2026 4:00PM**
Anticipated Interviews (if necessary)	**Week of December 7, 2026**
Anticipated Selection	**Week of December 14, 2026**
Desired Contract Start Date	**On or before January 11 , 2026**

Funding

This project is funded through a Great Trails State Program (GTSP) Grant. Respondents shall comply with all applicable grant requirements, reporting obligations, and contractual conditions associated with the funding source.

Alamance County Government reserves the right to reject any and all submittals.

Appendix: Proposals should include knowledge of and coordination with the following adopted plans.

- Alamance Parks Comprehensive Master Plan 2017 and Alamance County Trails Plan 2014 Alamance Co Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan Addendum and Trails Plan 4.2017.pdf
- Lower Haw River State Natural Area Trails Plan 2018 Lower_Haw_Trails_Plan_06-15-2018.pdf - Google Drive
- Chatham County Haw River Feasibility Study 2023 Haw River Trail Study 2023.pdf - Google Drive
- Current Alamance County Maps can be found on the Haw River Trail Website www.hawrivertrail.org