

October 11, 2006

Housatonic River NRD Fund – Project Proposals
c/o Woodlot Alternatives
30 Park Drive
Topsham, Maine 04086-1737

**Re: *Proposal to Provide Enhanced Public Access to the Housatonic River
RFR ENV 06 NRD 02 – Response to Comments
ESS Proposal No: 12891***

Dear Reviewer:

Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and ESS Group, Inc. (ESS) have carefully considered the concerns you have expressed regarding our proposed Public Access proposal and we are providing you this letter as additional information to consider before making your final decision.

We understand the concerns expressed by the reviewers regarding our proposal can be summarized as follows:

1. **Criterion C1** (Relationship of Expected Costs to Expected Benefits): The cost of the project seemed high, and reviewers felt that a more detailed budget would have been helpful in understanding the costs.
2. **Criterion C2** (Implementation-oriented): A significant portion of the funds would go to consulting company (ESS) overhead costs.
3. **Criterion C3** (Budget Justification and Understanding): Given the projects scale, the review team felt that permitting, land acquisition, and construction costs were potentially underestimated.
4. **Criterion D6** (Public Outreach): The review team noted that a significant amount of public outreach was planned regarding site selection, but also felt concern that the budget numbers seemed to be low and therefore desired clarification on that issue.

Additional Comments:

5. The review team wondered if it was feasible to identify 6 to 8 sites. They felt that the project should scale back the amount of sites to be commensurate with actual needs. A phased approach was noted as having potential merit.
6. The review team was not clear on HVA's role in the project.
7. The review team wanted the future management of the access sites to be more explicit.

Based on the above comments, the following responses have been prepared:

Response to Comment 1.

A budget summary was provided in our original proposal as Table 2, however, HVA and ESS recognize that selecting and completing construction for 8 sites may be too aggressive within the constraints of this funding opportunity and timeframe for completion. Therefore, we are willing to consider reducing the scope of the project to target the completion of up to 5 sites for an estimated project budget savings of \$75,000. This reduced scope and budget estimate could be provided upon request. A more detailed budget breakdown of our original project costs (for all 8 sites) has

also been attached per your request. The budget narrative provided in our original proposal still applies.

Response to Comment 2.

A significant portion of the costs for this project do go to ESS, the principal consulting company for the project, however, these costs are well within the range of industry standards for scientific work, conducting meetings, environmental permitting, engineering design, construction oversight, post-construction monitoring, and the production of educational materials associated with this project. Most of these tasks are directly associated with the implementation-oriented work on this project and are essential to its successful completion. The budget breakdown will show that much of the Contracted Services budget that ESS will use will be applied to cover the cost of hiring local survey crews and construction contractors. In excess of \$80,000 is anticipated to cover costs of these services for our project scope (for 8 sites).

Response to Comment 3.

The permitting costs associated with this project were somewhat less than might normally be expected for completing 8 projects of this nature because there was an expectation that having a solid and experienced team repeating the permitting process 8 times would result in some economies over the course of the work. ESS is very experienced in permitting projects of this kind and can assure the review team that we can perform the proposed permitting for the cost indicated in our original proposal. If a reduced number of sites is to be considered in the future (see response to Comment 1) we would be willing to keep the permitting budget essentially the same to ensure that sufficient budget would remain to complete the permitting process if any unforeseen complications arise. Land acquisition is not part of the scope of work for this project as all of the sites are expected to be located on public lands (see letters of support from our original proposal for these commitments).

Response to Comment 4.

The budgeted numbers for public outreach were established based on the concept of conducting public forums to narrow down the number of sites and ultimately find sites that meet most of the community's expectations and needs. The public forum approach would allow for HVA/ESS to reach a broad number of people with fewer individual meetings, thus saving cost. A benefit of the public forum would also be to allow all stakeholders the opportunity to become involved at the onset of the project and would foster the concept of the Housatonic Watershed rather than promoting and adhering to individual town boundaries. This approach would also allow others to gain insight into what other communities are supporting or committing to with regard to the site selection, construction efforts, and ultimately long-term management of the sites.

Response to Comment 5.

See response to Comment 1. The goal is currently to complete up to 8 sites, but we would be willing to consider targeting up to 5 sites for a reduced budget if awarded the project.

Response to Comment 6.

The partnership breakdown between ESS and HVA for this project is that HVA will be responsible for developing and maintaining the working relationship with the watershed community in site selection, implementation, and long-term management of the sites. Interaction with the communities will be by one on one discussion and with periodic regional meetings (public forum) to discuss the optimal locations for access sites. ESS will be coordinator the technical aspect of this project such as scientific data collection, development of engineering designs, permitting, and construction oversight.

HVA Responsibility:

HVA's first priority will be to have open dialogue with knowledgeable local recreational river users to identify where they feel a need for additional access sites exists. HVA will investigate locations that are presently being used on an unofficial basis as well as sites that are not being heavily used but might be if an access site was developed at these locations. With this information and the support and knowledge of local river users, HVA will then identify several (37 potential sites have already been identified and are listed in the proposal) potential sites to investigate more closely.

The HVA/ESS team, working with our partners, will then eliminate the sites that do not meet our management requirements of potential willing land ownership, usable terrain, proximately to nearest access site, and road accessibility. HVA will work with ESS to conduct further investigation on the remaining sites and will initiate discussions with land owners of these sites (typically public or non-profit entities) in order to obtain permission for developing access at the site and carrying out long-term management commitments.

Throughout the entire process of this project, HVA will be initiating and coordinating discussions with landowners, municipalities, and local river users and overseeing the development and implementation of a plan for maintenance and oversight for each of the selected sites. HVA will continue to provide oversight to each of the constructed sites in the future to ensure that they are being properly maintained and managed.

Response to Comment 7.

See Response to Comment 6. HVA will be the entity primarily charged with the responsibility of ensuring that long-term maintenance and management commitments made by municipalities or other land-owners are fulfilled. It is possible that some of the public access facilities may become state-operated facilities at some time in the future at which point management responsibilities would become the responsibility of the State's Public Access Board.

In addition to responding to the written comments covered above, we would also like to respond directly to the Consensus Based Review scoring we received for the proposed project to provide additional clarification and understanding to the review team in the hope that our score may be improved in areas that we feel we should have scored more strongly. These criteria and our response are as follows:

Criterion B6 (Administrative Capacity of Project Team) – ESS routinely works with non-profit organizations to execute publicly funded projects similar in scope and magnitude to the one we have proposed to conduct with HVA. We are currently executing a contract for EOEА with the Charles River Watershed Association with a budget in excess of \$450,000. We have also worked to successfully execute smaller joint projects between ESS and the Merrimac River Watershed Council (\$45,000), the Pioneer Valley Planning Council (\$25,000), Wickaboag Pond Association (\$20,000), and the Quaboag and Quacumquasit Lake Association (\$165,000). Each of these projects was publicly funded and most involved a significant amount of public outreach, public participation, and the integration of volunteers into the project execution.

Criterion C4 (Leveraging of Additional Resources) – The HVA/ESS team received no credit (scored zero) for leveraging of additional resources despite the commitment of \$30,000 of in-kind services to the project. This commitment will remain the same even if the overall budget for the project is reduced at some point in the future due to a reduction in the number of access sites to be constructed. We are hoping to get some credit in the scoring for providing this level of commitment.

Criterion C5 (Coordination and Integration) – The proposed project only scored 3 points for this criterion, however, we are committed to integrating this project with the efforts of other restoration projects that might be funded once those projects are identified. HVA is a leading steward of this watershed and as such functions to ensure that this type of integration occurs on a routine basis. There would be a significant opportunity to work with watershed stake-holders through the public forum process proposed under this project to incorporate the needs of other funded projects into this projects design. In addition to HVA's role, the project has already sought and received support or partnering commitments from the Town of Hinsdale, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Sheffield Land Trust, Tri-Community Development Corporation, and The Laurel Hill Association.

Additional coordination and integration that may not have been originally emphasized in our proposal but was intended was the need to specifically include EOEА and the MA SubCouncil in all of our outreach efforts, site selection criteria evaluations, and ultimately in the final decision making process so that they are ultimately able to provide final approval for the new access sites that will ultimately be selected for implementation.

Criterion D6 (Public Outreach) – We feel the combination of open public forums based on watershed location (e.g. upper, mid, and lower) combined with more focused community-based meetings to address local concerns and needs is an approach that reaches as much of the public as possible. This is being achieved in an economical manner for this project due to overlap with HVA's standing commitment to public outreach within the watershed and maybe should have been categorized as a form of in-kind match in our proposal.

Criterion D7 (Diverse Partnerships) - The project has already sought and received support or partnering commitments from the Town of Hinsdale, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Sheffield Land Trust, Tri-Community Development Corporation, and The Laurel Hill Association. Additional commitments from a wider range of support are expected once the project is funded and the public outreach portion of the project is implemented.

Commitments from angling associations, kayaking and canoeing groups, and local sporting goods retailers are some of the most likely partnerships that are anticipated.

Hopefully you will agree that the HVA/ESS Team has the technical expertise, the proven record of implementing successful project assignments, and the broad-based community support that will ultimately result in the selection of up to five new public access sites that will soon benefit future recreational opportunities on the Housatonic River.

If you have any additional questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact either Dennis Regan at (413) 394-9796 or Carl Nielsen at (781) 489-1103 directly.

Sincerely,

HOUSATONIC VALLEY ASSOCIATION

ESS GROUP, INC.



Dennis Regan
Berkshire Director



Carl Nielsen, CLM
Senior Water Resource Scientist
Ecological and Environmental Permitting

Attachments: Detailed cost breakdown

Project:	Enhanced Public Access to Housatonic River					
Client:	Housatonic River NRD Funds					
Project / Proposal Number:				Revised By:		CDN
Type of Bid (fixed or T&M):	T&M			Date Revised:		10/11/2006
Automatic Markup (if none - enter 1):	1.1	(enter 1.05 for 5%, 1.1 for 10% etc.)				
Comments:				Total Cost =		\$460,001
TASK	TITLE / PERSONNEL	BCL/ RATE	HOURS	TOTAL LABOR	EXPENSES	TOTAL COST
TASK 1: Baseline Investigations						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	700	\$66,500		\$66,500
	HVA Staff	\$75	180	\$13,500		\$13,500
	HVA Staff	\$50	23	\$1,150		\$1,150
	travel			\$0	\$1,191	\$1,310
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$1,400	\$1,540
Note - HVA committing \$20,000 in-kind to task						
	Task Total		903	\$81,150	\$2,591	\$84,000
TASK 2: Selection of Final Sites						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	20	\$1,900		\$1,900
	HVA Staff	\$75	20	\$1,500		\$1,500
	HVA Staff	\$50	4	\$200		\$200
	travel			\$0	\$300	\$330
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$64	\$70
	Task Total		44	\$3,600	\$364	\$4,000
TASK 3: Watershed Stakeholder Meetings						
Task 3.1						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	60	\$5,700		\$5,700
	HVA Staff	\$75	60	\$4,500		\$4,500
	HVA Staff	\$50	22	\$1,100		\$1,100
	travel			\$0	\$486	\$535
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$150	\$165
	Task Total		142	\$11,300	\$636	\$12,000
TASK 4: Conceptual and Final Engineering Design						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	684	\$64,980		\$64,980
	HVA Staff	\$75	20	\$1,500		\$1,500
	HVA Staff	\$50	8	\$400		\$400
	travel			\$0	\$0	\$0
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$1,018	\$1,120
	Task Total		712	\$66,880	\$1,018	\$68,000
TASK 5: Obtain Permits						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	330	\$31,350		\$31,350
	HVA Staff	\$75	50	\$3,750		\$3,750
	HVA Staff	\$50	5	\$250		\$250
	travel			\$0	\$291	\$320
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$300	\$330
Note: Assumes no filing fees for NOIs (local sponsor)						
	Task Total		385	\$35,350	\$591	\$36,000

TASK 6. Prepare Construction Bid Documents						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	200	\$19,000		\$19,000
	HVA Staff	\$75	3	\$225		\$225
	HVA Staff	\$50	2	\$100		\$100
	travel			\$0	\$0	\$0
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$614	\$675
	Task Total		205	\$19,325	\$614	\$20,000
TASK 7. Facility Construction						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	220	\$20,900		\$20,900
	HVA Staff	\$75	200	\$15,000		\$15,000
	HVA Staff	\$50	100	\$5,000		\$5,000
	travel			\$0	\$850	\$934
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$30,405	\$33,446
	Survey Crew(s)				\$22,000	\$24,200
	Contractor/Builder				\$73,200	\$80,520
	Task Total		520	\$40,900	\$126,455	\$180,000
TASK 8. Construction and Post Construction Monitoring						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	90	\$8,550		\$8,550
	HVA Staff	\$75	100	\$7,500		\$7,500
	HVA Staff	\$50	110	\$5,500		\$5,500
	travel			\$0	\$927	\$1,020
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$1,300	\$1,430
	Task Total		300	\$21,550	\$2,227	\$24,000
TASK 9. Revegetation of Disturbed Lands						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	20	\$1,900		\$1,900
	HVA Staff	\$75	22	\$1,650		\$1,650
	HVA Staff	\$50	25	\$1,250		\$1,250
	travel			\$0	\$682	\$750
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$1,500	\$1,650
	Contractor/Landscaper				\$8,000	\$8,800
	Task Total		67	\$4,800	\$10,182	\$16,000
TASK 10. Develop and Produce Educational Materials						
	ESS Staff (blended rate)	\$95	70	\$6,650		\$6,650
	HVA Staff	\$75	60	\$4,500		\$4,500
	HVA Staff	\$50	14	\$700		\$700
	travel			\$0	\$123	\$135
	materials, supplies, equipment			\$0	\$650	\$715
	Printer				\$3,000	\$3,300
Note - ESS committing \$10,000 in-kind to task						
	Task Total		144	\$11,850	\$3,773	\$16,000