

Delaware River Basin Commission

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): Water Resources Resilience Plan

RFP Issue Date: Thursday, March 12, 2026

Mandatory Pre-Proposal Meeting: Thursday, March 26, 2026, 10:00am

Response Deadline: Friday, April 17, 2026

1. OVERVIEW

The Delaware River Basin Commission (“DRBC” or “Commission”) is seeking a qualified consulting firm to provide technical and strategic support to Commission staff in completing Phase 2 of its Water Resources Resilience Plan (“WRRP”). The purpose of the WRRP is to evaluate the impacts of climate change and other challenges on the water resources of the Delaware River Basin (“Basin”) and to formulate management approaches, including recommended policies and rules, to improve resilience and adaptation to changing hydrologic conditions in the Basin. Commission staff have completed Phase 1, which outlines a framework for the WRRP and which will be published on the DRBC website the week of March 16, 2026. Phase 2 will focus on addressing challenges to the Basin’s water resources related to climate change and will consist of a vulnerability assessment, a gap analysis, and a prioritization of recommended actions and activities.

A mandatory pre-proposal meeting will be held on Thursday, March 26, from 10:00 am to 11:00 am for prospective bidders. The meeting will be held via Zoom. Pre-registration is required and can be accessed at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/11JZ2gBtSSWcDtKidTwTOQ>

Any changes to this RFP will be in the form of an addendum, which will be posted on the Commission’s website, www.drbc.gov, and distributed via e-mail to those who attend the pre-proposal meeting on Thursday, March 26. The consultant will be selected based on a review of proposals submitted to DRBC in response to this RFP, including as the RFP may be amended. The DRBC reserves the right to reject any or all submittals and to be the sole judge of the merits of each submittal. The Commission in its sole discretion may waive

minor irregularities, defects, or informalities in the submitted proposals when such irregularities, defects, or informalities have no bearing on the amount of the bid or on the competitive advantage of the proposal.

Bidders will have the opportunity to ask questions at the pre-proposal meeting. **Additional questions regarding any aspect of this RFP, including requests for clarification or to explain apparent discrepancies or omissions, should be directed in writing to the project coordinator, Sarah Beganskas, Manager of Water Quality Assessment, at sarah.beganskas@drbc.gov and will be accepted until 4:00 p.m., Eastern Time, on Friday, April 3, 2026.** Q&A will be posted on the DRBC website and e-mailed to those who attend the pre-proposal meeting no later than Friday, April 10, 2026.

2. BACKGROUND

The Delaware River Basin Commission is a federal–interstate compact agency created in 1961 to manage, protect, and improve the water resources of the Delaware River Basin without regard to political boundaries. The 13,500-mi² Basin provides drinking water for 14.2 million people in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The Lower Delaware River Basin is the second-highest electric-producing region in the United States, with multiple thermoelectric and nuclear power generation plants that rely on water from the Delaware River and its tributaries for cooling. The waters of the Basin serve as habitat for endangered species while providing bountiful recreational opportunities including boating, fishing, swimming, and hiking. The Delaware Estuary also provides a valuable waterway for commercial navigation and is home to one of the world’s largest freshwater port complexes.

Changing hydrologic patterns due to climate change pose many challenges to water resource management in the Basin, including rising temperatures, more frequent and severe precipitation events, and sea level rise. In recognition of these challenges, the Commissioners in 2024 directed DRBC staff via [Resolution 2024-04](#) to develop a climate resilience plan. This plan, called the Water Resources Resilience Plan, will recommend actions that the DRBC can take to manage the Basin’s shared water resources through the known and potential impacts of climate change and other challenges.

The WRRP will adapt the traditional climate resilience plan framework to apply to water resources throughout the Basin, emphasizing DRBC’s role in convening multiple partners and providing coordinated water resources management and regulation at a Basin scale. Each of the four Basin states, many cities that rely on the DRB’s water resources, and numerous partner organizations working in the Basin are engaged in ongoing climate resilience planning processes. In recognition of these efforts, DRBC strives for the WRRP to build on and complement our partners’ work.

Commission staff have completed Phase 1, which outlines a framework for the WRRP. The Phase 1 report will be published the week of March 16, 2026, and after publication, it will be available at the following link: https://www.nj.gov/drbc/library/documents/WRRP_Phase1.pdf. The successful bidder will provide technical and strategic support to Commission staff to complete Phase 2 of the WRRP, which will consist of a vulnerability assessment, gap analysis, and prioritization of recommended actions and activities.

3. PROJECT SCOPE

The objective of Phase 2 is to develop a prioritized list of recommended actions and activities that DRBC could undertake to advance resilience of the Basin’s water resources to climate change. These recommendations will complement and build on DRBC’s and partners’ past and ongoing work. Phase 2 will focus on three broadly-defined water resource assets that collectively provide wide-ranging benefit to Basin water users, as described in the table below.

Water Resource Asset	Includes...
Water Availability	Water supplies, such as streamflow along the main stem Delaware River, major and minor tributaries, and headwater streams; confined and unconfined groundwater aquifers; and reservoir storage. Water quality parameters such as salinity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, and nutrients.
Aquatic Life	All species that live in and/or rely on water bodies in the Basin, such as fish, shellfish, benthic macroinvertebrates, shorebirds, and algae. Wildlife habitat such as marshlands and aquatic vegetation.
Landscape	Water-adjacent infrastructure and land that supports quality of life and recreation, such as parks, bridges and roads, dams, buildings and homes, floodplains, riparian vegetation, and boat launches.

For each water resource asset, three tasks need to be completed in sequence:

Task 1: Vulnerability Assessment. The vulnerability assessment will characterize where and how each water resource asset is most vulnerable to specific hazards from climate change. We anticipate that this task will consist of the following steps:

1. Define which of the following climate change hazards apply to that water resource asset.
 - a. *Episodic hazards*: Drought, flooding, and wildfire.
 - b. *Incremental hazards*: Salinity intrusion, land inundation, water temperature increase, and changing winter weather.

2. Quantify the expected changes (exposure) each water resource asset may experience from the applicable hazard(s), including the possible compounding effects of multiple hazards.
 - a. *Planning horizons*: Evaluate incremental hazards using both mid-century (2030–2060) and end-century (2070–2100) planning horizons. Evaluate episodic hazards with a planning horizon of 2035–2090.
 - b. *Climate scenarios*: Evaluate for both a low-emissions scenario (SSP2-4.5) and a high-emissions scenario (SSP3-7.0).
3. Characterize the impacts of those expected changes. This characterization will include quantitative (where possible) and/or qualitative assessments of the water resource asset’s sensitivity and adaptive capacity, as well as potential consequences to end users.

Task 2: Gap Analysis. The gap analysis will generate a list of potential actions and activities that would help protect specific water resource assets from climate change hazards. We anticipate that this task will consist of the following steps:

1. Define goal outcome(s)¹ of resilience for each water resource asset, considering the expected impacts to each asset identified in the vulnerability assessment. The goal outcome(s) may include impacts we want to avoid, such as drinking water becoming too salty or a certain amount of flooding damage, or a level of resilience that we aspire to reach. A goal outcome may include both qualitative and quantitative components, as appropriate.
2. Define a strategic pathway to advance toward the goal outcome(s). The strategic pathway consists of a set of approaches that fall into three categories, addressing the following questions:
 - a. *Knowledge*: What information would help to guide planning and management decisions to move toward the goal outcome?
 - b. *Action*: What can we do to advance toward the goal outcome?
 - c. *Equity considerations*: How can we ensure that all Basin water users are protected as we move toward the goal outcome?

Identified approaches may include which partner(s) could be involved and a recommended time frame, if appropriate.

3. Identify any gaps that exist in the strategic pathway. A gap is a specific need for information or action that has not yet been addressed, and for which no plan has yet been developed. Identifying gaps will require a thorough review of current and planned work by DRBC and its many partners supporting the Basin’s water resources, including the Basin states, federal agencies, utilities, and community

¹ Depending on the range of impacts identified for different future scenarios and/or planning horizons in the vulnerability assessment, multiple goal outcomes may be defined for a single water resource asset.

and stakeholder groups, and comparing that work with the strategic pathway identified in step 2. In the context of ongoing and planned work in the Basin, a subset of possible recommended actions and activities will be selected.

Task 3: Prioritization and Recommendation. The actions and activities identified in the gap analysis will be evaluated to help determine which actions and activities are most highly recommended. The following seven metrics will be evaluated:

1. **Impact:** What impact will this action or activity have in terms of preparing and adapting the Basin's water resources to climate change?
2. **Urgency:** How urgently is this action or activity needed to address current or imminent climate change impacts?
3. **Reach:** What is the geographic and demographic extent of the benefit of undertaking this action or activity?
4. **Stakeholder Relevance:** How well does this action or activity address issues that partners and stakeholders think should be prioritized?
5. **Feasibility:** What resources (including funding, staff time, and expertise) will be required to complete this action or activity?
6. **Synergy:** How does this action or activity fit into the overall landscape of work being done to address climate change in the DRB? How well does it complement and build on DRBC's and others' work?
7. **Adaptivity:** What is the longevity of this approach? How well does it allow for adapting or scaling as needed moving forward?

Task 4: Deliverables (Meetings, Presentations, and Reports)

The successful bidder will need to collaborate closely with a dedicated team of Commission staff throughout Phase 2, including regular coordination meetings (approximately 24 1-hour meetings over 18 months). In their proposals, bidders should include a proposed collaboration structure and examples of similar previous collaborative efforts.

In addition, the successful bidder will support Commission staff in preparing and sharing formal presentations to document progress and seek guidance from the Commission's Advisory Committee on Climate Change. These meetings are approximately 2.5 hours long and occur approximately every four months (4 meetings over 18 months). Bidders are expected to have one representative attend these advisory committee meetings. The representative may assist DRBC staff in presenting progress and/or answering questions from the committee.

The successful bidder will assist in preparing a report documenting the methodology, results, and recommendations for each water resource asset (three reports total). Report

assistance may include writing; preparing figures, maps, or other visualizations; and/or reviewing and editing drafts.

Commission staff are expected to complete approximately one-half of the work outlined above, including contributions to each of the four primary tasks. Bidders' proposed level of effort should be sufficient to complete approximately one-half of the work outlined above.

Optional Task 5: Stakeholder engagement

Concurrent with this work, DRBC staff will also be conducting a stakeholder engagement campaign, with the goal of gathering public and partner input to guide the resilience planning process. Bidders with experience in this type of work are encouraged to describe relevant qualifications in their proposal, but do not include this work in the proposed scope of services or budget. If mutually agreed upon, the bidder may receive additional compensation based on standard hourly rates for any assistance related to the stakeholder engagement campaign. Specific tasks in this regard may include:

- Planning and designing outreach events
- Staffing and/or note-taking at outreach events (virtually or in person)
- Analyzing and compiling stakeholder input

4. DELIVERABLES

The successful bidder will assist DRBC staff in completing the technical reports comprising Phase 2 such that these reports are publication-ready. Their contributions may include writing sections of the report, preparing figures and other visualizations, and reviewing the reports' content. The successful bidder will also assist DRBC staff in preparing and presenting progress to the Advisory Committee on Climate Change, as described above.

It is expected that written summaries and/or presentations of all analyses related to this project be provided to DRBC staff, including detailed documentation of the methodologies employed. All datasets, methodologies, or other content developed for this project will be made available to Commission staff and will become the property of the Commission.

5. SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Each bidder must submit a Project Proposal and a separate Cost Proposal. There is no page minimum or page limit in responding to this RFP. However, submittals should be concise. Any requested terms, conditions, or qualifications should be noted.

PROJECT PROPOSAL. Project Proposals must adhere to the format and content prescribed by this RFP. The Project Proposal must include the following:

- A description of the proposed scope of services and approach to completing the proposed tasks in collaboration with DRBC staff.
- A description of the bidder’s qualifications. The qualifications should demonstrate the firm’s ability to perform the work and should address, at a minimum, the following:
 - The bidder’s experience, reputation and demonstrated abilities, including examples of at least three (3) successfully completed projects of similar scope;
 - At least two (2) references who can attest to the bidder’s prior work;
 - Resumés for the proposed project manager and key team members; and
 - The bidder’s capabilities to meet the needs of the project within the required time frame.
- A proposed schedule for the work that enables completion of the work within 18 months of the issuance of the contract.
- Statement that the consultant will comply with the specifications and conditions in this RFP.
- Identification and contact information for the proposed project manager.

COST PROPOSAL. The *separate* Cost Proposal must include the following:

- Budget, including estimated hours, hourly rates and cost per task, and including a proposed not-to-exceed total cost. Please also include titles of staff proposed to work on the project.
- Standard schedule of hourly rates.

Submittal instructions are set forth in Section 9 below.

6. COST/PAYMENT TERMS

Billing will be no more frequent than monthly and will be based on actual hours and work completed. Assuming evidence of satisfactory progress, in accordance with paragraph 10.a. (“Time of Payment”) of the DRBC Standard Contract, payment will be made within 30 days, consistent with the agreed upon rates and services. The invoice will be in such form as may be required by the Executive Director. Five percent (5%) of each payment will be withheld pending completion and acceptance by the Commission of all final work products.

7. AGREEMENT TERMS

The agreement between the consultant and the DRBC will require the consultant to provide insurance for its operations as set forth in Appendix A of this RFP. No subcontractors will be permitted to work in connection with this project without the

DRBC's express written approval. The selected consultant must comply with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws.

8. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The selected consultant will commence work on the Project within ten (10) business days of execution of an agreement between the Commission and the consultant, with the work presently expected to begin in May 2026, unless the Commission agrees to a later commencement date. Once commenced, unless otherwise agreed upon, the project should be completed within 18 months of the issuance of the contract.

9. SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

PROJECT PROPOSAL. Interested bidders should send an electronic (PDF) file of their Project Proposal (excluding Cost Proposal) that includes the requirements outlined in Section 5 – Submittal Requirements via email to: DRBC.Proposals@drbc.gov.

COST PROPOSAL. The Cost Proposal, including the requirements outlined in Section 5 – Submittal Requirements, must be submitted in hard copy only and in a sealed envelope clearly marked “Cost Proposal” addressed to:

Elba Deck, Director of Finance and Administration
Delaware River Basin Commission
25 Cosey Road
West Trenton, NJ 08628-0360

DEADLINE. Proposals – both the emailed Project Proposal (PDF) and sealed Cost Proposal (hard copy) – **must be received no later than 4:00 p.m., Eastern Time, on Friday, April 17, 2026**. Proposals received after this time will not be considered. The Commission reserves the right to reject any submittal for any reason.

10. PROPOSAL SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

Prospective bidders may only engage in communication with DRBC staff regarding this RFP as instructed in Section 1 – Overview. Proposals will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee comprised of Commission staff members knowledgeable about the subject of this RFP. Except for purposes of an invitation or query from the Evaluation Committee as a whole, members of the Evaluation Committee may not communicate with bidder representatives regarding proposals submitted in response to this RFP between the time the RFP is issued and the Commission's selection of a consultant.

Accepted proposals will be reviewed by the Evaluation Committee and scored against stated criteria. Cost Proposals will be opened only after the Project Proposals are

evaluated. The Evaluation Committee may review references, request interviews/presentations (on-site or virtual), or request demonstrations or additional details. The resulting information will be used to score the proposals. The Evaluation Committee’s scoring will be tabulated and proposals ranked based on the numerical scores received. The proposals will be scored using the following criteria:

Description	Points
Consultant Qualifications	30
Project Proposal: Understanding of Scope and Technical Approach	30
Cost Proposal	20
Proposed Schedule for Completing Tasks in the Specified Time Frame	20
Total	100

11. ATTACHMENT

Phase 1 report: A Framework for DRBC’s Water Resources Resilience Plan. To be published the week of March 16, 2026, and thereafter available at:

https://www.nj.gov/drbc/library/documents/WRRP_Phase1.pdf