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EVOSTC Great Land Trust Spill Area Ecosystem Habitat Conservation Project YEARS 3 (FY15) & 4 (FY16)

Project Summary

Great Land Trust (GLT) requests funding from the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) Habitat Acquisition Fund to continue work on up to five conservation projects that will implement habitat conservation actions to aid in the recovery and enhancement of the long term health and viability of those resources injured by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill (EVOS) and spill area ecosystems. GLT will carry out this work over a multi-year period. Beginning in 2013, the first year of the project, GLT focused on the Kodiak Afognak Archipelago area; the scope broadened to include all of the spill area in 2014, the second year of the project. Using a land conservation prioritization that GLT developed specifically for the Kodiak Afognak Archipelago, we identified multiple high ranking conservation projects and have begun due diligence and negotiations with landowners on six of the highest ranking projects. During Years 3 and 4, GLT will expand the land conservation prioritization to include the entire spill area and will continue due diligence and negotiations.

GLT will work closely with EVOSTC, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Alaska Departments of Natural Resources and Law in order to complete these projects. GLT will actively seek significant grant funding from other sources to compliment EVOS funding to carry out the top projects. Of the projects developed, we intend to complete or make substantial progress on at least two or three large-scale (greater than 1,000 acres) conservation projects with landowners in the entire spill area during years 3 and 4.

Project Narrative

Statement of Need

This project seeks to contribute to the objectives of the EVOSTC to aid in the recovery and enhancement of the long term health and viability of the resources injured by the EVOS. This project will seek to acquire priority lands within the EVOS area and increase the capacity of the existing, established EVOS habitat program.

This proposal will provide funding for Year 3 (FY15) of a multi-year project.

GLT has completed significant projects with a wide range of partners including the Municipality of Anchorage, the Mat-Su Borough, State of

Working with willing landowners and other partners to conserve Southcentral Alaska's lands and waterways. Your Land. Your Trust.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game, State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources and State Parks, USFWS, Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA, Alaska Native Corporations, Ducks Unlimited, Pacific Coast Joint Venture and numerous private businesses and landowners. GLT has experience raising and managing significant public and private funding, having completed nearly $14 million in conservation projects over the last 36 months. GLT also has extensive experience with mitigation funding, having operated an In-lieu Fee program under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Army Corps of Engineers since 1998. As part of this program, GLT has completed 9 conservation projects and received hundreds of payments totaling over $12 million.

Update on Year 1 and 2 Project Accomplishments

This FY2015 proposal will fund Year 3 of a multi-year project. During Year 1 GLT accomplished numerous tasks from our list of deliverables for the grant. Using data from the Kodiak prioritization completed early in 2013, GLT staff met numerous times with key landowners, both in Kodiak and here in Anchorage. Landowners included several Native corporations, as well as the Kodiak Borough Mayor, Manager and staff from Mental Health Trust Land Office. In addition, GLT met multiple times with the realty staff at USFWS as well as Kodiak Refuge staff and numerous Fish and Game staff in Kodiak. GLT staff met with Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District staff and staff at both Rep. Austerman's and Sen. Steven's Offices. GLT met with Alaska State Parks staff several times and consulted with staff at NOAA and The Conservation Fund regarding conservation projects on Kodiak. In gathering data for the prioritization we consulted with additional staff including individuals from Kodiak Island Borough, Koncor, Pacific Coast Joint Venture, Audubon Alaska and the others mentioned above.

During the grant period GLT made site visits to numerous properties and were accompanied by staff from Alaska State Parks and Alaska Department of Law in addition to representatives from the landowners on several visits.

A number of potential projects emerged from these meetings and site visits, and GLT ordered and obtained appraisals for several of these projects.

Great Land Trust has also applied for and received $1,000,000 matching funding from USFWS for a project in Kodiak and is working with the Conservation Fund to coordinate the use of the mitigation funds available from the Kodiak airport expansion.

During Year 2, GLT staff traveled to Kodiak several times to meet with agency staff and key landowners to continue work on due diligence activities and negotiations for acquiring a number of parcels. In addition to working on other potential projects, GLT pursued the acquisition of approximately 36,370 acres of land on Northern Afognak Island and the Triplet Islands, currently owned by Ouzinkie Native Corporation. This acquisition was approved by the EVOS Trustee Council, the AK State Legislature, and the Governor, and is moving forward. Due diligence is nearly complete and a draft Purchase and Sale agreement has been completed. In addition, other potential projects have been assessed and negotiations continue with landowners.

During this project period GLT continued meetings with EVOS staff, Federal agency realty officials including USFWS, NPS, and USFS and State agency officials and continued data collection and methodology development for a spill-wide area prioritization. Biologists, land managers, and agency partners were contacted to contribute data to the prioritization effort. Several meetings were held with stakeholders to provide comments on the draft prioritization maps for the entire spill area. In addition landowners and regional and local government officials were contacted to obtain land status information for both surface and subsurface for the entire spill area.

Project Goals and Objectives

GLT seeks to continue to permanently conserve important habitat in the EVOS-affected area with the acquisition of fee title properties of high conservation value. GLT will continue to implement a multi-year project by expanding the Kodiak Archipelago conservation prioritization to include the entire spill area. GLT will continue negotiations and due diligence for high priority projects identified in the Kodiak Prioritization and will contact landowners of parcels with high ranking conservation value in the entire spill area to determine their interest in habitat conservation. During the period of performance for this grant, GLT will develop up to 5 large acquisition projects within the EVOS area. GLT will contract a phased appraisal (described below) of the highest ranking parcels with willing landowners. GLT will seek matching funds for projects appropriate for EVOS funding, and working closely with partners, will complete or make substantial progress on at least 2-3 large scale conservation projects within the grant period.

Project Activities, Methods and Timetable

Funding Compliance

GLT intends to adhere to the following conditions regarding project methodology. The following conditions are from Resolution 13-03 of the EVOSTC:

- **a.** The funds are to be used by GLT, as described in the Proposal, to facilitate the acquisition of lands and interests in lands (e.g., fee title, conservation easements, mineral rights, timber rights) important to the conservation and protection of marine and coastal resources, ecosystems, and habitats in order to aid in the overall recovery of, and to enhance the long-term health and viability of, those resources injured by the EVOS and the spill-area ecosystems;
- **b.** GLT shall pursue parcels only from willing sellers and the sellers shall complete the relevant Council nomination form;
- **c.** GLT shall pursue protection, including identification, appraisal, commitments and approvals, of any specific parcel only after consultation and agreement by the entities that would own or manage the interests in the parcel and with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), and the Alaska Department of Law (ADOL);
- **d.** GLT shall ensure that any entity that would own or manage the interests in the parcel, as well as USFWS, ADNR, and ADOL, shall review and approve all conveyance documents and required actions, such as determining the required appraisal instructions, environmental reviews and site visits;

e. GLT shall submit quarterly updates to ADNR, ADOL and the EVOSTC Executive Director in addition to the semi-annual reports it submits to the USFWS, as per the USFWS reporting schedule, and shall ensure the reports convey the information needed by USFWS, ADNR, ADOL and EVOSTC.

f. GLT shall acquire parcels only after unanimous approval of the Council; the approval process shall include reasonable and adequate public notice about the proposed acquisition and an opportunity for public comment.

Great Land Trust proposes to carry out the project objectives in the EVOS area through a multi-step process:

1. Project Identification

GLT will use a recently completed conservation prioritization for the entire spill area to identify habitat with the highest conservation value. These prioritizations incorporate the latest information on land ownership including all projects previously completed with EVOS funding. All unprotected private lands, in addition to State lands owned by Mental Health Trust, are ranked for their conservation value. The prioritization includes current bird distribution data for all special status species as well as subwatershed rankings for anadromous fish diversity throughout the spill area. GLT will continue to obtain feedback on the prioritizations from EVOS Trustees, staff, USFWS, ADFG, ADNR, ADOL, and other key landowners and government officials.

2. Landowner Contact

GLT will contact the landowners of high-ranking parcels to determine their willingness to sell fee simple or a conservation easement. This will also include discussions with the landowners regarding acreage and parcel configuration, timelines, and due diligence. GLT will meet frequently with agency and EVOSTC staff during this phase of the project to get feedback on the projects that seem to have the most promise.

3. Appraisal

GLT will contract a phased appraisal of the highest ranking parcels with willing landowners based on the meetings conducted in step two. The first phase of the appraisal will include a meeting with the appraiser after research has been conducted by the appraiser. The appraiser will report the expected high and low range of values for the value of the property. A full appraisal will be completed only if the initial range of values is acceptable to both the buyer and the seller.

4. Matching Funds Partner Outreach

GLT will seek matching funds for projects that appear to be a good fit for EVOS funding. This will include funding from sources including the Forest Legacy Program, USFWS National Coastal Wetlands Program, and private foundations. This process takes 6-18 months but can yield significant funding that may allow more acres to be purchased.

5. Final Project Completion

GLT will work closely with EVOS Trustee Council Staff, DNR, USFWS, ADNR, ADOL, and other partners to complete up to approximately $100 million in high priority

conservation projects with willing landowners in the Spill Area as part of this project.

Project Milestones:

April 15-September 30, 2013:

- Finish project parcel identification using recently completed Kodiak archipelago conservation prioritization.

June 1- August 30, 2013:

- Initiate site assessments of 3-5 high ranking projects.

October 1, 2013- March 30, 2014:

- Develop conservation prioritization of the entire spill area.
- Continue landowner outreach on Kodiak Archipelago.
- Complete 2-3 appraisals of high-ranking projects on Kodiak Archipelago.
- Initiate Kodiak Archipelago project negotiations.

April 1, 2014- January 31, 2015

- Landowner outreach to landowners of high ranking parcels in the entire spill area to determine willing parties.
- Complete due diligence on 2-3 Kodiak Archipelago projects.
- Submit Kodiak Archipelago project packages to EVOSTC for full funding.
- Continue landowner outreach in the entire spill area.
- Complete 1-2 appraisals of high ranking projects in the spill area outside of Kodiak.
- Initiate project negotiations for projects in the greater spill area.

February 1, 2015 – January 31, 2016

- Complete due diligence on 2-3 additional spill area projects.
- Submit additional spill area project packages to EVOSTC for full funding.

February 1, 2016 – January 31, 2017

- Complete due diligence on 2-3 additional spill area projects.
- Submit additional spill area project packages to EVOSTC for full funding.

Budget:

		Year 3 (FY15)	Year 4 (FY16)
		Feb 1, 2015 – Jan 31, 2016	Feb 1, 2016 – Jan 31, 2017
GLT Staff	3 staff, 30hr/wk for 40 weeks @ $50/hour	$180,000	$180,000
Travel	Airfare from ANC to KOD (or Prince William Sound, Alaska Peninsula, and other Spill area project locations) $1,200/trip/staff @ 5 trips for 2 staff = $4,800; travel within Travel via float plane @ $650/hr @ 25 hrs= $16,250; $3,750 food, lodging, rental car.	$32,000	$32,000
Appraisal	Appraisals @ $25,000 each	$50,000	$50,000
Phase I Environmental Site Assessment	Phase I ESA reports @ $7,000 - $10,000 each	$27,000	$27,000
Legal	@ $370/ hr	$14,800	$14,800
Total		$303,800	$303,800

Anticipated Products/Outputs

Anticipated outputs for this grant include the prioritization and acquisition of high priority fee title properties within the EVOS area. In addition, some projects may be conservation easements held by USFWS or ADNR. Specific goals below:

- Substantial progress toward completion of fee title property acquisition of 30,000 acres within the EVOS area.
- Permanent protection of 5,000 acres of wetlands within the EVOS area.
- Permanent protection of up to 10 miles of coastline within the EVOS area.
- Permanent protection of up to 10 miles of anadromous streams within the EVOS area.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation

GLT will submit quarterly updates to USFWS, ADNR, ADOL, and EVOSTC on the status of the completion of project objectives. Upon completion of purchase of habitat with EVOSTC funding, a permanent conservation easement will be held by either ADNR or USFWS requiring annual monitoring of conservation values.

Description of Organization Undertaking the Project
GLT is Southcentral Alaska's regional land trust. It is an independent nonprofit land conservation organization founded by and for Alaskans in 1995. Our service area includes more than 50 percent of Alaska's total population and ranges from the Alaska Range in the North to Prince William Sound and Kodiak in the south. GLT is the only Alaska-based land trust working in Kodiak and is in an excellent position to work there because of our broad expertise. The other adjacent land trusts and national conservation organizations in Alaska were consulted prior to GLT's expansion to Kodiak and felt GLT was in the best position to work in this important area. GLT works in partnership with willing private and public landowners to permanently conserve special lands, signature landscapes, and waters essential to the quality of life and economic health of communities in the region. We seek to protect the integrity of the natural ecosystems, wetlands and streams, access to recreational lands, and conserve lands important for towns and cities.

GLT, an accredited land trust, has extensive experience with wildlife habitat and wetland conservation projects. Since 1995, GLT has completed 27 land conservation projects totaling nearly 8,500 acres in southcentral Alaska, including over 40 miles of salmon streams. GLT has professional staff skilled at carrying out complex land transactions. GLT has been nationally recognized for wetland conservation successes including the LTA Living Lands Publication, the Coastal America 2007 Partnership Award, the US DOI Cooperative Conservation Award 2008 and was awarded the Outstanding Partner Award by the Region 7 Director of USFWS for 2011. In addition, GLT recently became the first land trust in Alaska and one of only 200 nationwide to achieve accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission.

Sustainability
Upon completion of purchase of habitat with EVOSTC funding, a permanent conservation easement will be held by either ADNR or USFWS.

Map of Project Area

Great Land Trust Service Area
Municipality of Anchorage, Mat-Su Borough, and the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Affected Area