Terms of Reference for Consultancy
Systematic Conservation Plan for the Lower Mekong Basin

Location: Home-based with travel
Application Deadline: 15 days after publication
Type of Contract: Expert consultant
Post Level: Globally
Languages Required: English
Starting Date: 01.07.2024
Duration of Initial Contract: 30 months
Reporting to: Kathy Hughes, Asia-Pacific Freshwater Biodiversity Lead

1. Background:

WWF seeks Expressions of Interest from suitably qualified experts to create a collaborative multi-stakeholder freshwater Systematic Conservation Plan (SCP) for the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) in support of the Mekong in BALANCE Project (2024-2027).

Mekong in BALANCE Project
The Mekong region is facing urgent challenges that threaten its rich biodiversity and the well-being of millions of people who rely on its ecosystems. The conclusion of the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity saw the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Now that a framework has been adopted, accelerating action across sectors and society toward the realization of the goals and targets of the GBF is urgent to address the key drivers of biodiversity loss and lift the nature agenda. Mekong in BALANCE includes the five countries in the Lower Mekong region (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam), and will work in partnership with and across key national and regional actors, primarily national governments and civil society organisations.

Freshwater Systematic Conservation Plan

As part of the Mekong in BALANCE Project WWFs seeks to co-create an inclusive freshwater systematic conservation and restoration plan for the Lower Mekong Basin. This assessment seeks to maximise conservation impact efficiently, emphasizing the maintenance of hydro-ecological processes and connectivity in freshwater ecosystems. This will support climate adaptation through the preservation of ecosystem services and minimise climate shocks.

Flowing through Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam, the Lower Mekong Basin is a biodiversity hotspot and home to the world’s largest inland fishery. It is a provider of multiple other ecosystem services essential to the 60 million people living in the Basin. With the aim of identifying geographical gaps within the current network of area-based protections, the LMB SCP will specifically aim to identify future geographical priorities for restoration and protection, providing a strategic and effective pathway for the achievement of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 1, 2 and 3, alongside supporting SDG and other priorities.
2. **Expected Milestones and Deliverables**

The purpose of the consultancy is to deliver a collaborative Systematic Conservation Plan for the Lower Mekong Basin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Deliverable</th>
<th>Location (home-based or in-country)</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start Date -</td>
<td>Home-based</td>
<td>1st July 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation and delivery of Work Plan and facilitation through SCP activities</td>
<td>Home-based</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at 2-day Inception Workshop (Organized by WWF)</td>
<td>Lao PDR (anticipated)</td>
<td>October 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of MARXAN model and running of data</td>
<td>Home-based</td>
<td>January 2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at stakeholder ground-truthing workshop (organized by WWF)</td>
<td>Cambodia (anticipated)</td>
<td>June 2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at final stakeholder workshop to agree final SCP (Organized by WWF)</td>
<td>Lao PDR (anticipated)</td>
<td>April 2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production of final technical SCP report</td>
<td>Home-based</td>
<td>June 2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of SCP for peer-reviewed publication</td>
<td>Home-based</td>
<td>June 2026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Methodology**

To achieve the consultancy objective, the consultant is expected to undertake the following:

- Working closely with the Asia-Pacific Freshwater Biodiversity Lead, it is expected that the expert consultant will facilitate WWF and stakeholders through the process, ensuring the production of a collaborative and ground-truthed plan.
- The expert consultant is expected to provide technical decision making about the quality and sufficiency of data, stakeholder decisions about values, targets and spatial scales, and ensuring that biodiversity, in particular the needs of migratory freshwater fishes, are accommodated within the SCP.

4. **Required competencies**

WWF seeks an expert considered a global leader within the field of Systematic Conservation Planning, spatial planning, stakeholder engagement and management, area-based conservation effectiveness and the particularities of inland waters and their connectiveness.

The ideal candidate should possess in-depth knowledge and experience in developing systematic conservation plans, with a proven track record of success in stakeholder engagement processes. Additionally, expertise in evaluating the effectiveness of area-based conservation measures, particularly in freshwater ecosystems, is essential. The consultant should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the unique characteristics of inland waters and their connectivity within the broader landscape context. Strong analytical skills, publication record, strategic thinking, and a self-starter with the ability to navigate complex interdisciplinary challenges are also paramount for this role.

5. **Required skills and experience**
Qualifications
● PhD

Experience
● Production of similarly focused Systematic Conservation Plan.

Language
● English

6. Responsibilities and Logistics

WWF Reference people and working counterparts
● The expert will work with Project Lead: Kathy Hughes, Asia-Pacific Freshwater Biodiversity Leader.

Deliverables
1. Technical Report setting out the collaboratively produced Systematic Conservation Plan for the Lower Mekong Basin. To include methodology, decision making and stakeholder engagement processes and results.
2. Transcript to be submitted to peer-reviewed journal.

Field visits
● Three trips to the Lower Mekong Basin are anticipated.

7. Guidelines for submission

Interested applicants are required to submit the following:
Technical proposal comprising the following:
● Personal CV(s) and three professional references and/or evidence of relevant experience and mentioned competencies
● Brief description (Half a page) of why you consider yourself suitable for the assignment
● The proposal containing the methodology basing on the indication provided by this ToR (5 page max)
● Workplan and foreseen timetable
● Team composition, if required
● Information on any representative of your team, or any member of your team, that may give rise to a direct or indirect conflict of interest, including identifying other current contractual works being conducted for WWF and affiliations with WWF Staff.

Financial proposal indicating the all-inclusive contract value in USD, supported by the respective costs breakdown. The candidate is required to indicate in the financial offer any variation of the daily rate based on the service provided. Foreseen Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs are to be listed separately. These will be reimbursed upon presentation of the respective invoices and proof of payment.

Complete proposal (including all the above documents) should be submitted to the following email addresses kathy.hughes@wwfgreatermekong.org and daphne.carliez@wwfgreatermekong.org with the subject “Systematic Conservation Plan for the Lower Mekong Basin”.

For any question with regard to this assignment you can write to Kathy Hughes and Daphne Carliez, at kathy.hughes@wwfgreatermekong.org and Daphne.carliez@wwfgreatermekong.org
Deadline for submission is **15 days after publication.** Any late submission shall not be honored.

**IMPORTANT**
1. WWF reserves the right to accept any proposal or reject all proposals.
2. Technical evaluation will precede financial considerations.
3. Any forms of canvassing will lead to automatic cancellation of the bid in question.
4. This is a call for proposals. WWF may cancel the process without notice and shall accept no liability whatsoever arising out of such action.
5. WWF is also under no obligation whatsoever to award the contract to the lowest or any bidder; the decision of the Procurement Committee shall be final.