# Gallatin Conservation District
# REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

| RFQ Number: | RFQ Title: |
|---|---|
| GCD-JUN-17-26 | Gallatin Valley Managed Aquifer Recharge Study (Phase 2) |

| ISSUER INFORMATION | |
|---|---|
| **Contact:** Elizabeth Emeline, Natural Resource Specialist<br>(406) 282-4350, elizabeth@gallatincd.org | **Issue Date:**<br>5/20/2026 |

## INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFERORS

**Return Proposal to:** Gallatin Conservation District

Elizabeth Emeline
Gallatin Conservation District
PO Box 569 | 120 S. 5th St., Ste 104
Manhattan, 59741

elizabeth@gallatincd.org **Email submission preferred**

**RFQ Response Due Date and Time:** Jun 17, 2026 4:30 PM MST

| OFFERORS MUST COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING | |
|---|---|
| **Offeror Name/Address:** | **Authorized Offeror Signatory:**<br>(Please print name and sign in ink) |
| **Offeror Phone Number:** | **Offeror FAX Number:** |
| **Offeror E-mail Address:** | |

**OFFERORS MUST RETURN THIS COVER SHEET WITH RFQ RESPONSE**

# INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFERORS

**It is the responsibility of each offeror to:**

**Follow the format required in the RFQ** when preparing your response. Provide point-by-point responses to all sections in a clear and concise manner.

**Provide complete answers/descriptions.** Read and answer **all** questions and requirements. Don't assume GCD or evaluator/evaluation committee will know what your company capabilities are or what items/services you can provide, even if you have previously contracted with GCD or partners.

**Use the forms provided**, i.e., cover page, etc.

**Submit your response on time.** Note all the dates and times listed in the Schedule of Events and within the document, and be sure to submit all required items on time. Late proposal responses are not accepted.

**The following items MUST be included in the response to be considered responsive. Failure to include any of these items may result in a nonresponsive determination.**

**1. Cover Sheet**

**2. RFQ Response Form**

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

| EVENT | DATE |
| --- | --- |
| RFQ Issue Date | 5/19/2026 |
| RFQ Response Due Date | 6/17/2026 |
| Intended Date for Award Notification | 6/19/2026 |

# SECTION 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW AND INSTRUCTIONS

## BRIEF PROJECT OVERVIEW

Gallatin Conservation District (GCD) and its collaborating partners the Middle Creek Ditch and Canal Co. (MCDC) and the Gallatin Water Trust (GWT) are seeking engineering, design and construction oversight services to complete the deliverables set out in the “Gallatin Valley Managed Aquifer Recharge Phase 2” RDG planning grant (Project).

The project addresses the growing need to protect and secure water resources in the Gallatin River Basin by safeguarding and utilizing the Gallatin Valley’s extensive ditch network. Led by the Gallatin Conservation District with its partners the Gallatin Water Trust and the Middle Creek Ditch Company, the Project evaluates opportunities to use existing ditch infrastructure for managed aquifer recharge (MAR).

In Phase 1 (completed), the Project mapped the Middle Creek Ditch system, initiated monitoring to quantify water distribution, and set the foundation for identifying potential recharge sites that align with the ditch network’s current functions.

Phase 2 focuses on three objectives: (1) installing surface water flow monitoring devices in selected locations in the Middle Creek Ditch Company’s ditch and canal system, (2) developing outreach materials to increase public understanding of the ditch system’s role in surface water delivery and groundwater recharge, and (3) preparing the preliminary design to implement one or more MAR using the MCDC’s ditch and canal system. These efforts will establish the technical and scientific foundation for MAR as a long-term strategy to support existing water use while offsetting new demands across the Gallatin Valley.

The Project seeks to deliver public benefits by informing municipal and county planning, strengthening communication between development and agriculture, and supporting collaborative water management. It also advances natural resource benefits by helping sustain groundwater levels, streamflow, riparian habitat, and fisheries, while increasing drought resilience.

By expanding understanding of how the Middle Creek Ditch contributes to aquifer recharge and by catalyzing renewed investment in ditch-based infrastructure, this project helps safeguard vital and increasingly threatened resources in the Gallatin River Basin.

The purpose of this Request for Qualifications is to obtain / evaluate current qualifications of firms with the personnel and experience to complete project activities. GCD may conduct discussions with one or more firms regarding key personnel, relevant project experience, applicable expertise, anticipated concepts and the relative utility of alternative methods of approach for furnishing the requested services. GCD would then intend to negotiate a contract (or contracts) at a price that the organization determines to be fair and reasonable, with one or more qualified firms that provide a suitable service mix of skills, experience and expertise to implement the project activities.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**Offerors must submit a copy of the RFQ Cover Sheet and the information requested in the RFQ Response Form.** Offerors failing to comply with these instructions may be subject to point deductions. GCD may also choose to not evaluate, may deem nonresponsive, and/or may disqualify from further consideration any proposals that do not follow this RFQ format, are difficult to understand, are difficult to read, or are missing any requested information.

The highest scoring offeror will be the prime contractor upon contract award and shall be responsible, in total, for all work of any subcontractors. All subcontractors, if any, and their experience must be included in the proposal. GCD reserves the right to approve all subcontractors. The Contractor shall be responsible to GCD for the acts and omissions of all subcontractors, operators, or agents and of persons directly or indirectly employed by such subcontractors, and for the acts and omissions of persons employed directly by the Contractor. Further, nothing contained within this document or any contract documents created as a result of any contract awards derived from this RFQ shall create any contractual relationships between any subcontractor and GCD.

**Number of Copies and Due Date.** Offerors must submit at least one copy of the RFQ Cover Sheet and RFQ Response Form to the address listed below. Proposals must be received prior to **COB 4:30 p.m., MST on Wednesday, June 17th, 2026.** Proposals received after this time will not be accepted for consideration.

***Electronic submissions are preferred.* Gallatin Conservation District has limited office hours during the week. Please do not deliver in person unless necessary.**

**Elizabeth Emeline**
**Gallatin Conservation District**
**PO Box 569 | 120 S. 5th St., Ste 104**
**Manhattan, MT 59741**
**elizabeth@gallatincd.org**

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## SECTION 2: EVALUATION PROCESS

# EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

All proposals will initially be classified as either “responsive” or “nonresponsive.” Proposals may be found nonresponsive at any time during the procurement process if any of the required information is not provided. If a proposal is found to be nonresponsive, it will not be considered further.

Selection and award will be based on the offeror's proposal and other items outlined in this RFQ. Information or materials presented by offerors outside the formal response or subsequent discussion/negotiation or best and final offer, if requested, will not be considered, will have no bearing on any award, and may result in the offeror being disqualified from further consideration.

**Selection Process**

A Selection Committee will evaluate and rank all responses, considering available information to develop a final ranking in accordance with the following factors.

| | |
|---|---|
| Qualifications and experience pertinent to meeting GCD’s Project goals (below) and the deliverables of the Phase 2 grant (below). | **25** |
| Ability to meet Project deadlines and deliverables, and availability of staff to work on the Project within those timeframes. Availability of staff for field work in 2026. Ability to utilize prior documentation and studies to meet Project objectives. | **15** |
| Qualifications and experience working on highly visible, public projects involving multiple stakeholders. Experience working directly with regulators and government agencies, ditch companies, individual irrigators, and landowners preferred. | **10** |
| Qualifications and experience with aquatic flow monitoring systems, strategies, and purchasing equipment; and preparation of reports based on the same. Knowledge and expertise in groundwater hydrology and management. | **15** |
| Knowledge of the technical, legal, and social aspects of water resources in the portion of the Gallatin Valley encompassed by the Phase 1 study, including familiarity with key stakeholders, the hydrologic context, the ditch and irrigation network, key development issues, and current regulatory and governmental issues. Ability to coordinate project activities with other efforts in the Gallatin watershed. | **15** |
| Experience with and knowledge of the water rights change of use and related regulatory processes. | **10** |
| Ability to work within the Project budget (approx. $48,000). | **10** |

**Contract Negotiations**

GCD will commence contract negotiations as soon as possible with the highest ranked firm. If, in GCD's sole judgment and discretion, negotiations do not lead to acceptable terms for scope and fees, GCD will terminate negotiations and move on to the next highest ranked firm. This selection process is expected to be completed in June 2026, leading to GCD action for a contract award as soon as possible thereafter. GCD reserves the right to accept the submittal that the Selection Committee deems to be in the best interests of GCD and to reject any proposals that it deems, for any reason, to not be in GCD's best interests.

This solicitation is offered in accordance with state statutes governing procurement of professional services. Accordingly, GCD reserves the right to negotiate an agreement based on fair and reasonable compensation for the scope of work and services proposed, as well as the right to reject any and all responses deemed unqualified, unsatisfactory or inappropriate.

## SECTION 3: SCOPE OF PROJECT

Meeting water demands in the Gallatin River Basin has become increasingly difficult as the region's population grows rapidly in this closed basin. Gallatin County is the second-largest county in Montana, with approximately 130,000 residents in 2025, nearly doubling in population since 2010. The high rate of growth strains available water in this headwater community that is dependent upon spring snowmelt and rainfall for the entirety of its water supply. The City of Bozeman's 2013 Integrated Water Resources Plan projected that the City's water demand could surpass its supply as early as 2025 (pg. EX-1). The City is finding it ever more challenging to supply water to existing users and to identify available water rights for new users.

In addition to this water supply problem, an important source of aquifer recharge in the Gallatin Valley and a potential resource for mitigation of new water use is under growing threat. For well over a century, the Gallatin Valley's irrigation network has sustained agriculture while also serving as a source of seasonal aquifer recharge at an estimated 1-1.5 cfs/mile. This infrastructure has supported municipal water supply, private wells, and the rivers and streams that sustain fish, wildlife, and agricultural diversions in the Valley. These secondary functions of the irrigation system provide broad benefits to the entire community and to the resource.

However, as development pressure increases and historically irrigated lands are converted to new uses, sections of the ditch network are being bisected, moved, blocked, or otherwise altered. When these alterations occur without explicit approval by ditch companies, it is often due to uncertainty caused by the lack of a shared map of the ditch network and knowledge of ditch owners' prescriptive easements. These scenarios have caused tensions and distrust between the agricultural community and the development community, making it more difficult to find common-sense solutions that provide both public and natural resource benefits. The lack of shared information threatens a vital resource at a time when water scarcity is becoming more acute.
The 2015 State Water Plan highlights "mitigation and aquifer recharge" as essential strategies to address Montana's growing water demands, calling for additional research into their feasibility and application. This project directly responds to that call. In Phase I, the Middle Creek Ditch Company's network was mapped and expanded by 14 miles, and synoptic flow measurements at 25 sites informed development of a monitoring plan. These efforts demonstrated the ditch system's importance to both irrigation and groundwater recharge and established a foundation for more detailed monitoring, outreach, and project design.

The Middle Creek Ditch system lies between Bozeman's municipal water supply to the south and rapidly expanding urban and suburban development to the north. In recent years, ditch infrastructure has been altered by development activities without notice or approval, placing this resource at risk. Because the ditch system is both cost-effective and strategically located to support aquifer recharge, protecting and maintaining its integrity is urgent. Irrigator interviews conducted in Phase 1 underscored this urgency, noting that the ditch company is increasingly burdened by unauthorized encroachments and conflicts over easement rights. Accurate mapping, monitoring, and proactive outreach will help to alleviate these challenges and increase understanding of the ditch system's role in aquifer recharge and water management.

This project will strengthen the resilience of the Gallatin Valley's aquifers, which support irrigation, riparian ecosystems, fish and wildlife habitat, and community water supplies. Mapping in Phase 1 indicated that Middle Creek Ditch Water provides headwater contributions to spring creeks such as Figgins, Mandeville, East

Catron, Baxter, and Aajker Creeks. By improving both technical and public understanding of recharge dynamics and quantifying water distribution through the ditch network, this work will provide a foundation for siting effective managed aquifer recharge (MAR) projects. Benefits will extend beyond the ditch company service area to include the broader Gallatin Valley Aquifer.

The project also supports smarter land-use decisions. By producing an accurate, shared map of ditch infrastructure and assessing recharge potential, as was completed in Phase 1, the project will inform County and City planning and permitting, reduce conflicts between agricultural and development interests, and guide more sustainable growth. Outreach to engineers, builders, and planners will proactively reduce damage to ditch infrastructure and lessen the burden on ditch companies to enforce their rights after violations occur. Finally, this project advances Montana's broader efforts to develop a regulatory and practical framework for aquifer recharge. Monitoring activities will improve scientific understanding of local hydrology, pilot project development will test the feasibility of recharge in real-world conditions, and outreach will strengthen public and professional support for MAR as a tool for long-term water security.

## PROJECT GOALS

Advance understanding of flow dynamics and recharge potential within the Middle Creek Ditch network, build capacity for future MAR project implementation, and educate the public.

Objectives:

1. Monitor flows across the ditch network.
    a. Install pressure transducers at selected monitoring sites and staff gages at additional sites.
    b. Collect seasonal flow measurements to develop rating curves.
    c. Identify gaining and losing reaches and track seasonal variability.
    d. Use findings to inform MAR project siting and quantify recharge from existing ditch infrastructure.
2. Develop outreach materials for development professionals and the public.
    a. Create print and presentation materials explaining the importance of the ditch network and related legal obligations.
    b. Distribute and present materials to architects, engineers, builders, and other relevant organizations.
3. Prepare preliminary design of and provide technical support for one or more MAR project(s)
    a. Advance pilot project concepts based on prior analyses of the ditch network.
    b. Identify candidate parcels and partnerships at beneficial project sites.
    c. Support grant application(s) to secure funding for design and implementation.

## REQUESTED SERVICES

GCD and its partners are seeking a qualified entity to support the Project and to provide the following deliverables:

**1. Implement Ditch Flow Monitoring Network**

The monitoring plan developed during Phase 1 of the project will be implemented in Phase 2. Pressure transducers will be installed at ten monitoring sites throughout the ditch network and receiving streams, and flow measurements will be conducted at least four times throughout the season to develop rating curves. Information gathered will help to inform which sections of the ditch network are gaining, which are losing, and how these dynamics change throughout the irrigation season. Outcomes will inform the placement of MAR projects and help to quantify recharge from existing ditch infrastructure.
**Deliverables:** Table and maps representing the seasonal distribution of water through the Middle Creek Ditch Network

**2. Develop Outreach Materials**

This task aims to proactively educate members of the development community, such as architects, engineers, and builders, in order to reduce damage to ditch infrastructure. Print and presentation materials will be developed that explain the importance of the ditch network to water resources in the valley, and legal obligations associated with altering them. These will be distributed through the Gallatin

Conservation District, Water Trust, Trout Unlimited, Association of Gallatin Agricultural Irrigators, and Gallatin Water Collaborative to amenable organizations that interact with ditches professionally.
**Deliverables:** Print and presentation format materials aimed at development professionals distributed to relevant organizations

3. **Prepare preliminary design of MAR project(s) and support Pilot Project Grant Application(s)**
   This task involves developing the preliminary design for one or more specific MAR project(s) utilizing the Middle Creek Ditch network, and supporting a project grant application by GCD or others for a project or projects that implement MAR.
Phase 1 of the project characterized the ditch network, identified candidate parcels, and elucidated locations along the network where projects could be most beneficial. A pilot project(s) under Phase 2 would provide an important testing ground for project development and implementation that can help inform future efforts.
**Deliverables:** Preliminary design for pilot project implementation.

Phase 2 and its subsequent implementation will require, without limitation, some of all of the following activities:

- Preparation of preliminary MAR designs, including cost estimates
- Coordination with permitting agencies and the public
- Development of public outreach maps and visuals
- Defining and preparing for regulatory permitting requirements
- Development of bid documents
- Construction oversight
- Permit compliance evaluation and as-built surveys

GWT is the lead entity on project coordination and contracting. Project decisions will be made through collaboration between GCD, GWT and MCDC.

## SECTION 4: OFFEROR QUALIFICATIONS/INFORMATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

## GCD's RIGHT TO INVESTIGATE AND REJECT

GCD may make such investigations as deemed necessary to determine the ability of the offeror to provide the supplies and/or perform the services specified. GCD reserves the right to reject any proposal if the evidence submitted by, or investigation of, the offeror fails to satisfy GCD that the offeror is properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the contract. *This includes GCD's ability to reject the proposal based on negative references, including poor efficiency or previous project performance.*

## OFFEROR QUALIFICATIONS/INFORMATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

For GCD to determine the capabilities of an offeror to provide the supplies and/or perform the services specified in Section 3 above, the offeror must respond to the following requests for information regarding its ability to meet GCD's requirements. **Please limit responses to four (4) pages, not including resumes.**

**References.** Offeror shall provide a minimum of **(3)** references that are using services of the type proposed in this RFQ. At a minimum, the offeror shall provide the customer's name, the location where the supplies and/or services were provided, contact person(s), customer's telephone number, e-mail address, and a description of the project type, and dates the services were provided.

**Company Profile & Cost Schedule.** Offeror shall specify how long the individual/company submitting the proposal has been in the business of providing services similar to those requested in this RFQ and under what company name. Include names and resumes of professional personnel to be assigned to work under any contract entered into with GCD, including subcontractors. Provide a table that clearly identifies each staff member, their position, their role in this project and their current hourly base rates.

**Experience/Project Examples.** Offeror should provide up to three (3) project examples that best demonstrate their ability to meet project qualification requirements. For each project, please include project name, location, work performed.

**Capability of Providing Services.** Provide a concise narrative statement describing why GCD should hire your firm for expertise on services requested and your general approach to these projects. Provide examples of offeror's capability of managing complex projects, meeting deadlines and project budget requirements. For the individuals on the team, provide an analysis of their anticipated availability over a 3-year period.

**Requirements:** The consultant shall have demonstrated experience in hydrology, groundwater management, and managed aquifer recharge. Firms must possess a current PE license and proven experience with Montana water rights and DNRC processes.

# RFQ RESPONSE FORM

**(Offerors may use a separate, customized form if necessary. *Please limit response to 8 pages, not including resumes*)**

1. **References**

2. **Company Profile & Cost Schedule**

3. **Experience/Project Examples**

4. **Capability of Providing Services**

**Number of Copies and Due Date.** Offerors must submit at least one copy of the RFQ Cover Sheet and RFP Response Form to the address listed below. Proposals must be received prior to **COB 4:30 p.m., MST on Wednesday, June 17th, 2026.** Proposals received after this time will not be accepted for consideration.

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