



Request for Proposals for the West Mono Basin Project: 2026 Archaeological Surveys and Section 106 Compliance

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Project Background.....	2
3	Scope.....	2
3.1	Project location.....	3
3.1.1	Terrain	4
3.2	Description of Work.....	4
3.2.1	Purpose	4
3.2.2	Requirements.....	4
4	Deliverables.....	6
4.1	Schedule of Work	7
5	Other Contract requirements	7
5.1	Qualifications.....	7
6	Contractor Selection Process	8
6.1	Contractor Selection Process Schedule of Work.....	8
6.2	RFP Questions & Responses	8
7	Proposal Submission & Selection.....	8
7.1	Required Proposal Components.....	8
7.2	Proposal Submittal Instructions	9
7.3	Selection Criteria	9
7.3.1	Selection Notification.....	10



Attachments

- EXHIBIT A. INSURANCE PROVISIONS
- EXHIBIT B. SCOPE OF WORK
- EXHIBIT C. PROJECT AREA MAPS
- EXHIBIT D. INF MOTOR VEHICLE USE MAPS
- EXHIBIT E. BID TABLE (Excel Spreadsheet)

1 INTRODUCTION

[Whitebark Institute \(WBI\)](#) is seeking archaeology contractor(s) (CONTRACTOR) to conduct archaeological surveys and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, Section 106 compliance for the [West Mono Basin Project](#) (PROJECT). The PROJECT is located in the Mono Lake Ranger District on Inyo National Forest (INF) lands. The PROJECT includes **13,673 acres** and will require protocol level archaeological surveys and Section 106 compliance.

Responses to this Request for Proposals (RFP) are due no later than 5:00PM (PDT) on April 27, 2026, via email. See Section 7, Proposal Submission and Selection, for further details. Insurance provisions (Exhibit A), Scope of Work (Exhibit B), project area maps (Exhibit C), Inyo National Forest (INF) motor vehicle use maps (Exhibit D), and bid table (Exhibit E) are attached.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

WBI is a non-profit organization partnering with the INF to develop wildfire resilience projects that benefit communities and ecosystems in the West Mono Basin watershed. This project takes an all-lands approach; however, the majority of lands fall within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS or Forest Service). The goal of the West Mono Basin Project is to design vegetation treatment projects and conduct associated environmental planning with the objectives of reducing the likelihood of severe wildfires, increasing community resilience to wildfire, improving ecosystem resilience, reducing risks to natural and cultural resources and critical infrastructure from wildfire, and enabling the maintenance of fuel reduction treatments by reintroducing fire to the landscape. Review of previously collected data on historical and cultural resources in the area and additional surveys have been identified as key needs to advance the West Mono Basin project planning.

3 SCOPE

It is the intent of these specifications, terms, and conditions to describe the services WBI is seeking. WBI intends to award a contract to the CONTRACTOR(s) that best meets its requirements. The contract term will begin on the date it is executed by WBI and will terminate once the work is complete but no later than December 30, 2027.

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) has been drafted and currently identifies the June Lake area as Priority 1 and the Lee Vining Canyon area as Priority 2 (Exhibit C). This APE is considered

preliminary. Both the APE boundary and the specific survey areas within it may be refined as project priorities continue to be developed by the INF and WBI. While minor adjustments to the APE or survey locations may occur during the course of the contracted work, the overall survey acreage and general survey approach described in this section are expected to remain consistent in scope.

The total survey area includes slopes ranging from 0 to 60 percent, representing 10,476 acres within the broader 13,673-acre APE (Exhibit C). Table 1 provides a breakdown of acreage by priority area within the APE.

Table 1. Area of Potential Effect – total acreage including slopes that exceed 60 percent

Survey Areas	Priority Survey Areas	Acres
June Lake	Priority 1	4,993
Lee Vining Creek	Priority 2	8,680
	Total:	13,673

Within the designated 10,476-acre survey area, approximately 5,767 acres consist of slopes less than 30 percent, while roughly 4,700 acres fall within the 30–60 percent slope range.

In coordination with the INF, the CONTRACTOR(s) will be required to conduct surveys across the majority of areas within the 0–30 percent slope range. Portions of this slope category that fall within remote or difficult-to-access terrain may be excluded from survey requirements if, upon further evaluation by the INF, they are determined to be inaccessible. Any such exclusions will depend on additional project development and will be finalized in consultation with the INF and WBI.

Select areas within the 30–60 percent slope range located inside the APE will also require survey coverage; however, the total acreage to be surveyed within this slope class is expected to represent only a portion of the approximately 4,700 acres. CONTRACTOR(s) must complete and submit the bid table (Exhibit E) based on the information, assumptions, and anticipated survey extents described in this section.

3.1 PROJECT LOCATION

Surveys will be conducted on INF lands within the Mono Lake Ranger District at elevations ranging from approximately 6,400 to 10,000 feet. The project area may be snow-covered and inaccessible from late October through April or May, depending on annual snowfall. The town of June Lake, at 7,636 feet in elevation, receives an average of approximately 70 inches of snow per year. The town of Lee Vining (6,766 feet) also experiences snowfall throughout the winter months. As a result, groundwork windows may be limited to late spring, summer, and early fall, depending on snow accumulation.

Two survey area priorities have been identified by the INF in coordination with WBI pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA. Refer to the maps provided in Exhibit C for specific locations and



priority designations. These maps are geo-referenced and can be used with Avenza Maps or similar applications.

The areas to be surveyed consist of natural stands, some of which are dense with trees of varying sizes, shrubs, and surface fuels, and are therefore at risk for wildfire. Survey areas are located both within and beyond the Wildland Urban Interface and, in some cases, connect to past or anticipated future treatment areas on INF System lands.

Survey areas will be primarily accessed via Forest Service roads off U.S. Highway 395 and California State Routes 158 and 120.

3.1.1 Terrain

All survey areas within the PROJECT are located on sloped terrain, resulting in challenging hiking and survey conditions. In addition, vehicle and trail access is limited, and access may require the use of four-wheel-drive or high-clearance vehicles.

CONTRACTOR(s) must be willing and able to safely perform job duties in rugged terrain and at high elevations. CONTRACTOR(s) should obtain up-to-date access information from the Mono Lake Ranger District prior to entering the sites and must adhere to the INF Motor Vehicle Use Maps (Exhibit D), which limit vehicle use.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF WORK

The APE for the PROJECT is defined as outlined in Exhibit B and C. The APE encompasses the area where direct and indirect effects to National Register eligible properties from the project are anticipated to occur.

3.2.1 Purpose

Pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA (36 CFR Part 800), WBI will contract with individuals who meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation to conduct cultural resource compliance work within the APE for the PROJECT. All work performed by the CONTRACTOR must meet U.S. Forest Service (USFS) standards and expectations for the identification of historic properties and the assessment of project effects. The APE may change as the proposed action is developed throughout 2026. Accordingly, the scope of work and contract may be updated as necessary. The CONTRACTOR shall reference the Scope of Work provided by the INF (Exhibit B) for specifics on contracted work.

3.2.2 Requirements

3.2.2.1 Permit

Researchers must obtain an archaeological study permit before starting work. Permit contact information:



- Laurel Lueders, INF Archaeologist (DHPS)
760-873-2522, laurel.lueders@usda.gov

3.2.2.2 Background Research

The CONTRACTOR shall consult with the INF regarding archaeological studies and site records on file for the PROJECT, as well as the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) and other relevant sources (e.g., mineral and land ownership records, historic maps, and local museum collections), prior to initiating fieldwork.

To facilitate this review, the DHPS will provide GIS shapefiles for previous identification efforts and known resource locations within the priority acres. The CONTRACTOR shall critically evaluate previous survey efforts to determine whether adequate and reliable coverage exists for any portion of the APE. This evaluation shall consider factors such as survey age, methodology, changes in field conditions, and the thoroughness of documentation, as well as other indicators of reliability.

The CONTRACTOR shall provide a clear rationale for exempting any portions of the APE from survey. This rationale must be clearly articulated in the report (see Section 4, Deliverables).

3.2.2.3 NEPA Assessment and Tribal Consultation

The CONTRACTOR will provide support for NEPA planning efforts by summarizing legal frameworks for the consideration of cultural resources and tribal concerns, including but not limited to NHPA Section 106 and other applicable statutes (e.g., AIRFA, NAGPRA, EO11593), background research, methodologies, survey findings, consultation results and agency determinations in manner that informs decision making processes and is suitable for public disclosure. Specific analysis tasks include but are not limited to: developing a framework for analysis of historic properties and tribal values/concerns, working with the interdisciplinary team to identify issues to analyze units of measures to display across alternatives, determining and documenting land management plan consistency, and conducting a comparative analysis of the proposed action and alternatives that includes evaluation of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

The INF maintains responsibility for tribal consultation. The CONTRACTOR may provide support for tribal consultation by drafting letters and/or other documents and assisting with coordination and logistics for consultation meetings in both field and office settings. The CONTRACTOR will not distribute materials directly to tribes or act as a representative of the Forest in any discussions with tribes.

3.2.2.4 Field Inventory

The CONTRACTOR shall conduct intensive surface survey of the APE using parallel, adjacent pedestrian transects spaced no more than 15-30 meters apart, within the practical limits of safety, topography, vegetation, water, and other constraints. Transects need not follow straight



lines but may meander opportunistically to take advantage of soil exposures, topographic indicators, and to examine suspected cultural resources.

If the CONTRACTOR encounters areas of unnavigable steep terrain (greater than 30 degrees), surveys shall emphasize pedestrian and/or visual inspection of likely or suspected site locations (e.g., rock shelters, quarries, game drives, hunting blinds, mining adits, trails, roads, and logging features), as feasible. The CONTRACTOR must discuss any proposed adaptations to the survey strategy with the INF Heritage Program Manager (HPM) or DHPS. The CONTRACTOR shall provide a project report that accurately describes the methodologies employed, including a description and rationale for any unsurveyed areas within the APE.

The CONTRACTOR shall inspect and update all previously documented National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—eligible and unevaluated cultural resources within the APE. Previously documented sites shall be thoroughly examined, with at least broad-scale observations recorded for portions extending beyond the APE, unless otherwise negotiated with the HPM. NRHP-ineligible sites need only be revisited if prior determinations are being reconsidered. All newly identified sites shall be fully documented by the CONTRACTOR, including portions located outside the APE. For historic roads or trails, documentation shall extend at least to the nearest intersection with a paved road, another road or trail, or the Forest Service boundary. Alternative documentation approaches for sites that extend substantial distances beyond the APE may be negotiated with the HPM.

The CONTRACTOR shall consult with the HPM regarding field datums and obtain prior approval. Site reference points shall be recorded using a GPS unit with NAD 83, UTM Zone 11. Testing, excavation, and artifact collection are not permitted without prior approval from the HPM.

4 DELIVERABLES

A cultural resource inventory report shall be prepared by the CONTRACTOR(s) in accordance with National Forest standards ([FSM 2363.16](#)) and the California Office of Historic Preservation's *Archaeological Resource Management Reports: Recommended Contents and Format* (1990). The report shall include background research, historic contexts, oral histories, survey design, field methods, cultural resource findings, National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility recommendations, project effect recommendations, maps, site forms, photographs, and collection logs, as applicable. Draft reports shall be submitted to the HPM for a 30-day review period. Forest report and site numbers will be assigned during the draft review and shall be incorporated into the final report. The CONTRACTOR shall submit a final deliverable package that includes an unbound original color copy of the report; electronic files (Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF); applicable shapefiles (e.g., APE, survey area, and cultural resource locations); and field notes, negatives, and collected artifacts with associated logs, as applicable.



WBI, INF, and its CONTRACTOR(s) share responsibility for maintaining the confidentiality of site location information on public lands and are not authorized to distribute this information to any third party.

4.1 SCHEDULE OF WORK

Upon award of the contract, work may begin as soon as conditions allow. The CONTRACTOR(s) shall maintain communication with the WBI Project Manager (PM) regarding site conditions and anticipated start dates following contract award.

Start Date: Spring 2026, depending on snow conditions.

Contract Timeline: Preference will be given to CONTRACTOR(s) who demonstrate the ability to complete the surveys within a single field season (approximately June through October or November). CONTRACTOR(s) may propose alternative timelines, which must be clearly detailed in the Technical Proposal. See Section 7 for Technical Proposal requirements.

5 OTHER CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

5.1 QUALIFICATIONS

1. CONTRACTOR shall possess all permits, licenses, and professional credentials necessary to perform the services specified under this RFP.
2. The CONTRACTOR, the CONTRACTOR's principal, or CONTRACTOR staff working on the contract must meet the minimum professional qualifications outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation: Professional Qualifications Standards* and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2309.12.
3. Throughout the duration of the contract, the Principal Investigator shall monitor the activities of the Supervising Field Archaeologist and field crew. To meet the minimum professional qualifications in archaeology:
 - Principle Investigator: The minimum professional qualifications for the Principal Investigator are:
 - a) A graduate degree in anthropology with an emphasis in archaeology.
 - b) Demonstrated ability to carry out research to completion, evidenced by timely completion of previous contracts within the past three years and no ongoing contracts past their completion dates.
 - c) At least one year of full-time professional experience in archaeological administration and research relevant to California archaeology, preferably in the Sierra Nevada.
 - d) Supervisory field and analytical experience.

- Field Supervisors: Minimum qualifications include a bachelor’s degree in anthropology, archaeology, history, or a closely related field, with at least six months of general archaeological field experience and three months of previous field supervisory experience conducting similar work.

6 CONTRACTOR SELECTION PROCESS

6.1 CONTRACTOR SELECTION PROCESS SCHEDULE OF WORK

See **Table 2** below for the CONTRACTOR selection process schedule of work.

Table 2: CONTRACTOR Selection Process Schedule of Work

Description	Completion Date
Advertisement of RFP	Friday April 10, 2026
Candidate RFP Questions Due (via email)	Wednesday April 15, 2026
Responses to RFP Questions Distributed (via email)	Friday April 17, 2026
Proposals Due	Monday April 27, 2026
Evaluation and Selection	Friday May 1, 2026

6.2 RFP QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

Any clarifications or questions should be requested **via email** (no phone calls) from the contact below by **5:00 pm on April 15, 2026**. Questions received after this deadline may not be answered.

Questions should be emailed to Project Manager Jackie White, jackie@whitebarkinstitute.org. Responses to all questions received will be emailed to all candidates by **5:00 pm April 17, 2026**.

7 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION & SELECTION

7.1 REQUIRED PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

In response to this RFP, include the following information:

1. Technical Proposal approach submitted as a Portable Document Format (PDF) with no more than 15 pages including:
 - Number of estimated days by survey area and methodologies for project completion timeline.
 - Ability to complete the work within the described timeline or

- adjusted/suggested timeline (as needed).
- Work plan with personnel and equipment.
 - Subcontractors (if any) utilized and proposed equipment and technology list
 - A single sheet cover letter and any attachments described in this RFP which are required to be submitted with the proposal, including cost proposal, insurance, licensing documents, and addenda acknowledgments. These items do NOT count toward the fifteen (15) page limit.
 - Qualifications and experience of the CONTRACTOR, employees, subcontractors, etc.
 - Past performance on similar projects with 3 references.
 - CONTRACTOR Bid Sheet (excel format) with description of associated cost assumptions for each survey area (June Lake and Lee Vining Canyon).
 - Utilization description of local and small businesses or underserved populations.

7.2 PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals must be submitted via email no later than 5:00 PM (PDT) on April 27, 2026, to Project Manager Jackie White at jackie@whitebarkinstitute.org.

Without exception, proposals submitted after the deadline will not be accepted, regardless of any technical difficulties. If a proposal does not include all required information, it may be considered incomplete and rejected without further evaluation. WBI shall not, under any circumstances, be liable for any pre-contractual expenses incurred by the CONTRACTOR in preparing its proposal, and CONTRACTOR(s) must not include such expenses as part of their proposal.

7.3 SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by WBI and INF. There may be interviews with the top qualified CONTRACTOR(s). CONTRACTOR(s) will be scored on each of the following criteria using a scale of 0-5 which will be multiplied by the weighted values, with 0 = below average and 5 = exceptional (Table 3).

Table 3. Proposal scoring criteria and rating system.

Scoring Criteria	Weight Factor	Rating (0-5)	Weighted Rating
A. Technical proposal/proposed approach to the project/methodologies proposed, overall ability to meet project goals, requirements, and timelines	20		
B. Price/cost	15		
C. Past performance and references	15		
D. Benefits/relationship to the local community	5		



E. Relationship with local tribal entities	5		
Total Score:			

7.3.1 Selection Notification

WBI will notify successful and unsuccessful bidders by **Friday May 1, 2026**, and will prepare a separate contract document for the successful bidder.