



**THE MEADOWS CENTER  
FOR WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT**  
TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

**REQUESTS FOR QUALIFICATIONS 02-03-2021A:  
BLANCO WATER RECLAMATION TASK FORCE: BLANCO TPDES  
REFINEMENT STUDY – ALTERNATIVES TO DIRECT DISCHARGE**

### **About the Blanco Water Reclamation Task Force**

The Blanco Water Reclamation Task Force (Task Force) was formed in September 2020 when the Blanco City Council, with a unanimous vote on Sept. 8, committed to a partnership with local NGO, Protect Our Blanco, that would seek to identify solutions for continued growth and development without wastewater discharge into the Blanco River. The Task Force includes city council representatives, city staff, business representatives and technical experts. The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment (The Meadows Center) will facilitate the task force under its two-year agreement with the City to identify sustainable water management solutions.

This request envisions a collaboration that recognizes the fundamental need to keep discharge out of the river, while recognizing the City's interest in bringing more business to Blanco and helping the region's population grow responsibly.

In principle, these actions create a fresh start for a process that affects people across the 412 square miles of the Blanco River Basin.

### **About the Project**

While the City of Blanco had maintained the option to discharge treated effluent from its aging municipal wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) into the Blanco River, the effluent produced by the plant was historically treated to land application standards and utilized for irrigation. Following the completion of a new WWTP and sludge removal from conditioning ponds in October 2018, the City of Blanco allowed treated effluent to flow directly into the Blanco River. By the spring of 2019, the Blanco River had become thick with algae immediately downstream of the discharge point. A 2019 study conducted by Dr. Ryan King with Baylor University found that increased nutrient levels, including nitrogen and phosphorus, downstream of the discharge point had enabled proliferation of nuisance algae and altered aquatic ecosystems. When effluent discharge into the Blanco River ended in December 2019, nutrient levels were reduced and the river began to once again reflect the characteristics of a healthy, Hill Country stream.



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The Task Force now seeks detail on engineering, conservation, planning and economic resources that may be available to the City of Blanco to ensure sustainable water resources and a clean, clear and healthy Blanco River.

### **About the RFQ**

The Meadows Center seeks a qualified engineering firm to assist the Task Force in evaluating near-term solutions (0-15 years) for the City of Blanco's water and sewer service area applicable to the goal of continued growth and development while protecting the health of the Blanco River. This effort will require an analysis of existing engineering and hydrologic studies along with an evaluation of the City's current water/wastewater TPDES permit application, infrastructure, growth projections, economic outlook and available resources.

**The desired outcome of this effort is to present the City of Blanco with a series of recommendations for a robust wastewater management approach that may be swiftly adopted to ensure the health of the Blanco River and economic well-being of the community. Opportunities for beneficial reuse of treated effluent and land application should be strongly considered toward achieving near-term goals.**

While developing a responsible approach to no-discharge in the Blanco River is the top priority for this RFQ, long-term growth and development projections for the Hwy 281 growth corridor directly adjacent to the City of Blanco present additional challenges and opportunities for sustainable water and wastewater management. Wastewater collection and treatment options in the Texas Hill Country span from conventional centralized systems to a variety of decentralized options. To this end, there is considerable interest in One Water systems that handle wastewater as a resource, not a nuisance, which can be routed to reuse and other beneficial purposes that not only eliminate discharge, but also drastically reduce potable water demand. The One Water framework recognizes the need to manage water in a holistic way, acknowledging that human-centric water needs must be considered in a larger context, and proposes a decision framework that intentionally considers healthy waterways and prioritizes diverse perspectives to produce better-informed and more lasting decisions.

### **Project Scope**

The Meadows Center is seeking a qualified engineering firm to deliver the following tasks:

1. Analyze population growth, water demand and wastewater production over the next 10-15 years in the City of Blanco's anticipated water and sewer service area.  
Considerations may include:



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- Analyses of both surface water and groundwater supply identified in State Water Plan
  - Planning efforts conducted by the City of Blanco and other entities
  - Potential commercial, residential and associated infrastructure development
2. Evaluate capacity of current WWTP infrastructure and available lands for effluent application to determine additional investments, infrastructure and inputs that will be required to avoid discharge over the next 10 to 15 years. This should be supported by findings from Task #1. Considerations may include:
    - Review of current City of Blanco TPDES permit application
    - Current and potential land use agreements
    - Water quality impacts
    - Other non-potable beneficial reuse options
  3. Based on findings from Task #2, provide cost estimate for no-discharge engineering options, capital infrastructure and O&M over the planning period.
  4. Evaluate and recommend TPDES permitting options to align with the accurate population demand forecasts and no-discharge feasibility.
  5. Draft and final report.

To inform the Task Force's ongoing work, The Meadows Center seeks completion of these services by no later than April 30, 2021.

To support this work, The Meadows Center will provide the following inputs:

- Existing relevant studies
- Publicly available reports, applications, maps, data from the City of Blanco
- Facilitate communication with the City of Blanco including the City Engineer

In selecting the Contractor, The Meadows Center will consider competing firms':

- Demonstrated expertise in municipal water/wastewater system operations and engineering
- Knowledge of water/wastewater system efficiency assessment approaches
- Experience in developing estimated water budgets to identify opportunities for a "One Water" approach to regional water management
- Familiarity with the Texas CCN permitting environment

Competitive responses will include:



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- Anticipated approach and deliverables associated with each of the five tasks defined above
- A proposed timeline of completion
- Examples of at least 2 projects on which the Contractor has delivered technical services similar to tasks as defined herein
- Bios of the full consulting team

Responses will be accepted until February 19, 2021 and can be sent to Nick Dornak at [nickdornak@txstate.edu](mailto:nickdornak@txstate.edu)

### **Funding for Meadows RFQ 02-03-2021A and Companion RFQ**

*The Meadows Center has secured \$15,000 to date toward the final negotiated contract for Meadows RFQ 02-03-2021A (this RFQ).*

***The Meadows Center and Task Force are also in the process of raising additional funds (up to \$24,999) to support a companion RFQ, Meadows RFQ 02-03-2021B: One Water Pathways for the City of Blanco\****. Engineering firms are encouraged to review and respond to this companion RFQ, which seeks to identify a clear pathway from near-term development and water/wastewater management practices to viable, long-term One Water solutions that will enable the City of Blanco to grow and prosper as a community and a leader in natural resources protection and conservation.

*\*The Meadows Center and Task Force are in the process of raising additional funds to support Meadows RFQ 02-03-2021B: One Water Pathways for the City of Blanco. Once funds are secured for Meadows RFQ 02-03-2021B (likely spring 2021), a second contract will be issued for the completion of the companion study. Responses to Meadows RFQ 02-03-2021B will be scored independent of responses to Meadows RFQ 02-03-2021A.*