

## **Request for Proposals: Medium-scale mill feasibility study**

Northwest Natural Resource Group (NNRG) seeks proposals for a study of the feasibility of a medium-scale primary lumber mill that would process logs harvested from the Nisqually Community Forest in Pierce County, WA, and other nearby ownerships that practice ecological forestry. The goal of this study is to better understand the feasibility of processing logs from these projects at a facility where interested buyers could preferentially purchase lumber produced through the application of ecological forestry, which would be the sole sources of supply for this mill. The study will also evaluate other benefits that might accrue to the community forest from having an affiliated mill, such as shortened haul distances (depending on the mill's location) and a log-buyer who would prioritize purchasing logs from the community forest over other sources.

Prospective bidders who have questions must submit them in writing by 5:00 pm on August 18, 2025. Answers will be posted at [nnrg.org/sawmill-study](https://nnrg.org/sawmill-study).

Proposals must be received by 3:00 pm on Tuesday, August 26, 2025.

NNRG anticipates selecting the contractor for the project by August 29, and concluding a contract with the successful party by September 15, 2025. Final deliverables will be due no later than December 15, 2025.

### **Background**

NNRG is a Seattle-based nonprofit that helps people understand and implement ecological forestry across Washington and Oregon. This study is undertaken in partnership with the Nisqually Community Forest (NCF), a nonprofit organization that owns 2,800 acres of forestland near Ashford, WA, and which manages another 2,700 acres under a co-management agreement with the Nisqually Indian Tribe. Where "NCF" is used in the context of log supply, it refers to both of those ownerships.

The type of mill for which we are commissioning this feasibility study would be a stationary mill that takes in softwood logs and produces sawn lumber. The lumber could be processed further onsite — through kiln-drying, surfacing and possibly other steps to add value to it — or shipped elsewhere for further processing.

By "medium-scale," we mean a mill with a production capacity of 5,000 to 30,000 board-feet lumber scale per 8-hour shift.

## **Commercial terms and deadlines**

The entity or person undertaking this study will be an independent contractor, and will not be considered an employee of NNRG. They will be responsible for all taxes and any licensing requirements. Additional detail can be found in Appendix A.

A discussion draft of the study must be presented at least 15 business days before the end date of the contract. Thereafter, NNRG will have 7 business days to review the study and transmit its comments to the contractor, which the contractor can incorporate in the finished version (with no obligation to make any modifications that contradict their professional judgment).

## **Content of the study**

The feasibility study needs to include the following elements:

### **Survey of available and suitable equipment**

To include a comparative evaluation of at least five possible equipment configurations, from at least two manufacturers (preferably three), and their relative benefits and disadvantages with respect to initial cost, performance, capabilities, availability of technical and hardware support, and reliability. This evaluation shall also include the estimated overrun for various finished products, denominated in MBF lumber scale per MBF Scribner log scale.

What are the minimum product lines that would need to be included for this to be a viable facility, and what add-ons would be nice to have but not essential? At minimum, the study should address the question of whether this medium-scale mill would need to include

- Kiln-drying (and of what kind and capacity)
- Planing capabilities
- On-site in-house lumber grading.

Optionally, the study may include thermal modification or such other value-added processes as the Contractor may propose to examine. See below under “Downstream market evaluation” for further discussion of value-added products.

### **Capital budget**

For the two or three most promising configurations defined above, estimate the capital expenditure needed to begin operations, including site improvement cost, equipment cost, installation and set-up cost, cost of buildings to house the mill, or availability of sites with existing buildings suitable to house the mill, plus the amount of operating capital needed to commence operations.

### **Labor considerations**

Describe the level of staffing needed at various scenarios of operation, the industry standard wage rates for these positions, and the availability of qualified personnel in the area. Also, estimate the cost of workers' compensation insurance from the Washington Department of Labor & Industries for the various positions that would need to be staffed.

### **Operating budget**

For the two or three most promising configurations defined above, estimate the costs of operation per month and per shift, and derive a cost per MBF for the manufacture of different finished products, with the cost of logs disaggregated so as to enable the estimation of total costs at different levels of log pricing.

### **Upstream log supply evaluation**

NNRG will provide log supply data (species, grade and size available annually) from the Nisqually Community Forest. Wood from NCF consists primarily of whitewoods (true firs and western hemlock), and secondarily of Douglas-fir. The study should include an analysis of how much more log supply, if any and of what species and grades, would need to be procured to ensure the mill's viability, under each of the two or three most promising configurations analyzed above.

### **Downstream market evaluation**

What is the demand for wood from such a mill, at what price, and can any market premium be achieved in recognition of the sourcing of wood from the Nisqually Community Forest, tribally owned land, Forest Stewardship Council™-certified forestland, and other owners practicing ecological forestry?

How do potential lumber market premiums for FSC-certified lumber compare with the cost and effort required to achieve FSC certification? Is there demand for FSC 100% or FSC Mix? To what extent would the price or marketability of the mill's products be influenced by the story of ecological forestry, Tribal stewardship, and watershed-scale conservation that goes into producing them?

What kinds of products would be most in-demand from such a mill, and which the mill could produce at a competitive price? In particular:

- Are there market opportunities for laminate stock for cross-laminated timber and other mass timber applications?
- Are there opportunities for value-added products such as architectural millwork (e.g. paneling, moldings, trim), specialty dimensional lumber (posts or beams), artisan-grade furniture or installations (possibly in collaboration with Tribal artists), engineered wood products such as glulam or CLT panels?

Would any potential buyers be willing to execute offtake agreements in advance of mill operation for the wood from such a mill?

What log sorts (species, grade, and size) would be needed to produce the most advantageous products?

### **Siting considerations**

What considerations are essential or important for siting such a mill? Including minimum and preferred site area; how important it is to be located on a rail line or with easy access to rail transportation; the availability of industrially zoned sites with adequate transportation infrastructure and electrical supply. Are there many such sites vacant and available for lease? How would the area of the mill site change depending on how many months' worth of log supply needed to be in the log deck by the beginning of November each year to ensure year-round operation? (In most years, snow closes access to the Nisqually Community Forest from November to May.)

Describe the trade-offs involved in siting the mill closer to the NCF forest road gates in Ashford and Eatonville, versus closer to the Interstate 5 corridor, for purposes of readier access to labor markets, repair services, and finished-product transportation.

### **Disposal of byproducts**

What markets are there for byproducts such as bark, sawdust, and hog fuel?  
If there are byproducts for which there is no market, what is the cost of their disposal?

The study may also consider whether byproducts such as sawdust, chips, or bark could be used in value-added applications — for example, in the production of biochar, wood pellets, compost additives, animal bedding, or other low-grade wood products. I

To submit a proposal, use the format provided in Appendix B: Proposal Format and email the proposal as a single pdf file to [seth@nnrg.org](mailto:seth@nnrg.org). Modifications to proposals already submitted will be allowed if sent by email prior to the August 26 deadline set in this Request for Proposals. Modifications shall be submitted also via email, as a single pdf submission to take the place of the previous one.

Before bidding, please read Appendix A as well: Commercial terms.

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## **Appendix A: Commercial Terms**

### **1. Procurement Process And Obligations**

Procurement activities will be conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner with fair treatment given to all Contractors. NNRG is an equal opportunity employer and contractor. All firms — including disadvantaged, minority, and women-owned firms — are encouraged to submit proposals. NNRG shall incur no obligation or liability whatsoever by reason of issuance of this RFP or action by anyone relative thereto.

### **2. Bidder's Obligations**

In order to bid, Contractor must review and analyze all sections of this RFP and submit all information and materials required. Bidder must provide sufficient information to allow NNRG to evaluate the submitted bid. Contractor, by submitting a bid, agrees that any costs incurred by the Contractor in responding to this RFP are to be borne by Contractor and may not be billed to NNRG.

Contractor's bid materials must follow the format described in Appendix B. NNRG may consider informal any bid not prepared and/or not submitted in accordance with the provisions hereof and may waive any informalities or reject any and all bids. If any bid is unclear, it may result in disqualification. Contractor has the ability to resubmit its bid proposal to NNRG. Any bid may be withdrawn prior to the above scheduled time for the opening of bids or authorized postponement thereof. Any bid received after the time and date specified shall not be considered.

NNRG requests firm fixed pricing for bids through December 31, 2025. If chosen as an award winner and any additional costs are presented at the time of agreement negotiations or implementation, NNRG has the right to rescind your organization as the award winner.

### **3. Disposition Of Proposals**

All material submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of NNRG and may be returned only at the option of NNRG and at the expense of the Contractor. Successful and unsuccessful contractors will be notified via email. NNRG shall not be obligated to detail any of the results of the evaluation.

### **4. Contractual Commitment Of Proposal**

The contents of submitted bids will be considered obligations of the successful Contractor. No information should be submitted that is not intended to be incorporated into the proposal and any contract that may result from such proposal. If there is any inconsistency between the terms herein and any of the other contract documents, the terms in the other contract documents shall prevail.

## **5. Insurance Requirements**

The Contractor shall provide NNRG with a Certificate of Insurance verifying its limits for commercial and professional liability, property damage, and automobile insurance in an amount not less than One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000), per occurrence. For the awarded Contract, NNRG shall be specifically named as an “additional insured” on all policies covering work under the Contract and the required Certificate of Insurance shall show that NNRG has been added to the policies.

## **6. Applicable Local, State, And Federal Requirements**

Contractor shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, whether or not specifically referenced herein.

## **7. Drug Free Workplace**

The Contractor shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding smoke-free and drug-free workplaces and shall make a good faith effort to ensure that none of its employees or permitted subcontractors engaged in the work being performed hereunder purchase, transfer, use, or possess illegal drugs or alcohol, or abuse prescription drugs in any way.

## **8. Independent Capacity Of Contractor**

The parties hereto agree that the Contractor, and any agents and employees of the Contractor shall act in an independent capacity and not as officers, employees, or agents of NNRG. Nothing herein or in the submitted bid documents shall be construed so as to create a partnership, joint venture, or other relationship between the parties.

## **9. Liability**

The Contractor agrees to indemnify and to hold NNRG harmless and immune from any and all claims for injury or damages arising from this RFP or any awarded Contract which are attributable to Contractor’s own actions or omissions or those of its trustees, officers, agents, employees, subcontractors, suppliers, third parties utilized by Contractor, or joint ventures.

## **10. Right To Reject**

NNRG reserves the right to reject, in its sole and absolute discretion, any and all bids, for any reason, to waive technicalities, and to pursue purchasing that is in the best interest of the organization. NNRG shall not be required to award a contract to any entity that responds to this RFP. Reasons for non-award of this contract may include but are not limited to NNRG’s dissatisfaction of the submitted bids and/or lack of contractor qualifications required to complete the project. The final award of the Project is

conditional on Contractor executing a written Contract acceptable to NNRG, in its sole and absolute discretion.

### **11. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Process**

Contractors are to make written proposals, which present Contractor's qualifications and ability to perform the necessary work to complete the project, following the format and subject to the maximum lengths described in Appendix B. Submittals will be evaluated and ranked according to the following equally weighted criteria:

- A. Demonstrated ability to understand and perform the project
- B. Qualifications of key personnel, their experience, and technical skills
- C. Creativity and comprehensiveness of approach
- D. Cost of the project

### **12. Questions Regarding this RFP**

Contractor understands and agrees that they have a duty to inquire about and clarify any RFP requirements or questions that the Contractor does not fully understand or believes may be interpreted in more than one way. Only written questions can be submitted regarding this RFP. Contractors can send questions to NNRG via the email listed in Appendix B by 5:00 pm Monday, August 18, 2025. No phone calls, please. NNRG is not required to answer any questions that are not pertinent to the RFP or are considered to be proprietary information.

### **13. Restricted Communications**

It is the policy of NNRG to avoid situations which (1) place it in a position where its judgment may be biased; (2) create an appearance of conflict of interest with respect to rendering an impartial, fair, technically sound, and objective decision prior to selection; or (3) give an unfair competitive advantage to competing Contractors. Therefore, to ensure an ethical RFP process, bidders will not be able to submit questions or otherwise communicate with NNRG between the final date for accepting questions (August 18, 2025) and the announcement of the selected contractor (August 29, 2025), with the exception of the submittal of their actual bid and any modifications thereto.

## **Appendix B: Proposal Format**

To submit your proposal for consideration, please follow the following format and email it as a single pdf to [seth@nnrg.org](mailto:seth@nnrg.org) by **3:00 pm on Tuesday, August 26, 2025**. The subject line should read, "Sawmill feasibility study proposal" and the name of the pdf file should begin with the name of the entity submitting the proposal, e.g., "PaulBunyanAndBabe\_SawmillRFP.pdf" For your convenience, a version of this Appendix in Microsoft Word format is also available on the project web page, [nnrg.org/sawmill-study](http://nnrg.org/sawmill-study). Proposals should have minimum 1-inch margins (excluding page footers and headers), and should be prepared in 12-point type (with the exception of footnotes and captions).

If you have any questions, please reach out to Seth Zuckerman at [seth@nnrg.org](mailto:seth@nnrg.org). Questions must be received by 5:00 pm on August 18, 2025; the questions and our answers will be posted on our website in weekly installments, with the final installment posted on August 19.

**Name of the entity (person or firm) submitting this bid:**

**Name of the person who would be the official contact for any contractual relationship:**

**Describe your experience conducting similar studies and the background you bring to this project. (Maximum 1 page)**

**Describe how you would approach the project? (Maximum 2 pages)**

**Describe the team that would be working on this study. What is their experience? Would you engage the services of any subcontractors, and if so, whom and for what segments of the project? (1 to 2 pages)**

**What is your expected timeline to complete various parts of the project?**

**Minimum milestones to include are:**

**Completion of most research; Delivery of draft report; Delivery of final report.**

**What would be the total cost of the project to NNRG, inclusive of all taxes? Please include a description and explanation of costs (max. 1 page) Bidder may offer up to two levels of analysis or detail, each with a different price.**

**References:**

Include three references below.

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Professional relationship (i.e. former client, forestry consultant):

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Professional relationship:

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Professional relationship:

**Website/other info:**

**Other attachments (optional):**

**Acknowledge receipt of RFP addenda, if applicable:**

- Addendum 1
- Addendum 2
- Addendum 3