



**TERMS OF REFERENCE  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT  
STATE OF FINANCE FOR NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR WATER SECURITY**

**OVERVIEW**

Forest Trends seeks several highly-organized individuals that are proficient in data analysis and knowledgeable about nature-based solutions (NBS) to contribute to the production of a flagship global report on the state of finance for NBS for water security.

These positions will be contracted as consultancies reporting to the Program Manager of Forest Trends' Global Water Initiative. The contracts will run from April - August 2024 with the possibility for extension through November 2024. Applicants must be fluent in English, and proficiency in another language (Spanish, French, Chinese, or other) is highly valued. The work is remote (home-based).

**BACKGROUND**

Between 2010 and 2016 Forest Trends published four major global reports on the status and trends in investments in nature for water. The most recent global survey showed robust growth in investments since 2010 and documented investments of USD 25 billion in 2015, driven by financing mechanisms ranging from China's large national government-funded programs to water quality trading markets to local bilateral agreements between water utilities and upstream communities.

Since our last global report, the world has seen an explosion of interest in nature-based solutions (NBS) for managing water risks – from floods and landslides to quantity and quality of water supply. While new reports on NBS finance have covered global financing for broad categories of NBS such as forest management or biodiversity finance, they don't allow us to answer one critical question: Is the growing interest in nature-based solutions for water translating into more investments on the ground?

To respond to this gap, in 2024 Forest Trends and The Nature Conservancy are partnering to deliver a new global report on the state of finance for nature-based solutions for water security. This report will provide quantitative data and assess whether the growing interest in NBS for water is translating into more investments on the ground globally, including by answering the following questions:

- How much is being invested? What are the growth trends over time?
- Where are investments happening? Where are investments in NBS for water growing the most?
- What interventions on the ground are supported by these investments?
- How are local communities participating in investments?
- Who are the dominant and emergent actors that are paying for NBS for water?

- What are the key motivations driving investment?
- What financial mechanisms are facilitating investment?

To answer these questions we will gather data through an online survey of NBS program and project managers (including developers, implementers, and funders). To complement the survey responses, we will collect data from databases that contain information on finance within the report's scope. These databases may include publicly-accessible databases (e.g., managed by governments showing their public investments) or private databases that the report team gains access to through data sharing agreements with the owner of the database (e.g., managed by a development finance institution). Data collected from these databases will be converted and cleaned to complete as many of the survey fields as possible and then entered into the report database, which will be analyzed to identify trends in finance for NBS and produce graphics for the report. The report will summarize key messages identified in the data analysis.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The research assistant will collect and analyze data on finance for NBS for water.

## **ACTIVITIES**

The research assistant will carry out the following activities:

### **Conduct outreach & collect data**

- Review and expand list of global databases and project developers of nature based solutions for water through literature review and input from the report's Advisory Group, in coordination with the Forest Trends report team.
- Contact target survey respondents and support them to complete the survey as necessary. Ask respondents for additional contacts or databases to review, thereby expanding the target list as we proceed.
- Evaluate key databases for investments in nature based solutions for water, based on total potential volume and searchability.
- Scrape prioritized databases, manually as necessary or with automation processes (with support from programmers) where applicable.

### **Compile & analyze data**

- Compile and clean data into a central database.



- Produce a descriptive analysis of the data analysis to support the identification of questions for which we would not be able to reach a robust conclusion from the dataset.
- Analyze the dataset and produce graphics following the report's core research questions and specific guidance to be provided by Forest Trends.
- Revise analysis and graphics based on comments from reviewers.

Each research assistant will focus on specific geographies, to be determined based on the data collection needs and the applicant's profile. Research assistants who demonstrate strong data analysis and writing skills during the data collection and analysis phases may be considered to contribute to drafting the report under a contract extension (August - November 2024).

## SCHEDULE

The consultant will produce and deliver to FT the following products according to schedule:

#	Deliverable	Detail	Deadline
1	Outreach plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● List of databases &amp; project developers</li><li>● Plan for outreach</li></ul>	Weekly, mid-April to mid-May
2	Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Weekly reports on data collection (target: 7+ entries/week)</li></ul>	Weekly
3	Data analysis - draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Compiled database</li><li>● Figures and tables summarizing analysis following Forest Trends' instructions</li></ul>	July 31st
4	Data analysis - version 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Incorporate comments on draft figures and tables</li></ul>	August 16th

## DURATION & DEDICATION

Between 50-80% time dedication from signing the contract until July 31st 2024 (approximately 4 months). Minimal dedication in early August to revise and finalize analysis and graphics.

## PAYMENT

Payment will be based on the number of hours worked; a competitive hourly rate will be agreed upon based on the market in which the consultant is based. For a payment to be processed, the research assistant must submit a monthly timesheet and invoice. Payment depends on the Technical Supervisor's approval of the deliverables for that period.

## QUALIFICATIONS



The consultant must meet the following requirements:

- Master's degree in environmental science, natural resources management, environmental policy, or similar related field
- Knowledgeable and curious about financing mechanisms for nature-based solutions for water
- Demonstrated research experience conducting surveys and compiling databases
- Demonstrated experience with analyzing data and writing up conclusions
- Proficient in use of excel to create dynamic tables and figures
- Experience working successfully in interdisciplinary and multi-cultural settings
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills (English)

Desired qualifications:

- Fluency in one or more other languages, especially Spanish, French, or Chinese
- Experience in project management and leading collaborative research efforts

### **TECHNICAL SUPERVISION**

This consultant will be supervised by Mia Smith, Water Initiative Program Manager, Forest Trends.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Submit the following to [cv@forest-trends.org](mailto:cv@forest-trends.org) no later than April 1st, 2024. Candidates are encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible as they will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

- Cover letter (in English) including the following:
  - Expression of interest and motivation for applying
  - Description of education, experience, and skills that respond to indicated qualifications – specifically highlighting experience working on nature-based solutions, compiling and analyzing databases, and writing reports
  - Description of what candidate would bring to scope
- CV
- Writing sample that demonstrates data analysis capabilities

Only pre-selected candidates will be contacted.