

MacArthur Foundation

International Programs Conservation and Sustainable Development The Great Lakes Region of East and Central Africa

Request for Letters of Inquiry for Lake Victoria Watershed for 2014

In 2012 the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Conservation and Sustainable Development (CSD) program launched a 10-year grant program in the Great Lakes region (GLR) of East and Central Africa. This region comprises five adjacent watersheds: Lake Victoria Watershed, Upper Nile Watershed, Lake Tanganyika Watershed, Lake Malawi/Nyasa Watershed, and Turkana/Omo Watershed (see map).

The Foundation's overall goal for the Great Lakes region is to prevent or reduce biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and to sustain ecosystem benefits for human wellbeing ([full CSD Strategy](#)).

This year the Foundation is inviting Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) that focus on the Lake Victoria Watershed that integrate with the strategy.

Our Theory of Change is that an understanding of the benefits ecosystems provide to humans is necessary, but insufficient to spur effective conservation responses at the appropriate scales. To close the gap that exists between concern and effective action, sufficient incentives must be created for societies to slow current trends of ecosystem degradation and service loss and eventually reverse them.

Four major assumptions underpin this hypothesis:

- Ecosystems and the ecological processes that produce benefits for society can be understood sufficiently to value and then manage for them.
- Some ecosystem benefits – both economic and non-economic – are sufficiently valuable to be prioritized by society in resource use decisions.
- Sustainable management of natural resources contributes to preventing, mitigating, and/or resolving environmental and social conflicts.
- Some drivers of ecosystem loss are linked to global trends and responses to them are best addressed at a global scale.

The overall CSD strategy tests the theory and assumptions by supporting initiatives that:

- Describe the importance of ecosystems to sustainable economic growth persuasively to key decision makers;
- Illustrate ways to generate positive incentives for environmental stewardship;
- Strengthen resource use rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples who manage many of the ecosystems that provide benefits to others in society;
- Contribute to testing and evaluating policies that distribute the costs and benefits of ecosystem management efficiently and more equitably among the users and providers of ecosystem services; and,
- Monitor the status / trends in the health of ecosystems and pressures on them with scientific rigor and share this information with a broad audience.

Grantmaking in the Great Lakes region is informed by extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations and government representatives, in a process coordinated by BirdLife International over the period September 2011 to March 2012. (The report resulting from this consultative process is linked [here](#), with appendices [here](#)). In areas of geographical overlap, the strategy also draws on consultations conducted by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) in 2011 during the development of the Ecosystem Profile for the Eastern Afrotropical Biodiversity Hotspot (CEPF Ecosystem profile for EABH linked [here](#)).

Priorities watersheds for grantmaking in 2014

The priority focus for grantmaking in 2014 is the **Lake Victoria Watershed** that includes parts of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda that all supply Lake Victoria: the largest lake in Africa in terms of surface area and the second largest in the World and a major source of the Nile River.

The Lake hosts the largest freshwater fisheries on the continent and supports an important transport system in the East African region. The Nile River supports hydropower dams and extensive irrigated agriculture and tourism ventures in Egypt. The larger watershed hosts numerous terrestrial and freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) including important wetlands such as Rugezi marsh and the Winam Gulf; forest reserves such as Kakamega Forest and Mau Forest complex; Lakes Bulera and Luhondo; and national parks such as Volcanoes, Mt. Elgon, and the Serengeti.

Letters of Inquiry must address one or more of the following thematic priorities:

1. Understand and respond to increased environmental pressures from development and climate change impacts

- Understand Ecosystem Services and explore with stakeholders the expected changes in these in key development and climatic scenarios.
- Identify and assess impacts of major key high impact developments and engage in planning processes upstream promoting ecosystem values and oversight with decision makers.
- Develop local management networks, innovative projects and shared plans to protect biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and to enhance climate change resilience in Climate Resilient Altitudinal Gradients (CRAGs).
- Maintain, expand, and improve Protected Area/KBA networks and biodiversity safeguard policies.

2. Create and expand incentives to conserve ecosystems

- Explore opportunities with the private sector to develop conservation incentives through ecosystem service/biodiversity offsets and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.
- Research, and if feasible, utilize innovative ecosystem servicing frameworks.
- Develop climate change adaptation and resilience frameworks and policies.
- Understand options for, and promote, locally-based energy service provision (micro-hydro, solar and other Off-Grid sources).

3. Assist the rural poor in managing their resources for multiple benefits

- Strengthen environmentally related governance and advocacy capacity for the benefit of KBAs, CRAGs, countries, Lake Basins and the Great Lakes region as a whole.
- Work at community level to develop sustainable livelihood strategies at KBAs (especially unprotected), buffer zones and CRAGs.
- Enable traditional and indigenous values to be maintained in the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Foundation will prioritize sites within the Lake Victoria Watershed that demonstrate a number of values at the national and regional level, including designation as freshwater and terrestrial KBAs; and ecosystem services such as provisioning of water, food, energy, and carbon sequestration. Special attention will be paid to the conservation of biodiversity within agricultural, fisheries, and livestock production landscapes around important lakes, rivers, wetlands, and water catchment areas.

The Foundation will also pay particular attention to proposals that seek to complement geographical and thematic priorities for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot (see http://www.cepf.net/where_we_work/regions/africa/eastern_afromontane).

Eligibility

Letters of Inquiry should address one or more of the geographic and thematic priorities for the Lake Victoria Watershed listed above.

CSD typically makes three year grants with the possibility of renewal based on performance and continued relevance of the project.

Please note that the Foundation does not support political activities or attempts to influence action on specific legislation. We do not provide individual scholarships or tuition assistance for undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate studies; nor do we support annual fundraising drives, institutional benefits, honorary functions, or similar projects.

As is now the case with most charities in the United States who make grants to organizations based outside the United States, the Foundation checks the names of foreign based grantees, and the principal officers and directors of such grantees, against one or more lists maintained by the U.S. government, the European Union, and the United Nations, which contain the names determined by such entities to be terrorist organizations or individual terrorists. This process is a result of legislation passed by the U.S. Congress, Executive Orders issued by the President, and suggested guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. A memorandum on this topic is available upon request.

Review Process

All eligible Letters of Inquiry will be evaluated by the Foundation. The Foundation may ask outside experts or persons with relevant professional experience to review LOIs and/or proposals.

Decisions to invite full proposals based on the submitted LOIs and/or award grants will be made by the Foundation.

All material submitted becomes the property of the MacArthur Foundation.

Deadlines

A recommended LOI format is available on our website at:
<http://www.macfound.org/info-grantseekers/submit-letter-inquiry/>

LOIs should be submitted no later than April 2nd 2014 by e-mail to: 4answers@macfound.org

You will receive a general acknowledgement confirming receipt and providing a tracking number for your inquiry within two weeks of submission.

