

# MacArthur Foundation

## **Grant Guidelines**

### **International Programs Conservation and Sustainable Development Greater Mekong Regional Strategy**

#### **Request for Letters of Inquiry for the Lower Mekong for 2012**

#### **Introduction**

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Conservation and Sustainable Development (CSD) program is launching a 10-year grant program in the Greater Mekong.

The scope of this request for Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) is the Lower Mekong basin (see attached map), the focus for our investment in 2012.

The foundation will make grants in the upper basin in China in 2013 and invest in basin-wide initiatives in 2014.

Our goal is to reduce current rates of biodiversity and natural habitat loss and sustain the ecosystem services that underpin human well being in the Greater Mekong basin.

The theory of change guiding our strategy in the Greater Mekong is that:

- Deepening the understanding of the benefits provided to the economies and people of the region by the biodiversity and natural habitats of the Mekong River basin and expanding incentives to conserve them will result in broader and more effective implementation of direct conservation action in the highest priority sites and landscapes.
- This will reduce pressures on high biodiversity landscapes, slow current trends of degradation and ecosystem service loss, and eventually reverse them.

We will test the theory of change by supporting initiatives that:

- Describe the importance of high biodiversity ecosystems to sustainable economic growth persuasively to key decision makers;
- Illustrate ways to generate positive incentives for environmental stewardship at the highest priority sites and landscapes;
- Strengthen resource use rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples who manage many of the high biodiversity 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 of / trends in the health of ecosystems, pressures on them, and the effectiveness of conservation responses with scientific rigor and share this information with a broad audience.

## **Priorities**

Our grant making priorities were guided by the results of a regional consultation process led by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to update the Ecosystem Profile for the Indo-Burma Hotspot. The CEPF Secretariat led a highly collaborative process, with BirdLife International in Indochina, the Conservation International-China Program, Kadoorie Farms Botanical Garden (KFBG), the Samdhana Institute and the Yunnan Green Environment Development Foundation. Over 400 stakeholders were consulted through consultation workshops, small group meetings and email correspondence from June – October 2011.

We will prioritize grants in the following geographic areas:

### **The Mekong River and its Major Tributaries**

Partly as a result of a limited appreciation of their biodiversity values and fisheries benefits among decision makers, riverine ecosystems have, to date, received less conservation investment than most other ecosystems in the Mekong. The Mekong River and its major tributaries, including the Srepok, Sesan, and Sekong rivers, represent the best remaining examples of the riverine ecosystems in the region.

These rivers and their forest catchments, particularly, the Sekong sub-basin and the Srepok-Sesan sub-basin will be high priorities for investment.

## **The Tonle Sap and its Inundation Zone**

Tonle Sap, the largest lake in mainland South-east Asia, is an integral and essential part of the lower Mekong ecosystem. The flooded forests around the lake support the largest breeding colonies of large waterbirds remaining in South-east Asia, including important congregations of globally threatened species, such as Greater Adjutant (*Leptoptilos dubius*). The extensive area of flooded forest and high levels of nutrients transported by the annual flood result in very high levels of aquatic productivity, helping to make the lake the most important fishery in Cambodia, responsible for around 60 percent of protein intake by the country's population. The system is also critically important for agricultural and fisheries production in Vietnam, as waters draining from the lake provide around 50 percent of the dry season flow in the Mekong Delta.

Forests in the lake's catchment areas are also priorities for investment.

Within these areas we will prioritize grants that support the following objectives:

### **Understand and respond to increased environmental pressures from development and climate change impacts**

- Analyze development policies, plans and programs, evaluate their impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and propose alternative development scenarios and appropriate mitigating measures.
- Strengthen the voice of affected communities in approval processes for agro-industrial plantations, hydropower dams and other large-scale developments.
- Work with the private sector to develop guidelines for siting, developing, and operating agro-industrial plantations and dams in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.
- Engage the media as a way of increasing the accountability of public officials on environmental issues.

### **Create and expand incentives to conserve ecosystems**

- Integrate the biodiversity and ecosystem service values of priority landscapes into land-use and development planning.
- Pilot and expand payment for ecosystem service (PES) approaches.
- Pilot and expand innovative approaches to site conservation, including linking livelihood support to conservation actions through negotiated agreements and private management of land through conservation concessions.
- Develop best practice approaches for conservation of highly threatened and endemic freshwater species.

### **Assist the rural poor in managing their resources for multiple benefits**

- Support land registration for local communities at priority sites, especially Indigenous People.
- Pilot and amplify community forests, community fisheries and community-managed protected area.
- Develop co-management mechanisms for formal protected areas that enable community participation.

### **Evaluate the impacts of conservation investment on biodiversity and human wellbeing through systematic monitoring**

- Develop common standards and systems for monitoring the impacts and effectiveness of conservation actions.
- Invest in the professional development of future conservation leaders through support to graduate programs at domestic academic institutions.
- Develop and test mechanisms for ensuring that monitoring results inform national policy debates and local adaptive management.

### **Eligibility**

Letters of Inquiry should address these geographic and thematic priorities. Organizations may submit more than one LOI.

We will consider initiatives outside of the geographic priorities, where they present opportunities to engage civil society in major projects and programs that might influence a policy or sector with broad regional relevance.

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 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 MacArthur Foundation is collaborating with the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation (MAC), McKnight Foundation, and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) in reviewing grants to organizations working in the Lower Mekong. As part of this collaboration, our staff may circulate Letters of Inquiry, proposals or other information provided by applicants requesting funding for projects in the Lower Mekong to staff of the MAC Foundation, McKnight Foundation, and CEPF for review.

By submitting your LOI or other information in response to a request for proposal or otherwise to seek funding in connection with work in the Lower Mekong, you agree that the MacArthur Foundation may share the LOI and other information you provide with other potential donors unless we agree otherwise with you in writing

The Foundation may also 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**

LOIs should be submitted no later than February 3, 2012 by e-mail to: [4answers@macfound.org](mailto:4answers@macfound.org)

A suggested LOI format is available at:

[http://www.macfound.org/site/c.1kLXJ8MQKrH/b.913959/k.E1BE/Applying\\_for\\_Grants.htm](http://www.macfound.org/site/c.1kLXJ8MQKrH/b.913959/k.E1BE/Applying_for_Grants.htm)

## Mekong Basin Map

