NOAA Community-based Restoration Program

Partnerships for Marine and Coastal Habitat Restoration

Restoration Begins in Our Own Backyards

Around the country, communities are healing critical ecosystems with financial and technical assistance from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Restoration Center. Since 1996, NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) has funded more than 900 on-the-ground restoration projects in 26 states and the Caribbean. Support from technical staff at 15 NOAA offices around the country helps ensure project success.

Partnerships in Protection

A model program for community collaboration, partnership building, and interagency cooperation, the CRP partners with grassroots organizations to encourage hands-on citizen participation in restoration projects. This fosters long-term stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

In addition to a wide variety of community partners, CRP's national and regional partners include American Rivers, American Sportfishing Association's FishAmerica Foundation, California Coast Keeper, Earth Corps, Gulf of Maine Council, Gulf of Mexico Foundation, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Restore America's Estuaries, and Trout Unlimited.

Working With CRP To Restore Shorelines for Tomorrow

CRP solicits proposals for projects to restore a variety of coastal and estuarine ecosystems. Under a competitive review process, projects are selected for funding based on technical merit, level of community involvement, and ecological benefits. NOAA awards roughly $8 million to partners annually through the CRP. A variety of funding channels provide opportunities to apply for NOAA CRP grants several times per year.

Mike White - Florida Keys NMS

WHAT DOES CRP BRING TO THE TABLE?

CRP staff are committed to helping partners and grantees attain successful restoration. We offer one-on-one technical guidance throughout the application, planning, and implementation process. CRP regional staff help partners to:

- develop ecologically sound restoration designs,
- navigate complicated permitting issues, and
- coordinate with other federal agencies.

CRP staff also provide assistance with outreach programs and project evaluation.

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www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration
Last Updated: 6/15/05

SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS

Hawaii Coral Reef and Native Algae Restoration

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) of Hawaii partnered with NOAA to restore coral reef habitat by controlling alien marine algae in bays on the island of Oahu. The spread of alien algae is one of the greatest threats to Hawaii's coral reefs and other near shore marine ecosystems with the invasives now comprising between 11 and 60 percent of the bottom cover. To help sustain and restore healthy corals and increase the diversity of living marine resources in Hawaii, this project removes alien algae, cultivates and plants native algae, and reaches out to the community to build stewardship values. The project partners also developed a mechanized underwater removal device, known as the "Supersucker," which greatly increases the volume of algae removed compared to manual removal. To date, more than 1,200 community volunteers have removed over 60 tons of algae and the community effort continues.

In 2003/2004 NOAA's CRP provided over $110,000 to this project through a partnership with TNC. The Nature Conservancy matched NOAA's contribution with cash and in kind services for a total project Cost of $229,300.

Culebra Island Coral Reef Restoration

NOAA partnered with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Culebra Island Fishermen Association to develop a Coral Aquaculture and Restoration Program to address the loss of Staghorn coral in the waters off Puerto Rico. This unique community-based program uses local knowledge to determine the historic distribution of Staghorn coral and combines that information with field surveys to develop a blueprint for coral restoration site selection.

The Coral Aquaculture and Restoration Program will also educate volunteers about coral conservation, aquaculture, coral handling and transplanting. It will expand an existing system of coral aquaculture farms to provide a sustainable source of propagules for the restoration effort. The Culebra Island Fishermen Association effort serves as a model for future coral restoration efforts in the region.

In 2004, NOAA's CRP awarded $13,950 to this project through a partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife's 5-Star Restoration grant program. The Culebra Island Fishermen Association and its partners provided $24,500 in matching funds for a project total of $38,450.

How Can You Apply to NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program?

1) Individual project grants - You can apply directly to NOAA for funds to support restoration projects in your community. Proposals for these grants, called Direct Solicitation grants, are accepted and competitively awarded by CRP annually. Project awards range from $30,000 to over $200,000.

2) Regional and National Partnerships - Groups can apply to NOAA for larger Partnership awards to establish multi-year cooperative agreements with NOAA. These multi-year partnership awards range from $100,000 to over $1.9 million annually. These funds are used by the partner organization to support suites of habitat restoration activities. Grassroots groups can apply directly to a partner organization for these restoration funds. Awards decisions are made jointly by NOAA and the partner organization and are given on a competitive basis.

Grant deadline information can be found at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/funding_opportunities/funding.html

To date, the CRP has contributed $37 million to grassroots restoration projects, generating $59 million in cash and in-kind contributions.

Project Examples:

Lameshur Bay Mangrove Protection Project, St. John, USVI

Islamorada Seagrass Restoration Project, FL Keys, FL

Reef Medics Community-based Coral Reef Restoration Training Program, Summerland Key, FL

Mario Reef Marine Accretion Technology, La Parguera, PR

Condado Lagoon Mangrove Restoration Project, San Juan, PR

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www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries)**,** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**,** Department of Commerce

- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants

- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement

- **Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.463, Habitat Conservation

- **Dates:** Applications should be submitted via www.grants.gov, and must be received by grants.gov **no later than 11:59 PM EST on October 12, 2005.** No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

- **Application Submission:** Applications should be submitted via www.grants.gov. If grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, applications must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by **October 12, 2005.** NOAA Community-based Restoration Program, NOAA Fisheries, Office of Habitat Conservation (F/HC3), 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. **ATTN: CRP Project Applications**.

- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The NOAA Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) provides funding to catalyze the implementation of locally-driven, grass-roots habitat restoration projects that will benefit living marine resources, including anadromous fish. Projects funded through the CRP have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that provide educational and social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological habitat improvements for NOAA trust resources. The role of NOAA in the CRP is to help identify potential restoration projects, strengthen the development and implementation of sound restoration projects and science-based monitoring of such projects within communities, and develop long-term, ongoing national and regional partnerships to support community-based restoration of living marine resource habitats across a wide geographic area. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a cooperative agreement. Funding of up to $3,000,000 is expected to be available for Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants in FY 2006. The NOAA Restoration Center (RC) anticipates that typical awards will range from $50,000 to $200,000.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objectives

The principal objective of the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to grass-roots, community-based activities that restore living marine resources and their habitats and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for NOAA trust resources. NOAA trust resources are living marine resources and their habitats, including commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine fish and shellfish); anadromous fish species (such as salmon and striped bass that spawn in freshwater and then migrate to the sea); endangered and threatened marine species; marine mammals and marine turtles; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, other coastal habitats, areas identified by NOAA Fisheries as essential fish habitat (EFH) and areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). NOAA trust resources can also include marine habitats and resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and areas under state coastal management programs.

Successful applications will be those that:

- demonstrate collaboration among entities such as public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local government, state, and federal agencies to cooperatively implement habitat restoration projects, and

- are able to report a net gain in acres restored or anadromous fish-accessible stream miles re-established, and document volunteer hours involved or a maximization of project partnerships.

Partnerships may be developed at national, regional and local levels and may contribute funding, land, technical assistance, workforce support or other in-kind services; promote grass-roots participation in the improvement of locally important living marine resources; and engender local stewardship and monitoring activities to sustain and evaluate the success of the restoration. Community-based restoration projects supported by the CRP are successful because they have significant local backing, depend upon citizens hands-on involvement, and typically involve NOAA technical assistance or oversight.

B. Program Priorities

The CRP is interested in funding projects that will result in on-the-ground restoration of habitat to benefit living marine resources, including anadromous fish species. Restoration is defined here as activities that contribute to the return of degraded or altered marine, estuarine, coastal and freshwater anadromous fish habitats to a close approximation of their condition prior to disturbance.

Restoration may include, but is not limited to, improvement of coastal wetland tidal exchange or reestablishment of historic hydrology; dam or berm removal; improvement or

reestablishment of fish passage; reef/substrate/habitat creation; establishment of riparian buffer zones and improvement of freshwater habitat features in watersheds that support anadromous fish; exclusionary fencing and planting; invasive species removal; planting of native coastal wetland and submerged aquatic vegetation; and enhancement of feeding, spawning and growth areas essential to marine or anadromous fish, including degraded areas that historically were important habitat for living marine resources, and through the restoration of which would support these resources again.

The CRP will emphasize the selection of restoration projects addressing habitats whose regional condition is compromised due to loss, degradation, fragmentation, presence of invasive species, or loss of functionality. In addition, projects will be favored that restore habitats found to be socio-economically important within their region with regard to such issues as commercial (e.g., fisheries) and recreational use, aesthetic and stewardship value, and essential fish habitat. Within a given habitat, priority will also be given to project proposals that incorporate proven restoration techniques, address causes of habitat degradation/loss, and maximize cost benefits.

Since the inception of the CRP, west coast projects have focused primarily on restoration of salmonid freshwater habitats. To broaden the scope of funded CRP projects in the Pacific Northwest and California, and respond to concerns about potential funding overlap of CRP projects and Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund projects, the CRP seeks proposals for projects that benefit multiple species, including non-salmonid resources, and projects that emphasize restoration of marine and estuarine habitats. The CRP expects to continue to support freshwater salmonid habitat restoration efforts, however projects that benefit multiple species including non-salmonid marine resources may receive greater funding consideration. In addition, any salmonid project that would occur where NOAA species recovery planning efforts are underway must be consistent with those planning efforts to be competitive under this solicitation.

The CRP recognizes that accomplishing restoration is a multi-faceted effort involving project design, engineering services, permitting, construction, oversight, monitoring and education and outreach. The focus of the program, however, is to provide funding and technical expertise to support on-the-ground implementation of fishery habitat restoration projects that involve significant community support. To that end, projects must involve an outreach and/or volunteer component tied to the restoration activities, and may involve limited pre-implementation activities, such as engineering and design and short-term baseline studies.

Implementation of on-the-ground habitat restoration projects must have clearly identified goals (broad in scope) and specific, measurable objectives. Evaluating these objectives must involve monitoring during the project period of at least one structural and one functional parameter, as supported by Title I of the Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000, to ensure a basic level of assessment of project success. Monitoring must be conducted in a timely fashion with a frequency and length of time appropriate to each parameter in the context of the project objectives and status. Examples of structural and functional monitoring parameters by habitat restoration project type is available on the world wide web at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration, and assistance in refining the objectives and/or

selecting appropriate parameters is available from CRP staff.

The CRP will consider funding more than one project under a single award. All projects should be sufficiently detailed as per the guidelines and information requirements listed in this document for an application to be competitive, and all projects should be able to be completed within the award period specified below.

The CRP anticipates that a limited portion of available funds will be used to support high quality, quantitative monitoring projects to advance the science and technology of coastal and marine habitat restoration. Independent applications emphasizing science-based monitoring of previously completed CRP projects are encouraged. They should incorporate and expand upon the minimum evaluation requirements as identified above. Proposals for monitoring restoration projects other than those funded through the CRP or for restoration research will not be considered.

Proposals emphasizing a singular restoration component, such as only outreach or program coordination are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization's day-to-day activities, or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead and travel. Because funds are limited, funding land purchase agreements, conservation easements, and large equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats and similar items will be a low priority.

C. Program Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970, to provide grants or cooperative agreements for fisheries habitat restoration.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that funding of up to $3,000,000 is expected to be available for Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants in FY 2006. The NOAA Restoration Center anticipates that typical project awards will range from $50,000 to $200,000; NOAA will not accept proposals for under $30,000 or proposals for over $250,000 under this solicitation. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all proposals. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for initiating restoration projects by the applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the CRP by Congress.

The CRP anticipates that between 15 and 25 awards will be made as a result of this solicitation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award

negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any parts of any available funds. In FY 2005, 18 applications were recommended for funding ranging from $20,000 to $211,507 for a total of $1.72 million. In FY 2004, 14 applications were recommended for funding ranging from $30,000 to $206,277 for a total of $1.37 million. In FY 2003, 29 awards were made ranging from $25,000 to $200,000 for a total of $2.2 million; in FY 2002, 33 awards were made ranging from $15,200 to $150,000 for a total of $1.7 million; in FY 2001, 42 awards were made ranging between $14,400 and $100,000 for a total of $1.8 million.

B. Project/Award Period

Awards will be made for projects where requested funding will be used to complete proposed restoration and monitoring activities within a period of 24 months from the approved start date of the project. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 150-180 days after the close of this solicitation; applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities. If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project must be submitted to the competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Permission to extend the period of performance beyond the 24 month award period is at the total discretion of NOAA and must be requested in writing at least 60 days in advance of an award's expiration date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through a cooperative agreement since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in aspects of the project. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, activities such as hands-on technical or permitting assistance, support in developing protocols to adequately monitor the restoration to evaluate success, tracking the progression of the restoration through site visits and progress report evaluation, and involvement in public meetings and events to highlight restoration activities.

D. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow CRP staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications. For more information see Section VI. B. "Administrative and National Environmental Policy Act Requirements".

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, hospitals, other non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments whose projects have the potential to benefit NOAA trust resources. Applications from federal agencies or employees of Federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, national service clubs or youth corps organizations and others that are eligible to apply.

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under served areas. The CRP encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

A major goal of the CRP is to provide seed money to projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important habitat restoration to benefit living marine resources. To this end, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate a minimum 1:1 non-Federal match for CRP funds requested to conduct the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much investment as possible. Applicants with less than 1:1 match will not be disqualified, however, applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4. “Project Costs”. The nature of the contribution (cash versus in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration in the review process, with cash being the preferred method of contribution.

Match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services and volunteer labor. Federal funds are not considered matching funds. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from additional non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match expected, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV. E. 2. “Indirect Costs”.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the names of participating volunteers and the overall number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to individual habitat restoration projects. Letters of commitment for any secured resources expected to be used as match for an award should be submitted as an attachment to the

application.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

This solicitation, complete application packages (including required Federal forms) with instructions and the address for submission, can be found on www.grants.gov, or by contacting Melanie Gange (Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov) or Robin Bruckner (Robin.Bruckner@noaa.gov) at 301-713-0174. Additional information on the CRP, including examples of community-based habitat restoration projects that have been funded to date, can be found on the world wide web at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration. The required forms are as follows:

- Application for Federal Assistance: **SF-424** (9/03 version or newer)
- Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: **SF-424A**
- Assurances, Non-construction Programs: **SF-424B**
- Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment: **CD-511**

- CD-512 (remains with applicant–do not submit as part of the application package)

Depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)
- Applicant for Federal Assistance: **CD-346** (required for the following individuals: Non-profit Organizations, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations and Joint Venture)

If the standard NOAA application forms and instructions for applicants cannot be downloaded from www.grants.gov contact the NOAA Restoration Center, Community-based Restoration Program, NOAA Fisheries (F/HC3), 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301-713-0174, email Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov. Potential applicants are invited to contact CRP staff before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to the CRP's goals and objectives, and/or to request an application package that contains instructions for submitting standard NOAA grant applications and supplementary instructions specific to the CRP. Applicants wishing to submit comprehensive monitoring proposals for restoration projects previously funded by the CRP are strongly encouraged to contact staff (Perry.Gayaldo@noaa.gov) since the pool of available funding for this activity is expected to be limited and highly competitive.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applicants are encouraged to apply through the grants.gov website (www.grants.gov), the clearinghouse for Federal financial assistance. A complete standard NOAA grant application

package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each application should include:

- federal application forms specified above;
- a project summary that follows the prescribed format, not to exceed two pages;
- a narrative project description of no more than 12 pages, including a detailed narrative budget justification;
- the curriculum vitae or resume of primary project personnel;
- a site location map such as a USGS topographic quadrangle map with site location(s) highlighted;
- a letter documenting private landowner or public land manager support; and
- other relevant attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project.

1. <u>Summary Information</u> (not to exceed two pages):

- **Applicant Organization**
- **Project Title**
- **Site Location** (nearest town or watershed, and geographic coordinates if known)
- **Land Owner** (name and address if privately owned, resource agency contact if public land)
- **On-the-Ground Implementation Start Date** (not proposed award start date)
- **NOAA Trust Resources to benefit from the project** - habitat(s), organism(s)(species) currently using the project area or expected to return, and any listed threatened or endangered species in the project area or in the vicinity
- **Project Scope** (Briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds, and proposed techniques that will be used to implement and monitor the restoration)
- **Area to be Restored** (acreage, stream miles and/or other measurable outcome)
- **Project Time Line**
- **Permits** (identify permits expected to be necessary for this project and current status of applications or consultations)
- **Federal Funds Requested & Non-Federal Match Anticipated**
- **Overall Project Cost**
- **Partner and Volunteer Support Anticipated** (hours/tasks)
- Letters of Support (list those included with the application, particularly those from private landowner/public lands agency resource personnel)

2. <u>Narrative Project Description</u>

The **narrative project description** should closely follow the organization of the evaluation criteria for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The body of the narrative description should be no more than 12 pages long (in12-

point font) including a narrative budget justification, and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. In general, proposals should clearly demonstrate anticipated benefits to specific NOAA trust resource habitats (such as salt marshes, seagrass beds, coral reefs, mangrove forests, and riparian habitat near rivers, streams and creeks used by anadromous fish, or where fish passage is certain to be restored to habitat formerly used by anadromous fish), describe how these benefits will be achieved through the proposed restoration activities, and identify the range of species expected to benefit.

The narrative should include at least one of the following: an estimate of acreage to be restored by the proposed project; proportion of local degraded habitat to be restored; stream miles to be reopened to fish passage; or another measure that describes the significance of the proposed actions on NOAA trust resources and habitats. The applicant should also indicate whether the proposed project is part of a larger community or watershed plan, or otherwise prioritized in a publically vetted, published restoration or planning document. Projects taking place in marine protected areas such as National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, or in special management areas such as those under state coastal management, in National Estuary Program sites, in Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) or areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern may receive greater funding consideration.

The narrative should describe the historic condition of the restoration site and, if applicable, the processes which resulted in degradation of the area and how these processes have been abated to allow for successful restoration. It should list the species currently found in the project site, identify the problems the project will address, describe short- and long-term objectives and goals, detail the methods for carrying out and monitoring the project, and clearly explain the project's relevance and significance to enhancing habitat to benefit living marine resources.

Detailed information appropriate to the type of project should be included. For example:

- dam removal and fish passage projects should describe historical fish runs in the river, identify the river length that will be restored, the distance to the next upstream blockage, any downstream blockages or seasonal impediments to fish passage; state how the project will meet fish passage guidelines established for the area, and identify the dam owner/landowner;

- projects proposing to change tidal flushing characteristics should be accompanied by a hydrograph showing any tidal restriction(s);

- projects proposing to create, restore, or rehabilitate shellfish grounds should identify whether the site was historically classified or productive habitat, the current and historic bottom type at the project location; the type and source of substrate base to be added (if any) and whether the material is permitted for open water placement, the origin and strains of any seed to be placed on the site and the proximity to any existing or remnant sources of similar type in the area, and information on future management including potential for future

harvest;

- projects proposing to install fish passage devices or moveable control structures like self-regulating tide gates should submit as an appendix a management plan that details who will be in charge of the operation and maintenance of such structures, how they will be operated, and similar details;

- projects involving large woody debris (LWD) placement or other engineering decision making should highlight the qualifications and experience of the designer/engineer, outline the specific objectives for debris placement, and indicate the monitoring and adaptive management plans for the placement;

- projects involving planting should include information on site preparation and invasive control methods, the basis for determining species and planting density, a brief discussion about genetic integrity and how that will be addressed, and detail planned maintenance activities including duration of maintenance.

To ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, implementation of on-the-ground habitat restoration projects must have clearly identified goals (broad in scope) and specific, measurable objectives. Proposals should describe evaluation of these objectives by indicating at least one structural and one functional parameter that will be monitored during the project period. For each selected parameter (minimum of two), a baseline value, reference value, and a proposed target value must be identified prior to the implementation of restoration efforts. Proposals should describe how monitoring will be conducted in a timely fashion by describing the frequency and length of time appropriate to each parameter in the context of the project objectives and status.

To provide assurance that the project will expeditiously meet environmental compliance and permitting requirements, so that on-the-ground activities will begin within the first 12 months after the project's start date, projects that would require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project, including the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency and documentation of all permits already secured for the project.

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicants that are seeking NOAA federal funding. Proposals should provide enough detail for NOAA to make a NEPA determination (see Section VI. B. "Administrative and National Environmental Policy Act Requirements"). Successful applications cannot be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division with recommendations for funding until NOAA completes necessary NEPA documentation (see Section I.B. "Program Priorities". Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under the description of proposed activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, such as site locations, species and habitat(s) to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or

disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, impacts to coral reef systems, etc.).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required and one does not already exist for the activities proposed in the application. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible to obtain guidance with respect to the level and scope of information needed by NOAA to comply with NEPA. A phased approach to funding project activities may be recommended, or special award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill. The type of detailed information described above is critical to evaluating the significance of a project and its readiness to use available funding.

The project narrative should describe the organizational structure of the applicant group, identify proposed project staff, and detail their experience and qualifications. If known, the applicant should state the level of NOAA involvement in, and/or support for the project and include contact information of relevant NOAA staff.

Applications will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness by examining the proportion of funds directed to on-the-ground restoration/monitoring activities compared with that to be used for general program support. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with appropriate narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal shares.

If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a budget for the entire project should be provided to allow the selecting official to make an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio. A narrative budget justification should indicate if the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The narrative budget justification is included within the overall narrative project description 12-page limit.

The project narrative should also describe community involvement in the project, such as community participants (project partners) other than the applicant and their contributions, volunteer opportunities, education/outreach/stewardship plans, and efforts to disseminate information on project goals and results and/or the sources of project funding and support. If applicable, the narrative should explain how the proposed project will complement or encourage other local restoration or conservation activities.

To demonstrate a project's potential to realize long-term benefits for NOAA trust resources, indicate project readiness, and protect the federal investment, a letter of commitment is required from the landowner for projects on private land, or from relevant resource agency personnel for projects on public, permanently protected land, that provides assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose. For monitoring proposals, the proposal should address the critical issue of success, failure or adaptive management as identified or supported by the local community, landowner or Habitat Restoration Program.

Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Inclusion of supplementary materials such as photographs, project designs, diagrams, copies of secured permits, letters of support, etc. are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the project narrative page limit.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through www.grants.gov. It takes approximately 3 weeks to register with grants.gov, and registration is required only once. Applicants should consider the time needed to register with grants.gov, and should begin the registration process well in advance of the application due date. If grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, a hard copy (signed in blue ink) of each application may be submitted to the NOAA Restoration Center (see sub-section G. " Addresses"). Paper applications should be printed on one side only and should not be bound in any manner.

Applications for habitat restoration projects that involve marine debris removal as the primary restoration activity may be considered under the NOAA Community-based Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Project Grants solicitation being announced for FY2006 in NOAA's June 2005 Omnibus Federal Register Notice.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications should be submitted via www.grants.gov, and must be received by grants.gov **no later than 11:59 PM EST on October 12, 2005** to be considered for funding. If grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, applications must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by **October 12, 2005.** Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Applicants desiring acknowledgment of receipt of their applications should include a self-addressed post card.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point

of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments"; and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 Code of Federal Regulations, subpart 31.2 "Contracts with Commercial Organizations." All cost reimbursement subawards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 150-180 days after the close of this solicitation. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities.

2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Send applications to Christopher D. Doley, Director, NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA

Fisheries (F/HC3), 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282, **ATTN: CRP Project Applications.**

V. Application Review and Selection Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below.

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (25 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state or local activities. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The potential of the project to restore, protect, conserve or enhance habitats and ecosystems vital to self-sustaining populations of living marine resources under NOAA Fisheries stewardship (including commercial, recreational, threatened or endangered species), and the extent to which restoration activities are expected to result in direct ecological benefits or otherwise maximize benefits for LMR. For monitoring of previously funded CRP projects, applications will be considered with respect to their potential to comprehensively evaluate restoration success. Projects occurring in marine protected areas such as National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, special management areas, areas identified by NOAA as essential fish habitat (EFH) or areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern may receive greater consideration.

- The project's significance with respect to the extent of proposed habitat restoration activities or the type(s) of habitat(s) that will be restored, considered in the context of the local environment.

- The likelihood that the project will deliver tangible, specific results that are measurable, and that tie back to relevant Habitat Restoration Program performance measures such as acreage or stream miles restored for fish passage. Those applications that identify parameters and targets are likely to score higher on this criterion.

- Whether the proposal addresses a priority habitat as evidenced by reference to a restoration plan, watershed assessment or stewardship plan or similar publicly vetted, published planning document.

The CRP will emphasize the selection of restoration projects addressing habitats whose regional condition is compromised due to loss, degradation, fragmentation, presence of invasive species, or loss of functionality. In addition, projects will be favored that restore habitats found to be socio-economically important within their region with regard to such issues as commercial (e.g.,

fisheries) and recreational use, aesthetic and stewardship value, and essential fish habitat.

2. <u>Technical/Scientific Merit</u> (25 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants competition, proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description, including clearly stated restoration objectives and goals, and the extent to which the implementation plan is achievable within the 24 month award period, including the ability to yield minimum monitoring data.

- The overall technical feasibility of the project from both biological and engineering perspectives, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives on both an ecological and community stewardship level.

- Whether there are plans for long-term management of the restored resource, and an effective mechanism to evaluate project success, including adequate and meaningful monitoring that includes a clearly stated goal and at least one structural and one functional monitoring parameter for which results are achievable within the award period.

- For assurance that implementation of the project will meet all federal, state and local environmental laws, and will expeditiously obtain applicable permits so that on-the-ground activities will begin within the first 12 months after a project's proposed start date. Projects that would require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project, including the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency and documentation of all permits already secured for the project. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, if applicable, are likely to score higher on this criterion. For monitoring of previously funded CRP projects, applications will be evaluated with respect to the potential of monitoring results to further advance restoration methods or techniques for implementation of similar projects.

3. <u>Overall Qualifications of Applicants</u> (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the

project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing projects that benefit living marine resources. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged. Communities and/or organizations developing their first locally-driven restoration project may not be able to document past experience, and therefore will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, as evidenced by the explanation of characteristics such as education, training and/or experience of primary project participants.

- The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage the restoration work, including the availability of NOAA or other technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion. Applicants with demonstrated or potential NOAA involvement in or support for the proposed project may score higher on this criterion.

4. <u>Project Costs</u> (20 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants competition proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- Their cost-effectiveness. Reviewers will examine the percentage of funds that will be dedicated to all phases of project implementation including physical, on-the-ground coastal habitat restoration and/or science-based monitoring, compared to the percentage for general program support such as administration, salaries, overhead and travel. Applications proposing to use restoration funds to expand an organization's day-to-day activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. To encourage on-the-ground restoration, funding for salaries must be used to support staff directly involved in accomplishing the restoration work and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task.

- Whether the proposed budget is realistic, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame, and sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing $5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving on-the-ground habitat restoration and a comparison with rental costs should be used to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats and similar items will be a low priority.

- The ability of the applicant to demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. If funds are requested for partial support of a project, the budget will be examined with respect to the overall project budget to allow an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio.

- The demonstrated need for funding and the overall leverage of NOAA funds anticipated, including the amount of cash match. NOAA will expect cost-sharing at a 1:1 level to leverage funding or other resources that improve cost-effectiveness and to further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applicants that provide documentation that acceptable secured match is available within the proposed project period, and those that are able to provide cash contributions, are likely to score higher on this criterion.

5. <u>Outreach, Education and Community Involvement</u> (20 points)

NOAA assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission. For the Community-based Habitat Restoration Project Grants competition, proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- Whether the activities proposed will involve citizens and broaden their participation in coastal habitat restoration and/or science-based monitoring, and lead to achievement of long-term stewardship for restored living marine resources and a heightened community conservation ethic. Community participation may include hands-on training, restoration and/or monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews.

- Public outreach as it relates to the proposed project, including plans to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and their roles, sources of funding and other support provided; and the potential for the proposed project to encourage future restoration and protection of living marine resources or complement other local restoration or conservation activities.

- On the depth and breadth of community support, as reflected by the diversity and strength of project partners, sponsorship by local entities (either through in-kind goods and services such as earth-moving services, technical expertise, conservation easements, or cash contributions), and/or written support from state and local governments or members of Congress.

- On the potential of the project to be sustainable and long-lasting, as indicated by assurances provided by the applicant in the form of a letter of commitment from the affected landowner for a project on private land, or from the appropriate resource agency personnel for a project on permanently protected land, including assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose. For monitoring of previously funded CRP projects, applications will be considered with respect to whether the project addresses a critical issue of success, failure or adaptive management as identified or supported by the local community, land owner or Habitat Restoration Program.

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened by CRP staff to determine if they are eligible, complete and

in accordance with instructions detailed in the standard NOAA Grants Application Package. Applications that present narrative information in the same order as the evaluation criteria set out above are likely to be more competitive, as reviewers will be more easily able to identify information that directly translates to scoring. Eligible restoration proposals will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process. As appropriate during this process, the NOAA Restoration Center will solicit individual technical evaluations of each project proposed and may request evaluations from other NOAA offices, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, other federal and state agencies, such as state coastal management agencies and state fish and wildlife agencies, and private and public sector restoration experts who have knowledge of a specific applicant, program or its subject matter. Proposals also will be reviewed by NOAA regional and headquarters staff to determine how well they meet the stated aims of the CRP, and how well the proposal meets the goals of the NOAA Restoration Center (RC) and the NOAA Habitat Program.

Applications for habitat restoration projects will be evaluated by at least three individual technical reviewers, including those mentioned in the above paragraph, according to the criteria and weights described in this solicitation. The proposals will be rated, and reviewer comments and composite project scores and a rank order will be presented to the Director of the NOAA Restoration Center (Director). The Director, in consultation with CRP staff, will select the proposals to be recommended to the Grants Management Division (GMD) for funding and determine the amount of funds available for each approved proposal. The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

(1) the availability of funding;

(2) the balance/distribution of funds: a) geographically, b) by type of institutions, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas, e) by project types;

(3) duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA and/or other federal agencies;

(4) program priorities and policy factors as set out in section I.A and B;

(5) the applicant's prior award performance;

(6) partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and

(7) adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to GMD.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scored proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file until the close of the following fiscal year then destroyed.

Successful applicants generally will be identified approximately 90-120 days after the close of this solicitation. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 150-180 days after the close of this solicitation, when all NOAA/applicant negotiations and NEPA analysis and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities have been completed. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the CRP staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

B. Administrative and National Environmental Policy Act Requirements

1. Administrative Requirements.

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided with a copy of the award by the NOAA Grants Office, and can be found at: http://www.osec.doc.gov/oebam/pdf/ST&C-rev-1002.pdf.

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Office may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill, and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as the required use of the CRP's form and format approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472 for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

2. NEPA Requirements

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

Applicants proposing restoration activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Supplemental PEA and FONSI will be informed after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an EA prior to an award being made, or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities if one exists. The CRP PEA and FONSI can be found at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/assessment/ea_main.html.

C. Reporting Requirements

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date listed in award documentation provided by GMD. Progress reports are due directly to the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program office and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

Progress reports must be submitted using a specific format for narrative information and a fill-form for project specific details that can be found on the NOAA Restoration Center website at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration. Use of this required progress report form and format involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, and has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472 and expires on April 30, 2006. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants office.

Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 - March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 - September 30 (due by October 30), and should be submitted directly to the NOAA Grants Management Division as per instructions contained in official NOAA award documentation.

Recipients of CRP funding are strongly encouraged to submit project information on-line through the National Estuary Restoration Inventory (NERI) at https://neri.noaa.gov/. Submission of project information through NERI is not a substitute for submitting the mandatory CRP progress report data form and narrative. Only projects receiving funding through the Estuary Restoration Act are required to submit project information on-line through NERI. NERI is a web-based inventory of restoration projects that restoration practitioners can use to track the success and progress of their own projects. Projects submitted to NERI may be counted toward

the one million acre goal of the Estuary Restoration Act and information will be available for on-line queries and reports once the project is approved. This collection-of-information is subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, and has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0479 and expires on July 31, 2006. For more information on submitting projects to NERI, see https://neri.noaa.gov/about.html.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Robin Bruckner or Melanie Gange at(301)713-0174, or by fax at (301) 713-0184, or by e-mail at Robin.Bruckner@noaa.gov or Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act [5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)] or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Accordingly, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S. C. 601 et seq.).

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

The use of the standard NOAA grant application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

END