

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program

General Coral Reef Conservation Grants

Preserving, Sustaining, and Restoring Coral Reef Ecosystems

Supporting Local Conservation Efforts

Long-term sustainable conservation of coral reef ecosystems relies on localized community-based activities and initiatives. Since 2002, the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program has supported local coral reef conservation projects within U.S. state and territorial waters and the Freely Associated States (Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshall Islands). The General Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (GCRC) has supported over 35 on-the-ground projects in U.S. states, territories, and the Freely Associated States.

Program Priorities

The objectives of the GCRC are to support projects that: (1) Help preserve, sustain and restore the condition of coral reef ecosystems; (2) Promote the wise management and sustainable use of coral reef resources; (3) Increase public knowledge and awareness of coral reef ecosystems and issues regarding their conservation; and (4) Develop sound scientific information on the condition of coral reef ecosystems and the threats to such ecosystems.

A major goal of the GCRC is to provide seed money to projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important coral reef conservation projects to benefit living marine resources.



Sampling in Pago Bay, Guam - University of Guam

FY2006 project priorities fall within 7 categories:

1. Monitoring and assessment of coral reefs or reef resources;
2. Socio-economic assessments and resource valuation;
3. Marine protected areas and associated management activities;
4. Coral reef fisheries management and enforcement;
5. Coral reef restoration;
6. Public education and outreach activities; and
7. Local action strategy projects.

Conserving Coral Reef Ecosystems for the Future.

The GCRC solicits proposals for coral reef conservation projects for work in U.S. waters and the Freely Associated States. Proposals go through a competitive review process and projects are selected for funding based on technical merit, geographic balance, and conservation priorities. NOAA awards approximately \$500,000 to partners annually through the GCRC.



SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS

¡Cuidado con los arrecifes! A Coral Reef Public Education and Outreach Initiative for Puerto Rico.

Consultores Educativos Ambientales (CEA) partnering with the Fundación para la Conservación Marina de Culebra and others developed a targeted coral reef conservation outreach program for the eastern region of Puerto Rico. These partners developed a weather proof poster and a corresponding comic book targeting the users of coral reefs to increase public awareness and illustrate activities that can be taken to reduce human impacts to coral reef ecosystems. To date, 900 posters and 1,500 comic books have been distributed to marinas, dive shops, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environment Resources (PRDNER), University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant, teachers, and the general public. Due to the overwhelming amount of requests, CEA is now partnering with PRDNER Cordillera Reef Natural Reserve in Fajardo to distribute the materials to a wider audience. Additionally, The Puerto Rico Department of Education is printing 1,000 more copies for use in teacher training sessions and the Pfizer Pharmaceuticals of Puerto Rico will print 500 additional comic books for the schools within their environmental education program.

In 2003, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program provided \$10,000 for this project through a grant to CEA. CEA matched NOAA contribution with cash and in-kind services for a total projects cost of \$20,000.

How to Apply:

Institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, local and Indian tribal governments and Freely Associated State Government agencies can apply for funding under the GCRC. Proposals are accepted and competitively awarded annually. Projects awards range from \$15,000 - \$50,000 and require a one to one match.

Grant deadline information can be found at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ead/fundingopps.htm> or on www.grant.gov by search the Funding Opportunity Number NMFS-HCPO-2006-2000348.

To date the GCRC has contributed over \$1,400,000 to coral reef conservation efforts, leveraging over \$1,500,000 in cash or in-kind contributions.

Improving Community-based Marine Conservation Area Management in Palau

This project enabled PCS to work a variety of community members throughout Palau to improve monitoring of mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reef. PCS trained local conservation area staff on monitoring techniques, which in return empowered the conservation staff to train local community members to assist in monitoring. This effort has led into the development of local environmental community groups to assist monitoring efforts and to further catalyze local community action. PCS also worked with targeted groups such as the Retired Environmental Volunteers, to monitor mangroves throughout a number of states using traditional bamboo rafts, which enabled them to access places where regular boats cannot go. Additionally, PCS began working with local communities to create best management guidelines for coral reef management in Palau, which focused on traditional, local and community-based efforts.



In 2003, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program provided \$30,000 to for this project through a grant to PCS. PCS matched NOAA contribution with cash and in-kind services for a total projects cost of \$60,000.

Project Examples:

- * Developing a Virgin Islands Marine Protected Area Network to Protect and Restore Vanishing Coral Reef Ecosystem Resources.
- * Reefs at Risk: Improving the Information Available for Sound Management and Protection of Coral Reefs in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- * Community- Base Conservation of Coral Reef Resources in Maui, Hawaii.
- * Coral Reef Conservation through Outreach: Education traveling exhibit phase 1 (starting in Florida).
- * Enhancing the Capacity to Inform Effective Management Decisions for the East End Marine Park, St Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.
- * Effects of Habitat and Life History Characteristics on Marine Reserve Effectiveness (Hawaii).
- * Managing Overfishing and Destructive Fisheries on Coral Reefs In the Republic of the Marshall Islands a U.S. Freely Associated State.



- ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ! **Federal Agency Name(s):** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); U.S. Department of Commerce

- ! **Funding Opportunity Title:** NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program/General Grants

- ! **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement

- ! **Funding Opportunity Number:** NMFS-HCPO-2006-2000348

- ! **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):**
11.463 - Habitat Conservation

- ! **Dates:** Pre-applications must be received by NOAA before midnight, Eastern Time, on November 15, 2005. Final applications must be received by NOAA before midnight, Eastern Time, on March 3, 2006.

- ! **Funding Opportunity Description:** The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program/General Grants, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance ranging from \$15,000-\$50,000 to institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, Freely Associated State government agencies, and local and Indian tribal governments to support conservation projects for coral reef ecosystems of the United States and the Freely Associated States in the Pacific (Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia).

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

General Coral Reef Conservation

A. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objective

Pursuant to the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), through the NOAA Administrator (Administrator), and subject to the availability of funds, is authorized to provide matching grants of financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects through the Coral Reef Conservation Program (Program). As such, the objective of the

Program is to provide financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and “A National Coral Reef Action Strategy” (Strategy). A copy of the Strategy and the Act can be found at: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/>.

Pursuant to the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. The Guidelines can be also found at: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/>.

The Guidelines provide broad eligibility criteria, pursuant to Section 6403(g) of the Act, for coral reef conservation activities, and also created the following six program categories under the Program for awarding financial assistance:

1. State and Territory Coral Reef Management;
2. State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring;
3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research;
4. General Coral Reef Conservation;
5. Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans; and,
6. International Coral Reef Conservation.

From year to year, specific priorities of the above listed program categories change due to Congressional appropriations and direction, and priorities of NOAA, the Program, and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. Each of the categories listed above has its own FFO announcement, which describes the following specific requirements and criteria: program priorities, applicant and project eligibility, funding availability, application content and submission, application review and selection, and award administration. The criteria provided herein are specific only to the General Coral Reef Conservation category.

The principal objectives of the Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program/General Grants (CRCGP/GG) are to support projects conducted in the United States and the Freely Associated States in the Pacific (Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia) that: (1) Help preserve, sustain and restore the condition of coral reef ecosystems; (2) Promote the wise management and sustainable use of coral reef resources; (3) Increase public knowledge and awareness of coral reef ecosystems and issues regarding their conservation; and (4) Develop sound scientific information on the condition of coral reef ecosystems and the threats to such ecosystems. A major goal of the (CRCGP/GG) is to provide seed money to projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important coral reef conservation projects to benefit living marine resources.

Proposals must address the goals and purposes of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act 16 U.S.C. 6401, 6403, P.L. 106-562) and address coral reef conservation priorities identified in the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs and the National Coral Reef Action Strategy. Priority will be given to individuals and organizations with a demonstrated

track record at conducting coral reef conservation projects, effectively working with stakeholders and communities, and developing and disseminating high quality awareness and information materials to relevant user groups. Applicants should consult with all relevant state, territory, and local governmental and non-governmental entities involved in coral reef activities in developing the application, and demonstrate collaboration among entities such as public and nonprofit organizations, academia, industry, and local, state, territorial and Federal government agencies as appropriate.

2. Program Priorities

The CRCGP/GG will accept applications that fall within at least one of the following 7 categories: (a) Monitoring and assessment of coral reefs or reef resources; (b) Socio-economic assessments and resource valuation; (c) Marine Protected Areas and associated management activities; (d) Coral reef fisheries management and enforcement; (e) Coral reef restoration; (f) Public education and outreach activities; and (h) Local action strategy projects. Research activities are eligible only if they directly relate to management or are listed as a project within a local action strategy. The priorities are not listed in any particular order and each is of equal importance.

Details of the 7 categories are as follows:

a. Monitoring and assessment of coral reefs or reef resources: Monitoring and assessment activities conducted by community and non-governmental organizations that complement or fill gaps in state and territorial coral reef monitoring programs.

b. Socio-economic assessments and resource valuation: Studies to develop regional economic valuations of coral reef ecosystems including both market and non-market values to help strengthen management approaches and ensure effective decision making. This could include community assessments, economic valuations, and alternative income generation workshops.

c. Marine Protected Areas and associated management activities: Studies, workshops and other coordinated regional planning efforts to (1) assess effectiveness and gaps of existing marine protected area systems; (2) develop and provide tools to increase effectiveness of MPA design and management including models of community-based conservation, policy guidance and model legislation, assessment of legal and policy frameworks; (3) evaluate management effectiveness or determine functional linkages among MPA sites; (4) engage diverse stakeholders and incorporate the best available science in the design, planning or implementation of coral reef MPAs or MPA networks; and (5) support outreach and education to facilitate participation and cooperation at local to national levels in design and implementation of coral reef MPAs

d. Coral reef fisheries management and enforcement: Activities that (1) identify, monitor and protect critically important fisheries habitats and populations; (2) provide strategies to reduce destructive fishing, bycatch and overfishing; and (3) reduce overexploitation of reef organisms for the aquarium trade. This could include resource assessments, collection of fishery information, outreach to fishers, co-management of coral reef fisheries by fishing communities, and other activities that complement state, territorial or Regional Fishery Management Council activities and programs.

e. Coral reef restoration: Activities to (1) review and evaluate existing reef restoration projects; (2) develop and test innovative methods and techniques to expedite reef restoration; (3) promote cost-effective pilot restoration projects; and (4) transfer proven restoration tools, techniques and lessons to communities, local, state and territorial government agencies and other partners. This includes restoration activities for coral reefs and associated habitats that were damaged by physical and biological disturbances such as orphan vessel groundings, storm events, coral disease and coral predator outbreaks, and anthropogenic disturbances, with emphasis on projects utilizing innovative coral restoration technologies and/or comprehensive evaluation of restoration sites.

f. Public education and outreach activities: Activities that (1) raise awareness and understanding of coral reef ecosystems; (2) create and distribute solution-focused outreach materials targeting specific threats and user-groups; and (3) promote local and regional outreach efforts designed to modify behaviors that affect reefs on a local scale. This could include the development and dissemination of brochures and other informational materials, and convening of public meetings and workshops, particularly those which address the needs of local user groups.

g. Local action strategy projects: The U.S. states and territories, under purview of the USCRTF, have developed local action strategies to address six priority threats: overfishing, land-based sources of pollution, lack of public awareness, recreational overuse or misuse, disease and coral bleaching, and climate change. These strategies provide a list of specific projects that each state and territory would like to implement. Proposals must identify the particular priority LAS project(s) that their activities will focus on and the project they are conducting. The applicant must develop an implementation plan in consultation with state and territorial governments prior to submission of the application, and include letters of support from the relevant government agency. Information on current local action strategies can be found NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ecosystem/fundingopps.htm>.

Additional consideration will be given to state and territory priorities. The state or territorial management agency working under the purview U.S. Coral Reef Task Force will prioritize and provide comments on the proposals for work in their jurisdiction. This is intended to enhance coordination of coral reef conservation activities each jurisdiction and to ensure proposed activities are appropriate and do not duplicate on-going activities. Applicants are encouraged to coordinate with state and territory agencies prior to submission of their pre-applications.

3. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 (Coral Reef Conservation Program) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 *et seq*).

B. Award Information

1. Funding Availability for FY2006

NOAA announces the availability of approximately \$600,000 of Federal assistance may be available in FY 2006 under the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program/General Grants to support financial assistance awards for coral conservation activities. Proposals can be submitted for a minimum of \$15,000 to a maximum of \$50,000; NOAA will not accept proposals requesting over \$50,000 of Federal funds.

There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant during the 2006 competitive grant cycle. However, multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must clearly identify different projects and must be successful in the competitive review process. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the CRCGP/GG by Congress. The funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

2. Project/Award Period

Projects for a period of 12 to 18-months will be considered for funding under the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program/General Grants. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA Fisheries has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Funding for subsequent years will require submission of a new application, which will compete with other project proposals submitted during the subsequent budget period. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of the period, the applicant must notify the assigned Federal Program Officer 30 days prior to the end of the award to apply for a no-cost extension. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the discretion of NOAA.

3. Type of Funding Instrument

Recipients will enter into a grant with the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program through the Office of Habitat Conservation

4. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. For work within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other Federally designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement prior to award from the appropriate government agencies.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis or whether an environmental assessment is necessary to conform with requirements of NEPA. For those applications needing an environmental assessment, applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of the assessment prior to final approval of the award.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessment) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, local and Indian tribal governments and Freely Associated State Government Agencies can apply for funding under the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program/General Grants. U.S. federal, state, territory, and commonwealth governments and Regional Fishery Management Councils are not eligible under this category.

NOAA employees are not allowed to help in the preparation of applications or write letters of support for any application. NOAA staff are available to provide information regarding statistics on coral reefs, programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs, Regional funding priorities, and, along with other Federal Program Officers, can provide information on application procedures and completion of required forms. For activities that involve collaboration with current NOAA coral reef conservation programs or staff, NOAA employees can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project. Federal employee travel and salaries are not allowable costs under this program.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the project. All CRCGP/GG projects submitted to this program require a 1:1 match obtained from non-Federal sources. Applicants must specify in their proposal the source of the match and may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. The match can include in-kind contributions and other non-cash support. 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. Federal funds may not be used as matching funds. 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. 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 “d”. “Project Costs”.

As per section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, the NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements: (1) No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement; and (2) The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement. In the case of a waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver including attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match.

Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), the Program shall waive any requirement for local matching funds for any project under \$200,000 (including in-kind contribution) to the governments of Insular Areas, defined as the jurisdictions of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Eligible applicants choosing to apply 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) must include a letter requesting a waiver that demonstrates that their project meets the requirements of 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d).

D. Application and Submission Information

The application process requires both a preapplication and final application, subject to the submission dates and times listed in section 3 below. Both preapplications and final applications must include a cover sheet, project summary, the narrative description of the budget and proposed project, and applicable supporting documentation must be complete and must follow the format described here. Failure to follow these requirements will result in the proposal being returned without review.

Applicants must identify the specific priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list first on the application the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposals. Applications should support the “National Coral Reef Action Strategy” and one or more of the following goals of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force “National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs” or the “Local Action Strategies”: A. II. Assess and Monitor Reef Health; A. IV. Understand Social and Economic Factors; B.I. Improve Use of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); B. II. Reduce Impacts of Fishing; B. IV. Reduce Pollution; B. V. Restore Damaged Reefs; and B. VI. Improve Education.

Applicants must consult with all relevant state, territory, and local governmental and non-governmental entities involved in coral reef activities in developing the application. Local government agencies that must be consulted include coastal zone management, water quality, and wildlife and/or marine resource agencies. Applicants are encouraged to provide letters of

support from local state and territory government agencies to demonstrate coordination and collaboration. In addition, proposed activities should be coordinated, where appropriate, with ongoing and proposed NOAA mapping, monitoring, and coral reef or fishery management initiatives, and DOI Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service coral reef activities.

Applicants whose preapplications are preliminarily selected and choose to submit a final application, must submit a final Federal financial assistance award application package, including the revised proposal and supporting documentation described below, and all required Federal financial assistance forms. The required Federal financial assistance forms include a SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511, CD-512, and if applicable, CD-346 and/or SF-LLL. These can be filled out and submitted on line at www.grants.gov, can be requested from the technical point of contact (andy.bruckner@noaa.gov), or obtained from the NOAA grants Website at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf>. Applicants are required to include one original and two copies of the signed, hard/paper of the Federal financial assistance forms for each final application package unless the application is submitted through www.grants.gov

Selected applicants may be asked to revise award objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to submittal of the final application. The amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and the specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD), and relevant NOAA staff. Letter(s) of support from relevant government agencies and letters of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds must be included with the final application.

For each project proposed, the preapplication and final application should not exceed 25 pages, including descriptions of qualification, letters of support and no more than five pages of other attachments, and should use 12-point font on letter size paper. Applications must include the following information:

a. Cover Sheet:

A cover sheet must be included for each preapplication and final application. The cover sheet must list (1) the project title, (2) applicant organization, (3) principal investigator or contact, (4) contact information, (5) program category, (6) geographic location of the project, (7) amount of grant funds requested, (8) amount of matching funds provided, and (9) a one paragraph project summary.

b. Project Summary (1-page limit):

Each proposal must contain a summary describing:

- (1) Status and magnitude of the issues in the jurisdiction where the project will occur.
- (2) Recent actions undertaken to address the issues.
- (3) How the project fits into the jurisdiction's strategy to addressing critical coral reef conservation needs the next 2- to 3-years.

(4) Summary of work to be performed and expected outcomes.

c. Narrative Project Description (15 page limit).

The Narrative should be no more than 15 double-spaced pages long (in 12-point font) and must include a clear presentation of the proposed work and a narrative budget justification. Each task within the project must be completely and accurately described. The narrative should include: (1) specific objectives, performance measures for the period of the proposed work, and the expected outcomes; (2) relation to longer-term goals of the PI's project; and (3) relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway.

Each project must be described as follows:

i. Identification of problem(s): Identify the problem/opportunity the project intends to address and describe its significance to the conservation of coral reefs.

ii. Project objectives: Identify the CRCGP/GG objective, listed under A. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Program Priorities, to which the project's objective(s) correspond. Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; and; attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.

iii. Project narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during each budget period of the project. This description should include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from a successfully completed project. The narrative should respond to the following questions:

(1) What specific activities does the project include and how do these activities relate to the project's goals and objectives?

(2) Who will be responsible for carrying out each activity? Highlight activities that will be conducted by co-investigators or cooperators, or by sub-contractors, volunteers, and others designated as co-investigators or cooperators.

(3) What are the project milestones? List milestones, describing specific activities and associated time lines necessary to meet them. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc.), rather than by specific dates.

(4) What are the major outcomes, results, or products expected? Describe expected outcomes, results, or products that will directly relate to the CRCGP/GG objectives. Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities and the potential impacts of this proposed project on the conservation of coral reefs.

iv. List the programs (Federal, state, territorial or local governmental activities) this project would affect and describe how the project coordinates with relevant state, territorial, or local governmental and non-governmental agencies, and if applicable, NOAA regional activities.

v. Describe how the project will be organized and managed. The lead organization and person listed as the technical contact, should be identified as the principal investigator. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.).

d. Narrative Budget Summary:

Provide a detailed breakdown of costs by category and the corresponding direct and indirect cost totals. Provide information regarding the amount of matching funds available to the applicant. If the applicant currently has a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal Government, up to 25% of the total indirect costs can be included in the budget supported by federal funds. Indirect costs are 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. If indirect costs are included, the package should include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government.

Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

We will not consider fees, fund-raising activities, travel for Federal employees, salaries for Federal employees, or profits as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs you incur in accomplishing project activities during the project period. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between you and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the award. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or preparing the application, or in any discussions or negotiations with us prior to the award. We will not accept such expenditures as part of your cost share.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by NOAA before Midnight Eastern Time on the dates specified below:

Preapplications due to NOAA - November 15, 2005

NOAA returns proposal comments to applicants – February 3, 2006

Final Applications due to NOAA - March 3, 2006

There will be no extensions beyond these dates. If the preapplication or final application is not received by NOAA by the deadline, the late application will not be reviewed or considered for FY 2006 funding.

Preapplications may be submitted by surface mail or e-mail. Submissions by e-mail are preferred. If submitting by surface mail, applicants are encouraged to include an electronic copy of the pre-application or final application on disk or cd. Pre-applications must be sent to coral.grants@noaa.gov or to David Kennedy, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, Room 10102, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Final applications should be submitted electronically to: www.grants.gov, the Federal grants portal. If internet access is unavailable, hard copies can be submitted David Kennedy, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, Room 10102, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applicants are required to include one original and two copies of the signed, hard/paper of the Federal financial assistance forms for each final application package applications that is not submitted through www.grants.gov.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this Program are subject to 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.

5. Funding Restrictions

a. Pre-award Notification Requirements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of 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 October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), is applicable to this solicitation.

b. Indirect Cost Rates: 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 1) the negotiated Federal indirect cost rate or 2) 25 percent of the direct costs proposed. If applicant's indirect cost rate is greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share. 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.

c. **Allowable Costs:** Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

d. **Ineligible Projects:** The following projects will not be eligible for funding:

- (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law;
- (2) Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under Federal or state law; and,
- (3) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

E. **Application Review Information**

1. 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.

a. **Importance and Applicability of Proposal** (Score = 0-40): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applications will be evaluated on clear identification of project goals and objectives and the ability to link those goals and objectives to project activities and the applicability of the project to the CRCGP/GGgoals. Reviewers will consider:

- (1) Whether the proposed work contributes to improved understanding, conservation, management, or protection of coral reefs in the U.S. waters and the Freely Associated States by addressing one of the 7 program priorities (0-20 points); and
- (2) The need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction; the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to coral reef conservation and management; and, the amount of collaboration with local, state and territorial governments (0-20 points).

b. **Technical/ Scientific Merit** (Score = 0-20): 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. Applications will be scored based on their clear identification of performance evaluation methods and the suitability of those methods for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

- (1) The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description, including clearly stated coral reef conservation objectives and goals, and the likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time line specified in the statement of work and the inclusion of quality assurance considerations if data collection is proposed.
- (2) The overall technical feasibility of the project, 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.
- (3) Whether there are effective mechanisms to evaluate project success.

c. Overall Qualification of Applications (Score = 0-10): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. The overall qualifications of the project will be evaluated based on:

- (1) 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. Consideration will be made to previous awards received by the Principal Investigator and outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards. Communities and/or organizations developing their first locally-driven coral reef conservation 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, on the basis of their explanation of characteristics such as education, training and/or experience of primary project participants.
- (2) 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.

d. Project Costs (Score = 0-10): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The budget should reflect the ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed and a demonstrated need for funding. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. NOAA will expect cost-sharing 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.

e. **Outreach and Education** (Score = 0-20): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. The reviewers will evaluate whether information about or the findings of this work is disseminated to the appropriate user groups and if the proposed outreach/education methods appropriate for this type of work.

2. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps, including an initial evaluation, technical review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., the Office of Habitat Conservation, Ecosystem Assessment Division Chief). The peer review step will involve at least 3 individual reviewers per application. The Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which applications will be funded based upon the numerical ranking of the applications and the evaluations by the peer reviewers as well as the selection factors set in E.3. below.

a. **Initial Evaluation of the Applications**: The initial screening will ensure that preapplication packages have all required forms and application elements, clearly relate to the 2006 CRCGP/GG objectives, and meet all of the eligibility criteria. Application packages will be screened to ensure that they (1) were received by the due date (see Submission Dates and Times); (2) include the entire preapplication package (a cover sheet, project summary, the narrative description of the budget and proposed project minus the Federal forms); (3) identify a Principal Investigator and provide current resumes or curricula vitae for both the Principal and Co-Investigators; (4) identify one of the 7 project categories; (5) include supporting documentation from relevant state or territorial governments; and (6) include any relevant permit application cover letters, if applicable. Applications that pass this initial screening will be submitted for technical review.

b. **Technical Review**: Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three external reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score preapplications (0-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V, A above. This review will involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. NOAA will also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

c. **Final Selection**: Preapplications for CRCGP/GG 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 Selecting Official. Based on these cumulative reviews and the additional selection factors described below, the Selecting Official, in consultation with Coral Reef Conservation Program staff, will make preliminary funding recommendations. Only those applications having an

average score higher than 70 points in the peer review will be considered for funding. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding.

3. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official, in consultation with Office of Habitat Conservation 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. Applications will be awarded in rank order of the technical review ratings, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. 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. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set forth under section A.2. and D.
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NMFS will provide a summary of comments received during the review process to each selected applicant by February 3, 2006. These summary comments will include input from peer reviewers, the solicited jurisdictions, and the NOAA Coral Program review. These comments include recommended modifications to the proposed activities and should be used in the applicant's development of the final application. The Program Officer and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal, and request specific modifications to the proposal, based on the review. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds. If insufficient eligible projects are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this program area to a different funding category under the Program.

Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal financial assistance forms, NMFS will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of, and/or response to comments that were returned

to the applicant. NMFS will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA selection panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines. The selection panel will ensure that funding decisions are consistent with the geographic distribution requirements of 16 U.S.C. 6403(d). Final funding will be made available to the successful applicant by October 1, 2006.

F. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued through electronic mail to the Authorizing Official and the Principle Investigator of the project.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by March 3, 2006 that their proposal was not selected for recommendation. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, then destroyed.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). You may obtain a copy of this notice by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish sufficient information to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

Limitation of Liability

Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2005 appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these 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.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

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 feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

3. Reporting

Performance and Financial Reports - Recipients receiving funding will be required to submit semiannual financial reports and semiannual performance reports no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports must be submitted to NOAA Fisheries, Office of Habitat Conservation. The applicant must submit a comprehensive final report along with copies of all products that are developed under the award within 90 days of the end of the award. Electronic submission of performance reports at www.grantsonline.gov is preferred.

G. Agency Contact(s)

Technical point of contact for NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program/General Grants is Andy Bruckner, 301-713-3459, extension 190 or e-mail at andy.bruckner@noaa.gov.