



Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership - NOAA Community-Based Restoration Grant Program Request for Proposals & Proposal Guidelines

Deadline for Proposal Submission: October 22, 2010

Introduction: The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) are pleased to request proposals for their matching grant program to restore marine, estuarine and riparian habitats to benefit living marine resources through community involvement. This multi-year, regional partnership between SARP and NOAA supports on-the-ground projects in the Southeast Region of the U.S. which further the goal of the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan (SAHP):

To maintain, restore, and conserve the quantity and quality of freshwater, estuarine, and marine habitats to support healthy, sustainable fish and aquatic communities and sustainable public use for the benefit of all in the southeastern region and the entire U.S.

NOAA trust resources and the habitats that support them serve as the focus of this partnership. NOAA trust resources include:

- Commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine fish and shellfish and their habitats);
- Diadromous species (fish, such as sturgeon and eel, which migrate and spend different parts of their life cycles in freshwater and in marine habitats);
- Endangered and threatened marine species and their habitats;
- Marine mammals, turtles, and their habitats;
- Marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and other coastal habitats; and
- Resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries and National Estuarine Research Reserves.

This multi-year, regional partnership is designed to strengthen aquatic conservation activities and foster local stewardship of ecologically significant areas in the region. Projects meeting this request for proposals may be located in the nine coastal states of the southeastern United States: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

Project Specifications: Proposals will be accepted for projects that involve restoration or enhancement of coastal habitats in the Southeast United States. Proposed projects associated with watersheds along the South Atlantic coast will be given special consideration at this time due to the availability of other funding sources in the Gulf of Mexico. However, high priority projects in the Gulf watersheds will still be considered for funding. Please see Appendices B, C, and D for assessment details.

All projects must:

- Result in on-the-ground aquatic habitat restoration benefitting NOAA trust resources;

- Have applicability to one or more of the eight objectives of the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan (SAHP). The SAHP can be found at <http://southeastaquatics.net/programs/southeast-aquatic-habitat-plan-sahp>;
- Ensure lasting benefits and enhanced community stewardship through a focused and effective education and outreach element;
- Provide a minimum 1:1 non-federal match to the requested partnership funds;
- Include a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the success of the project.

Projects are expected to have one or more of the following outcomes:

- Restore coastal and marine habitats, threatened or endangered species, or benefit species of concern.
- Restore diadromous fish habitat, particularly to remove in-stream migration barriers, other barriers to habitat connectivity, or to improve habitat hydrology and improve riparian areas of estuarine and inshore habitats.
- Restore shellfish habitat to broaden ecological benefits and ecosystem services
- Restore coastal wetlands through shoreline restoration or hydrological reconnection
- Prepare habitats to respond to climate change and sea level rise, possibly but not limited to restoration or protection of transition zones. (A transition zone can help to mitigate the impacts of climate change on biodiversity by providing potential refugia that will allow species to persist, shift ranges and ultimately adapt to climate change.)

Eligible applicants include: non-governmental organizations (e.g., community associations, watershed user groups, cooperatives, civic groups), municipalities, universities, schools, state and tribal governments. Federal agencies are not eligible to apply.

Project Duration: Work conducted for the project is to be completed within 18-24 months of contract approval. Projects should be designed to begin in January 2011.

Funding: A total of about \$215,000 is available for projects. The number and size of the projects funded will not be limited except as they are related to the objectives above. Project budgets will be between \$20K and \$100K. Grants must have a minimum **1:1 non-federal match**, which may be in cash, time, goods, or other services. All match must be acquired during the project period. Special consideration will be given to projects with more than the minimum match. Eligible costs will be paid for work done no earlier than contract approval. Payment will be made on a reimbursement basis with 15% of the grant award allowed up-front.

Grant funds may **NOT** be used to support overhead, permanent staffing costs, political advocacy, scholarships to individuals, deficit reduction activities, projects that have already been completed, or for activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law.

Applicants are strongly urged to discuss project ideas and questions prior to submitting proposals. For questions regarding applicability to the SAHP, contact Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary, SARP Project Manager at

225-892-7470. For technical questions, including those regarding NOAA's trust resources, contact the NOAA technical advisor in the project area.

NOAA Technical Advisors

Name and Email Address	Phone	Area of Responsibility
Walter.Priest@noaa.gov	804-684-7385	VA
Howard.Schnabolk@noaa.gov	843-740-1328	NC, SC, GA,
Daphne.Macfarlan@noaa.gov	727-824-5384	Northeast FL
Sean.Meehan@noaa.gov	727-824-5330	FL East (Cape Canaveral to the FL Keys)
Marti.McGuire@noaa.gov	727-551-5785	FL West (Everglades to Apalachicola)
Leslie.Craig@noaa.gov	727-551-5786	FL Northwest (Apalachicola west to Pensacola)
Meg.Goecker@noaa.gov	251-243-2200	AL and MS
Cheryl.Brodnax@noaa.gov	225-578-7923	LA
Kristopher.Benson@noaa.gov	409-766-3699	TX
Mark.Sramek@noaa.gov	727-824-5511	All states in region

Proposal Requirements: Proposals should be no more than 10 pages in length, formatted as described in Appendix A. This page limitation does not include attachments and support materials. Timelines may use a January 1, 2011 starting date, but the actual start date will be determined by completion of the contract document.

Proposal Selection Process: Final projects will be selected for funding following review by the SARP-NOAA Selection Committee. The Committee consists of the SARP Coordinator and one representative from: NOAA, each of the SARP coastal states, USFWS, USGS, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. Grantees will be notified of awards within six to eight weeks of the proposal deadline.

Proposals will be reviewed by the SARP-NOAA Partnership Project Selection Committee on the basis of the criteria below.

Evaluation criteria: Projects will be scored according to criteria in five categories:

- **Category 1: (20 %) Importance and Applicability**
 Does the project support the identified habitat conservation objective(s) of the SAHP?
 Does the project contribute to the restoration, conservation, or enhancement of NOAA trust resources?
 Considered in the context of the existing local environment, will restoration activities in the target habitat make a significant positive impact?
 Will the project deliver tangible, specific results that are measurable (acres, stream miles, volunteer hours, adequate monitoring parameters, etc)?
 Does the project support any of the habitats, watersheds, or species listed in Appendices B, C, or D or is it located along the South Atlantic Coast?
- **Category 2: (30%) Technical/Scientific Merit**
 Can the project be completed within 18-24 months of receiving funding (excluding monitoring and evaluation)?
 What is the overall technical feasibility of the project, from both a biological and an engineering perspective?
 Is the proposal technically sound in its use of appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives on both ecological and community stewardship levels?
 Does the project addresses the root causes of habitat degradation or loss, ensuring that the restoration project will sustain itself over time?
 Does the proposal provide assurance that the project will meet all Federal, state and local environmental laws and follow applicable permit requirements so that on-the-ground activities will begin soon after the project's proposed start date?
 Does the proposal provide landowner assurance of support and dedication to protecting the project for its useful life (such as letter of support, conservation easement, or significant financial investment), or possibly mention provisions for long-term maintenance?
 Does the proposal include an effective mechanism to evaluate project success that includes an appropriate, clearly stated goal and at least one structural and one functional monitoring parameter?
- **Category 3: (10%) Applicant Qualifications**
 Do project leaders have the appropriate qualifications and technical expertise or access to appropriate expertise to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed project?
- **Category 4: (20%) Project Costs**
 Is the proposed budget realistic and cost-effective, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame, and sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification?
 Does the proposed budget include an appropriate ratio of match leveraged from other sources?
 Does the proposed budget include match in excess of the minimum?
- **Category 5: (20%) Outreach, Education, and Community Involvement**
 Does the project contribute to the aquatic habitat conservation outreach goals of SARP or foster a community conservation ethic through citizen involvement?
 Does the project involve public outreach, and seek to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and the sources of funding and other support provided, or otherwise compliment or encourage other local restoration or conservation activities?
 Does the proposal have significant community support as demonstrated by a diversity of active,

contributing partners and/or sponsors?

Administrative Requirements: Applicants will be required to demonstrate that all necessary permits and consultations have been completed prior to conducting any earth moving activities. Each project will be assigned a NOAA technical monitor that, upon request, can assist with aspects of project implementation.

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 funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>. In order for NOAA staff to complete a NEPA analysis, applicants will be asked 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. introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

Minimum Monitoring/Evaluating: In support of the Estuary Restoration Act of 2000, a quantitative monitoring program is required. Projects will identify at least one structural and one functional parameter of the restoration project site to be quantitatively monitored. These parameters should reflect a major objective or goal of the project. The monitoring plan should define a target value (realistic outcome) for the parameter after restoration as well as a reference value (ideal value) for the parameter. SARP and NOAA will work with successful applicants to finalize monitoring parameters and develop success targets to evaluate project results. Applicants are encouraged to contact NOAA staff or use Restoration Monitoring Planner at http://coastalscience.noaa.gov/ecosystems/estuaries/restoration_monitoring.html when developing monitoring plans.

Permitting: 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 including Endangered Species Act consultations as appropriate. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment.

Safety Plan: If a proposal is selected for funding, the grantee will be required to have and use a written safety plan for all project activities, management of volunteers (if applicable). The safety plan should consider safety at the site during and after project construction, and take into account potential safety concerns with regard to the current and future use of the site. A copy of the plan is required with the first progress report.

Reporting: The contract will include specific reporting requirements as follows:

- Progress reports will be submitted to SARP every six months; dates will be supplied in the funding contract. The progress report form will be available online. Each progress report will describe progress to date. Photos of the site and project are encouraged.
- A final report, including documentation of the completed project and financial report will be submitted to the project administrator within 30 days of the end of the grant period.

To whom should proposals be submitted? Original copies of proposals may be submitted by snail mail and postmarked by **October 22, 2010** to:

Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership

22182 Fen St.
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

or submitted electronically to marilyno@southeastaquatics.net by close of business on **the same date**.

Appendix A Proposal Format

Please use the format below to ensure a complete application: No proposal should exceed 10 pages (optional items such as maps, photos or letters of support do not count toward the page limit).

A. Applicant Information:

Name and address of applicant organization

Name, title, and contact information of principal investigator or project leader

B. Project Information:

Title

Location - GPS coordinates if possible

Project focus (diadromous fish habitat or coastal fish habitat)

SAHP objective(s) benefitting from this project

NOAA Trust Resource(s) benefitting from the project

Estimated on-the-ground start and end dates (not award date)

Land ownership (public or private) - Add document(s) under item 3, Optional Supporting Materials below.

Estimated total cost of project as amount required from grant and estimated total cost. - Add details under section D. below.

List of partners.

C. Project Description (largest portion of proposal):

1. **Project overview** to include the existing relevant habitat conditions and the desired or targeted conditions, size of area (acres or stream miles) to be restored, NOAA trust resources that will benefit from the restoration activity and the specific restoration methods and techniques that will be used. **The project overview is a critical part of the application** that should provide reviewers with sufficient detail to fully understand the proposed project. Please review the Evaluation Criteria above to ensure that all relevant information has been included.

2. **Monitoring plan overview** summarizing the parameters as described in the rfp under Administrative Requirements: Minimum Monitoring/Evaluation, including project goals, monitoring parameters, monitoring methods and schedule, and target and reference values. (See Appendix E)

3. **Outreach plan overview** summarizing critical activities for stakeholder/community involvement.

4. **Provisions to protect the restoration project site after project completion**, including provisions for long term maintenance, if needed.

5. **List of required permits** and any other environmental compliance issues to be considered (Federal, state, local), indicating any that have already been secured or addressed.

6. **Project timeline.** Projects should be designed to begin in early 2011.

D. Budget:

1. **Amount requested** through the SARP Community-based Restoration Partnership

2. **Amount of matching** contributions (specify amounts and sources, both in kind and cash. Federal funds cannot be used as match. Calculate volunteer hours at \$20.85/hr. Use the table below.

Categories	Grant Amount	Match Amount	Type of Match
Personnel			
Staff			
Volunteers			
Fringe			
Travel			
Equipment*			
Supplies			
Contractual			
Other			
Total direct			
Total indirect			
Total			

*Equipment is any individual item over \$5,000. Even if an item is tangible, nonexpendable, and having a useful life of more than one year, items costing less than \$5,000 should be placed under the Supplies category. Such large purchases should be anticipated in the contract. For an unplanned purchase at that level, a purchase request will be required, detailing type of equipment, price, vendor, and a brief justification of why the purchase is to be made with a comparison to rental costs (if applicable).

3. **Budget narrative:** A budget justification should be included to further explain how the funds will be used. Please explain expenditures in detail. For example, costs under personnel should identify those individuals who will work on the project, their title and role in the project, and how the cost for their participation was calculated. Explanation of calculation of fringe benefits and travel costs should also be provided. Major equipment purchases, types of supplies, and specific contracts should be identified.

Optional supporting materials (do not count toward page limits):

1. Map(s) of the proposed project location and site in addition to the described location under B above.
2. Aerial or on-the-ground photos of the proposed project site. Though not required, these visual aids will help to support the proposal. Photos taken from the ground should show the current condition of the site. All photos should be identified with date of photo and location.
3. Letters of Support-Besides letters in support of the project from community leaders, stakeholders, or others, documentation may include support letter(s) from those owning land

upon which project will be undertaken, such as private landowners or appropriate public land owners agency resource personnel.

4. Vita of Principal Investigator or Principal Grant Contact. A two-page limit is recommended, to indicate skills and experiences demonstrating qualifications under Evaluation Criteria 3 above.

Appendix B

Recent habitat assessments along the south Atlantic Coast show that certain rivers, bays and tributaries support a high number of threatened and endangered aquatic species (see map below). In addition, assessments indicated that the habitats with submerged aquatic vegetation, tidal influences, loose fine bottoms and those in the lower gradients of large mainstream rivers support species of concern. Therefore projects that can restore or improve riparian buffers, estuaries, diadromous fish habitats or corridors, coastal bottoms and shorelines of certain rivers and tributaries along the South Atlantic coast will be given special consideration in the evaluation criteria. The identified rivers are:

Rivers flowing into Chesapeake: Potomac, Rappahannock, Piankatank, York, Elizabeth, James

Rivers flowing into Albermarle Sound: Roanoke, Chowan, Alligator

Rivers flowing into Pamlico Sound: Pamlico, Neuse

Rivers flowing directly into the Atlantic: Cape Fear, Pee Dee, Santee, Briar Creek, Ogechee, Altamaha, Satilla, Savannah, St. Marys.

Appendix C

Populations of certain diadromous and coastal species depend upon the habitats described in Appendix B or have historically been located in the rivers and bays named in Appendix A. Projects to improve or restore populations of these species directly or to restore habitats upon which they depend are encouraged. The species for special consideration are:

American shad, hickory shad, river herring, striped bass, oysters, Atlantic sturgeon, short and long-nose sturgeons, American eel

Appendix D

Mandated protection of habitats in National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS) and National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERR) offer added potential for sustainable outcomes. Therefore projects in or near these federal areas will be given special consideration in the evaluation criteria. The NMSs and NERRs along the southeast Atlantic coast are:

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (York River Basin)
Corolla National Estuarine Research Reserve
Rachel Carson National Estuarine Research Reserve
Currituck Banks National Estuarine Research Reserve
Masonboro Island National Estuarine Research Reserve
Zekes Island National Estuarine Research Reserve

North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve (Ashepoo, Combahee, Edisto rivers)
Guano Tolomato Matanzos National Estuarine Research Reserve

NOAA Restoration Center Project Monitoring

Sound Research for Successful Restoration

Why Monitor?

The Estuary Restoration Act (ERA) of 2000 directed NOAA to develop restoration monitoring protocols for all ERA-funded projects. NOAA's Restoration Center (RC) has embraced this mandate and will expand it to cover all NOAA-funded restoration projects. By requiring quantitative monitoring of hundreds of NOAA projects, and collectively analyzing results, we have the potential to improve restoration success nation-wide. Without this evaluation process we cannot learn from our successes or correct our failures.

Getting Started

To grow the Restoration Center's research efforts, quantitative monitoring is required on 25 percent of the 2005-funded projects, 50 percent of 2006 projects, and 75 percent of 2007 projects. NOAA's RC relies on local partners to monitor their restoration projects. Many of these groups are well versed in research techniques and have been monitoring for years – others are relatively new to the monitoring process. To assist both these groups, RC technical staff are available to work directly with partners to help them develop and implement sound monitoring plans.

Shared Knowledge, Shared Success

NOAA's Restoration Center strives to share research results with the larger restoration community through seminars, publications, our website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/>), and direct relationships with hundreds of grantees. Knowledge gained through the RC's applied research approach is based on hundreds of real world examples from around the country. Applying this knowledge leads to superior restoration techniques and healthier habitats and ecosystems. Together, we can use the results of these evaluation efforts to close the loop between today's monitoring information and tomorrow's restoration actions.

Monitoring Helps Us:

- *Determine* which restoration techniques produce the best results and why.
- *Maximize* restoration efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- *Define* which factors are the best indicators of success.
- *Suggest* appropriate timeframes for determining success.



Volunteers conduct a transect survey of a restored oyster reef to evaluate project success.



DEVELOPING A MONITORING PLAN

Four main steps are required to develop an effective monitoring plan – a plan that meets NOAA’s minimum monitoring requirements.

Step 1. *Develop at least one broad **goal** for the project.* This goal identifies the project’s general intent.

Step 2. *Develop at least two quantifiable **objective statements** related to the goal.* These statements specify what you hope to achieve during the project period. One objective should relate to structure, which is how the habitat looks. The other objective should relate to function, which is how the habitat works.

Step 3. *For each objective, identify a **parameter to monitor.*** These parameters are measured before and after the restoration to determine if the objectives were achieved.

Step 4. *Define a **target value** for each parameter.* These targets represent the expected outcomes at the end of the project period (short-term goals). Falling short of a target does not mean that a project has failed, rather, that we need to further examine this type of project to improve the applied techniques.

How to define a target? To determine a target, first identify the ideal condition for each selected parameter (the **reference value**). Reference values may be obtained either directly from a reference site or from literature. Using the reference value, the current understanding of the restoration site, and the effectiveness of other similar restorations, estimate a realistic improvement to be achieved at the end of the project period (the **target**). Habitats can take decades to become fully restored; therefore, it is not expected that the restoration project will achieve the reference value during the short project period.

What if the project “fails”?

The goal of monitoring and evaluation is to **learn** from project results. If a project misses its targets, it demonstrates a need to improve restoration techniques and helps prioritize research efforts.

Monitoring Plan Example

Goal

- Restore a degraded salt marsh to a healthy state.

Objectives

- Increase the abundance of native salt marsh vegetation (structure).
- Improve the marsh’s ability to provide habitat for desired fish species (function).

Parameters

- Percent cover of native species (structure).
- Population size of the desired fish species (function).

Targets

- Greater than 40% cover of native plant species (structure).
- 10% increase in the desired fish population utilizing the salt marsh (function).

Working Together

NOAA Restoration Center staff can provide assistance to individuals interested in developing a monitoring and evaluation plan for their restoration project. More information on regional staff can be found at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/contact.html.

