

# 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:** NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **FFO Number:** NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2010-2002089
- **Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.463, Habitat Conservation
- **Dates:** Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 PM EDT on September 30, 2009. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Please Note: It may take [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NOAA delivers funding and technical expertise to restore coastal and marine habitats. These habitats support valuable fisheries and protected resources, improve the quality of our water, provide recreational opportunities for the public's use and enjoyment and buffer our coastal communities from the impacts of storms and sea level rise. Partnerships funded through NOAA have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that provide social and economic benefits in addition to long-term ecological habitat improvements that benefit NOAA trust resources. Through this solicitation, NOAA seeks to openly compete funding available for multi-year national and regional habitat restoration Partnerships. Partnerships will result in implementation of a wide-range of individual habitat restoration projects, from locally-driven, grass-roots projects that emphasize stewardship and hands-on restoration, to mid-scale, watershed level projects that yield significant ecological and socio-economic benefits. NOAA envisions working jointly on such Partnerships through its Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) to identify, evaluate, fund, and administer projects that offer this range of ecological, socio-economic and stewardship benefits to coastal watershed communities. This document describes the types of habitat restoration Partnerships that NOAA envisions establishing, portrays the qualities that NOAA deems desirable in such Partnerships, and describes criteria under which applications will be evaluated for funding consideration. Partnership applications selected through this announcement will be implemented through a multi-year

cooperative agreement, and will ultimately involve joint selection of multiple community-based habitat restoration projects funded as sub-awards made through the Partner organization. Funding of approximately \$10 million is expected to be available to establish habitat restoration Partnerships in 2010, with annual funding anticipated to maintain them for up to 3 years duration. Requests for funding to establish Partnerships typically exceed the funds available for this purpose and the selection process will be highly competitive. Typical Partnership awards will range from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 per year. Funds will be administered by the NOAA Restoration Center within NOAA Fisheries' Office of Habitat Conservation. This is not a request for individual community-based habitat restoration project proposals.

## **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

### **A. Program Objective**

The principal objective of these NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants is to provide Federal financial and technical assistance to organizations that have the capacity and expertise to identify, evaluate, fund, and administer coastal and marine habitat projects across a range of scales that meet NOAA's mission to restore marine and coastal habitats.

### **B. Program Priorities**

NOAA seeks to support Partnerships that will implement on-the-ground restoration of marine and coastal habitat. NOAA will emphasize the selection of Partnership applications that, collectively, provide a range of restoration benefits from grass-roots, stewardship building projects to those that can implement mid-scale restoration projects that yield significant ecological benefits with emphasis on regionally or nationally significant species or ecosystems. The program priorities for this opportunity primarily support NOAA's "Ecosystems" mission goal of "Protect, Restore, and Manage Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through Ecosystem-Based Management."

#### **1. Desirable Partnership Qualities**

Selected Partnerships are expected to be well-rounded with respect to restoration benefits, sound science, accountability, cost effectiveness and other qualities. Partnership applications that incorporate a combination of the factors identified below will be high priority for funding consideration. NOAA is looking to support Partnerships that:

##### **Offer significant ecological and societal benefits -**

- Are focused on implementation of on-the-ground restoration of marine and coastal habitats to support valuable fisheries and protected species, and restore ecosystem processes that create and maintain habitats;

- Have the greatest potential to develop restoration that will be sustainable and provide lasting benefits of regional or national significance;
- Have the greatest potential to achieve ecological benefits, and in so doing, also advance socio-economic benefits such as jobs creation, waterfront revitalization, recreational opportunities, and similar effects attributable to restoration;
- Address underserved or underrepresented regions and communities;

Can demonstrate sound science support for restoration-

- Can describe the technical and scientific merit of the restoration techniques and strategies that will be implemented;
- Propose a plan for ensuring sufficient, cost-effective monitoring is associated with restoration as appropriate to evaluate the benefits of individual projects;
- Through monitoring of multiple restoration projects or collaboration with other organizations, can help to answer some of the questions surrounding restoration science;
- Are consistent with NOAA species recovery planning efforts if sub-award projects will be located in areas where recovery planning efforts for Endangered Species Act listed species are underway;
- Rely on regional restoration planning or other comprehensive planning framework for identifying priority projects so that restoration conducted under sub-awards is more strategic and less opportunistic;

Provide Accountability -

- Identify specific goals and outcomes, with appropriate ecological and economic performance metrics;
- Propose a competitive mechanism or similarly rigorous process to direct funding to highly qualified projects;
- Focus on developing sub-award projects that will have clearly defined goals and specific measurable objectives, that will involve monitoring during the project period of structural and functional parameters, and provide discrete and measureable outputs and long-term outcomes;
- Are able to fully provide information in a timely manner (for NOAA inclusion in the Restoration Center Database) on individual project accomplishments using the CRP's OMB approved progress report form and format to allow for robust project tracking and evaluation.

Are Cost-Effective -

- Request funds primarily to develop and implement physical, on-the-ground coastal habitat restoration (as opposed to funds for general program support, overhead and travel)
- Are able to provide cash match for project implementation funds at the national/regional level, before local contributions for specific projects are factored in. Providing cash match at the national/regional level will enable a greater number of community-based habitat restoration projects to be implemented.

- Limit their administrative costs so that the bulk of funding goes to support on-the-ground project implementation (this includes technical staff with restoration experience that are integral to the on-the-ground activities);

#### Have Demonstrated Organizational Capacity -

- Provide Partnership staff with administrative skills to manage contracts and financial aspects and technical background to develop restoration projects, monitoring plans, and assist with NEPA review with minimal need for guidance from NOAA;
- Utilize an established network to effectively advance the vision of habitat restoration and support NOAA's ecosystem mission goal;
- Plan to emulate the CRPs evaluation criteria when evaluating individual projects for funding consideration. These criteria are based on standard criteria common to all NOAA competitive grant programs. The five standard NOAA criteria are 1) importance and applicability of proposal; 2) technical and scientific merit; 3) overall qualifications of applicants; 4) project costs; and 5) outreach, education and community involvement.

### **2. National and Regional Restoration Partnership Goals**

The primary goals of NOAA in establishing these Partnerships are to meet program priorities (see Section I.B) stated above, through the Partner-led implementation of coastal and marine habitat restoration projects. Proposals for both national and regional Partnerships are encouraged. However, because regional Partnerships are more focused in geographic scope, these applicants will be expected to demonstrate coordinated efforts among multiple groups such as universities, science centers, state and municipal agencies, watershed groups, local schools, civic groups and non-governmental organizations. Applications for regional Partnerships should involve a coalition that has or will develop joint goals and objectives to accomplish habitat restoration, and whose activities are expected to take place across a substantial and defined geographic region, such as the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the Klamath watershed or the states that border the Gulf of Mexico, for example, and/or that will work within a prioritized framework to focus on ecologically and regionally significant ecosystems to implement projects of greatest benefit in a comprehensive, strategic fashion.

Proposals for Partnerships that are narrowly focused or that will benefit limited resources or few user groups, that lack a competitive or comprehensive restoration planning element for identifying and selecting projects, or that request funding solely to support or increase general organizational activities, are discouraged. Similarly, applications for Partnerships that would have limited NOAA involvement, or that seek to primarily support administration, salaries, overhead and non-essential travel are not considered ideal for the Partnership development goals of the NOAA Restoration Center, and will be less likely to be selected for restoration Partnership agreements with NOAA.

### **3. Restoration Expectations through the Sub-award Process**

Projects funded under a Partnership will be expected to have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that provide educational and social benefits for communities in addition to long-term ecological habitat improvements for NOAA trust resources. NOAA recognizes that accomplishing restoration is a multi-faceted effort involving project design, engineering services, permitting, construction, oversight and monitoring. Therefore, to allow maximum flexibility under a Partnership, applicants should avoid unduly restricting proposed activities to specific restoration phases or categories of cost.

Restoration is defined here as activities that contribute to the return of degraded or altered marine, estuarine, coastal and freshwater diadromous fish habitats to a close approximation of their condition prior to disturbance. The following are exemplary of the types of coastal and marine habitats and projects that NOAA would prioritize for restoration under National and Regional Partnership sub awards:

- Projects that seek to restore coastal and marine habitat to recover threatened or endangered species or benefit species of concern;
- Diadromous fish habitat, particularly projects that remove in-stream migration barriers or create/restore habitats limiting productivity;
- Shellfish habitat restoration/creation, for the broad ecological benefits and ecosystem services it provides;
- Coral reefs, through projects that address land-based sources of pollution, recovery from disturbance or disease, or that promote coral recruitment and/or recovery;
- Coastal wetlands, through shoreline restoration or hydrological reconnection;
- Projects that support conservation corps type activities to provide employment, education and training through restoration of coastal and marine habitat;
- Projects that aim to restore priority habitats through culturally or locally sensitive means to maximize community involvement and stewardship development;
- Habitat restoration projects designed to provide protection for communities and infrastructure to improve coastal resiliency to storms and flooding;
- Projects that improve the potential for coastal habitat to respond to climate change through restoration or protection of transition zones that provide room for habitat migration with sea level rise; and
- Projects that, through on-the-ground restoration, support any additional priorities identified by NOAA's Administrator (e.g. the training, development and employment of certain sectors, such as commercial fishers, to conduct restoration for its habitat conservation value as a job shift).

A Partnership application may focus on the restoration of specific habitats or the use of certain restoration techniques, or may focus work within certain geographic locations, especially in cases where regional planning efforts have identified priorities consistent with NOAA's.

Partnership proposals should demonstrate that sub-award restoration projects will incorporate science-based monitoring of restoration projects. On-the-ground habitat restoration

sub award projects that will result in structural or functional habitat changes will be expected to have clearly identified goals (broad in scope) and specific, measurable objectives to ensure a basic assessment of project success. Successful applicants will also be asked to track the economic impacts of sub award projects and work with NOAA to develop appropriate performance measures to do so.

Safety is expected to be a critical consideration for Partners implementing restoration projects through sub awards. If a sub award project is selected for funding, recipients will be expected to have a written safety plan for all project-related activities, including management of volunteers if applicable. The plan should consider safety at the restoration sites during and after project construction, and take into account potential safety concerns with regard to the current and future use of the restored sites.

### **C. Program Authority**

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the following statutes to provide grants and cooperative agreements for habitat restoration:

- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970;
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a;

## **II. Award Information**

### **A. Funding Availability**

NOAA anticipates that approximately \$10 million may be available in FY2010 to establish national and regional Partnerships that will implement coastal and marine habitat restoration through sub awards. Funding is expected to be provided on an annual basis to maintain Partnerships for up to 3 years duration, and is dependent upon the level of funding made available by Congress. NOAA anticipates that typical awards for the initial year of restoration Partnerships will range from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. NOAA will not accept proposals with a first year budget under \$250,000 or over \$5,000,000 under this solicitation. Applicants can request increases to continue scaling up Partnership activities in subsequent budget periods to a limit of \$7,500,000 in FY 2011, and to \$10,000,000 in FY 2012. Annual funding levels and any increases over FY 2010 levels for successful applicants will be at the discretion of the NOAA Restoration Center Chief (Chief). The Chief will make annual funding determinations for each Partner, in consultation with NOAA technical staff, based on Partnership performance, capacity of the Partner organization to generate quality projects with respect to funding potentially available to them under an award, the amount of prior year funding remaining to be expended, regional and Administration priorities, and other factors deemed important to the annual allocation process. For reference, in FY 2007 the NOAA Restoration Center established and funded 17 multi-year Partnerships for a total of \$8.8 million in their first year, \$7.1 million in FY 2008, and \$9.8 million in FY 2009.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all Partnership applications. 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 establishing national and regional habitat restoration Partnerships by the applicants, the merit and ranking of the applications, and the amount of funds made available by Congress.

The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives, and multi-year funding requests are expected to be funded incrementally on an annual basis. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any parts of any available funds.

## **B. Award Period**

Applications for national and regional Partnerships should cover a project period of 3 years. The earliest start date for Partnership awards is anticipated to be June 1, 2010; applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed Partnership activities. Once Partnership funds are awarded in FY2010, Partners will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years. The intention of NOAA is to attract and maintain restoration Partnerships that will be ongoing and long-lasting; Partnerships established in 2010 are expected to continue through the duration of the award period. If an application is recommended and approved for funding under a Partnership, NOAA has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with this Partnership in subsequent years. A recommendation to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) to continue an award for a Partnership in subsequent years or to extend the period of performance, and to determine annual Partnership funding levels, is at the discretion of the Chief. Permission to extend the period of performance beyond that stated in award documentation is at the discretion of NOAA and should be requested in writing at least 60 days in advance of an award's expiration date.

## **C. Type of Funding Instrument**

Selected applications will primarily be funded through a cooperative agreement since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in many aspects of the Partnership. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to: activities such as hands-on technical assistance; joint selection of sound restoration projects with clear benefits to NOAA trust resources; support in development of appropriate monitoring protocols to ensure project performance can be evaluated; tracking the progression of the restoration through site visits and progress report evaluation; and involvement in public meetings and events to highlight restoration activities.

## **III. Eligibility Information**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. Territories, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. 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, municipal and county governments, conservation 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. NOAA encourages applications involving any of the above institutions.

## **B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements**

The overall focus of the CRP is to implement coastal and marine habitat restoration that leverage funds and other contributions from the public and private sector to accomplish broad yet locally important habitat benefits. To this end, applicants seeking national and regional Partnerships with NOAA are encouraged to demonstrate a 1:1 non-Federal match overall for federal funds requested. Additionally, those Partnerships that propose to provide cash match toward project implementation funds at the national/regional level (before local, project-specific contributions are included) will be likely to score higher in the evaluation of project costs. While this is not a requirement, NOAA strongly advises applicants to leverage as much investment as possible. Applicants with less than 1:1 match and those that do not have cash match for project implementation funds at the national/regional level will not be disqualified, however applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in evaluation criteria #4. "Project Costs" (Section V.A.4.). Similarly, proposals that limit administrative costs to 20% at the national or regional level also will be likely to score higher on this criterion.

The match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services. Federal funds may not be considered matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are permitted to combine non-federal contributions from additional Partners in order to meet the 1:1 match expected to establish a Partnership, as long as the matching funds are not already being used to match other funding sources and are available within the project period stated in the application. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV. E. "Funding Restrictions."

Applicants whose proposals are selected for habitat restoration Partnership funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants must be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to individual habitat restoration projects.



### **C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility**

This solicitation is intended to ultimately result in on-the-ground habitat restoration projects administered by Partners that will have significant and tangible ecological impacts. NOAA recognizes that water quality issues can impact habitat restoration efforts. However, Partnerships to support projects dealing only with water quality improvement measures are not eligible. Partnership applications that propose the following would be ineligible: wastewater treatment plant upgrades, combined sewer outfalls, and non-point source pollution projects such as replacement of failing septic systems, implementation of farm waste management plans, and storm water management projects. Applicants should also note that the following activities will not be considered under Partnerships: (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state or Federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under Federal, state or local law; (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation; and (4) activities that don't have a central focus on restoration for its habitat conservation value.

## **IV. Application and Submission Information**

### **A. Application Packages**

Complete application packages, including required Federal forms and instructions, and Supplemental Guidance for Prospective Applicants can be found on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

If a prospective applicant does not have internet access, please contact [Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov](mailto:Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov) or by phone at 301-713-0174 x158.

### **B. Content and Form of Application Submission**

Applicants should apply through the Grants.gov website ([www.grants.gov](http://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:
  - Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)
  - Budget Information for Non-construction Programs: SF-424A (three in total, one for each 12-month funding period of the three-year award)
  - Assurances for Non-construction Programs: SF-424B
  - Certification Regarding Lobbying: CD-511
  - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)

- Partnership summary (described below, 2 pages);
- Partnership narrative (described below, 15 pages);
- A detailed, narrative budget justification (described below, 4 pages);
- Brief curriculum vitae or resume of primary Partnership personnel (maximum of 1 page per person); and
- Any other relevant supporting material, such as letters of support, restoration planning or prioritization documents, etc.

To summarize, applications submitted through the Grants.gov website should include a maximum of three (3) files (PDF files only) in addition to the Federal application forms:

- 1) Partnership summary and narrative;
- 2) Budget justification; and
- 3) Supplemental Information - all other attachments combined into one, indexed file, such as maps, resumes, and support letters, not to exceed 20 pages. Information about converting documents to PDF files is available on the grants.gov website under “Download Software” under “Applicant Resources.”

Applications that exceed the page limits stated above may not be sent forward for review. Applicants that do not comply with the page limit guidance do so at their own risk.

### **1. Partnership Summary (2 pages):**

- **Applicant Organization**
- **Partnership Title**
- **Geographic Scope** – state whether the Partnership is national or regional, and what states and/or watersheds it will cover
- **Planning Framework** - briefly describe any planning or prioritization framework the Partnership may use to determine funding priorities
- **Project Identification** - briefly describe the process that will be used to identify high quality projects, including a proposed timeline for solicitation, project sub-award, and initiation of on-the-ground implementation.
- **Coastal and marine habitats to benefit from the Partnership** - briefly describe the Partnership resource focus, any restrictions expected such as only certain habitat types, specific applicant/user groups, specific resource/habitat targets, etc.
- **Partnership Outputs/Outcomes** – briefly describe the anticipated outputs and outcomes the Partnership may be expected to produce (acres restored or stream miles to be made accessible to diadromous fish, ecological and socioeconomic outcomes, etc).
- **Federal Funds Requested & Non-Federal Match Anticipated**
- **Letters of Support** - list those included with the application, particularly those from members of Congress

### **2. Partnership Narrative (15 pages):**

The **partnership narrative** should closely follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. Evaluation Criteria) for the application to receive a consistent review, and should include:

- A narrative description no more than 15 pages long (in 12-point font with 1” margins) that clearly describes how the Partnership would work to carry out restoration activities that will yield ecological, social and economic benefits;
- Specific problems the Partnership plans to address and the geographic area over which the Partnership will operate;
- A description of short- and long-term objectives and goals, methods for identifying potential projects, a process for collaborating with NOAA staff to reach funding decisions, the criteria that will be used for selecting restoration proposals and determining the success of projects implemented under the Partnership, and the relevance and significance of the proposed Partnership to enhancing habitat to benefit living marine resources;
- A discussion on how Partners plan to work with sub awardees to develop appropriate evaluation parameters for both the socioeconomic and ecological aspects of sub award projects, and work with NOAA during project selection and negotiation to ensure that the proposed parameters are adequate and meaningful to ensure a basic level of project success;
- A discussion of how Partners will ensure that all necessary environmental permits and consultations will be secured prior to the use of federal funds for implementing individual projects that may require permits and consultations, and how the necessary information would be provided to NOAA staff to enable them to make a NEPA determination for all projects, particularly those projects that fall outside programmatic NEPA documents;
- The anticipated Partnership duration, the amount and timing of funds requested, potential sources of national/regional and local match, including cash match available at the national/regional level for supporting project sub-awards, and any restrictions the Partner may impose on the further use of Federal funds. For example, if the Partner anticipates limiting competition, restricting the level of funding per project, designating funding for specific project phases, cost categories or to specific recipients, restricting habitat types, organization types or geographic locations from consideration, these limitations or restrictions should be clearly detailed in the narrative. It is NOAA’s intention to maintain maximum competition and flexibility in the use of Federal restoration funds.
- Information on how the selection of projects under the Partnership with NOAA will promote significant community involvement in fisheries habitat restoration and stewardship, or how the Partnership will advance and leverage NOAA’s capacity to collaborate on mid-scale, watershed level projects;
- A description of how the Partnership will be advanced or promoted through outreach;
- A description of the organizational structure of the applicant, proposed Partnership staff, and their qualifications. Partners in addition to the applicant should be identified, their intent to participate documented, and their expected contributions and involvement outlined. This is particularly important for those applying to establish regional Partnerships.

- All supplementary materials including letters of support should be combined and submitted as one single file separate from the narrative, limited to 20 pages. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA as to the relative merits of the Partnership described in the application.

### **3. Budget Justification (4 pages):**

The narrative budget justification 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 (if applicable) shares. The object classes should match those found on the SF-424A. Applicants are encouraged to include a budget table to further clarify the cost breakdown. 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.

Funding for salaries must also 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. Requests for salaries are expected to support Partnership staff with the proper qualifications and relevant skill sets to support the technical aspects of restoration such that NOAA staff augment and assist with project implementation rather than serve as the primary. The NOAA Restoration Center and Grants Management Division staff will review budget information for recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic. The narrative budget justification should be sufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of the cost breakdown and calculations used to come up with the line item totals in each object class of the 424A budget form.

### **C. Submission Dates and Times**

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 PM EDT on September 30, 2009. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

### **D. Intergovernmental Review**

Applications submitted by state and local governments 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**

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. Incurring pre-award costs before the NOAA Grants Management Division provides an award document is at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards is expected to be June 1, 2010.

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, and 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 Federal 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 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 negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a Federal agency, then they may direct cost all charges, or submit a request to establish a rate. 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**

Applicants should submit applications electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

Do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Applicants should allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration; registration is required only once. After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by two automated receipts of the date and time of submission (the first confirms receipt; the second confirms that there are no errors with an application submission and that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If both notifications are not received, an applicant needs to follow up with both the Grants.gov helpdesk and the NOAA Restoration Center to confirm receipt of submission. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Applicants should allow themselves sufficient time to submit their application to Grants.gov in advance of the deadline to ensure applications have been submitted successfully, as the deadline for submission cannot be extended. NOAA may request that you

provide original signatures on forms at a later date.

If an applicant does not have internet access, a hard copy application must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by September 30, 2009 and sent to: NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14853, Silver Spring, MD 20910. **ATTN: Restoration Partnership Applications.** 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 7 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound in any manner. Applicants submitting paper applications must also include a full copy of the application as a single PDF file, including Federal forms, on a compact disc (CD).

## **V. Application Review Information**

### **A. Evaluation Criteria**

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive.

#### **1. Importance and Applicability (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 NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- The potential of a proposed Partnership to implement significant coastal and marine habitat restoration projects that offer long-term ecological habitat improvements, and improve the short- and long-term economic condition of an area (e.g., increased fisheries benefits, increased tourism and recreation, etc.) based on the anticipated outcomes of sub awarded projects. This includes the extent to which the Partnership will deliver tangible, specific results that are measurable and relevant to NOAA performance measures such as acres restored, stream miles opened for fish passage, and similar outputs that directly result from on-the-ground restoration. (10 points)
- The potential of the Partnership to provide sustainable, long-lasting benefits of regional or national significance for coastal and marine habitats, including realistic goals for monitoring and maintenance to ensure longevity of restoration actions. (5 points)
- The extent to which Partnerships are national or regional in geographic scope; involve

multiple partner groups within or outside the applicant's organization; operate within multiple states or across jurisdictional boundaries; focus on ecologically and regionally significant ecosystems; and meet program priorities listed in section I.B. (10 points)

## **2. Technical/Scientific Merit (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 NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants competition, applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant has described a realistic and thorough Partnership implementation plan, including: (5 points each):

- the adequacy of proposed strategies for coordination with NOAA in all phases of project selection, design, implementation and monitoring, including a plan for the timely submission of project specific progress reports and outputs;
- the degree to which the selection process is competitive or uses a similarly rigorous process to ensure that sub-awards will be identified through joint technical evaluations consistent with NOAA priorities and NOAA's standard evaluation criteria for competitions;
- how the Partnership will measure success and ensure that sub awardees develop appropriate evaluation parameters for the ecological aspects of their projects, and work with NOAA during project selection and negotiation to ensure that the proposed parameters are adequate and meaningful;
- the likelihood that restoration activities supported through the Partnership will be consistent with regional/community/stakeholder planning processes, tie into restoration plans, or utilize some other planning framework to ensure prioritization of projects;
- whether there is an adequate strategy to ensure that projects implemented through sub-awards will meet all Federal, state and local environmental laws and obtain applicable permits and consultations (see NEPA details, VI. B.2)

## **3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (20 points)**

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to support the proposed Partnership. For the NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- The technical capacity/knowledge of the applicant and associated personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed Partnership, as indicated by the qualifications, past

experience, or potential of the Partners to effectively identify, develop, select, manage and oversee all technical phases of projects that restore marine and coastal habitats. This includes having staff with the requisite technical credentials to coordinate and manage restoration activities, with little or no guidance from NOAA, such as development of project work plans, monitoring plans, performance measures, and appropriate target setting to demonstrate success of individual projects funded through sub-awards; (10 points)

- The administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant, or that will be secured to support and successfully manage Partnership grant management responsibilities, and the applicant's track record with NOAA or other Federal agencies or partners on project accountability and tracking that demonstrates a Partner's capability to effectively and efficiently managing a significant number of projects simultaneously including the financial and administrative management of sub-awards. (10 points)

#### **4. Project Costs (15 points)**

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants competition, applications will be evaluated on the following (5 points each):

- Whether the proposed budget is realistic, commensurate with the Partnership's needs 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 , and by annual budget period. 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. In order to encourage on-the-ground restoration, if funding for salaries is requested, it should be used to support staff with the requisite skill sets to directly support the accomplishment of the restoration work that will take place under the Partnership. Budget narratives should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task for all staff involved in the proposed Partnership.
- Whether the applicant demonstrates that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. Reviewers will score this criterion based on the percentage of funds that will be dedicated to all phases of restoration partnership implementation including physical, on-the-ground restoration compared to the percentage that is for administration, overhead and non-essential travel to be used by the Partner. Proposals that limit administrative costs to 20% at the national or regional level will be likely to score higher for this criterion.
- To what extent an applicant can leverage the Federal investment through matching contributions and/or Partnerships, including the amount of cash match available on the national/regional level specifically to support project implementation. NOAA desires cost sharing to leverage funding and to further encourage partnerships among government,



industry, and academia.

### **5. Outreach and Education (15 points)**

NOAA assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants competition, applications will be evaluated on the following (5 points each):

- The potential of the Partnership to help to meet NOAA's ecosystem based management goals and mission, leverage NOAA's capacity to implement projects and foster long-term stewardship for living marine resources, and generate or increase a community conservation ethic through actions that involve community volunteers and broaden their participation in habitat restoration projects;
- The extent to which a public education and outreach component will be part of the partnership goals to disseminate information on habitat restoration and protection that will increase awareness and transfer knowledge on lesson learned, and to publicly advance the Partnership and its goals and objectives;
- The level of support for the Partnership as demonstrated by other contributing partners, letters of support from these partners, and/or from local entities, state, local or federal governments and/or members of Congress.

Community involvement may include: (a) hands-on training and restoration activities undertaken by volunteers; (b) sponsorship from local entities, either through in-kind goods and services (earth moving, technical expertise, conservation easements) or cash contributions; (c) public education and outreach associated with restoration activities (media interaction, public meetings, community workshops, etc.); (d) support from state and local governments; and (e) ability to achieve long-term stewardship for restored resources and to generate a community conservation ethic.

### **B. Review and Selection Process**

Applications will undergo an initial administrative review to determine if they are eligible and complete. Eligible applications will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process to determine how well they meet the stated aims of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA.

Eligible applications for national and regional habitat restoration Partnerships will be evaluated by at least three individual technical reviewers according to the criteria and weights described in this solicitation. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score. No consensus advice will be provided by these reviewers. Applications will likely be subject to a subsequent panel review. If a panel review is not

convened, the application ranking, technical review comments and scores will be provided to the Selecting Official (SO). If a panel is convened, the FFO, application ranking, top ranked applications, and technical review comments and scores will be provided to a panel whose members will not have participated as technical reviewers. The panel will be comprised of Federal employees, and may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference or other electronic means to discuss applications and consider technical reviewer comments. Prior to the panel discussion, each member of the panel will independently assign a numerical rating of either 0, 2 or 4 for each application, based on the degree to which each application addresses the evaluation criteria and program priorities, according to the following scale:

- 0 – Poor to Fair – not recommended for funding
- 2 – Good – recommended for funding with modification once higher priorities are met
- 4 – Excellent - recommended for funding and inclusion in top tier for definite consideration with available funds

Panel member scores will be averaged and an interim ranking will result which will be presented to the panel for discussion, with the goal of reaching consensus on the applications to be recommended for funding. After discussing the applications, panelists will again assign a numerical rating of 0, 2 or 4 (as described above) for each application, scores will be averaged, and a final project ranking developed. The final ranking from the panel will be presented to the SO and should be the primary consideration by the SO in deciding which applications will be recommended to the NOAA Grants Officer.

### **C. Selection Factors**

The SO anticipates recommending applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection 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 set out in section I.A. and I.B.;
- (5) An 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 the NOAA Grants Officer.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scored applications. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file

until the selection process has been validated and approved by the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Law Division and then destroyed.

#### **D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

Successful applicants generally will be identified by May 1, 2010. The earliest anticipated start date for projects will be June 1, 2010, dependent on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis, and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities.

### **VI. Award Administration Information**

#### **A. Award Notices**

Successful applicants may be asked to modify work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the Partnership duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each Partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA staff that will administer these restoration Partnership grants. Applicants that initiate Partnership activities in expectation of Federal funding do so at their own risk, and are advised not to begin until a notice of award document is received electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management system.

#### **B. Administrative and National Policy 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 in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management system, and can be found at: [http://oamweb.osec.doc.gov/gmd\\_updated-doc.html](http://oamweb.osec.doc.gov/gmd_updated-doc.html).

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Office in the Grants Online award package 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 requirements for submitting progress reports consistent with the NOAA Restoration Center data form and narrative format approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472.

##### **2. NEPA Requirements**

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts for individual habitat restoration projects as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Detailed

information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) implementation regulations. 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, safety concerns, 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).

It is the Partners' responsibility to ensure that subawardees obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Sub award projects should be designed so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. Partners will be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposed sub award projects. The failure to agree to do so shall be grounds for not awarding a grant.

In most cases, applicants will not have identified specific projects to be funded as sub-awards under the proposed Partnership. Therefore, under each Partnership awarded, NOAA staff will review individual project proposals considered for sub-award funding for National Environmental Policy Act compliance on a project by project basis. Restoration activities that are not covered by the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be reviewed under NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6, Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NAO 216-6 is located at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~nao/216-6.html>.

Successful Partnerships will need to ensure that project proposals considered for sub-award funding provide enough detail for NOAA to make a NEPA determination, and that funds will not be released until NOAA completes necessary NEPA documentation. Successful applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible on projects considered for sub-awards to obtain guidance with respect to the level and scope of information needed by NOAA to comply with NEPA. A phased approach may be recommended and funds withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental law compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a Partnership project may have on the environment.

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, or whose activities are not covered under another agency's NEPA compliance procedures that can be analyzed and adopted by NOAA, will be informed after the technical 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.

### **C. Reporting**

Successful applicants will be required to submit progress reports semi-annually that cover 6-month periods as indicated in the award documentation provided by GMD. Progress reports are due directly to the NOAA Restoration Center 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 should detail Partnership activities that have occurred at the national or regional level during the reporting period that correspond with goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information, as described below.

Progress reports for individual projects sub-awarded under each approved Partnership must be submitted using a specific format for narrative information and a form for project specific details. This format and form can be found on the NOAA Restoration Center webpage at: [http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects\\_programs/crp/partners\\_funding/project\\_reports.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/project_reports.html). 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 is in review with OMB for continued use. 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.

### **D. Cost Principles**

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out a Partnership. 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 sub-awards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those Federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

## **VII. Agency Contacts**

For further information contact Robin Bruckner or Melanie Gange at (301)713-0174, or by e-mail at [Robin.Bruckner@noaa.gov](mailto:Robin.Bruckner@noaa.gov) or [Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov](mailto:Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov). Prospective applicants are invited to contact NOAA staff before submitting an application to discuss their partnership ideas. Additional information on habitat restoration can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

## **VIII. Other Information**

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for 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 Partnership 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. Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) are not applicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866 (Regulatory Impact Review).

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.

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