

ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESEARCH-SET ASIDE TO SUPPORT RESEARCH IN SEA SCALLOP FISHERIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name(s):** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Request for Research Proposals supported under a Research Set-Aside Program
- **Announcement Type:** Notice of Request for Submission of Research Proposals to conduct Sea Scallop Research Projects during the Fishing Year 2004 (March 1, 2004 - February 28, 2005)
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2004 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside Program
- **Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.454, Unallied Management Projects
- **Dates:** Full proposals must be received by 5 p.m., eastern standard time, on May 17, 2004.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NMFS announces that for fishing year 2004 the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) may set aside portions of the total allowable catch (TAC) and Days-at-Sea (DAS) allowance in the sea scallop fishery to be used for research endeavors under a research set-aside (RSA) program. The RSA program provides a mechanism to fund research and compensate vessel owners through the sale of fish harvested under the research quota. Vessels participating in an approved research project may be authorized by the Northeast Regional Administrator, NMFS (Regional Administrator), to harvest and to land species in excess of any imposed trip limit or during fishery closures. Landings from such trips would be sold to generate funds that would help defray the costs associated with research projects. No Federal funds would be provided for research under this notification. NMFS and the Council will give priority to funding research proposals in the following areas: (1) groundfish bycatch reduction; (2) reduction of fishing impact on habitat; (3) sea turtle interactions; (4) sea scallop abundance estimates; (5) distribution, size composition, and density of scallops; and (6) other research relevant to the sea scallop fishery as further discussed in the full funding opportunity announcement.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Research Set-aside (RSA) Program provides a mechanism to fund research and compensate vessels through the sale of fish harvested under a research quota. NOAA, in cooperation with the New England Fishery Management Council (Council), is soliciting proposals for sea scallop research to be conducted under RSA programs for fishing year 2004 (March 1, 2004-February 28, 2005). Such research would utilize two RSAs proposed by Amendment 10: (1) a DAS set-aside for use in areas open to all fishery participants, and (2) a TAC set-aside for use in the Hudson Canyon Area. In addition, Amendment 10 proposes to allow such research activities in the Groundfish Closed Areas, as developed by the Council in Framework Adjustment 16 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Framework Adjustment 39 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP (Joint Framework). It is necessary to request research proposals at this time even though neither Amendment 10 nor the Joint Framework are approved yet. If Amendment 10 is disapproved none of these set-asides will be available. If the Joint Framework is disapproved, set-asides will not be available for projects in the Groundfish Closed Areas.

On September 17, 2003, the Council approved Amendment 10 and voted to submit the action to the Secretary of Commerce for approval. The notice of availability for Amendment 10 was published at 69 FR 2561 on January 16, 2004, and public comment regarding its approvability under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act ended March 15, 2004. The proposed rule for Amendment 10 was published at 69 FR 8915 on February 26, 2004, and public comment regarding the implementing regulations ended March 29, 2004. The final rule for Amendment 10 including the approved numbers will be published in the Federal Register. NOAA will also update the funding opportunity announcement to include the final numbers for the 2004 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside Program which can be accessed via NOAA's web site at: <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/~amd/SOLINDEX.HTML> .

Amendment 10 would continue a Scallop Area Access Program for the Hudson Canyon and includes provisions to allow access to portions of the Groundfish Closed Areas (subject to NMFS' approval of the Joint Framework to establish TACs and measures to minimize groundfish bycatch). Under the proposed area access program, limited access sea scallop vessels would be allowed to land scallops in excess of the proposed possession limit, or to take additional trips above those proposed in the program, and use the proceeds of the excess catch or additional trips to offset the costs of the research proposals submitted in response to this notice. The proposed access areas would remain open until one of four events triggered a closure: (a) The fishing year ends (February 28, 2005); (b) finfish catches exceed TACs established by the Joint Framework; (c) the vessels use all of the trips authorized under the access program; or (d), the fishing season, as established by the Joint Framework, ends.

In addition, Amendment 10 would expand the RSA program to all areas where scallop fishing occurs, including regular open fishing areas. Two percent of the total allowable DAS allocations would be set-aside for scallop related research activities, before determining annual fishing allocations for limited access scallop vessels. This pool of DAS would become available for authorized research projects, under which vessels may participate in scallop research programs and/or conduct trips to compensate for research expenses incurred. The vessel may be authorized to conduct additional trips of a specified duration that would not be counted against the vessel's annual DAS allocation, or DAS may be added to a vessel's annual DAS allocation as compensation. Research applicants must specify which method would apply, should their proposal be funded.

Vessels participating in an approved project, and fishing in the Sea Scallop Access Areas, would be authorized by the Regional Administrator to do one or more of the following: Take additional trips into the areas and/or to land scallops in excess of the proposed 18,000-lb (8,164.7-kg) possession limit; make a trip of specified duration without counting against the vessel's 2004 DAS allocation; or be allocated additional DAS which would be added to the vessel's 2004 DAS allocation.

In order to set a value on the RSAs, the value of scallops must be estimated. However, scallop prices are uncertain and depend, in part, on whether or not scallop fishing will be authorized in the Groundfish Closed Areas in 2004 through the Joint Framework. This Request for Proposals (RFP) uses the median value of the range of prices estimated in Amendment 10, both with and without access to the Groundfish Closed Areas. With access to the Groundfish Closed Areas, Amendment 10 projects the value of scallops to be approximately \$3.84 per pound in 2004 due to increased supply of scallops to the market. Without access to Groundfish Closed Areas, Amendment 10 projects the value of scallops to be approximately \$4.27 per pound in 2004 due to decreased supply of scallops to the market. Therefore, for the purposes of this solicitation, the best estimate of the value of scallops in 2004 is the median of those values, \$4.06 per pound. By selecting the median price, and requiring researchers to use this price in requesting TAC and DAS, all proposals will relate scallop catch to research costs similarly. In addition, catch rates are assumed to be 1,550 lb (704 kg) per DAS, based on the Amendment 10 analysis of catch rates without access to Groundfish Closed Areas.

Research proposals are, therefore, sought to utilize the two set-asides proposed in Amendment 10: (1) the research TAC set-aside for the Hudson Canyon area of 375,800 lb (170.5 mt), with a value of \$1,525,748.00, presuming that scallops are valued at \$4.06 per pound; and (2) the DAS set-aside for the open fishing areas of 233 DAS with an average catch rate of 1,550 lb/DAS. Given the estimated value of \$4.06 per lb, the open area set-aside would be valued at approximately \$1,466,269.00. Thus, if Amendment 10 is approved, the total value of the set-asides that would be available for scallop-related research would be \$2,992,017.00 (51 percent from Hudson Canyon Area access, and 49 percent from the open area DAS set-aside). Researchers must specify the amount of set-aside (TAC or DAS, as appropriate) sought from each area.

There may be additional research set-aside available from the Groundfish Closed Areas, if the Joint Framework is approved and implemented. Researchers are urged to request set-aside from these areas as well. The Joint Framework, if approved and implemented, would specify that the total TAC set-aside for scallop research from the Groundfish Closed Areas access program in the 2004 fishing year would be 322,272 lb (146.2 mt), an amount of scallops that would have an approximate value of \$1,308,424.00. The Joint Framework, if approved and implemented, would specify that this set-aside would be applicable to research in Closed Area II (167,904 lb (76.16 mt) worth approximately \$681,690) and the Nantucket Lightship Closed Area (154,368 lb (70 mt) worth approximately \$626,734). Researchers are instructed to clearly indicate in their proposals whether or not their research would be applicable to more than one area.

B. Program Priorities

Projects funded under the proposed sea scallop RSA program should enhance understanding of the scallop resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. Subject to experimental fishing permit requirements specified at 50 CFR 600.745, sea scallop research may be conducted in or outside of the Hudson Canyon, Closed Area I, Closed Area II, and the Nantucket Lightship Area, within or outside of the Sea Scallop Area Access Program time frames, and on board fishing or other type of vessels. Sea scallop research conducted with these set-asides also may or may not involve the harvest of scallops.

Sea scallop research projects that identify and evaluate gear to reduce groundfish bycatch and habitat impacts, that identify sources of sea turtle interactions and/or identify ways to minimize interactions with sea turtles, and that provide improved information concerning scallop abundance estimates are considered high priority by the Council. Sea scallop research that involves evaluating the distribution, size composition, and density of scallops also will be considered the highest priority. This includes the cooperative industry resource survey proposed in Amendment 10. Research needs (not listed in order of priority) that also will be considered by the Council and NOAA follow:

1. Evaluation of ways to control predation on scallops; research to actively manage spat collection and seeding of sea scallops;
2. Social and economic impacts and consequences of closing areas to enhance productivity and improve yield of sea scallops and other species;
3. High resolution surveys that include distribution, biomass of exploitable size scallops, recruitment, mortality and growth rate information;
4. Estimation of factors affecting fishing power for each limited access vessel;
5. Demonstration projects to identify ways to reduce discard mortality or increase efficiency without increasing fishing power (e.g., decreasing processing time with sorters) and improve safety;

6. Research to identify scallop habitat and ecological relationships that affect reproduction, recruitment mortality and growth, including those enhanced/impeded by area closures;
7. Quantification of fishing costs related to fishing for sea scallops in specific areas (e.g., fishing gear modification, steaming time, and opportunity cost);
8. Video and/or photo transects of the bottom within scallop access areas (Hudson Canyon Area, Nantucket Lightship Area, Closed Area I, Closed Area II) and within closed scallop areas (Elephant Trunk Area) and in comparable fished areas that are both subject and not subject to scallop fishing, before and after scallop fishing commences;
9. Intensive sampling on both sides of access boundaries (e.g. Hudson Canyon Area, Nantucket Lightship Area, Closed Area I, Closed Area II) this year and in subsequent years to gauge the short- and long-term effects of fishing on the resource;
10. Development of high resolution sediment mapping of scallop fishing areas in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and Mid-Atlantic regions, using Canadian sea scallop industry mapping effort as an example process;
11. Identification of nursery and over-wintering habitats for species that are vulnerable to habitat alteration by scallop fishing;
12. Other research that relates to habitats affected by scallop fishing, including but not limited to long-term or chronic effects of scallop fishing on marine resource productivity, other ecosystem effects, habitat recovery potential, fine-scale fishing effort in relation to fine-scale habitat distribution;
13. Evaluation and analysis of the co-distribution of sea turtles and scallop effort to identify time/area 'hot spots';
14. Identification of the mechanisms that cause scallop fishing gear to threaten sea turtles during all phases of operation (towing on the bottom, retrieving gear to the surface, and towing at the surface);
15. Development of scallop dredge and trawl operations that would reduce or eliminate the threat of sea turtle capture;

16. Development of appropriate escape gear, gear modifications, or fishing techniques that may be used to reduce or eliminate the threat of sea turtle captures, without unacceptable reduction in scallop retention;

17. Comparison and analysis of turtle capture rates of similar gear in other fisheries such as the Mid-Atlantic summer flounder trawl fishery;

18. Research on scallop biology and scallop fishery social science, including identification of potential management measures to improve benefits to the fishery and to the nation;

19. Research on habitat effects from scallop fishing and development of practicable methods to minimize or mitigate those impacts;

20. Broader investigations of variability in dredging efficiency across habitats (substrates, current velocities, etc.) times, areas, and gear designs; and

21. Research that provides more detailed sea scallop life history information (especially on age and area-specific natural mortality and growth) and to identify stock-recruitment relationships.

C. Statutory Authority

Issuing grants is consistent with sections 303(b)(11), 402(e), and 404(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. 1881(c), respectively.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

No Federal funds are provided for sea scallop research under this notice. The Federal Government's contribution to the project will be a Letter of Authorization (LOA) that will provide special fishing privileges in response to sea scallop research proposals selected to participate in this program. Funds generated from the RSA landings shall be used to cover the cost of the research activities, including vessel costs, and to compensate boats for expenses incurred during the collection of set-aside scallops. For example, these funds could be used to pay for gear modifications, monitoring equipment, additional provisions (e.g., fuel, ice, food for scientists) or the salaries of research personnel. The Federal Government is not liable for any costs incurred by the researcher or vessel owner, should the sale of the excess catch not fully reimburse the researcher or vessel owner for their expenses.

B. Project/Award Period

Because the implementation of Amendment 10, if approved, will occur after March 1, 2004,

project activities will not be authorized at the start of the fishing year. The project period for the TAC and DAS set-asides for the Hudson Canyon and the open areas will begin with the implementation of Amendment 10, while the project period for the Groundfish Closed Areas will begin with the implementation of the Joint Framework, if approved. The project period may not extend beyond February 28, 2005. Any portion of the 2004 fishing year TAC and DAS awarded to compensate for research costs and participation must be caught or used for compensation by February 28, 2005. Proposals to fund research started on or after the project period, but before final approval of the project for TAC and/or DAS set-aside awards, are eligible for consideration. However, if the project is not approved, any research or expenditures related to this project will be the sole responsibility of the researcher without any further compensation from the TAC set-aside funds.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

In consultation with NMFS, the NOAA Grants Office will award a grant to successful applicants through the NOAA grant award process.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

All commercial organizations; non-profit organizations; state, local or tribal governments; institutions of higher education; and individuals are eligible to apply, provided that all proposal requirements are satisfied and the proposal is received by the date specified in this document.

DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity in our programs and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications. In addition, 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. DOC/NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

DOC/NOAA encourages applications from members of the fishing community, and applications that involve fishing community cooperation and participation.

A person is not eligible to submit an application under this program if he/she is an employee of any Federal agency or a Regional Fishery Management Council. However, Council members who are not Federal employees may submit an application.

To be eligible for consideration, a research proposal for work to be conducted using a RSA allocation for fishing year 2004 must be received during the application submission period.

B. Permits and Approvals

Evaluations of the impacts of sea scallop research, which involve exemptions to the current fishing regulations, other than those stated in the FMP, will be made by NMFS. Vessels conducting certain types of sea scallop research requiring relief from fishery regulations may be required to obtain an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP). To apply for an EFP, interested parties must submit an application to NMFS at least 60 days before the requested start date of the proposed research to allow for additional review and analysis. Additional time could be necessary for NMFS to make determinations regarding requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable laws.

If any part of the proposed research activities occur in state waters, successful applicants, as a condition of project approval, will be required to provide NMFS with a copy of written documentation to demonstrate that the applicant has contacted the concerned state fishery management agency or agencies for any required state authorization. Information on identity of state fishery management agencies is available from NMFS.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Electronic copies of the Standard Forms for submission of research proposals may be found on the Internet in a PDF (Portable Document Format) version at <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>. Paper applications can be obtained by contacting Sandra Stone or Andrew Applegate, New England Fishery Management Council, at (978) 465-0492; Peter Christopher, at NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, by phone at (978) 281-9288, by fax at (978) 281-9135, or via e-mail at Peter.Christopher@noaa.gov.

B. Proposal Preparation and Requirements

NOAA employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not permitted to assist in the preparation of an application, except that staff may provide information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Since this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for a proposal. However, the Council or NMFS contact person may provide assistance to researchers who are seeking vessels to participate in the collection of set-aside species or directly in research projects. NMFS, in consultation with the Council, may decide to hold a meeting with the public to discuss general topics concerning past RSA program accomplishments and ways to enhance communications on funding priorities and associated potential study methods. Such meetings will be publicized by NMFS through a Federal Register notice, and through the public mailing list maintained by the Council office.

Proposals must be submitted to NOAA and must identify the sea scallop research to be conducted and the areas within which the research and/or compensation trip is to be conducted. Each proposal must specify the amount of TAC and DAS required to support the research and to compensate for vessel participation. The total amount of scallops requested for the project must be based on a scallop meat value of \$4.06 per pound and an estimated catch rate of 1,550 lb (704 kg) per DAS. Proposals must indicate the amount of TAC to support research from the Hudson Canyon Access Area and the amount of DAS from the open area set-aside required to support research. If an exemption from Federal regulations is proposed, a list of the specific regulations to be exempted and a brief justification for each regulation to be exempted must be included. Awards are contingent upon approval of Amendment 10.

Researchers wishing to submit proposals to utilize the set-asides for the Groundfish Closed Areas are reminded that the availability of this set-aside is contingent upon implementation of the Joint Framework, as specified in the Program Objective section of this document.

Additionally, each proposal must identify the requirements for the participating vessel(s) that would make a Sea Scallop Access Area trip, additional trips outside of DAS, and/or under additional DAS issued to the vessel, to collect the scallop set-aside. The vessel selected by the applicant should be listed in the proposal, if possible, or specifically identified prior to final approval by NOAA. The proposal must also include the agreement between the vessel owner and researcher that shows exactly how the research activity is to be paid for, if possible, or such agreement must be provided prior to final approval by NOAA. Proposals must specify the manner in which the scallop research revenue will be generated, i.e. by authorizing the vessel to exceed the scallop possession limit when fishing in scallop access areas, by fishing in regular open areas off the DAS clock, or by increasing the annual DAS allocation for the vessel in an amount that is expected to generate the needed scallop research revenue and compensate the vessel for trip expenses. Proposals may request that the scallop set-aside be collected separately from the sea scallop research trip or other related research trip. The separate sea scallop research compensation trips do not necessarily have to be conducted by the same vessel. The Council or NMFS contact person may provide assistance to researchers who are seeking vessels to participate in the collection of set-aside scallops or directly in research projects. The Council or NMFS may publish a list of those vessel owners willing to participate through their respective home webpages.

In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant does not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, the applicant should mark each page containing such information or data with the words “Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use” at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 15 CFR part 4, “Public Information,” which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. To the extent permitted under FOIA, the contents of applications and proposals submitted by successful applicants may be released in response to FOIA requests. Based on the confidential information identified by the applicant, the confidentiality of the information provided will be protected to the degree possible.

C. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to the provision under “Proposals” and the five requirements under “Required Elements” by the deadline of May 17, 2004. Failure to follow these restrictions will result in proposals being returned to the applicant without review.

1. Proposals

a. Proposals submitted to the 2004 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program must include one signed original and two signed unbound copies of the proposal (including supporting information). Applicants must submit a Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance), including a detailed budget using Standard Form 424A, (Budget Information--Non-Construction Programs), Standard Form 424B (Assurances-Non-Construction Programs), Commerce Department Form CD-511, (Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters: Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying), and if applicable, Standard Form SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities). Copies of these Standard Forms may be found on the Internet in a PDF version at <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>.

2. Required Elements

Proposals should be limited to 6 pages, excluding item “e” below. The format may vary, but must include:

- a. A project summary;
- b. A narrative project description to include: (1) Project goals and objectives; (2) the relationship of the proposed project to management needs or priorities identified by the Council; (3) a statement of work (project design and management--who is responsible, expected products, participants other than applicant); and (4) a summary of the existing state of knowledge related to project and contribution and relevance of the proposed work;
- c. A description of all funding sources (including revenues derived from the sale of scallops harvested under the research TAC set-aside) and funding needs. This element of the proposal must include: (1) the amount of scallop TAC and/or DAS set-aside requested; (2) state where the research and/or compensation trip is to be conducted, and the expected funds to be generated by the sale of those scallops; and (3) state the expected percentage of funds to be allocated to the researcher and any involved fishing vessel;
- d. A budget that includes a breakdown of costs (vessel expenses, permit costs, equipment, supplies, overhead, as applicable), and;
- e. Supporting documents (resumes, cooperative research agreements, contracts, etc.).

D. Other Requirements

See the Permits and Approvals section of this document.

E. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals must be received by NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, on or before 5 p.m., May 17, 2004. Mark proposals “Attention–Sea Scallop Research Proposals.”

F. Funding Restrictions

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

The project period may not extend beyond February 28, 2005. Any portion of the 2004 fishing year TAC and DAS awarded to compensate for research costs and participation must be caught or used for compensation by February 28, 2005. Proposals to fund research started on or after the project period, but before final approval of the project for TAC and/or DAS set-aside awards, are eligible for consideration.

The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred in the conduct of the project. Any additional funds generated above the cost of the research activities (or excess program income) shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for the use of his/her vessel.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The review panel convened by NMFS to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP (see the Review and Selection Process section of this document), will evaluate proposals by assigning scores up to the maximum indicated for each of the following criteria:

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project: 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 2004 RSA program, provide a clear definition of the problem, need, issue, or hypothesis to be addressed. The proposal should describe its relevance to the research needs identified by the Council. If not directly related to priorities listed in this solicitation, provide justification why the proposed project should be considered. (30 points)
2. Technical/scientific merit: 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 2004 RSA Program, proposals should provide a clear definition of the approach to be used, including descriptions of field work, theoretical studies, and laboratory analysis to support the proposed research. (15 points)

3. Overall qualifications of the project: This criterion assesses whether the applicant and team members possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the 2004 RSA Program, proposals should provide adequate justification as to how the project is likely to achieve its stated objectives. Projects should demonstrate support, cooperation and/or collaboration with the fishing industry. (35 points)

4. Project costs: This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the 2004 RSA program, cost-effectiveness of the project will be considered. (10 points)

5. Outreach and education: This criterion assesses whether the project involves a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the 2004 RSA Program, proposals should provide identification of anticipated benefits, potential users, likelihood of success, and methods of disseminating results. (10 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

At the request of NOAA, applications may be reviewed and evaluated by the Council before they are submitted to NOAA, or, if not first reviewed by the Council, reviewed by the Review Team convened by NOAA. Both the Council review and the NOAA review are included to allow the Council to retain its responsibility to consider research in fishery management plans and to allow NOAA to conduct the reviews if the overall Council process prohibits their review in a timely manner.

If the Council is requested to review the proposals, the proposals will be reviewed in a public meeting process by representatives of the Council, based on the criteria described in the Evaluation Criteria section of this document. The Council's representatives would then make recommendations to the Council. The Council would consider recommendations of its representatives, the criteria described in the Evaluation Criteria section of this document, and may also consider the program policy factors listed below. The Council would then make its recommendations to the Regional Administrator through a formal vote or by consensus recommendations, as determined appropriate by the Council. Recommendations from the Council would be given to the Regional Administrator in rank order based on average scores of the projects, taking into consideration the numerical scores based on the criteria described in the Evaluation Criteria section of this document, and consideration of program policy factors listed below.

If the Council does not participate in the evaluation of the proposals, NOAA will solicit written technical evaluations from three or more private and/or public sector experts to

determine the technical merit of the proposal and to provide a rank score of the project based on the criteria described in the Evaluation Criteria section of this document. Following completion of the technical evaluation, NOAA will convene a Review Team to review and individually critique the scored proposals to enhance NOAA's understanding of the proposals. No consensus recommendations will be made.

The Regional Administrator shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

- (1) Availability of funds.
- (2) Balance/distribution of funds:
 - (a) geographically,
 - (b) by type of institutions,
 - (c) by type of patterns,
 - (d) by research areas, and
 - (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.
- (5) Applicant's prior award performance.
- (6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.

The program policy factors are: (1) the time of year the research activities are to be conducted; (2) the ability of the proposal to meet the experimental fishery requirements discussed under the Permits and Approvals section of this document; (3) redundancy of research projects; and (4) logistical concerns. Therefore, the highest scoring projects may not necessarily be selected for an award. The Regional Administrator will provide final approval of the projects to allow NMFS to exempt selected vessel(s) from regulations of the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP. For example, NOAA may authorize selected vessel(s) to exceed the possession limit, take additional trips, take trips that are exempt from DAS regulations, or increase the vessel's annual DAS allocation to compensate the vessel for incurred research expenses. All sea scallop research must be conducted in accordance with provisions approved by NOAA and provided in an LOA or EFP issued by NMFS.

Approval of proposals submitted in response to the subject RFP would be contingent upon approval of Amendment 10 and the Joint Framework by NMFS. Should Amendment 10 be disapproved by NMFS, projects would not be funded and notification would be sent to applicants. Should the Joint Framework be disapproved by NMFS, projects proposed for the Groundfish Closed Areas would not be funded and notification would be sent to applicants. In addition, unsuccessful applications will be returned to the submitter. Successful applications will be incorporated into the award document.

C. Final Reports and Data Submission

NOAA and the Council will require project researchers to submit semi-annual progress reports and a completion report describing their research project results and other acceptable

deliverable(s), in a time frame that is specific to the type of research conducted. The format of the final report may vary, but must contain:

1. A brief summary of the completion report (200-word or less abstract);
2. A description of the issue/problem that was addressed;
3. A detailed description of methods of data collection and analyses;
4. A discussion of results and any relevant conclusions presented in a format that is understandable to a non-technical audience. This should include benefits and/or contributions to management decision-making;
5. A list of entities, firms or organizations that actually performed the work, and a description of how the work was accomplished; and
6. A detailed final accounting of all funds used to conduct sea scallop research, including those provided through the research set-aside. The financial information must be submitted on Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Form-269 (Financial Status Report). Copies of this Standard Form may be found on the Internet in a PDF version at <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>, or by contacting the NMFS office (see the [Address to Request Application Package](#) section of this document).
7. Projects designed to collect new data for inclusion in NMFS' or ACCSP's databases must submit the data in electronic format with appropriate documentation. Certain databases will have highly specific requirements as to required fields and content. Applicants must agree to provide newly collected data in a format acceptable to the administrators of the receiving databases.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Review of proposals will occur during the two months following the date given in this announcement that the proposals are due to NMFS. Initiation of approved RSA project activities should begin during Summer 2004 for most projects. The date of June 1, 2004, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will received notification that the application has been recommended for selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance on the project. Official notification of selection, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principal Investigator of the project. It is provided by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

NMFS will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, by postal mail. If an application is not selected, NOAA will return the proposal and related documents to the applicant.

B. 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 contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under the Council and Agency Contact(s) section of this document, or by going to the website: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.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.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer.

Performance reports shall be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer. Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expires.

VII. Council and Agency Contact(s)

Information may be obtained from Sandra Stone or Andrew Applegate, New England Fishery Management Council, phone (978) 465-0492, fax (978) 465-3116, or e-mail ssone@nefmc.org, aapplegate@nefmc.org or Peter Christopher, Fishery Policy Analyst, NMFS, phone (978) 281-9288, fax (978) 281-9135, email Peter.Christopher@noaa.gov.

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