NOAA Great Lakes Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: NOAA Great Lakes Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2022-2007109

Federal Assistance Listings Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation

Dates: The application deadline is January 12, 2022, at 11:59 PM Eastern time. Applications must be received by www.Grants.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description: The principal objective of the NOAA Great Lakes Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants competition is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to habitat restoration projects that meet NOAA's mission to restore coastal habitats and support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) (https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/documents/glri-action-plan-3-201910-30pp.pdf) goal to protect and restore habitats to sustain healthy populations of native fish species in the eight U.S. Great Lakes states. Proposals submitted under this solicitation will be evaluated based on alignment with our program priorities, including: 1) contribution to GLRI Focus Area 1 (Toxic Substances and Areas of Concern) goals to implement management actions within select Areas of Concern (AOC), and 2) contribution to GLRI Focus Area 4 (Habitats and Species) goals to restore habitat for native Great Lakes fish species whose populations have been impacted by habitat degradation. Through this solicitation, we intend to address GLRI Focus Area 4 goals by prioritizing a subset of habitat restoration projects identified by the Lake Committees as Environmental Priorities to meet fish community objectives for Great Lakes fish species. Lake Committees are composed of senior officials from state, provincial, and U.S. intertribal fishery agencies, convened by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Together, they are responsible for managing the Lakes' fisheries and developing plans and guidance to sustain healthy populations of Great Lakes commercial and recreational fish species.

Applicants are encouraged to propose one or more projects that are identified on 1) an AOC management list and/or 2) a Lake Committee Environmental Priorities list. (Please see section I.B of this funding opportunity to see the AOCs and Environmental Priorities that are prioritized in this competition). An applicant's capacity to manage concurrent habitat restoration projects over multiple years and willingness and ability to work with stakeholders and communities to

achieve project goals will also be evaluated through this competition. NOAA reserves the right to fund some and not all the proposed projects based on program priorities and funding availability. Proposals may include the following types of activities: restoration feasibility and/or design; habitat restoration construction (i.e., on-the-ground activities); or a combination thereof.

Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. One-year or multi-year awards will be considered. Multi-year awards are awards that are funded annually, for up to three years. Funding needs for the second and/or third year (Fiscal Year 2023 and/or FY 2024) will be estimated in FY2022, with final amounts determined in future years, pending future federal appropriations and progress towards project milestones. NOAA anticipates typical federal funding for awards will range from $500,000 to $5 million over one to three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than $300,000 or more than $30 million total over three years. NOAA anticipates up to $10 million will be available under this announcement in FY22. Funds will be administered by the NOAA Restoration Center. Awards are dependent upon the amount of funds made available to NOAA for this purpose by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in FY22 - FY24 budgets.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The principal objective of the NOAA Great Lakes Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants solicitation is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to habitat restoration projects that meet NOAA's mission to restore coastal habitats and support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) (https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/documents/glri-action-plan-3-201910-30pp.pdf) goal to protect and restore habitats to sustain healthy populations of native fish species in the eight U.S. Great Lakes states. This funding opportunity prioritizes habitat restoration projects identified in Section I.B. that aim to restore functional coastal wetland, nearshore, and/or riverine habitats that support native fish migration, reproduction, growth, and/or seasonal refuge. Proposals submitted under this solicitation will be evaluated by how well they demonstrate that the proposed habitat restoration actions will lead to significant and sustainable benefits for Great Lakes native fish species. Furthermore, successful proposals will be those that address the Program Priorities (Section I.B) and the Evaluation Criteria (Section V.A) most strongly.

B. Program Priorities

As stated above, the principal objective of the NOAA Great Lakes Fish Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants solicitation is to support habitat restoration projects that contribute to NOAA and the GLRI priorities by restoring habitat for native Great Lakes fish species whose populations have been impacted by habitat degradation.

Note: please see sections III.C. for information about ineligible restoration activities and IV.B for examples of relevant habitat restoration projects that have been funded under this program.

Highest priority will be given to applications that:

1. Propose habitat restoration activities that substantially contribute to GLRI goals including:

a. GLRI Focus Area 1 - Toxic Substances and Areas of Concern

Habitat restoration that contributes to implementing management actions within the following AOCs will be given the highest priority in this competition: Milwaukee Estuary, Lower Green Bay and Fox River, Cuyahoga River, Maumee River, St. Lawrence River at

Massena, Niagara River, Torch Lake, Rouge River, Kalamazoo River, Saginaw River and Bay, St. Louis River, Detroit River, and Grand Calumet River.

b. GLRI Focus Area 4 - Habitat and Species

Through this competition we intend to address GLRI Focus Area 4 goals by prioritizing a subset of habitat restoration projects identified by the Lake Committees as Environmental Priorities to meet fish community objectives for Great Lakes fish species. Lake Committees are composed of senior officials from state, provincial, and U.S. intertribal fishery agencies, convened by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Together, they are responsible for managing the Lakes' fisheries and developing plans and guidance to sustain healthy populations of Great Lakes commercial and recreational fish species.

The subset prioritized for this competition is listed below.

Subset of Lake Superior Committee Environmental Priorities

-Hydrologic modification of unregulated tributary flows within the basin to provide minimum flows to meet reproductive and early life-history requirements for brook trout. Specific focal areas to address hydrological modifications that impact fish production include tributaries along the south shore of Lake Superior in Wisconsin and on the Bayfield Peninsula.

-Habitat restoration in the St. Louis River and Bay area including restoration of connected coastal wetlands and floodplains and enhancement of spawning habitat for additional lake sturgeon and walleye production.

Subset of Lake Michigan Committee Environmental Priorities

-Reef restoration of degraded reef habitats, which provide critical spawning and nursery areas for multiple species of common concern across Lake Michigan including lake trout, lake whitefish, and cisco. Specific focal areas to implement reef restoration actions in Lake Michigan are in the Charlevoix/Harbor Springs, Michigan area. Reef restoration projects that focus on restoring historic conditions using natural substrates are prioritized.

-Coastal wetland reconnection/restoration, softening of shorelines, and increasing submerged aquatic vegetation, which provide critical spawning and/or nursery habitats for multiple species of common concern across Lake Michigan, including lake sturgeon, lake whitefish, yellow perch, esocids, and centrarchids. Priority locations include the western and eastern

shorelines of Green Bay and the southern basin nearshore of Lake Michigan.

-Tributary connectivity/fish passage restoration is critical for providing access of adult species of common concern, including lake sturgeon and lake whitefish, to reproductive and nursery habitat across the Lake Michigan Basin. Consideration of sea lamprey control remains paramount for all tributary connectivity/fish passage restoration projects. Specific locations where connectivity is limiting production of priority species includes: the Peshtigo River and the Oconto River.

-In-stream habitat restoration is critical for providing suitable reproductive habitat for multiple species of common concern, particularly lake sturgeon. Specific focal areas for in-stream habitat restoration include locations in the Grand River, Michigan, particularly below the Sixth Street Dam.

Subset of Lake Huron Committee Environmental Priorities

-Reef restoration of degraded reef habitats, including mitigating impacts of sedimentation on reefs, which provide critical spawning and nursery areas for multiple species of common concern across Lake Huron, are necessary for the achievement and maintenance of self-sustaining populations of lake whitefish, cisco, lake trout, and walleye. Reef restoration projects that focus on restoring historic conditions using natural substrates are prioritized. Specific focal areas to implement reef restoration actions in Lake Huron include:

--The Thunder Bay Reefs, MI
--The Saginaw Bay Reefs, MI
--The Northern Main Basin region, MI
--Implementation of actions to address spawning habitat augmentation, sedimentation, and connected nursery habitat restoration is critical to restore functional habitat and enhance fish production.

-Coastal wetland habitat restoration/reconnection, which will provide critical spawning and nursery habitats for multiple species of common concern across Lake Huron, including esocids and walleye. Specific focal areas for coastal wetland reconnection and restoration include locations in Saginaw Bay.

-In-stream habitat restoration and enhancement that is critical for providing suitable reproductive habitat for multiple species of common concern, particularly lake sturgeon and walleye.

Subset of Lake Erie Committee Environmental Priorities

-Regional nutrient reduction strategies to reduce phosphorus loading and achieve mesotrophic conditions in the western, central, and nearshore waters of the eastern basins and embayments. The Maumee River watershed is a focal area for nutrient reduction strategies. Projects that improve water quality through the creation or enhancement of fish habitat, such as coastal wetland restoration and floodplain reconnection, are eligible. See section III.C. for examples of ineligible activities.

-Increase connectivity of select tributaries where connectivity is limiting production of fish community objective species including: Black River, MI – Wingford Dam and Huron River, MI – Flat Rock Dam/Huroc Dam.

-Increase shoreline/nearshore complexity through softening of shorelines, rehabilitation of connected coastal wetlands, and increases in submerged aquatic vegetation. Specific locations where shoreline alterations (hardening, diking, etc.) are limiting production of fish community objective species include:

--Sandusky Bay
--Huron-Erie Corridor
--Grand River, OH
--St. Clair River Delta

Subset of Lake Ontario Committee Fish Habitat Priorities

-Enhance or restore effective upstream passage for adult Atlantic Salmon to allow access to spawning and juvenile rearing habitat.

-Restore nearshore open coast, cold-water spawning and nursery habitat for Lake Trout, Whitefish and Cisco.

-Restore degraded stream habitat to improve reproductive capacity in streams that are managed for wild fish production. Priority activities include:

--Install riverbank stabilization/fish habitat improvement structures and instream flow enhancement features for Atlantic Salmon on the Salmon River (system-wide) including Trout and Orwell brooks.
--Add spawning substrate (gravel) for Walleye and Lake Sturgeon downstream of Dexter Dam on the Black River.

-Restore the ecological function of coastal wetlands to enhance Northern Pike, Muskellunge and other members of the wetland-dependent fish community. Priority actions include:

--Complete level ditching and potholing to increase fish spawning and nursery habitat in coastal wetlands, including Lakeview Wildlife Management Area, Port Bay, and Sodus Bay.
--Promote restoration and rehabilitation of lost coastal wetlands.

2. Exhibit a capacity to manage concurrent habitat restoration projects over multiple years, and an ability to manage federal funds, maintain financial and administrative records, and fulfill reporting requirements. The applicant should demonstrate a willingness to coordinate with NOAA to conduct technically sound restoration projects to address program priorities.

3. Demonstrate willingness and ability to work with stakeholders and communities. Applicants should propose projects that were developed through inclusive processes and demonstrate appropriate and diverse stakeholder support. Applicants should also plan to disseminate information about project plans, benefits and results with relevant stakeholders and local communities.

NOAA makes a commitment to diversity and inclusion by encouraging program applicants to consider diversity and inclusion through proactive community engagement in the identification, design or implementation of proposed projects.

C. Program Authority

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

Under 33 U.S.C. § 893a(a), the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is authorized to conduct and support formal and informal educational activities at all levels to enhance public awareness and understanding of ocean and coastal science and stewardship by the general public and other coastal stakeholders, including underrepresented groups in ocean science careers. In conducting those activities, the Administrator shall build upon the educational programs and activities of the agency with consideration given to the goal of promoting the participation of minorities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates typical federal funding for awards will range from $500,000 to $5 million over one to three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than $300,000 or more than $30 million total over three years. NOAA anticipates up to $10 million will be available under this Announcement in FY22. Awards are dependent upon the amount of funds made available to NOAA for this purpose by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in FY22 - FY24 budgets.

Funds will be administered by the NOAA Restoration Center. One-year or multi-year awards up to three funding years will be considered. A multi-year award releases funds incrementally through Fiscal Year 2024 without further competition. The exact amount of funds that may be provided in the first year of the award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Any funds provided to successful applicants for subsequent-year funding requests will be determined by progress towards stated milestones and availability of funding at the discretion of the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD). NOAA expects, but is not obligated, to provide additional funding to multi-year awards in subsequent years.

Both federal and match pre-award costs, incurred up to 90 days prior to the award start date, may be requested and will be considered during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Incurring pre-award costs before NOAA GMD offers a grant is at the applicant's own risk.

NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for direct costs of application preparation if programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all top-ranked 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 habitat restoration, the merit and ranking of the applications, and the amount of federal appropriations made available in FY22 and subsequent fiscal years. NOAA reserves the right to fund some and not all the proposed projects based on program priorities and funding availability.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications should cover a period of performance between 12 and 36 months, but may select a project where the period of performance extends up to 48 months. The earliest

anticipated start date for awards will be October 1, 2022. Award periods may be extended, at the discretion of NOAA and based on project needs, up to the extent legally allowable, typically 5 years.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements, as defined in 2 C.F.R. Sec 200.1, meaning that NOAA expects to be substantially involved in many aspects of the awards. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, collaboration on the scope of work, providing assistance with technical aspects of the habitat restoration project, review and comment on design plans, and review of procurement materials to the extent authorized by 2 C.F.R. Sec. 200.323.

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 Native American 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, and others that are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants may be located anywhere but must propose work within the Great Lakes basin and within one of the eight U.S. Great Lakes states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota).

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no statutory matching requirement for this funding. NOAA typically leverages its federal funding with matching contributions from a broad range of sources in the public and private sectors to implement coastal habitat restoration. To this end, applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4 "Project Costs" (Section V.A.4).

Federal sources cannot be considered as matching funds, but should be described in the budget justification to demonstrate additional leverage. Match to NOAA funds can come from a variety of non-federal public and private sources and can include third party in-kind goods and services and volunteer labor. Refer to 2 C.F.R. 200.306 for cost sharing or matching policies. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from non-federal partners, as long as such contributions are not used to match any other federal funds and are available within the project period stated in the application. Applicants with approved

indirect cost rates planning to provide cost sharing may find it convenient to propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been federally approved and documentation is readily available. Refer to Section IV.F "Funding Restrictions" for information on indirect costs. Refer to Section II.A. “Funding Availability” for information on pre-award costs.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of match reflected in the award document signed by NOAA's Grants Management Division, unless amended based on extenuating circumstances. NOAA is under no obligation to amend the matching contributions once agreed to by the recipient. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the overall number of volunteers and third party in-kind participation hours devoted to habitat restoration projects. Letters of commitment for any secured resources that will be used as match for an award under this solicitation should be submitted as an attachment to the application in the Supplemental Materials (see Section IV.B).

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

As mentioned above, projects must be within the U.S. Great Lakes basin (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). Projects outside of the U.S. Great Lakes basin will not be considered and will be disqualified. Section III.A presents information distinguishing eligible versus ineligible organization types.

NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than $300,000 or more than $30 million over three years (see Section II.A).

All applications MUST contain ALL required forms signed via the www.Grants.gov application process, (SF-424, SF-424b, CD-511). Failure to submit signed forms shall result in disqualification from this competition. See Section IV.G. for more details.

The following information describes ineligible project activities:

1. Ineligible activities related to water quality improvements include, but are not limited to, proposals addressing hard infrastructure only for water quality improvement, wastewater treatment plant upgrades, elimination of combined sewer outfalls, replacement of failing septic systems and implementation of agricultural animal waste management plans. However, projects that improve water quality through the creation or enhancement of fish habitat, such as coastal wetlands, are eligible.
2. Proposals that focus only on marine debris prevention and removal are not eligible.
3. Proposals that focus on acquisition of real property are not eligible.

4. Proposals that focus on beach renourishment solely for recreational purposes are not eligible.
5. Projects seeking funds only for invasive species removal and management will also not be considered under this solicitation. However, NOAA may fund invasive species removal as a component of an overall habitat restoration project proposal.
6. Reef restoration projects that propose the use of molluscicides only are not eligible.
7. Activities that alleviate the liability associated with legally required mitigation for the adverse environmental impacts of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law are not eligible for federal funding.
8. Activities that alleviate the liability associated with legally required compensatory restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law are not eligible for federal funding.
9. Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation are not eligible. Applicants planning to combine grant or matching funds with mitigation should review the Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources; Final Rule at 73 Fed. Reg. 19594 (April 10, 2008). NOAA plans to follow the approach adopted by some other Federal agencies on Page 19636 that describes scenarios where mitigation credits may or may not be obtained in association with federal financial incentives.
10. Proposals that focus only on pre- or post-restoration effectiveness monitoring are not eligible. To find out more about RC's effectiveness monitoring and regional contacts with whom to discuss ideas, visit https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration-projects.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, can be found on www.Grants.gov. If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from www.Grants.gov, contact www.Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. Instructions for these forms are available at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html. Information about the recommended format for applications is contained in Section IV.B.

B. Content and Form of Application

A complete, standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted, as described below. See section IV.A. for submission information.
Each proposal must include the following Federal application forms:

- Standard Form (SF)-424: Application for Federal Assistance. The SF-424 form family may be downloaded from https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html.
- SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-construction Programs. (An SF-424A for each year of requested funding will be required prior to an award offer, but is not required as part of the initial application.)
- SF-424B: Assurances for Non-construction Programs
- CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying
- SF-LLL (if applicable): Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

In addition to the Federal application forms, NOAA recommends the following components as part of a complete application package. Page limits assume an 11- or 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Components should be organized into a maximum of four (4) PDF files outlined below:

- Project Summary, Project Narrative, and Data Management Plan (22 page limit)
- Budget Justification (6 page limit)
- Project design related documents (including feasibility studies, as applicable) (no page limit)
- Supplemental Materials (15 page limit)

Proposals that include multiple restoration sites should fully describe the proposed restoration activities at each site. If all project(s) details cannot be described within the recommended page limits, applicants should consider submitting more than one application.

Project summary (2 page limit):

We recommend you provide a summary with the following components:

-Applicant Organization

-Project Title

-Site Location: Include the geographic coordinates and the nearest town or watershed. If multiple sites are proposed, please include the geographic coordinates for all sites.

- Brief Project Description, as follows:

Relevance to Program Priorities: Describe how the proposed projects will deliver meaningful

results that are relevant to GLRI Action Plan III Focus Area 1 and/or 4 goals to restore habitat for native Great Lakes fish species whose populations have been impacted by habitat degradation.

Habitat Issue(s) Addressed: Briefly describe the habitat issue limiting the recovery or sustainability of the target species, the state of the species' habitat/populations within the watershed/affected area, and how the proposed restoration actions will directly improve the habitat limiting issue, thereby benefiting the species.

Sustainability of Restoration Approach: Describe the proposed techniques and how the approach will result in sustainable and lasting benefits for the native Great Lakes fish species that are the focus of the proposal.

Timeline: Provide a timeline of all project activities to be supported with federal and/or non-federal matching funds, including an indication of when activities will begin.

Permits and Approvals: Identify and list all consultations, permits, and regulatory approvals necessary for the proposed project(s) and their status (e.g., not applied for, pending, or secured).

Landowner(s): Include name and address (if privately owned) or public agency contact for each proposed project.

Funding Request: Note the total requested NOAA funds and the amount anticipated for non-federal matching funds by year. Please state whether the match has been secured or is pending. Also note total project costs, and any funds beyond the requested NOAA funds and non-federal match that will contribute to the overall project costs.

Project Narrative (18 page limit):

Provide sufficient background and contextual information for reviewers to independently assess the significance of the proposed project(s). The application should generally follow the organization of the Evaluation Criteria (see Section V.A) to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The information provided below is intended to help applicants address the evaluation criteria.

Relevance to Program Priorities: Describe how the proposed projects will deliver meaningful results that are relevant to GLRI Action Plan III Focus Area 1 and/or 4 goals to restore habitat for native Great Lakes fish species whose populations have been impacted by habitat

degradation. As described in Section I.B, through this solicitation we intend to address GLRI Focus Area 1 and 4 goals by prioritizing habitat restoration projects in a subset of priority Areas of Concern and/or projects identified by the Lake Committees to meet fish community objectives for native Great Lakes species. The narrative should explicitly describe how the proposed project(s) addresses the Priorities. For full points, a letter of endorsement from the relevant Lake Committee or AOC Public Advisory Council (PAC), as appropriate, should be submitted for all proposed projects.

Habitat Issue(s) Addressed: The narrative should succinctly describe the historic and current condition of the restoration site(s) and the habitat-based issue(s) that is the primary focus of the proposal. Describe any processes that have resulted in degradation of the habitat and how these processes have been abated to allow for successful restoration. Identify one or more species targeted by the proposed habitat restoration, their historic and current status or population estimates, and the project(s)' expected benefits on the target species and ecosystems. The narrative should describe the project's context within the ecosystem, including how it complements other nearby restoration efforts, as appropriate.

Applicants should include the number of acres to be restored and/or stream miles to be made accessible to fish through the proposed activities and any other anticipated long-term ecological benefits, so that reviewers can understand the scale and meaning of your proposed project in the context of the watershed. Please indicate how the anticipated benefits and quantitative performance measures have been determined (e.g., ground-truthing, desktop assessment).

Community Benefits: The intention of this funding is to restore ecosystem functions with holistic benefits, leading to resilience in a changing climate. Applications should describe how the proposed projects will carry out restoration activities that will yield multiple benefits and describe the significance of the anticipated ecological, social and economic benefits (e.g., increased flood retention, enhanced water quality through hydrological improvements, nature-based solutions to erosion, increased recreational opportunities, commercial and recreational fisheries benefits, increased tourism, etc.).

Technical/Scientific Merit: As noted above, this funding opportunity prioritizes habitat restoration projects identified in Section I.B. Proposals should describe in detail the actions to be undertaken. Proposals that include multiple restoration sites should fully describe the proposed restoration activity at each site within the project narrative section. Applicants should clearly identify the project phase(s) proposed (e.g., feasibility study, engineering, implementation) and proposed restoration techniques. Suggested details to include in your proposal, by restoration activity:

--Hydrologic restoration (modification) reverses the negative impacts to habitat function created by restricting or changing surface water flow. Examples include restoring water elevations and flow through fill removal, culvert removal/replacement to allow natural flooding of wetlands, complete removal of levees and dikes or other impediments to historic/natural flow or hydrology, floodplain reconnection, or creation/restoration of off-channel habitats. Priority will be given to projects that restore habitat that previously existed. Applicants proposing to install structures such as fish passage devices or water control structures should include discussion of an operation and management plan that specifies the entity responsible for the operation and maintenance of the structure(s) and how they will be operated and maintained throughout the life of the structure(s) to ensure lasting habitat benefits. Applicants should also describe measures that will be put in place to prevent filling of the flood storage area upstream of new or modified water control structures.

--Fish passage projects remove barriers that prevent native Great Lakes fish from accessing spawning habitats and create or improve habitat to support the growth of juvenile fish. Priority will be given to fish passage/barrier removal projects that directly benefit native Great Lakes migratory fisheries by providing free and open passage from spawning grounds to the open lake environment. These projects include, but are not limited to, dam removals and/or culvert removals and replacement with bottomless arch culverts or bridges, fish ladders, by-pass channels, and/or nature-like fishways. Fish passage project applications should describe the significance of the project to historical fish populations in the river, identify the river length that will be restored, the distance to the next upstream blockage, any downstream blockages or seasonal impediments to fish passage, and whether the target barrier is a partial or complete barrier. Applications should state how the project will meet fish passage guidelines for the area, and identify and provide documentation of support for the project from the landowner/dam owner. Applications should highlight any synergies with other fish passage efforts in the watershed, including fish passage improvements at hydropower dams. Fish passage projects proposing to install fish passage devices or movable control structures should submit a summary management plan that specifies the entity responsible for the operation and maintenance of the structure(s) and how they will be operated and maintained throughout the life of the structure(s) to ensure lasting habitat benefits. All types of fish passage projects should address issues and potential control strategies regarding aquatic invasive species (e.g., sea lamprey). If a project is proposing fish passage, include appropriate documentation demonstrating consultation with and support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sea Lamprey Control Program.

--Shoreline/nearshore restoration may include removing fill and debris, removing hardened structures, stabilizing the shoreline with natural materials and vegetation, installing

nearshore rock reefs, and/or restoring spawning beds. Applications should describe the significance of the fish habitat in the area including desired function (e.g., shallow water nursery habitat), historic conditions and materials to be used. Proposals should highlight synergies with other fish habitat efforts in the watershed. NOAA prioritizes reef restoration projects that restore historic conditions and/or complement previous or planned habitat restoration efforts and that use natural substrates (e.g., gravel, cobble, woody debris, plant material). Reef restoration projects that propose the use of molluscicides only are not eligible.

As noted above, proposals that include multiple restoration sites should fully describe the proposed restoration activities at each site within the project narrative section. If all aspects of a multi-year and/or multi-project award cannot be described within the recommended page limits, applicants should consider submitting more than one application.

For feasibility or design projects, applicants should: describe the overall habitat restoration need and goals of the feasibility and design activities; provide justification for potential design alternatives, if known (e.g., technique is appropriate and proven as demonstrated by similar successful projects, approach is comprehensive); discuss expected outcomes; list members of the planning team including NOAA staff and provide the decision framework; and discuss how support for the proposed activity would catalyze subsequent on-the-ground restoration.

Timeline and Milestones: The project narrative should include a timeline with key milestones identified and detail how the project(s) will be completed within the specified time period. This includes identifying all consultation and permitting requirements and their status (e.g., not applied for, pending, secured), and incorporating the likely award start date (not to precede October 1, 2022) and species-specific work windows. For projects with NEPA documents completed or under development, please indicate the status and level of NEPA review (CE, EA, or EIS), lead Federal agency, contact information for the lead agency point person, and where public copies of the document(s) are available. Applications for multi-year awards should identify annual/interim milestones that correspond to funding increments. As described in Section II.A, NOAA will consider progress towards identified milestones when making funding decisions for multi-year awards in subsequent years.

Project Assessment: Proposals requesting funding for restoration implementation / construction activities should include a discrete monitoring plan, either within the body of the narrative, or as part of the Supplemental Materials. Applicants should be willing to work with NOAA to adjust the plan, if necessary, to ensure that the proposed parameters are adequate and meaningful and meet the requirements below. All monitoring plans should

propose sufficient, cost-effective monitoring metrics to show that the project(s) was carried out as designed and provided a basic level of effectiveness. Monitoring plans should: 1) include parameters that evaluate short-term structural changes at the project site(s) (e.g. as-built surveys), and may also include a basic measure of effectiveness (e.g. presence/absence of target species); 2) propose pre-implementation data collection, when applicable; 3) include parameters with quantitative or clearly defined targets; and 4) include parameters with targets that can be evaluated within approximately one year after project implementation. Proposals that include one of the RC's primary restoration methods (fish passage barrier removal, hydrologic restoration) must incorporate the monitoring parameters found in the NOAA RC Implementation Monitoring (Tier 1) Guidance available at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants#restoration-monitoring-and-data-management. Proposals requesting funding for feasibility and planning projects should describe how pre-restoration monitoring meets the requirements listed above. Please mention any additional planned monitoring to address permitting requirements. Please also describe any planned monitoring intended to contribute to on-going data collection efforts, and plans to fund this additional monitoring. NOAA strongly encourages match funding for monitoring beyond the basic monitoring, as described above.

Sustainability: To protect the Federal investment, the narrative should describe the proposed techniques and how the approach will result in sustainable and lasting benefits for native Great Lakes fish species that are the target of the proposal. Please also describe the future management beyond the award period, including mechanisms to protect, maintain, or sustain the restoration site(s) so that project benefits are realized into the future. Because climate change is anticipated to have significant effects on the Great Lakes, applicants should describe how the proposed restoration design, methodology, and techniques provide for resilience to extreme weather events or adaptation to potential climate change impacts at the project site. A copy of (or description of) the landowner agreement may contribute to this element.

Qualifications of Applicant:
This section should fully describe the partner's ability to develop, carry out and/or manage multiple habitat restoration projects simultaneously, for the benefit of native Great Lakes fish species. Please include a description of: past relevant experience of the applicant organization, project staff and/or partners, including experience with habitat restoration design, construction, monitoring, and environmental compliance; the ability of the applicant to work with diverse partners and to manage multiple projects (as relevant); and the ability of the applicant to effectively manage large federal awards. Include brief resumes or curriculum vitae (CV) for up to three (3) key personnel, as described under the Supplemental

Information section below.

Outreach and Education:
The project narrative should demonstrate that the partnership and proposed projects have the support of relevant stakeholders, and should include an effective outreach strategy to encourage long-term stewardship for restored resources and to generate a community conservation ethic. Letters of support should be included in the Supplemental Information section.

Furthermore, restoration designed to incorporate the values of diverse user groups and traditional and local knowledge results in a broader suite of holistic benefits. The NOAA Restoration Center recognizes that it has a particular opportunity to support NOAA's commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking an intentional step that encourages program applicants to consider diversity and inclusion. In order to ensure projects are meeting the holistic needs of the community, NOAA encourages robust public involvement including a diversity of participants to inform project design and facilitate outreach throughout the project. Ecologically-focused applicant organizations may wish to consider developing subrecipient partner relationships with other organizations, including those culturally-competent in the demographics of the restoration location, to facilitate diverse public involvement and the incorporation of values important to indigenous people, residents, subsistence users, non-english speakers, and groups frequently underrepresented in coastal restoration (e.g., gender, ethnicity, geographic, etc.). Applicants who are interested in partnering with conservation corps, veterans groups and/or Minority Serving Institutions to introduce people from frequently underrepresented groups to the professional field of coastal restoration should describe how they plan to implement those partnerships.

Data Management Plan (2 page limit)

Proposals submitted in response to this announcement should include a Data Management Plan. The Data Management Plan should follow the Guidance for Data Management Plans at https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/data_sharing_plan_guidance_and_templates_nov2019.pdf. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project, the tentative date by which data will be shared, the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content, the website where data will be made available (all data must be made publicly available), approximate total volume of data to be collected, and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is

one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets. Data Management Plans may be developed in coordination with NOAA as part of NOAA's substantial involvement, as described in Section II.C. See also Section VI.B.of this Announcement. NOAA's Data and Publication Sharing Directive for NOAA Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts is available at https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf.

Budget Justification (6 page limit)

Reviewers will evaluate project costs by reviewing your budget justification. If requesting funds for a multi-year proposal, award costs should be broken into annual/interim funding requests up to three years in duration, based on logical milestones in the implementation plan. For instance, a proposal request might include a request for a project's design costs in year one, estimated construction costs needed in year two, and estimated post-project monitoring costs in year three. Another example would be a project that requests construction costs for discrete sites in each year of a multi-year award. One, two, or three-year proposals will be accepted. Please note, the total proposed over three years sets an award maximum, and final award funding can not exceed the amount identified for all years in the original proposal.

If NOAA funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a budget overview for the entire project should be provided to demonstrate how the NOAA request relates to the overall project budget and is needed for successful project implementation. If the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, the amount(s) requested or secured from other funding sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal, should be included. The applicant should provide an estimate of all monitoring-related costs within the proposed budget. As previously noted, NOAA strongly encourages match funding for monitoring beyond the basic monitoring described in the "project assessment" section above.

The budget justification should break project costs out into the following categories: Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, Other, and Indirect Charges, and these totals should also be recorded on the SF-424A. The NOAA Restoration Center and GMD staff will review budget information in recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic. The NOAA Restoration Center has provided guidance regarding the level of detail required to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, and reasonable in the "Supplemental Instructions" at: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-

center-applicants#restoration-budget-guidance.

Project Designs (no page limit)

If available, project designs should be included in the application in order for reviewers to comprehensively assess the technical merit of the proposed restoration action(s). Construction specifications, scopes of work for services, and cost estimates may also be provided.

Supplemental Materials (15 page limit)

All supplemental attachments should be combined into one file that includes a list of the documents and associated page numbers.

- Include a map or aerial photo with nearby towns and/or roads labeled and with the site location(s) highlighted;

- Include brief resumes or curriculum vitae (CV) for up to three (3) key personnel (maximum of 1 page per person) and any examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the project team;

- Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements;

- Adaptive management plan, and/or long term maintenance plan(s);

- Monitoring plan;

- Site photos; and

- Include any other relevant supporting materials, such as letters of support:

--Letter from relevant Lake Committee indicating that the proposed project meets the objectives of the Lake Committee Environmental Priorities, as appropriate.
--Letter from relevant Public Advisory Council or state agency responsible for implementing the AOC program indicating that the proposed project is on a management action list for the target Area of Concern, as appropriate.
--If a project is proposing fish passage, include appropriate documentation demonstrating consultation with and support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sea Lamprey Control Program.

--If applicable, include a letter documenting private owner or public land manager support of the project proposed for the owned site(s);
--Letters from adjoining landowners, and
--Letters documenting financial and in-kind support.

Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants: This program does not use this questionnaire, except as described in Section VI.B.4.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants should: (1) Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting an application; (2) provide a valid Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number on an application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. The federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant. The DUNS number remains the official identifier until April 04, 2022. After April 04 2022, there will be a new Unique Entity Identifier number in place. More information is available here: https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update

Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once but must be periodically renewed. Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform. Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.

D. Submission Dates and Times

The application deadline will be no earlier than January 12, 2022. at 11:59 PM Eastern time.

E. 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 19 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, contact the official listed in Section VII of this announcement for referral information.

F. Funding Restrictions

Both federal and match pre-award costs incurred up to 90 days prior to the award start date may be requested and will be considered during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Incurring pre-award costs before the NOAA GMD provides an award document (generally via NOAA Grants Online on Form CD-450) is at the applicant's own risk. The earliest date for receipt of awards for this funding opportunity is anticipated to be October 1, 2022.

The budget may include indirect (facilities & administrative [F&A]) costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. As defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, indirect (F&A) costs are incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefited, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved (e.g., lights, rent, water, and insurance). A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect (F&A) cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), an applicant that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), describe all costs as direct costs in the budget justification, or establish a new rate through the Department of Commerce by contacting Lamar Revis, Grants Officer at NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East-West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or lamar.revis@noaa.gov. Applicants may elect to propose all or part of indirect costs as cost sharing.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit applications electronically through www.Grants.gov. Users of Grants.gov will be able to create an online application workspace to submit the application. If an applicant has problems accessing the online workspace at Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov.

Applications must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Late applications will not be considered for funding. We highly recommend that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov, as registration with SAM and DUNS are required, as described in Section IV.C.

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 THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt; the second validates that the submission is acceptable and timely; and the third confirms that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If all notifications are not received, applicants should follow up with both the Grants.gov help desk and the NOAA Restoration Center to confirm NOAA receipt of the complete submission. After submitting the application package, applicants should download a copy of the submitted application for offline record-keeping and to verify the contents of the submission zip file. Grants.gov recommends downloading the submitted application via the Details tab of the workspace and verifying the contents of each file in the zip.

Submission time will be documented by electronic submission to Grants.gov. All applications MUST contain ALL required forms, signed via the www.Grants.gov application process. Failure to submit signed forms may result in disqualification from this competition. Applicants are responsible for tracking their own applications. Please notify the contact officials in Section VII of this announcement by email if you are experiencing difficulties with Grants.gov or your organization is not able to use this system.

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.

Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (30 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 this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

(a) Relevance to Program Priorities: How well do the proposed project(s) link to the program priorities and address GLRI Focus area 1 and 4 goals (see Section I.B). (15 points)

0 – project(s) does not align with any of the program priorities; 7.5- project(s) aligns moderately well with program priorities; meaningful benefits to native Great Lakes fish species are likely to result, with moderate progress toward meeting GLRI Focus area 1

and/or 4 goals. 15 - proposed project(s) are well aligned with program priorities as demonstrated by letters of support by relevant entities; extraordinary benefits to native Great Lakes fish species are likely to result, with substantial progress toward meeting GLRI Focus area 1 and/or 4 goals.

(b) Habitat Issue(s) Addressed: To what extent does the proposal describe the habitat issue limiting the recovery or sustainability of the target species, the state of the species' habitat/populations within the watershed/affected area, and propose restoration actions that will directly improve the habitat limiting issue, thereby benefiting the species? (10 points)

0 – no habitat issue or restoration action is identified; 5 – habitat issue and status of target species is adequately described, and proposed habitat restoration actions will result in some benefit to the species; 10 – habitat issue and status of target species is described in detail, and the proposed habitat restoration actions will result in significant benefit towards the species.

(c) Community Benefits: To what extent will the proposed project(s) have multiple benefits, such as contributing to ecosystem and community resilience, and yield environmentally compatible socio-economic benefits, such as increased business opportunities, public community revitalization, recreational opportunities, reduced safety hazards, or reduced maintenance costs? For restoration feasibility or design projects what is the likelihood that the project will yield multiple benefits, once implemented? (5 points)

0 – project(s) will not lead to any resilience or socio-economic benefits; 3 – project(s) will result in some resilience or socio-economic benefits, once implemented; 5 – project(s) will result in multiple, important resilience and socio-economic benefits, once implemented.

2) Technical/Scientific Merit (30 points): This criterion assesses whether the restoration activity or approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant has described a realistic and thorough implementation plan that includes:

(a) Project Feasibility and Methodology: To what extent is the proposed project(s) feasible from a biological and engineering perspective, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound, safe for the public, and uses appropriate methods and personnel? For feasibility and design proposals, what is the technical merit and feasibility of the proposed approach (e.g, has the applicant described similar successful projects, is the technique appropriate and proven, is the approach comprehensive?) (8 points)

0 – proposed approach is not feasible, safe, or technically sound; 4 – proposed approach is potentially feasible, safe, and technically sound, but lacks documentation to support the proposed methodology; 8 – proposed approach is feasible, safe, and technically sound, and substantial evidence is provided to support the proposed methodology for all proposed projects.

(b) Project Detail: To what extent does the proposal completely describe the proposed restoration actions, the current status of the project(s) (e.g., 60% design plans complete), permitting and environmental compliance status, and key milestones throughout the course of the project(s). Complete project description(s) should include all relevant phases of the restoration from initial feasibility study through design, permitting, construction, project implementation monitoring, operation and/or maintenance. If the proposal is a feasibility and design proposal only, to what extent does the proposal explain the planned approach, or provide examples of other projects where the approach was successful? (Please see section IV.B for suggested details to include in your proposal by restoration activity, as well as recommended details to include for feasibility and design projects only). For projects with multiple sites, does the proposal include sufficient detail about the proposed work at each site to assess the merit of the planned activities? (10 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail (as described in section IV.B) regarding restoration actions, project(s) status, and key milestones; 5 – proposal provides moderate detail (as described in section IV.B) regarding restoration actions, project(s) status, and key milestones; 10 – proposal provides extraordinary detail (as described in section IV.B) regarding restoration actions, project(s) status, and key milestones.

(c) Timeline and Milestones: Based on the details provided, has the applicant proposed a realistic time-frame and interim milestones, and is it likely that the scope of the proposed project(s) will be completed within the requested award period? (2 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail regarding timelines, and is unlikely to be completed within the requested award period; 1 – proposal provides moderate detail regarding timelines, and the project(s) is likely to be completed within the requested award period; 2 – proposal provides substantial detail regarding timelines, and the project(s) is highly likely to be completed within the requested award period.

(d) Project Assessment: To what extent will the project measure near-term implementation success following requirements in Section IV.B including use of parameters described in NOAA RC Implementation Monitoring (Tier I) Guidance for projects that include one of the primary RC restoration methods? For restoration feasibility and design proposals, is the

proposed pre-restoration monitoring aligned with the requirements? See the NOAA RC Implementation Monitoring (Tier 1) Guidance for more information: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants#restoration-monitoring-and-data-management. (3 points)

0 – proposal does not include plans for monitoring near-term implementation success; 1.5 – proposal includes a satisfactory monitoring plan, as outlined in Section IV.B.; 3 – proposal includes a well-described monitoring plan following requirements in Section IV.B. Projects that include one of the RC primary restoration methods strictly follow the NOAA RC Implementation Monitoring (Tier I) Guidance.

(e) Sustainability of Restoration Approach: How great is the potential of the restoration effort to be sustainable and provide lasting benefits of regional or national significance for the species targeted by the project and its habitat? Is there evidence that the applicant has chosen the most self-sustaining restoration technique that accomplishes the project's goals and/or evidence that habitat impacts will not re-occur? To what extent does the proposal describe the susceptibility of the project site to climate change impacts and how the proposed restoration methodology and design provides for resilience to extreme weather events and adaptation to potential climate change impacts anticipated at the project site? (5 points)

0 – project is not sustainable and will not provide lasting benefits for target species; 2.5 – project is sustainable and will potentially provide lasting benefits for target species; 5 – project is sustainable and will provide lasting benefits for target species, and the design provides for resilience to extreme weather events and adaptation to potential climate change impacts.

(f) Landowner Support: Is there substantiated landowner/land manager support and commitment to the project documented within the application (e.g., a support letter)? (1 point)

0 – proposal does not provide documentation of landowner/land manager support; 1 – proposal provides documentation of landowner/land manager permission to implement the project.

(g) Data Management Plan: Does the proposal include a Data Management Plan, including descriptions of the types of environmental data and information created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible? If no

data will be collected through the project, applicant must clearly explain the rationale for the lack of data collection in order to receive full points. See pages 3 - 5 in the NOAA RC Implementation Monitoring (Tier 1) Guidance for a template and more information: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants#restoration-monitoring-and-data-management. (1 point)

0 – proposal does not provide a Data Management Plan; 1 – proposal provides a complete and well-detailed Data Management Plan.

3) Overall Qualification of Applicant (10 points): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to support the proposed award. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following (as demonstrated by attached resumes, past project experience, and accomplishments of the key technical and financial staff):

(a) Restoration and Conservation Background: Does the applicant have the capacity and knowledge to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing, and effectively managing and overseeing projects? Otherwise, does the applicant demonstrate an ability to collaborate with stakeholders and other partners? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides no documentation of experience in conducting the scope and scale of proposed work; 2.5 – proposal provides documentation of adequate capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work; 5 – proposal provides documentation of substantial capacity and expert knowledge to conduct the proposed work.

(b) Management Capacity: Does the applicant possess and describe the necessary experience, facilities, equipment, and administrative resources available to successfully fulfill the responsibilities associated with managing a federal grant award? Does the proposal describe the applicant's ability and the plan for managing a significant number of projects simultaneously, including financial and administrative management of sub-awards and timely submission of project-specific progress reports and deliverables? Does the applicant include a plan for coordination with NOAA to implement the project(s)? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides no description of experience or available resources to manage the award; 2.5 – proposal describes adequate experience and available resources to manage the award; 5– proposal describes extensive experience with federal grants, demonstrates capacity for managing a significant number of simultaneous projects, and includes a plan for

coordination with NOAA to implement the project(s).

4) Project Costs (20 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project(s) needs and time-frame. For this competition, applications will be evaluated on the following:

(a) Cost-benefit Comparison: Has the applicant demonstrated that a significant benefit will be generated at a reasonable cost, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame? If funds are requested for partial support of a larger project or for a project with multiple sites or phases, the proposal should include the full project budget and/or a budget for each site or project phase to place the funding request in spatial and temporal context. (8 points)

0 – proposal does not provide a reasonable cost-benefit comparison; 4 – project is likely to be reasonably cost-effective for anticipated benefit; 8 – project is likely to be extraordinarily cost-effective for anticipated benefit.

(b) Budget Detail: Has the applicant demonstrated a realistic understanding of costs by providing a budget (broken down by SF-424A object classes) that provides sufficient detail and credible cost estimates and justifications? Does the budget clearly outline the NOAA funding request and other funding sources, noting whether the other funding sources are non-federal or federal, match or leverage? Multi-year or multi-phase award requests should include annual/interim milestones that correspond to logical funding request increments. (5 points)

0 – proposal does not provide a realistic budget; 2.5 – proposal provides an adequately detailed budget with realistic cost estimates; 5 – proposal provides an extraordinarily detailed budget with realistic cost estimates.

(c) Funding Priorities: Does the proposed budget direct the majority of funds, including funds for salaries, to implement the project (i.e. project development/feasibility, design, or implementation and monitoring), compared to the percentage used for general program support including administration? (5 points)

0 – proposed budget directs only a small amount of funds to support project development, design, implementation, or monitoring; 2.5 – proposed budget allocates a majority of direct federal funds to support project development, design, implementation, or monitoring; 5 – proposed budget allocates all direct federal funds to support project development, design, implementation, or monitoring.

(d) Cost-sharing: To what extent will the applicant complement NOAA’s investment with other funding sources, including non-federal matching contributions and federal or non-federal leverage? NOAA desires cost sharing to leverage funding and further encourage partnership among government, industry, and academia (2 points).

0 – proposal does not include any non-federal match or leverage; 1 – proposal provides documentation of secured, non-federal match; 2 – proposal provides documentation of secured, non-federal match that meets or exceeds a 1:1 ratio of federal to non-federal match (contributions that meet the requirements of 2 C.F.R. 200.306).

5) Outreach and Education (10 points): NOAA assesses whether the project is based on broad community support and the award can deliver a focused and effective outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the nation's natural resources through coastal habitat restoration. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

(a) Stakeholder Engagement and Support: Does the proposed project(s) include a wide base of stakeholder and community support that demonstrates the restoration effort has been put forward by common agreement, preferably through inclusion in a public planning process? Has or will the applicant engage with a diverse range of groups, either directly or in collaboration with a local partner (including through contracts and subawards), to engage a variety of organizations such as community associations, local environmental justice organizations, business/agricultural groups, adjacent landowners, state and local governments, and/or members of Congress? Have underrepresented communities, as defined in EO 13985 (https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government),been engaged in the process? (5 points)

0 – proposal does not demonstrate community support or common agreement; 2.5 – proposal demonstrates adequate community support through a diverse set of partners; 5 – proposal demonstrates extraordinary community support through a diverse set of partners, with evidence of common agreement through a public planning process.

(b) Community Outreach: Does the proposal include an outreach strategy to disseminate information about restoration goals and results to a broad audience? The strategy may include, but is not limited to: informal education and mentoring for conservation corps, interns, or early career professionals from underrepresented groups in relevant science and policy careers; opportunities for press visits; or other outreach that encourages support for restoration and environmental stewardship. (5 points)

0 – proposal does not include an outreach strategy as it pertains to dissemination of information about project goals and results; 2.5 – proposal includes an adequate outreach strategy as it pertains to dissemination of information about project goals and results; 5 – proposal includes an extraordinary outreach strategy as it pertains to dissemination of information about project goals and results and has strong potential to encourage future habitat restoration and protection actions.

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will undergo an initial administrative screening to determine if they are eligible and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications are screened to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see Section IV.D Submission Dates and Times); the applicant is eligible to apply; and includes a project summary, project description, budget, and supporting documentation as outlined in Section IV.B Content and Form of Application. NOAA does not have to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause the application to be rejected or receive a poor evaluation. However, if deficiencies are identified by NOAA or the applicant, the applicant may correct any deficiencies in their application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it.

Eligible applications will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process to determine how well they meet the program priorities and evaluation criteria of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA. Eligible applications will be evaluated by three or more merit reviewers as part of a technical review based on the Evaluation Criteria listed in Section V.A. After the technical review, a panel may meet to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official regarding which proposals best meet the program objectives and priorities (Sections I.A and I.B). The panel will be composed of federal employees and may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means to discuss applications.

If convened, the panel will be presented with the top-ranked applications, per the results of the technical review. Panelists will also receive the technical review scores and comments for each application. The panel will rate all top-ranked proposals on the following scale:
1 – Fair: application marginally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A and I.B and was moderately responsive to Evaluation Criteria;
2 – Good: application adequately addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A and I.B and was strongly responsive to Evaluation Criteria;
3 – Excellent: application exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in Sections I.A

and I.B, and was highly responsive to Evaluation Criteria.

If a panel is held, the panel's ranked list will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding. If a panel is not held, the technical review ranking will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will recommend 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) by geographic area, b) by type of institutions, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas; or 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 Sections 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 GMD.

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.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

In addition, the NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the

applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. NOAA is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Applicants should be in compliance with the terms of any existing NOAA grants or cooperative agreements and otherwise eligible to receive federal awards, or make arrangements satisfactory to the Grants Officer, to be considered for funding under this competition. All reports due should be received and any concerns raised by the agency should be addressed in a timely fashion in order to receive a new award. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants will receive notification that their application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA GMD by October 1, 2022. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be October 1, 2022. Applicants that initiate award activities in anticipation of federal funding do so at their own risk, and are advised not to begin award-related work until a notice of award is received electronically from the NOAA GMD in Grants Online, NOAA's online financial assistance management system.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities including monitoring, the award duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each cooperative agreement award will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA GMD, and NOAA staff that will administer these restoration awards.

The official notice of award is the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, issued by the NOAA Grants Officer electronically through NOAA's Grants Online system. The authorizing document, the CD-450 award cover page, is provided to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this solicitation. Refer to https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy.

2. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements at 2 C.F.R. 200, implemented by the Department of Commerce at 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, apply to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/cXCJQ.

3. The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and NOAA Standard Administrative Terms will apply to awards in this program. A current version of the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions is available at https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy. The NOAA Standard Administrative Terms are found at: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance. Current versions are subject to change. In addition, award documents provided by NOAA may contain specific award conditions, including those limiting the use of funds for compliance activities such as outstanding environmental compliance requirements, which will be applied on a case-by-case basis, and requirements for submitting progress reports. These award conditions are subject to change prior to award, but examples can be provided by the contact listed in Section VII.

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements - NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts for individual projects as required by 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 the description of their 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).

Applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible on proposed projects to discuss NEPA considerations, and should review the restoration-specific environmental compliance documents available at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants. Funds will not be released until NOAA completes the requisite NEPA analysis and documentation. Funds may be withheld by the GMD under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental law compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment of impacts that the award may have on the environment.

Applicants proposing activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis, that are not covered by existing NOAA programmatic NEPA documents, or whose activities are not covered under another agency's NEPA compliance procedures, which can be analyzed and adopted by NOAA, will be informed after the technical review stage. Such applicants may be requested to complete the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants (https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/grants.html), assist in the preparation of an EA prior to an award being made, or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA/EIS that covers proposed activities if one exists. Awardees 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 or sub-contract projects, especially for projects requiring NOAA to consult under the ESA. Failure to agree to do so shall be grounds for not awarding funds or for terminating an award.

5. NOAA's Data Sharing Policy
(a) Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably based on widely used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely-used or international standards.

(b) Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in this announcement (Sec. IV.B.). The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.
(c) NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.
(d) Proposal submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.
More information about the Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Committee website at: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php

6. Limitation of Liability - Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Federal appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not yet have been appropriated for the programs listed in this notice. NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for direct costs for proposal preparation if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

7. Minority Serving Institutions - The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and

Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

8. NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards - If NOAA-operated, leased, or owned facilities are involved in any awards funded under this announcement, such awards are subject to the NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy Applicable to Financial Assistance Awards Involving NOAA Operated Facilities (May 2018) found at: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial. In addition, refer to the NOAA Standard Administrative Terms for Financial Assistance at https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.328-330 and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress reports shall use the NOAA Restoration Center's progress report narrative format and form approved by OMB under control number 0648 0472. This form will be provided to awardees by the NOAA Federal Program Officer. In addition, award recipients proposing multiple site locations may be required to complete individual reports for each site, or provide a project/site list including status and expenditures.

Narrative progress reports shall be due on the same fiscal year schedule as financial reports (Oct. 30 and April 30) covering April 1 - September 30 and October 1 - March 31, respectively. A comprehensive final report covering all activities during the award period is required and must be received by NOAA within 120 days after the end date of this award.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note, as amended, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards of $30,000 and over.

VII. Agency Contacts

Supplemental Guidance regarding application writing and FAQs about this Announcement can be found at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/noaa-great-lakes-fish-habitat-restoration-regional-partnership-grants.

For further information contact Rina Studds by e-mail at rina.studds@noaa.gov and Julie Simmons at julie.simmons@noaa.gov. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact NOAA Restoration Center staff before submitting an application to discuss their NOAA project ideas with respect to technical merit and NOAA's objectives. NOAA will make every effort to respond to prospective applicants on a first come, first served basis. These discussions will not include review of draft proposals or site visits during the application period.

VIII. Other Information

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out an award. 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 Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, codified by the Department of Commerce at 1327.101. All cost reimbursement sub-awards (e.g. subgrants, subcontracts) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

Access to Information. Applications submitted in response to this announcement may be subject to requests for release under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. § 552). In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA.

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed, and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and

performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.