ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL 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 Habitat Restoration Project Grants under the U.S. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in Areas of Concern

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2015-2004351

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM EST on March 3, 2015. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Please Note: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA delivers funding and technical expertise to restore Great Lakes coastal habitats. These habitats support valuable fisheries and protected resources; improve the quality of our water; provide recreational opportunities for the public's use and enjoyment; and buffer our coastal communities from the impacts of changing lake levels. Projects funded through NOAA have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that provide social and economic benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological habitat improvements. Through this solicitation, NOAA seeks to openly compete funding available for habitat restoration in U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern (http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/) under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative as anticipated in the President's FY2015 Budget. Applications should be submitted for any project that is to be considered for this funding, even for those projects already submitted as applications to other NOAA competitions. Competition will ensure that the most beneficial restoration projects are selected to realize significant ecological gains.

Applications selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a grant or cooperative agreement. Funds will be administered by the NOAA Restoration Center (RC). Multi-year cooperative agreement awards will be considered, and additional releases of funds may be used to fund selected proposals through FY17 without further competition. Awards are dependent upon the amount of funds made available to NOAA for this purpose by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. NOAA anticipates approximately $15 million may be available over the next three years to maintain selected awards, dependent upon the level of funding made available by Congress.

One, two, or three year proposals will be accepted. Award funding options will include:

• For one year requests for habitat implementation proposals, NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than $500,000 or more than $6 million of federal funds. Typical awards for one year requests for habitat restoration implementation are expected to range between $500,000 and $2 million.

• For one year requests for engineering and design proposals, NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than $75,000 or more than $350,000. Typical awards for engineering and design are expected to range between $100,000 and $350,000.

• For multi-year awards, regardless of the type of proposal, NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than $750,000 and more than $10 million for up to a three year award period.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The principal objective of these NOAA RC Project Grants is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to habitat restoration projects in U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern that meet NOAA's mission to restore coastal habitats and that support the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy (http://glrc.us/strategy.html).

Successful applications, both engineering and design and implementation, should provide information on how the project will: (1) contribute to the delisting of fish and wildlife related beneficial use impairments in Great Lakes Areas of Concern; (2) yield significant ecological benefits especially benefits that will be robust to potential climate change impacts in the region; (3) create community benefits such as improved opportunities for recreation, park use, or other tangible community benefits; and (4) demonstrate collaboration among entities such as public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academia, and local government, state, and federal agencies to cooperatively implement coastal habitat restoration projects.

Applications may cover a period of performance of between one and three years. Applicants with multiple-year award requests should divide their funding request into logical segments up to three consecutive years, based on their implementation plan. For instance, a proposal might include design and pre-project monitoring costs in year one, estimated construction costs in year two, and estimated post-project monitoring costs in year three. Another example would be a proposal that requests construction costs for distinct sites in each of three years.

B. Program Priorities

NOAA seeks to support projects that will result in on-the-ground restoration of Great Lakes coastal habitat. The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's "Ecosystems" mission goal to "Protect, Restore, and Manage Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through Ecosystem-Based Management." Projects must be within a U.S. Great Lakes Area of Concern and contribute to the removal of either project-based delisting targets or numeric delisting targets for fish and wildlife habitat related beneficial use impairments (degradation of fish and wildlife population, loss of fish and wildlife habitat, and degradation of benthos). There is no limit on the number of proposals per Area of Concern for on the ground restoration, however, each project must be endorsed with a letter of support from the

Remedial Action Plan (RAP) implementation group (defined as the state agency responsible for implementing the Area of Concern program or the local public stakeholder group working with the state agency on implementing the RAP) indicating that the project(s) being proposed are required to achieve delisting of an Area of Concern.

Applications may cover a period of performance of between one and three years. Applicants that are applying for one year awards for on-the-ground implementation should be shovel-ready and are expected to be those where final design plans are available, where required consultations and permits, if not in-hand, are either in progress or there is reasonable assurance provided that they can be attained quickly, and where other environmental permits and authorizations are finished or can be expeditiously completed, so that a project can be implemented shortly after funding is made available (see NEPA details below, Section VI. B.2). For all proposals, applicants must provide detail as to what funding will support (i.e., final design plans, permitting needs, construction costs).

NOAA also recognizes the need to continue to have shovel-ready projects ready in future years and anticipates dedicating a small portion of funds to the engineering and design of high quality projects that are necessary to achieve an Area of Concern's delisting targets. NOAA will accept two proposals per Area of Concern for engineering and design. If an Area of Concern is located in multiple states, each state can submit two proposals for that AOC for engineering and design. The proposals must also be endorsed by a RAP implementation group.

NOAA anticipates funding between one and three engineering and design only projects. Projects seeking funds for engineering and design should demonstrate their likelihood of achieving measurable gains in identified delisting targets, document how the project will lead toward the delisting of fish and wildlife habitat related beneficial use impairments in Great Lakes Areas of Concern, and lead to project implementation within 6 to 18 months.

Priority consideration will be provided to those project proposals that:

- Work towards achieving measurable gains in identified delisting targets and that document how the project activities will lead to delisting fish and wildlife habitat-related beneficial use impairments (including loss of fish and wildlife habitat, degradation of fish and wildlife populations, and degradation of benthos) in Areas of Concern (http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/). Projects should include a description of the quantifiable targets that have been set and how the proposed project will contribute to those targets;

- Address habitat related issues within a NOAA Habitat Focus Area (St. Louis River Estuary or Muskegon Lake) http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/habitatblueprint/greatlakes.html)

- Restore coastal wetlands, through shoreline restoration or hydrological reconnection;

- Benefit native Great Lakes fish and their habitat, particularly projects that remove in-stream migration barriers or create/restore habitats limiting productivity;

- Are designed to be robust to projected climatic change impacts, including reduction of potential climatic change effects, and other challenges that climate change may present;

- Identify the project as an Area of Concern priority based on specific restoration planning goals, publicly vetted plans, or other priority setting planning documents(e.g. Stage II RAP documents) with appropriate ecological performance metrics and measures;

- Can be completed within 18-24 months of the start of the period of performance as evidenced by having appropriate permitting and environmental compliance documentation (e.g., letters from the State Historic Preservation Office, Army Corps 404 permits, etc.);

- Propose sufficient, cost-effective monitoring appropriate to the scope and scale of the project to evaluate a project's benefits. Higher priority will be given to those projects that are most suitable or best able to conduct effectiveness monitoring designed to document changes in the abundance, fecundity, or other metrics relating to target species improvement; and

- Request funds primarily to implement physical, on-the-ground coastal habitat restoration or designs that lead to on the ground restoration (as opposed to funds for land acquisition, general program support, overhead and travel).

While the primary objective of the RC is to provide funding and technical expertise to support on-the-ground implementation of coastal habitat restoration projects, NOAA recognizes that accomplishing habitat restoration is a multi-faceted effort involving feasibility studies, project design, engineering services, permitting, construction, legal considerations, oversight, pre- and post-removal monitoring, and education and outreach. Applicants may therefore apply for funding to support a combination of these activities; however, priority will be given to project proposals that feature on-the-ground implementation activities. Habitat restoration engineering and design project proposals should provide information on the project's likelihood to move forward to implementation and the significance of the ecological benefits that would be ultimately achieved as they relate to the program priorities as described above.

C. Program Authority

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

- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970; and

- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates that up to $15 million may be available for Great Lakes coastal habitat restoration over the next three years to maintain selected awards from this solicitation, dependent upon the level of funding made available by Congress. Award options will include:

- For one year requests for habitat implementation proposals, NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than $500,000 or more than $6 million of federal funds. Typical awards for one-year requests for habitat restoration implementation projects are expected to range between $500,000 and $ 2 million.

- For one year requests for engineering and design only proposals, NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than $75,000 or more than $350,000. Typical awards for engineering and design only projects are expected to range between $100,000 and $350,000.

- For multi-year awards, regardless of the type of proposal, NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than $750,000 and more than $10 million for up to a three year award period.

NOAA anticipates that the majority of projects selected for funding will be for on the ground restoration projects in Areas of Concern. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for any or all 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 projects by the applicants, the merit and ranking of the applications, and the amount of funds made available.

The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Multi-year funding requests in out-years are expected to be funded based on progress towards milestones and the availability of funding. Any funds provided to successful applicants will be at the discretion of the NOAA Restoration Center Division Chief and the NOAA Grants Management

Division (GMD). Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any parts of any available funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications may cover a period of performance of between one and three years. Applicants with a multi-year award request should divide their funding request into logical segments over one to three consecutive years, based on their implementation plan. The earliest start date for awards is anticipated to be September, 2015, but awards may not be available until October 1, 2015. Project proposals should include a timeline with discrete benchmarks for completing the project within this period. NOAA will evaluate project readiness and feasibility for completion within this timeframe.

Grantees selected for multi-year awards will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years. NOAA expects, but is not obligated, to provide additional funding to multi-year awards in subsequent years, out-year funding will be based on progress towards milestones and availability of funding. Continuing an award in subsequent years, either to extend the period of performance or to add funds to an award is at the discretion of NOAA, per Section II.A, above. Permission to extend the period of performance beyond that stated in award documentation should be requested in writing at least 60 days in advance of an award expiration date, as per NOAA Award Conditions.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

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

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, and commercial (for profit) organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies

are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, municipal and county governments, conservation corps organizations and others that are eligible to apply.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. The RC encourages applications involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There is no statutory matching requirement for this funding. NOAA typically leverages its federal funding with matching contributions and/or partnerships from a broad range of sources in the public and private sector to implement locally important coastal habitat restoration. To this end, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate a 1:1 non-federal match for RC funds requested to conduct the proposed project. Applicants with less than 1:1 match will not be disqualified, however, applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4 "Project Costs" (Section V.A.4.).

Match to NOAA funds can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services and volunteer labor. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from non-federal partners, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other federal funds and are available within the project period stated in the application. Federal sources cannot be considered for matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV.E. "Funding Restrictions."

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing 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 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, see Section IV.B.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Projects must be within the Great Lakes basin, within a U.S. Great Lakes Area of Concern, and a support letter from the RAP implementation group must be received with the submitted application. Projects outside of U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern will not be considered and will be disqualified.

NOAA recognizes that water quality issues can impact habitat restoration efforts. However, this initiative is intended to fund on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that will have significant and tangible ecological impacts. Projects dealing only with water quality improvement measures are not eligible. Ineligible projects include, but are not limited to, wastewater treatment plant upgrades, combined sewer outfalls, and non-point source pollution projects such as replacement of failing septic systems, implementation of farm waste management plans, and stormwater management projects.

Projects seeking funds only for invasive species removal and management will also not be considered under this solicitation. However, NOAA will fund invasive species removal as a component of an overall habitat restoration project proposal.

Applicants should also note that the following activities will not be considered: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, and Supplemental Guidance for Prospective Applicants can be found on www.grants.gov. If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. If the application forms and instructions cannot be downloaded from www.grants.gov, please contact Jessica Berrio (Jessica.Berrio@noaa.gov) at 301-427-8654.

B. Content and Form of Application

Projects must be within the Great Lakes basin, within a U.S. Great Lakes Area of Concern, and a support letter from the RAP implementation group must be received with the proposal submitted to grants.gov. Projects outside of U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern will not be considered.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through the Grants.gov website (www.grants.gov), the clearinghouse for federal financial assistance. A complete standard NOAA grant application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document.

Each application must contain the following documents, unless otherwise noted below:- Required federal application forms:

o Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)

o Budget Information for Non-construction Programs: SF-424A

o Assurances for Non-construction Programs: SF-424B

o Certification Regarding Lobbying: CD-511

o Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable);

In addition, A letter of endorsement from the RAP implementation group (defined as the state agency responsible for implementing the Area of Concern program or the local public stakeholder group working with the state agency on implementing the RAP) is required as part of the application (to be considered for review).

NOAA recommends the following as part of a complete application package:

--a project summary (described below, 2 pages);

--a project narrative (described below, 15 pages);

--a detailed, narrative budget justification (described below, 6 pages);

--a Data Sharing Plan (described below, 2 pages);

--a site location map with site location(s) highlighted;

--Design plans (if applicable)

--Other relevant supporting materials (15 page limit) such as:

-A site location map such as a USGS topographic quadrangle map or aerial photo with site location(s) highlighted

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

-A letter documenting private or public land manager support; and

-Any other relevant supporting materials such as letters of support (including those from adjoining landowners and those documenting financial and in-kind support), indirect cost rate agreements, monitoring plans, site photos, etc.

-Applications submitted through the www.Grants.gov website should include a maximum of three files (PDF files only) in addition to the Federal application forms: 1) Summary, narrative, budget justification, and data sharing plan (not to exceed 25 pages total, as outlined above); 2) Project designs; and 3) Supplemental Information - all other attachments combined into one indexed file, such as maps, curriculum vitae, and support letters, not to exceed 15 pages. Page limits assume a 12 point font and 1 inch margins. Information about converting documents to PDF files is available on the Grants.gov website under "Download Software" under "Applicant Resources."

1. Project Summary (2 page limit):

-- Applicant Organization

-- Project Title

-- Site Location - nearest town or watershed, and geographic coordinates

-- Project Scope: briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds, and proposed techniques that will be used to implement and monitor the restoration

-- Coastal Habitats to Benefit from the Project: habitat(s), organism(s) currently using the project area or expected to benefit in the future

-- Project Outputs/Outcomes - measurement of contribution to achieve habitat-related beneficial use impairment delisting targets including measures such as number of acres restored or stream miles to be made accessible to native Great Lakes fish, and other anticipated long-term ecological outcomes.

-- Permits and Approvals: identify permits or regulatory approvals necessary for this project and current status of permits secured, or applications and/or consultations pending

-- Project Time Line, including an Implementation Start Date (not proposed award start date)

--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, secured)

--Land Owner - name and address (if privately owned) or public agency contact

--Amount of Funding Requested per Year (if requesting a multi-year award)

--Total Federal Funds Requested & Non-Federal Match Anticipated

--Overall Project Cost

2. Project Narrative (15 pages):

The project narrative should closely follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. Evaluation Criteria) for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The body of this narrative description should be no more than 15 pages long (12-point font with 1" margins; reviewers generally prefer 1.5 line spacing), and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. In general, applications should indicate how the proposed work helps achieve measurable gains in meeting the habitat related beneficial use impairment delisting targets in U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern and how the proposed habitat restoration activities will yield ecological benefits.

Multi-year proposals 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. Furthermore, if multiple restoration sites are included within one proposal, the habitat issue or target species should be linked across all proposed sites to achieve the overall proposal's stated outcome goal. Proposals that include multiple restoration sites should also fully describe the proposed restoration activity at each site within the project narrative section. If page limits are restrictive, focus the application on the technical aspects of the proposed actions and on those actions with highest priority funding needs. If you cannot describe all aspects of a multi-year or multi-project award within the recommended page limits, applicants should consider submitting more than one application.

Where applicable, the narrative should describe the historic condition of the restoration site and, if applicable, the processes which resulted in degradation of the area and how these processes have been abated to allow for successful restoration. It should list the species currently found in the project site, identify the problems the project will address, describe how the project fits into existing restoration plans, describe short- and long-term objectives and goals, detail the methods for carrying out and monitoring the project, and describe how

the project will be managed and maintained in the long-term. Detailed information about the objectives, implementation plan, techniques, anticipated results, and management and monitoring of the project should be included. For example:

- All projects should address beneficial use impairments to loss of fish and wildlife habitat, degradation of fish and wildlife populations, or degradation of benthos in Areas of Concern. Specifically, projects should include information describing how the project will advance the delisting of the Area of Concern or lead to removing the beneficial use impairment. Specifically projects should also include a description of the quantifiable targets that have been set and how the proposed project will contribute to those targets.

- Hydrologic reconnection: Projects may include berm breaching, 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.

- Fish passage: Fish passage projects include, but are not limited to, fish ladders, by-pass channels, nature-like fishways, dam removals, and culvert removal and replacement with bottomless arch culverts or bridges. Fish passage project applications should describe the significance of the project to migratory fish populations and historical fish runs 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, 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 briefly describes who will be in charge of the operation and maintenance of such structures, how they will be operated, and similar details (plan should be included as another attachment not in the "Supplemental Information" attachment). All types of fish passage projects should address any issues and potential control strategies regarding aquatic invasive species (e.g., sea lamprey).

- Native Great Lakes fish habitat: activities that contribute to the return of degraded or altered estuarine, coastal, and freshwater, native Great Lakes fish habitats to functioning habitats including removing fill and debris, removing hardened structures, stabilizing the shoreline with natural materials and vegetation, installing nearshore rock reefs, and restoring spawning beds. Project applications should describe the significance of the fish habitat in the area including desired function (e.g., shallow water nursery habitat). Applications should provide documentation of support for the project from the landowner and highlight any synergies with other fish habitat efforts in the watershed.

- Invasive Species: Projects proposing planting and/or invasive species removal and maintenance should include information on site preparation and invasive eradication or control methods, the basis for determining species and planting density, a brief discussion about genetic integrity and how that will be addressed, and detail planned maintenance activities including duration of maintenance. Overall activities should be consistent with the Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment document used by the NOAA Restoration Center. http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/funding/applicantresources.html

- Engineering and Design: Projects that wish to be considered for funding related to engineering and design should include a Project Description (including project location, project justification, project objective(s), project feature(s) and benefits) and a Project Budget justification with cost estimates and an explanation of the engineering and design phase. The engineering and design phase description should include a schedule for a project initiation meeting, submission of a feasibility report and periodic design reviews (e.g., 30%, 95% and final review). Projects seeking funds for engineering and design should demonstrate their priority in achieving measurable gains in identified delisting targets, document how this project will lead toward the delisting of fish and wildlife habitat related beneficial use impairments in Areas of Concern, and lead to project implementation within 6 to 18 months.

Other coastal restoration project types within an Area of Concern and with an endorsement letter from a RAP implementation group will also be considered, particularly those that most strongly support NOAA's mission and goals. If known, the applicant should state the level of NOAA involvement in, and/or support for the project and include contact information of relevant NOAA staff.

All proposals should include a discrete monitoring plan and applicants should be willing to work with NOAA during award negotiation to expand the monitoring proposal to ensure that the proposed parameters are adequate and meaningful. All monitoring proposals should, at minimum, include implementation monitoring. Implementation monitoring assesses whether a directed restoration action was carried out as designed and, as appropriate, determines if the restoration action is providing a basic level of effectiveness. Implementation monitoring plans should: 1) include parameters that evaluate short-term structural changes at the project site(s) (e.g. as-built surveys), but may also include basic measures of effectiveness (e.g. presence/absence of target species) and document changes in the abundance, fecundity, or other metrics relating to target species improvement;; 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 met within approximately one year post-implementation. A description of the anticipated long-term ecological and socio-economic outcomes should also be included.

Because climate change is anticipated to have significant effects on the Great Lakes, project goals and strategies should also be designed to be viable despite climate change and its potential impacts. Projects should demonstrate that climate change information has been or will be considered in the project design. Examples of vulnerabilities that may need to be addressed in project design include: is the project area expected to remain suitable for the species/ habitats of interest; if replanting is to be done, will the species/cultivars used be appropriate for future as well as current conditions; do engineering designs account for plausible changes in temperature, precipitation (type, intensity, and timing), water level, flooding, ice cover, and sedimentation as a result of climate change; or will the proposed connectivity design still work in a changed climate.

Priority will be given to projects that can measure their impact on the environment in both the short and long-term. Examples of long-term performance evaluation include, but are not limited to: percentage of habitat-related beneficial use impairment delisting target met; improved fish habitat quality; increased abundance of target species; impact on status of listed species and species of concern; changes in recreational angling and/or property value. Those projects that identify specific quantifiable targets, achievable during the award period, are likely to score higher. Applicants who propose sufficient, cost-effective monitoring appropriate to the scope and scale of the project to evaluate a project's benefits are also likely to score higher, as will those that have funding in place to support long-term monitoring beyond the award period. In addition, NOAA may add additional funds to design and engineering projects that have developed components of a monitoring plan that will be implemented in the next phase of activities of the project.

To protect the federal investment, a letter of commitment from the landowner should be provided for projects on private land, or from relevant resource agency personnel for projects on public, permanently protected land. This letter should provide assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose. Documentation of plans for long-term project maintenance should also be included.

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicants that are seeking NOAA federal funding. Applications should provide enough detail for NOAA to make a NEPA determination (see NEPA details below, Section VI. B. 2). For projects with NEPA documents completed or under development, please indicate the status and level of NEPA review (CE, EA, EIS), lead federal agency, contact at the agency, and where public drafts of the document are available.

Safety is a critical consideration for restoration project implementation. If an application is selected, the grantee must have a written safety plan for all project related activities, including management of volunteers (if applicable). The safety plan should consider safety at the site during and after project construction, and take into account potential safety concerns with regard to the current and future use of the site.

3. Budget Justification (6 pages):

The narrative budget justification must include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with appropriate narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal (if applicable) shares. The object classes should match those found on the SF-424A.

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 breaks in the implementation plan. For instance, a proposal might include a project's design and pre-project monitoring costs in year one, estimated construction costs in year two, and estimated post-project monitoring costs in year three. One, two, or three year proposals will be accepted. Note that total funding for a multi-year award should not exceed a total request of more than $10 million.

Applicants are encouraged to include a budget table to further clarify the cost breakdown. Applications will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness by examining the proportion of funds directed to on-the-ground restoration/monitoring activities compared with that to be used for general program support. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing $5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving on-the-ground habitat restoration and a comparison with rental costs must be included to justify the need to purchase.

If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a budget overview for the entire project should be provided to allow the Selecting Official (SO) to make an informed determination of a project's readiness. A narrative budget justification should indicate if the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The NOAA Grants Management Division will review budget information for recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic.

4. Data sharing plan (2 page limit)

The data sharing plan should include 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; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The plan is required as part of NOAA’s data sharing policy and will be reviewed as part of the Evaluation Criteria under V.A.1.

5. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Inclusion of supplementary materials such as photographs, diagrams, copies of secured permits, etc. are strongly encouraged, and should be submitted in the grants.gov application as a single PDF file not to exceed 20 pages (Sec. IV. B Content and Form of Application Submission). For general questions about this competition, please contact Jessica Berrio (Jessica.Berrio@noaa.gov) or call 301-427-8654 for assistance.

Even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their System for Award Management (SAM) registration (formerly Central Contractor Registration [CCR]) may need to be renewed or updated prior to submitting to Grants.gov. (Note that your CCR username will not work in SAM; you must create a new SAM User Account to renew or update your registration.) Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days to establish. Please plan accordingly to avoid late submissions. For further information please visit the SAM web portal (https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/).

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.grants.gov by 11:59 PM EST on March 3, 2015. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Please Note: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. If an applicant does not have internet access, a hard copy application with the SF-424 form must be postmarked or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by 11:59 PM EST on March 3, 2015 Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received later than five business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted for review. See Section IV. F Other Submission Requirements for complete mailing information.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 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, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html.

E. Funding Restrictions

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. Incurring pre-award costs before the NOAA Grants Management Division provides an award document is at the applicant's own risk. The earliest date for receipt of awards is expected to be September 1, 2015.

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs should not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as the non-federal share.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application as part of the Supplemental Information (Sec. IV. B Content and Form of Application Submission). If the applicant does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, then they may direct cost all charges, or submit a request to establish a rate. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants will be able to download a copy of the application package in Grants.gov, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Applicants should allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration; registration is required only once. After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number.

Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by three automated receipts of the date and time of submission (the first confirms receipt; the next two confirm that there are no errors with an application submission and that the application has been forwarded to NOAA for further processing). If all notifications are not received, an applicant needs to follow up with both the Grants.gov helpdesk and the NOAA RC to confirm receipt of submission. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Applicants should allow themselves sufficient time to submit their application to Grants.gov in advance of the deadline to ensure applications have been submitted successfully, as the deadline for submission cannot be extended. NOAA may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date.

If an applicant does not have internet access, a hard copy application must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by 11:59 PM EST on March 3, 2015 and sent to:

NOAA Restoration Center (F/HC3)
NOAA Fisheries, Office of Habitat Conservation
1315 East West Highway, Rm. 15750
Silver Spring, MD 20910
ATTN: Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Project Applications.

Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after 11:59 PM EST March 3, 2015 will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received later than five business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications should be printed on 8.5" x 11" paper (12-point font with 1" margins; reviewers generally prefer 1.5 line spacing) and should not be bound in any manner.

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. Engineering and design project proposals should address the evaluation criteria below to the best of their ability including anticipated outcomes once restoration work is complete.

1. Importance and Applicability (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 the NOAA RC Project Grants competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

-The potential of the project to restore, protect, conserve or enhance coastal habitat resulting in direct ecological benefits or otherwise maximizing benefits for coastal resources. This includes making measurable gain towards achieving delisting of fish and wildlife habitat-related beneficial use impairments (including loss of fish and wildlife habitat, degradation of fish and wildlife populations, and degradation of benthos) in Areas of Concern (http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/) as indicated in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan. Projects should include a description of the quantifiable targets that have been set and how the proposed project will contribute to those targets. (10 points)

- How well the project links to the program priorities such as restoring coastal wetlands, through shoreline restoration or hydrological reconnection and benefits native Great Lakes fish and their habitat, particularly projects that remove in-stream migration barriers or create/restore habitats limiting productivity in addition to the significance of the project in its area of impact or amount of restored habitat in context with the local environment, i.e. small projects in urban areas could score the same or more points than larger projects in more intact areas.(6 points)

-The extent to which the project is expected to deliver specific, tangible results that tie back to relevant NOAA performance measures (e.g. acres, stream miles, tonnage, etc.).(6 points)

-The extent to which the project is an Area of Concern priority based on specific restoration planning goals, publicly vetted plans, or other priority setting planning documents (e.g. State II RAP documents) with appropriate ecological performance metrics and measures and also if the project addresses habitat related issues within a NOAA Habitat

Focus Area (St. Louis River Estuary or Muskegon Lake)
http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/habitatblueprint/greatlakes.html)6 points)

- Has the proposal included a Data/Information Sharing Plan including descriptions of the types of environmental data and information that will be created over the course of the Partnership; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. (2 points)

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (35 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the NOAA RC Project Grants competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

-The extent to which the proposal completely describes the restoration objective and provides sufficiently detailed project information so that NOAA's NEPA analysis can be completed and on-the-ground activities can begin soon after the start date. (6 points)

-The extent to which the applicant has described a realistic implementation plan that is likely to be fully achievable within the proposed timeframe, including the ability to yield monitoring data. (6 points)

-The overall technical feasibility of the project from an ecological and engineering perspective, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound, safe, uses appropriate methods and personnel and designed to be robust to projected climatic change impacts. This includes the likelihood that a project is able to achieve stated project goals and objectives. (6 points)

-The extent to which the project can measure progress towards broad project goals and evaluate success across clearly identified, measurable objectives using adequate and meaningful pre- and post-monitoring of both implementation and effectiveness parameters within the award period. (6 points)

-The degree to which the project features self-sustaining restoration techniques or, if necessary, includes long-term management of the restored resource. (6 points)

-The degree to which the landowner has provided assurance of support and dedication to protecting the project for its useful life (letter of support, conservation easement, or significant financial investment). (5 points)

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the proposed work. For the NOAA RC Project Grants competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

-The capacity/knowledge of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing projects that restore coastal habitats. Projects that require engineering decision making should highlight the qualifications and experience of the designer/engineer. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged.(5 points)

-The facilities/equipment and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant, or that will be secured to support and successfully manage the restoration work and grant responsibilities. (5 points)

4. Project Costs (20 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the NOAA RC Project Grants competition, applications will be evaluated on the following:

-The extent to which funds will be dedicated to project implementation compared to the percentage for general program support such as administration, salaries, overhead and travel. Proposals should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours/costs and contractual hours/costs by task so the extent to which costs are directly related to on-the-ground restoration activities can be assessed. (5 points)

-Whether the proposed budget is sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of federal and any non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing $5,000 or more) will be evaluated on how strongly tied the equipment is to achieving on-the-ground habitat restoration and on the adequacy of lease versus buy comparisons in justifying the need for purchase. (5 points)

-The ability of the applicant to demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a budget overview for the entire project should be provided to allow the Selecting Official to make an informed determination of a project's readiness, need for funding, and cost-benefit ratio. (5 points)

-The overall leverage of NOAA funds anticipated, including any other federal funding anticipated or awarded and the amount and type (e.g. cash, in-kind) of the official non-federal match commitment to the requested NOAA funding. NOAA encourages a non-federal cost-sharing at a 1:1 level to leverage funding or other resources, improve cost-effectiveness, and encourage partnerships. The extent to which applicants provide documentation that confirms acceptable secured non-federal match available within the proposed project period will be considered. (5 points)

5. Outreach and Education (5 points)

NOAA assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the NOAA RC Project Grants competition, applications will be evaluated on the following:

-Public outreach as it relates to the proposed project, including plans to disseminate information on project goals, results, and project partners; sources of funding and other support provided, such as the involvement of project partners; and the potential for the proposed project to encourage future restoration and protection of coastal habitats or complement other local restoration or conservation activities. (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will undergo an initial administrative review to determine if they are eligible and complete. Proposals that are not in a U.S. Area of Concern, and do not have a letter of endorsement from a RAP implementation group will not be reviewed. Eligible applications will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process to determine how well they meet the stated aims of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA. Eligible applications will be evaluated by three or more merit reviewers as part of a technical review following the Evaluation Criteria listed above. After the technical review, a panel will meet to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official (SO) regarding which proposals best meet the program objectives and priorities (Sections I.A. and I.B.). The panel will be comprised of federal employees and may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means to discuss applications.

The panel will be presented with the top ranked applications, per the results of the technical review, technical review scores, and comments for each application. The panel will rate all top ranked proposals on the following scale:

1 - Marginal; application partially meets some of the evaluation criteria (Section V.A) but does not address program priorities outlined in the FFO.

2 - Fair; application adequately meets some of the evaluation criteria (Section V.A) and sufficiently addresses a program priority outlined in the FFO.

3 - Good; application thoroughly meets much of the evaluation criteria (Section V.A) and addresses program priorities outlined in the FFO.

4 - Excellent; application fully meets most of the evaluation criteria (Section V.A) and exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in the FFO.

Panel member scores will be averaged and an interim ranking will result which will be presented to the panel for discussion, with the goal of reaching consensus on the applications to be recommended for funding. After discussing the applications a final ranking from the panel will should be given primary consideration by the SO in deciding which applications will be recommended to NOAA's Grants Management Division.

C. Selection Factors

The SO anticipates recommending applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors:

1. Availability of funding;

2. Balance/distribution of funds: a) geographically, b) by type of institutions, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas; e) by project types;

3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;

4. Program priorities and policy factors set out in section I.A. and I.B.;

5. An applicant's prior award performance;

6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to NOAA's Grants Management Division.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scored applications. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those

recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file until the selection process has been validated and approved by the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Law Division and then destroyed.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by June 1, 2015 and notifications to all applicants are anticipated to be made as soon as possible thereafter. The earliest anticipated start date for projects will be August 1, 2015, dependent on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis, and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA's Grants Management Division, and NOAA staff that will administer these restoration grants. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management system.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010).

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Administrative Requirements.

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management system.

In addition, award documents provided by NOAA's Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill, and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as requirements for submitting progress reports.

2. NEPA Requirements

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applications that are seeking NOAA funding for projects. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) implementation regulations. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, safety concerns, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, and impacts to endangered and threatened species).

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their projects so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposed project. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not awarding a grant. Documentation of requests/completion of required environmental authorizations and permits, including Endangered Species Act authorizations, if applicable, should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

Applicants proposing restoration activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Supplemental PEA and FONSI will be informed after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an EA prior to an award being made, or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities if one exists. The CRP PEA and FONSI can be found at http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/funding/applicantresources.html If additional information is

required after an application is accepted, funds can be withheld by NOAA's Grants Management Division under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental law compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Restrictions Governing Making Grants to Corporations Convicted of Felony Criminal Violations and/or Unpaid Federal Tax Liabilities. Pursuant to sections 543 and 544 of Public Law 112-55, Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012, execution by an applicant of the 'Representation by Corporations Regarding a Unpaid Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Conviction Under Any Federal Law' form will be required in a format requested by NOAA before any award will be made under this FFO announcement.

C. Reporting

Performance progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods. Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information. Progress reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer via NOAA's Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information. Currently, a fill-form and format for project progress reports can be found on the NOAA Office of Habitat website at: http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/funding/applicantresources.html In addition, grantees will be required to comply with various EPA reporting measures which will be included in the Special Award Conditions associated with the award. Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 - March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 - September 30 (due by October 30) throughout the award period and are submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division via NOAA Grants Online System.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. 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 over $25,000.

New Reporting Requirement: Complete details on reporting requirements, including those that might be new to applicants under the Federal Financial Assistance Transparency

Act, will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by NOAA in the award package.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Julie Sims at 734-741-2385 or by email and julie.sims@noaa.gov or Jessica Berrio at 301-427-8654 or by email Jessica.Berrio@noaa.gov . Prospective applicants are invited to contact NOAA staff before submitting an application to discuss whether their project ideas are within the scope of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's objectives and NOAA's mission and goals. Additional information on habitat restoration can be found at http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/index.html

VIII. Other Information

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634) are applicable to this solicitation.

Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements (OMB Uniform Guidance) (https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards), which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A 122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-102 and A 110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards to be codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Once adopted, the OMB Uniform Guidance will supersede DOC′s uniform administrative requirements set out at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the OMB Uniform Guidance by December 26, 2014, meaning that the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non-Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at https://cfo.gov/cofar/.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency priorities.

Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)) or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) are not applicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

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

The use of the standard NOAA grant application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. 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.