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: FY 2013 Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project Grants

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2013-2003587

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 February 19, 2013. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The principal objective of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project solicitation is to identify and support proactive restoration project(s), which use a habitat-based approach to foster species recovery and increase fish production. Proposals submitted under this solicitation will be selected based on their ability to demonstrate how the proposed habitat restoration actions will help recover threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (hereafter, Listed Species), sustain or help rebuild fish stocks managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (hereafter, Managed Species), or benefit other coastal and marine species with a nexus to NMFS management. Successful proposals will 1) identify a habitat-based issue/concern limiting the recovery or sustainability of one or more target species (e.g. fish, marine mammals, sea turtles); 2) identify the project(s)' outcome goal(s) and describe in detail the actions and on-the-ground habitat restoration project(s) to be undertaken to resolve the issue/concern and; 3) describe the measurable impact on the target species, including evaluation techniques.

Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will primarily be funded through cooperative agreements. Multi-year cooperative agreement awards will be considered, and additional releases of funds may be used to fund selected proposals through FY15 without further competition. Awards are dependent upon the amount of funds Congress makes available to NOAA for this purpose in the FY13-FY15 budgets.

NOAA anticipates approximately $20 million may be available over the next three years to maintain selected awards, dependent upon the level of funding made available by Congress. NOAA anticipates typical awards will range from $500,000 to $5 million over three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a budget of less than $100,000 or more than $10 million.

One, two, or three year proposals will be accepted. Funds will be administered by the NOAA Restoration Center.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The principal objective of the NMFS Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project solicitation is to identify and support proactive restoration project(s), which use a habitat-based approach to foster species recovery and increase fish production. Proposals submitted under this solicitation will be selected based on their ability to demonstrate how the proposed habitat restoration actions will help recover threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (Listed Species), improve or sustain fish stocks managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Managed Species), or benefit other coastal and marine species with a nexus to NOAA management. Successful proposals will: 1) identify a habitat-based issue/concern limiting the recovery or sustainability of one or more target species; 2) identify the project(s) outcome goal(s) and describe in detail the actions and on-the-ground habitat restoration project(s) to be undertaken to resolve the issue/concern and; 3) describe the measurable impact on the target species, including evaluation techniques.

As described in the NOAA Habitat Blueprint (http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/habitatblueprint/), healthy habitat is critical to recover and sustain populations of NOAA trust species. Under this solicitation, NOAA seeks proposals benefitting the habitats of Listed or Managed Species or their prey. Proposals benefitting other coastal and marine species with a nexus to NMFS management through the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Coral Reef Conservation Act and Species of Concern under NMFS will also be considered.

Applications may cover an award period between one and three years. As deemed appropriate by NOAA, an award that extends beyond three years can be approved. 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. If multiple restoration sites are included within one proposal, applicants are encouraged to develop a watershed approach for restoration, which links proposed sites by the habitat-based issue or concern or proposed target species and outcome goal.

B. Program Priorities

The program priorities for this funding opportunity primarily support NOAA's "Ecosystems" mission goal of "Protect, Restore, and Manage Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through Ecosystem-Based management." Restoration includes, but is not limited to, 1) activities that contribute to the return of degraded or altered marine, estuarine, coastal, and freshwater, diadromous fish habitats to functioning habitats or 2) techniques that return target species to their historical habitats. High priority will be given to proposals that fulfill the following goals:

--Have the greatest potential to recover Listed Species under NOAA jurisdiction, including Candidate Species, specifically through project(s) that are consistent with, or identify links to, species Recovery Plans;

--Have the greatest potential to improve or sustain populations of Managed Species, specifically through project(s) that restore or enhance Essential Fish Habitat or identify links to Fishery Management Plans;

--Provide sustainable and lasting ecological benefits of regional significance;

--Propose sufficient, cost-effective implementation monitoring to verify that the project(s) was implemented as designed and determine if the restoration action is providing a basic level of effectiveness, if appropriate. For proposals including in-depth, longer-term monitoring, 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.

Furthermore, while all types of restoration meeting the goals above will be considered, priority may be given to the following methods:

--Removal of in-stream migration barriers for diadromous fish;

--Hydrologic reconnection of wetlands;

--Coral reef restoration, which addresses land-based sources of pollution, invasive species, and promotes other population recovery and recruitment activities; and

--Bivalve shellfish habitat restoration, which includes some form of protection from harvest in order to maximize long-term direct and/or indirect benefits to NOAA trust species, as well as additional ecosystem services.

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;

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a; and Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1535.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates approximately $20 million may be available over the next three years to maintain selected awards, dependent upon the level of funding made available by Congress. NOAA anticipates typical awards will range from $500,000 to $5 million over three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a budget of less than $100,000 or more than $10 million. One, two, or three year proposals will be accepted.

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 are expected to be funded based on progress towards milestones and availability of funding. Any funds provided to successful applicants will be at the discretion of the NOAA Restoration Center Chief and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD).

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific award or to obligate any available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all recommended 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 funds made available by Congress in FY13 and subsequent fiscal years.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications may cover an award period between one and three years. Applicants with a multiple-year award request should divide their funding request into logical segments over one to three consecutive years, based on their implementation plan. As deemed appropriate by NOAA, an award that extends beyond three years can be approved. The earliest start date for awards is anticipated to be August 1, 2013, but awards may not be available until October 1, 2013.

Once funds are awarded in FY13, 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. 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's expiration date, as per NOAA Award Conditions.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will primarily be funded through cooperative agreements since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in many aspects of the awards. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, hands-on technical assistance; participation in feasibility studies, design plans, and construction oversight to ensure benefits are realized; 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 discuss or highlight restoration activities.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. territories, and state, local and Native American tribal governments. Applicants must be proposing work in geographic areas that benefit species with a nexus to NOAA management, further detailed in section III.C. 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.

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 and marine habitat restoration. To this end, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate partnerships and some portion of non-federal match (suggested at 1:1) for NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed award. 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 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." Applications selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing (if applicable) reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Section III.A presents information distinguishing eligible versus ineligible organization types. Applications must propose work on target species with a nexus to NOAA management, namely marine and estuarine species and diadromous fish species. Projects in the Commonwealth and Territories of the United States, for this solicitation defined as American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, are eligible, but those in the Freely Associated States are not. Proposals that solely benefit freshwater fish species or Listed Species under the jurisdiction of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service are not eligible. Projects in the Great Lakes watershed, while potentially under NOAA jurisdiction, are not eligible as there are separate funding opportunities available for those projects. Projects that focus on marine debris prevention and removal are not eligible as there is a separate funding opportunity available for those projects.

All applications MUST contain ALL required forms; if these forms are not signed via the www.Grants.gov application process, they MUST be signed in ink. Paper applications should also be accompanied by a CD or DVD with the entire application as one Adobe PDF file. Paper applications without inked signatures on their forms will be ineligible and will not be reviewed. Application forms are available on www.Grants.gov. As stated in Section II.A, under this solicitation, NOAA will not accept proposals with a budget request of less than $100,000 or more than $10 million.

NOAA recognizes that water quality issues can impact Listed Species recovery and Managed Species sustainability. However, this initiative is intended to fund on-the-ground habitat restoration resulting in physical habitat modifications and beneficial ecological impacts. Proposals dealing only with water quality improvement measures are not eligible. Ineligible activities 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 and implementation of farm waste management plans.

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, 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.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants should apply through the www.Grants.gov website. A complete standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each application must include the application forms from the SF-424 form family:

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

--Budget Information for Non-construction Programs: SF-424A (prior to award, an SF-424A for each year of funding will be required)

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

--Certification Regarding Lobbying: CD-511

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

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

--Project summary (described below, 2 page limit);

--Project narrative (described below, 15 page limit);

--A detailed budget justification (described below, 6 page limit);

--A data sharing plan (described below, 2 page limit)

--Project design plans

--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 resume 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;

--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 (3) 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

--Brief Project Description/Executive Summary: Briefly describe the activities to be accomplished with the requested funds including: 1) a habitat-based issue/concern limiting the recovery or sustainability of one or more target species; 2) identify the project(s)' outcome goal(s) and describe in detail the actions and on-the-ground habitat restoration project(s) to be undertaken to resolve the issue/concern and; 3) the measurable impact on the target species, including evaluation techniques.

--Project Performance Measures and Outcomes -Number of acres to be restored or stream miles to be made accessible to diadromous fish through the proposed activities and any other anticipated long-term ecological and socioeconomic outcomes

--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 page limit):

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. In general, proposals should 1) identify a habitat-based issue/concern limiting the recovery or sustainability of one or more target species; 2) identify the project(s)' outcome goal(s) and describe in detail the actions and on-the-ground habitat restoration project(s) to be undertaken to resolve the issue/concern and; 3) describe the measurable impact on the target species, including evaluation techniques.

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.

The narrative should succinctly describe the historic condition of the restoration site(s) and the habitat-based issue/concern that is the primary focus of the proposal. Additionally, the narrative should describe any processes that have resulted in degradation of the habitat and how these processes have been abated to allow for successful restoration. The narrative should identify one or more species targeted by the proposed habitat restoration and their historic and current status or population estimates. The narrative should also highlight any synergies with other restoration efforts in the watershed, especially ESA recovery plans, fishery management plans, or other fishery-related strategic planning or management documents. Any additional societal benefits, such as increased business opportunities, recreation opportunities, decreased safety hazards, or minimization of maintenance costs that may result from the proposed habitat restoration should also be succinctly described within the project narrative.

The short-term objectives and long-term outcome goals of the proposed habitat restoration activities should be clearly identified. The project narrative should also describe the anticipated impact of the proposed restoration on the habitat-based issue/concern and the target species. Detailed, technical information about the proposed restoration activities and site(s) should be included in the project narrative. For each restoration site, applicants

should clearly identify the project phase(s) proposed (e.g. feasibility study, design, construction) and detail the implementation plan and proposed restoration techniques. For applicants proposing feasibility and design activities, a detailed scope of services or tasks to be completed under this award should be included in the proposal. For applicants proposing construction, design plans, specifications, scope of work for services, and cost estimates should be included in the proposal. Applicants proposing to alter tidal exchange should also provide a hydrograph showing any tidal restriction(s) and projected conditions with restoration.

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), as well as a commitment to quickly provide information needed by NOAA to analyze project impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, see 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 information for the lead agency person, and where public copies of the document are available.

To protect the federal investment, the narrative should describe future management, beyond the award period, including mechanisms to protect, maintain, or sustain the restoration site(s) so the effects of the funded project(s) can benefit the target species and their habitat decades into the future. Applicants proposing to install fish passage devices or operational control structures like self-regulating tide gates should include discussion of a management plan that details who will be in charge of the operation and maintenance of such structures and how they will be operated in the future. Applicants proposing to place plants or animals into the environment should include the origin/source and regional stock of the plant or animal, and describe the proximity to any existing or remnant sources of similar type in the area. Applicants should also describe how the proposed restoration design/methodology/techniques account for or provide for adaptation to known or potential climate change impacts.

All proposals should include a discrete monitoring proposal 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); 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. Guidance on implementation monitoring for selected restoration types are available at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources.

NOAA will also consider proposals that include more in-depth, longer-term monitoring that addresses ecologic effectiveness or restoration technique effectiveness. We are particularly interested in effectiveness monitoring designed to document changes in the abundance, fecundity, and other metrics of target species' improvement. NOAA may choose to provide additional funds to an award or increase the award period for successful applicants whose awards are identified as suitable for conducting more in-depth, longer-term effectiveness monitoring.

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 award, with a detailed narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal (if applicable) shares. The object classes should match those found in 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. Another example would be a project that requested construction costs for distinct sites in each of three years. One, two, or three year proposals will be accepted.

If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a budget overview for the entire project to demonstrate how the NOAA request relates to the overall project budget and outcomes should be provided. If the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, the amount(s) requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal should be included.

Additional budget development guidance is available at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources. 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 narrative budget justification should be sufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of the cost breakdown and calculations used to derive the line item subtotals in each object class of the SF-424A budget form. An SF-424A for each year of requested funding will be required prior to award, but not as part of the initial application.

4. Data Sharing Plan (2 pages)

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 described in Section VI.B.3 below, and will be reviewed as part of the Evaluation Criteria under V.A.1. Examples are provided at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources.

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 February 19, 2013. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. See section F. for more information.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted under the FFO are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC). To find out about and comply with a State's process under Executive Order 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

E. Funding Restrictions

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. Incurring pre-award costs before the NOAA GMD provides an award document is at the applicant's own risk. The earliest date for receipt of awards for this funding opportunity is anticipated to be August 1, 2013.

The budget may include 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 award. 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 20 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 20 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as non-federal leverage. Limiting indirect costs may lead to a higher score for applications (see Section V.A.4).

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, then they may direct-cost all charges.

F. Other Submission Requirements

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

We highly recommend that applicants 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 current registration in the Central Contractor Registration or System for Award Management (CCR/SAM) system. Applicants should allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR/SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically. In all, there are approximately five steps needed to set up your organization's Grants.gov account (see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp). After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses (the first confirms receipt; the second confirms that there are no errors with an application submission; and the third validates 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.

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. If applicants are unsure about the success of their submission to Grants.gov, applicants may also mail a hard copy application; see below for details. If an applicant does not wish to use the preferred submission method (Grants.gov), a hard copy application must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by the deadline under "Submission Dates and Times," Section IV.C and sent to: NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East West

Highway, Rm. 14873, Silver Spring, MD 20910. ATTN: NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project Applications.

Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications provided to a private delivery service (e.g. FedEx) must be documented with a receipt. In any event, applications received later than seven business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. If submitting a hard copy application, the three federal forms with signature lines (SF-424, SF-424B, CD-511) MUST be signed with an original inked signature; failure to complete this task shall result in disqualification from this competition. See sections III.C and IV.C for relevant information regarding submitting a hard copy. Per section III.C, applications that do not follow these requirements will not be reviewed.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

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

1. Importance and Applicability (38 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:

-- Have one or more target species (e.g., fish, marine mammals, turtles) been identified? How great is the potential of the project(s) to restore or enhance habitat for the benefit of: 1) species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (or Candidate Species) under NOAA jurisdiction; 2) species managed by NOAA under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, including projects benefitting Essential Fish Habitat; or 3) other species with a nexus to NMFS management such as through the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Coral Reef Conservation Act, or NMFS Species of Concern? (Projects that address #1 or #2 will be scored out of 15 points. Projects that address only #3 will be scored out of 10 points.)

--To what extent does the proposal describe the habitat issue limiting recovery or sustainability of the target species, the state of the target species' habitat/populations within

the watershed/affected area, and propose actions with a measureable impact on the target species (e.g., contribute to the recovery or sustainability of target species populations)? (8 points)

-- Does the proposal establish that the project(s) is a high priority as evidenced by reference to a specified ESA recovery plan, restoration plan, watershed assessment, or other publicly-vetted planning document or process, especially one with fishery emphasis such as an interstate fisheries management plan? (5 points)

--To what extent does the project(s) meet NOAA's mission to protect and restore marine and coastal habitats by delivering tangible, specific results that are measurable and relevant to NOAA performance measures such as 1) acres restored, 2) stream miles opened for fish passage, or 3) similar outputs that directly result from the project(s)? (5 points)

--Has the proposal included a Data/Information Sharing 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; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data? (2 points)

--Will the project(s) yield environmentally compatible socio-economic benefits, such as increased business opportunities, community revitalization, recreation opportunities, decreased safety hazards, or minimization of maintenance costs? (3 points)

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (27 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:

--To what extent is the 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? To what extent does the proposed methodology account for or provide for adaptation to known or potential climate change impacts? (8 points)

--To what extent does the proposal completely describe the restoration effort, any milestones throughout the course of the project(s), and a realistic time frame (within the 1-3 year award period) to reach those milestones? A complete project description should include all phases of the restoration from initial feasibility study through design, permitting, construction, monitoring, and maintenance. (8 points)

--To what extent will the project(s) have a measurable impact on the habitat-based issues/concern identified? This includes the likelihood that the applicant is able to demonstrate progress towards stated recovery and sustainability goals. Will the project measure progress towards broad goals and evaluate success across clearly identified, measurable objectives using adequate and meaningful pre- and post-implementation monitoring? In addition to implementation and basic effectiveness monitoring, where appropriate, projects that propose in-depth effectiveness monitoring designed to document changes in the abundance, fecundity, or other metrics relating to target species' improvement, will receive stronger scores. Further guidance is provided at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources. (6 points)

--How great is the potential of the restoration effort to be sustainable and provide lasting benefits of regional or national significance for the target species and their habitat? Is there land owner/land manager support, documented in the proposal (e.g., a support letter)? 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? (5 points)

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicant (8 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):

--Restoration and Conservation Background: Does the applicant have the capacity/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 that restore marine and coastal habitats, especially those benefitting Listed or Managed Species? (5 points)

--Resources and Capabilities: Does the applicant describe the facilities, equipment and/or administrative resources available to support and successfully manage the restoration work and award responsibilities? (3 points)

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:

--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 phase to

place the funding request in context. Multi-year or multi-phase award requests should also include annual/interim milestones that correspond to logical funding increments. (5 points)

--Has the applicant demonstrated a realistic understanding of restoration costs by providing a budget (broken down by SF424A object classes) that provides sufficient detail and credible cost estimates and justifications for both federal and non-federal shares? (5 points)

--Does the proposed budget direct the majority of funds, including funds for salaries, to implement habitat restoration (project development, design, implementation and monitoring), compared to the percentage used for general program support including administration, salaries, overhead, and travel? (5 points)

--Does the proposed non-federal match meet or surpass the suggested 1:1 level, and is any part of the contribution confirmed? Is cash match proposed? Can the applicant leverage the federal investment through matching contributions and/or partnerships? Applicants that propose to use independent sources of funds for in-depth evaluation and monitoring of long-term ecological and/or socio-economic impacts of a project outside the award period will score higher for this sub-criterion. (5 points)

5. Outreach and Education (7 points): NOAA assesses whether the award can deliver a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the nation's natural resources. For the NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project Grants competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

--Does the proposed project(s) include community involvement that demonstrates the restoration effort has been put forward by common agreement? To what degree does the project(s) have community support as demonstrated by a diversity of partners and/or sponsorship (letters of support, confirmed contributions) from local entities, state and local governments, and/or members of Congress? (4 points)

--Does the proposal include public outreach as it relates to the proposed restoration, including plans to disseminate information on: 1) restoration goals and results; 2) sources of funding and other support provided, such as the involvement of partners; and 3) the potential for the proposed restoration to encourage future restoration and protection of marine and coastal habitats or complement other local restoration or conservation activities? (3 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will undergo an initial administrative review to determine if they are eligible and complete, per Section III.A. 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 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:

3- Excellent-- Application exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B., and was highly responsive to Evaluation Criteria;

2-Good-- Application partially addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B. and was strongly responsive to Evaluation Criteria; or

1-Fair-- Application marginally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B. and was moderately responsive to Evaluation Criteria.

This rating will be presented to the SO for funding consideration and will be the primary consideration of the SO in deciding which applications will be recommended to the NOAA GMD, pending the application of selection factors below.

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) 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 section I.A. and I.B.;

(5) An applicant's prior award performance;

(6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and

(7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA 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. 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

NOAA will attempt to notify highly-ranked applicants by June 30, 2013. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be August 1, 2013, but awards may not be available until October 1, 2013. 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.

If sufficient funding is not available in FY13 for all highly ranked proposals, NOAA may use this FFO to allocate FY14 funding.

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 including monitoring, the award duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project Grant will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA GMD, and NOAA staff that will administer these restoration awards.

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 CCR/SAM 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), http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl.

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 and NOAA standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's online financial assistance management system. In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA GMD through the Grants Online award package may contain program-specific special award conditions. These award conditions are subject to change prior to award but are provided at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources.

2. NEPA Requirements

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

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 www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources. 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 restoration activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis, that are not covered by the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Supplemental PEA and FONSI, or whose activities are not covered under another agency's NEPA compliance procedures, which can be analyzed and adopted by NOAA, will be informed after the technical review stage. Such applicants 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/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 or for terminating an award.

3. NOAA's Data Sharing Policy

Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants/ cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publicly available at the time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

More information about the Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Committee website at: www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php

C. Reporting

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 90 days after the end date of this award.

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 of $25,000 and over.

VII. Agency Contacts

Supplemental Guidance regarding proposal writing and a checklist to submit a complete proposal can be found at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources and www.habitat.noaa.gov/funding/coastalrestoration.html, respectively. For further information contact Melanie Gange at (301) 427-8664, or by e-mail at Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact NOAA RC staff before submitting an application to discuss their NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project Grants ideas with respect to technical merit and NOAA's restoration and fishery management objectives.

VIII. Other Information

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation. 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 Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments"; and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 Code of Federal Regulations, subpart 31.2 "Contracts with Commercial Organizations." All cost reimbursement sub-awards (e.g., subgrants, subcontracts) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

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 4040-0004, 4040-0006, 4040-0007, 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.