FY 2018 Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Funding Opportunity Description . . . 3
A. Program Objective . . . 3
B. Program Priorities . . . 3
C. Program Authority . . . 15
II. Award Information . . . 15
A. Funding Availability . . . 15
B. Project/Award Period . . . 15
C. Type of Funding Instrument . . . 16
III. Eligibility Information . . . 16
A. Eligible Applicants . . . 16
B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement . . . 16
C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility . . . 16
IV. Application and Submission Information . . . 16
A. Address to Request Application Package . . . 16
B. Content and Form of Application . . . 16
C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) . . . 20
D. Submission Dates and Times . . . 21
E. Intergovernmental Review . . . 21
F. Funding Restrictions . . . 21
G. Other Submission Requirements . . . 22
V. Application Review Information . . . 22
A. Evaluation Criteria . . . 22
B. Review and Selection Process . . . 24
C. Selection Factors . . . 25
D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates . . . 26
VI. Award Administration Information . . . 27
A. Award Notices . . . 27
B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements . . . 27
C. Reporting . . . 30
VII. Agency Contacts . . . 31
VIII. Other Information . . . 31

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 2018 Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN)

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-SE-2018-2005326

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.433, Marine Fisheries Initiative

Dates: Applications must be received by http://www.grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 pm, Eastern Daylight Savings Time, Tuesday, October 31, 2017. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received more than 5 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Southeast Region, is seeking proposals under the Marine Fisheries Initiative Program (MARFIN), for research and development projects that optimize the use of fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and off the South Atlantic states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, involving the U.S. fishing industry (recreational and commercial), including fishery biology, resources assessment, socio-economic assessment, management and conservation, selected harvesting methods, and fish handling and processing. This program addresses NOAA's mission goal "Healthy Oceans."

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN) is a competitive Federal assistance program that funds projects seeking to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources through cooperative efforts involving the best research and management talents to accomplish priority activities. Projects funded under MARFIN provide answers for fishery needs covered by the NMFS Strategic Plan, available from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), particularly those goals relating to: rebuilding over-fished marine fisheries, maintaining currently productive fisheries, and integrating conservation of protected species and fisheries management. Funding priorities for MARFIN are formulated from recommendations received from non-scientific and technical experts and from NMFS research and operations officials.

With the long-term planning capabilities available through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process, the priorities are selected to coordinate assessment needs with this solicitation.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must address one of the priority areas listed below as they pertain to federally managed species. If you select more than one priority, you should list first on your application the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. Projects should focus on the greatest probability of recovering, maintaining, improving, or developing fisheries; collecting data directly applicable for improving stock assessments, collecting and improving data on bycatch estimates and protected species fishery interactions, and/or generating increased social and economic values and opportunities for the commercial, recreational, and subsistence sectors of fisheries.

The priorities are not listed in any particular order of importance.

1. Bycatch

The bycatch of biological organisms (including interactions with sea turtles, marine mammals, and endangered or threatened fishes and coral) by various fishing gear types can have wide-reaching impacts from a fisheries management and an ecological standpoint. Numerous factors contribute to bycatch and bycatch mortality, including fishing gear, depth, species morphology, environmental variables, and regulations. Determining methods and

gear for reducing bycatch and bycatch mortality can reduce fishing mortality and operational costs, increase efficiency, conserve protected species, and result in less waste.

a. Collect and analyze observer program data for shrimp otter and skimmer trawl fisheries in inshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico and southeast Atlantic to expand and update current protected species bycatch estimates, temporally and spatially emphasizing areas of greatest impact by shrimping. The statistical design and extent of the shrimp-trawl observation program should ensure bycatch data collected are appropriate and sufficient for stock assessment of the bycatch species, including marine mammals and sea turtles.

b. Identify, develop, and evaluate gear, non-gear, and tactical fishing options to reduce bycatch in the U.S. shrimp trawl fisheries, including dolphin and sea turtle bycatch in Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic shrimp trawl fisheries and smalltooth sawfish bycatch in Gulf shrimp fisheries off Southwest Florida.

c. Explore methods and data collection for estimating protected species interactions and capture rates in U.S. shrimp trawls, including sea turtle interactions as identified in the 2014 biological opinion on shrimp fisheries.

d. Characterize bycatch in the rock and royal red shrimp fisheries.

e. Determine the impact of shrimp trawl bycatch on the habitat and all non-target species of fish and invertebrates (i.e., include impacts on habitat and all incidental species, not just the impact on other "fishery resources").

f. Studies are needed to evaluate the impacts of the Gulf of Mexico individual fishing quota programs on bycatch, including whether discards are due to harvest of undersized fish or lack of sufficient allocation. Studies are also needed to estimate the magnitude and condition of discarded managed species associated with regulations (e.g., quota and seasonal closures, minimum size limits, bag limits, and trip limits) in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic.

g. Research is needed on catch-and-release mortality of reef fish species by gear (e.g., capture by commercial bandit rigs that are electrically or hydraulically powered), sector (recreational or commercial), and depth. Studies are needed to evaluate acute (short-term observations typically at surface by observers) and chronic, long- term release survival rates.

h. Test gear and tactics that can be used to return regulatory discards and protected species (e.g., Nassau grouper) to depth in the recreational and commercial reef fish fisheries

to minimize or reverse pressure-related fishing trauma, and determine mortality rates.

i. Test and validate the use of on-board recording systems (e.g., electronic logbooks and video monitoring) for capturing information on discarded fishes by the commercial and recreational sectors in reef fish fisheries including species, length, depth, location, and disposition (float, swim, etc.).

j. Identify, develop, and evaluate gear, non-gear, and tactical fishing options to reduce mortality of marine mammals and threatened and endangered; priority fisheries include shrimp, other federally-managed commercial fisheries, recreational hook-and-line fisheries, and fisheries under take reduction teams.

k. Conduct a survey of headboat and charter captains to determine where in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic depredation of hook-and-line gear by bottlenose dolphins, sharks, goliath grouper, and large pelagics occurs, how often, and to characterize fishing practices during depredation events.

l. Research to document predation rates by marine mammals, sharks, and goliath grouper on caught and discarded reef fish and mackerel species for both recreational and commercial sectors.

m. Characterize effort, fishing tactics and catch rates of sea turtles at recreational fishing sites that have significant catch of turtles and recommend changes to reduce bycatch.

n. Identify and pilot innovative methods to monitor and inform protected species interactions and capture rates with trap pot fisheries.

o. Observe the Gulf of Mexico menhaden fishery to quantify interactions with protected species and species that support other fisheries.

p. Quantify the numbers of fish discarded in the reef fish and CMP fisheries.

2. Reef Fish and Other Fishery Resources Associated with Reef Environments
Some species within the reef fish complex are overfished and/or experiencing overfishing because of directed efforts and bycatch in other fisheries. Reef fish are vulnerable to overfishing because they tend to concentrate over specific types of habitat, are often long-lived, may aggregate to spawn, and sometimes change sex.

a. Collect basic biological data for species in commercially and recreationally important

fisheries using statistically defined and defensible sample sizes and sample allocations. For all reef fish species, representative age, length, and sex composition data are needed for all sectors (commercial, private, for-hire), gear, seasons, and areas. Life history studies are needed that cover the complete geographic range of species currently assessed through SEDAR (see Table 1). The typical research needs for assessed stocks are listed in Table 1 while Table 2 outlines data needs by particular stock. Species-specific estimates of recruitment, fecundity, steepness, natural mortality, release mortality, and gear selectivity are also needed for stock assessments, as well as estimates of how catchability has changed through time due to technological and other advances.

(1) Conduct research on age, growth, and reproduction of reef fish in anticipation of upcoming stock assessments. Collect basic fishery information (landings, discards, and biological characteristics) for all managed stocks necessary to develop age-based quantitative stock assessments for those stocks that comprise the bulk of the fishery, or serve as important ecological indicators.

(a) Obtain fish ages from commercial and recreational fishing sectors (e.g., private, charter, headboat) that are representative of the catches for South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Caribbean species. Conduct representative sampling of age- and length-composition consistently across area, time, and gear. Examine the age structure of reef fishes taken from longlines (survey and fishery) and other gear, to evaluate availability to gear types and the geographic distribution of fish as they age. Resolve any discrepancies in fish age estimates by different institutions.

(b) Identify spawning aggregation locations for reef fishes in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and U.S. Caribbean.

(2) Develop three-dimensional larval dispersal/connectivity models for identifying and predicting spatial patterns of recruitment of reef fishes in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and U.S. Caribbean.

(3) Assess the contribution of live bottom habitat, marine protected areas, special management zones, and habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC) in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Caribbean to spawning locations, reef fish recruitment, and survival. Identify the critical habitats for food, cover, spawning, nursery areas, and migration.

(4) Conduct comprehensive fishery-independent monitoring and sampling in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Caribbean to support quantitative assessments, track changes in fish size and abundance through time, assess status and trends of reef fish species, and reconcile differences between catch per unit effort indices and fishery-dependent age composition used for stock assessments. Indices should cover a broad seasonal/spatial scale and age structure.

(5) Determine the relationship between juvenile reef fish and estuarine habitat. If an

obligatory relationship is found, determine the distributions, rates of change, and documented causes of loss for estuarine habitat types.

(6) Quantify the relationship between reef fish production and habitat. What are the key trophic pathways in the ecosystem, and how does the flux of essential nutrients, carbon compounds, and energy through these systems influence fisheries productivity?

(7) Conduct a calibration study to ensure that a methodologically unbiased time-series of reef fish visual census survey data is preserved as the Coral Reef Conservation Program's National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP) transitions from a transect based survey to a stationary point count based survey in the U.S. Caribbean (Puerto Rico and the USVI).

(8) Conduct research to estimate changes in catchability by gear over time due to the introduction of GPS, marine chart-plotting equipment, and artificial reefs.

(9) Conduct research examining species compositions, densities, locations, habitat associations, and size and age distributions of species inside and outside of existing or potential marine protected areas and special management areas.

(10) Evaluate how dredging affects federally-managed fish species' use of shallow sand bottom areas as nursery, spawning, and foraging habitat.

(11) Research the stock structure of reef fish and other fishery resources associated with reef fish environments as listed below:

(a) Examine retention and residency of reef fish species. Examine temporal and spatial differences in the size at age, size at maturity, and other life history characteristics.

(b) Conduct genetic research on stock structure of commercially and recreationally important reef fishes in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and U.S. Caribbean. Evaluation of stock structure and identification of stock units is for use in upcoming SEDAR stock assessments. Continue oceanographic and genetic studies to identify the origin of spiny lobster recruitment to the United States and U.S. Caribbean.

(c) Use genetics techniques to estimate the effective population size of reef fish populations in the U.S. Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic.

(d) Conduct traditional tagging studies or use genetic tag methods to estimate natural mortality and release mortality rates of managed fishes.

(e) Tagging data are needed to help elucidate movement of black sea bass between Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions and movement of Gulf of Mexico red snapper between the eastern and western Gulf. A tag and recapture program for red drum in the Gulf of Mexico is needed to help determine the status of the offshore portion of the stock. Tagging programs specifically designed to examine the mixing of king mackerel between Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic regions should be developed. In the Gulf of Mexico, greater amberjack, the jack complex, and lionfish management also can benefit from tag and recapture studies. Tagging data are needed for U.S. Caribbean spiny lobster to provide estimates of growth and natural mortality.

b. Management of reef fish

(1) Identify ways to design, manage, and implement a U.S. Caribbean fishing permit specific to gear or fishery.
(2) Evaluate the utility of electronic logbooks, video monitoring and other data collection systems for commercial and for-hire fishing sectors in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and U.S. Caribbean. Projects should focus on validation of data and timeliness of data delivery.
(3) Develop pilot studies and methods for enhancing data collection to test alternative depth-based management strategies for the recreational sector, such as harvest tags, days-at-sea, regional state-by-state management, and catch share programs.
(4) Characterize the impacts of invasive species (lionfish, etc.) on ecosystems and their influence on stocks managed by fishery management councils, including information on geographic ranges, rates of expansion, food web dynamics, and habitat (niche) competition with native species.
(5) Conduct density dependence studies using a habitat context to examine the potential effects of habitat on catchability and selectivity.
(6) Increase information on life history bottlenecks and the timing of mortality events relative to density dependent compensation.

3. Red Snapper Research
Red snapper are overfished and undergoing overfishing in the South Atlantic and are overfished in the Gulf of Mexico. Additional information is needed to improve stock assessments of red snapper.

a. Conduct research (e.g., otolith analysis, tagging, etc.) to better describe stock structure and mixing rates of red snapper and other reef fishes between the eastern and western Gulf of Mexico.

b. Obtain better estimates of private recreational catches and discards.

c. Develop and/or evaluate gear, fishing tactics, and management measures to minimize the bycatch of or increase the survival of discarded red snapper and other reef fish species in the directed and shrimp trawl fisheries. Identify fishing tactics and gear that can be used to reduce red snapper interactions and discard mortality in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico with hook-and-line gear.

d. Evaluate the effects of GPS and artificial reefs on catch rates of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.

e. Characterize and assess the impact of bycatch of undersized red snapper, including release mortality, during recreational and commercial fishing. Conduct research on the catch-and- release mortality of red snapper and other reef fish species by gear, sector, and depth. Studies are needed to evaluate acute (short-term observations typically at surface by observers) with chronic, long-term release survival rates. More information is needed on release mortality and discard rate by depth, fish size, season, and fishery. Studies are also needed to evaluate the impacts of the Gulf of Mexico individual fishing quota program on bycatch including whether discards are due to harvest of undersized fish or lack of sufficient allocation.

f. Obtain better estimates of red snapper natural mortality and release mortality in commercial and recreational fisheries and effects of devices and methods to reduce barotrauma.

g. Investigate life history (i.e., growth, survival, feeding, habitat preferences, movement) of larval/juvenile (ages 0 and 1) red snapper in the South Atlantic.

h. Conduct gut content analysis of groundfishes and predator-prey interactions, to assess possible impacts of reductions in shrimp trawl bycatch on post-settlement survival of juvenile red snapper and other reef fishes.

4. Economic and Sociocultural Studies

Social and economic assessments are required components of all fishery management plans and actions. These assessments assist in the determination of whether management objectives have been met. Research will provide information used to improve social and economic assessments.

a. Develop models that explain and predict the production of fishing effort, including participation across fisheries and entry-exit decisions, in response to past and proposed regulatory actions (e.g., annual catch limits, catch shares, allocation, time/area closures, trip and bag limits, and size limits) and other external forces (e.g., imports, trade restrictions, hurricanes and other environmental factors) for the commercial, for-hire and recreational sectors. Research should also consider, when possible, how targeting behavior changes spatially and/or temporally (e.g., when to fish, where to fish, how much to fish, what species to target, what gear to use, etc.) due to the above-mentioned forces.

b. Evaluate the potential use and effects of catch shares for the recreational (private and for-hire anglers) sector.

c. Evaluate the potential use and effects of catch shares for a fishery with a small commercial fishing sector.

d. Identify and examine economic incentives and other innovative alternatives to minimize bycatch and bycatch injury and mortality, including bycatch quotas (aggregate and/or vessel quotas), and alternative fishing practices. The project should contrast the relative economic and social costs, potential gains, and level of bycatch and bycatch injury and mortality reduction associated with traditional methods and any innovative alternatives addressed by the project.

e. Collect social and economic data on Southeast fish processors and dealers, including, information on both year-round and seasonal employers and employees, and bait and tackle shops. The information collected should include, but not be limited to, gender, race and ethnicity, country of origin, and employee wages. Various data collection methodologies may be utilized, such as conducting in-person interviews, surveys, or mixed methods.

f. Collect current economic and social data for reef fish, CMP, and dolphin wahoo fisheries.

g. Examine how coastal development and land management in the U.S. Caribbean has economically and socially affected fishermen, their families, and communities, including, but not limited to, impacts on participation and production in the commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing sectors.

h. Develop a general equilibrium model for assessing the economic implications of an ecosystem management program.

i. Advance integration of economic and social dimensions into ecosystem modeling in the South Atlantic, U.S. Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico.

j. Advance economic evaluation of ecosystem services provided by essential fish habitat.

k. Develop a methodology for estimating the economic value of domestically harvested seafood up to the retail level for commercially harvested species.

l. Develop a methodology for estimating the economic value of initial allocations or reallocations that addresses critiques in the economics literature regarding application of the equimarginal principle in fisheries or sectors that are not managed by catch shares or other

rights based management approaches.

m. Evaluate the social impacts of past and present allocations of harvests (ACLs/quotas) among competing user groups including the commercial, private angler, and for-hire sectors.

n. Determine the quantitative effect of land-use changes (especially commercial dock space and shore-side facilities) in the Key West area on annual production in the Tortugas pink shrimp fishery. Present this as a time series.

5. Integrated Ecosystem Assessment

The goal of Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) is to provide an ecosystem-based fisheries management approach to managing various ecosystem services. By integrating information from all other MARFIN projects such as fisheries stock assessments, bycatch, and community social economics, the IEA uses Management Strategy Evaluation to make clearer the management tradeoffs between multiple users of the available resources. Please note that it is recommended that proposals pertaining specifically to the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) demonstrate direct support of the existing GOM IEA program through collaboration with the GOM IEA team. Proposed projects may include the following:

a. Conduct diet composition and gut content of Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic fishes currently under represented in the existing trophic database or literature.

b. Conduct studies that lead to the quantification of uncertainty (especially climatic variability and process error) of results of various ecosystem modeling platforms.

c. Conduct studies that describe socioeconomic/ecological trade-offs between the various ecosystem services provided by the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem.

d. Identify and quantify ecosystem drivers and pressures and comparative risk analysis of candidate management strategies analysis.

e. Obtain data resurrection, compilation, or community-based knowledge that leads to pertinent data histories that can readily be used in various ecosystem models.

f. Map the Miami-Stetson Terrace to characterize bottom areas, particularly those on the southern end.

g. Conduct Ecopath/Ecosim modeling studies.

h. Develop ecosystem health indices that could be used in a U.S. Caribbean Fishery Ecosystem Plan.

6. Coastal Migratory Pelagics
The goal is to update and improve information used in the assessment process for king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

a. Conduct tagging, genetic or otolith microchemistry studies to identify mixing of stocks. Particularly in the Gulf of Mexico with respect to Mexican and Texas waters.

b. Collect life history information including improved estimate of age and size structure, recruitment, natural mortality, growth rates, fecundity, feeding, habitat use, and migration patterns.

c. Collect fishery dependent catch composition information from U.S. and Mexican ports.

7. Ageing of Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic spiny lobster, crabs, and non-penaeid shrimp

a. Evaluate the feasibility of directly ageing Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic spiny lobster and shrimp utilizing the recent techniques developed for detection of growth bands in calcified regions of the eyestalk or gastric mill in shrimps, crabs, and lobsters.

8. Determine best practices for relocating various sizes and species of Southeast Region corals

a. Study the factors contributing to listed corals' susceptibility to disease and corals' resiliency to climate stressors to support efforts to improve resistance to disease and adaptation to climate impacts.
b. Study the factors impacting coral recruitment, particularly grazing, to inform management measures to facilitate recruitment.
c. Better understand how threatened coral species respond to nutrient, sediment and contaminant loads.

9. Atlantic, Gulf, and shortnose sturgeon

a. Develop new devices and technologies to pass Atlantic, Gulf, and shortnose sturgeon through long-standing barriers to spawning and nursery grounds.

Table 1. Stocks currently assessed through SEDAR.

Gulf of Mexico: Red Snapper, Gag Grouper, Gray Triggerfish, Greater Amberjack, Vermilion Snapper, Red Grouper, Spanish Mackerel, Tilefish, Cobia, Hogfish, Yellowedge Grouper, Scamp, Gray Snapper

South Atlantic: Vermilion Snapper, Black Sea Bass, Red Porgy, Red Snapper, Tilefish, Gag Grouper, Gray Triggerfish, Snowy Grouper, Spanish Mackerel, Blueline Tilefish, Cobia, Greater Amberjack, Red Grouper, Scamp, Gray Snapper

U.S. Caribbean: Spiny Lobster, Queen Trigger, Yellowtail Snapper, Blue Tang, Hogfish, Mutton Snapper, Queen Conch, Queen Snapper, Red Hind, Redtail Parrotfish, Silk Snapper, Stoplight Parrotfish, Yelllowfin Grouper

HMS-Sharks: Blacknose, Blacktip, Bonnethead, Sharpnose, Smooth Dogfish, Dusky Shark, Finetooth Shark, Sandbar Shark

Gulf and South Atlantic: Hogfish, Goliath Grouper, King Mackerel, Mutton Snapper, Spiny Lobster, Yellowtail Snapper, Black Grouper

Please note that U.S. Caribbean stock assessments are typically conducted by Island Platform.

Typical Research Needs for assessed stocks

- Discard mortality rates, particularly considering depth and use of release or descending devices
- Location-specific age and growth information, particularly including the younger age classes
- Location-specific reproduction and fecundity information
- Stock identification
- Age validation
- Independent measures of natural mortality and stock abundance, particularly addressing recruitment or year class strength

Table 2. Highlighted data and research needs by stocks. Stock - Research and Information Needs

South Atlantic
White Grunt - Stock ID
Dolphin - Age information, assessment approach
Red Snapper - Discard mortality rates, private recreational discards
Tilefish - Abundance indices, particularly for juveniles
Gray Triggerfish - Age validation and ageing methodologies, Stock ID
Cobia - Stock identification, abundance indices, tagging
Blueline Tilefish - Stock identification, abundance indices, fecundity
Scamp - Stock identification, age and growth, age validation
Vermilion Snapper - Growth models with age-0 fish
Greater Amberjack - Age validation, discard mortality rates, abundance indices
Gray Snapper - Stock ID, discard mortality, age validation
Spanish Mackerel - Stock ID

Gulf of Mexico
Gag - Continuous red tide effect analysis, sex ratio, recruitment, reproduction
Greater Amberjack - Age composition and validation, recruitment
Gray Triggerfish - Age composition and validation, recruitment, gear selectivity
Vermilion Snapper - Recruitment measures
Spanish Mackerel - Recruitment measures
Tilefish - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID
Cobia - Recruitment measures, discard mortality, stock structure
Yellowedge Grouper - Age and length composition samples, recruitment, discard mortality
Scamp - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID
Gray Snapper - Recruitment measures, age and growth, Stock ID
Red Snapper - Discard mortality rates, effect of devices to reduce barotrauma, stock structure

Gulf and South Atlantic
Goliath Grouper - Non-catch based assessment methods, age and length composition data, recruitment, reproduction, discard mortality rates, gear selectivity
Spiny Lobster - Age composition, recruitment, relationship between the reproductive cycle characteristics in Florida and in the Caribbean, with postlarval recruitment in Florida
Hogfish - Recruitment, stock ID, gear selectivity, discard mortality

Mutton Snapper - FI indices, recruitment, discard mortality
Black Grouper - Recruitment
Yellowtail Snapper - Stock ID, recruitment
King Mackerel - Discard mortality, recruitment, Mexican data

U.S. Caribbean
Life history information, Stock ID for Silk Snapper, Queen Snapper, Mutton Snapper, Red Hind, Coney, Queen Trigger, Dolphin, Spiny Lobster, and Queen Conch

HMS-Sharks
Bull Shark, Sandbar Shark - Stock ID, discard mortality
Finetooth Shark - Stock ID, life history update

Please note this table is not inclusive or prioritized.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the Marine Fisheries Initiative Program is provided by the following: 16 U.S.C 753a and 16 U.S.C. 742d.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Awards are dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress. The fiscal year 2018 budget has not been finalized by Congress and could result in unknown funding scenarios. Applicants are not guaranteed any level of funding. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that funds will be appropriated or that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for any projects. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years beyond the award period. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs.

B. Project/Award Period

The period of award may be from one to three years. It is suggested that a September 1, 2018, start date be requested on the application. In any event, the requested award start date

must begin on the first day of the first month and end on the last day of the last month of the project period.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement depending upon the amount of collaboration, participation, or involvement of NOAA in the management of the project. Substantial involvement includes planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing proposed project activities and frequent contact with the grantee to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants may be institutions of higher education, nonprofits, individuals, and state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible. Foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations are excluded for purposes of this solicitation since the objective of the MARFIN program is to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Not applicable

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package is available at http://www.grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, or if Grants.gov is inaccessible, you can obtain an application package by contacting Kelly Donnelly, Federal Grants Program Manager, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, 263 13th Avenue S., St. Petersburg, FL 33701, Phone: (727) 551-5731, e-mail: kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must adhere to the following instructions and requirements by the proposal

submission deadline. Failure to follow these instructions may be reflected in lower scoring by reviewers. Proposals should be submitted via the Grants.gov website. If you cannot submit your application via Grants.gov, a hard copy of the application will be accepted.

1. Format Requirements:

All pages should be single-spaced and must be composed in at least a 12-point font with one-inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. The project description may not exceed 25 pages, exclusive of title page, project synopsis, literature cited, budget information, resumes of investigator(s), and letters of support (if any). Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirements when printed out. Applications that do not follow the format requirement will be rejected and returned.

2. Content Requirements:

The following forms are required as part of each application and are available on Grants.gov:

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

- Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)

- Assurances, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424-B)

- Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511), and

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

The following information must also be included. Failure to submit any of these will result in the rejection of the application.

a. Signed Title Page: The Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) must be signed by the authorized representative identified in Box 21. Electronic signatures submitted through www.grants.gov satisfy this requirement.

b. Project Synopsis (1-page limit): It is critical that the project synopsis accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the activities. It is imperative that potential applicants tie their proposals to one of the program priorities described in Section I.B., Funding Opportunity Description. The Project Synopsis must identify the principal investigator(s) and include a brief statement of their qualifications.

c. Project Description (25-page limit): The applicant should describe and justify the project being proposed and address each of the evaluation criteria as described below in Section V., Application Review Information. Project descriptions should include clear objectives and specific approaches to achieving those objectives, including methods, timelines, and expected outcomes.

d. Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below, for additional information on what the plan should contain.

e. Literature Cited: If applicable.

f. Budget and Budget Justification: There must be a detailed budget justification accompanying the SF-424A Budget Information form. Provide justifications for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. For multi-year award applications, indicate and describe separate funding amounts for each funding year in the detailed justification and in Section B of the SF-424A Budget Information form. You must submit a copy of a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, if such an agreement exists.

g. Resumes (2 pages maximum for each major participant).

h. Standard Application Forms: Please refer to the appropriate application package available through www.grants.gov. If you do not have internet access or if Grants.gov is inaccessible, an application package may be received by contacting Kelly Donnelly, Federal Grants Program Manager, NOAA/NMFS/SERO; 263 13th Avenue , South, St. Petersburg, FL, 33701, Phone: (727) 551-5731, e-mail: Kelly.Donnelly@noaa.gov.

i. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, applicants are required to answer the following questions:

(1) Has any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or other environmental compliance documentation (e.g., Endangered Species Act Biological Opinion; Letter of Concurrence or Biological Assessment/Evaluation; Clean Water Act permit; State Historic Preservation Officer consultation; state environmental compliance documentation (mini-NEPA); etc.) been completed? If yes, list the environmental compliance documentation that has been completed and provide copies of the documentation as appropriate.

(2) Would the proposed activity or environmental impacts of the activity be subject to public controversy? If yes, describe the potential controversy.

(3) Would the proposed activity have potential environmental impacts that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks? If yes, describe the impacts that are uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

(4) Is the proposed activity related to other activities (both NOAA and non-NOAA that together may cumulatively adversely impact the environment? For example, the proposed activity is one of a series of projects that together may cause a change in the pattern of pollutant discharge, traffic generation, economic change, flood plain change, or land use. If yes, briefly describe the other activities and discuss how the related projects would have cumulative impacts on the environment.

(5) Would the proposed activity involve a non-native species? If yes, describe how the non- native species is involved.

(6) Would the proposed activity occur within a unique geographic area of notable recreational, ecological, scientific, cultural, historical, scenic or aesthetic importance? If yes, describe the area, including the name or designation if known.

(7) Would the proposed activity affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources? If yes, describe the impact.

(8) Would the proposed activity affect public health or safety? The effects may be adverse or beneficial and temporary, long-term, or permanent. If yes, describe the effects and the circumstances that would cause these impacts.

(9) Would the proposed activity affect directly or indirectly, in an adverse or beneficial manner, any listed endangered, threatened, or otherwise protected species or their critical habitat under federal and state laws including the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act? If yes, name the species and/or habitat that will be impacted and describe the circumstances that would impact the species and/or habitat.

j. Applications must identify the principal participants, and include copies of any agreements describing the specific tasks to be performed by participants. Project

applications should give a clear presentation of the proposed work, the methods for carrying out the project, its relevance to managing and enhancing the use of Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and/or Caribbean fishery resources, and cost estimates as they relate to specific aspects of the project. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown, by category of expenditures, with appropriate justification for both the Federal and non-Federal shares.

k. Applications should exhibit familiarity with related work that is completed or ongoing. Proposals should state whether the research applies to the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, or North Atlantic for highly migratory species or multiple areas. Successful applicants are required to collect and manage data in accordance with standardized procedures and format approved or specified by NMFS and to participate with NMFS in specific cooperative activities that are determined by consultations between NMFS and successful applicants before project grants are awarded. All data collected as part of an awarded grant must be provided to NMFS.

l. In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, you should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 5 U.S.C. 552, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

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

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application (i.e. Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number); and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award, application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use

that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant. Applicants should allow a minimum of five days to complete the SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically.

Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through http://www.grants.gov.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by http://www.grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 PM, Eastern Daylight Savings Time (EDST) on October 31, 2017. Use of Grants.gov is preferred. If Grants.gov cannot be used, use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received more than 5 business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of E.O. 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under E.O. 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.

F. Funding Restrictions

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

Funding beyond the first year will be dependent upon satisfactory performance and the continued availability of funds.

The total amount that may be requested shall not exceed $175,000 for a one-year project, $350,000 for a two-year project, and $525,000 for a three-year project. Each funding year cannot exceed $175,000. Applications exceeding these amounts will be rejected and

returned without further consideration.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit applications electronically through http://www.grants.gov. Applicants should note that it can take between 3 and 5 business days, or as long as 3 weeks to register with Grants.gov if all steps are not completed in a timely manner, and registration is required only once. 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, call Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or email them at support@Grants.gov.

If an applicant cannot use Grants.gov, paper applications will be accepted. Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed, original forms in hard copy and an electronic copy of the entire application on CD, including scanned signed forms. If the applicant has completed the entire application in Grants.gov but is unable to submit it via Grants.gov, then this application package should be provided via CD along with printed and signed versions of forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511. The authorized representative MUST sign and date these forms over the printed signature that will appear in the signature box. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound in any manner.

Paper applications must be postmarked or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt and sent to Kelly Donnelly, Federal Grants Program Manager, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, 263 13th Avenue S., St. Petersburg, FL 33701, Phone: (727) 551-5731, e-mail: kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after 11:59 PM, Eastern Daylight Savings Time (EDST), on October 31, 2017, 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 5 calendar days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by three or more

appropriate private and/or public sector experts to determine their technical merit. These reviewers will provide individual evaluations of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given. These reviewers provide comments and assign scores to the applications based on the following criteria, with the points shown in parentheses. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (35 points):

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. Does the proposal describe its relevance to a MARFIN Program Priority, and how information gathered will contribute to NOAA's mission to enhance the understanding of the fishery resource and contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made (20 points)? Does this study address an important problem, providing a clear definition of the problem, issue or research need (10 points)? Is the participation of U.S. fishermen or industry meaningfully incorporated into the project design (3 points)? Is this the best method to obtain the needed data (2 points)?

2. Technical/scientific merit (40 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. Proposals should provide a clear definition of the approach to be used, including descriptions of field work, theoretical studies, and laboratory analysis to support the proposed research.

Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project (15 points)? Are the objectives in the proposal clearly defined and focused, realistic and attainable within the proposed project period (8 points)? Is there sufficient description of the project's environmental impact, such as detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, and any environmental concerns that may exist (4 points)? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider ways to resolve the issues or implement alternative tactics (4 points)? Does the project develop new methodologies or technologies (4 points)? Is sufficient detail provided in the proposal about the methods proposed for monitoring and evaluating the success of the project, and are they appropriate (5 points)?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (15 points):

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

Does the applicant have the expertise to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and partners, if necessary to complete the work, that show adequate experience in successfully completing similar projects (9 points)? Does the applicant describe the facilities, equipment and/or administrative resources available to support and successfully manage the work and award responsibilities (5 points)? If consultants and contractors are conducting the critical activities under the award, is the primary applicant's involvement necessary (1 point)?

4. Project costs (10 points):

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

Is the proposed budget sufficiently detailed, with appropriate breakdown and justification of costs by object class and funding year (6 points)? Is the proposed budget cost-effective and realistic based on the applicant's stated objectives, and time frame (4 points)?

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications must address one of the priority areas listed in Section I.B. (Program Priorities). When we receive applications we will screen them to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see Submission Dates and Times); were submitted by an eligible applicant, and meet the requirements of Section IV.B. (Content and Form of Application). We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it. If your application does not conform to these requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be returned without further consideration.

Each application will be independently reviewed and scored by at least three reviewers with expertise in the applicable subject. These scores are then averaged to determine a final score. Applications are then ranked in descending order by the average scores. The top twenty (including those tied for twentieth) applications will be forwarded to a panel for further review. Those applications that are not in the top twenty category will be eliminated from

further consideration.

Those applications ranking in the top twenty will be presented to the MARFIN Panel, a group of non-NOAA fishery experts. Each member of the panel individually considers: if the needs of the Agency, as described under Priorities, are addressed in each proposal; if the project assists industry; and if the project addresses issues that are important to regional fisheries management. Needs of the agency follow the information identified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Title III, Sections 301 and 404. NMFS will advise members of the MARFIN panel of any unpredicted fishery events, or other issues that arise after the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) is published, which affect the needs of the Agency and the priorities. Panel members will have the option of considering the new information in their individual scoring.

Each member of the panel will independently assign a numerical rating on Grants Online between 1 and 5 for each application according to the following scale, and provide comments to support their score (fractions of whole numbers will not be accepted):

1 - Not recommended
2 - Poor, application was marginally responsive to the evaluation criteria (Section V.A.) but does not address program priorities outlined in the FFO.
3 - Fair; application was adequately responsive to the evaluation criteria (Section V.A.) and marginally addresses program priorities outlined in the FFO.
4 - Good; application was strongly responsive to the evaluation criteria (Section V.A.) and partially addresses program priorities outlined in the FFO.
5 - Excellent; application was highly responsive to the evaluation criteria (Section V.A.) and exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in the FFO.

The panel will give no consensus advice. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of preferred funding based on the number of participating panel members submitting a score. In the event that there are two or more project tied in the panel's ranking, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the Selecting Official based on the Selection Factors, regardless of the tied projects' peer review score.

C. Selection Factors

The MARFIN Panel ratings will be provided in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the following 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 priority
e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups
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 Grant Officer.

In the case of ties among applications that received a panel review, the Selecting Official will justify the selection based on the selection factors. The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate funds.

After applications are proposed for funding by the selecting official, the Grants office performs administration reviews. These may include financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. After administrative review, special conditions appropriate to the degree of risk determined to exist may be applied to the award.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, successful applications are usually recommended for funding within 260 days from the application due date specified in this notice. The earliest start date of awards (1st of a month) is approximately 320 days from the application due date specified in this notice. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications. Based on that timetable, it is suggested that a September 1, 2018, start date (1st of a month) be requested on the application.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and any specific NMFS cooperative involvement with the activities of each project are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and

the NMFS Program Office. Recipients must not initiate projects until an approved award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding by the NOAA Grants Management Division with the issuance of an award signed by a NOAA grants officer. This is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. The award will be issued electronically to the authorizing official of the project.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by the NMFS program office that their proposals were not selected for recommendation. Panel review comments and individual recommendations will not be provided to unsuccessful applicants, unless requested by the applicant.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS. Through 2 C.F.R. Par. 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to https://go.usa.gov/SBYh and https://go.usa.gov/SBg4.

DOC TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system at http://www.ago.noaa.gov and http://go.usa.gov/hKbj.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA

or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

UNPAID TAX LIABILITY. In accordance with Section 523 of Division B and Sections 744 and 745 of Division E of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Pub. L. 113-235) or a future public law, an authorized representative of the selected applicant(s) will be required to provide certain pre-award representations regarding federal felony and federal criminal tax convictions, unpaid federal tax assessments, and delinquent federal tax returns. When applicable under appropriations law, NOAA will provide certain applicants a form to be completed by the applicant's authorized representative making a certification regarding Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law. If a form is provided, an award may not be issued until it is returned and accepted by NOAA.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA). NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site: www.nepa.noaa.gov including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, and the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA. 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, locations, sites, number and species expected to be caught, 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). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grant Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make as assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.205. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency.

DATA SHARING. Data Sharing Plan up to 2 pages (not included in the 25-page limitation; can be submitted as an appendix.)

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

(2) Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Sharing Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Sharing Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. The contents of the Data Sharing Plan) or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative data by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submission and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

(3) NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Sharing Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Sharing Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include the metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

(4) Proposals submitters are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be

submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

INDIRECT COST RATE. An applicant with a current Federally-approved indirect cost rate that is proposing indirect costs in its budget should include a copy of the approved rate with its application. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. 200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS. The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA). In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

C. Reporting

Unless otherwise specified by terms of the award, performance and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Performance reports should include progress on identified milestones. Electronic submission of reports is required and conducted through the use of NOAA's Grants Online system. All reports, other than a comprehensive final performance report, will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30

days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. In addition to the financial and performance reports, grant recipients will be required to submit the comprehensive final performance report 90 days after the project end date.

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.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Kelly Donnelly, Grants Management Branch, (727) 551-5731, or kelly.donnelly@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

None