2017 BREP FFO

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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: 2017 BREP FFO

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-FHQ-2017-2005150

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.472, Unallied Science Program

Dates: Required Pre-proposals must be received by electronic mail to the BREP National Program Coordinator (erin.wilkinson@noaa.gov) by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on February 10, 2017.

Full proposals must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on March 31, 2017.

Funding Opportunity Description: The mission of the National Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) is to develop technological solutions and investigate changes in fishing practices designed to minimize bycatch of fish (including sponges, deep–sea corals, and shallow (tropical) corals) and protected species (including marine mammals, sturgeon, seabirds, and sea turtles) as well as minimize mortality and injury of bycaught species (including post-release injury and mortality). Projects should produce outcomes that can directly influence management needs of federally managed living marine resources.

For FY2017, NMFS anticipates that approximately $2,500,000 could be made available for projects that address bycatch research as identified in the Program Priority Section (I.B.1 - I.B.4).

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

This grant program provides competitive grants to non-Federal researchers working to benefit U.S. fishermen and fisheries by the development of improved fishing practices and innovative gear technologies. The Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act (MSA) requires that NOAA's conservation and management measures minimize bycatch to the extent practicable and established the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) to develop technological devices and other conservation engineering changes to minimize bycatch and reduce post-release mortality of non-target species in our nation's fisheries. Bycatch reduction is a top priority for NMFS, as outlined in the NMFS National Bycatch Reduction Strategy, because bycatch contributes to overfishing, threatens endangered and threatened species and protected marine mammals, and can close fisheries, significantly impacting U.S. economic growth. This Program seeks to support the development and testing of fishing gears that reduce bycatch. NMFS managers and Regional Fishery Management Councils need new bycatch reduction technology to meet the MSA requirements to minimize bycatch and habitat impacts.

B. Program Priorities

The NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries (OSF) proposes to fund applied management projects in the following four high-priority areas. You must identify a priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. Applications must address one of the four priorities listed below.

1. Developing innovative and effective technologies, gear modifications, avoidance programs, and/or improved fishing practices in commercial and recreational fisheries to reduce bycatch impacts. Proposals that specifically reduce impacts to the following are encouraged:

a. Catch share fisheries [e.g. Northeast groundfish, Pacific halibut] – catch share programs are designed to improve the ecological and economic sustainability of fisheries by extending seasons, reducing market gluts, improving safety, and ensuring annual catch limits are not exceeded. In some programs, bycatch of some species is deducted from the allocations provided to individual fishers limiting their ability to harvest other species. Proposals in this sub-priority should seek to facilitate fuller utilization of quotas within a catch share program, while minimizing negative impacts on the bycatch species.

b. Protected species under the Marine Mammal Protection Act or the Engendered Species

Act– such as marine mammals, sea turtles, fish and invertebrates – in particular (but not limited to) those species listed as part of the NOAA "Species in the Spotlight" campaign [e.g. Atlantic salmon Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segments (DPS), Pacific leatherback sea turtle, Sacramento River Winter-Run Chinook and Central California Coast Coho salmon, and Hawaiian monk seal); and priority fisheries such as shrimp, other federally-managed commercial fisheries, recreational hook-and-line fisheries, and fisheries under take reduction teams;

c. Highly migratory species [in particular, but not limited to tuna, shark, swordfish, and billfish];

d. Fish stocks that are overfished, where overfishing is occurring, or that are limiting the ability to harvest due to bycatch constraints -- i.e. under prohibited species catch limits. [in particular but not limited to bigeye tuna, Pacific halibut, Atlantic cod (Gulf of Maine), red snapper, striped marlin];

e. Seabirds [in particular, but not limited to black-footed or Laysan albatrosses]

2. Improved understanding and reduction of post-release and other indirect mortality, including barotrauma, predation, and unaccounted mortality associated with commercial and recreational fisheries including target and non-target species. Proposals addressing this priority may, but are not limited to, projects that specifically test descending devices to increase functionality and ease of use, as well as proposals that identify high priority release and discard mortality needs and provide baseline information (e.g. depth of capture, effects of air exposure, gear type, temperature) for important discarded species (in particular, but not limited to red snapper, Atlantic cod, striped marlin, etc.).

3. Developing techniques to reduce interactions, between fishing gears and corals, sponges, and other structure-forming invertebrates. Proposals that specifically reduce impacts to the following are encouraged:

a. Essential fish habitats identified and described pursuant to Section 303(a)(7) of the MSA.

b. Deep-sea coral sites identified by the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program pursuant to Section 408 of the MSA.

c. Tropical corals listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act

4. Conducting comprehensive international bycatch analyses or research which will inform conservation engineering in U.S. Fisheries.

C. Program Authority

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) (16 U.S.C. 1865) requires the Secretary of Commerce , in cooperation with the Councils and other

affected interests, and based upon the best scientific information available, to establish a Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP), including grants, to develop technological devices and other conservation engineering changes designed to minimize bycatch, seabird interactions, bycatch mortality and post-release mortality in federally managed fisheries.

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C 661) authorizes the Secretary to provide assistance to, and cooperate with, Federal, State, and public or private agencies and organizations in the development, protection, rearing, and stocking of all species of wildlife, resources thereof, and their habitat, in controlling losses of the same from disease or other causes, and in minimizing damages from overabundant species.

The National Fisheries Research and Development Program (15 U.S.C. 713c-3(c) requires the Secretary to carry out a national program of research and development addressed to such aspects of United States fisheries (including, but not limited to, harvesting, processing, marketing, and associated infrastructures).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces approximately $2,500,000 in federal funds that may be available in FY 2017 to provide support for 10 15 projects at approximately $50,000 to $200,000 per project. NOAA does not anticipate funding project proposals requesting greater than $250,000 in federal funding. Funding for subsequent years of work will depend on the availability of appropriations and satisfactory performance as determined by the Federal Program Officer through performance reports, site visits, and compliance with award conditions, and is at the sole discretion of NOAA. It is expected that the majority of funding will be towards projects that address the highest Program Priority, I.B.1.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made, or the award is for research, per 2 C.F.R. 200.308.

B. Project/Award Period

Applicants should propose a one year (12-month) period of performance but NOAA will accept applications for up to 18-months. Proposals should clearly identify objectives and products to be completed during that period of activity. The requested start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. The earliest start date for projects will be July 1, 2017. Proposals may be considered eligible for renewal beyond the period of performance. However, funds will be made available for only up to the initial award period requested initially and any continuation of the award will depend on submission of a successful proposal subject to an identified review process, adequate progress on previous award(s), and available funding to renew the award. No assurance for a funding renewal exists; funding will be at the complete discretion of NOAA.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NMFS/OSF will fund BREP Projects as cooperative agreements. The cooperative agreement has been determined to be the appropriate funding instrument because of the substantial involvement by NOAA. Substantial involvement means that, after award, NOAA scientific or program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in project activities in a partnership role; it is not to assume direction, prime responsibility, or a dominant role in the activities. The dominant role and prime responsibility resides with the awardee for the project as a whole, although specific tasks and activities may be shared among the awardees and NOAA. The exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA/NMFS representatives.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, for-profit organizations, foreign public entities or foreign organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or instrumentalities are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in underserved areas.

If the applicant is a university that has a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI), the institution is encouraged to submit an application that will be associated with the CI. The application must

specify the name of the CI, its most recent award number, and the NOAA-approved research theme applicable to the work to be performed in the project narrative. The application will use the facilities and administrative rate (F&A or Indirect Cost Rate) associated with the most recent CI award.

If the application is selected for funding, NOAA will notify the university that a separate competitive award will be issued with its own award grant number. However, the BREP competitive award will include a Special Award Condition (SAC) that evidences the link between it and the CI award. The SAC will provide: (1) that the university has submitted the proposal to be associated with the CI; (2) that any existing University/NOAA memorandum of agreement (MOA) will be incorporated by reference into the terms of the BREP competitive award; and (3) that any progress report(s) for the BREP competitive award must follow the timetable of and be submitted by the CI directly to the funding program. Copies of these progress reports will be attached to the CI's performance report as an appendix.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

No cost sharing is required under this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive funding under this competition; however federal scientists can serve as uncompensated partners on proposals. Should you wish to partner with a NMFS employee, who will act as a partner in the proposed project, a written agreement of this participation must be provided, detailing their involvement, signed by the employee’s supervisor. NMFS involvement could include planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing proposed project activities and frequent contact with the Applicant to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

No application package is required to submit a pre-proposal.

Electronic application packages for full applications are strongly encouraged and are available at: http://www.grants.gov.

If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NMFS/OSF website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/by_catch/bycatch_BREP.htm), they

should contact the BREP Coordinator:

Erin Wilkinson
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 427-8561
erin.wilkinson@noaa.gov

B. Content and Form of Application

Format requirements for both pre-proposals and full proposals: All application materials should be submitted in Adobe PDF or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be single- (pre-proposal) or double- (full proposal) spaced, printed or typed in at least 12-point font, and printable on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins.

Pre-proposal Format
Pre-proposals are required. The pre-proposal process is intended to provide an indication to potential applicants of the technical merit and the relevancy of the proposed project to BREP before preparing a full proposal. The intent is to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not have a high probability for being funded. When drafting a pre-proposal, applicants should clearly convey the management impact and applicability of their proposed research for the priority area to which they are applying. Late or incomplete pre-proposals, as well as those that deviate from content or format requirements, will not be reviewed by NOAA.

Each pre-proposal may not exceed two pages, single-spaced, using the format described above and should provide:
a. Title of project;
b. Background section that sets the stage for the work and identifies which one of the priorities in Section I.B that the pre-proposal addresses directly;
c. Rationale of why the work should be conducted and how it is relevant to the BREP – this should include applicability to management;
d. Clear statement of research objectives and general methodology to be used;
e. Identification of required permits (i.e. ESA, MMPA) and permit numbers, if applicable; and
f. Estimated budget amount;

In addition, and not counted towards the two page limit, the applicant must provide:

g. Cover page that includes the title of the project, the name, affiliation, and address of the primary investigators with e-mail and phone contact information, the estimated total budget requested, and duration of the project (start and end dates).

Full Application Format
Applicants must submit the following forms during initial submission of the application:
- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424),
- Budget Information, Non-construction Programs (SF-424A),
- Assurances, Non-construction Programs (SF424B),
- Certification Regarding Lobbying (CD511)

Applicants may submit the information typically included on these documents through the http://www.grants.gov/ website.

Proposal format must be in at least a 12 point font and double-spaced. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limit. Data management plans and/or access agreements as well as budgets and justifications, project summary, indirect cost rate documentation, letters of support, and previous, current and pending support sections do not count towards the 15-page limit. Appendices may be included but must not exceed a total of 15 pages in length, except for the budget narrative, which has no page limit. Appendices may include information such as resumes and/or letters of endorsement. Additional informational material will be disregarded.

In addition to the Federal Forms listed above, proposals must include the following information in the format outlined below.

a. Project summary (1-page limit):
(1) Organization title.
(2) Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
(3) Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
(4) Area of interest for which you are applying (see section I. B.).
(5) Project title.
(6) Project objectives for the project period.
(7) Summary of work to be performed within the project period.
(8) Budget Information - Total Federal funds requested for federal fiscal year 2017 and

federal fiscal year 2017 (if applicable).

b. Project description (15 page limit): Each project must be completely and accurately described. The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include: specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance; relation to longer-term goals of the PI's work; and relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway through Federal assistance.

Each project must be described as follows:

(1) Identification of problem(s): Describe the specific problem(s) or area(s) of interest to be addressed (see section I.B. above). Specify how the problem(s) or area(s) of interest directly relates to a Program Priority(ies) in section I.B.

(2) Project objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why", and; attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.

(3) Project narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during each budget period of the project. This description must include the specific methodologies, by project job activity, proposed for accomplishing the proposal's objective(s).

Investigators submitting proposals in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to develop inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary research teams in the form of single, integrated proposals or as individual proposals that are clearly linked together. The project narrative must include a milestone table that summarizes the procedures/objectives that are to be attained in each project month covered. Table format should follow sequential month rather than calendar month (i.e. Project period Month 1, Month 2... versus October, November...).

(4) Permitting: The proposal must describe any Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, or other permit requirements related to the proposed research. The proposal also must describe whether the investigators have the necessary permits in hand, or what steps the investigators have taken to obtain the necessary permits. All proposals must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required. If no permits are

required, this section must indicate “no permits are required.”

(5) Impacts, benefits or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities. Specifically identify management applicability of the work being proposed.

(6) Need for Government financial assistance: Demonstrate the need for assistance. Explain why other funding sources cannot fund all the proposed work. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.

(7) Federal, state and local government activities: List any programs (Federal, state, or local government or activities, including Sea Grant, state Coastal Zone Management Programs, etc.) this project would affect and describe the relationship between the project and those plans or activities. Describe any coordination with other agency programs or on-going research efforts. Describe any other proposals or outside activities that are essential to the success of this proposal.

(8) Project management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Include resumes of principal investigators. List all persons directly employed by the applicant who will be involved with the project. If a consultant and/or subcontractor is selected prior to application submission, include the name and qualifications of the consultant and/or subcontractor and the process used for selection. Describe who will monitor project performance. Also include participation by persons or groups other than the applicant. Describe how Federal, state, and non-governmental entities, particularly members of fishing communities, will participate in the project, and the nature of their participation.

(9) Results from prior NOAA/NMFS support: If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received support from the NOAA/NMFS in the past 5 years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:
(a) The NOAA award number, amount and period of support;
(b) The title of the project;
(c) Summary of the results of the completed work, including, for a research project, any contribution to the development of human resources in science/biology;
(d) Publications resulting from the award (Reprints may be submitted, and are requested, for documentation if applicable);
(e) Brief description of available data, samples, physical collections and other related research products not described elsewhere; and
(f) If the proposal is for renewed support, a description of how the completed work relates to the proposed work.

(10) Project impacts: Describe how these products or services will be made available to the fisheries and management communities. Describe how the development and facilitation of innovative fishing practices and gear technologies is an identified NMFS management priority (please refer to Council research priorities, etc.) and will be transitioned from research to fisheries management.

(11) Education and outreach: How will this project provide a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources? This includes the degree to which the potential users of the results, i.e., industry or state resource managers, have been involved in the planning of the activity, will be involved in the execution of the activity and/or are providing funds, and whether there is a plan to disseminate the results to user groups (including Regional Fishery Management Councils and, if applicable, marine mammal take reduction teams) and the public.

(12) Evaluation of project: The applicant is required to provide a description of project accomplishments and progress towards the project objectives and performance measures at the end of each funding period and in the final report. The application must describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to quantify the results of the project.

(13) Data Sharing Plan (not included in the 15-page limitation; can be submitted as an appendix.) 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.
(a) Unless otherwise noted in the federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required. A typical 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 Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria.
(b) The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) must be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.
(c) 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.
(d) If your proposed activities do not generate any environmental data, your application is still required to have a data sharing plan. Such a data sharing plan could include the statement that “this project will not generate any environmental data”.

c. Total project costs and budget narrative: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description.

Provide a detailed table with narrative to support the requested items or activities (personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs (such as vessel charters), and indirect costs.) Supplies (<$5,000/item) and equipment (>= $5,000/item) should be broken out in as much detail as possible. The budget table and narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on the SF-424 and SF-424A forms. If indirect costs are proposed, include a copy of the current Federally approved rate if applicable; see also Section IV.F.1. below. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness.

Please note the following restrictions for salaries and fringe benefits:
Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. Hourly rates and projected hours worked on the project and/or percentage of time and yearly salary should be included for all salary requests. Applicants are strongly encouraged to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure the proposal is competitive.

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

Unless excepted under 2 C.F.R. 25.110, each applicant is required to: (1) be registered in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application; (2) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

NOAA 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 NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA 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.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-proposals must be received via e-mail (to erin.wilkinson@noaa.gov) by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on February 10, 2017. By March 1, 2017, NOAA will inform applicants, based upon their pre proposal, if the BREP encourages or discourages submission of a full proposal. All those who submit complete and timely pre-proposals and meet all requirements are eligible to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements and must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 31, 2017. Failure to follow these requirements will result in proposals being returned without review.

Important: All applicants, both electronic and paper, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov is currently extremely heavy, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in paper format. Paper applicants should allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

Applications must follow the format described in this document and must be complete. Applicants must identify the specific research priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list first on the application the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposals. For applications containing more than one project, each project must be identified individually using the format specified in this section. If an application is not in response to any of the priorities listed in this Announcement, it should so state. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NMFS as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

E. Intergovernmental Review

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

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates

If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award to Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division, 1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), a recipient that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC).

2. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

G. Other Submission Requirements

1. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant’s responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, State, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of permits must be included in the proposal package.

Most projects involving directed or incidental impacts (i.e., introducing sound into an animal’s environment or employing gear that may entangle or injure) affecting marine mammals and species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA may require permits or authorizations under section 101 or 104 of the MMPA and/or section 10 of the ESA (50 CFR 222.307 and 222.308). If an ESA permit covering the proposed activities has already been issued, the permit number must be provided in the application. Issuance of the necessary ESA and/or MMPA permit(s) or authorization(s) or evidence that the applicant has submitted a permit application is required in order for a proposal to be considered for funding. If the grant applicant is not the Principal Investigator (PI) or the permit holder, a copy of the authorization to work under the permit and/or a letter of support from the permit holder is required.

For further information on ESA and MMPA permit requirements and application procedures, contact the NMFS Office of Protected Resources Permits Division (301-427-8401) or see http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse

impacts on the environment. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further analysis, covered under an existing programmatic analysis, or whether additional analysis is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For those applications needing further analysis, affected applicants will be informed after the merit review stage and asked to assist by providing any information necessary to complete a draft Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

Failure to obtain other Federal, State, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide information necessary to complete environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessments or documentation) may delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.

2. Pre-Proposals
All pre-proposals must be submitted via electronic mail to the BREP Program Coordinator (erin.wilkinson@noaa.gov). You will receive acknowledgement of your pre-proposal submission via email within 48 hours. If you do not receive such an acknowledgement, please contact the BREP Program Coordinator to assure successful receipt.

3. Application Submission
Only applicants that submit complete and timely pre-proposals AND complete and timely full proposals will have their proposals reviewed and evaluated. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications electronically (through http://www.grants.gov/). Facsimile transmissions of proposals will not be accepted. For additional information on application requirements or submission procedures, contact:

Erin Wilkinson
National Bycatch Program Coordinator
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
erin.wilkinson@noaa.gov

Please refer to important information in submission dates and times above (Section IV.C) to help ensure your application is received on time.

4. Registration Process

Required registrations: You must complete and maintain the following registrations to be eligible to submit an application using the Grants.Gov website. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. Registration can take between 3 days to 4 weeks or more, so applicants should begin the registration process as soon as possible.
(a) Grants.Gov: The first step in submitting an application online is to complete a onetime registration process. Individuals wishing to submit a grant application, using Grants.Gov, are required to complete this one time registration process. Neither a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number nor the System for Award Management (SAM) registration is necessary for Individual Registration.
(b) Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) - All Applicant Organizations (optional for Individual Applicants) must be issued a DUNS number. A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit identification number provided by Dun and Brad Street. It will be used as the Universal Identifier when applying for federal awards or cooperative agreements. You may request a DUNS umber by calling 1-866-705-5711 (toll free) or through the internet at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform. Your DUNS Number assignment is free. To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2013), http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/textidx?SID=1ccffb4c1d4de03addd6a041113460f9&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1300&rgn=div8
(c) System for Award Management (SAM) – All Applicant Organizations (optional for Individual Applicants) must complete and maintain an active registration. New registrations take an average of fourteen (14) business days for new registrations and may take longer. The renewal process may require as much time as the initial registration. SAM registration includes the assignment of a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) Code for domestic organizations which have not already been assigned a CAGE Code. To register, go to: http://www.SAM.gov. Registration is free.
You must renew and revalidate your entity’s registration at least every 12 months from the date you last certified to and submitted the registration in SAM - and sooner, if your entity’s information changes. The primary point of contact email address will receive a message alerting them to the entity’s/entities’ renewal requirements at 60 days, 30 days and 15 days prior to expiration. If you do not renew your registration, it will expire. You must have an active SAM registration in order to be eligible to receive contract awards or payments, submit assistance award applications via Grants.gov, or receive certain payments from some federal government agencies.

Electronic application packages for full applications are strongly encouraged and are available at: http://www.grants.gov.

If the applicant has difficulty accessing Grants.gov or downloading the required forms from the NMFS/OSF website (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/by_catch/bycatch_BREP.htm), they should contact the BREP Coordinator:
Erin Wilkinson
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 427-8561
erin.wilkinson@noaa.gov

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (30 points)
This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA. For the BREP, this includes the following questions: Does the project directly relate to a Program Priority in Section B, and/or is the project relevant to NOAA, Regional Fishery Management Councils, Take Reduction Teams, Endangered Species Act (ESA) Recovery Plans, and/or requirements of a Biological Opinion on a U.S. Federal fishery (20 points)? Is the participation of U.S. fishermen or the use of research results by U.S. fishery managers been meaningfully incorporated into the project design (10 points)?

2. Technical merit (35 points)
This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the BREP, this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period (15 points)? Is the project design appropriate for addressing the research question (10 points) and does the project design include a project evaluation that ensures that the goals and objectives of the project will be met? Does the project include collaboration with NMFS Science Center / Regional scientists (10 points)?

3. Project costs (15 points)
This budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the BREP, this includes the following questions: Is the budget

request reasonable, does the applicant justify the proposed budget request, and are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project (15 points)?

4. Overall qualifications of applicants (10 points)
Does the applicant have experience with this or a similar gear technology, does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects, does the applicant demonstrate a knowledge and comprehension of the problem, and is the applicant familiar with related work that is completed or on-going (10 points)?

5. Outreach and education (10 points)
This assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the BREP, this includes the following questions: Does the project involve external sharing and communication through peer-reviewed publication and presentation at scientific symposium and conferences or other public fora (5 points)? Does the project involve external communication with management? This should primarily include the degree to which the potential users of the results, i.e., industry or state resource managers, have been involved in the planning of the activity, will be involved in the execution of the activity and/or whether there is a plan to disseminate the results to user groups (including Regional Fishery Management Councils and, if applicable, marine mammal take reduction teams) and the public (5 points).

B. Review and Selection Process

This will be a two-stage competition with pre-proposals and full proposals. At both stages, an administrative review is conducted by NOAA to determine compliance with requirements, completeness of the application, and responsiveness to this FFO and programmatic priorities. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured.

Encouragement of pre-proposals is based on management applicability, technical merit (realistic and timely objectives and appropriate design) and relevance to Program Goals. Scoring will be done on a simple scale from 0-3 during this initial pre-proposal review. Scoring will be determined by a technical panel similar to that used at the full proposal stage, providing scores based upon receiving up to one point for meeting each of the provided criteria (management applicability, technical merit and relevance to Program Goals). National Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program Committee members will review the complete set of pre-proposals and consider the merit ranking and relevance to determine

whether to ‘encourage’ or ‘not encourage’ full proposals.

A summary statement will be provided to each applicant of a pre-proposal, stating whether their pre-proposal was complete and timely and whether a full proposal is ‘encouraged’ or ‘not encouraged’ for the full proposal stage. Regardless of encouragement or discouragement based on the pre-proposal, all those who submit complete and timely pre-proposals and meet all requirements are eligible to submit full proposals.

All timely, responsive, and complete proposals that meet the eligibility requirements will be subjected to evaluation, to be organized by NOAA, based on the criteria listed in section V.A.

Full Proposal Review and Selection
1. Initial Evaluation of Applications
Once a full application has been received by NMFS/OSF, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

2. Technical Review
Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo a technical merit review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three independent reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V.A. This review may involve subject matter experts from both NOAA and non NOAA organizations. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. If more than one non-Federal reviewer is involved, no consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

3. Review Panel
Following completion of the technical review, NMFS may convene a review panel, including federal and non-federal members, to review the scored proposals and to enhance NOAA’s understanding of the proposals. Applicants may be required, in consultation with NMFS, to further refine or modify study methodology and/or budget as a condition of project approval. Review panel members may re-score the proposals using the evaluation criteria in V.A. and taking into account the panel discussions; however, if more than one non-Federal panelist is involved, scoring will be individual and no consensus recommendations will be made.

C. Selection Factors

The Federal Program Officer will, in consultation with BREP staff as appropriate, review the ranking of the proposals and make recommendations to the Selecting Official,

who is NMFS/OSF Director or designee. The numerical numerical ranking from the Technical review will be the primary consideration by the NMFS/OSF Director in deciding which of the proposals will be recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer. However, the Director of the NMFS/OSF will select proposals after considering the technical reviews, panel review comments, and recommendations of the Federal Program Officer. The NMFS/OSF Director shall award in rank order unless it is justified that a proposal be selected out of rank order based upon any of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds by
a. Geographic area
b. Type of institutions
c. Type of partners
d. Research areas
e. Project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.B. and IV.B.
5. Applicant’s prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted group
7. Adequacy of information (including information on permit requirements or status) necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to GMD.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant’s management systems, an applicant’s history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant’s ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an

applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the 120-days following the date given in this announcement that the proposals are due to the NMFS/OSF. Funding should begin during fall 2017 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to August 1, 2017, unless otherwise directed by the Federal Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Upon completion of the review and selection process, successful applicants will receive notification from the Federal Program Officer that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. This notification will be issued by e-mail from NOAA's electronic system, Grants Online, to the Authorized Representative of the project. The official notice of award in which NOAA obligates funds for a project is the Standard Form CD-450, Financial Assistance Award. Only the NOAA Grants Officer will issue the CD-450 through Grants Online. The CD-450 award cover page is available at http://go.usa.gov/SNMR. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until the Applicant's Authorized Representative has received official notice of the award from the NOAA Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation and will receive copies of their technical review scores and comments. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, and then destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

2. Award documents provided by the Grants Officer may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements. These special award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award as applicable and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award so they are fully aware of the relevant terms and conditions that have been placed on the award.

3. Award recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data.

4. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this solicitation. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/cXC7A.

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

6. The Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions will apply to awards in this program. A current version is available at http://go.usa.gov/cXC7A.

7. Limitation of Liability
Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Federal appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not yet have been appropriated for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

8. Delinquent tax liability
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.

9. NOAA’s Data Sharing Policy
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 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 decision. If your proposed activities do not generate any environmental data, your application is still required to have a data sharing plan. Such a data sharing plan could include the statement that “this project will not generate any environmental data”. More information about the Data Sharing Policy is available on NOAA’s Environmental Data Management Committee website at: http://www.nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/PD.DSP.php

10. 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 website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

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, 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 and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application. In some cases if additional

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

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.327-329 and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

1. All financial reports should be submitted through the NOAA Grants Online system. Reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award.

2. Performance Progress Reports must also be submitted to the Federal Program Officer through the NOAA Grants Online system 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. Basic information that should be in all report submissions includes the project title, award number, dates of the award period, dates of the reporting period, and the name(s) of the grantee and the principal investigator. Inclusion of media such as photography and statistics (tables, graphs, etc.) to help document programmatic activities in report submissions is also encouraged. Pertinent, captioned photographs of project activities are requested, and may be included within the progress report document.

Semi-annual progress reports should describe the tasks scheduled for the reporting period (from the proposal and amendments) and the tasks that were actually accomplished in the period. The report should also explain any special problems or differences between the scheduled and accomplished work. The performance reports must also include documentation of all fish caught by vessels participating in the project, including catch that may or may not be directly applicable to the research subject matter.

The final, comprehensive report should include an "Executive Summary" of the project accomplishments which briefly and succinctly summarizes the final report for website or publication use. Limit this summary to no more than one page. The suggested format for the final report is:

a. Report title, author, organization, grant number, date

b. Executive Summary: a brief and succinct summary of the final report

c. Purpose:

- Detailed description of problem or impediment of fishing industry that was addressed by the project.
- Objectives of the project.

d. Approach:

- Detailed description of the work that was performed.

- Project management: list individuals and/or organizations actually performing the work and how it was done.

e. Findings:

- Actual accomplishments and findings.
- If significant problems developed which resulted in less than satisfactory or negative results, these should be discussed.
- Description of need for additional work, if any.

f. Evaluation:

- Describe the extent to which the project goals and objectives were attained. This description should address the following: Were the goals and objectives attained? How? If not, why? Were modifications made to the goals and objectives? If so, explain.
- Dissemination of project results: Explain, in detail, how the project's results have been and will be disseminated.

Additional performance reports may be required to comply with Congressional reporting requirements on an annual basis if the above noted reports are not timely for the congressional report.

3. Publications, Videos, and Acknowledgement of Sponsorship: Publication of the results or findings of the funded award activities in appropriate professional journals, outreach materials, or press releases, and production of video or other media is encouraged as an important method of recording and reporting scientific information. These are also constructive means to expand access to federally funded research. The recipient is required to submit a copy of any publication to the funding agency, and when releasing information related to a funded project, include a statement that the project or effort undertaken was or is sponsored by NOAA Fisheries Service. The recipient is also responsible for assuring that every publication of material (including Internet sites and videos) based on or developed under an award, except scientific articles or papers appearing in scientific, technical or professional journals, contains the following acknowledgement and disclaimer: "This project received funding under award [number] from NOAA Fisheries Service, in cooperation with the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA Fisheries."

4. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6106 Note. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards 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 Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards

over $25,000. Refer to OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. Part 170 (2015), accessible at http://go.usa.gov/cCr8j.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information about BREP, please visit the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program website at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/by_catch/bycatch_BREP.htm.
Or contact:

Erin Wilkinson
National Bycatch Program Coordinator
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
erin.wilkinson@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

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