2018/2019 Sea Scallop Research Set Aside

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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: 2018/2019 Sea Scallop Research Set Aside

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC-2018-2005322

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.454, Unallied Management Projects

Dates: Complete proposals/applications must be received on or before 5 p.m. EDT on November 6, 2017. Proposals received after the established deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without consideration. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication will be the basis of determining timeliness. The proposal must be validated by Grants.gov in order to be considered timely. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

For those without access to the Internet, one signed original and two hard copy applications must be postmarked or received by the established due date for the program at the following address: Cheryl A. Corbett, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, ATTN: 2018/2019 Atlantic Scallop Research Set-Aside Program. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. (Note that late-arriving hard copy proposals provided to a delivery service on or before 5:00 p.m. on the closing date for applications will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the proposal was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the proposal is received by Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) no later than 5 p.m., two business days following the closing date.)

No facsimile or electronic mail proposals will be accepted. April 1, 2018, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

Funding Opportunity Description: NMFS, in coordination with the New England Fishery Management Council (Council), is soliciting Atlantic Sea Scallop (scallop) research proposals to utilize scallop research set aside (RSA) quota that has been set-aside by the Council to fund scallop research endeavors through the 2018/2019 Scallop RSA Program. No federal funds are

provided for research under this notification. Rather, proceeds generated from the sale of RSA quota will be used to fund research activities and compensate vessels that participate in research activities and/or harvest set-aside quota.

Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance the knowledge of the scallop fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which scallop management decisions are made. Priority will be given to scallop research proposals that investigate research priorities identified by the Council, which are detailed under the Program Priorities section of this announcement.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Scallop RSA Program was established through the Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to address scallop research priorities identified by the Council. NMFS, in coordination with the Council, is soliciting proposals for scallop research to be conducted under the 2018/2019 Scallop RSA Program. Set-aside quota will be awarded to successful applicants.

B. Program Priorities

Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance the understanding of the scallop resource or contribute to scallop fishery management decisions. Priority is given to funding research proposals addressing the below list of 2018 and 2019 Scallop Research Priorities.

Applicants are encouraged to consider previously funded scallop research projects when developing proposals. Applicants responding to scallop survey priorities are encouraged to review and consider the findings of the Scallop Survey Methodologies Peer Review, which was convened by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in March 2015. This includes efforts to increase the level of coordination between scallop surveys. Reports and additional information for this peer review are posted at: www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/scallop-2015.

2018 and 2019 Scallop RSA Research Priorities (listed in order of importance from HIGHEST to OTHER)

HIGHEST

1. Survey Related Research (a, b, and c have equal priority, d has lower priority).

1a. an intensive industry-based survey of each of the relevant scallop access areas (Closed Area I, Closed Area II, Nantucket Lightship, Delmarva, Elephant Trunk and Hudson Canyon) that will provide estimates of total and exploitable biomass to be used for setting fishery catch limits under the rotational area management program. To support these area management decisions, survey data and biomass estimates must be available by early August of the year in which the survey is conducted (e.g. survey results that would inform 2019 fishing area decisions must be available by August 2018). Areas scheduled to be open in the

following fishing year generally have a higher priority than other areas. For 2018 the priority areas to survey are likely to be: Mid-Atlantic Access Area (Elephant Trunk, Hudson Canyon, Delmarva), Nantucket Lightship, the access area in the southern part of Closed Area II as well as the extension south of Closed Area II.

1b. an intensive industry-based survey of areas of importance (i.e., open areas with high scallop recruitment or closed areas that may open to fishing). For 2018, the priority areas are the closed portion of the Nantucket Lightship, the "sliver" north of the current access area in Closed Area I, and the HAPC in Closed Area II. Each of these areas is currently part of an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) closed area. Priority areas also include portions of the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area that have recently been or are likely to be fished: Stellwagen Bank, southern Jeffreys Ledge, Ipswich Bay, and Platts Bank.

1c. a resource wide industry-based survey of scallops within Georges Bank and/or Mid-Atlantic resource areas. The survey or surveys do not need to be carried out by a single grant recipient. The primary objective of these surveys would be to provide an additional broad scale biomass index in addition to the federal survey to improve the overall precision of the scallop biomass estimate produced by the Scallop Plan Development Team. Survey results must be available by early August of the year in which the survey is conducted (e.g., survey results that would inform 2019 fishing effort decisions must be available by early August 2018). (A broad, resource wide industry-based dredge survey of the Mid-Atlantic resource area, including Delmarva, Elephant Trunk, and Hudson Canyon, was funded for 2018 through the 2017/2018 Scallop RSA process.)

1d. a resource wide industry-based survey of scallops within the Gulf of Maine. The survey or surveys do not need to be carried out by a single grant recipient. These surveys would provide biomass estimates of scallop resource in the Gulf of Maine. Survey results must be available by early August of the year in which the survey is conducted (e.g., survey results that would inform 2019 fishing effort decisions must be available by early August 2018).

HIGH (in order of importance)

2. Scallop meat quality research: Research aimed at describing the occurrence of disease and parasites, as well as understanding the mechanisms and processes (including the life cycle, distribution and transmission, and relationship to sea turtles) that affect scallop product quality; research aimed at evaluating the impact of density dependence and the potential impacts of area rotation on scallop product quality, marketability, meat weights, and seasonal monitoring would be particularly useful. This priority also includes research on natural mortality, such as scallop predation (e.g., starfish, crab, snails, and dogfish).

3. Bycatch research: Identification and evaluation of methods to reduce the impacts of the scallop fishery with respect to bycatch of small scallops and non-target species. This would include projects that reduce impacts on small scallops through gear modifications, determine seasonal bycatch rates of non-target species, characterize spatial and temporal distribution patterns, gear modifications to reduce non-target bycatch and avoid fishery conflicts, collect and analyze catch and bycatch data on a near-real time basis, as well as the associated discard mortality rates of key bycatch species. Research efforts focusing on non-target bycatch should provide results that would help the scallop industry avoid pending or potential implementation of accountability measures. Projects should consider the enforceability and feasibility of gear modification regulations in the commercial fishery.

MEDIUM (listed in order of importance):

4. Research to support the investigation of turtle behavior and its potential impact the scallop fishery in the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank (via satellite tagging or other means). This could include research to understand their seasonal movements, vertical habitat utilization, how and where interactions with scallop dredge gear are occurring, and the status of the population. This includes monitoring of scallop dredge and scallop trawl operations, and the development of further gear modifications if monitoring should indicate current designs are not eliminating the threat or harm to sea turtles or are resulting in unacceptable reductions in scallop catch.

5. Research on other scallop biology projects, including studies aimed at understanding recruitment processes (reproduction, timing of spawning, larval and early post-settlement stages), and seasonal growth patterns of scallop shell height and meat and gonad weight, as well as research to evaluate the potential impacts of scallop spat and seeding projects.

OTHER (of equal importance)

6. Investigation of variability in dredging efficiency across habitats, times, areas, and gear designs to improve dredge survey estimates.

7. Habitat characterization research including (but not limited to): Before-After-Control-Impact (BACI) dredge studies; identification of nursery and over-wintering habitats of species that are vulnerable to habitat alteration by scallop fishing; evaluation of long-term or chronic effects of scallop fishing on the ecosystem; and habitat recovery potential from fine scale fishing effort. In particular, projects that would evaluate present and candidate EFH closures to assess whether these areas are accomplishing their stated purposes and to better

define the complex ecosystem processes that occur in these areas.

8. Research projects designed to either 1) examine whether chemicals, water quality, and other environmental stressors affect reproduction and growth of scallops (e.g., jet fuel, pesticides, ocean acidification, etc.); or 2) research to actively manage spat collection and seeding of sea scallops.

9. Research related to identifying the major sources of management uncertainty and measuring their potential effects on future projected landings. Specifically, research that investigates factors affecting fishing power and estimates of how they relate to projections of landings per unit of effort (LPUE) and days-at-sea (DAS) allocations.

10. Other resource surveys to expand and/or enhance survey coverage in areas that have the potential to be important resource areas, but which currently lack comprehensive survey coverage (e.g., inshore areas east of the current NOAA Fisheries survey strata or deeper than the surveyed area, Northern Gulf of Maine resource, etc.).

11. Evaluate the social and economic impacts and consequences of the area rotation program of the scallop fishery, including evaluation of potential distributional effects as well as impacts on other fisheries.

12. Research to support the investigation of non-harvest mortality of scallops. This includes research on incidental mortality (i.e., scallop mortality of uncaptured scallops that interact with gear but are not captured), and discard mortality (e.g., shucked scallops that are discarded due to meat quality, tearing, or size preference).

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under sections 303(b)(11), 402(e), and 404(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. 1881c(c), respectively. The Scallop RSA Program is established through the Scallop FMP (69 FR 35193, June 23, 2004) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 648.56.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

No federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, funds generated from the sale of landed scallop RSA quota shall be used to cover the cost of

research activities, including vessel costs. The Federal Government is not liable for any costs incurred by the researcher or vessel owner should the sale of set-aside quota not fully reimburse the researcher or vessel owner for their expenses. Any additional funds generated through the sale of set aside landings, above the cost of the research activities, shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for the use of his/her vessel.

The Scallop RSA sub-Annual Catch Limit (ACL) is 1.25 million pounds per scallop fishing year (April through March). Under the previous 2017/2018 Federal Funding Opportunity, NMFS awarded 133,037 pounds of scallops from the 2018 sub-ACL. Consequently, under this solicitation there are 1,116,963 pounds available from the 2018 RSA sub-ACL, and 1.25 million pounds available from the 2019 RSA sub-ACL.

All scallop RSA awards will be made in pounds of scallops, and will not be associated with a specific fishing area or days-at-sea allocation. RSA quota may be harvested from any area that is open to the scallop fishery (i.e., open access areas and open areas), unless otherwise restricted by the Council. Applicants should be aware that flounder bycatch in the scallop fishery may trigger accountability measures that could affect the harvest of RSA quota in certain times and areas.

In the event that the entire scallop RSA sub-ACL is not fully expended, NMFS may award unused RSA quota to compensate projects due to low scallop prices or to expand a project within its original topic area. In such an instance, the awarded allocation will be posted on the NMFS Northeast Cooperative Research website (www.nefsc.noaa.gov/coopresearch).

Applicants must submit a budget that is based on funds necessary to execute the research plan and funds necessary to compensate vessel owners harvesting set-aside quota. Upon project selection, NMFS will negotiate with successful applicants on the specific RSA quota award. Projects will be selected based on technical merit, management relevance, and responsiveness to Council research priorities. NMFS will establish a common scallop price estimate, based on the best and most recent data available at the time of negotiations, to determine the amount of set-aside necessary to cover research and compensation fishing expenses. For reference, $ 12/lb was used for projects funded through the 2017/2018 scallop RSA competition.

B. Project/Award Period

Proposals may be submitted for research activities that encompass all or part of the 2018 and 2019 scallop fishing years (April 1 through March 31).

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 by NOAA in the management of the project. Examples of substantial involvement may include, but are not limited to, proposals for collaboration between NOAA scientists and a recipient scientist. Funding for contractual arrangements for services or products for delivery to NOAA is not available under this notice.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

1. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, institutions of higher education, hospitals, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, individuals, state, local, and Native American tribal governments. Federal agencies and institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. Additionally, employees of any Federal agency or Regional Fishery Management (RFM) Council are ineligible to submit an application under this program. However, RFM Council members who are not Federal employees may submit an application.

2. DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications to the RSA program. In addition, 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. DOC/NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

3. DOC/NOAA encourages applications from members of the fishing community and applications that involve fishing community cooperation and participation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

None Required

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

1. Research proposals submitted under the 2018/2019 Scallop RSA Program must be received within the application submission period to be eligible for consideration.

2. Proposals for different and distinct projects must be submitted separately in accordance with the format requirements in Section IV.B. Multiple stand-alone projects in the same proposal will not be accepted.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application information is available at http://www.grants.gov. Electronic copies of the Standard Forms for submission of research proposals may be found on the Internet in a PDF (Portable Document Format) version at http://www.ago.noaa.gov/acquisition/standard.html. Delays may be experienced when registering with grants.gov near the end of a solicitation period. Therefore, NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through grants.gov.

Applicants without Internet access may contact Cheryl Corbett, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, by phone 508-495-2070, fax 508-495-2004, or email cheryl.corbett@noaa.gov. To apply for this NOAA Federal Funding Opportunity, go to http://www.grants.gov, and use the following funding opportunity #: NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC-2018-2005322.

B. Content and Form of Application

Should a recipient wish to include a coversheet with his/her proposal, the coversheet should summarize key information already contained in detail within the proposal. Such information might include, for example, the program name, date, applicant name, project title, project duration, principal investigator(s), program priorities addressed, and funds requested broken down by research, compensation, and total value.

Applications must adhere to the provision under "Applications" and the seven requirements under "Required Elements" and must be submitted by the stated deadline. Failure to follow these provisions will result in proposals being returned to the applicant without review.

1. Applications

a. Applications submitted to the 2018/2019 Scallop RSA Program must include a Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance), including a detailed budget using Standard Form 424A, (Budget Information--Non-Construction Programs), Standard Form 424B (Assurances--Non-Construction Programs), Commerce Department Form CD-511, (Certification Regarding Lobbying), and if applicable, Standard Form SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities). These forms are available at http://www.ago.noaa.gov/acquisition/forms.html These forms should be submitted through the www.grants.gov website. Applicants submitting hard copy must include one signed original and two signed unbound copies of the application (including supporting information).

b. The Standard Form SF424 must include the estimated monetary value of the entire project, including costs of compensation fishing and research project costs. This value must be recorded under item 18. Estimated Funding (e) "Other" on the SF424.

c. The Standard Form SF424A must report the total value under "Non-Federal."

d. 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 the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of the proposal first. Each application must address only one research investigation. If an application does not fulfill a priority category, it must be clearly stated in the application. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NMFS as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

2. Required Elements

Proposals should be limited to 12 pages, excluding item "e" below. The format may vary, but must include:

a. A narrative project description to include project goals, and objectives. Funding objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but avoiding the "how and why;" and attainable within the time, funding, and resources available. Proposals should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures, describing how investigators foresee research results being used in the management and/or science arena to enhance the understanding of the scallop resource or contributing to the body of information on which management decisions are made (see Section I.B.). The main body of the narrative should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and include: (1) Project design and management, including who is responsible, expected products, and participants other than applicant; (2) project year, or years, including the duration (starting on the first day of the month and ending on the last day of the month); (3) names and affiliations of the principal investigator(s) (PI); (4) contribution and relevance of the proposed work; and (5) a summary of the existing state of knowledge related to the project;

b. A detailed budget, including a description of the funds needed to execute the research plan and compensate vessels that harvest set-aside quota. The budget must include a breakdown of research costs including labor, vessel contracts, equipment, supplies, and overhead, as applicable. The proposal must state how the proceeds from the sale of compensation fishing activities, including those derived from incidental catch, will be

divided between the vessel and applicant. Proposals must provide a description of the safeguards that will be used to ensure that the set-aside award will not be exceeded;

c. A list of any federal regulations that the applicant needs to have waived and a brief justification for such a waiver;

d. Each proposal must identify the activities for the vessel(s) participating in the project, including research and compensation fishing activities. The applicant should differentiate between fishing industry partners that would participate in the project, if funded, and those where no such agreement exists (e.g., previous partners). Only vessel(s) that will participate in the study should be listed in the proposal;

e. Supporting documents, including resumes, letters of intent for vessels to participate in research activities, and any relevant contracts; and

f. As part of this application process, questions from The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants, OMB Approval Number 0648-0538, must be answered and submitted with the application. This form is located at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov. Failure to complete all of the questions with current and relevant information will result in the application being considered incomplete.

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

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 System For Award Management (SAM; available online at: https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/##11) and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25 and 170 (available online at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collectionCfr.action?collectionCode=CFR).

D. Submission Dates and Times

Complete proposals/applications must be received on or before 5 p.m. EDT on November 6, 2017. Proposals received after the established deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without consideration. For proposals submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication will be the basis of determining timeliness. The proposal must be validated by Grants.gov in order to be considered timely. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline.

For those without access to the Internet, one signed original and two hard copy applications must be postmarked or received by the established due date for the program at the following address: Cheryl A. Corbett, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, ATTN: 2018/2019 Atlantic Scallop Research Set-Aside Program. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. (Note that late-arriving hard copy proposals provided to a delivery service on or before 5:00 p.m. on the closing date for applications will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the proposal was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the proposal is received by NEFSC no later than 5 p.m., two business days following the closing date.)

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applicants will need to determine if their State participates in the intergovernmental review process. This information can be found at the following website: www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc. This information will assist applicants in providing either a Yes or No response to Item 16 of the Application Form, SF-424, entitled "Application for Federal Assistance."

F. Funding Restrictions

1. The research project period may encompass all or part of the 2018 and/or 2019 scallop fishing years (April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019, and April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020, respectively). Proposals to fund research started before final approval of the project for set-aside awards are eligible for consideration, but any project expense incurred prior to the final determination is done solely at the researcher’s risk.

2. Set-aside quota may only be harvested from open areas and open access areas, excluding areas identified by the Council as closed to RSA compensation fishing.

3. Set-aside quota awarded under this competition must be harvested by the end of July 2019 or 2020, as determined by the fishing year from which the award was derived, at which point all compensation fishing must cease, regardless if a portion of the set-aside has not been harvested. For example, 2018 set aside quota must be harvested by July 31, 2019.

4. The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred by any applicant to this announcement or any proposed or selected application or project. Any additional funds, generated through the sale of the fish harvested under the research quota, above the cost of the research activities, shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for use of his/her vessel.

G. Other Submission Requirements

1. Applications should be submitted through www.grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copies should be sent to NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA, 02543. Mark proposals "Attention—2018/2019 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside Program."

2. NOAA employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not permitted to assist in the preparation of an application, except that staff may provide information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for an application. However, the Council or NMFS contact person may provide assistance to researchers who are seeking vessels to participate in the collection of set-aside species or directly in research projects. NMFS, in consultation with the Council, may decide to hold a meeting with the public to discuss general topics concerning past RSA program accomplishments and ways to enhance communications on funding priorities and associated potential study methods. Such meetings will be publicized by NMFS and the Council in accordance with their respective requirements.

3. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal assistance opportunities, including special fishing privileges. The provisions of the Scallop RSA Program, and the associated 2018 and 2019 sub-ACLs were considered under the Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment 15, and will be considered under the Environmental Assessment for Framework 29. Applications that propose research that is not within the scope of the NEPA analysis for these management actions may require the applicant to provide additional information that will serve as the basis for any further analyses.

4. Permits and Approvals

a. If field research will occur in state or federal waters, investigators must secure the appropriate vessel documentation, as determined by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, and applicable state management agencies. Such documentation may include a Letter of Acknowledgment, Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), Exempted Educational Activity Authorization, or Temporary Possession Letter of Authorization. Investigators will be notified if there is no required or recommended research specific vessel documentation. In order to assist NMFS in determining whether or not the

proposed research would require a permit, researchers should briefly address the following:

i. Location and Time of Year - Specify time of year and areas where research will occur (e.g., coordinates, 10-minute squares, closed areas; include map if possible);

ii. Gear Type - Specify type(s) of gear, including mesh size or gear modification (trawl; pot; gillnet; dredge; acoustic gear, including frequency and amplitude);

iii. Effort - Specify the number of vessels, number of tows, length of tows, number of pots, set duration of tended gear, sampling frequency, etc.;

iv. Catch - Specify the anticipated species composition and amount (directed catch and bycatch);

b. If an exemption from Federal regulations is proposed, include a list of the specific regulations, along with a brief justification, for each regulation that needs to be waived. Should the applicant submit a request for an EFP to NMFS, the completed application should be received by NMFS at least 60 days before the requested start date of the proposed research. NMFS may not exempt a vessel from any requirement imposed by any state. Therefore, applicants are urged to discuss with state fisheries agencies any proposed landings in their state(s), and must obtain any additional permits that may be required by such state(s).

c. Successful applicants must obtain compensation fishing permits from NMFS prior to initiating compensation fishing. NMFS will issue letters of authorization to federally permitted scallop vessels as identified by the Project Coordinator, thereby authorizing such vessels to take compensation fishing trips.

d. Grant recipients and partnering vessel owners and operators must adhere to compensation fishing permit and exempted fishing permit terms and conditions. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of RSA compensation fishing and exempted fishing privileges for the remainder of the project period.

e. Projects may not have more than 50 vessels authorized to conduct compensation fishing at any given time, unless sufficient rationale can demonstrate that more than 50 vessels are needed. In addition, principal investigators and project coordinators should be aware that it may take NMFS up to 4 weeks to process requests to revise the list of vessels that are authorized to conduct compensation fishing.

f. Amendment 15 established a list of scallop management measures from which vessels that are conducting research funded by the scallop RSA program could be exempted via a letter of authorization. These management measures include crew restrictions, seasonal closures in access areas, and the requirement to return to port if fishing in more than one area. The review and issuance of these permits would not entail additional environmental review or public comment beyond that which was conducted for Amendment 15. These authorizations would apply only to dedicated research activities, and would not be available to vessels harvesting scallops for sale.
To apply, please go to http://www.grants.gov, and use the following Federal Funding Opportunity # NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC-2018-2005322. Applicants without Internet access may contact Cheryl Corbett, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, phone 508-495-2070, fax 508-495-2004, or email cheryl.corbett@noaa.gov.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

NMFS will solicit written technical evaluations from three or more federal and public/private sector experts to determine the technical merit of the proposal and to provide a rank score of the project based on the evaluation criteria.
NMFS may simultaneously convene a technical review panel of from the same pool of experts to discuss the technical merit of applications for scallop resource surveys, bycatch research, scallop meat quality, and scallop biology research. Following the panel discussion(s), reviewers would submit independent written evaluations and a ranked score in accordance with the technical evaluation criteria listed below.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project: This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applicants should provide a clear definition of the problem, need, issue, or hypothesis to be addressed. The proposal should describe its relevance to RSA program priorities. If not directly related to priorities listed in this solicitation, applicants should provide justification why the proposed project should be considered. (20 points)

2. Technical/scientific merit: 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. Special emphasis will be given to proposals that foster and improve cooperative interactions with the fishing industry, other research organizations conducting scallop research, NMFS, and other stakeholders. A clear description of the project design,

including a detailed description of field and laboratory work, and analysis methods, should be provided. The time frame for conducting the proposed research should be clearly specified. Activities that take place over a wider versus narrower geographical range, where appropriate, are preferred. (30 points)

3. Overall qualifications of the project: This criterion assesses whether the applicant, and team members, possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This includes demonstration of support, cooperation and/or collaboration with the fishing industry, and qualifications/experience of project participants. (15 points)

4. Project costs: This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Cost-effectiveness of the project is considered. (25 points)

5. Outreach and education: This criterion assesses whether the project involves a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This includes identification of anticipated benefits, potential users, likelihood of success, and methods of disseminating results. (10 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

In addition to the technical evaluation as described above, NMFS, in consultation with the Council, will convene a management review panel, including Council members and scallop fishery experts, to review and individually critique the proposals to enhance NOAA's understanding of the proposals as they relate to the program priorities enumerated in Section I.B. above. Applicants may be required, in consultation with NMFS, to further refine/modify the study methodology as a condition of project approval. No consensus recommendations will be made by the management review panel.

C. Selection Factors

The program officer will make recommendations to the Selecting Official based on technical ranking, management panelist support, and responsiveness to program priorities. The Selecting Official may also consider one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding.

2. Balance/distribution of RSA quota:

a. Geographically

b. By type of institutions

c. By type of partners

d. By research areas

e. By project types

3. Whether this project duplicates other projects currently supported or being considered for support by other NOAA offices.

4. Program priorities and policy factors.

5. Applicant's prior award performance.

6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.

7. Adequacy of information necessary to conduct a NEPA analysis and determination.

Key program policy factors (see 4 above) to be considered by the Selecting Official are: (1) The time of year the research activities are to be conducted; (2) the ability of the proposal to meet the applicable experimental fishing requirements; (3) redundancy of research projects; and (4) logistical concerns. Therefore, the highest scoring projects may not necessarily be selected for an award. All approved research must be conducted in accordance with provisions approved by NOAA. Unsuccessful applications will be returned to the submitter. Successful applications will be incorporated into the award document.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Award announcements are expected 6 months following the deadline for this announcement.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that their applications have been recommended for selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not authorization to begin project operations. An official notification of selection, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that grants the set aside award and

allows compensation fishing to begin. These notifications will be issued via email to the Authorizing Official and the Principal Investigator of the project. Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified electronically.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register Notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

2. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

If recommended for funding, applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact will be asked to furnish sufficient information to assist NOAA in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for each project which seeks NOAA funding. Detailed information on NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA web site: www.nepa.noaa.gov, including our NOAA Administrative order 216-6 for NEPA, www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hhs.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

If needed by NOAA for NEPA assessment, applicants will be asked 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 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. The 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 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.

3. 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.

C. Reporting

1. Recipients will be required to submit the following financial and performance (technical) reports. These are to be submitted electronically through the Grants online system. Hard copy submissions will be accepted only if the recipient does not have Internet access. A final Financial Status Reports (SF-425) is required to be submitted to the Grants Officer no later than 90 days after the award expiration.

2. Performance or progress reports are required to be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer semi-annually. These reports will be due no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of an award. The final report is due no later than 90 days after the award expiration. The format of the final report may vary, but the report must contain:

a. A brief summary of the completion report (200-word or less abstract);

b. A description of the issue/problem that was addressed;

c. A detailed description of methods of data collection and analyses;

d. A discussion of results and any relevant conclusions presented in a format that is understandable to a non-technical audience. This should include benefits and/or contributions to management decision-making;

e. A list of entities, firms, or organizations that actually performed the work, and a description of how the work was accomplished;

f. A detailed accounting of all fish caught during research activities (including catch by vessels operating under a Letter of Acknowledgment), including weight by species, and disposition of catch;

g. A detailed accounting for compensation fishing activities with each progress report and the final report. Compensation fishing reports should be provided in an electronic

spreadsheet, and should include the following information: Vessel name, vessel permit number, date landed, RSA scallop pounds landed, scallop RSA value, incidental catch pounds landed by species, incidental catch value, funds provided to grant recipient. In addition, for the final report, the grant recipient must provide a final accounting of all funds derived from compensation fishing, and address the following questions: 1. If more funds were generated than the total amount of funds identified in the proposed budget, provide a detailed description for how those funds were used, or will be used, or 2. If fewer funds were generated than the total amount of funds identified in the proposed budget, describe why the shortfall occurred, and if it affected project proposed goals and objectives; and

h. Principal investigators should, when possible, make any report or publication that details research findings accessible to the general public. Where appropriate, data generated from the research must be formatted in a manner consistent with NMFS and ACCSP databases. A copy of this format is available from NMFS.

i. Principal Investigators should anticipate being requested to provide an oral presentation to the Council's Scallop Committee, Advisory Panel, or Plan Development Team on the results of their research.

j. Data from research projects must be submitted in electronic format with appropriate documentation to NMFS, as requested.

3. Vessels operating under an EFP or conducting compensation fishing must report each trip to NMFS in accordance with the vessel monitoring system instructions provided by NMFS. Non-compliance with this reporting requirement could be cause for revoking compensation fishing privileges, and not awarding future NOAA projects.

VII. Agency Contacts

Information may be obtained from Jonathon Peros, New England Fishery Management Council, phone 978-465-0492 (ext. 117), fax (978) 465-3116, or email jperos@nefmc.org, or from Cheryl Corbett, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, phone 508-495-2070, fax 508-495-2004, or email cheryl.corbett@noaa.gov for grant related questions, or from Ryan Silva, NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, phone (978) 281-9326, fax (978) 281-9135, or email ryan.silva@noaa.gov for general program inquiries, or for permitting and regulatory questions.

VIII. Other Information

Limitation of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award or of not receiving an award.

The Data/Information Sharing Plan

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 by security requirements.

1. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, 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, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

3. 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.

Access to Information

Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, 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 Federal Funding Opportunity 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 that 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.

Felony and Tax Certifications

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.