

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

FY 2012 Notice of Availability of Grants and Request for Applications

Program Overview Information

Federal Agency Name:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) and Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program (FHC)

Funding Opportunity Title:

Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act - National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

Announcement Type:

Announcement of availability of grants for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 and request for applications.

Funding Opportunity Number: CWG-12

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 15.614

Dates: Hard copy applications are due to the Regional Fish and Wildlife Service WSFR Office by June 30, 2011, 4:00 p.m. local time. Electronic applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accepted up until June 30, 2011, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. We recommend electronic applications be submitted through Grants.gov at least two days before the deadline to allow for any unforeseen technical complications. We will not consider for funding applications received after the due date.

Applicants that want comments or assistance with their applications are encouraged to contact the Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Office approximately 4-6 weeks prior to the due date. Although there is no guarantee that the Regional Office will provide comments, feedback generally includes recommendations to improve the application. Applicants can contact their Regional Office for additional information about submitting early (see contact information in section IV. A.).

We encourage applicants to submit letters of financial commitment by the June 30, 2011 due date, however we will accept letters at the Regional Office up through Sept. 9, 2011, 4:00 p.m. local time. We will not consider letters received after the Sept. 9, 2011, 4:00 p.m. deadline.

The announcement of awards will be in December 2011 or January 2012.

Additional information: The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Section 305, Title III, Public Law 101-646, 16 U.S.C. 3954) established the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program to acquire, restore, and enhance wetlands in coastal States through competitive matching grants to State agencies. The primary goal of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is the long-term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems. In FY 2011, the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program awarded \$19.1 million to 12 States to fund 24 individual projects encompassing nearly 5,951 acres of coastal habitat.

The Final Rule establishing the requirements for participation in the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program was published in the Federal Register July 30, 2002 (67 FR 49264). The program regulations are in 50 CFR 84. Additional information about the Program is online at <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants>. **Before applying for a grant, please carefully review Attachment A to this announcement, *Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and General Program Questions*.**

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Coastal wetlands are valued because they protect against flooding, help maintain water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife. Coastal environments are also important economically, generating billions of dollars annually through such industries as commercial fishing and tourism. The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program provides States with financial assistance to protect and restore these valuable resources.

Projects can include (1) acquisition of a real property interest (e.g., conservation easement or fee title) in coastal lands or waters (coastal wetlands ecosystems) from willing sellers or partners for long-term conservation or (2) restoration, enhancement, or management of coastal wetlands ecosystems. All projects must ensure long-term conservation.

Examples of restoration efforts that could be funded include:

- Restoring wetland hydrology by plugging drainage ditches, breaking tile drainage systems, installing water control structures, dike construction, or re-establishing historic connections with waterways, or
- Planting native vegetation and/or removing invasive plants and animals that compete with native fish and wildlife and alter native habitats.

We rank applications based on criteria published in title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 84.32. Also see Attachment A to this announcement that clarifies select ranking criteria and addresses questions regarding 50 CFR 84.

II. Award Information:

The Fish and Wildlife Service expects that approximately \$17.5 million will be available for grants from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program in FY 2012. Awards typically range from \$200,000 (there is no specific minimum) to a maximum of \$1,000,000. We expect to announce the awards in December 2011 or January 2012.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are any State agency or State agencies designated by the Governor of a coastal State. It is usually a State natural resource or fish and wildlife agency. If your agency is uncertain of its eligibility, please contact the Regional Fish and Wildlife Service WSFR Office (see section IV. A.). The Regional Offices maintain the list of certified eligible agencies in each coastal State in the Region.

Eligible coastal States are States bordering the Great Lakes (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin); States bordering the Atlantic, Gulf (except Louisiana), and Pacific coasts (Alabama, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington); and American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Louisiana is not an eligible coastal State for this program as dictated by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Resources Act (16 U.S.C 3955 (b)(1)).

B. Cost-Sharing or Matching

The maximum Federal cost share for this Program is 75 percent of total project costs in States that have a fund established and used for acquiring coastal wetlands, other natural areas, or open spaces. States that do not have a fund are limited to a maximum 50 percent Federal cost share. The following insular areas: American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are not required to provide a match, in which case the Federal government may provide 100 percent of the project costs. Puerto Rico is not exempt from the match requirements of this Program.

The maximum Federal cost share of 75 percent is based on project costs, i.e., the amount requested from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program plus the amount of non-Federal cost share (match). Other funds that are related to the project or are part of a larger project, but are not designated for match or cost share will not count towards project costs when calculating the match requirement/maximum Federal cost share.

The cost-sharing requirements are detailed in 50 CFR 84.46. The requirements allow for in-kind contributions for the required non-Federal match. To receive points under the ranking criterion

“Federal share reduced” (50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11)), however, match above the required non-Federal share must be cash. See Attachment A: Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and General Program Questions for more information.

Cost share examples (State with dedicated fund):

Example 1 – State agency requests maximum Federal share (75%) and the maximum award amount (\$1 million)

Total project cost: \$1,333,334

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Request: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal cost share: \$333,334.

Example 2 – The proposed project will be part of a larger effort costing \$10 million, but the application is to acquire and restore a distinct parcel with project costs of \$1,333,334. State agency requests maximum Federal share (75%) and the maximum award amount (\$1 million).

Total project cost: \$1,333,334

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Request: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal cost share: \$333,334

The other costs are not associated with the project, and therefore are not listed on the SF-424.

Example 3 – State agency requests maximum Federal share (75%) and less than the maximum award amount.

Total project cost: \$600,000

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Request: \$450,000

Non-Federal cost share: \$150,000

Example 4 – State agency requests less than maximum Federal share to maximize points for ranking criterion 11 and the maximum award amount (\$1 million).

Total project cost: \$1,454,555

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Request: \$1,000,000

Non-Federal cost share: \$454,555 (with at least \$90,916 of this amount in cash)

- required non-Federal share = 25% = \$363,639
- cash above required non-Federal share = \$454,555 - \$363,639 = \$90,916
- percent above required non-Federal share = \$90,916 / \$363,639 = 25% = 5 points

Example 5 – State agency requests less than maximum Federal share to maximize points for criterion 11 and less than the maximum award amount.

Total project cost: \$654,555

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Request: \$450,000

Non-Federal cost share: \$204,555 (with at least \$40,916 of this amount in cash)

- required non-Federal share = 25% = \$163,639
- cash above required non-Federal share = \$204,555 - \$163,639 = \$40,916

- percent above required non-Federal share = $40,916 / \$163,639 = 25\% = 5$ points

To apply for a 75 percent Federal cost share, applicant must provide either a description of the State trust fund that supports a request for a 75 percent Federal share (in sufficient detail for the Service to make an eligibility determination), or a statement that eligibility has been previously approved and there has been no change in the fund.

If an applicant proposes to use land as all or a portion of the non-Federal share, he or she should explain in the project overview how the land is necessary and reasonable to accomplish the objectives of the project. Applicants should include information on both (a) parcels proposed for acquisition/restoration, and (b) match parcels in adequate detail for each ranking criteria so reviewers can make informed scoring decisions.

You must document in the application all third-party matching funds, those supplied by organizations or individuals other than the applicant, with a signed letter of financial commitment from an authorized representative of the match provider. The letter of financial commitment must detail the amount of matching funds or value of donated land and/or services. The State is responsible for ensuring the full amount of the non-Federal match as listed on the SF-424.

Please note that if match is being provided by a third-party, and the letter of financial commitment is missing and/or late, the match will not be counted, and the application may be deemed ineligible.

C. Other

Although only approved State agencies can apply for and receive grants from this Program, we encourage partnering with Tribes, Federal agencies, other State agencies, non-governmental organizations, local governments and others.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request/Submit Application Package

Potential applicants can receive application forms and other material necessary to apply for this Program by contacting one of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Regional Offices. Application forms are also available through the Grants.gov web site. Below is a list of Regional Office contacts:

Coastal States by Fish and Wildlife Service Region	Regional Contact Information
American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington	Nell Fuller U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Eastside Federal Complex

	911 NE 11 th Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181 503-231-6758
Texas	Susan MacMullin U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program P.O. Box 1306 500 Gold Avenue, SW, Suite #9019 Albuquerque, NM 87103 505-248-7450
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin	Paul Glander U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building 1 Federal Drive Fort Snelling, MN 55111 612-713-5130
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, and the Virgin Islands	Scott White U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 4 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 240 Atlanta, GA 30345-3319 404-679-7113
Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia	Colleen Sculley U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035-9589 413-253-8508
Alaska	Cliff Schleusner U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 7 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 261 Anchorage, AK 99503 907-786-3631

California	Bart Prose U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 8 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program 2800 Cottage Way Room W-1729 Sacramento, CA 95825 916-978-6152
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B. Content and Form of Application

Applications submitted for funding from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program must include:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424). Please list the project area Congressional district in box 16.
2. Budget Information, i.e., estimated costs to achieve the project objectives (applicants can use Standard Form 424C or present the information in a similar table). Contingencies must not be included in estimated costs, as they are ineligible costs. The various activities or components of each project should be broken out by cost and by partner.
3. Statement of Assurances of compliance with applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies (Standard Form 424D).
4. A project overview that concisely describes the project. The project overview should not detail the ranking criteria in 5. The project overview should address:
 - a. The need for the proposed project;
 - b. Discrete, quantifiable, and verifiable objectives to be accomplished during a specific time period;
 - c. Expected results or benefits in terms of coastal lands and waters, the hydrology, water quality, or fish and wildlife dependent on the wetlands;
 - d. The approach to be used in meeting the objectives, including specific procedures, schedules, key personnel, and cooperators;
 - e. The project location;
 - f. Either a description of the State trust fund that supports a request for a 75 percent Federal share in sufficient detail for the Service to make an eligibility determination, or a statement that eligibility has been previously approved and no change has occurred in the fund;
 - g. List of other current coastal acquisition, restoration, enhancement and management actions; agencies involved; relationship to the proposed grant; and how the application fits into comprehensive natural resource plans for the area; and
 - k. Any public involvement or interagency coordination on coastal wetlands conservation projects that has occurred or is planned that relates to the application (Specify the organization or agencies involved and dates of involvement).
5. A description, with appropriate documentation, of how the proposed project addresses each of the **13 numeric ranking criteria in 50 CFR 84.32**. We recommend

applicants address each ranking criteria individually with a brief statement or table. If land is proposed as match, applicants should include information on both (a) parcels proposed for acquisition/restoration and (b) match parcels in adequate detail for each ranking criteria so reviewers can make informed scoring decisions.

6. Two maps of the project location: a map of the State showing the general location of the application and a map of the project site. If the project location is part of a larger effort, please detail what land area is specific to the proposed grant activities and what land area is part of the larger effort. If land will be used as match, please show the match parcel(s). Additional maps and/or photos of the project site may be included.
7. Signed letter(s) of financial commitment from an authorized representative of all third-party match provider(s). The letter(s) of financial commitment must detail the amount of matching funds or value of donated land and/or services.

There is a 35 page limit for the narrative section of the application package. This includes the project overview, information addressing the ranking criteria, and accompanying materials (4. – 5.). Exempt from the page limit are the forms (1. – 3.), pages of only maps and/or photos (6.), and letters of financial commitment (7.). If the narrative section of the application is over the 35 page limit, the reviewer(s) will not consider the information beyond page 35 in their review and/or scoring of the application.

Application packages should be arranged in the following order:

1. SF 424
2. SF 424 C (or budget table)
3. SF 424 D
4. project overview
5. ranking criteria information
6. color maps and/or photos
7. letters of financial commitment

Applications should be on 8.5" X 11" paper, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides and page numbers at the bottom of the page (starting with the project overview). Fonts should be legible, i.e., preferably 12 point Arial, Times New Roman, or other commonly used font. Please number your pages starting with the project overview.

In accepting Federal funds, applicants must comply with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Evidence of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and other Federal laws must be provided if selected for award.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due in the Service's Regional Offices (see contact information in section IV. A.) or on Grants.gov by June 30, 2011. Hard copy applications are due to the Regional Fish and Wildlife Service WSFR Office by June 30, 2011, 4:00 p.m. local time. Electronic applications submitted through Grants.gov will be accepted up until June 30, 2011, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. We recommend electronic applications be submitted through Grants.gov at least two days before the deadline to allow for any unforeseen technical complications. We will not consider for funding applications received after the due date.

Applicants are encouraged to submit applications approximately 4-6 weeks before the due date if they would like the Fish and Wildlife Service to provide comments on their application. Although there is no guarantee that comments will be provided, feedback generally includes recommendations to improve the application. Applicants can contact their Regional Fish and Wildlife Service WSFR contact for additional information about submitting early (see contact information in section IV.A.).

We encourage applicants to submit letters of financial commitment by the June 30, 2011 due date, however we will accept letters at the Regional Office up through Sept. 9, 2011, 4:00 p.m. local time. We will not consider letters received after the Sept. 9, 2011, 4:00 p.m. local time deadline.

D. Intergovernmental Review

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is subject to Executive Order 12372 "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Coastal States and territories that have chosen to participate in the Executive Order process have established Single Points of Contact (SPOCs). Applicants from jurisdictions that have not chosen to participate do not need to take any action regarding E.O. 12372. All other applicants should alert their SPOCs early in the application process. If you, as an applicant, are required to submit materials to a SPOC, indicate the date of this submittal (or the date of contact if no submittal is required) on the Standard Form 424.

E. Funding Restrictions

Ineligible activities include:

- Projects that primarily benefit navigation, irrigation, flood control, or mariculture;
- Acquisition, restoration, enhancement or management of lands to mitigate habitat losses;
- Creation of wetlands where wetlands did not previously exist;
- Enforcement of fish and wildlife laws and regulations, except when necessary for the accomplishment of approved project purposes;
- Research;
- Planning as a primary project focus;
- Operations and maintenance, including long-term invasive species management;

- Acquisition and/or restoration of upper portions of watersheds where benefits to the coastal wetlands ecosystem are not significant and direct; and
- Projects providing less than 20 years of conservation benefits.

F. Other Submission Requirements

If an applicant submits a hard copy application, it must be sent to the appropriate Regional Office (see section IV.A.).

If an applicant submits an electronic application, it must be submitted through Grants.gov. It is suggested that applicants verify that their version of Adobe Reader is compatible with Grants.gov to avoid problems in submitting and/or downloading application forms. The Grants.gov homepage has a link that allows users to verify compatibility of Adobe Reader.

As a courtesy, all applicants are also encouraged to send a single pdf file comprising their entire application package, including all standard forms (424, 424C, 424D), project overview, ranking criteria information, maps and photos, and letters of financial commitment to their Regional WSFR contact (see contact information in section IV. A.) by the deadline.

For further information or questions on hard copy or electronic submission, contact your Regional Office.

V. Application Review Information

A. Criteria

Criteria for reviewing and ranking projects were established in the final rule for administering the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (67 FR 48264; <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/toolkitfiles/50cfr84.pdf>; see 50 CFR 84.32). Attachment A to this announcement clarifies select ranking criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and answers general program questions. A brief summary of the 13 ranking criteria follows:

- 1. Wetlands conservation.** Will the project reverse coastal wetland loss or habitat degradation in decreasing or stable coastal wetland types?
- 2. Maritime forests on coastal barriers.** Will the application significantly benefit maritime forests on coastal barriers?
- 3. Long-term conservation.** Will the project ensure long-term conservation of coastal wetland functions? The project must provide at least 20 years of conservation benefits to be eligible.
- 4. Coastal watershed management.** Will the completed project help accomplish the natural resource goals and objectives of one or more formal, ongoing coastal watershed management plan or effort?
- 5. Conservation of threatened and endangered species.** Will the project benefit any federally listed endangered or threatened species, species proposed for Federal listing,

recently delisted species or designated or proposed critical habitat in coastal wetlands? Will it benefit State-listed species?

6. Benefits to fish. Will the project provide, restore or enhance important fisheries habitat?

7. Benefits to coastal-dependent or migratory birds. Will the project provide, restore, or enhance important habitat for coastal-dependent or migratory birds?

8. Prevent or reduce contamination. Will the project prevent or reduce input of contaminants to the coastal wetlands and associated coastal waters that are already contaminated?

9. Catalyst for future conservation. Will the project leverage other ongoing coastal wetlands conservation efforts in an area or provide additional impetus for conservation?

10. Partners in conservation. Will the project receive financial support, including in-kind match, from private, local or other Federal interests?

11. Federal share reduced. Does the application significantly reduce the Federal share by providing more than the required match amount? (Only cash above the required match applies.)

12. Education/outreach program or wildlife-oriented recreation. Is the project designed to increase environmental awareness and develop support for coastal wetlands conservation? Does it provide recreational opportunities that are consistent with the conservation goals of the site?

13. Other factors. Do any other factors, not covered in the previous criteria, make this project or site particularly unique and valuable?

B. Review and Selection Process

Project selection is a three-step process: application acceptance, application ranking, and application selection.

- Application acceptance - The Regional WSFR Offices determine agency eligibility and whether applications are complete, substantial, and contain only activities that are eligible. Applications that are ineligible are returned to the State agency. Revision and resubmission of returned applications is allowable up until the identified deadline for application submittals.
- Application ranking - Once an application is accepted by the Regional WSFR Office, the Regional Office forwards the application to Fisheries and Habitat Conservation (FHC). FHC coordinates an internal, cross-programmatic review of all accepted applications by a National Review Panel.
- Application selection - The National Review Panel scores and ranks all accepted applications and provides the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service with a list of recommended projects for funding. The final list of awards is determined by the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The awards will be announced in December 2011 or January 2012. Successful applicants will receive a letter informing them that their application was awarded funding and the amount of the award.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive a letter informing them that their application was awarded funding, the amount of the award, and the remaining process needed to complete the grant award. The Service will also publish on its website a national press release announcing the awards.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

When a project is awarded funding, compliance with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies, including environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act, and applicable executive orders must be satisfied before the Service can approve an award and make funding available.

In accordance with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006, eligible State agencies, as prime recipients, must register with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) at <http://www.ccr.gov>. Eligible State agencies and sub-award recipients must also obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number through <http://www.dnb.com>.

All financial assistance awards are subject to Federal financial administration requirements. The Regional WSFR Offices will work with applicants to ensure that all financial arrangements comply with these requirements.

To find out more about the rules, including administrative requirements and cost principles, you can review them on the WSFR Toolkit (<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/ToolkitFiles/toolkit.pdf>).

The rules that apply to different recipients are detailed here:

Table 1. Federal Financial Administrative Guidance	
<u>Categories of Recipients</u>	<u>Specific Rules and Guidance</u>
Individuals, private firms, and non-profits excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-122	- Federal Acquisition Subpart 31.2 - 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 48 CFR 31 (Contracts with Commercial Organizations)
Non-profit organizations covered under OMB Circular No. A-122	- 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 2 CFR 215 (Administrative Requirements for Grants) - 2 CFR 230 (Cost Principles) - OMB Circular No. A-133 (Audits)
Educational Institutions (even if part of a State or local government)	- 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 2 CFR 220 (Cost Principles) - 2 CFR 215 (Administrative Requirements for Grants) - OMB Circular No. A-133 (Audits)
States, local governments and Tribes	- 43 CFR 12 (Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles for Assistance Programs) - 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 2 CFR 225 (Cost Principles) - OMB Circular No. A-102 (Grants and Cooperative Agreements) - OMB Circular No. A-133 (Audits)

C. Reporting

Reporting requirements include retention and access requirements that are specified in 43 CFR 12.82. Additional details regarding new requirements, guidance, consequences, etc. are available in the document “Interim Guidance for Financial and Performance Reporting,” located at <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/toolkitfiles/intgdrpt.pdf>.

VII. Agency Contacts

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is administered jointly by the Divisions of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration and Fisheries and Habitat Conservation. National level program information can be obtained by contacting:

Chris Darnell
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Fisheries and Habitat Conservation
 MS 730
 4401 North Fairfax Drive
 Arlington, VA 22203
 703-358-2236
Chris_Darnell@fws.gov

or

Christy Vigfusson
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program
WSFR-4020
4401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203
703-358-1748
Christy_Vigfusson@fws.gov

**For project specific information and application details, contact your Regional WSFR Office.
(See contact information in IV.A.)**

VIII. Other Information

The Federal government is not bound to financially support any project until an authorized Service financial officer has approved the award.

OMB Control Number 1018-0109

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT: The Paperwork Reduction Act requires us to tell you why we are collecting this information, how we will use it, and whether or not you have to respond. We will use the information that we collect to evaluate applications submitted to acquire funding for Clean Vessel Act Grant Program funds. Your response is required to receive funding. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. We estimate that it will take an average of 50 hours to complete the application. The average estimated annual burden associated with writing and submitting required performance reports is 6 hours. You may send comments concerning the burden estimates or any aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS 222 ARLSQ, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203.

**Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and
General Program Questions**

Sections of this attachment have been revised for FY 2012 – please read

The purpose of this attachment is to provide clarification of certain criteria in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 84. General questions are listed first, followed by questions specific to ranking criteria.

General Questions:

Are lands used for match purposes used in calculating points for ranking criteria?

Yes. Because lands that are used for match purposes are part of the project area, reviewers consider both lands being proposed for acquisition/restoration with grant funds and lands proposed for contribution as match when assigning points for ranking criteria. Therefore, information on both parcels proposed for acquisition/restoration and match parcels should be described in adequate detail for each ranking criteria so reviewers can make informed scoring decisions.

Does land used for all of or part of the non-Federal cost share need to be necessary and reasonable?

Yes. The land used for match purposes must be necessary and reasonable to achieving project objectives. Please explain how the match parcel(s) relate to the overall project and remember to detail information about the match parcel for all ranking criteria.

If a project includes a conservation easement, what information about the conservation easement is helpful for reviewers?

Applicants should describe the general terms of the conservation easement, including the length of the conservation easement, who will hold the conservation easement, allowable and prohibited uses, and plans for long-term monitoring and stewardship of the easement. This information helps reviewers understand the conservation benefit(s) of the conservation easement.

Who holds title to land acquired under this program or contributed as match?

Title to real property acquired under a grant or subgrant or contributed as match will vest upon acquisition in the grantee or subgrantee, respectively, as directed by 43 CFR 12.71 and 43 CFR 12.64.

Should applicants include letters of support that are not financial commitment letters or those detailing scientific information specific to a project?

Given the volume of material reviewers must read, letters of general support for a project should not be included in the application package. However, it is required to include letters of financial commitment from third-party sources.

What are “total costs” in 50 CFR 84, including 84.21(f), 84.32(a)(11), and 84.46?

“Total costs” are the costs to complete a project, including the total amount of funds requested from the NCWCGP and the non-Federal share. It does not include other Federal funds or non-matching funds.

For example, if total costs of a project are \$1,333,334, the maximum Federal share (National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program request) would be either \$1,000,000 (75%) or \$666,667 (50%), depending on whether or not the State has a designated fund (see definition of fund in 50 CFR 84.11).

Does “maximum Federal share” under 50 CFR 84, including 84.32 (a)(11) and 84.46 (h), refer to the maximum percentage of Federal dollars of the project costs, i.e., 75% or 50%, or the maximum grant amount from the NCWCGP, i.e., \$1 million?

“Maximum Federal share” refers to the percentage, i.e., 75% or 50%, of Federal dollars of the project costs, not the maximum grant amount from the NCWCGP, i.e., \$1 million. For example, if total project costs are \$1,333,334, the maximum Federal share would be either \$1,000,000 (75%) or \$666,667 (50%), depending on whether or not the State has a designated fund. If the applicant only provides the minimum non-Federal share (25% or 50% of total project costs), no points will be awarded for reducing the Federal share (50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11), Criterion 11).

What changes are allowed to an application after its submission?

Applications submitted to the Service for consideration in the national competition must be in final format by the due date specified in the Request for Applications. The only application changes that will be accepted after the due date are those that will not impact the project scoring, such as small corrective or clarifying statements. Regional Office and/or Washington Office representatives may also request that the applicant make modifications to an application after the due date to correct inconsistencies within an application or change any other error that would cause the National Review Panel difficulty in accurately assessing the application during review.

50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1) (Criterion 1):

Must a score of 7 be given for all applications that result in over 50% of the project area conserving, restoring, or protecting decreasing coastal wetlands types?

Yes. Applications that document that over 50% of the project area will be, upon project completion, decreasing coastal wetlands types will receive the full 7 points. You may find specific guidance on how reviewers score this criterion at 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1).

Should a graduated scale be used to further delineate applications?

The program regulations in 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1) provide guidance on the use of intermediate scores (i.e., less than 7 points) for projects that document that, upon project completion, a minimum of 50% of the project area will be a combination of decreasing and stable types of wetlands, and for projects that are less than 50% wetlands.

50 CFR 84.32 (a)(2) (Criterion 2):

What qualifies as a maritime forest?

A thorough description of what is considered to be a maritime forest for the purpose of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant program is found in the program regulations in the Definitions section, 50 CFR 84.11.

How will this criterion be scored?

In order to receive the maximum 7 points for this criterion, the project must significantly benefit maritime forests which meet the following descriptions: 1) are located on coastal barriers (see definition of “Coastal barrier” in 50 CFR 84.11) along the mainland coast from Delaware to Texas, and 2) are broad-leaved forests. Examples of maritime forests are primarily characterized by a closed canopy of various combinations of live oak, upland laurel oak, pignut hickory, southern magnolia, sugarberry, and cabbage palm.

Intermediate scores of less than 7 points are acceptable (1) for applications in which the significance of the benefit to maritime forests is unclear, or (2) for applications in which it is unclear if the forests meet the strict definition of maritime forest.

50 CFR 84.32 (a)(5, 6, 7) (Criteria 5, 6, and 7):

What information should I include about threatened and endangered species, fish, and coastal-dependent or migratory birds in responses to ranking criteria 5, 6, and 7?

You should include the information requested in the ranking criteria. It is important to also note if species have been observed within the project boundary or only in the general vicinity. It is

suggested that applicants supply this information in table format. The column headings can include: common name, scientific name, status (Federally listing, delisted within the last 5 years, State listing, etc.), observed within project boundary, habitat type provided, restored, or enhanced (nesting, breeding, feeding, nursery areas), etc. See ranking criteria language for additional information.

50 CFR 84.32 (a)(10) (Criterion 10):

Can applications receive points for more than one State agency's participation in a proposed project?

In general, applications will only receive credit for one State agency. The exception to this practice will occur when an application includes multiple States. In these instances, the application may receive points for each additional State that is participating in the proposed project.

What documentation is required to receive points for this criterion for non-Federal partners?

A signed letter of financial commitment of matching funds or in-kind match from an authorized representative of any third-party match provider or partner(s) must accompany the application to receive points. Partners that are providing financial support that is not match will not be counted for this ranking criterion. Applicants are ultimately accountable for third party commitments of financial support.

What documentation is required to receive points for this criterion for Federal partners?

A signed letter committing project involvement that is necessary and reasonable to completing the project objectives from an authorized representative of the Federal partner(s) must accompany the application to receive points. Project involvement that is not necessary or reasonable to complete the project objectives will not be counted as a partner for this criterion.

50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11) (Criterion 11):

Can in-kind services or contributions be used as the required State match?

Yes. In-kind services can be used for the entire portion of the State's required cost share (i.e., 25% or 50%). However, the applicant will not receive points for this ranking criterion.

Can in-kind services or contributions, including bargain land sale, be used to score points for this criterion?

No. We only consider cash contributions that exceed the required match when scoring points for Criterion 11. Cash is a liquid asset and can be tracked easily through audit procedures and also serves as a proxy for the State's commitment towards a project. Federal regulations and

guidance clearly identify a landowner's acceptance of a reduced price for his or her property as an in-kind service or contribution, not cash. As such, so-called "bargain sales" cannot be used to receive points for decreasing the Federal share.

Can the in-kind contribution of a landowner accepting an offer below market value for his property be used for the required State match?

Yes. The in-kind contribution of a landowner accepting a reduced price for his property can be used as part of or all of the State's required cost share of 25% or 50%.

50 CFR 84.32(b)(4) (Additional considerations):

Please clarify the 'provides lands as part of the State matching share'.

The purpose of this tie-breaking factor is to consider applications which include the donation of lands owned by a third party as part of the overall project. Such donations increase the overall acreage of land managed by the State agency, increasing the likelihood that the land will be managed to conserve the natural resources and increase the management options for the grant property.