FY2022 Marine Debris Removal

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NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY2022 Marine Debris Removal

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ORR-2022-2006974

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.999, Marine Debris Program

Dates: ATTENTION: The FY2022 competition will have a pre-proposal requirement (hereafter described as Letter of Intent; LOI). Please note the competition's early submission deadline for this requirement.

This funding opportunity requires a Letter of Intent to be submitted for competitive review before a full proposal can be submitted. LOIs must be received via email as an attachment (to grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov) no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, September 24, 2021. If invited per the instructions in this announcement, full proposals must then be submitted through and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, January 14, 2022. Due to limited staffing of federal offices, hardcopy LOIs or full applications will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Marine Debris Program, authorized in the Marine Debris Act, codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq., supports the development and implementation of locally-driven, marine debris assessment, removal and prevention projects that benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and marine and Great Lake resources. Projects awarded through this grant competition will create long-term, quantifiable ecological benefits and habitat improvements through on-the-ground marine debris removal activities, with highest priority for those targeting derelict fishing gear and other medium- and large-scale debris. Projects should also foster awareness of the sources and effects of marine debris to further the conservation of living marine resource habitats, contribute to the understanding of marine debris composition, distribution and impacts, and work to prevent marine debris reaccumulation. Projects awarded through this competition may be implemented throughout all United States coastal, marine, and Great Lakes areas; the coastal and marine areas of United States territories and Freely Associated States, or; within coastal areas of Mexico or Canada as long as benefits to United States resources, navigation or economy can be clearly demonstrated. Successful proposals through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. Funding of up to $5,000,000 is expected to be available for Marine Debris Removal grants in Fiscal Year 2022. The typical

funding level for the federal share of project awards ranges from $150,000 to $350,000. Funding for this grant competition comes through the NOAA Marine Debris Program as annual or supplemental appropriations to the National Ocean Service, Coastal Science, Assessment, Response and Restoration budget line, as well as from the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2019 Pub. L. 116-113, Title IX to carry out Section 3 of the Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. § 1952) in the North American region.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Marine debris is defined as "any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes" (15 C.F.R. § 909.1). Marine debris can come from land-based or ocean-based sources, and can range in size from small solid waste items such as plastic bags, cigarette butts, foam take-out containers, or balloons, to large items such as derelict fishing gear and abandoned vessels. Most marine debris is primarily the result of human actions such as ineffective or improper waste management, dumping and littering, or stormwater runoff. Some types of debris, such as derelict fishing gear, can also be the result of storms or interactions with shipping or fishing gear. There are many adverse impacts from marine debris, including wildlife injury and death from entanglement or ingestion, exposure to toxic chemicals which attach to or are in plastics, habitat destruction, vessel damage, and economic loss to tourism, fisheries and maritime activities.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP), a division of the Office of Response and Restoration, leads national efforts to address marine debris. NOAA MDP’s mission is to investigate and prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris, a principal objective of which is to provide financial and technical assistance to organizations with the expertise to identify, evaluate, and execute marine debris removal projects. The funding from this solicitation will develop impactful, community-driven and cost-effective projects that remove threats to living marine resources and improve habitats through the removal of marine debris. These activities align with NOAA's mission to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources, and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for NOAA trust resources.

NOAA trust resources are living marine resources and their habitats, including commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine and Great Lakes fish and shellfish); coastal habitats; diadromous fish species; endangered and threatened marine species; marine mammals and marine turtles; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and other coastal habitats; Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). NOAA trust resources can also include marine habitats and resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves and areas under state coastal management programs, including Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes. For the purposes of this competition, NOAA trust resources may also include foreign, transient,

or transboundary marine species.

Marine debris removal is the most direct approach to restoring damaged or depleted habitat and mitigating any future impacts. Another principal objective of the Marine Debris Program is engaging the public to promote the long-term prevention of marine debris. NOAA supports this objective through education and outreach projects that provide the knowledge and resources necessary to change behaviors and raise awareness of the issue. In conjunction with all removal efforts, NOAA encourages such activities to be integrated into the project to maximize the long term impact of a removal project. NOAA also encourages partnerships with relevant groups to this end. These may include partnerships with public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, anglers, boaters, industry (e.g. the commercial fishing industry, the aquaculture industry, fishing gear manufacturers, other marine industries, and the plastics and waste management industries), corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local, state, and federal government agencies.

A portion of the funds available through this solicitation were allocated to MDP through the USMCA Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2019 Pub. L. 116-113, Title IX to carry out Section 3 of the Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. § 1952) in the North American region. The USMCA, Article 24.12, recognizes the importance of taking action to prevent and reduce marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics, in order to preserve human health and marine and coastal ecosystems, prevent the loss of biodiversity, and mitigate marine litter's costs and impacts. The USMCA calls for cooperation among the Parties (that is, the United States, Mexico and Canada) to address matters of mutual interest with respect to combatting a variety of marine debris issues. As such, NOAA welcomes applications for projects implemented in border areas of Canada and Mexico, and in alignment with these objectives (please note additional eligibility criteria and specific priorities to address for these projects).

To better achieve these program objectives, the NOAA Marine Debris Program encourages applicants and awardees to support the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion when writing their proposals and performing their work. Ensuring justice and equity means paying particular attention to the most vulnerable populations, which are often low-income, those already overburdened by pollution, those who lack economic or social opportunity, and people facing disenfranchisement. Diversity here is defined as a collection of individual attributes that together help organizations achieve objectives. Inclusion is defined as a culture that connects each person to the larger organizing structure. Promoting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion improves the creativity, productivity, and vitality of communities in which the program engages.

B. Program Priorities

Projects awarded through this competition may be implemented throughout all United States coastal, marine, and Great Lakes areas; the coastal and marine areas of United States territories and Freely Associated States, or; within Mexico or Canada as long as the benefits to United States resources, navigation or economy can be clearly demonstrated.
The highest program priorities for this solicitation are the detection and removal of derelict fishing gear, abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV), and the removal of medium- to large-scale marine debris that have a negative impact on NOAA trust resources and important habitat areas. Derelict fishing gear includes, but is not limited to, such items as abandoned crab or lobster pots/traps, fishing nets, and synthetic (e.g., monofilament, polypropylene) line. Medium- and large-scale debris are items that generally cannot be manually removed by an individual. Such projects must comply with applicable federal and state laws regarding handling and ownership.

In order to reduce the need for repeated removal in the future, these activities should be tied to, and include substantial interaction with, targeted user groups prioritized in Section I. A. Information on the types and quantities of debris removed during these projects should be shared through education and outreach efforts so the relevant target audience can better prevent those debris types from accumulating in the future. Generally speaking, for such education and outreach activities, applicants are encouraged to incorporate existing resources into their projects, including those available for download at http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/resources. Proposals should include such activities as project components, but they should not be the main focus of the project - proposals that focus primarily on prevention through education and outreach are not a priority for this competition.

ADV removal and associated vessel debris removal activities must demonstrate direct benefits to the aforementioned habitats. Proposals should also identify specific vessels or discrete target removal areas and utilize existing prioritized inventories of derelict vessels such as those maintained by state regulatory agencies. Proposals with an ADV removal component should confirm that a search for responsible parties, such as the vessel’s owner, has been conducted and that no alternative course of action for removal exists. Recreational or commercial vessels are applicable under this funding opportunity. More information on ADV policies by state may be found at NOAA’s ADV InfoHub (https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/discover-issue/types-and-sources/abandoned-and-derelict-vessels).

Other priority activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Projects that pair removal activities with technically sound, cost-effective habitat monitoring that measures the benefits of debris removal to NOAA trust resources. This includes pre- and post-removal monitoring of the removal site, and should include information on the areal extent and habitat types impacted by the debris, objective measures of ecosystem health in and around the removal site, species impacts and mortality rates, length of time debris will cause impacts if not removed, time to recover after removal, or other additional data the NOAA MDP may require. Such projects that include a monitoring component may receive higher priority under this funding opportunity.

- Detection and removal of marine debris resulting from hurricanes or other natural disasters.

- Detection and removal of legacy aquaculture debris. Legacy aquaculture debris removal proposals should confirm that a search for responsible parties (such as the property’s current or former owner) has been conducted and that no alternative course of action for removal exists.

- Shoreline or riparian cleanup projects should be coupled with education and outreach efforts, a monitoring program, or volunteer involvement that aims to reduce or prevent future accumulation of marine debris. Such projects may include cleanups of shoreline litter, as well as timed, targeted watershed "hot spot" cleanups to prevent seasonal debris inundation into sensitive habitats used by NOAA trust resources. Such projects will be considered a priority only if there is a strong link to NOAA trust resource impacts. For shoreline removal activities, the NOAA MDP has developed standardized marine debris shoreline survey protocols to facilitate regional and site-specific comparisons of debris loads. If a proposal has a shoreline cleanup component, applicants should contact the NOAA MDP to discuss whether it would be appropriate to incorporate NOAA MDP monitoring and data collection protocols, which are posted at http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/research/marine-debris-monitoring-and-assessment-project.

- Derelict piling removal projects should have a meaningful benefit to NOAA trust resources or have a strong debris impact-related reason supporting removal (e.g., derelict pilings that snag marine debris and add to the impact of this debris in that area or pilings that are breaking up and generating more debris). Such projects will be considered a priority only if there is a strong link to NOAA trust resource impacts, there is landowner and/or regulatory permission to conduct the removal, and the removal is one component of a greater marine debris removal proposal or are recognized as a priority through a regional prioritization process. Piling removal proposals should indicate that a search for responsible parties (such

as the property’s current or former owner) has been conducted and that no acceptable responsible party exists.

There are additional considerations for those proposed projects with work occurring in Mexico or Canada. The geographic focus for proposed projects in Mexico or Canada are border regions with the United States that have the potential for debris to impact United States resources. Activities occurring wholly within Mexico or Canada should demonstrate that such activities will address debris that impacts the United States economy, the United States marine environment (including the U.S. exclusive economic zone, territorial sea, coastal waters, Great Lakes, navigable waters of the United States, and the lands therein and thereunder, and adjacent shorelines and shorelands), or navigation safety in the United States. Projects proposing activities partially or fully occurring in Mexico or Canada should effectively engage and partner with an organization/entity in Mexico or Canada to address their identified cross-border marine debris issues. Projects that take place in Mexico will be prioritized over those taking place in Canada. This is due to the general disparity in available resources between Mexico and Canada to effectively address this issue.

For all locations, strong proposals will integrate innovative, sustainable approaches for disposal of debris (i.e. re-use, recycling, energy recovery, use of open shipping capacity to reduce transport costs (also known as "backhauling"), partnering with local waste management companies, etc.). If there are no alternative disposal options in the project area or the current alternatives present a negative impact, applicants should demonstrate that the approach being proposed is the most environmentally friendly (e.g. lower carbon footprint). NOAA may consider the disposal methodology and whether these types of sustainable disposal options are integrated into the project as a selection factor when making final funding recommendations. Derelict fishing gear removal projects that promote innovative and comprehensive removal efforts that lead to greater recycling and/or re-use of gear materials will be prioritized. Additionally, projects that propose new or novel ways to recover marine debris that are consistent with the legislative priorities of the Marine Debris Program may be considered as well (i.e. incentive programs).

Strong proposals will also describe, where applicable, the specific resource, navigational, and economic benefits that are expected from the removal effort. Successful proposals may be required to track or measure such benefits during or following removal activities.
The NOAA MDP strongly encourages applicants and awardees to incorporate justice, equity, diversity and inclusion when writing their proposals and performing their work. Applicants may demonstrate this in a variety of ways and examples include, but are not limited to, working in or with under-resourced or underserved communities, working with stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues, working with

a diverse project team (including, but not limited to, sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic), or incorporating different learning or engagement approaches into the project. Special consideration will be given to proposals that work with disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized and overburdened by pollution.

Sanctuaries, Reserves, or other protected areas are valuable natural resource areas (as described in Section I.A above). However, projects are not limited to these areas and may take place in remote, urbanized, or underserved areas. Despite project location, all proposals must have a primary emphasis on removal activities that benefit NOAA trust resources described above and must clearly lay out the direct links to such resources.

The NOAA MDP encourages projects implementing activities addressing marine debris removal that are identified in any existing regional or national publicly vetted program, priority, or strategic plans (e.g., National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, 2021-2025 NOAA MDP Strategic Plan, NOAA Marine Debris Action Plans, etc.) and describe how they do so. NOAA Marine Debris Action Plans can be found on the NOAA MDP website at https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/emergency-response-guides-and-regional-action-plans.

Because funding is limited, proposals requesting support for large equipment purchases, to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative or program management activities or to support strictly administration, salaries, overhead, and travel without being part of a specific project will be a low priority. If a project requires funding for large equipment purchases, collection facilities, or other long-term operations, the application should provide a lease versus purchase justification, identify how the overall project will continue into the future and how any equipment operation and maintenance costs will be paid for beyond the award period. Proposals may include any associated habitat restoration costs, however such costs must be minimal and directly address habitat impaired by debris removed under the project. Projects that duplicate those that the NOAA MDP currently supports or those that have been funded by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies may not receive priority.

All proposed removal projects will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in Section V.A.

Projects focused on removing primarily hazards to human health or removals for aesthetic purposes, with no clear connection to NOAA trust resources are not a focus of this grant competition.

Applicants should also note that the following activities, in general, will not be considered under this competition: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation.

Applications addressing other types of pollution not fitting the definition of marine debris provided in Section I. A. are not priorities for this solicitation and may not be considered.

C. Program Authority

Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq.)
USMCA Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2019 Pub. L. 116-113, Title IX

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding of up to $5,000,000 is expected to be available for this grant solicitation. The actual funding amount available is contingent upon Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations. The NOAA MDP does not plan to fund proposals for removal activities at less than $50,000 or more than $750,000 under this solicitation, however the exact amount of funds to be awarded and the number of awards made will be at the discretion of NOAA following pre-award negotiations with highly meritorious applicants. At NOAA's discretion, additional funding may be awarded above the $750,000 limit to allow for effective completion of proposed project objectives. The typical funding level for the federal share of project awards ranges from $150,000 to $350,000.

The NOAA MDP anticipates that between 8 and 15 awards will be made under this solicitation. NOAA may request that a highly ranked applicant submitting more than one meritorious proposal combine all or parts of its proposals into one award. Publication of this opportunity does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of available program funds. Awards may include funding from other programs or agencies. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for any or all proposals. The number of awards to be made under this solicitation will depend on the number and quality of eligible applications received, the amount of funding requested by recommended applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the NOAA MDP by Congress.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications should cover a project period of performance of no more than two years in duration. If habitat recovery monitoring activities are proposed to be conducted before or following removal, NOAA may consider applications with a period of performance of up to three years total as long as there is reasonable justification provided. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be September 1, 2022 – applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed project activities. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date to accommodate any delays in federal appropriations. Applications for renewal or supplementation of previously-awarded NOAA MDP projects are allowed, however such proposals will be subject to the competitive process and will not receive preferential treatment. In some cases NOAA may fund a project with incremental funding, usually in the form of a multi-year award. If incremental or multi-year funding is awarded, in which NOAA only obligates funds initially for the first phase of a project, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent time periods; additional funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to program mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in aspects of the project. Substantial involvement is defined as, but is not limited to, engagement with the recipient on environmental compliance requirements, hands-on technical collaboration or permitting assistance, support in developing protocols (e.g., for data collection or monitoring), tracking the progress of removal efforts through site visits, regular conference calls, and progress report evaluation and milestone approval, developing performance measures to assess project outcomes, reviewing manuscript drafts (if any), and support in developing and disseminating public-facing communication materials or events to highlight marine debris removal activities.

Marine debris removal, prevention, or monitoring activities funded through this competition may have long term planning goals and objectives common to the programmatic needs of both NOAA and the recipients. As such, NOAA may seek to maintain a long-term partnership with recipients by establishing cooperative agreements in relevant situations as “institutional awards”. If a cooperative agreement is established as an institutional award, the initial cooperative agreement will be established for no more than five years and NOAA may issue new cooperative agreements to the recipient for similar or related activities through a non-competitive selection process.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

As outlined in the Marine Debris Act, eligible applicants for projects taking place in the United States, territories, or Freely Associated States (or their adjacent waterways), are state, local, tribal, territory, and freely associated state governments whose activities affect research or regulation of marine debris. Equally eligible are any institution of higher education, nonprofit organization, or commercial (for-profit) organization with expertise in a field related to marine debris. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Interested federal agencies may collaborate with eligible applicants but may not receive funds through this competition. Foreign public entities (see 2 CFR 200.1) from outside of the Freely Associated States are not eligible to apply as the primary applicant but can be involved as project partners.

Eligible applicants for projects taking place in Mexico or Canada are limited to any institution of higher education, nonprofit organization or commercial (for-profit) organization with expertise in a field related to marine debris. This includes community based organizations, business associations, and non-public foreign organizations. Foreign public entities (see 2 CFR 200.1), from Canada or Mexico are not eligible to receive awards or subawards under the Marine Debris Act and will not be considered. Interested governmental agencies in Canada or Mexico may collaborate with eligible applicants but may not receive funds through this competition.

NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of veterans, minority-serving institutions, and entities that work in underserved areas. The NOAA MDP encourages applicants of all backgrounds, circumstances, perspectives and ways of thinking to apply.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grant programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

The Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. § 1951 et seq.) requires NOAA MDP's grant programs to leverage its federal grant funding with non-federal cost share or match. Applicants often satisfy this requirement by developing and including public and private partnerships, as well as in-kind and financial contributions, to accomplish the overall project objectives. Applicants must provide a minimum 1:1 ratio of non-federal matching contributions to NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed project. Applicants may consider involving co-PIs from other institutions that may have an easier time finding sources for matched funds. In addition to required cost sharing, the NOAA MDP encourages

applicants to leverage additional investment where possible.

"Cost share" or "match" is defined by 2 C.F.R. 200.1 as "the portion of project costs not paid by federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by federal statute)." Any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind contributions, will be accepted as part of an applicant's cost sharing or matching when the contributions meet the criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. 200.306. Matching funds may come from a variety of public and private sources and may include in-kind goods and services from the applicant or third parties (e.g., private boat use, existing equipment, volunteer labor, etc.). In addition, applicants are permitted to combine contributions for allowable costs from non-federal partners when they meet the criteria in Section 200.306, such as not being contributed as match for other projects, and being available within the project period stated in the application. Section 200.306 also describes the valuations to attribute to the matching contributions. Federal contributions cannot be used as match without a specific legal authority, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage or partnership. Applicants may also choose to designate part or all of their federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. Refer to Section IV.F.2. "Indirect Costs".

If the match requirement cannot be met, the Marine Debris Act allows the NOAA Administrator to waive all or part of the matching requirement if the applicant can demonstrate the following:

1) No reasonable means are available through which applicants can meet the matching requirement, and
2) The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

Applicants wishing to waive all or part of this competition’s match requirement should request a waiver in the Budget Narrative section of the application package being submitted. Match waiver requests must justify the need for the waiver, describe attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, and explain how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, along with any other extenuating circumstances preventing the incorporation or local availability of matching contributions. In certain cases, if circumstances warrant, match waivers may also be negotiated post-award at NOAA’s discretion.

In accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a, NOAA has determined that any requirement for local matching funds less than $200,000 (including in-kind contributions) to be provided by applicants from American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the

Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau, shall be waived, notwithstanding any other provision of law. Any matching funds otherwise required by law to be provided by government entities of the above-mentioned insular areas may be waived at the discretion of NOAA.

Applicants should note that cost sharing is an evaluation criterion (See Section V.A. "Evaluation Criteria") for this funding opportunity. As such, if available, the inclusion of matching contributions is encouraged. Please note within the proposal whether cash or third party in-kind contributions have been secured at the time of application, or if such contributions are still pending.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the cost share amount reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should carefully document cost sharing, including but not limited to, the estimated value of services and/or resources provided by the applicant's organization or a third party (e.g., real property, equipment, supplies and expendable goods) as well as facilities and administration costs. Letters of commitment for any secured matching contributions expected for an award should be submitted as an attachment to the application.

The Marine Debris Act also allows the NOAA Administrator to authorize, as appropriate, the non-federal share of the cost of a project to include money paid pursuant to, or the value of any in-kind service performed under, an administrative order on consent or judicial consent decree that will remove or prevent marine debris. See 33 USC 1952(d)(3).

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

For removal and monitoring activities conducted under an award funded through this competition, recipients of financial assistance from the NOAA MDP involved in the collection, assessment, oversight, or interpretation of scientific information are required to adhere, to the best of their ability, to the principles, policies and codes of conduct identified in NOAA's Policy on Scientific Integrity (NOAA Administrative Order 202-735D), which is available at: https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-202-735d-2-scientific-integrity

The intent of the policy is to strengthen widespread confidence (from scientists, decision-makers, and the general public) in the quality, validity, and reliability of NOAA-funded science. Further information on this policy can be found at: https://nrc.noaa.gov/Scientific-Integrity-Commons.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms, general instructions, and supplementary instructions specific to the Fiscal Year 2022 Marine Debris Removal grants competition, can be found on Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov). If the application forms and instructions cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 202-870-2863).

B. Content and Form of Application

LETTER OF INTENT:

Applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and receive an invitation from the NOAA MDP before submitting a full proposal. LOIs must be submitted as an email attachment to grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern time on September 24, 2021 (see Section IV.D. below). Please put “FY2022 Marine Debris Removal Letter of Intent (LOI)” in the email subject heading. Do not direct questions to this email address (see Section VII below). An email confirmation will be sent indicating successful submission of the LOI. If no confirmation email is received, that is an indication that the LOI submission was not successful and will not be reviewed. In such cases please contact NOAA MDP to resolve the issue prior to the deadline. For this reason, it is highly recommended that LOIs are submitted early.

Applicants must follow the LOI and full application requirements stated in this announcement, or they may not be considered. The LOI submission is a critical step to determine if proposed projects are well-suited for this specific competition. The goal of the LOI is to streamline the proposal review process by inviting full applications only from those applicants whose projects are most likely to support NOAA's implementation of the Marine Debris Act through the removal of marine debris, for NOAA MDP to be able to provide feedback and guidance on invited application ideas, and to ensure a manageable number of applications are included in the merit review process. In the LOI, applicants must indicate clearly which priorities their project proposes to address, the geographic location of all project activities, and the methods to be used. Those applicants whose LOIs do not strongly align with program objectives and goals, as determined by the NOAA MDP (through the review process described below in Section V.A.), will not be invited to submit full applications. The LOI must be no more than two (2) pages in length. It should be single-spaced, use 11- or 12-point font, with one-inch margins, and should provide a concise description of the proposed work and its relevance to the competition’s priorities. A third page may be submitted showing only project site maps and photographs of the area or the debris targeted for removal. If the LOI is incomplete, does not meet the guidelines above, or

is submitted late, it may not be considered. Those applicants invited to submit a full proposal will receive an email notification containing feedback and full-proposal submission instructions from NOAA MDP. NOAA MDP may limit the number of full applications invited in order to meet the Program's expected budget or to manage the review workload.

The LOI should include each of the components listed below:

a) Applicant Organization;

b) Project Title;

c) Principal Investigator(s) Name, Address, Telephone Number and Email Address. Briefly describe the PI or organization's experience or expertise that would lead to a successful removal project. A list of primary project partners and their roles/contributions should also be part of this section;

d) Project Location - list the geographic area(s) in which the project will be implemented and what the overall debris problem at the site is / why this area is being targeted. Include geographic coordinates of removal sites if known.

e) Project Description: clearly state the purpose of the project and briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds and proposed techniques that will be used; identify NOAA trust resources that are likely to benefit (habitats and species expected to benefit) and why the project is important; and indicate the duration of the project.

f) Removal activity start date (not the proposed award start date);

g) Funding: approximate federal funds requested and non-federal match anticipated

h) Project Outcomes: estimate how many pounds of debris will be removed from the marine/coastal environment, number of traps/nets (if applicable), acreage to be cleared, volunteer participation, etc; and describe how data will be recorded. Describe any anticipated ecological services to be restored by debris removal, as well as any quantifiable economic benefits anticipated. This section should also describe any associated prevention / education / outreach activities that are planned.

i) Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion description: briefly describe how justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion will be promoted in the proposed work. This may be demonstrated in a variety of ways and examples include but are not limited to working in or with under resourced or underserved communities, working with stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues, working with a diverse project team (including, but not limited to, sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic), or incorporating different learning or engagement approaches into the project.

An LOI template can be found at: http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants

FULL PROPOSAL (only if invited):

Applicants may only submit a full proposal if invited to do so by NOAA. Applicants are required to apply through the Grants.gov website. No hardcopy applications will be accepted due to limited staff presence in federal offices.

Please visit http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants for helpful information on developing and submitting proposal documents/information.

Applicants are also encouraged to minimize the number of files uploaded to an application by combining the proposal's files as much as possible. Adobe PDF is the preferred file format for all application attachments.

Applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section may not be reviewed. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed. Full proposals will not be accepted if sent via fax or email.
Application documents must use 11- or 12-pt font on an 8.5" x 11" page size.

Applications should be sufficiently detailed in accordance with the guidelines and information requirements listed below and elsewhere in this announcement, and should be able to be completed within the proposed period of performance. Each full proposal application must contain the following required federal application forms (available from Grants.gov) and adhere to page limits indicated for each category, unless otherwise noted below:

- SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A - Budget Information, Non-construction Programs
- SF-424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs
- CD-511 - Certifications Regarding Lobbying
- SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: (if applicable)
- Project Summary (described below, 2 pages or less);
- Project Narrative (described below, 12 pages or less);
- Data Sharing Plan (described below, 2 pages or less);
- Budget Narrative (described below, 6 pages or less);
- Curriculum vitae or résumé of the primary project personnel (2 pages or less per person);
- Maps with site location(s) highlighted (no page limit);
- Photographs of targeted debris and removal site characteristics (no page limit);

- Letter(s) documenting partner support (no page limit);
- Indirect cost rate agreement, if applicable (no page limit); and
- Other relevant attachments important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as summaries of regional marine debris action plans, or documentation about any permits necessary to perform the project. Do not include entire documents (management plans, action plans, organizational protocols, etc…) that exceed the page limit for this section (20 pages or less).

1. Project Summary (2 pages or less):

A brief project summary must include the following components:

a) Applicant Organization;
b) Project Title;
c) Principal Investigator(s) Name, Address, Telephone Number and Email Address.
d) Project Location (list the geographic area(s) in which the project will be implemented. Include geographic coordinates of removal sites if known.);
e) Project Description: clearly state the purpose of the project and briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds and proposed techniques that will be used; identify NOAA trust resources that are likely to benefit (habitats and species currently using the project area or expected to benefit); and indicate the duration of the project.
f) Removal activity start date (not the proposed award start date);
g) Funding: approximate federal funds requested and non-federal match anticipated
h) Project Outcomes: estimate how many pounds of debris will be removed from the marine/coastal environment, acreage to be cleared, volunteer participation, etc. Describe any anticipated ecological services to be restored by debris removal, as well as any quantifiable economic benefits anticipated. For those projects taking place in Mexico or Canada, describe how the proposed project will include and enhance international collaboration between project partners.

2. Project Narrative (12 pages or less)

When writing the project narrative, applicants should understand the components of the evaluation criteria (see Section V.A. "Evaluation Criteria" in this announcement), as they explain how proposals will be scored for the application to be competitive. The project narrative must not be more than 12 pages long and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. Generally, the project narrative should include:

Introduction: A summary of what the removal project will do, and why the removal project

is needed, demonstrating anticipated benefits to specific NOAA trust resources (as described in Section I.A.), as well as any benefits to the economy or navigation safety that might result. Describe how these benefits will be achieved through the marine debris detection, assessment, and removal techniques proposed in the application. Identify the habitats, species and/or resources expected to directly and indirectly benefit from removal activities, including anticipated ecological services to be restored by debris removal. These benefits should be tracked during the award period.

Description: Describe all phases and aspects of the proposed on-the-ground project activities, removal techniques and processes. Describe the project location. Proposals should also describe the project's disposal arrangements to ensure debris would not potentially be re-introduced. Strong proposals will integrate innovative, sustainable approaches for debris disposal (e.g. re-use, recycling, return to owner, energy recovery, use of open shipping capacity to reduce transport costs (also known as "backhauling"), partnering with local waste management companies, etc.) as described in Section I.B.

Applicants should note, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental statutes require NOAA to analyze a project's potential environmental impacts. Applicants therefore should provide as much detailed information as is reasonable about the project's activities in this section, including details (and coordinates) about site locations and access routes, species and habitat(s) that could be affected, proposed removal techniques and other on-the-ground project activities to be implemented, the time of year that work will take place, duration of removal activities in the field, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, potential introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, impacts to coral reef systems). See Section VI.B.10 for further detail on the NEPA process and requirements for applicants.

This section should also describe the community involvement in the project, such as contributions from partners, volunteer opportunities, citizen science participation, education and outreach plans, and efforts to disseminate information on project goals, results, and/or the sources of project funding and support. If applicable, the narrative should explain how the proposed project would engage and educate a target audience in hands-on programs designed to raise awareness, reduce barriers to marine debris prevention, and/or encourage and support changes in behaviors to ensure long-term prevention of the targeted type of marine debris. Community involvement may include participation in the physical debris removal during the project, marine debris education and outreach activities, hands-on training, cash contributions, or donation of in-kind goods and services such as boat time, and/or monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews. Letters demonstrating

support for such participation should be included in the application. This section should also briefly describe how justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion will be promoted in the proposed work. This may be demonstrated in a variety of ways and examples include but are not limited to working in or with under resourced or underserved communities, working with stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues, working with a diverse project team (including, but not limited to, sectors, age, career stage, gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic), or incorporating different learning or engagement approaches into the project.

Applicants should indicate whether the proposed project is part of a larger, ongoing effort or is otherwise prioritized in any existing regional or national, publicly-vetted programs, priorities or strategic plans (e.g., National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, 2021-2025 NOAA MDP Strategic Plan, NOAA Marine Debris Action Plans, etc.) and describe how they do so. Proposal narratives should explicitly list or otherwise cite such documents for verification purposes, including the page or action number if referencing a specific action or issue within the plan.

Project Location: Provide maps, exact coordinates of all removal locations, and the time of year that removal activities will take place in each location. Be as specific as possible. If exact locations are unknown at the time of application, describe removal site locations in as much detail as possible and when/how locations will be determined.

Project Implementation Timeline and Milestones: Describe the anticipated project duration and the timeline and milestones for completing all project objectives.

Objectives and Goals: Describe short- and long-term objectives and goals including the expected results and potential performance measures that will be used to track the success of the project. Describe how the project will benefit the NOAA trust resources currently found in the project site. Describe the methods for carrying out and monitoring (if applicable) the project, and clearly explain the project's significance to enhancing habitat to benefit living marine resources with specific examples.

To ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, marine debris removal projects should have broad, clearly identified goals and specific, measurable objectives. In order to track project success, all funded projects will need to be able to report the total amount of debris removed (pounds), total amount of debris (pounds) that is disposed in a ‘alternative’ way, (for example through re-use or return to owner (in the case of identifiable fishable gear), recycling, waste-to-energy, etc...), total area or extent cleaned (acres and/or miles), types of debris encountered, and number of volunteers as well as total volunteer hours

contributed to the project. Other performance measures relevant to demonstrating project success may include: expected footprint or impacted area (in acres or square-feet) of removed debris; number of removal operations; number of discrete items removed (e.g., crab pots, gill nets, pilings); species bycatch data (if appropriate); anticipated ecosystem services to be restored by the debris removal; percent of overall problem areas addressed by removal activities; comparisons of initial removal targets to post-removal results; estimated debris accumulation rates; number of fishers who receive training on the safe removal of derelict gear or specific debris types; expected (or actual) weight of material recycled; expected (or actual) weight (pounds) of material prevented from entering the marine environment; economic or job creation metrics (if appropriate), among others.

Not all projects and applicants are expected to include a habitat and/or species monitoring component. Those proposals that do incorporate more in-depth monitoring in addition to debris removal activities (per Section I. B. above) should describe, in detail, the methodology for monitoring or pre/post-removal evaluation. These studies should be designed in a scientifically rigorous manner to assess factors indicative of habitat or species benefits through project and location specific metrics. Such metrics include: information on the footprint of item(s) being removed and habitat types impacted by the debris, objective measures of ecosystem health in and around the removal site, species presence, abundance, density or other similar metrics, species impacts and mortality rates (number of animals killed annually by the targeted debris), length of time debris will cause impacts if not removed, recovery rate of benefitting habitat; and any others the applicant deems appropriate to the removal site. Monitoring protocols should be designed to measure these improvements over a span of time appropriate to the targeted habitat/species (in some cases, monitoring may take longer than one year). Monitoring proposals should describe the anticipated, long-term ecological and socio-economic outcomes of the project; describe the approach to planning, developing and implementing the study design; describe rationale for proposed survey techniques and parameters; and advance our scientific understanding of marine debris monitoring by publishing peer-reviewed literature on project accomplishments (if appropriate). Any proposed monitoring must be cost-effective and appropriate to the scope and scale of the project to evaluate a project's benefits. The NOAA MDP will work with successful applicants who have included an in-depth monitoring plan to ensure an acceptable approach is implemented and that the appropriate metrics are monitored to link removal to habitat or species improvement.

Permits and Consultations: Applicants must demonstrate that they have the legal authority to conduct the project activities within the proposed project area, and understand what permitting requirements exist for work to be conducted as described in the proposal. To provide assurance that the project will expeditiously meet environmental compliance and

permitting requirements, projects that would require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project. This should include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, permit status, and documentation of all secured permits. Proposals must indicate the project's readiness and should ensure that on-the-ground debris removal activities will begin reasonably soon after the project's start date.

Letters of commitment are required from relevant landowners for projects on private land or from relevant resource agency personnel for projects on public, permanently protected land. Letters of commitment should provide assurance that the project is supported, and will be maintained for its intended purpose. Documentation of plans for long-term project management should also be included.

Organization Structure and Project Staff: Describe the organizational structure of the applicant, and the qualifications of project staff. Describe the level of staff experience and qualifications in managing grants and implementing marine debris removal projects; this includes any relevant sub-contractors conducting project work. If applicable, describe any previous NOAA involvement in and/or support for the project and include name(s) of any relevant NOAA staff. Examples of successfully implemented past projects, or the organization’s experience successfully managing federal grants should be provided. If project staff have no specific examples to provide, applicants will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, demonstrated by the education, training, and/or experience of primary project participants.

References Cited: This section should include all references to source materials cited within the Project Narrative, if applicable. Please follow any accepted scholarly format for citations that includes authors’ names, year of publication, article and journal (or chapter and book) title, volume number, and page numbers. The Reference Cited section is not included in the 12-page limit but should include bibliographic references only (i.e., no additional parenthetical information), and can be included as either a separate attachment or part of the Project Narrative.

3. Data Management Plan (2 pages or less)

Proposals must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how environmental data and information collected or created under an award made through this competition will be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public. Such data must be made available in a timely fashion (typically within two years), and should be free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction.

The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in Section VI. B. 9. below. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access and the medium by which the data will be shared; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. NOAA MDP manages and maintains a public-facing Clearinghouse (https://clearinghouse.marinedebris.noaa.gov/) and is able to ensure grantee compliance with Data Management requirements by hosting project data on that platform.

A sample Data Management Plan may be found at: http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants

4. Budget Justification (6 pages or less)

Applicants should follow NOAA's Budget Narrative Guidance document to ensure the appropriate content and format is provided with the proposal. This document can be found at: https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/gmd_budget_narrative_guidance_-_05-24-2017_final.pdf

The Budget Justification should include both a narrative and a summary budget table that lay out and describe each line item's various costs in as much detail as is reasonable. For clarification and simplicity, the Budget Justification should be organized using the object classes in the order that they appear on the SF424A. Include detailed descriptions of all cost justifications for both federal funds and any cost sharing or matching funds (cost share or matching funds should be described in the same level of detail as the federal funds). The amounts described in the Budget Justification narrative and summary table must match the dollar amounts on all required forms. The summary budget table does not count toward the 6 page limit.

The Budget Justification narrative should also indicate if the proposal has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The source of any matching funds, including applicant or third party in-kind contributions, should be explained. If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, the Budget Justification should describe the overall budget for the entire project to allow NOAA to make an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio. Any funding

other than the federal funds requested and proposed cost share or match should be considered additional leverage.

Applicants should ensure personnel roles (including hours and costs by task) are clearly explained and allocable to the project. For projects with a monitoring component, applicants should separate out monitoring or post-project evaluation costs so that NOAA can evaluate the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of those activities.

If sub-awards are expected to be made, describe the process that will be used to identify recipients and justification for that process.

The Budget Justification narrative should also indicate if the applicant is requesting a waiver of all match requirements, as outlined above in Section III.B. "Cost Share or Matching Requirement." As previously stated, in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA has waived the requirement for local matching funds to the insular areas (up to $200,000) defined above in Section III.B.

NOAA assesses budgets to determine the reasonableness, necessity, and adequacy of proposed costs for accomplishing the project objectives, and performs a cost analysis to assure that costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable in accordance with applicable federal cost principles. NOAA MDP may recommend funding only specific components of a project, as such applicants should describe the extent to which project activities can be scaled up or scaled down.

Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing $5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving the project’s stated goals, and a comparison with rental costs should be provided to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats, and similar items will be a low priority.

Refer to Section IV.F.2. regarding indirect costs in the budget.

5. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should not assume NOAA has any prior knowledge relative to the merits of the project described in the proposal. As such, proposals should be written with an appropriate level of detail. Detailed maps of project activities, photographs or the targeted debris / removal site characteristics, summaries of project designs, and letters of support from project partners are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the Project Narrative page limit. Letters of support from local and state governments, and Congressional representatives are

also helpful in demonstrating support for the project. All other supplementary materials should not exceed 20 pages. Such supplementary information should be combined and submitted as a single file in the Grants.gov application.

Files uploaded to Grants.gov should not have any special characters in the filename (example: &, ¿, *, %, /, #, -), and filenames should be limited to less than 50 characters.

Participant safety is critically important during project implementation. Proposals should demonstrate meaningful consideration for the safety of project participants during project activities. It should be noted that all funded projects will be required to have a written safety plan governing all project-related activities, especially regarding the safety and management of interns and volunteers. The safety plan should consider safety at all project sites during and after project implementation and take into account potential safety concerns for current and future uses of the project site.

If a project requires scuba diving or the use of surface-supplied air, it is the responsibility of the recipient organization to ensure that divers are qualified and trained to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. The organization must describe their capacity (appropriate insurance, safety policies, etc.) to effectively oversee all proposed diving activities in the proposal. All diving activities must meet, or be specifically exempted from, OSHA guidelines. Assuming all other relevant safety conditions are satisfied, divers that are not advanced divers may perform only simple activities, such as underwater surveys and/or removal of light, non-entangling objects. Advanced divers are divers with advanced diving training for the proposed tasks and in compliance with OSHA guidelines. Snorkeling activities are similarly restricted, in that snorkelers should complete only simple activities such as surveys and removal of light, non-entangling objects. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any diving activities under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of diving being undertaken.

Activities that should be performed only by advanced divers include but are not limited to the following:

- Using hand tools or moving or lifting heavy objects where the tools or objects weigh more than 25 pounds underwater;
- Performing underwater tasks that require substantial physical exertion;
- Using lift bags; and
- Underwater removal of potentially entangling debris, such as nets, crab or lobster pots, or fishing line.

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

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, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at https://www.sam.gov. Applicants are also required to use the Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25.

Applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) in order to apply via Grants.gov and to be funded by NOAA. Applicants must: (1) Be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting an application; (2) provide a valid Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number on an application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. The federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform. The applicant organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.

Applicants should allow a minimum of several weeks to complete each of these registration processes. Registrations may need to be periodically renewed.

D. Submission Dates and Times

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND APPLICANTS BEGIN THE APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS EARLY AND SUBMIT IN ADVANCE OF THE DEADLINE. NOAA WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE SUBMISSIONS. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY. DUE TO LIMITED STAFF PRESENCE IN FEDERAL OFFICES, HARDCOPY APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Letters of Intent must be submitted as an email attachment to grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov

by 11:59 pm Eastern time on September 24, 2021. Please put "FY2022 Marine Debris Removal Letter of Intent (LOI)" in the email subject heading. Do not direct questions to this email address; see Section VII below.

Full Proposals may only be submitted if invited by NOAA. Invited full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, January 14, 2022.

Please keep in mind that acquiring a DUNS number, and the registration processes for SAM.gov and Grants.gov may take as long as several weeks and may impact the submission timeline (see Sections IV.C and IV.G. of this announcement).

As stated above, no hardcopy, fax or email applications will be accepted. Applicants without the ability to apply electronically should contact the program to discuss arrangements for submission.

For all applicants, adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Volume on Grants.gov is at times extremely heavy.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grants programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation but will not be given preferential treatment.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications for federal financial assistance are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." All applications for funding under this competition are required to complete item 19 on the SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, contractual costs, supplies, and indirect costs, as long as these

are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Currently, allowable costs are determined by reference to 2 C.F.R. 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." All sub-awards are also subject to these federal cost principles. Award recipients are subject to 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.327 when implementing contracts under an award.

Pre-award costs are allowable only with the written approval by NOAA under 2 C.F.R. 200.458 except to the extent allowed for research awards under 2 C.F.R. 200.308(e)(4). Any pre-award costs incurred before the NOAA Grants Office provides a notice of award are at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be September 1, 2022. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing plans for proposed project activities.

2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates may propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been federally-approved and documentation is readily available.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: The NOAA contact for indirect costs is Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division; lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov). To use Grants.gov, applicants must have active Grants.gov registration, a DUNS number, and be registered with SAM.gov (as described in Section IV.C). Applicants should note that it may take up to several weeks for first time users to register with each of these systems. Even if an applicant has registered with each of these systems previously, renewing, updating or

reactivating accounts are required prior to proposal submission, and may take some time to complete. Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days. For further information please visit http://www.sam.gov. See also 2 C.F.R. 25.

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

The Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete following submission through Grants.gov. After submission, Grants.gov will send a series of email notifications (potentially for up to two business days) indicating the application's status and whether NOAA's system has received the application. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. Please plan accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected.

As stated above, a Letter of Intent must be submitted as the first step for this competition. The LOI should include the information described in Section IV.B. It must be included as an email attachment to grants.marinedebris@noaa.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern time on September 24, 2021. Please put "FY2022 Marine Debris Removal Letter of Intent (LOI)" in the email subject heading.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

LETTER OF INTENT EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Letters of Intent will be reviewed to ascertain whether the proposal has the potential to address marine debris removal activities that meet the competition's priorities. The highest program priorities for this solicitation are the detection and removal of derelict fishing gear, ADVs, and the removal of medium- to large-scale marine debris that have a negative impact on NOAA trust resources and important habitat areas. Derelict fishing gear includes, but is not limited to, such items as abandoned crab or lobster pots/traps, fishing nets, and synthetic (e.g., monofilament, polypropylene) line. Medium and large-scale debris are items that generally cannot be manually removed by an individual. Such projects must comply with applicable federal and state laws regarding handling and ownership. Other priorities for this solicitation are listed in Section I.B above.

By assigning a score of 0 to 5 to each criterion, the NOAA MDP will assess whether the proposed approach is appropriate, focused on priority marine debris issues, and whether the LOI clearly explains how project activities will be carried out. Specifically, LOIs will be evaluated using the following criteria and weighting:

- How likely is it that the project will restore, protect, conserve, or enhance coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems or other NOAA trust resources, through the removal of a high priority debris type (as described in Section I.B)? (35%)

Projects addressing the highest priority debris types and that can also demonstrate a direct benefit to endangered species or commercial and recreational fisheries (and their habitats) are likely to score higher on this criterion. For proposed projects within Mexico or Canada, those with the clearest benefits to United States resources, economy, or navigation safety are likely to score higher on this criterion. Such projects should also demonstrate effective international partnerships to address the identified cross-border marine debris issues.

- Does the LOI clearly identify the project's overall goals and objectives and lay out a realistic and cost-effective removal approach? How well developed are the proposal ideas at this stage? (25%)

LOIs with clear, realistic, achievable and cost-effective goals are likely to score higher on this criterion.

- Does the organization demonstrate the capabilities, experience, or expertise that would lead to a successful removal effort? Organizations demonstrating high levels of technical and administrative expertise or capability are likely to score higher on this criterion. (25%)

- Does the LOI include the project's outreach and/or education plan? Is there an appropriate and effective level of education and outreach to be conducted about the project's goals and accomplishments? Is a target audience identified? Does the project demonstrate how justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion will be promoted in the proposed work? (15%)

The NOAA MDP may use the Selection Factors described in Section V.C. below during the LOI process to determine final invitations. Furthermore, the NOAA MDP may establish cut-offs based on reviewer score or the number of reviewer invite recommendations.

FULL PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Technical reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that address the issues contained in these criteria are likely to be more competitive.

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (37 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the proposed work is relevant to the goals set out by the NOAA MDP in this announcement. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

Project Priorities (30 points)

- How effectively will the project restore, protect, conserve, or enhance coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems or other NOAA trust resources (as described in Section I.B)?

- Will the project remove a high-priority marine debris type, as defined in Section I. B.?

- Does the project align with the priorities described in Section I.B. (including specific considerations for those applications with proposed work in Mexico or Canada)

- Is the targeted debris unlikely to reaccumulate quickly and nullify any resource benefits achieved by the removal? If so, will any prevention efforts that are implemented as part of the project limit reaccumulation in a meaningful way?

- For projects that focus on the removal of derelict fishing gear, does the project promote innovative and comprehensive removal efforts that may lead to greater recycling and/or re-use of gear materials?

- Projects addressing the highest priority debris types and that can also demonstrate a direct benefit to endangered species or commercial and recreational fisheries (and their habitats) are likely to score higher on this criterion. For proposed projects within Mexico or Canada, those with the clearest benefits to United States resources, economy, or navigation safety are likely to score higher on this criterion. Such projects should also demonstrate effective international partnerships to address the identified cross-border marine debris issues.

Project Relevance (5 points)

- Does the proposal address a marine debris issue and/or priority habitat that is identified in an existing regional or national, publicly vetted program, priority or strategic plan?

- Program or plan examples include, but are not limited to: National Estuary Program or NOAA Habitat Focus Area sites, 2021-2025 NOAA MDP Strategic Plan, NOAA Marine Debris Action Plans, etc. Check your region's page on the NOAA Marine Debris Program website (https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/your-region) for a regional Marine Debris Action Plan.

- Project types (or even specific projects) that are mentioned and/or prioritized in the above, or similar, plans will score higher on this criterion.

Data Management (2 points)

- Does the proposal include a Data Management Plan?

- If so, does it adequately describe what data will be collected during the project and how it will be made accessible and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner, in compliance with Data Management requirements described in Section VI.B.9?

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (20 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

Project Description / Impacts (5 points)

- Does the application include detailed maps of specific removal sites, information on the expected species that may be encountered in the area and affected by project activities, a descriptive project timeline, a description of proposed removal and disposal techniques and other on-the-ground activities to be implemented? Sections IV.B.2. and VI.B.10 detail complete project description requirements.

- Does the applicant provide assurances that implementation will meet all federal, state, and local environmental laws?

- Applications submitted with all of the above information, along with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations, or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed debris removal activities are legally permissible in the project area are likely to score higher on this criterion.

Project Goals and Objectives (5 points)

- Does the proposal clearly identify the project's overall goals and objectives? Reference Section IV.B.2.

- Are the timelines for the project reasonable and in line with the award period guidelines described in Section II.B?

- Are project goals, objectives and timeline realistic, and likely to be achieved?

- If applicable, has the applicant outlined a realistic, rigorous, and sustainable monitoring plan to measure habitat and species benefit as a result of project effort?

Performance Metrics (5 points)

- Will the applicant be able to collect specific, measurable metrics on removal efforts, species/habitat impacts, volunteer participation, economic benefits, and other performance measures as described above in Section IV. B?

- Those projects that include a strong monitoring component, or that provide high quality metrics (as appropriate), such as species bycatch data, ecosystem services, local debris accumulation rates, economic or job creation metrics, among others, are likely to score higher on this criterion.

Project Methods (5 points)

- Are the proposed methods and removal techniques adequately described and appropriate for the debris being removed?

- Are the proposed methods and removal techniques adequate to ensure minimal impacts to habitat and other sensitive resources?

- Are safety considerations addressed in the proposal, and are safety precautions built in to the work plan?

- Are disposal methods appropriate for the type of debris being removed, and, if relevant, has consideration been given to alternative disposal methods?

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

Applicant Technical Qualifications (10 points)

- Does the project meaningfully engage a diversity of partners to accomplish the project objectives? For projects within Mexico or Canada, will the project effectively develop international partnerships to address cross-border marine debris issues?

- Do the applicant and any other project partners have the ability and expertise to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work? This should be indicated by the qualifications, planning, and/or past experience of project partners in designing, implementing, and effectively managing marine debris removal projects.

- Does the applicant have the administrative capacity (i.e. the facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities that are available to the applicant) to successfully manage the award?

- Proposals that demonstrate access to extensive technical expertise and federal grant experience, or that have systems and personnel in place to effectively manage federal grant requirements are likely to score higher on this criterion.

4. Project Costs (18 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. Applications will be evaluated on the following:

Project Budget Composition (5 points)

- Is the overall budget realistic, enabling the applicant to effectively and successfully

meet all proposed objectives with the funding requested?

- Is the overall budget reasonable, including only those costs necessary to effectively and successfully meet all proposed objectives?

- Applications that propose to use NOAA funds to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative activities are unlikely to score high under this criterion.

Project Budget Organization (5 points)

- Does the budget justification narrative contain a sufficient level of detail, as required in Section IV.B.?

- Does the applicant include a summary budget table? Is it sufficiently detailed?

- Are the narrative and summary table organized by SF-424A object classes?

- Does the overall budget describe both the federal and non-federal funding needs for all required project costs (i.e. for both implementation and administration activities)?

- Proposals with detailed Budget Narratives that follow the format of NOAA's Budget Narrative Guidance document (link is provided in Section IV.B.) are likely to score higher on this criterion.

Funding Need (3 points)

- Does the proposal demonstrate a critical need for NOAA funding and support for debris removal activities to be implemented?
If the application does not specifically address funding need, NOAA will consider other identified funding sources, organization capabilities and resources, and project history to evaluate this criterion.

Non-federal Match Requirement (5 points)

- Is the federal funding request matched by at least the same amount of non-federal contributions?

- Matching contributions should improve cost-effectiveness and further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applicants that document match

that has already been secured (or provide a justified waiver) are likely to score higher on this criterion.

- Applicants can include all matching contributions allocated to their project, however no extra points in this merit review are given for match above the 1:1 requirement.

- Those applications that demonstrate secured, acceptable non-federal cost-share at a 1:1 ratio, or those proposals eligible for a waiver, will score higher on this criterion. Reviewers will make a recommendation of waiver eligibility (and score this criterion accordingly) based on the information provided by the applicant. Section III.B. of this announcement ("Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements") describes the conditions for waiving the match requirement (or part of the match requirement if some match is able to be secured). In addition to the conditions described in Section III.B., a justified waiver generally demonstrates unusual hardship on and meaningful attempts by the applicant to secure 1:1 matching contributions or cost-share partnerships. Applicants should make every effort to meet the match requirement. Match waivers are not common, and are approved at NOAA’s discretion.

5. Community Involvement and Support (10 points)

This criterion evaluates whether the project provides for effective engagement from relevant stakeholders. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (5 points)

- Does the applicant address justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the proposal?

- Does the project involve work in underserved or underrepresented areas?

Community Support (5 points)

- Does the proposal demonstrate strong community support for the project, as reflected by the diversity, strength and involvement of project participants, partners and local entities?

- Does the proposal include letters of support from project partners, state and local governments, members of Congress, private landowners, or relevant resource agency

personnel familiar with the issue?

- Proposals that include letters of support from all proposed project partners will score higher on this criterion if those letters demonstrate the specific financial or in-kind commitments to the work. This also includes letters from landowners and other stakeholders involved with or impacted by the project, granting permissions and other assurances that the project has their full support. As appropriate, projects that make connections to underserved and/or underrepresented individuals or communities to broaden participation of stakeholders for whom there is currently limited direct engagement on marine debris issues and/or for whom social and economic vulnerability due to marine debris impacts is high, may score higher on this criterion.

6. Prevention through Education and Outreach (5 points)

This criterion evaluates whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach plan to relevant stakeholders that promotes the long-term prevention of marine debris. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

Prevention of Targeted Debris (5 points)

- Does the proposal include the project’s outreach and/or education plan?

- Is there an appropriate and effective level of education and outreach to be conducted about the project’s goals and accomplishments?

- Does the plan provide the knowledge and resources necessary for the target audience to change behaviors and/or raise awareness of the issue to prevent the type of marine debris addressed by the project?

- Proposals that thoroughly describe the outreach and/or education plan for promoting the project activities and accomplishments to an appropriate target audience, including methods to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and their roles, sources of funding and other support provided will score higher on this criterion.

B. Review and Selection Process

Letters of Intent and full proposal applications will be screened to determine if they are eligible, complete and responsive to this funding announcement. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application with omitted documentation

or with a minor administrative discrepancy that can be easily rectified or cured. Eligible proposals will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process.

For applications for projects in areas severely affected by natural disasters or unusually disruptive events, NOAA in its sole discretion may allow late application submissions in such cases. Any applicants in project areas severely affected by such events and who are unable to comply with competition deadlines but are interested in submitting a proposal for consideration must inform the agency, in writing, of the circumstances and location of the project and contact the NOAA point of contact listed in Section VII to discuss submission options. Applications will not be accepted under any circumstances once proposal review has begun.

Letters of Intent and full proposal applications will undergo a technical merit review where they will be evaluated by at least three professionally and technically qualified reviewers, and according to the evaluation criteria described in this announcement (see Section V.A.). Reviewers may include NOAA officials, officials from other federal agencies and state agencies with subject matter expertise, (e.g., coastal management agencies and fish and wildlife agencies), and other private and public sector experts. Proposals may be organized into distinct review groups (e.g. based on geography, debris type, project type, or some combination thereof), with reviewers assigned to one or more review groups. For the FY22 competition, because of the inclusion of USMCA funding, NOAA MDP may group, evaluate, and award USMCA-related applications separately from the rest of the competition's submitted applications. Each reviewer will evaluate their assigned proposals and provide individual scores, comments and/or recommendations. Reviewers may discuss applications with each other, but if one or more non-federal reviewers is involved, scoring will be on an individual basis and no consensus advice will be given. Once complete, reviewer comments, project scores, and a rank order for each review group will be presented to the NOAA MDP Selecting Official. Based on the results of the technical merit review, the Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division based on those review group rankings. The Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding out of rank order if justified by any of the selection factors listed below in Section V.C. The Selecting Official may not recommend proposals for funding from all review groups, and conversely, may select multiple awards from the same review group if it is determined they are higher quality proposals.

After the technical merit review is complete, NOAA may conduct a secondary panel review to determine which top-ranked proposals best meet the program's objectives and priorities (Sections I.A. and I.B.). The panel would be comprised of federal employees and may convene in person, by telephone or video conference. The panel would be presented with the

top ranked applications (based on the results of the technical merit review), technical review scores, and comments for each application. The panel would then rate all top ranked proposals on the following scale:

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

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

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

The panel review rating would then be presented to the Selecting Official in order to determine which applications should be recommended to the NOAA Grants Management Division. The Selecting Official may recommend proposals for funding out of the panel review’s rank order if justified by any of the selection factors listed below in Section V.C.

Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.206. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.208. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an

applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final.

Applicants may submit comments to the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS), accessible from the System for Award Management, about any information included in the system about their organization for consideration by the awarding agency. NOAA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205.

C. Selection Factors

The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the selection of a proposal out of rank order is justified based on one or more of the following factors:

1. The availability of funding
2. The balance/distribution of funds
    a. Geographically
    b. By institution type
    c. By partner type
    d. By habitat type
    e. By debris type
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I.A. and I.B. of this announcement
5. The applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA Grants Management Division.
8. Relevance to legislative priorities of the NOAA Marine Debris Program.

Therefore, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by May 1, 2022. Typically, the earliest

start date for projects will be September 1, 2022, dependent on the completion of all NOAA-applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities. Applicants should consider this timeline when developing requested start dates for proposed project activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be announced or initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division. A “Notice of Award” will be made electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions:
Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. See https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/DOC%20Standard%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20-%2012%20November%202020%20PDF_0.pdf. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online and can also be found at http://www.ago.noaa.gov. If the Department of Commerce publishes revised Standard Terms and Conditions prior to issuance of awards under this solicitation, the revised Standard Terms and Conditions will apply.

2. Specific Award Conditions:
In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain specific award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as specific reporting requirements for semi-annual progress reports.

3. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements:

Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to http://go.usa.gov/SBYh and http://go.usa.gov/SBg4.

4. Department of Commerce (DOC) Pre-Award Notification Requirements:
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. These may be accessed online at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf.

5. Access to Information:
The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflicts of interest and nondisclosure agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

In addition, 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 should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information

contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

6. Certifications Regarding Tax Liability and Felony Criminal Convictions:
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.

7. Limitation of Liability:
Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. NOAA or the Department of Commerce are not responsible for direct costs of proposal preparation. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

8. Executive Order 12866:
This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866 (Regulatory Planning and Review).

9. Data Management Guidance:

(a) Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA MDP. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format (Machine-readable means the data are stored on a computer in a digital format whose structure is well described and the data can be read without the aid of a human), preferably a widely-used or open-standard format (An open-standard format is one that does not require proprietary software to be read), and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), based on widely used or international standards.

(b) Funding recipients are responsible for ensuring that environmental data produced by the project is discoverable and accessible to the general public in the required timeframes. The NOAA Marine Debris Program recommends (or requires) that public access to grant-produced data be enabled by one of the following methods (1) data hosting by the NOAA MDP (preferred method; NOAA MDP manages and maintains a public-facing Clearinghouse and is able to ensure grantee compliance with Data Management

requirements by housing project data on the Clearinghouse); (2) the recipient establishing their own procedures and hosting capabilities for collected environmental data; or (3) hosting by another authorized organization (such as NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information). Regardless of hosting method, the recipient is responsible for collecting, managing, and appropriately structuring data and metadata. The NOAA MDP does not require any specific data format, access method, or other technical guidance beyond what is described in this section, however the use of open-standard formats and widely used methods is encouraged. The proposal budget may include reasonable costs associated with compliance with this data management guidance. The NOAA MDP encourages grantees to coordinate with NOAA staff on the best approach ways to meet this public access requirement. In some cases, as appropriate, NOAA may request project data and share / post project data on NOAA systems, potentially in addition to the agreed data sharing/access approach. The proposal may request permission not to make data publicly accessible and the proposal should explain rationale for lack of public access, and if funded to obtain approval from Responsible NOAA Official listed below).

(c) Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied (see Section IV.B.4 above). The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance described in this section. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance.

(d) The NOAA MDP may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

(e) Applicants are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than one year upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal. Manuscripts submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository

must also be 508 compliant. For more information about the repository, see https://repository.library.noaa.gov/welcome.

(f) Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data Management Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

(g) Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf

(h) The Responsible NOAA MDP Official for questions regarding this guidance and for verifying accessibility of data produced by funding recipients: Tom Barry, Management and Program Analyst, NOAA Marine Debris Program; tom.barry@noaa.gov; 240-533-0425

10. NEPA Requirements
As stated in Section IV.B., NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov. Consequently, as part of an applicant's award package, and under their description of program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). Providing as much detailed information as is reasonable is critical to the NOAA MDP evaluating the significance of a project’s impacts and its readiness to use available funding.

Successful applications cannot be recommended for funding until NOAA completes the NEPA process. Such applicants may be requested to complete parts of the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity Applicants (OMB Control Number 0648-0538; https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf), and may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an Environmental Assessment or other NEPA analysis, or provide for NOAA review a copy of an Environmental Assessment that covers the proposed activities, if one exists, if NOAA determines that it is required. This may also be required of applicants proposing marine debris removal activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA MDP’s Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant

Impact (FONSI). Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do will result in denial of an application. Applicants will be notified if additional analysis is required after the peer review stage.

Specific award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding NEPA compliance requirements and in some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a specific 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. Projects that would require permits to complete the project should list them and include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, documentation of all permits already secured for the project, and an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired.

NOAA may make funding recommendations based on the level of effort needed to fulfill NEPA requirements. The NOAA MDP PEA and FONSI can be found on the NOAA MDP website: http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/mdp_pea.pdf.

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA MDP staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

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

C. Reporting

Reporting requirements are described at 2 CFR 200.328-.330, 2 CFR Part 170, and in the

Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress and financial reports are generally due semi-annually and cover 6 month periods, however more frequent reporting may be required. Progress reports are to be submitted to NOAA via NOAA's electronic Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each reporting period ends. Interim reports for the last reporting period may not be required in some cases. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information. A project progress report template may be provided by the NOAA MDP. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package, however the following information should be reported at minimum: For interim progress reports, the Performance Narrative should include a description of project activities and accomplishments that covers the reporting period only, and contain at least the following components: overall short and long-term goals for the project and a description of the approved award activities that were performed to achieve those goals; a comparison of actual accomplishments to the schedule established in the award. This should include a narrative and details on the status of approved activities (completed, not-completed, on-going), and an explanation of why targets may not have been met or other extenuating circumstances surrounding project progress; quantitative performance metrics (e.g. tons removed, acres restored); details on any perceived challenges or potential roadblocks to future progress; an updated timeline of remaining tasks, and a summary of any changes made to the project’s approved plan that occurred during the reporting period.

For the final progress report, the Performance Narrative should be a comprehensive description of project activities and accomplishments that covers the entire award period, and contain the following components: overall short and long-term goals and background, including relevance of the project to reducing the impacts of marine debris on NOAA trust species populations and habitats and/or increasing awareness about marine debris issues; a description of any NOAA trust species or habitats that the project benefited; how important the project was to a particular species or habitat; how important the project was to human use values of a given resource (e.g. commercial, recreational uses, or other ecosystem services); the methodology used to undertake removal activities, including materials used; specific monitoring techniques used, if any (greater detail may be provided in a separate final monitoring report); lessons learned (e.g., Best Management Practices (BMPs) or protocols followed, new techniques tested, innovative partnerships); a description of any deviations from original plans and challenges faced; other general accomplishments (e.g. results and outcomes). Reports should explain the project’s performance measures (e.g. tons removed, acres restored) and provide a summary of monitoring results, if any; a description of outreach activities and products; and next steps for prevention efforts, debris removal,

restoration and monitoring, or research needs, as applicable.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program Performance Progress Report approved by OMB under control number 0648-0718 may be required for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (31 U.S.C. 6101 Note) includes a requirement for awardees of applicable federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under federal assistance awards. 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 $30,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 202-870-2863).

VIII. Other Information

Not Applicable.