ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2015 Species Recovery Grants to Tribes

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-PRPO-2015-2004185

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

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Friday, November 7, 2014. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recognizes the unique importance of many protected species to tribes and values ongoing efforts by tribal nations to conserve and protect species under NMFS' jurisdiction. NMFS is authorized to provide Federal assistance to tribes to support conservation programs for marine and anadromous species under its jurisdiction. This assistance, provided in the form of grants, can be used to support conservation of endangered, threatened, and candidate or proposed species, as well as post-delisting monitoring of recovered species. Funded activities may include development and implementation of management plans, scientific research, and public education and outreach; proposals should address priority actions identified in an Endangered Species Act (ESA) Recovery Plan or address a NMFS-identified regional priority or need. Only federally recognized tribes and organizations of federally recognized tribes, such as the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, that have delegated authority to represent a federally recognized tribe on matters relating to ESA listed, candidate, or proposed species, are eligible to apply. Proposals focusing on listed, candidate, or proposed species of Pacific salmon or steelhead will not be considered for funding under this grant program; such projects may be supported through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. This document describes how to prepare and submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2015 and how NMFS will determine which proposals will be funded; this document should be read in its entirety.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

### A. Program Objective

The principal objective of the Species Recovery Grants to Tribes Program is to support recovery efforts that directly benefit threatened or endangered species, species proposed for listing, recently de-listed species, or candidate species under the jurisdiction of the NMFS or under the joint jurisdiction of NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Recovery efforts may involve management, research, monitoring, and outreach activities or any combination thereof.

Candidate species. A candidate species is one that is actively being considered for listing as either threatened or endangered under the ESA and is the subject of a positive 90-day finding but not yet the subject of a proposed rule, or a species for which NMFS has initiated an ESA status review and has announced the review in the Federal Register (see 71 FR 61022; October 17, 2006). Candidate species are listed at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/candidate.htm.

Proposed species. Proposed species are those that are currently the subject of a proposed rule to list as threatened or endangered under the ESA. A list of proposed species is available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/candidate.htm#proposed.

Recently delisted species. Recently de-listed, for purposes of this solicitation, are those species de-listed within the past five years. A list of all de-listed species and the year de-listed are available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/delisted.htm.

Successful applications will be those that demonstrate a direct conservation benefit to the species or its habitat. Proposals involving management activities should demonstrate a high probability of contributing to recovery of the species, especially through mitigation of existing threats or factors inhibiting recovery of the species. Proposals involving scientific research should demonstrate a high probability of providing information that can be used to recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a given species. Proposals involving public education and outreach projects should demonstrate a high probability of improving or increasing public understanding and participation in conservation activities.

All projects should address priority actions identified in an ESA Recovery Plan or address a NMFS-identified regional priority or need if applicable. Priority will be given to those projects that are designed to have a direct impact on species recovery through implementation of management actions (e.g. habitat restoration, by-catch reduction, land acquisition, or mitigation of existing threats). Such proposals will receive higher priority than those projects that involve research or monitoring activities only or are merely responding to existing threats. However, research proposals that are designed to fill critical data gaps and directly contribute to management and recovery of eligible species will still be competitive under this solicitation. Projects that include measures/indicators by which performance or success of the project will be evaluated will receive higher priority.

Projects focusing on Pacific salmon or steelhead that are listed, candidates, or proposed for listing will not be considered under this grant program; tribal conservation efforts for these species may be supported through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund.

B. Program Priorities

Under this solicitation, federally recognized tribes or organizations of federally recognized tribes with certain delegated authority, such as the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (see section III. Eligibility Information) may apply for grants to support recovery efforts for ESA-listed species, candidate species, species proposed for listing, or recovered species under the jurisdiction of the NMFS or under the joint jurisdiction of NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (e.g. Atlantic salmon). Priority will be given to proposals addressing listed species as opposed to proposals that only address proposed, candidate, or recently de-listed species. Pacific salmon or steelhead that are listed, candidates, or proposed for listing will not be considered under this grant program, but may be supported through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. See the list of eligible species at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/ under listed species, candidate and delisted species, and proposed species. Species under the sole jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (e.g. bull trout, sea otter) are not eligible for funding through this program.

Proposals may include development and implementation of management plans and/or actions, scientific research, or education and outreach activities, or a combination thereof. Proposals concerning listed species for which the NMFS has released a Recovery Plan should discuss how the project would address one or more of the high priority recovery objectives or actions identified in that plan. Recovery Plans are available at

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans.htm. Projects that include measures by which performance or success of the project will be evaluated will receive higher priority.

Proposals including management activities should demonstrate a high probability of contributing to recovery and conservation of the species, especially through mitigation of existing threats or factors inhibiting recovery or conservation of the species. Such projects could involve habitat restoration or protection efforts or development and implementation of bycatch reduction measures. For example, proposals addressing habitat restoration can involve the engineering and design of a restoration project, actual implementation of a restoration activity, and/or science-based monitoring of a previously funded or simultaneously proposed NOAA habitat restoration project that will yield information on population benefits accruing to listed species resulting from the restoration action.

Proposals including scientific research should demonstrate a high probability of filling existing data gaps or providing information that will be used to recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a given species. Research activities could, for example, focus on defining and characterizing threats to the species, improving bycatch estimates, identifying and assessing important habitats (e.g. foraging habitats, spawning areas), or evaluating methods to reduce or mitigate threats to the species. Research that does not directly contribute to management through identification of specific recovery or conservation actions that can be undertaken to recover or conserve the species will be considered a low priority.

All proposals should address the dissemination of results and/or information resulting from completion of the proposed activities. Proposals including specific public education and outreach projects should demonstrate a high probability for improving or increasing public understanding of, and participation in, conservation activities. Outreach projects could, for example, involve developing outreach tools (e.g. reporting hotlines, websites, brochures), convening regional coordination workshops or meetings, or working with local fishers or boaters to address a particular issue (e.g. bycatch, boat strikes, derelict gear).

Proposals may address new or ongoing work. If the proposal includes a continuation of previous or ongoing work, a brief discussion of accomplishments to date and a justification for the continuation of the work must be included in the project description in order to receive full consideration.

Applicants interested in further discussion of program priorities may contact program coordinators listed in Section VII., Agency Contacts.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Up to approximately $300,000 may be available for distribution under this program in FY 2015 for new awards or to supplement existing awards. While there is no set minimum or maximum amount for any award, most awards are expected to be in the range of $10,000 to $100,000 per year. Note that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is considerable uncertainty regarding the level of available funding for FY 2015. Thus, there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make any new awards or that awards will be made for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific grant proposal or to obligate any available funds.

There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same Principal Investigator or tribe. Multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must, however, clearly identify distinct projects.

If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless approved by the Grants Officer in accordance with 2 CFR Part 225.

B. Project/Award Period

Project periods may extend up to a maximum of 3 years. For multi-year proposals, applicants must include project plans and budgets for each year of the project. Multi-year projects may be funded in one-year increments or in their entirety depending on available funds. In either case, multi-year awards do not compete for funding in subsequent budget periods within the approved award period. Rather, any funding required for subsequent years is added to the multi-year award provided demonstration of satisfactory performance by the recipient and provided funds to support the continuation of the project are available. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a funded project beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of this period, the applicant can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer no later than 30 days prior to the end of the award period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension. If, however, the money is expended and funds are needed to continue the project, the applicant should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle (e.g. FY 2015) or seek an alternate source of funding.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund grants. Funding will be provided in 12-month increments, with a maximum project period of 3 years.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are federally recognized tribes defined under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act (Public Law 103-454) or presidential executive order. A Federal Register notice, 78 FR 26384 (May 6, 2013), published the current list of tribal entities. That Federal Register notice was published pursuant to Section 104 of the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of November 2, 1994 (103; 108 Stat. 4791, 4792), and in exercise of authority delegated to the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs under 25 U.S.C. 2 and 9 and 209 DM 8. Organizations of federally recognized tribes, such as the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, that have delegated authority to represent federally recognized tribes on matters relating to listed, candidate, or proposed species, are also eligible to apply (1934 Indian Reorganization Act, 25 U.S.C. sections 476 and 477).

Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. In addition, NOAA and NMFS employees shall not provide assistance in writing applications, write letters of support for any application, or otherwise confer any unfair advantage on a particular application. However, for activities involving collaboration with

current NMFS programs, NMFS employees can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project.

Applicants not meeting these eligibility criteria will not be considered for funding under this solicitation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no cost sharing or match requirements under this solicitation.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Funding can only support work on ESA-listed species, recently de-listed species, and species that have become a candidate or a proposed species by the grant application deadline. Species must also be under NMFS or joint NMFS-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service jurisdiction. However, Pacific salmon and steelhead that are listed, candidates, or proposed for listing will not be considered under this grant program, but may be supported through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. Current lists of eligible candidate, proposed, and de-listed species are available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/other.htm; and a current list of threatened and endangered species is available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/species/esa_table.pdf. Applications addressing ineligible species will not be reviewed.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The federal funding announcement and application instructions for this grant program are available via the Grants.gov website at http://www.grants.gov. Applicants without internet access can obtain application instructions from NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, ATTN: Heather Coll, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20910, (phone) 301-427-8455, (email) Heather.Coll@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements by the proposal submission deadline. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals early in the event that we are able to pre-screen applications for any deficiencies, contact applicants, and obtain revised applications by the solicitation deadline.

The following forms are required as part of each application: Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424); Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A); Assurances, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B); and Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511). These forms are available on Grants.gov. For applicants submitting proposals by mail, the SF 424 must be signed (preferably with blue ink).

Proposals and all attachments must be formatted for letter-sized paper (8.5 x 11). Text should be no smaller than 10-point font, and all pages must be numbered. The Project Description should not exceed 15 pages. Within the Project Description, tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are not included in the 15-page limitation. Abbreviated curricula vitae (CVs) or resumes should be appended to each application. Appended material must not exceed a total of 10-pages in length and can include letters of endorsement, an indirect cost rate agreement, permit information, related grant progress reports, or any other supporting information.

To be considered, proposals must include the following information:

1. Title Page

Provide the project title, project duration (with a start date of July 1, 2015 or later unless applicants request and get approval for an earlier start date from the Program Officer, Heather Coll; See Section VII, Agency Contacts), applicant name(s), name(s) of the Principal Investigator (or Project Manager) and any Co-Investigators (or Co-Managers), complete contact information (address, telephone, fax, email, and phone number) for the applicant(s) and all Co-investigators (or Co-Managers), and a statement regarding the Federal, non-Federal, and total costs of the project. Contact information should include phone numbers and email addresses.

2. Project Summary (1-page limit)

Provide a brief summary discussing the project goals and objectives, the proposed activities, the geographic area where the activities would occur, the recovery objectives or actions as specified in a NMFS Recovery Plan (if applicable) or a NMFS-identified regional priorities or need, and expected outcomes and benefits of the proposed activities. This summary may be posted on our website if the project is funded. If the proposal focuses on implementing recovery actions identified in a NMFS Recovery Plan, indicate the priority number or level assigned to the particular actions.

3. Project Description (15-page limit)

Describe the project activities completely and accurately. The Project Description should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include the information listed below in (a)-(g). Multi-year applications must include such information for each year of the proposed activity.

(a) Project goals and objectives: Identify the specific problem(s) or opportunities the project intends to address and describe its significance to the recovery of the species. Identify the project objectives, which should be simple and understandable, as specific and quantitative as possible, and attainable with the time, money and human resources available.

(b) Project narrative: Describe the methodologies or technical plan for activities that are to be conducted during each budget period of the project. Include detailed descriptions of the specific plan and/or methods that will be employed. Project milestones and the timelines (e.g. the number of months) necessary to meet them should also be discussed. Information about relevant permits necessary to conduct the work must be included. See Section IV.G. (Other Submission Requirements (Permits and Approvals)) below for further information about permits and approvals.

(c) Benefits or results expected: Identify the outcomes or results and the benefits to the species that should result from the successfully completed project. Discuss how the project's success in meeting the stated goals and objectives will be measured or assessed. Describe how these expected outcomes, results, or products will be applied and/or made available to any appropriate user groups.

(d) Need for Government financial assistance: Demonstrate the need for government financial assistance. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.

(e) Federal, State, tribal and local government activities: List any plans or activities (Federal, State, tribal or local) this project would affect and, if applicable, identify the relationship between the proposed work and other ongoing work, or work planned, anticipated, or underway through Federal Assistance or other means. If the proposal is a continuation of previous or ongoing work, a brief discussion of results or accomplishments to date should be included; progress or final reports for previous awards may be included in the appendix.

(f) Environmental Impacts: Discuss any potential negative impacts on listed species or their critical habitat as a result of the proposed activities. If applicable, discuss ways in which any such negative impacts will be minimized or mitigated.

(g) Project management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed and who will be responsible for carrying out project activities. The lead organization/individual and person listed as the technical contact should be identified as the Project Manager (PM) or Principal Investigator (PI). Use of sub-contractors or volunteer staff time to complete project activities and oversight of those individuals should be discussed. The PM/PI is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan as delineated in the proposal. One PM or PI must be designated on each project, but the PM/PI may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the PM/PI, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and PM/PI (e.g. applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the PM will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.). Project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-investigators or Co-Managers. Organizations or individuals that support the project, for example, researchers contributing data or materials, should be referred to as Cooperators. Copies of the PM's or PI's and all Co-investigator's/Co-Manager's current resumes or curricula vitae must be included as appendices.

4. Data Management Plan

Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than 2 years after the award expires), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

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

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

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

For further information on NOAA's Data Sharing Policy and samples of Data Management Plans, please refer to information posted here: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/tribes.htm.

5. Total project costs and budget justification

Each application must include clear and concise budget information, both on the required Federal forms and in the narrative detail of this section. Multi-year applications must include budget information for each year of the proposed activity.

Applications must include OMB standard form 424A, "Budget Information - Non-construction Programs." All instructions should be read before completing the form, and the amounts per category and total amounts indicated on the form should correspond with amounts indicated elsewhere in the proposal.

A spreadsheet or table listing itemized costs per category (e.g., salary, supplies, equipment, travel, contractual) and the corresponding Federal and non-Federal share and direct and indirect cost totals must be provided. The proposed budget must indicate the Federal and non-federal share for each cost category. Such budget detail must be provided for each year of multi-year projects. Budget tables or spreadsheets must be formatted to fit letter-sized paper (8.5 x 11). A budget justification in narrative form must also be provided to explain and justify all project costs. This narrative must be organized to clearly correspond to the information provided in the budget table/spreadsheet. Detail provided in the spreadsheet and/ or the narrative must also be sufficient so that reviewers can interpret how costs were estimated or calculated, especially for costs over $5,000. Contractual costs must be itemized and justified similarly to other cost categories. For any non-Federal share, the itemized costs should be identified as cash or in-kind contributions.

6. Appendices (10-page limit)

Abbreviated curricula vitae or resumes of the PM/PI and any Co-Managers/ Co-Investigators should be included with the application. Applicants requiring ESA scientific research permits must also include evidence of such a permit (e.g. by providing the permit number) or evidence that they have submitted an ESA permit application. If indirect costs are being requested as part of the proposed budget, a copy of the applicant agency's indirect cost rate agreement should be provided. Additional material that is necessary or useful to the description of the project may also be provided (e.g. letters of endorsement, tables or visual materials).

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by http://www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Friday, November 7, 2014.

Applications submitted by U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. Proposals submitted after the deadline cannot be considered for funding. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates.

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., utilities, rent, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government must be included in the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. Allowable Costs.

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments," and by 2 C.F.R. part 200, which supersedes OMB Circular A-87 for awards made after December 26, 2014. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between the recipient and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the award. Accordingly, applicants cannot be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or preparing the application; such expenditures also cannot be accepted as part of the cost share.

F. Other Submission Requirements

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, State, tribal and local government permits and approvals where applicable for the proposed work to be conducted.

If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of permits must be included in the proposal package.

Projects involving directed or incidental take of threatened or endangered species generally require permits under section 10 of the ESA (50 CFR 222.307 and 222.308). If an ESA permit covering the proposed activities has already been issued, the permit number must be provided in the application. Issuance of the necessary ESA permit(s) or evidence that the applicant has submitted a permit application is required in order for a proposal to be considered for funding. If the grant applicant is not the Principle Investigator (PI) or the permit holder, a copy of the authorization to work under the permit and/or a letter of support from the permit holder is required.

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

If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other federally designated protected areas, the applicant is responsible for requesting and obtaining any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to award.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impacts on the environment. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further analysis or whether additional analysis is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For those applications needing further analysis, affected applicants will be informed after the merit review stage and asked to assist by providing any information necessary to complete a tiered draft Environmental Assessment based off the Programmatic Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement.

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

Applications should be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at http://www.grants.gov. NOAA strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register in the System for Award Management (SAM), which incorporates the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Applicants should allow at least 5 business days to complete the SAM registration. Though registration in SAM is only required once, note that your CCR username will not work in SAM. You must create a new SAM user account to renew or update your registration. To obtain additional information and to verify that all required registrations are current, go to www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM. Also, it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. Following submission of applications through Grants.gov, applicants should receive two automated responses from Grants.gov: one confirms receipt of the application; the other confirms that the application has been forwarded to NOAA. If both confirmation messages from Grants.gov are not received, applicants should contact both the Grants.gov Helpdesk and the NMFS Office of Protected Resources to confirm the application has been transmitted and received by NOAA.

For applicants lacking internet access, hard copies may be submitted (by postal mail or commercial delivery) to the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, ATTN: Heather Coll, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applications submitted by U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5 x 11 paper, and not be bound in any manner. A signed (in ink) SF 424 must be included. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

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## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria as described below (with their relative weights out of 100 total points):

1. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of the Proposal to the Program Goals (35/100 points).

This criterion addresses whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, tribal or local activities. Applications will be evaluated on clear identification of project goals and objectives and applicability of those goals and objectives to conservation and recovery goals for threatened or endangered species, de-listed species, or candidate species as specified in a NMFS recovery plan (if applicable) or a NMFS-identified regional priority or need. Reviewers will consider whether the project meets the program goals and priorities as stated in sections I.A. and I.B. of this document.

Reviewers will also score the proposal based on their consideration of the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to species conservation and management goals; whether milestones and products are clearly identified; and whether performance measures for evaluating effectiveness of the completed project were clearly identified.

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (30/100 points).

For proposals addressing management and outreach, this criterion addresses whether the approach is appropriate for achieving the stated goals and objectives, whether the approach will result in successful execution of the project, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the time line specified. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient information is provided to evaluate the design of the project relative to the stated goals/objectives.

For proposals addressing research and monitoring, this criterion addresses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate for achieving the stated goals/objectives, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the time line specified. Reviewers will consider the sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically, and if such information is sufficient, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results, and if data collection is proposed, the inclusion of quality assurance considerations.

For all applications, reviewers will consider whether the proposal includes an effective mechanism for evaluating the project's success in meeting the stated goals and

objectives. Reviewers will also evaluate whether application instructions contained in this document were followed and if all required elements were submitted.

3. Overall Qualification of Applications (10/100 points).

This criterion addresses whether the applicant possesses the necessary expertise, experience, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will consider previous related experience and qualifications of the project's PM or PI, Co-Manager(s) or Co-Investigator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and cooperators. Reviewers will also consider past award performance of the applicant(s) and PM/PI.

4. Project Costs (15/100 points).

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is sufficiently detailed, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be adequately justified and appropriately allocated.

5. Outreach and Education (10/100 points).

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Reviewers will consider whether project results or products will be shared appropriately given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Depending on the nature of the project, "outreach and education" may include, for example, peer reviewed publications, presentations at professional meetings, development of brochures, internal agency meetings, public meetings, or distribution of project results to appropriate managers or management agencies. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/ education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal and whether the outreach/education is expected to be effective. Every proposal does not necessarily require a public outreach component in order to be considered "effective" or "appropriate" outreach/education.

B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps: initial evaluation, merit review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., Director, Office of Protected Resources). Initial screening and evaluation of applications will be conducted to ensure that application packages have all required forms and application elements, clearly relate to the 2015 Species Recovery Grants to Tribes solicitation, and meet all of the eligibility criteria.

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will then undergo merit review. Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of three reviewers, who will independently evaluate and score proposals using the evaluation criteria provided in section V.A. (Evaluation Criteria) above. Merit reviewers will be individuals with appropriate subject-matter expertise and may be from Federal, State, or Tribal agencies, academic institutions, or non-profit organizations. The reviewers‘ ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

After applications have undergone merit review, the Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which applications will be funded based upon the numerical rankings and evaluations of the applications by the merit reviewers as well as the selection factors set forth in section V.C. (Selection Criteria) below.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order of the review ratings unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors, where applicable:

a. Availability of funding

b. Balance/distribution of funds

i. Geographically

ii. By type of institutions

iii. By type of partners

iv. By research areas

v. By project types

vi. By species or species groups

c. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies

d. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I.A. (Program Objectives) and B (Program Priorities) and Section II. A. (Funding Availability)

e. Applicant's prior award performance

f. Partnerships with and/or participation of targeted groups

g. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA

determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during winter 2014/2015, and funding is expected to begin during summer 2015 for most approved projects. Project start dates should be no earlier than July 1, 2015, unless an earlier start date request is approved by the Program Office.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Project Manager/Principal Investigator of the project either electronically or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, and then destroyed.

NOAA is not responsible for delays in processing new awards that are not accompanied by adequate and accurate budget justifications and forms. For guidance on preparing budget justifications, please refer to tips and examples posted on our website at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/states/faq.htm.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements.

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634). You may obtain a copy of this notice by contacting the agency contact(s) under section VII., or by going to the website at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact must furnish information requested to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

2. Limitation of Liability.

Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. Universal Identifier.

Applicants should be aware that they are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number during the application process. See the October 30, 2002 Federal Register, Vol. 67, No. 210, pp. 66177-66178 for additional information. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated

toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or via the internet (http://www.dnb.com).

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g. the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposed project. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

5. Implementation of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards

On December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Uniform Guidance) (https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards), which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A 122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-

102 and A 110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. Once adopted, the OMB Uniform Guidance will supersede DOC's uniform administrative requirements set out at 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the OMB Uniform Guidance by December 26, 2014, meaning that the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non-Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at https://cfo.gov/cofar/.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer (Heather Coll, Office of Protected Resources) in accordance with the award conditions. All performance reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. The last semi-annual performance report may not be required depending on award conditions. Additional reporting on project outputs and outcomes may be required at the request of the Program Office to facilitate program performance evaluation. A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after award expiration. Data collected by recipients under a Species Recovery Grant must be made available no later than 90 days after the award period concludes if requested. Any reports or publication resulting from funded work should acknowledge funding received through the "NOAA Fisheries' Species Recovery Grant Program."

## VII. Agency Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this proposal solicitation, please contact Heather Coll at the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Endangered Species Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, by phone at 301-427-8455, or by email (Heather.Coll@noaa.gov). You may also contact one of the following people in your region for further guidance: Jessica Pruden, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (Jessica.Pruden@noaa.gov, 978-282-8482); Karla Reece, Southeast Regional Office (Karla.Reece@noaa.gov, 727-824-5348); Justin Greenman, West Coast Regional Office (Justin.Greenman@noaa.gov, 562-980-3264); Barbara Mahoney, Alaska Regional Office (Barbara.Mahoney@noaa.gov, 907-271-3448).

## VIII. Other Information

None.