

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: FY2015 Community-based Marine Debris Removal

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2015-2004213

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EST, November 17, 2014. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. No fax or email applications will be accepted. Use of U.S. Postal Service or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Marine Debris Program, authorized in the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act (33 U.S.C. 1951 et seq.) as amended by the Marine Debris Act Amendments of 2012 (P.L. 112-213, Title VI, Sec. 603, 126 Stat. 1576, December 20, 2012), provides funding to catalyze the implementation of locally-driven, community-based marine debris prevention, assessment, and removal projects that will benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and NOAA trust resources. Funding for this purpose comes through the NOAA Marine Debris Program as appropriations to the Office of Response and Restoration, National Ocean Service. The funding is, in part, administered through a grant competition with the NOAA Restoration Center's Community-based Restoration Program. Projects awarded through this grant competition have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components involving the removal of marine debris, including derelict fishing gear. Projects also provide benefits to coastal communities, and create long-term ecological habitat improvements for NOAA trust resources. Through this solicitation NOAA identifies marine debris removal projects, strengthens the development and implementation of habitat restoration through community-based marine debris removal, and fosters awareness of the effects of marine debris to further the conservation of living marine resource habitats, as well as contribute to the understanding of debris types and impacts. Successful proposals through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. Funding of up to \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants in FY2015. Typical awards will range from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

NOAA is interested in improving marine and coastal habitat through on-the-ground removal of marine debris. 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 CFR §909.1). A principal objective of the NOAA Marine Debris Program is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to grass-roots, community-based activities that improve living marine resource habitats through the removal of marine debris and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for NOAA trust resources. NOAA trust resources include living marine resources and their habitats, including commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine fish and shellfish); coastal habitats; diadromous fish species; endangered and threatened marine species; marine mammals and marine turtles; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, other coastal habitats; areas identified by NOAA Fisheries as essential fish habitat (EFH); and areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). 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.

The program aims to foster collaboration among diverse entities and groups (e.g., public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, anglers, boaters, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local, state, and federal government agencies) in order to cooperatively implement safe, impactful, and cost-effective marine debris removal projects. In order to track project success, funded projects will need to be able to report the total amount of debris removed (metric tons), total area or extent cleaned or restored (acres and/or miles), types of debris encountered, and volunteer hours involved.

B. Program Priorities

The highest program priorities for this solicitation are the removal of derelict fishing gear and the removal of medium- to large-scale marine debris that have a negative impact on important habitat areas, particularly to habitats frequently used by threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act or those species managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Additionally, proposals that pair removal activities with technically-sound, cost-effective habitat monitoring that measures benefits to NOAA trust resources and supports healthy ecosystems may receive higher priority under this funding opportunity. NOAA is also interested in proposals for

removal work in urbanized areas; however as with all other proposals, such projects must have a primary emphasis on debris removal to benefit NOAA trust resources and must clearly lay out the direct links to such resources. Priority activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Detection and removal of derelict fishing gear, such as abandoned crab or lobster pots, fish nets, and synthetic (e.g., monofilament, polypropylene) line. Such applications must address applicable federal and state laws regarding handling and ownership.

- Detection and removal of medium- and large-scale debris from coastal habitats (e.g. marshes, bays, mangroves, and coral reefs). Medium and large-scale debris are items that generally cannot be manually removed by an individual, (e.g., appliances, engine blocks, fuel tanks, etc.).

- Derelict vessel removal and associated vessel debris removal activities. Proposals for derelict vessel 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 a derelict vessel removal component should indicate that a search for responsible parties, such as the vessel's owner, has been conducted and that no acceptable responsible party exists.

- Detection and removal from marine, estuarine, or beach environments of debris resulting from hurricanes or other natural disasters. A certain portion of available funds may be dedicated to projects in Hawaii, Alaska, California, Oregon, or Washington for the removal of debris generated by the March 2011 tsunami in Japan. Funds cannot be for used for removal of hazardous materials. Preparatory, survey or other project design activities are allowable, but they must be components to a debris removal project.

- Projects that pair habitat monitoring or assessment with debris removal. Pre- and post-removal monitoring of the local natural resources and water quality will provide additional data on the benefits of marine debris removal and how habitats and/or species recover from impacts caused by marine debris.

- Shoreline cleanup projects will be considered only if the project is (a) coupled with a significant, high-quality outreach program that will reduce or prevent future accumulation of marine debris or (b) consists of debris cleanup event(s) that is/are not likely to rapidly re accumulate, such as debris removal related to natural disasters or similar point-in-time events. 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 utilized by NOAA trust resources. NOAA encourages the involvement of volunteers in such activities.

-Derelict piling removal projects should have a meaningful benefit to the resource or 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 only if there is a strong link to habitat impacts and the piling removal is one component of a greater marine debris removal proposal or are recognized as a priority through a regional prioritization process.

Proposals emphasizing general program coordination are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization's day-to-day activities or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead, and travel. Because funding is limited, proposals that request funds for large equipment purchases will be a low priority. If a project involves collection facilities, other long-term operations, or equipment purchases, the application should identify how the project will continue and be sustained beyond the award period. Projects focused on removing hazards to navigation or human health, or removals for aesthetic purposes are not a focus of this grant competition, although they are eligible to be sub-components of a removal project.

Proposals must have a primary emphasis on debris removal, and be able to clearly lay out the direct links to NOAA trust resources benefits. This is especially important for shoreline or targeted watershed cleanups (where it may be more efficient to remove debris from land-based hot-spots before it impacts coastal or marine resources). NOAA 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, NOAA encourages applicants to contact NOAA to discuss whether it would be appropriate to incorporate debris data collection according to NOAA protocols.

Applicants should consider how data collection might inform future prevention or mitigation efforts. Similarly, prevention, outreach, education, and/or volunteer activities are important aspects of debris removal projects. Proposals are encouraged to include such activities as project components. These activities should be tied to, and include substantial interaction with, targeted user communities (e.g. public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, anglers, boaters, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local, state, and federal government agencies) and other stakeholders, such as the fishing industry, fishing gear manufacturers, other marine industries, and the plastic and waste management industries. For outreach activities in general, applicants are encouraged to incorporate existing outreach and educational resources into their projects, including those available for download at <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>.

NOAA recognizes that the removal of marine debris can be a multi-faceted effort that may involve project design, engineering services, permitting, oversight and monitoring. The focus of the program, however, is to provide funding and technical expertise to support on the-ground habitat restoration through community-led marine debris removal, and robust

monitoring of removal impact. To that end, projects may include any needed pre-implementation activities, such as engineering, design, and baseline studies.

C. Program Authority

Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act (33 U.S.C. 1951 et seq.), renamed the Marine Debris Act (Pub. L. No. 112-213, Title VI, Sec. 603, 126 Stat. 1576, December 20, 2012) (Marine Debris Act).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that funding of up to \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for Community-based Marine Removal Project Grants in FY2015. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon FY2015 Congressional appropriations. Typical project awards will range from \$50,000 to \$150,000; NOAA will not accept proposals for removal activities at less than \$15,000 or more than \$250,000 under this solicitation. For projects that include monitoring activities, applicants may request additional funds not to exceed \$100,000 for such activities, for a project of up to \$350,000. In such cases NOAA would work with successful applicants to determine final levels of monitoring effort and funding. 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 as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for initiating marine debris removal projects by the applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to NOAA by Congress.

NOAA anticipates that between 8 and 15 awards will be made as a result of this solicitation. In FY2013, the latest year for which information is available, 11 applications were funded, ranging from \$16,000 to \$210,000. The total grant funding level was approximately \$967,000, which was matched by over \$1,137,000 of matching contributions. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. NOAA can consider funding more than one project under a single award. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of any available funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications should cover a project period from one to three years in length. However, NOAA expects that removal activities should be completed within 24 months of the start date of the award. If monitoring activities are to be conducted before or following removal, NOAA may consider applications with a period of performance beyond 24 months as long as such activities are to be completed within a reasonable timeframe given the characteristics of

the resource being monitored. The earliest anticipated start date for projects will be June 1, 2015 - applicants should consider this when developing plans for marine debris removal activities. If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new awards; any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project would need to be submitted to the competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Permission to extend the period of performance beyond the award period is at the sole discretion of NOAA and should be requested in writing at least 60 days in advance of an award's expiration date.

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 may include, but is not limited to, activities such as hands-on technical or permitting assistance, support in developing protocols (e.g., for data collection or monitoring), tracking the progress of removal efforts through site visits and progress report evaluation, discussing development of meaningful performance measures to assess project outcomes, and involvement in public meetings and events to highlight marine debris removal activities. These cooperative agreements may be single or multi-year awards, and may include funding from other programs or agencies. If multi-year agreements are awarded, funding is not guaranteed for out years.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

In accordance with the Marine Debris Act, eligible applicants are state, local, and tribal governments whose activities affect research or regulation of marine debris and 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 work with eligible applicants, including state, local, and tribal governments and non-governmental organizations (for example, national service clubs or youth corps organizations).

NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of veterans, historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of the NOAA Marine Debris Program is to fund projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector. To this end, the Marine Debris Act requires applicants to provide a minimum 1:1 ratio of non-federal matching contributions to NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed project. In addition to formal match, NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much additional investment as possible.

Match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services (e.g., private boat use, volunteer labor, etc...). To meet the 1:1 match requirement, applicants are permitted to combine contributions from non-federal partners, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds and are available within the project period stated in the application. Federal sources cannot be considered for matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV. E. 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.

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.

Additionally, under 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), any department or agency may waive any requirement for matching funds otherwise required by law to be provided by an Insular Area (defined here as the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA may waive any requirement for local matching funds to Insular Areas. Any applicant wishing to request a match waiver must provide a match waiver request letter or provide other language in the required budget narrative as a part of the application package being submitted. The request must contain a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, descriptions of attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing

match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the incorporation or local availability of matching contributions. However, if available, the inclusion of matching contributions is encouraged.

All applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4. "Project Costs."

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the names of participating volunteers and the overall number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to individual marine debris removal projects. Letters of commitment for any secured resources expected to be used as match for an award should be submitted as an attachment to the application.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Safety is a critical consideration for project implementation. Proposals should demonstrate meaningful consideration for the safety of project participants during removal activities. All funded projects must have a written safety plan for all project-related activities, especially regarding the safety and management of volunteers. The safety plan should consider safety at the site during and after project implementation and take into account potential safety concerns with regard to the current and future use of the site. For tsunami related debris, debris handling protocols and guidance have been developed at the state-level with NOAA assistance. These protocols can be found at: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/tsunamidebris/>

If a proposal includes scuba diving activities or other use of compressed gas as a breathing medium (e.g., surface supplied air), it is the responsibility of the recipient organization to ensure that divers are trained to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. The organization must have the capacity (appropriate insurance, safety policies, etc.) to oversee all proposed diving activities. 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 simple activities, such as underwater surveys and removal of light 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.

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

- Undertaking underwater removal of potentially entangling debris, such as nets, crab or lobster pots, or fishing line.

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.

Applications should be sufficiently detailed in accordance with the guidelines and information requirements listed in this Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), and should be able to be completed within the project period specified. Successful proposals will assist NOAA in implementing the Marine Debris Act, particularly those activities that address marine debris impacts to living marine resources and habitats as described in Section I. A. of this FFO.

Applicants should also note that the following activities, in general, will not be considered for use of federal dollars under project awards: (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.

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 NOAA Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, can be found on Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If

the application forms and instructions for applicants cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 301-427-8653).

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through the Grants.gov website, which is the clearinghouse for federal financial assistance. A complete standard NOAA grant application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document.

Each application must contain the following documents, unless otherwise noted below:

-required Federal Application Forms, including the following:

-Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)

-Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A

-Assurances, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424B

-Certifications Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-511

-Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable)

-a project summary (described below, 2 pages);

-a project narrative (described below, 12 pages);

-a detailed, narrative budget justification (described below, 4 pages);

-a Data Sharing Plan (described below, 2 pages);

-the curriculum vitae or résumé of each of the primary project personnel;

-a site location map with site location(s) highlighted;

-a letter documenting private landowner or public land manager support;

-other letters of support (if applicable); and

-other relevant attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as summaries of regional restoration plans, project site photographs, or design plans are encouraged to be included in the proposal package (20 pages).

Applications submitted through the Grants.gov website should include only three files in addition to the federal application forms noted above: 1) the project summary, project narrative and data sharing plan, 2) the budget justification, and 3) all other attachments

combined, including resumes, maps, and support letters. Adobe portable document format (PDF) files are the preferred format.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application must be mailed to the NOAA Restoration Center (see Section IV. F. "Other Submission Requirements" for complete mailing information). For paper-copy submissions Forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511 must signed in ink (blue ink is preferred). No fax or e-mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound or stapled in any manner.

1. Project Summary (2 pages):

A brief project summary must include the following:

-Applicant Organization

-Project Title

-Site Location (nearest town or watershed, and geographic coordinates if known)

-On-the-ground Activity Start Date (not the proposed award start date)

-NOAA Trust Resources to benefit from the project (habitats and species currently using the project area or expected to benefit and the anticipated biological function to be restored by debris removal. This section should also mention any listed threatened or endangered species in the project area or in the vicinity)

-Project Scope (briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds and proposed techniques that will be used)

-Area to Be Improved (tons of debris to be removed from the marine environment, acreage restored, and other measurable outcome)

-Project Timeline

-Permits (identify permits expected to be necessary for this project and current status of applications or consultations)

-Federal Funds Requested and Non-federal Match Anticipated

-Overall Project Cost

-Partner and Volunteer Support Anticipated (hours/tasks)

-Letters of Support (list those included with the application, particularly those from public agency resource personnel familiar with the issue or project area)

2. Project Narrative (12 pages)

The project narrative should closely follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. "Evaluation Criteria") for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. It should be no more than 12 pages long (in 12-point font with 1" margins) and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. In general, proposals should clearly demonstrate anticipated benefits to specific NOAA trust resource habitats (as described in Section I. A.); describe how these benefits will be achieved through marine debris detection, assessment, and removal; and identify the range of species and/or resources expected to benefit, including the anticipated biological function to be restored by debris removal. Applications should list the trust resources currently found in the project site, describe short- and long-term objectives and goals, including specific performance measures, detail the methods for carrying out and monitoring the project, and clearly explain the project's significance to enhancing habitat to benefit living marine resources with specific examples.

The applicant should indicate whether the proposed project is part of a larger, ongoing effort or is otherwise prioritized in a publicly vetted, published restoration or planning document. Proposal narratives should explicitly list or otherwise cite such documents for verification purposes, including the page number if referencing a specific action or issue within the plan. Projects taking place in marine protected areas such as National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, or in special management areas such as those under state coastal management, in Great Lakes Areas of Concern, in National Estuary Program sites, in Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) or areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern may receive greater consideration.

To protect the federal investment, a letter of commitment is required from relevant landowners for projects on private land or from relevant resource agency personnel for projects on public, permanently protected land. The letter of commitment should provide assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose. Documentation of plans for long-term project management should also be included.

To ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, implementation of marine debris removal projects should have broad, clearly identified goals and specific, measurable objectives. Results that are measured and reported must include the following:

- Expected weight of debris removed, in metric tons.

- Expected footprint of the medium- and large-scale debris proposed to be removed, in acres or square feet.

-Expected volunteer participation, in terms of number of volunteers as well as total volunteer hours.

Projects should have broad, clearly identified goals and objectives that feed into meaningful success criteria. Projects must be able to collect and report on the weight of debris removed throughout the project. Reporting on project progress and evaluating project objectives for effectiveness (e.g., anticipated biological functions to be restored by the debris removal, comparing initial removal targets set for each objective to post-removal results) will be required of all accepted applicants. Proposals that incorporate a more in-depth monitoring component in addition to debris removal activities (per the above priority) should describe how monitoring or post-removal evaluations will be conducted by comparing pre implementation targets to post-removal results for each parameter in the context of the project objectives (e.g., habitat/species condition or quality). A description of the anticipated long-term ecological and socio-economic outcomes should also be included. Such projects should also include a planned approach to developing and implementing a study design; selecting appropriate survey techniques and parameters; and collecting high-quality monitoring data. These studies should also be designed to assess factors indicative of habitat or species improvement through project and location specific metrics. Monitoring protocols should be designed to measure these improvements over an appropriate span of time (in some cases, monitoring may be a multi-year effort). Data collected and methodology are expected to be high quality, so depending on the monitoring targets and techniques, the use of volunteers for field surveys may not be appropriate. Not all projects and applicants are expected to include a habitat and/or species monitoring component. Any monitoring proposed is expected to be cost-effective and appropriate to the scope and scale of the project to evaluate a project's benefits. NOAA will consult with successful applicants who have included a habitat and/or species monitoring plan to ensure the appropriate metrics are monitored to link removal to habitat or species improvement.

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. 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. Applicants proposing to conduct specific marine debris removal activities, such as removal of derelict fishing gear, should demonstrate that they have the legal authority to conduct the stated activities within the proposed project area.

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 to disposal of debris (i.e. re-use, backhauling, partnering with local waste management companies, etc.).

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicants that are seeking NOAA federal funding. Proposals should provide enough detail for NOAA to make a NEPA determination (see Section VI. B. "Administrative and National Policy Requirements"). Successful applications cannot be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division with recommendations for funding until NOAA completes necessary NEPA documentation (see Section I. B. "Program Priorities"). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under the description of proposed activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, such as site locations, species and habitat(s) to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required and one does not already exist for the activities proposed in the application. 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 so will result in denial of an award.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible to obtain guidance on the level and scope of information needed by NOAA to comply with NEPA. A phased approach to funding project activities may be recommended or special award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements. The type of detailed information described above is critical to evaluating the significance of a project and its readiness to use available funding.

The project narrative should describe the organizational structure of the applicant group, identify proposed project staff, and detail their experience and qualifications in managing grants and implementing marine debris removal projects. If known, the applicant should state the level of NOAA involvement in and/or support for the project and include contact information of relevant NOAA staff.

The project narrative should also describe community involvement in the project, such as contributions from community partners, volunteer opportunities, citizen participation, education/outreach/stewardship 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 complement or encourage other local marine debris prevention or removal, or restoration or conservation activities.

3. Budget Justification (4 pages)

The narrative budget justification should include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with appropriate narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal shares. The object classes should match those found on Form SF-424A. Applications will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness by examining the proportion of funds directed to marine debris removal activities compared with that to be used for general program support.

The narrative budget justification should also indicate if the project 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 or in-kind contributions should be explained. If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a summary budget for the entire project should be provided; any funding other than the proposal request and match should be considered additional leverage.

Proposals with a monitoring component should clearly describe and separate out all monitoring or post-removal evaluation costs so that NOAA can evaluate the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of such activities. If multiple years of monitoring and evaluation are proposed, those costs should be broken out by year.

The narrative budget justification should also indicate if the applicant is requesting a waiver of all match requirements, as outlined above in Section III. B. "Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement".

Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA may waive any requirement for local matching funds to Insular Areas, as defined and outlined above in Section III. B. "Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement".

The NOAA Grants Management Division will review budget information for recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic.

4. Data Sharing Plan (2 pages)

A data sharing plan is required. 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. See Section VI.C. for more

information on this requirement. A sample Data Sharing Plan may be found at: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/funding/applicantresources.html> under "Applicant Resources".

5. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Inclusion of supplementary materials (e.g., photographs, summaries of project designs, key diagrams, copies of secured permits) are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the project narrative page limit, although it is suggested that supplementary materials do not exceed 20 pages. Letters of support from partners, local and state governments, and Congressional representatives are also helpful in demonstrating support for the project. Such supplementary information should be combined and submitted as a single file in the Grants.gov application.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EST, November 17, 2014. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No fax or email applications will be accepted.

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

D. 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 16 on Form SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

E. 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, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Currently, allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations" (2 CFR, Part 230); A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions" (2 CFR, Part 220); A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments" (2 CFR, Part 225); and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 CFR, Subpart 31.2 "Contracts with Commercial Organizations." All cost reimbursement sub-awards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

See Section VI.B. "Administrative and National Policy Requirements" below for more information on likely changes to the applicable OMB Circulars.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. A pre-award cost incurred before the NOAA Grants Office provides a notice of award is at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be June 1, 2015. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing plans for proposed restoration 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. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with 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 should be submitted prior to receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Applicants should note that it may take up to four weeks to register with Grants.gov and the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants should consider the time needed to

register with Grants.gov and should begin the registration process well in advance of the application due date.

Note: even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or their SAM registration (formerly Central Contractor Registration [CCR]) may need to be renewed or updated prior before the application can be submitted through Grants.gov. (Note that an old CCR username will not work in SAM; you must create a new SAM User Account to renew or update your registration.) 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 to establish. Please plan accordingly to avoid late submissions. For further information please visit the SAM web portal (<https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>).

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application package (as outlined in Section IV. B. "Content and Form of Application") must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by 11:59 p.m. EST, November 17, 2014, and sent to:

Tom Barry

NOAA Restoration Center (F/HC3)

ATTN: MDP Project Applications

1315 East West Highway, Rm. 15864

Silver Spring, MD 20910

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

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 (27 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The potential of the project activities to restore, protect, conserve, or enhance coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems vital to self-sustaining populations of living marine resources under NOAA stewardship (including commercial, recreational, threatened, or endangered species) through the removal of high-priority marine debris. (10 points)

- The project's significance with respect to project area, amount of debris removed, or potential to reduce marine debris, considered in the context of the local environment. (5 points)

- The likelihood that the project will deliver tangible, specific results that are measurable, including expected weight of debris removed, in metric tons; expected footprint of the debris proposed to be removed, in acres or square feet; and numbers of volunteers as well as total volunteer hours. Those applications that are likely to carry out robust and successful monitoring activities to identify the impacts of debris removal are likely to score higher on this criterion. Those applications that identify parameters and targets (e.g. accumulation and debris prevention rates) or to estimate degree to which NOAA trust resources will no longer be impacted (e.g., number of crabs and fish saved, number of acres restored) are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

- Whether the proposal addresses a marine debris problem area and/or priority habitat, as evidenced by reference to a regional or national publicly vetted, published planning document. (5 points)

- Whether the proposal included a Data/Information Sharing Plan including descriptions of the types of environmental data and information created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. (2 points)

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (25 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

-For assurance that implementation will meet all federal, state, and local environmental laws, projects that would require such permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project. This should 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. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed debris removal activities are legally permissible in the project area, if applicable, are likely to score higher on this criterion. See Section VI. B. "Administrative and National Policy Requirements" for more information. (5 points)

-The extent to which the applicant has described a realistic implementation plan achievable within 24 months, including whether the landowner has provided assurance of support and dedication to completing the project in a timely manner (letter of support, conservation easement, or significant financial investment). (5 points)

-The extent to which the applicant has described the ability to report measurable results. Such results should include the following:

1. expected weight of debris removed, in metric tons.
2. expected footprint of the medium- and large-scale debris proposed to be removed, in acres or square-feet.
3. expected volunteer participation, in terms of numbers of volunteers as well as total volunteer hours.

Other examples of measurable results may include number of removal operations; number of discrete items removed (e.g., crab pots, gill nets, pilings); square feet/acres cleared of small debris; percent of identified problem areas (for derelict gear or debris) addressed by removal activities; re-accumulation rate per unit area; number of fishers who receive training on the safe removal of derelict gear or specific debris types; expected weight of material prevented from entering the marine environment, in metric tons; change in volume of recycled gear as a result of a corporate recycling initiative, etc. If applicable, the applicant has outlined a realistic, rigorous, and sustainable recovery monitoring plan to measure habitat and species benefit as a result of project effort. (5 points)

-The overall technical feasibility of the project from a biological, ecological, and safety perspective, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound, likely to achieve project goals and objectives, and able to be conducted safely. Any activity proposing diving or snorkeling activities of any kind should follow the guidance provided in Section 1. B. "Program Priorities" (5 points)

-The likelihood of long-term success, as indicated by the degree to which the applicant has chosen the most self-sustaining restoration technique that accomplishes the project's goals. For projects requiring maintenance to assure success/proper function, the adequacy of the long-term operation and/or maintenance plan will be considered. For proposed shoreline cleanup activities, projects should be either a) coupled with a significant outreach or other component that will reduce or prevent future accumulation of marine debris or b) consist of a one-time cleanup event of debris that is not likely to re-accumulate, such as debris removal related to natural disasters or similar point-in-time events. (5 points)

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

-The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing, and effectively managing and overseeing projects that benefit living marine resources. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged. Communities and/or organizations developing their first project may not be able to document past experience and therefore will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, as evidenced by the explanation of characteristics such as education, training, and/or experience of primary project participants. (5 points)

-The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage marine debris removal work and grant responsibilities. (5 points)

4. Project Costs (23 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. If funds are requested for partial support of a project, the budget will be examined with respect to the overall project budget to allow an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

-The percentage of funds that will be dedicated to all phases of project implementation, including physical, on-the-ground assessment or removal efforts and, if applicable, science-based monitoring, compared to the percentage for general program support such as administration, salaries, overhead, and travel. Applications proposing to use

NOAA funds to expand an organization's day-to-day activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. To encourage on-the-ground efforts and tangible results, funding for salaries should be used to support staff directly involved in accomplishing the debris removal work and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task. (5 points)

- Whether the proposed budget is realistic, reasonable, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame, and sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving on-the-ground habitat improvements, and a comparison with rental costs should be used 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. (5 points)

- The demonstrated need for NOAA funding and whether NOAA support is critical. (8 points)

- The overall leverage of other funds anticipated, including the amount of match. Other than those proposals eligible for a waiver according to Section III. B. "Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements" (above), NOAA will expect non-federal cost-sharing at a minimum 1:1 ratio of formal matching contributions to federal funds. These funds or other resources should improve cost-effectiveness and further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applicants that provide documentation that acceptable secured match is available within the proposed project period are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

5. Outreach, Education, and Community Involvement (15 points)

NOAA assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission, and for the Marine Debris Program, such activities specifically include education and outreach to the public and other stakeholders, such as the fishing industry, fishing gear manufacturers, other marine-dependent industries, and the plastic and waste management industries. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- Whether the activities proposed will involve citizens, broaden their participation in coastal marine debris prevention or removal activities, and lead to achievement of long-term stewardship for restored living marine resources and a heightened community conservation ethic. Community participation may include hands-on training, involvement in marine debris

prevention and education activities, physical debris removal, and monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews. (5 points)

-Public outreach as it relates to the proposed project, including plans to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and their roles, sources of funding and other support provided; and the potential for the proposed project to encourage future restoration, conservation, and protection of living marine resources or complement other local restoration or conservation activities. (5 points)

-The depth and breadth of community support, as reflected by the diversity and strength of project partners and sponsorship by local entities (through cash contributions or in-kind goods and services such as boat use time and technical expertise). This may also include demonstration of support, in written form, from state and local governments, members of Congress, or relevant resource agency personnel familiar with the issue. If the project takes place within a protected or otherwise managed public area, a letter of commitment from the appropriate resource management agency is required. Similarly, if the project takes place on private property, a letter of commitment from the appropriate landowner is required. (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened by NOAA staff to determine if they are eligible and complete. Eligible marine debris removal proposals will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process. As appropriate during this process, NOAA will solicit individual technical evaluations of each project proposal to determine how well it meets program goals. Proposal evaluations may be requested from NOAA offices and staff, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, other federal and state agencies (e.g., state coastal management agencies and state fish and wildlife agencies), and private and public sector experts who have knowledge of a specific applicant, program, or its subject matter.

Applications for marine debris removal projects will be evaluated by at least three individual technical reviewers, including those mentioned in the above paragraph, according to the criteria and weights described in this solicitation. Reviewer comments, composite project scores, and a rank order will be presented to the NOAA Restoration Center Selecting Official. The Selecting Official, in consultation with the NOAA Marine Debris Program, will identify the proposals to be recommended to the NOAA Grants Management Division for funding and determine the amount of funds available for each approved proposal.

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
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 B of this FFO
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.

Hence, 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. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file until in accordance with the policies set forth in the Department of Commerce Grants Manual, which in general is 3 years.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by May 1, 2015 and notifications to all applicants are anticipated to be made as soon as possible thereafter. Typically, the earliest start date for projects will be June 1, 2015, 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 restoration 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 initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Award notification 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. Administrative Requirements

Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program, and can be found at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov>.

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain special 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 the required use of the NOAA Restoration Center data form and narrative format approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472 for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634) are applicable to this solicitation. Uniform Administrative Requirements:

Likely updates and changes to Uniform Administrative, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements: Among other things, the DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements notify applicants of the uniform administrative requirements and cost principles that apply to all DOC grants and cooperative agreements. Applicants should note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements (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 to be codified at 2 C.F.R. part 200. 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/>.

Delinquent Tax Liability and Felony Criminal Convictions– In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

2. NEPA Requirements

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>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations. 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).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying 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 proposing marine debris removal activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Supplemental PEA and FONSI will be informed after the peer review stage and may be asked to help prepare an EA prior to an award being made or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities, if one exists. The Community-based Restoration Program PEA and FONSI can be found on the Restoration Center website: <http://www.restoration.noaa.gov>.

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 Community-based Restoration Program 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.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6 month periods. Progress reports are to be submitted to NOAA via NOAA's Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each 6 month project period ends. 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 can be found in the Toolkit folder of the Publications & Resources section of the NOAA Restoration Center website at <http://www.restoration.noaa.gov>. Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 to March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 to September 30 (due by October 30) throughout the award period and are submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division via NOAA Grants Online system. 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.

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

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

Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under: http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 301-427-8653).

VIII. Other Information

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act [5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)] or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Accordingly, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.).

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

The use of the standard NOAA grant application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of

information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl