



Billing Code 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD895

FY 15 Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Program

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of funding availability.

SUMMARY: The principal objective of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Program is to implement projects that use a proactive approach to improve or restore coastal habitat to: 1) strengthen the resilience of our marine or coastal ecosystems to decrease the vulnerability of communities to extreme weather; and 2) support sustainable fisheries and contribute to the recovery of protected resources. See the full Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), located on Grants.gov as described in the **ADDRESSES** section, for a complete description of program goals and how applications will be evaluated. Note that this funding opportunity is one of two competitions being administered by NOAA to build coastal resilience. The companion competition, the Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program, is being administered by NOAA's National Ocean Service to support implementation of actions that directly build resilience of U.S. coastal communities using regional approaches. The Regional Coastal Resilience Grants FFO is expected to be posted in May 2015, and may be

found on *www.Grants.gov*.

DATES: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by *www.Grants.gov* by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on July 2, 2015. Use of a delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. In addition, applicants are advised that they must provide approval from the State Governor as evidenced by a letter or other form of documented correspondence for the proposed project by July 31, 2015. Before awards are made, NOAA will verify that correspondence from the State Governor has been received. See also Section III.C of the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants FFO.

ADDRESSES: Complete application packages, including required Federal forms and instructions, can be found on *www.Grants.gov* by searching for Funding Opportunity Number NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2015-2004410. If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from *www.Grants.gov*, contact *www.Grants.gov* Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or *support@Grants.gov*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information, contact Melanie Gange at (301) 427-8664, or by e-mail at *Melanie.Gange@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Statutory Authority: Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970; Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a; and Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1535.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA): 11.463.

Program Description

As noted above, the principal objective of the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants Program is to implement projects that use a proactive approach to improve or restore coastal habitat to: 1) strengthen the resilience of our marine and coastal ecosystems to decrease the vulnerability of communities to extreme weather; and 2) support sustainable fisheries and contribute to the recovery of protected resources. Applications should demonstrate how the proposed project will enhance the resiliency of marine and coastal ecosystems to the impacts of extreme weather and changing environmental conditions thereby increasing community resilience and providing habitat to threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (hereafter, Listed Species), fish stocks managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (hereafter, Managed Species), or other marine and coastal species with a nexus to NMFS management (such as through the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Coral Reef Conservation Act, or NMFS Species of Concern). Successful applications will 1) identify an issue limiting the resiliency of marine or coastal ecosystems to extreme weather events or changing environmental conditions at the proposed project site; 2) identify the proposed project's outcome goal(s) and describe in detail the actions and on-the-ground restoration to be undertaken to enhance resiliency and reduce risk and; 3) describe the measurable impact on the ecosystem, target species, and surrounding coastal communities to benefit from the proposed habitat restoration project. Applications selected for funding through this solicitation will primarily be funded through cooperative agreements.

Section IV.B. of the FFO describes the suggested information to include in the

application narrative. Supplemental Guidance regarding application writing, a checklist to submit a complete application, and FAQs about this solicitation and the Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program being administered by NOAA's National Ocean Service can be found at www.restoration.noaa.gov/partnerresources and www.habitat.noaa.gov/funding/coastalresiliency.html, respectively. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact NOAA Restoration Center staff before submitting an application to discuss their NOAA Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency project ideas with respect to technical merit and NOAA's objectives. NOAA will make every effort to respond to prospective applicants on a first come, first served basis. These discussions will not include review of draft proposals or site visits during the application period.

This funding opportunity is one of two FFOs being administered by NOAA to build coastal resilience. The companion competition, Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program, is being administered by NOAA's National Ocean Service to undertake activities that build resilience of coastal regions, communities, and economic sectors to the negative impacts from extreme weather events, climate hazards, and changing ocean conditions. The Regional Coastal Resilience Grants FFO is expected to be posted in May of 2015 and may be found on www.grants.gov.

Funding Availability

Total anticipated funding for all awards is up to \$4 million, subject to the availability of appropriations. NOAA anticipates typical awards will range from \$500,000 to \$1 million. NOAA will not accept applications requesting less than \$200,000 or more than \$2 million in Federal funds from NOAA under this solicitation and the exact

amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Any funds provided to successful applicants will be at the discretion of the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for application preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all top-ranked applications. 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 coastal ecosystem resiliency projects, and the merit and ranking of the applications.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. territories, and state, local and Native American tribal governments. Applications from individuals, Federal agencies, or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Individuals and Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, municipal and county governments, and others that are eligible to apply. In addition, NOAA will only award funds to projects that receive and demonstrate approval of the State's Governor to implement the proposed project as evidenced by a letter or other form of documented correspondence by July 31, 2015. Funds awarded under this program must be matched with non-federal funds (cash or in-kind services) at a 2:1 ratio of Federal-to-non-federal contributions. Applications selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost

sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer.

Evaluation and Selection Procedures

The general evaluation criteria and selection factors that apply to full applications to this funding opportunity are summarized below. Further information about the evaluation criteria and selection factors can be found in the full FFO announcement in *www.Grants.gov* (Funding Opportunity Number NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2015-2004410).

Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive.

1. Importance and Applicability (35 points): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state or local activities.

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (25 points): This criterion assesses whether the project activity or approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives.

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicant (10 points): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to support the proposed award.

4. Project Costs (20 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project's needs and time-frame.

5. Outreach and Education (10 points): NOAA assesses whether the award can deliver a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission

to protect the nation's natural resources.

Review and Selection Process

Applications will undergo an initial administrative review to determine if they are eligible and complete, per Section III of the full FFO posted at www.Grants.gov. Eligible applications will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process by three or more merit reviewers to determine how well they meet the program priorities and evaluation criteria of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA. After the technical review, a panel may meet to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official (SO) regarding which applications best meet the program objectives and priorities (see Sections I.A. and I.B. of the full FFO). The SO anticipates recommending applications for funding in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors: (1) Availability of funding; (2) Balance/distribution of funds: a) by geographic area, b) by type of institutions, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas; or e) by project types; (3) Whether the project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies; (4) Program priorities and policy factors set out in section I.A. and I.B. of the FFO; (5) An applicant's prior award performance; (6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups; and (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 GMD. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications. In addition, as noted above, applicants must provide NOAA with documentation of approval from the State Governor for the proposed project by July 31, 2015 in order to receive an award. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their

application was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file in accordance with NOAA records requirements and then destroyed.

Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted under the FFO are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on Form SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC). To find out about and comply with a State's process under Executive Order 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed on the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

Limitation of Liability

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.

National Environmental Policy Act

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. 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. Applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, or in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. Further details regarding NOAA's compliance with NEPA can be found in the full Federal Funding Opportunity.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (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, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Executive Order 12866

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

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)

It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act

Prior notices and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for rules concerning public property, loans, grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements for the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

Frederick C. Sutter,
Director, Office of Habitat Conservation,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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