

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: FY2010 Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2010-2002082

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. ET, October 31, 2009. 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 received after the deadline will be rejected/returned to the sender without further consideration. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP), authorized in the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act (MDRPR Act, 33 U.S.C. 1951 et seq.), 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. Projects funded through the MDP have strong on-the-ground habitat components involving the removal of marine debris and derelict fishing gear, as well as activities that provide social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological habitat improvements for NOAA trust resources. Through this solicitation the MDP identifies marine debris removal projects, strengthens the development and implementation of habitat restoration through the removal of marine debris within communities, and fosters awareness of the effects of marine debris to further the conservation of living marine resource habitats across a wide geographic area. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a cooperative agreement. Funding of up to \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants in FY 2010. The NOAA MDP anticipates that typical awards will range from \$15,000 to \$150,000.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

A principal objective of the NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) 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.

Successful applications will be those that:

* Demonstrate collaboration among entities such as public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, anglers, boaters, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local government, state, and federal agencies to cooperatively implement marine debris removal projects, and

* Are able to report the total amount of debris removed, total area cleaned or restored, types of debris encountered, and document volunteer hours involved or a maximization of project partnerships.

Safety is a critical consideration for project implementation. If selected, the applicant must have a written safety plan for all project related activities, including 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.

B. Program Priorities

The MDP is interested in funding projects that will result in on-the-ground benefits to living marine resource habitats through the removal of marine debris, particularly non-re-accumulating debris or debris which is no longer being introduced into the marine environment, and associated activities. 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.

The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's "Ecosystems" mission support goal of "Protect, Restore, and Manage Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through Ecosystem-Based Management."

Successful proposals will assist NOAA in implementing the MDRPR Act, particularly sections 3(b)(1)(C) and 3(b)(3). Activities may include, but are not limited to:

- * Detection, assessment, and removal of derelict fishing gear, such as abandoned crab pots, fish nets, and monofilament line;

- * Detection, assessment, and removal of persistent debris from coastal habitats including marshes, bays, mangroves, and coral reefs. This includes activities such as removal of large material washed up on shorelines. Vessel, associated vessel debris, derelict pilings, and large debris removal will only be considered if there is a strong link to habitat impacts according to a regional prioritization process. Furthermore, vessel removal and derelict piling removal will only be considered if any single vessel or piling area removal is only a component of the greater proposal;

- * Detection, assessment, and removal of debris from marine, estuarine or beach environments resulting from hurricanes or other natural disasters;

- * Development and implementation of strategies, methods, priorities and plans for the detection, safe removal, and responsible disposal of derelict fishing gear and associated marine debris. This may include defining best management practices and local or regional protocols;

- * Prevention, outreach, education and/or volunteer activities. Proposals are encouraged to include such activities as project components and these activities should be tied to the public and other stakeholders, such as the fishing industry, fishing gear manufacturers, and other marine-dependent industries, and the plastic and waste management industries.

The MDP recognizes that the assessment and removal of marine debris can be a multi-faceted effort that may involve project design, engineering services, permitting, and oversight. The focus of the program, however, is to provide funding and technical expertise to support on-the-ground implementation of habitat restoration through marine debris assessment and removal that involves significant community support. To that end, projects may involve limited pre-implementation activities, such as engineering, design and short-term baseline studies.

Implementation of on-the-ground debris removal projects should have clearly identified goals (broad in scope) and at least two specific, measurable objectives. Evaluating these objectives should involve an assessment of effectiveness (i.e. comparing initial targets set for each objective to post-removal results). The assessment should be conducted in a timely fashion with a frequency and length of time appropriate to each parameter in the context of the project objectives and status.

If a proposal has a prevention component, there should be a targeted user community and substantial interaction and outreach with that community. Monofilament recycling and prevention is supported by NOAA through separate activities and is not a focus of this call. For more information visit www.marinedebris.noaa.gov.

If a proposal has any Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA), and/or other use of compressed gas as a breathing medium (e.g. surface supplied air), for diving activities, 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 compliance with OSHA guidelines.

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

- * Moving or lifting heavy objects, or using hand tools, weighing >25 pounds underwater
- * Performance of tasks requiring substantial physical exertion
- * Use of lift bags
- * Underwater removal of potentially entangling debris, such as nets, crab 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.

Snorkeling activities are similarly restricted, in that snorkelers should only complete simple activities such as surveys and removal of light objects.

For outreach activities, applicants are encouraged to incorporate existing outreach materials, including those available for download at www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/outreach/. These projects should also include measures to determine effectiveness of activities and identify how the project will continue in the future if it involves collection facilities or other long-term operations.

The MDP will consider funding more than one project under a single award. All projects should be sufficiently detailed as per the guidelines and information requirements listed in this document for an application to be competitive, and all projects should be able to be completed within the award period specified below.

The MDP anticipates that a limited portion of available funds will be used to support high quality projects that transfer removal technology and methods to other parts of the U.S.

Applications proposing solely to conduct regular maintenance activities, such as volunteer clean-ups of beach litter, may be considered a lower priority. Proposals with such activities should clarify whether the activity is (a) coupled with a significant outreach or other component that will reduce or prevent future accumulation of marine debris, or (b) consists of a one-time clean-up event of debris that is not likely to re-accumulate, such as debris removal related to natural disasters or similar point-in-time events. Furthermore, 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 funds are limited, large equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats and similar items will be a low priority.

Applications proposing the removal of a significant amount of marine debris are likely to be considered a high priority. Proposals with an abandoned vessel removal component should indicate that a search for responsible parties, such as the vessel's owner, has been conducted and that no identifiable responsible party exists. Proposals should focus on benefits to living marine resources and associated habitats. Proposals with a primary emphasis on removing materials that represent hazards to navigation or human health, or removal for aesthetic purposes are not a focus of this grants competition.

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.

C. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. 1951 et. seq.

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 FY 2010. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon Fiscal Year 2010 Congressional appropriations. The NOAA Restoration Center anticipates that typical project awards will

range from \$15,000 to \$150,000; NOAA will not accept proposals for under \$15,000 or proposals for over \$250,000 under this solicitation. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for 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 the MDP by Congress.

The NOAA Restoration Center anticipates that between 10 and 25 awards will be made as a result of this solicitation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of any available funds. In FY 2008, 10 applications were recommended for funding ranging from \$39,000 to \$175,000, for a total grant competition funding level of approximately \$900,000.

This is the fourth year of the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants, a grant partnership between the NOAA Marine Debris Program and NOAA Restoration Center. These grants are funded through the NOAA Marine Debris Program with appropriations to the Office of Response and Restoration, National Ocean Service for this purpose. The NOAA Restoration Center will administer this grants program in the same manner that the Community-based Restoration Program is conducted.

B. Project/Award Period

Applicants should plan the restoration and monitoring activities proposed for this funding to be completed within 24 months of the start date of the award. The earliest anticipated start date for projects will be June 1, 2010; 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. Any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project should be submitted to the competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Permission to extend the period of performance beyond the 24 month award period is at the total 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 a cooperative agreement 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, tracking the progression of the 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.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments whose projects have the potential to benefit NOAA trust resources. Applications from federal agencies or employees of Federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, national service clubs or youth corps organizations and others that are eligible to apply.

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. The MDP encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of the MDP is to provide seed money to projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important marine debris removal activities to benefit living marine resources. To this end, the MDRPR Act requires applicants to demonstrate a minimum 1:1 non-Federal match for MDP funds requested to conduct the proposed project. In addition to formal match, NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much investment as possible.

However, the MDRPR Act allows the Administrator to waive all or part of the matching requirement if the applicant can demonstrate that:

- 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.

In addition, the MDP shall waive any requirement for matching funds to an Insular Area (Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands). Under 48 USC 10.1469a(d), any department or agency may waive any requirement for matching funds otherwise required by law to be provided by the Insular Area involved.

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

Match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. 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."

The MDRPR Act allows the 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.

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

Not applicable.

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 grant competition, can be found on www.grants.gov. If the application forms and instructions for applicants cannot be downloaded from www.grants.gov, please contact David Landsman (David.Landsman@noaa.gov, 301-713-0174).

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through the grants.gov website, www.grants.gov, 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 should contain:

* required Federal Application Forms, including:

- Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)
- Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A
- Assurances, Non-construction Programs: SF-424B
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying: CD-511
- CD-512 (remains with applicant - do not submit as part of application package)

* the following forms may also be required, depending on the applicant:

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)
- Applicant for Federal Assistance: CD-346 (required for the following individuals: Non-profit Organizations, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations and Joint Venture);

- * a project summary (described below, 2 pages);
- * a project narrative (described below, 10 pages);
- * a detailed, narrative budget justification (described below, 4 pages);
- * the curriculum vitae or resume of primary project personnel;
- * a site location map such as a USGS topographic quadrangle map with site location(s) highlighted;
- * a letter documenting private landowner or public land manager support;
- * other letters of support; and
- * other relevant attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as general support letters, summaries of regional restoration plans, project site photographs, or design plans (20 pages).

Applications submitted through the grants.gov website should include only three files in addition to the Federal Application Forms: 1) the project summary and project narrative, 2) the budget justification, and 3) all other attachments combined, including resumes, maps, and support letters. PDF files are the preferred format; information about converting documents to PDF files is available on the grants.gov website under Help and Download Software.

If grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, a hard copy application, with the SF424 signed in ink (blue ink is preferred), must be mailed to the NOAA Restoration Center (see Section IV F Other Submission Requirements for complete information). No facsimile or electronic 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 in any manner.

1. Project Summary (2 pages):

- * Applicant Organization
- * Project Title
- * Site Location (nearest town or watershed, and geographic coordinates if known)

- * On-the Ground Activity Start Date (not proposed award start date)
- * NOAA Trust Resources to benefit from the project - habitat(s), organism(s) (species) currently using the project area or expected to benefit, and 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 Time Line
- * Permits (identify permits expected to be necessary for this project and current status of applications or consultations)
- * Federal Funds Requested & 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 (10 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. The body of this narrative description should be no more than 10 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 (such as salt marshes, seagrass beds, coral reefs, mangrove forests, and riparian habitat near rivers, streams and creeks used by diadromous fish) and/or navigable waterways; 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. 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.

The applicant should indicate whether the proposed project is part of a larger, ongoing effort, or otherwise prioritized in a publicly vetted, published restoration or planning document. 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 National Estuary Program sites, in Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) or areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern may receive greater consideration.

Also, to protect the federal investment, a letter of commitment is required from the landowner 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 clearly identified goals (broad in scope) and specific, measurable objectives. Results that are measured and reported should include:

- * All projects proposing removal of marine debris should include expected weight of debris removed, in metric tons.

- * All projects proposing to remove mid- and large- scale debris should include the expected footprint of the debris proposed to be removed, in acres or square-feet.

- * All projects proposing use of volunteers should include expected volunteer participation, in terms of numbers of volunteers as well as total volunteer hours.

Proposals related to monitoring should describe how monitoring or post-removal evaluation(s) would be conducted by comparing pre-implementation targets to post-removal results for each parameter in the context of the project objectives. A description of the anticipated long-term ecological and socio-economic outcomes should also be included.

To demonstrate a project's potential to realize long-term benefits for NOAA trust resources, indicate project readiness. To provide assurance that the project will expeditiously meet environmental compliance and permitting requirements, so that

on-the-ground debris removal activities will begin within the first 6 months after the project's start date, 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 and documentation of all permits already secured for the project. 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.

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, etc.).

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 of 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. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an award.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible to obtain guidance with respect to 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 to fulfill. 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.

Within the project narrative, proposals should include information on cost-effectiveness by examining the proportion of funds directed to the removal activities compared with that to be used for general program support. To allow the selecting official to make an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio, the narrative budget justification should 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. 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.

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 and 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 424A. Applications will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness by examining the proportion of funds directed to on-the-ground restoration/monitoring 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.

The MDRPR Act allows the Administrator to waive all or part of the matching requirement if the applicant can demonstrate that: 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. In the case of a match waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification at the time the proposal is submitted explaining the need for the waiver including 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 availability of match.

Notwithstanding any other provisions herein, and in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), the Program shall waive any requirement for local matching funds to the governments of Insular Areas, defined as the jurisdictions of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Eligible applicants choosing to apply 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) must include a letter requesting a waiver that demonstrates that their project meets the requirements of 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d).

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

4. 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 such as photographs, summaries of project designs, key diagrams, copies of secured permits, etc. are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the project narrative page limit, although it is suggested that the above 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 one 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. ET, October 31, 2009. 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. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Applications that are aligned with Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants that have been submitted directly to other NOAA grants programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on 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.html>.

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. 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 Code of Federal Regulations, 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.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. A pre-award cost incurred before a notice of award document is provided by the NOAA Grants Office is at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be June 1, 2010. 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 www.grants.gov. Applicants should note that it takes approximately 3 weeks to register with grants.gov, and registration is required only once. 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 if they have never registered with grants.gov.

If the applicant does not have Internet access, a hard copy application with the SF424 bearing an original, ink signature (blue ink preferred) must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by 11:59 p.m. October 31,

2009, and sent to:

David Landsman

NOAA Restoration Center (F/HC3)

ATTN: MDP Project Applications

1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14727

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date 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. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic 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 in any manner.

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 (25 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 marine debris assessment or removal activity 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). (10 points)

* The project's significance with respect to area or amount of debris removed, or its 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. Other examples of measurable results, such as decreased re-accumulation rates or material prevented from entering marine environment, may also be included.

Those applications that identify parameters and targets and use data 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)

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (30 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, proposals will be evaluated 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:

- All projects proposing removal of marine debris should include expected weight of debris removed, in metric tons.

- All projects proposing to remove mid- and large- scale debris should include the expected footprint of the debris proposed to be removed, in acres or square-feet.

- All projects proposing use of volunteers should include 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, fill 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. (5 points)

* The overall technical feasibility of the project from a biological and ecological perspective, including whether the proposed approach is likely to achieve project goals and objectives. (5 points)

* The overall technical feasibility of the project from an engineering perspective, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and can be safely conducted. Any activity proposing snorkeling or SCUBA activities should follow the guidance provided in Section 1. B. (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 clean-up type 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 clean-up 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 locally-driven marine debris removal 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 (20 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition proposals will be evaluated on the following:

* Their cost-effectiveness. Reviewers will examine 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 MDP 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, 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 ability of the applicant to demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. 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. (5 points)

* The demonstrated need for NOAA funding and whether NOAA support is critical. (5 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 1:1 level for formal match. These funding 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, and other marine-dependent industries, and the plastic and waste management industries. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition proposals will be evaluated on the following:

* Whether the activities proposed will involve citizens and 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, sponsorship by local entities (either through in-kind goods and services such as boat use time, technical expertise, or cash contributions). 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. Also, a letter of commitment from the appropriate resource agency personnel for a project in permanently protected areas, or from the affected landowner for a project on private property. (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened by NOAA staff to determine if they are eligible and complete. Eligible restoration proposals will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process. As appropriate during this process, the NOAA Restoration Center will solicit from NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) staff individual technical evaluations of each project proposed to determine how well it meets the aims of the MDP, and may request evaluations from other NOAA offices and staff, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, other federal and state agencies, such as 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 Director of The NOAA Restoration Center. The Director, in consultation with the Office of Response and Restoration Director, where the MDP is located, and their respective program staff will identify the proposals to be recommended to the Grants Management Division (GMD) 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 upon one or more of the following factors:

1. The availability of funding;
2. The balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically,
 - b. By type of institutions,

c. By type of partners,

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 section I.A and B;

5. The 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 GMD.

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 the close of the following fiscal year then destroyed.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by April 1, 2010. Typically, the earliest start date for projects will be June 1, 2010, dependant on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations and 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, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office. Award notification will be made electronically from the NOAA Grants office via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Administrative Requirements.

Successful applicants that 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/ago/grants/policy.cfm>

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Office in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill, and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as the required use of the NOAA Restoration Center (RC) data form and narrative format approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472 for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

2. NEPA Requirements

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 funding. 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_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.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 order to obtain adequate information about the proposed project, NOAA may ask applicants to complete portions of the "Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants" (OMB Approval no: 0648-0538, expires 6/30/09).

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 of 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. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the 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 requested to assist in the preparation of 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 at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/index.html.

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests 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 CRP 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 (GMD) along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date listed in award documentation. Progress reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer via NOAA's Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. 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. Currently, a fill-form and format for project progress reports can be found on the NOAA Restoration Center website at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 - March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 - 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.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact David Landsman at 301-713-0174 or by e-mail at David.Landsman@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if 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.

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.