

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: Protected Species Cooperative Conservation

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: NMFS-PRPO-2010-2001945

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

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by <http://www.grants.gov/> by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on October 5, 2009. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline.

Application Submission: Applications should be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov/>. If on-line submission is not possible, hard copy applications may be submitted by postal mail or commercial delivery to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, ATTN: Lisa Manning, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: States play an essential role in the conservation and recovery of endangered and threatened species. Protected species under the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) jurisdiction may spend all or a part of their life-cycles in state waters, and success in conserving these species will depend in large part on working cooperatively with state agencies. The NMFS is authorized to provide Federal assistance to eligible States to support the development of conservation programs for marine and anadromous species that reside within that State. This assistance, provided in the form of grants through the Protected Species Cooperative Conservation program, can be used to support conservation of endangered, threatened, and candidate or proposed species, as well as post-delisting monitoring of recovered species. Funded activities may include development and implementation of management plans, scientific research, and public education and outreach; proposals should address priority actions identified in an ESA Recovery Plan, a State's ESA Section 6 Program, or a State Wildlife Action Plan. Any State agency that has entered into or applied for an agreement with the NMFS pursuant to section 6(c) of the ESA is eligible to apply under this solicitation. Proposals focusing on listed Pacific salmon will not be considered for funding under this grant program; such projects can be considered under a NMFS Pacific salmon grant program. This document describes how to submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2010 and how the

NMFS will determine which proposals will be funded; this document should be read in its entirety, as some information has changed from the previous year.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objectives

The principal objective of the Protected Species Cooperative Conservation (PSCC) grant program is to support the development of State conservation programs that directly benefit listed species, recently de-listed species, or candidate species¹. Conservation programs may involve management, research, monitoring, and outreach activities or any combination thereof.

Successful applications will be those that demonstrate a direct conservation benefit to the species or its habitat. Proposals involving management activities should demonstrate a high probability of contributing to recovery of the species, especially through mitigation of existing threats or factors inhibiting recovery of the species. Proposals involving scientific research should demonstrate a high probability of providing information that can be used to recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a given species. Proposals involving public education and outreach projects should demonstrate a high probability of improving or increasing public understanding and participation in conservation activities. All projects should address priority actions identified in an ESA Recovery Plan, a State's ESA Section 6 Program, or State Wildlife Action Plan. Priority will be given to projects that involve regional activities and/or cooperation with other states or have an ecosystem approach through which multiple species may benefit. Projects that include measures by which performance or success of the project will be evaluated will also receive higher priority.

¹A candidate species is a) one that is actively being considered for listing as either threatened or endangered under the ESA and is the subject of a positive 90-day finding but not yet the subject of a proposed rule, or b) is a species for which NMFS has initiated an ESA status review and has announced the review in the *Federal Register* (see 71 FR 61022; October 17, 2006). Under this solicitation, however, we will consider species proposed for listing and candidate species to have the same status. NMFS also maintains a Species of Concern (SOC) list; SOC are those species for which NMFS has concerns or for which uncertainties exist regarding status and threats, yet for which information is lacking. Neither status carries any procedural or substantive protections under the ESA. Grant proposals may address a species of concern *if the species is also currently considered a candidate species*. And, grant proposals may involve species of concern *if the proposal is focused on a listed species, candidate species, or recently de-listed species*. The list of species of concern is available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/concern/>, and the lists of candidate and proposed species are available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/other.htm>.

Projects focusing on listed Pacific salmon will not be considered under this grant program; State conservation efforts for these species may be supported under a NMFS Pacific salmon grant program.

B. Program Priorities

Under this solicitation, States may apply for grants to support development of their conservation program for ESA-listed species, candidate species, or recently recovered species under the jurisdiction of the NMFS or under the joint jurisdiction of the NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (e.g. sea turtles). Elements of a conservation program may include management, scientific research, or outreach activities, or a combination thereof. Proposals concerning listed species for which the NMFS has released a Recovery Plan should discuss how the project would address one or more of the recovery objectives or actions identified in that plan. Recovery Plans are available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans.htm>.

Proposals including management activities should demonstrate a high probability of contributing to recovery of the species, especially through mitigation of existing threats or factors inhibiting recovery of the species. Such projects could, for example, involve the development of an ESA section 10 conservation plan, synthesis or analysis of stranding or observer data, habitat restoration or protection efforts, or development and implementation of by-catch reduction measures. While proposals involving the development of ESA section 10 conservation plans may be regarded as high priority projects, proposals involving implementation of required elements of a section 10 incidental take permit cannot be considered for funding through this program.

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

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

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

Applicants interested in further discussion of program priorities may contact their regional section 6 coordinator listed in Section VII., Agency Contacts.

C. Program Authority 16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 1535

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates that up to \$12 million may be available for distribution under the FY 2010 PSCC program; awards are expected to range between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 in federal funding per year. Applications requesting less than \$200,000 in federal funding per year may receive lower priority. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific grant proposal or to obligate any available funds.

NOAA will consider funding more than one project under a single application. Applicants that bundle projects into a single application should ensure that there is sufficient detail for each project as per the guidelines and information requirements listed in this document if an application is to be competitive. Bundled projects should address the same or related species (e.g. shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon) or species that share similar habitats to allow for appropriate review of the proposal.

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

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

B. Project/Award Period

Project periods may extend up to a maximum of 3 years. For multi-year proposals, applicants must include project plans and budgets for each year of the project. Multi-year projects will be funded in one-year increments but will not compete for funding in subsequent budget periods within the approved award period; funding for subsequent years will be at the sole discretion of the Department of Commerce, and will depend on satisfactory performance by the recipient, the availability of funds to support the continuation of the project, and Agency priorities. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a funded project beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of this period, the applicant can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer no later than 30 days prior to the end of the award period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension. If, however, the money is expended and funds are needed to continue the project, the applicant should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle (e.g. FY 2011) or seek an alternate source of funding.

C. Type of funding instrument

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

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applications

Eligible applicants are state agencies that have entered into an agreement with NMFS pursuant to section 6(c) of the ESA. The terms “state” and “state agency” are used as defined in section 3 of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1532).

Currently eligible state agencies are from the following states: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Washington. Any state agency that enters into a section 6(c) agreement with NMFS within 60 days following the grant application deadline is also eligible to apply.

State agencies may apply for funding to conduct work on federally listed species that are included in their ESA section 6 agreement and any species that has become a candidate or a proposed species by the grant application deadline. State agencies may not apply for funding to conduct work on federally listed species that are not covered in their ESA section 6 agreement unless said species is added to the agreement within 60 days following the grant application deadline.

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

In accordance with section 6(d) of the ESA, proposals must include a minimum non-Federal cost share of 25 percent of the total budget if the proposal involves a single state. If a proposal involves collaboration of two or more states, the minimum non-Federal cost share decreases to 10 percent of the total project budget. The project proposal and budget should reflect the work and responsibilities to be carried out by each of the cooperating states. The non-Federal cost share should be identified in the project budget (and on the SF-424A) and may include in-kind contributions according to the regulations at 15 CFR part 24.

Match requirements of section 6(d) of the ESA do not apply to insular areas covered by the Omnibus Insular Areas Act of 1977 (48 U.S.C. 1469a) including Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The federal funding announcement and application instructions for this grant program are available via the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. Applicants without internet access can obtain application instructions from Lisa Manning, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20912, (phone) 301-713-1401, (email) Lisa.Manning@noaa.gov.

B. Address for Submitting Proposals

Applications should be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. NOAA strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a DUNS number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Applicants should allow at least 5 business days to complete the CCR registration; registration is only required once. Also, it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. Following submission of applications through Grants.gov, applicants should receive two automated responses from Grants.gov: one confirms receipt of the application; the other confirms that the application has been forwarded to NOAA. If both confirmation messages from Grants.gov are not received, applicants should contact both the Grants.gov Helpdesk and the NMFS Office of Protected Resources to confirm the application has been transmitted and received by NOAA.

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

C. Content and Format of Application Submission

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

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

Proposals and all attachments should be formatted for letter-sized paper (8.5" x 11"). Text should be no smaller than 10-point font, and all pages must be numbered. The Project Description should not exceed 15 pages. Within the Project Description, tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are not

included in the 15-page limitation. Abbreviated CVs or resumes should be appended to each application. Appended material must not exceed a total of 10-pages in length and can include letters of endorsement, an indirect cost rate agreement, permit information, related grant progress reports, or any other supporting information.

To be considered, proposals must include the following information:

1. Title Page

Provide the project title, project duration (**with a start date no earlier than June 1, 2010**), applicant name(s), name(s) of the Principal Investigator (or Project Manager) and any Co-Investigators (or Co-Managers), complete contact information (address, telephone, fax, email, and phone number) for the applicant(s) and all Co-investigators (or Co-Managers), and a statement regarding the Federal, non-Federal, and total costs of the project.

2. Project Summary (1-page limit)

Provide a brief summary discussing the project goals and objectives, the proposed activities, the geographic area where the activities would occur, the recovery objectives or actions as specified in a NMFS Recovery Plan, a State Section 6 Program, or State Wildlife Action Plan being addressed (as applicable), and expected outcomes and benefits of the proposed activities. This summary may be posted on our website if the project is funded.

3. Project Description (15-page limit)

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

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

(b) Project narrative: Describe the methodologies or technical plan for activities that are to be conducted during each budget period of the project. Include detailed descriptions of the specific plan and/or methods that will be employed. Project milestones and the timelines (e.g. the number of months) necessary to meet them should also be discussed.

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

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

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

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

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

4. Total project costs and budget justification

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

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

Itemized costs per category (salary, supplies, equipment, travel, etc.) and the corresponding Federal and non-Federal share and direct and indirect cost totals should be listed on a separate sheet or spreadsheet. Multi-year projects must include separate, itemized budgets for each year of the project. A budget justification must also be provided to describe and justify the costs indicated in the requested budget. For the non-Federal share, the itemized costs should be separated into cash and in-kind contributions. If in-kind contributions are included, describe briefly the basis for estimating the value of these contributions.

5. Appendices (10-page limit)

Abbreviated curricula vitae or resumes of the PM/PI and any Co-Managers/ Co-Investigators should be included with the application. Applicants requiring ESA scientific research permits must also include evidence of such a permit (e.g. by providing the permit number) or evidence they have submitted an ESA permit application. Additional material that is necessary or useful to the description of the project may also be provided (e.g. letters of endorsement, tables or visual materials).

D. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on October 5, 2009. Applications submitted by U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. Proposals submitted after the deadline cannot be considered for funding. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates.

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. Applicants may use indirect costs or a portion of these costs as part of the non-federal cost share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government must be included in the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. Allowable Costs.

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

G. Other Submission Requirements (Permits and Approvals)

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

Projects involving directed or incidental take of threatened or endangered species require permits under section 10 of the ESA (50 CFR 222.307 and 222.308). If an ESA permit covering the proposed activities has already been issued, the permit number must be provided in the

application. Issuance of the necessary ESA permit(s) or evidence that the applicant has submitted a permit application is required in order for a proposal to be considered for funding.

Projects involving rescue of marine mammals in accordance with the regulations at 50 CFR 216.22, rescue or salvage of stranded or dead endangered sea turtles in accordance with 50 CFR 222.310, or take of threatened sea turtles in accordance with 50 CFR 223.206 do not require an independent ESA section 10 permit.

For further information on permit requirements and application procedures for federal natural resource permits, contact the NMFS Office of Protected Resources Permits Division (301-713-2289) or see <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/>.

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

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

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

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria (with their relative weights):

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

This criterion addresses whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, or local activities. Applications will be evaluated on clear identification of project goals and objectives and applicability of those goals and objectives to conservation and recovery goals for threatened or endangered species, de-listed species, or candidate species as specified in a NMFS recovery plan or a state conservation plan. Reviewers will consider whether the project meets the program goals and priorities for the ESA section 6 program as stated in sections I.A. and I.B. of this document.

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

ecosystem approach in which multiple species may benefit. (Score: 1-10 points; where, for example, 1= no importance/relevance to the program goals or objectives, very limited potential to contribute to species recovery, no partnering and/or ecosystem consideration; 5= moderately important/ relevant, and likely to make a moderate contribution to species recovery, involves more than one state and/or an ecosystem approach; 10= extremely important/relevant, and likely to make a significant contribution to species recovery, involves multiple states or an ecosystem approach.)

2. Technical/ Scientific Merit (30%).

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

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

For all applications, reviewers will consider whether the proposal includes an effective mechanism for evaluating the project's success in meeting the stated goals and objectives. Reviewers will also evaluate whether application instructions contained in this document were followed and if all required elements were submitted. (Score: 1-10 points; where, for example, 1= completely unsound and/ or unlikely to meet the stated objectives, application instruction were not followed, and no performance measures included; 5= intermediately sound, and/ or reasonably likely to meet the stated objectives, application instructions generally followed; 10= extremely sound and highly likely to meet the stated objectives, application instructions followed thoroughly.)

3. Overall Qualification of Applications (10%).

This criterion addresses whether the applicant possesses the necessary expertise, experience, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will consider previous related experience and qualifications of the project's PM or PI, Co-Manager(s) or Co-Investigator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and cooperators. Reviewers will also consider past award performance of the applicant(s) and PM/PI. (Score: 1-10 points; where, for example, 1= completely unqualified and/or lacking the resources or capacity to accomplish the project, 5= intermediate level of qualifications or experience and/or adequate resources and capacity to accomplish the project, 10= extremely qualified/ experienced, has all necessary resources and demonstrated capacity to accomplish the project.)

4. Project Costs (15%).

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is sufficiently detailed, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. The Federal share of a single State's project cannot exceed 75%. The Federal share increases to 90% when two or more States submit a joint

proposal. A State's share does not necessarily require a commitment of State funds; State match can be reflected by in-kind contributions, such as volunteer labor and other staff resources. (Score: 1-10 points; where, for example, 1= unrealistic and lacking sufficient detail; 5= adequately detailed and realistic; 10= extremely detailed and realistic.)

5. Outreach and Education (10%).

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Reviewers will consider whether project results or products will be shared appropriately and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Depending on the nature of the project, 'outreach and education' may include, for example, peer reviewed publications, presentations at professional meetings, development of brochures, internal agency meetings, or public meetings. (Score: 1-10 points, where 1= insufficient/ineffective outreach, 5= adequate outreach, 10= extremely effective outreach).

B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps: initial evaluation, merit review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., the Assistant Administrator for NMFS). Initial screening and evaluation of applications will be conducted to ensure that application packages have all required forms and application elements, clearly relate to the 2010 PSCC program, and meet all of the eligibility criteria.

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

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

C. Selection Factors

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

- a. Availability of funding
- b. Balance/distribution of funds
 - i. Geographically
 - ii. By type of institutions
 - iii. By type of partners
 - iv. By research areas
 - v. By project types

- c. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies
- d. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I.A. (Program Objectives) and B (Program Priorities) and Section II. A. (Funding Availability)
- e. Applicant's prior award performance
- f. Partnerships with and/or participation of targeted groups
- g. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the fall of 2009, and funding is expected to begin during summer 2010 for most approved projects. Project start dates may be no earlier than June 1, 2010 unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements.

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). You may obtain a copy of this notice by contacting the agency contact(s) under section VII., or by going to the website at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact must furnish information requested to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

2. Limitation of Liability.

Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for the programs listed in this notice. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding

or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. Universal Identifier.

Applicants should be aware that, they are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number during the application process. See the October 30, 2002 Federal Register, Vol. 67, No. 210, pp. 66177-66178 for additional information. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or via the internet (<http://www.dunandbradstreet.com>).

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

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

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer (Lisa Manning, Office of Protected Resources). Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration.

VII. Agency Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this proposal solicitation, please contact Lisa Manning at the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Endangered Species Division,

1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, by phone at 301-713-1401, or by email at Lisa.Manning@noaa.gov. You may also contact one of the following people in your region for further guidance: Amanda Johnson, Northeast Regional Office (Amanda.Johnson@noaa.gov, 978-282-8463); Karla Reece, Southeast Regional Office (Karla.Reece@noaa.gov, 727-824-5348); Scott Rumsey, Northwest Regional Office (Scott.Rumsey@noaa.gov, 503-872-2791); Scott Hill, Southwest Regional Office (Scott.Hill@noaa.gov, 562-908-872-5348); Kaja Brix, Alaska Regional Office (Kaja.Brix@noaa.gov, 907-586-7824); Krista Graham, Pacific Islands Regional Office, (Krista.Graham@noaa.gov, 808-944-2238).