ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

OVERVIEW INFORMATION

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

- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Proactive Species Conservation Program

- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement

- **Funding Opportunity Number:** NMFS-PRPO-2010-2002211

- **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 Standard Time on February 11, 2010. 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 online through the Grants.gov website at http://grants.gov. If online submission is not possible, paper applications may be mailed to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Attn: Dwayne Meadows, NMFS Office of Protected Resources F/PR3, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

- **Funding Opportunity Description**: The NMFS is seeking to provide federal assistance, in the form of grants or cooperative agreements, to support conservation efforts for the current list of marine and anadromous species under the Proactive Species Conservation Program. The program supports voluntary conservation efforts designed to conserve marine and anadromous species before they reach the point at which listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) becomes necessary. Such proactive conservation efforts can serve as an efficient, non-regulatory, and cost-effective means of managing potentially at-risk species. To raise awareness of potentially at-risk species and to foster their proactive conservation, the NMFS created a 'species of concern' list in April 2004 (69 FR 19975). 'Species of concern' are species that are potentially at risk of becoming threatened or endangered or may potentially require protections under the ESA, yet for which sufficient data are lacking. The species-of-concern status carries no procedural or regulatory protections under the ESA. The list of species of concern and descriptions of each species are available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/concern/#list. Under this solicitation, any state, territorial, tribal, or local entity that has authority to manage or regulate these species or activities that affect these species is eligible to apply to this 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

A. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objectives

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) initiated this grant program to support proactive conservation efforts for federally-identified species of concern (SOC). To raise awareness of potentially at-risk species and to foster proactive conservation, the NMFS created a 'species of concern' list in April 2004 (69 FR 19975). A current list and description of these species is available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/concern/#list. The SOC status does not confer any protections under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or any other law or regulation. Under this solicitation, the NMFS is seeking to provide federal assistance, in the form of grants or cooperative agreements, to support conservation efforts for these marine and anadromous SOC. The ultimate goal of the Proactive Species Conservation Program (PSCP) is to demonstrate success in conserving SOC, obviating the need to list them under the ESA. Successful applications will be those that demonstrate a direct benefit to the species or its habitat. Projects may include management, scientific research, or outreach activities, or a combination thereof. Management projects 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. Research projects should demonstrate a high probability of providing novel information that can be used to recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a given species. Public education and outreach projects should demonstrate a high probability for improving or increasing public understanding and participation in conservation activities.

When making ESA listing determinations, the NMFS (and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for species under their jurisdiction) is required under section 4 of the ESA to consider any efforts being made to protect the species in question. Formalized conservation efforts that have yet to be implemented or to show effectiveness can be taken into account, as long as there is certainty that the efforts will in fact be implemented and achieve their stated goals. In order to provide consistency in how such assessments are made, the NMFS developed a joint policy with FWS that establishes criteria for determining when and how conservation efforts should inform listing decisions under the ESA. The policy, entitled "Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts When Making Listing Decisions" (PECE), was finalized in March 2003 (68 FR 15100) and is available at https://reefshark.nmfs.noaa.gov/f/pds/publicsite/documents/policies/02-109.pdf. The criteria established by the PECE were also designed to guide the development and implementation of proactive conservation efforts. In order to effectively contribute to any future ESA listing determinations, conservation efforts developed and implemented under a PSCP grant should be consistent with the criteria established by the PECE, and thus we have designed this grant program with this in mind.

2. Program Priorities

Proposals submitted to the PSCP should address conservation and management of species on the NMFS' Species of Concern list. Successful applications will be those that demonstrate a high probability of contributing to the conservation of the species. Projects may include management, scientific research, or outreach activities, or a combination thereof. Management projects 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. Research projects should demonstrate a high probability of providing novel information that can be used to recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a given species. Public education and outreach projects should demonstrate a high probability for improving or increasing public understanding and participation in conservation activities. Activities under a funded PSCP grant should include "hands-on" conservation efforts that address or mitigate existing threats to the species throughout all or a significant part of its range, or within a particularly vulnerable or ecologically important part of its range. **Priority will be given to proposals that address threats or conservation needs across a major portion of a species' range. Therefore, multi-jurisdictional or multi-state projects are strongly encouraged.** Proposals that address a smaller area within the species' range will also be considered for funding.

Proposals may address one or more SOC. Proposals that address multiple SOCs or that have benefits to other ESA listed or state species of greatest conservation need are a priority. Priority will be given to applicants with a demonstrated track record of successful implementation of conservation activities or programs.

See 'Program Objectives' (above) for more information on the type of proposals solicited under this announcement. Applicants interested in further discussion of program priorities may contact their regional SOC program coordinator listed in Section G, Agency Contacts.

3. Program Authority 16 U.S.C. 661

B. Award Information

1. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that approximately $200,000 may be available for distribution in FY 2010 under the PSCP; there are no restrictions on minimum or maximum funding requests. Applicants may apply for funds for up to 5 years (see below) so the total amount requested over the life of the project may be more than $200,000, but the limit for FY 2010 should be $200,000. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon Fiscal Year 2010 Congressional appropriations. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige the NMFS to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds; and, if an application is selected for funding, the NMFS has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years.

There is also no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant. Multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must clearly identify distinct projects, and single applications should not include multiple, unrelated projects.

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.

2. Project/Award Period

Award periods may be up to a maximum of 5 years. For multi-year projects, applications must include project plans and budgets for each year of the project. All projects will be funded for no more than one year at a time; however, multi-year project proposals accepted for funding will not compete for funding in subsequent budget periods within the approved award period. Funding for subsequent years of multi-year projects will be at the sole discretion of the Department of Commerce, contingent upon satisfactory performance by the recipient, federal appropriations, Agency priorities, and the availability of funds to support the continuation of the project. 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.

3. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NMFS will fund grants or cooperative agreements with project periods up to a maximum of 5 years. For cooperative agreements, NMFS may provide review and comment on conservation plans and make other recommendations as appropriate.

4. Permits, Approvals, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local permits and approvals, where necessary, for the proposed work. **Documentation of requests or approvals of relevant permits should be included in the grant application.** If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, or other federally designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request or obtain from the appropriate government agencies any necessary permits or letters of agreement prior to the 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 an Environmental Assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).** All projects that actually or potentially interact with Endangered or

Threatened species under the Endangered Species Act require an Environmental Assessment. For those applications needing an Environmental Assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the merit review stage and will be asked to provide information necessary to complete a draft of the assessment (prior to award).

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

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are U.S. state, territorial, tribal, or local governments that have regulatory or management authority over one or more SOC or activities that affect one or more SOC. A current list of SOC can be found at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/concern/#list or obtained from the Office of Protected Resources (see section G, Agency Contacts).

Applicants are not eligible to submit a proposal under this program if they are a federal employee; however, federal employees may serve as Cooperators. In addition, NMFS employees are not allowed to actively engage in the preparation of proposals or write letters of support for any application. However, if applicable, NMFS employees can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with a particular project. NMFS contacts (see section G) are available to provide information regarding programmatic goals and objectives associated with the PSCP, other ongoing ESA programs, regional funding priorities, and, along with other Federal Program Officers, can provide information on application procedures and completion of required forms.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no cost-sharing or matching requirements under this solicitation.

3. Other Criteria That Affect Eligibility

Each proposal must also include the five elements, (a)-(e), listed in the "Content and Form of Application Submission" section or it will be returned to sender without further consideration.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. 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 packages from Dwayne Meadows, NOAA/NMFS/Office of

Protected Resources F/PR3, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20912; 301-713-1401 x199; Dwayne.Meadows@noaa.gov.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

The instructions below are designed to guide applicants in preparing and submitting their application. All required federal forms, the narrative description of the budget and proposed project, and applicable supporting documentation must be complete and must follow the format described here.

All pages should be formatted for letter-sized paper (8 1/2" x 11"), and all pages must be numbered. Text should be no smaller than 10-point font. 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 25-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.

If submitting an application through Grants.gov, the required Federal forms should be downloaded from Grants.gov. If submitting a hard copy application, the required Federal forms should be downloaded from http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/grants/forms.cfm. If forms cannot be downloaded, they can be obtained by contacting Dwayne Meadows, NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources F/PR3, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (Dwayne.Meadows@noaa.gov, 301-713-1401 x199). Please follow all instructions provided when completing forms. The required forms for all proposals are as follows:

Application for Federal Assistance: **SF-424**
Certification Regarding Lobbying: **CD-511**
Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs: **SF-424A**
Assurances, Non-Construction Programs: **SF-424B**

To complete item 10 of Standard Form 424, the "Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance" number is 11.472 and the title is "Unallied Science Program". For item 13 of Standard Form 424, a start date no earlier than September 1, 2010 should be selected.

For projects with 50 percent or more of their requested federal funding supporting construction activities, the following forms are required in place of the SF-424A and SF-424B:

Budget Information, Construction Programs: **SF-424C**
Assurances, Construction Programs: **SF-424D**

Depending on the applicant, the following form may also be required:

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: **SF-LLL**

Proposals must include the following information:

a. Title Page: Provide the project title; project duration, with a start date no earlier than September 1, 2010; name, address, and phone number of Project Manager or Contact; the

project's objective(s); and a statement regarding the federal, non-federal, and total costs of the project.

b. Project Summary (1-page limit): Provide a brief summary of the project goals and objectives, the proposed activities, the geographic area where the project would occur, and expected outcomes and benefits of the proposed activities. This summary may be posted on our website if the project is funded.

c. Project Description (15-page limit): The Project Description may not exceed 15 pages, double-spaced, with text no smaller than 10-point font. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations associated with the Project Description are not included in the 15-page limitation.

1. Project goals and objectives: Identify the specific problem or opportunity the project intends to address and describe its significance to the understanding and conservation of the species. Describe 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.

2. Project narrative: Provide a complete and accurate description of the work to be undertaken, and include specific methodologies where applicable. Provide project milestones, and the time-lines for all phases of work; describe time-lines in increments rather than by specific dates. Multi-year proposals must include a work plan for each year of the project.

3. 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.

4. Related Federal projects: If applicable, describe the relationship of the proposed project to other ongoing work, or work planned, anticipated, or underway using federal assistance.

5. 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.

6. Environmental Impacts: Discuss whether any negative environmental, biological, social, political, or economic impacts are expected as a result of the proposed activities. If any negative impacts are anticipated, describe what steps will be taken to minimize or mitigate these impacts. Incidental take of protected species should be noted. This information is the basis for a determination of the level of NEPA analyses (including

an Environmental Assessment or EIS) are necessary, so please be thorough. See Section F2(c) below for further information about NEPA requirements.

7. Project Management: The Project Description must also identify who will be responsible for carrying out each activity and discuss how the project will be organized and managed. Indicate what specific management authorities the Project Manager (PM) has over the species addressed in the proposal. One PM must be designated on each project, but the PM may or may not be the applicant. If the applicant is not the PM, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and PM (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.). Highlight activities that will be conducted by sub-contractors, volunteers, and others designated as Cooperators. Project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in completing the project should be listed as Cooperators. A copy of the PM's and all Cooperators' current resumes or CVs must be included in an appendix (see below). Use of volunteer staff time to complete project activities and oversight of those volunteers should be discussed, if applicable. The PM is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan as delineated in the project narrative.

d. Total project costs and budget narrative: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and include non-federal contributions and donations. 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 proposals must include budgets for each year of the project.

The budget narrative should itemize costs per category (using the categories of SF424A Section B), provide direct and indirect cost totals, and present a justification for the requested budget.

Applications must use OMB standard form 424A, "Budget Information - Non Construction Programs" or standard form 424C, "Budget Information, Construction Programs" and associated instructions. All instructions should be read before completing the appropriate form. Federal columns on these forms must be filled in completely, and the amounts per category and total amounts must correspond with the budget narrative. Use one line for Form 424A Section A. Use one column for each additional year (beyond year 1) in Section D.

If indirect costs are requested in the budget, the application must include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government. For more information on indirect costs see section D.4.a.

e. Appendices (25-page limit): Additional material that is necessary or useful to the description of the project may be provided. These materials are not included in the 15-page limit for the Project Description. Abbreviated curricula vitae or resumes of the Project Manager and Cooperator(s) must be included here and should be limited to 2 pages per person. Applicants requiring ESA scientific or other permits must include evidence of such a permit or evidence they have submitted any necessary permit applications. Appendices may also include letters of endorsement, indirect cost rate agreements, and any other relevant material.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by http://www.grants.gov/ by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on February 11, 2010. 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.

4. 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.

5. Funding Restrictions

a. 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. 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.

b. 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" which can be found at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a087/a87_2004.pdf. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable." 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.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Electronic application submissions should be transmitted on-line through http://www.grants.gov. 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). To use Grants.gov, applicants must also register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR), if they have not already done so. Applicants should allow at least 5 business days to complete the CCR registration process; 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 contacts 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 without internet access, paper applications can be mailed to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Attn: Dwayne Meadows, NMFS Office of Protected Resources F/PR3, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910. If it is necessary to submit a paper application, then one signed original and two signed copies (including supporting information) must be submitted; paper applications should not be bound in any manner.

E. Application Review Information

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

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

This criterion addresses whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NMFS, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Applications will be evaluated on the applicability of the project goals and objectives to conservation of SOC. Reviewers will consider: the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to SOC conservation and management as described above in the “Program Objectives” and “Program Priorities” sections, and whether milestones and products are clearly identified. (Score: 1-5 points, where 1= not important/relevant; 2= minimally important/relevant; 3=moderately important/ relevant; 4= very important/ relevant; 5= extremely important/ relevant.)

b. Technical/ Scientific Merit (30%)

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

For all applications, reviewers will consider whether application instructions contained in this document were followed and if all required elements were submitted. (Score: 1-5 points, where 1= unsound; 2= minimally sound; 3= moderately sound; 4= very sound; 5= extremely sound.)

c. Overall Qualification of Applicants (10%)

This criterion addresses whether the applicant(s) possesses the necessary education, experience, or training, as well as the facilities and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This criterion also addresses whether the applicant has the appropriate management authority to implement actions identified in the proposal. Reviewers will also consider the previous related experience and qualifications of the Project Manager, Cooperator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors and consultants. (Score: 1-5 points, where 1= unqualified; 2 = minimally qualified; 3= moderately qualified; 4= very qualified; 5= extremely qualified.)

d. Project Costs (15%)

This criterion addresses whether the budget is sufficiently detailed, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The itemized proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated in terms of the work proposed. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. (Score: 1-5 points, where 1= no detail/unrealistic; 2= minimally detailed/ realistic; 3= moderately detailed/ realistic; 4= very detailed/ realistic; 5= extremely detailed/ realistic.)

e. Outreach and Education (10%)

This criterion addresses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and/or outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Reviewers will consider whether project results 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, development of brochures, public meetings, educational or outreach campaigns, peer reviewed publications, presentations at professional meetings, and may include partnerships with other organizations to accomplish these goals. (Score: 1-5 points, where 1= insufficient/ ineffective outreach; 2= minimally effective outreach; 3= moderately effective outreach; 4= very effective outreach; 5= extremely effectively outreach).

2. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps, described in detail in this section: initial evaluation, merit review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., Director, Office of Protected Resources). The Selecting Official will make the final decision

regarding which applications will be funded based upon the numerical ranking of the applications and the evaluations by the merit reviewers as well as the selection factors set in section E.3. below.

a. Initial Evaluation of the Applications

The initial screening will ensure that application packages have all required forms and application elements, clearly relate to the 2010 PSCP, and meet all of the eligibility criteria.

b. Merit Review

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo merit review. This merit review will be conducted by a minimum of three reviewers per application. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals using the evaluation criteria provided in section E.1. above. This review may involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the reviewers.

c. Final Selection

After applications have undergone merit review, NMFS Office of Protected Resources staff will summarize the merit reviews by averaging the scores and preparing recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official (i.e., Director, Office of Protected Resources).

3. 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 section A.1-2.
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.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the three months following the deadline given in this announcement for proposal submissions. Funding should begin during summer 2010 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to September 1, 2010, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

F. Award Administration Information

1. 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 through electronic or regular mail to the Authorizing Official and the Project Manager. 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.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

a. 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 contacts under section G, or by going to the website at: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html.

b. 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.

c. National Environmental Policy Act

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. 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, 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). Particular attention should be paid to describing potential interactions with ESA listed species. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. 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. The special award condition would require 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.

3. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All reports shall be submitted to NOAA in accordance with the award conditions. 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.

G. Agency Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this proposal solicitation, please contact Dwayne Meadows at the NMFS Office of Protected Resources F/PR3, Endangered Species Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, by phone at 301-713-1401 x199, or by email at Dwayne.Meadows@noaa.gov. You may also contact one of the following people in your region for further guidance: Sarah Laporte, Northeast Regional Office (Sarah.Laporte@noaa.gov, 978-282-8477), Calusa Horn, Southeast Regional Office (Calusa.Horn@noaa.gov, 727-824-5312), Krista Graham, Pacific Islands Regional Office (Krista.Graham@noaa.gov, 808-944-2238), Susan Wang, Southwest Regional Office (Susan.Wang@noaa.gov, 562-980-4199), Eric Murray, Northwest Regional Office (Eric.Murray@noaa.gov, 503-872-2791), Brad Smith, Alaska Regional Office (Brad.Smith@noaa.gov, 907-271-3023).