

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name(s):** Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and National Ocean Service (NOS); National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); U.S. Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program
- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- **Funding Opportunity Number:**
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):**
 - 11.419 - Coastal Zone Management
 - 11.426 - Financial Assistance for National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science
 - 11.441 - Regional Fishery Management Councils
 - 11.463 - Habitat Conservation
- **Dates:** Pre-applications must be received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m., Eastern Time, on December 10, 2004. Final applications must be received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on March 4, 2005.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects, with the exception of grants to Fishery Management Councils, which do not require match. The Program solicits proposals under six funding categories: State and Territory Coral Reef Management, State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring; Coral Reef Ecosystem Research; General Coral Reef Conservation; Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans; and International Coral Reef Conservation. Each funding category has specific applicant and project eligibility criteria.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Pursuant to the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), the Secretary of Commerce

(Secretary), through the NOAA Administrator (Administrator), and subject to the availability of funds, is authorized to provide matching grants of financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects through the Coral Reef Conservation Program (Program). As such, the objective of the Program is to provide financial assistance for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and “A National Coral Reef Action Strategy” (Strategy). A copy of the Strategy and the Act can be found at: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>

B. Program Priorities

Pursuant to the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. The Guidelines can be also found at <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>.

The Guidelines provide broad eligibility criteria, pursuant to Section 6403(g) of the Act, for coral reef conservation activities, and also created the following six program categories under the Program for awarding financial assistance:

1. State and Territory Coral Reef Management;
2. State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring;
3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research;
4. General Coral Reef Conservation;
5. Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans; and,
6. International Coral Reef Conservation.

From year to year, specific priorities of the above listed program categories change due to Congressional appropriations and direction, and priorities of NOAA, the Program, and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. As such, each of the categories listed above has a correlating subsection in the Attachment of this FFO, which describes the following specific requirements and criteria: program priorities, applicant and project eligibility, funding availability, application content and submission, application review and selection, and award administration.

Please Note: The Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Program mentioned here will solicit proposals through NOAA’s Undersea Research Program (NURP) on a different schedule and process than described in this Guidance. Applicants interested in submitting applications for coral research should consult Section 3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research in the Attachment.

Applicants should thoroughly review sections I-VII and the six program categories described in the Attachment of this FFO to determine the categorical eligibility of their proposed activity and the respective proposal requirements.

All applications submitted pursuant to this FFO must be consistent with the requirements stated herein, the Guidelines and the Strategy. Applicants may also request copies of the Strategy from the contacts listed below. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 (Coral Reef Conservation Program) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 *et seq*).

II. **Award Information**

A. Funding Availability for FY2005

NOAA announces the availability of approximately \$5,590,000¹ of Federal assistance in FY 2005 for coral conservation activities, of which NOAA is providing approximately \$5,240,000 and Department of Interior (DOI) is providing approximately \$ 350,000.

These funds will be used to support financial assistance awards under the program categories listed in section I(B) above and describe in the Attachment, with the exception of the Coral Reef Ecosystem Research category which has both a separate timetable and funding. The amount of funds available, the application requirements, and the number of awards made under this FFO may vary. See specific program description in the Attachment for more information.

Selected applicants may be asked to revise award objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to submittal of the final application. The amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and the specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD), and relevant NOAA staff.

B. Project/Award Period

Awards under this program will have either a 12 or 18 month project period. The specific project/award duration will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD), and relevant NOAA staff.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Recipients will enter into either a cooperative agreement or grant with the NOAA Office responsible for the program depending upon the amount of NOAA's involvement in the project. Substantial involvement means a cooperative agreement, while independent work requires a

¹Please note that the funding amounts throughout this FFO are based on previous year's funding amounts. Funding will be subject to the availability of federal appropriations.

grant.

Examples of substantial involvement include:

1. Requirements that the appropriate NOAA official collaborate with the recipient by working jointly with a recipient scientist or technician in carrying out the scope of work;
2. Specify direction or redirection of the scope of work due to the relationships with other projects; and,
3. Review scope of work and closely monitor the program operations during the performance period.

Each of the six program categories under this FFO has specific information on the type of funding instrument. See the specific program descriptions in the Attachment for more information.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Each of the six program categories under this FFO has specific eligibility criteria. See the specific program descriptions in the Attachment for more information.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

With the exception of Section 5. Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans, all program categories are subject to the matching fund requirements described below.

As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the projects. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this program requires a 1:1 match. Matching funds must be from non-Federal sources and can include in-kind contributions and other non-cash support. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much investment as possible. Federal funds may not be considered as matching funds.

As per section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, the NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements;

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and
2. The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

Applicants must specify in their proposal the source and may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. In the case of a waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification 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 for any project under \$200,000 (including in-kind contribution) 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. Please Note: eligible applicants choosing to apply 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) should note the use and amount in the matching funds section of the respective application.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Specific information regarding the content for application submission is found in both Section IV. B. Content and Form of Application Submission below, as well as in the specific program description in the Attachment.

To request an Application Package (Federal financial assistance forms), please send request to: Bill Millhouser, 1305 East West Highway, 11th Floor, N/ORM3, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or telephone 301/713-3155 extension 189; or fax 301/713-4367.

The Federal financial assistance forms can also be obtained from the NOAA grants Website at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf>

Any administrative questions should also be addressed to Bill Millhouser (see above).

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

The application process required by this FFO requires both a pre-application and final application, subject to the submission dates and times listed in section IV.C. below. Applicants whose pre-applications are preliminarily selected for funding will be asked to submit a final application, which may require modifications or revisions.

Each pre-application and final application submitted in response to this FFO must include: 1) all specific application requirements listed in the relevant funding category description found in the Attachment of this FFO, and 2) a cover sheet with the following information:

- a. Project title;
- b. Applicant organization; nonprofit, university, government, etc.;
- c. Principal investigator or contact responsible for conducting the project;
- d. Contact information including address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address;

- e. Program category (see Section I. Funding Opportunity Description above);
- f. Geographic location of the project (countries and sites, if appropriate);
- g. Amount of grant funds requested;
- h. Amount of matching funds provided; and,
- i. One paragraph project summary.

Please consult the relevant program description in the Attachment of this FFO to determine the additional requirements for the application. Federal financial assistance forms are not required to be submitted with the pre-application.

For applications submitted in electronic format, acceptable formats are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF), WordPerfect or Microsoft Word files. All applications must meet the information and formatting requirements specified in this FFO.

Applicants whose pre-applications are preliminarily selected and choose to submit a final application, must submit a final Federal financial assistance award application package, including proposed projects and supporting documentation, as described in the relevant program descriptions below, and all required Federal financial assistance forms. The required Federal financial assistance forms SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, CD-511, CD-512, and if applicable, CD-346 and/or SF-LLL, can be requested by mail, by telephone, or by fax (see this Section IV. Address to Request Application Package above), or obtained from the NOAA grants Website at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf>. Applicants are required to include one original and two copies of the signed, hard/paper of the Federal financial assistance forms for each final application package submitted.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the dates specified below. If the application is not received by NOAA by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the dates specified below, the late application will not be reviewed or considered for FY 2005 funding.

If an applicant's pre-application is preliminarily selected and the applicant decides to submit the final application by electronic mail (e-mail), the applicant must also submit by surface mail, one original and two signed hard/paper copies of the Federal financial assistance forms along with the final application. Applicants should consider the delivery time when submitting their applications from international or remote areas.

The following review and selection timetable applies to all applications under the Program, except the Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Program:

Pre-applications due to NOAA - December 10, 2004
NOAA returns proposal comments to applicants - February 7, 2005
Final Applications due to NOAA - March 4, 2005

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs”, except for General Coral Reef Conservation applications under the National Marine Fisheries Service.

E. Funding Restrictions

Each of the six program categories under this FFO may have specific funding restrictions. See specific program description in the Attachment for more information.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Pre-applications and final applications may be submitted by surface mail or e-mail. Submissions by e-mail are preferred. If submitting by surface mail, applicants are encouraged to include an electronic copy of the pre-application or final application on disk or cd.

Proposals must be submitted to: David Kennedy, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Coordinator, Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, Room 10102, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applications submitted by e-mail must be sent to coral.grants@noaa.gov.

Fax submittals will only be accepted for International Coral Reef Conservation applications, (Fax: 301-713-4389).

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Each of the six program categories under this FFO has specific evaluation criteria. See specific program description in the Attachment for more information.

B. Review and Selection Process

Each of the six program categories under this FFO has specific review and selection process criteria. See specific program description in the Attachment for more information.

C. Selection Factors

Each of the six program categories under this FFO has specific selection factors. See each specific program description in the Attachment for more information.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, final funding selection will be made and selected recipients notified on or before September 30, 2005. NOAA intends to provide funding to selected applicants no later than September 30, 2005. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until a notice of award document is received from NOAA Grants Management Division. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of the available funds.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

The NOAA Grants Officer will provide written notice of the award by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient. Unsuccessful applications will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant. It is the goal of the NOAA Program Officer to also provide written notice to each unsuccessful applicant before September 30, 2005.

As previously mentioned, the Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Program will solicit applications through NOAA's Undersea Research Program (NURP) on a different schedule and process than described in this Guidance. Applicants interested in submitting applications for coral research should consult Section 3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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., utilities, rent, 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 awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that 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 proposed, 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 must 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 must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

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 must be submitted to the competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of

NOAA.

The recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data.

The Program uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

Executive Order 12866 - This action has been determined to be “not significant” for purposes of Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review.”

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 requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number. Forms SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, and 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, respectively.

This notice also contains a collection-of-information requirement subject the Paperwork Reduction Act and which has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0448. The public reporting burden is estimated to average one hour per response for comments on a proposed project from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted and one hour per response for a request for a waiver of matching funds. This estimate includes the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate, or any other aspect of these data collections, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the NOAA Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Notice and Comment are not required under 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2), or any other law, for rules relating to public property, loans, grants, benefits or contract. Because notice and comment are not required, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required and has not been prepared for this notice 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*

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

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

Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), are applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability

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

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

OAA 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, 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.html. 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 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.

C. Reporting

Performance and Financial Reports - Recipients receiving funding will be required to submit semiannual performance reports and copies of all products that are developed under the award. The specific information, products, or data contained in the performance report can be determined by the NOAA office responsible for the program and applicant in pre-award negotiations or, the recipient will submit performance reports according to the Department of

Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Performance reports must be submitted to the NOAA office responsible for the program within 30 days after each semi-annual performance period.

Unless otherwise authorized, semi-annual financial reports will be submitted in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions to the Grants Officer at NOAA Grants Management Division.

VII. Agency Contacts

Administrative questions should be directed to Bill Millhouser, 301-713-3155, extension 189 or e-mail at Bill.Millhouser@noaa.gov.

Technical point of contact for State and Territory Coral Reef Management is Bill Millhouser, 301-713-3155, extension 189 or e-mail at Bill.Millhouser@noaa.gov.

Technical point of contact for State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring is John Christensen, 301-713-3028, extension 153 or e-mail at john.christensen@noaa.gov.

Technical point of contact for Coral Reef Ecosystem Research is Kimberly Puglise, 301-713-2427, extension 199 or e-mail at kimberly.puglise@noaa.gov.

Technical point of contact for General Coral Reef Conservation is Andy Bruckner, 301-713-3459, extension 190 or e-mail at andy.bruckner@noaa.gov.

Technical point of contact for Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans is Andy Bruckner, 301-713-3459, extension 190 or e-mail at andy.bruckner@noaa.gov.

Technical point of contact for International Coral Reef Conservation is Arthur Paterson, 301-713-3078, extension 217 or e-mail at arthur.e.paterson@noaa.gov.

For general information on NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program, contact Roger Griffis, 301-713-3989, extension 115 or e-mail at roger.b.griffis@noaa.gov.

Attachment

1. State and Territory Coral Reef Management

A. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objective

The objective of the State and Territory Coral Reef Management Grant program is to support comprehensive programs for the conservation and management of coral reefs and associated fisheries in the jurisdictions of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), Florida, Hawaii,

Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and American Samoa. The following description provides requirements for applying for funding appropriated by Congress to NOAA and DOI in FY 2005.

2. Program Priorities

NOAA's National Ocean Service, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Habitat Conservation (HC), and DOI Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) are jointly providing funding for cooperative agreements to support state and territorial coral reef and coral reef fishery management and conservation activities under the priority areas listed below.

a. Climate Change, Coral Bleaching, Diseases of Coral Reef Organisms, and Extreme Biotic and Storm Events, e.g., applied research, monitoring, or planning to better understand and manage impacts;

b. Overfishing, Destructive Fishing, and the Harvest and Collection of Marine Ornamental coral reef species, including: (1) Assessment and monitoring of fish and fishery resources, collection of fishery information; (2) Analysis of fishery impacts on reefs and support for the implementation of fishery gear restrictions or other priority regulations; (3) Development of fishery reserves; (4) Activities to improve management of ornamental reef species for the aquarium industry; (5) Hiring or training of enforcement officers; and, (6) Outreach and education on fishery and endangered species issues.

c. Tourism and Recreational Overuse and Misuse, and Vessel Groundings and Anchorings, e.g., coastal zone management activities, marine and land zoning, vessel grounding prevention and management, mooring buoy installation, recreational signage, etc.;

d. Lack of Public Awareness, e.g., tasks to increase general coral reef awareness, education about coral reefs, or outreach and educational materials targeted a specific user groups, including the development and distribution of brochures and other informational materials, public and stakeholder meetings and workshops, etc.;

e. Land Based Sources of Pollution, including Sedimentation, Runoff, Nonpoint Source Pollution, including projects addressing: 1) Reducing sources and impacts of sedimentation, runoff, and other land-based/watershed nonpoint source pollution, e.g., design and implementation of best management practices (BMP), watershed restoration projects, etc.; and 2) reducing point-sources of pollution, e.g., planning and implementation.

f. Increasing Development Pressure, Unmanaged Land Use, and Population Growth, e.g., tasks to forward the conservation and management of coral reefs through planning, designation, implementation and evaluation of land use and marine protected areas; including personnel training, equipment procurement, management plan development, signage, monitoring and enforcement, etc.;

g. Alien and Invasive Species, e.g., policy development, mitigation projects, etc.;

h. Marine Pollution, and Marine Debris, e.g., tasks focused on: (1) Oil-spill prevention and response, e.g., developing response plans, personnel training, interagency coordination, etc.; and (2) Marine debris prevention and removal, e.g., developing prevention policies, collection and disposal of debris, etc.;

i. National Security Activities, e.g., tasks intended to support coordination toward the management of impacts from national security activities; and,

j. Other, e.g., activities that address other priority threats.

These priority areas are based on the threats identified and ranked by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) in their October 2002 meeting in Puerto Rico. More specifically, the USCRTF decided in their 2002 'Puerto Rico' Resolution that a-f above would be the focus for a three year effort to develop and implement Local Action Strategies to address these six priority areas. A copy of the Task Force 'Puerto Rico' Resolution is available at <http://coralreef.gov/res1cfm>

3. Program Authority

Specific information on program authority can be found in Section I. C. Program Authority above.

B. Award Information

1. Funding Availability for FY2005

OCRM, OHC, and DOI/OIA may provide approximately \$2,100,000 in FY 2005 for cooperative agreements to support priority Coral Reef and Coral Reef Fishery Management activities that address areas a-j above. Funding will be subject to the availability of federal appropriations. Support in out years after FY 2005 is contingent upon the availability of funds and the requirements of the Federal agency supporting the project. Each eligible jurisdiction can apply for a maximum \$400,000. Please Note: the average award made in FY 2004 was approximately \$300,000.

In addition to the \$2,100,000, pending appropriations, NOAA may make available additional funds to each jurisdiction to support the implementation of activities developed in Local Action Strategies for threat areas a-f listed above. The amount of funding awarded to each jurisdiction will be subject to the eligibility and evaluation requirements described in this announcement. These additional funds for implementation of Local Action Strategies for areas a-f will be awarded in the overall FY 2005 Coral Management Grant to each jurisdiction. Further information will be provided to applicants prior to the application due date.

In certain instances, when requested by the applicant and agreed upon by NOAA and DOI, NOAA may hold back a portion of any awarded funds in order to provide specific coral reef conservation technical assistance in the form of contractual or other services. This will only be allowed where such priority technical assistance and/or the lack of sufficient means to deliver it are unavailable at the local level. Such requests proposed herein will be reviewed on a case by case basis with respect to the specific management objectives of this and the local coral reef program.

If all available funds are not awarded, NOAA and DOI will consult with the eligible applicants on the use of any residual funds. NOAA and DOI will work with each jurisdiction to ensure the greatest degree of success in meeting local, state, territorial, and national coral reef management needs.

2. Project/Award Period

Puerto Rico, Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands may submit applications covering a 12- to 18-month period with an anticipated start date of June 1, 2005.

3. Type of Funding Instrument

Cooperative agreements (see Section II. C. Type of Funding Instrument above for examples of substantial involvement) will be awarded to each eligible jurisdiction. It is anticipated that OCRM will make awards to four of the seven jurisdictions and that DOI/OIA will make awards to the remaining three jurisdictions.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are the governor-appointed point of contact agencies for coral reef activities in each of the jurisdictions of American Samoa, Florida, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Specific information to be submitted in regard to matching funds can be found in Section III. B. Cost Sharing or Matching above.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Specific information regarding the address for application submission can be found in Section IV. A. Address to Request Application Package above.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications should reflect the “National Coral Reef Action Strategy”, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force “National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs”, and local strategies for coral reef management, such as the 1999, “U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Strategy”, as modified by the events and activities of the last 4 years. In addition, proposed activities should be coordinated, where appropriate, with ongoing and proposed NOAA coral reef mapping, monitoring, coastal zone and fishery management initiatives, and DOI Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service coral reef activities.

In light of the October 2002 U.S. Coral Reef Task Force resolution to implement a regional process to address six key focus areas, jurisdictions are particularly encouraged to propose funding under this program for projects and associated management capacity to implement local action strategies. In addition, proposed activities should be coordinated, where appropriate, with ongoing and proposed NOAA coral reef mapping, monitoring, coastal zone and fishery management initiatives, and DOI Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service coral reef activities.

In developing the application, applicants must consult with all relevant State and/or Territory governmental and non-governmental entities involved in coral reef activities in their respective jurisdictions. At a minimum, those agencies consulted must include coastal zone management, water quality, and wildlife and/or marine resource agencies.

Funding under this award is also intended to support jurisdictional participation in national coral reef planning activities, such as U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meetings. As such, applicants should include in their proposal, anticipated travel costs associated with attendance and participation at U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and other relevant meetings and conferences.

Applicants may submit applications covering up to an 18-month period and must meet all applicable Department of Commerce (DOC) or DOI grant requirements. Pre-applications and final applications must be submitted to NOAA by the due dates established in Section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times above. Federal financial assistance forms are not required to be submitted with the pre-application; however, all applicable Federal forms must be submitted with the final application. A list of the required Federal forms can be found in Section IV. B. Content and Form of Application Submission above. One original and two signed hard/paper copies of the final application, including forms, are required.

In developing the application, applicants must organize proposed tasks into the following nine

key threat management categories (a - i, above), which are based on those found in the threat and management action matrices developed by the states and territories. Each jurisdiction need only develop and submit one comprehensive coral reef management application for the funds available under this section. The Federal agencies will coordinate their reviews of each application to ensure comparability and continuity.

The first page of the application should consist of the cover page described in Section IV. B. Content and Form of Application Submission above.

In addition, for each category (a-j above) in which one or more task is proposed, the applicant must include the following information:

a. Brief introduction that describes the status of the issue in the jurisdiction as addressed by the proposed task; recent actions undertaken to address the issues, with a focus on the status of previous federally funded tasks; the jurisdiction's strategy to address critical needs over the medium term; and, a justification for the proposed task.

b. Description of each proposed task that must include:

- (1) The category of management action from the state and territory management action matrix under which the proposed activity falls;
- (2) Clear identification of the work to be completed, who will perform the work, relationship to ongoing projects and how the project fits into the jurisdiction's strategy for addressing the issue;
- (3) How the project coordinates with relevant local governmental and non-governmental agencies and, if applicable, NOAA or DOI regional activities;
- (4) Task timetable with interim benchmarks and clearly-defined work products;
- (5) Project priority as compared to all other proposed projects; and,
- (6) A Summary Budget that includes a detailed breakdown of costs by category and information regarding the amount of matching funds available to the applicant, as described in Section III. 2. Cost Sharing or Matching above. Intended sources of matching funds must be identified in the application, and applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be required to submit with the final application, letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds.

c. Each application must also include, on the last page, a summary budget table of all projects, which lists the name of each project proposed and the corresponding total cost and matching funds information.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Specific information regarding the dates and times of application submission can be found in Section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times above.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Specific information regarding Intergovernmental Review can be found in Section IV. D. Intergovernmental Review above.

5. Funding Restriction

Large equipment and/or infrastructure acquisitions are not a priority for funding under this program. Such purchases proposed herein will be reviewed on a case by case basis with respect to the specific management objectives of this and the local coral reef program.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Specific information regarding other submission requirements can be found in Section IV. F. Other Submission Requirements above.

E. Application Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria

Once a full application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Merit review is then conducted by peer reviewers. Applications will be peer-reviewed by individuals with coral reef and fisheries management experience on the weighted evaluation criteria listed below, as evidenced by information in the application. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and rank proposals using the evaluation criteria provided below. A minimum of three merit reviewers per proposal is required. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local goals and priorities. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate the need for the proposed coral reef management activity to fill gaps in the jurisdiction's management capacity;
2. Technical/scientific merit (25%): This 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 this management activity.
3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate coordination with applicable ongoing local, state, territorial, and Federal coral reef management activities;

4. Project costs (20%): The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, the budget should reflect the ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed.

5. Outreach and education (10%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources.

2. Review and Selection Process

Once the peer review has been completed, a Federal agency team of representatives from NMFS, OCRM, and OIA will review the applications, pursuant to equally weighted criteria described in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and comments received from peer reviewers. Based on this review, the team will make a preliminary funding recommendation for each jurisdiction. OCRM and DOI will provide the preliminary funding recommendation and application comments to each selected jurisdiction. These comments will include input from peer reviewers and the Federal agency team and are intended for use in the applicant's development of the final application.

Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal financial assistance forms, the Federal agency team will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the response to comments that were returned to the applicant. The team will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines. The Federal Agency team may review the ranking of the proposals and make recommendations to the Selecting Official based on the mail and/or panel review(s) and selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official selects proposals after considering the mail and/or peer panel review(s) and recommendations of the Federal Agency team. In making the final selections, the Selecting Official will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors below. The Program Officials and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

3. Selection Factors

In addition to the to equally weighted criteria described in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and comments received from peer reviewers, the following selection factors will be used:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types

3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors. These are listed in State and Territory Coral Reef Management section, A.2. above.
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups

F. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

Specific information regarding award notice can be found in Section VI. A. Award Notices above.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Specific information regarding administrative and national policy requirements can be found in Section VI. B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements above.

3. Reporting

Specific information regarding reporting requirements can be found in Section VI. C. Reporting above.

G. Agency Contact(s)

Technical point of contact for State and Territory Coral Reef Management is Bill Millhouser, 301-713-3155, extension 189 or e-mail at Bill.Millhouser@noaa.gov .

2. State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring

A. Funding Opportunity Description

8. Program Objective

This description provides requirements for applying for funding appropriated by Congress to the NOAA in FY 2005 to support state and territorial coral reef ecosystem monitoring. This program will be administered by the NOS National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science (NCCOS). NOAA and its partners are implementing a nationally coordinated, comprehensive, long-term monitoring program to assess the condition of U.S. coral reef ecosystems and evaluate the efficacy of coral ecosystem management. This program was requested by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, which, along with the nation's coral reef program managers and the public, endorsed and called for implementation of "A National Program to Assess, Inventory, and Monitor U.S.

Coral Reef Ecosystems.”

NOAA began implementing the Program in 2000 and continues to administer it with Congressional appropriations for coral reef conservation. The Program includes the collection, analysis, and reporting of long-term coral reef ecosystem monitoring data pursuant to scientifically valid methodologies and protocols and is a key priority of the “A National Coral Reef Action Strategy.”

The implementation plan calls for integration of monitoring activities into a coordinated national network, sharing of monitoring information among U.S. coral reef resource managers and scientists, and filling gaps in monitoring coverage nationwide. Through this Program, U.S. Federal, state, commonwealth, territory, and Freely Associated State agencies support a variety of local and regional assessments, inventories, and monitoring of U.S. and U.S. affiliated coral reef resources. Additionally, there are several regional volunteer and community monitoring programs regularly assessing reef resources. A nationally coordinated coral monitoring infrastructure will enable the preparation of a biennial science-based report on the status of U.S. coral reef ecosystems and support local coral reef management efforts.

2. Program Priorities

The nation's coral reef resource managers have recommended key biotic and abiotic parameters that should be monitored at all local sites in the National monitoring network:

1. Benthic habitat characterization (e.g., depth, habitat delineation, and/or percent live/dead cover of corals, submerged aquatic vegetation, macroalgae, sponges, rugosity, diversity, etc.);
2. Associated biological community structure including fish condition (e.g., abundance, density, size, diversity, disease, harvest trends, etc.) and large motile and sessile invertebrates condition (abundance, density, size, diversity, disease, harvest trends, etc.); and,
3. Water/substrate quality (e.g., temperature, nutrient enrichment, toxic chemicals, turbidity, etc.).

Proposed work should include multi-organizational partnerships (local, regional, Federal, and possibly international) that build local capacity for maintaining long-term monitoring sites as part of a National Coral Reef Monitoring Network. NOAA will be an active partner in the development and implementation of the award; thus, proposals should be structured as cooperative agreements between NOAA and the principal investigators. For these proposals, it is appropriate to include the equipment necessary to build capacity, and to archive data (e.g., one or more digital videography cameras with underwater housing, museum maintenance of reference specimen collections, etc.).

3. Program Authority

Specific information on program authority can be found in Section I. B. Program Authority above.

B. Award Information

1. Funding Availability for FY2005

NCCOS may provide approximately \$1,000,000 in funding for FY 2005 to support coral reef ecosystem monitoring activities under this program. FY 2005 awards to Puerto Rico, Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are expected to range from \$50,000 to \$130,000. FY 2005 awards to the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands are expected to be approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year. Funding will be subject to the availability of federal appropriations. FY 2005 awards to the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands may submit proposals up to three years in duration, at funding levels between \$10,000 - \$20,000 per year (i.e., \$60,000 for three year continuation proposal).

9. Project/Award Period

Annual projects should follow the Federal fiscal year, beginning on October 1 and ending September 30. FY 2005 awards to Puerto Rico, Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands may submit applications up to 3 years in duration, at funding levels between \$50,000 to \$130,000 per year (e.g., up to \$390,000 for 3-year continuation proposal). Multiple-year applications must specify the budget and activities for each year. FY 2005 awards, however, will only provide funding for the monitoring activities proposed for FY 2005, and funding for out years is contingent on subsequent years' appropriations.

3. Type of Funding Instrument

Cooperative agreements (see Section II. C. Type of Funding Instrument above for examples of substantial involvement) will be awarded to each eligible jurisdiction.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are limited to the natural resource management agency in each U.S. State or Territory, or Freely Associated State, with jurisdiction over coral reefs, as designated by the respective governors or other applicable senior jurisdictional official. NOAA is requesting proposals from Puerto Rico, Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Federal agencies are not eligible for funding under this Program.

Furthermore, to be eligible for FY 2005 funding, applicants previously receiving funds under this program must have made significant progress implementing those tasks and met data

submission deadlines, including all performance and fiscal reporting requirements and data transfers.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

Specific information to be submitted in regard to matching funds can be found in Section III. B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements above.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Specific information regarding the address for application submission can be found in Section IV. A. Address to Request Application Package above.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Specific information regarding the required cover sheet for application submission can be found in Section IV. B. Content and Form of Application Package above.

Application Content should be developed and submitted according to the following guidelines:

a. First time applicants for monitoring awards: Eligible activities for the first year of proposed funding include an initial characterization of baseline ecosystem condition, an inventory/mapping of biotic resources, and an assessment of anthropogenic stressors (e.g., contaminants in lagoon sediments, sedimentation conditions, eutrophication, etc.) if these studies are prerequisite to establishing new long-term monitoring sites. Activities can also include database development and training of field crew. Proposed second and third year work should follow the guidelines for previous recipients below.

b. Previous recipients of NCCOS monitoring awards: Proposals from previous recipients should detail the monitoring design, sampling parameters and protocols, data management, and the need/context for establishing new long-term monitoring sites. Proposals should describe how the proposed monitoring meets local coral conservation needs and fits into ongoing long-term assessments, inventories, and monitoring within the jurisdiction and/or region. Each proposal must provide enough specificity on the parameters to be monitored, the design and frequency of sampling, methods used, data management and quality assurance, and other information for peer-reviewers to judge the quality of proposed work. The information produced through these awards is intended to fill gaps in knowledge of coral reef ecosystems nationwide, track and predict changes in coral reef ecosystems nationwide, and serve as the foundation for biennial reporting in the "Report of the Health of U.S. Coral Reef Ecosystems."

In addition, each jurisdiction's proposal for FY 2005 must include the preparation of an assessment of coral reef ecosystem status for that jurisdiction. This will contribute to the "Report on the Status of U.S. Coral Reef Ecosystems: 2006." Toward this end, FY 2005 applications may

budget for travel to at least one national workshop (annual coral reef mapping and monitoring meeting), costs for preparing and printing a jurisdictional report on the condition of coral reef ecosystems, and related expenses.

In light of the October 2002 U.S. Coral Reef Task Force resolution to implement a regional process to address six key focus areas, jurisdictions are encouraged to propose funding under this program for local projects and participation in support of this effort.

Applicants must submit pre-applications, inclusive of elements a-e below, by the date established in the Section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times above. Applications are limited to 15 standard letter size pages, including attachments, and font should be Times New Roman, 12 point or larger.

- a. Cover Page as described in the Section IV. B. Content and Form of Application Submission above;
- b. A Project Description (i.e., narrative description) for each proposed task that includes: the specific priority management questions that are driving the effort, how data collected will be translated and transferred to the local management community, project objectives, and a timetable with project milestones;
- c. Summary Budget that includes a detailed breakdown of costs by category and a description of the amount of matching funds available to the applicant, as described in Section VIII of the Guidelines. Each subcontract or subgrant should be listed as a separate item. Describe the products or services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Provide separate budgets for each subcontract or subgrant and indicate the basis for the cost estimates. Intended sources of matching funds must be identified in the application. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be required to submit letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds with the final application. Multiple-year proposals must specify the budget and activities for each year;
- d. Curriculum Vitae for principal investigators;
- e. Summary Project Abstract; and,
- f. All required NOAA Federal financial assistance awards - forms (see below). One original and two copies of the jurisdiction's application must be submitted to NOAA by the date established in Section IV. C. Submission Date and Times above.

Final applications must include all elements of the pre-application, any responses to comments and edits, all required NOAA Federal financial assistance forms (see Section IV. B. Content and Form of Application Submission above), and must be received by NOAA on or before the date established in the Section IV. C. Submission Date and Times above. The required Federal forms can be found on NOAA grants Website at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf> . The two most relevant sections at this web site are, "C. Instructions and Guidelines," and, "D. Application Forms for Pre-Application Submission."

3. Submission Dates and Times

Specific information regarding the dates and times of application submission can be found

in Section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times above.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Specific information regarding Intergovernmental Review can be found in Section IV. D. Intergovernmental Review above.

5. Funding Restrictions

Federal agencies are not eligible for funding under this Program.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Specific information regarding other submission requirements can be found in Section IV. F. Other Submission Requirements above.

E. Application Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria

Once a full application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications will be peer-reviewed by a small panel of representatives from relevant U.S. State, Territory, and Federal, and Freely Associated State agencies. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and rank proposals using the evaluation criteria provided below. A minimum of three merit reviewers per proposal is required. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities.

2. Technical/scientific merit (25%): This 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 this management activity.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (25%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

4. Project costs (25%): The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.

5. Outreach and education (0%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and

effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources.

Reviewer results will be shared with applicants, and applicants will be given the opportunity to revise their application and/or respond to reviewer comments.

Taking into consideration comments received from peer reviewers, NCCOS will evaluate each proposal and develop funding recommendations based on the criteria in Section X(3) of the Guidelines. In evaluating the technical merit and adequacy of the implementation plan, NCCOS will apply the following 3 equally weighted criteria:

- a. Relevance to establishing a national monitoring network. The principal objective of the proposals should be to fill priority gaps or needs in coral reef monitoring and assessment programs, such that they contribute to the creation of a comprehensive and coordinated network of monitoring sites for U.S. coral reef ecosystems. In subsequent years, the project should be monitoring the "minimum suite of key biotic and abiotic parameters," (as listed in the program description) at least once a year, at one or more sites;
- b. Quality assurance and error estimates for parameter measurements. Flexibility of methodologies for acquiring measurements is allowable, as long as they are done in situ and are quantitatively reliable within a jurisdiction and across a region. Where possible, NOAA favors a stratified random sampling design for site selection (i.e., ideally based on reliable habitat maps), multi-methodological monitoring of the ecosystem (i.e., line transects for cryptic species, point-count surveys for large pelagic species), and sample archiving (i.e., species reference collections, transect/survey videographic records); and
- c. Potential to meet data reporting requirements and the ability of transferring the data to the local or regional management community. Data from proposals must be useful in preparing the biennial report on the "Status of U.S. Coral Reef Ecosystems." Grant recipients will provide raw or synthesized data to NCCOS no later than 3 months after data collection. The data generated in the National Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring Program will be used by NOAA and its partners to develop regional and national state of the reef reports and disseminated to the public via NOAA's Coral Reef Information (CoRIS) Web site development (<http://www.coris.noaa.gov>). Biotic data integrity is critical for sharing of information and detection of national/regional trends and hotspots. Each jurisdiction will need to have basic data management quality controls and quality assurances for its data. Funding eligibility for future funding years will be contingent on meeting data submission deadlines including all performance and financial reporting requirements and data transfers.

2. Review and Selection Process

Based on the criteria reviews, NCCOS will provide a preliminary funding recommendation and proposal comments to each selected applicant. These comments will include input from peer reviewers and the Federal agency team and are intended for use in the applicants development of the final application.

Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the Federal forms, the Federal agency team will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation and/or response to comments that were returned to the applicant.

NCCOS will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines.

3. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the NOAA Review Panel which shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors - These are found in section A.2. above
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups

F. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices

Specific information regarding award notice can be found in Section VI. A. Award Notices above.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Specific information regarding administrative and national policy requirements can be found in Section VI. B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements above.

3. Reporting

Specific information regarding reporting requirements can be found in Section VI. C. Reporting above.

G. Agency Contact(s)

Technical point of contact for State and Territory Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring is John Christensen, 301-713-3028, extension 153 or e-mail at john.christensen@noaa.gov .

3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research

A. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objective

In FY 2005, the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is providing funding to NOAA's Undersea Research Program (NURP) to administer NURP coral reef research grant programs for the Caribbean, Southeastern U.S., Florida, Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, and the Western Pacific. Three separate requests for proposals will be announced and administered by three regional NURP Centers: the Caribbean Marine Research Center covers the Caribbean region; the Southeastern United States and Gulf of Mexico Center covers the Southeastern U.S., Florida, and Gulf of Mexico region; and the Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory covers Hawaii and the Western Pacific region. Therefore, three individual requests for proposals describing the program and proposal requirements will be made available by NURP at <http://www.nurp.noaa.gov/noaacoral.html> or by contacting one of the regional contact persons identified in section 3. Coral Reef Ecosystem Research B. Agency Contact(s), below.

PLEASE NOTE: proposals are not being solicited for Coral Reef Research at this time. Separate solicitations will be made at a later date through the three NURP Centers identified above.

2. Program Priority

Research supported through this program will address priority information needs identified by coral reef ecosystem managers and scientists. FY 2005, broad priorities may include research on coral disease and bleaching, fisheries population dynamics and ecology, coral reef restoration and mitigation approaches, effects of anthropogenic stressors on benthic invertebrates, impacts and spread of invasive species, and evaluation of management actions and strategies. Specific priorities within these broad areas, and geographic preferences, will be indicated in each NURP Center's request for proposals.

Furthermore, specific information on awards, eligibility, application and submission, application review, and award administration will be indicated in each NURP Center's request for proposals. The grant requirements will be consistent with the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Guidelines.

B. Agency Contact(s)

For overall information regarding the NURP Coral Reef Grants Program contact:

Kimberly Puglise, 301-713-2427, extension 199 or e-mail at kimberly.puglise@noaa.gov , or see: <http://www.nurp.noaa.gov/noaacoral.html>.

For information regarding the NURP Center for the Caribbean contact: Craig Dahlgren, 561-741-0192, extension 231, or e-mail at cdahlgren@cmrc.org , or see: <http://www.cmrc.org> .

For information regarding the NURP Center for the Southeastern United States and the Gulf of Mexico contact: Andrew Shepard, 910-962-2441, or e-mail at sheparda@uncw.edu , or see: <http://www.uncwil.edu/nurc> .

For information regarding the NURP Center for Hawaii and the Western Pacific contact: Keith Crook, 808-956-9429, or e-mail at hurl@hawaii.edu , or see <http://www.soest.hawaii.edu/HURL/> .

4. General Coral Reef Conservation

A. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objective

The principal objectives of the General Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (GCRC) are to support programs and projects to: (1) Help preserve, sustain and restore the condition of coral reef ecosystems; (2) Promote the wise management and sustainable use of coral reef resources; (3) Increase public knowledge and awareness of coral reef ecosystems and issues regarding their conservation; and (4) Develop sound scientific information on the condition of coral reef ecosystems and the threats to such ecosystems.

Successful applicants will be those that have a high probability of addressing the goals and purposes of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act 16 U.S.C. 6401, 6403, P.L. 106-562) and the priorities identified in the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs and the National Coral Reef Action Strategy. Priority will be given to individuals and organizations with a demonstrated track record at conducting coral reef conservation projects, effectively working with stakeholders and communities, and developing and disseminating high quality awareness and information materials to relevant user groups. Applicants should consult with all relevant state, territory, and local governmental and non-governmental entities involved in coral reef activities in developing the application, and demonstrate collaboration among entities such as public and nonprofit organizations, academia, industry, and local, state, territorial and Federal government agencies as appropriate.

2. Program Priorities

The GCRC is interested in funding projects that address coral reef conservation priorities, as identified in the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs and the National Coral Reef Action Strategy. For this solicitation, all applications must fall within at least one of the

following 8 categories: (a) Monitoring and assessment of coral reefs or reef resources; (b) Socio-economic and resource valuation; (c) Marine Protected Areas and associated management activities; (d) Coral reef fisheries management; (e) Reducing pollution; (f) Coral reef restoration; (g) Public education and outreach activities; and (h) Local action strategy implementation.

The priorities are not listed in any particular order and each is of equal importance. The purpose of the priority list is to guide applicants in application development by identifying those applications that will best compete during this grant cycle for these limited funds, and to provide technical reviewers with guidance for their evaluations. Details of the 8 categories are as follows:

a. Monitoring and assessment of coral reefs or reef resources: Monitoring and assessment activities conducted by community and non-governmental organizations that complement state and territorial coral reef monitoring programs.

b. Socio-economic and resource valuation: Studies to develop regional economic valuations of coral reef ecosystems including both market and non-market values to help strengthen management approaches and ensure effective decision making. This could include community assessments, economic valuations, and alternative income generation workshops.

c. Marine Protected Areas and associated management activities: Studies that assess gaps in protection of existing marine protected area system; develop and provide tools for MPA management including models of community-based conservation, policy guidance and model legislation; evaluate management effectiveness or determine functional linkages among MPA sites; and involve outreach and education efforts designed to strengthen and support community and national cooperation in conserving coral reef biodiversity.

d. Coral reef fisheries management: Activities that identify, monitor and protect critically important fisheries habitats and populations; provide strategies to reduce destructive fishing, bycatch and overfishing; and reduce overexploitation of reef organisms for the aquarium trade. This could include resource assessments, collection of fishery information, outreach to fishers, co-management of coral reef fisheries by fishing communities, and other activities that complement state, territorial or Regional Fishery Management Council activities and programs.

e. Reducing pollution: Studies that involve the development of partnerships with, and provide technical guidance to, communities, local, state and territorial government agencies and users to reduce land-based sources of pollution, control discharges from known point sources, and enhance marine debris prevention and removal efforts.

f. Coral reef restoration: Activities to review and evaluate existing reef restoration projects; develop and test innovative methods and techniques to expedite reef restoration; promote cost-effective pilot restoration projects; and transfer proven restoration tools, techniques and lessons to communities, local, state and territorial government agencies and other partners. This includes restoration activities for coral reefs and associated habitats that were damaged by physical and biological disturbances such as orphan vessel groundings, storm events, coral disease and coral predator outbreaks, and anthropogenic disturbances, with emphasis on projects utilizing innovative coral restoration technologies and/or comprehensive evaluation of restoration sites.

g. Public education and outreach activities: Activities that raise awareness and understanding of coral reef ecosystems; create and distribute solution-focused outreach materials targeting specific threats and user-groups; and promote local and regional outreach efforts

designed to modify behaviors that affect reefs on a local scale. This could include the development and dissemination of brochures and other informational materials, and convening of public meetings and workshops, particularly those which address the needs of local user groups.

h. Local action strategy implementation: The U.S. states and territories, under purview of the USCRTF, have developed final or draft local action strategies to address six priority threats: overfishing, land-based sources of pollution, lack of public awareness, recreational overuse or misuse, disease and coral bleaching, and climate change. These strategies outline the key activities that each state and territory would like to implement. For this category, applicants must identify the particular priority LAS project(s) that their activities will focus on, and develop an implementation plan in consultation with state and territorial governments prior to submission of the application. Information on current local action strategies can be found NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation website:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ecosystem/fundingopps.htm> .

3. Program Authority

Program authority for the General Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is 16 U.S.C. 6403.

B. Award Information

1. Funding Availability for FY2005

This solicitation announces that approximately \$600,000 may be made available for distribution under the FY 2005 GCRC, of which up to \$200,000 will be used to address local action strategies. Final award amounts will be determined by the proposals and available funds, but will not exceed \$50,000 for any individual application. 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. The exact amount of funds that will be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Most awards will range from a minimum of \$15,000 to a maximum of \$50,000. NOAA will not accept proposals requesting over \$50,000 of Federal funds. There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant during the 2005 competitive grant cycle. However, 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 coral reef conservation projects by the applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the GCRC by Congress. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA Fisheries has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years.

2. Project/Award Period

This solicitation announces that approximately \$600,000 may be made available for distribution under the FY 2005 GCRC of which up to \$200,000 will be used to address local action strategies. Multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must clearly identify different projects and must be successful in the competitive review process. Projects for a period of up to 18-months will be considered under the GCRC. Funding for subsequent years will require submission of a new application, which will compete with other project proposals submitted during the subsequent budget period. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of the period, the applicant can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer 30 days prior to the end of the period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension.

3. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund GCRC as 12-18 month grants.

4. 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. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. 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 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis or whether an environmental assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of the NEPA. For those applications needing an environmental assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of a draft of the assessment (prior to award).

If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other Federally designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain from the appropriate government agencies any necessary permits or letters of agreement prior to award.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessment) will also delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, local and Indian tribal governments and Freely Associated State Government Agencies. U.S. state, territory, and commonwealth governments and Regional Fishery Management Councils are not eligible under this category. Federal agencies are eligible under this program; however, pursuant to Section IV of the Guidelines, such applications will be a low priority unless they are an essential part of a cooperative project with other eligible educational or non-governmental institutions. In order for a Federal agency to receive an award under this program, it must provide the requisite statutory authority to receive funds from a Federal agency for these purposes. Please note that the Economy Act, 31 U.S.C. 1535, is not sufficient legal authority because NOAA is not procuring goods or services from the Federal agency.

NOAA/NMFS employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not allowed to help in the preparation of applications. NMFS staff are available to provide information regarding statistics on coral reefs, programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation programs, Regional funding priorities, and, along with other Federal Program Officers, can provide information on application procedures and completion of required forms. Since this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees shall not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring applications, or write letters of support for any application. However, for activities that involve collaboration with current NMFS programs on coral reef conservation, employees of NMFS can write a letter verifying that they are collaborating with the project. Federal employee travel and salaries are not allowable costs under this program.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of the GCRC is to provide seed money to projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important coral reef conservation projects to benefit living marine resources. To this end, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate a minimum 1:1 non-Federal match for GCRC funds requested to conduct the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much investment as possible. Applicants with less than 1:1 match will not be disqualified, however, applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion “d”. “Project Costs”.

Matching funds must be from non-Federal sources and can include in-kind contributions and other non-cash support. Federal funds may not be considered as matching funds. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from additional non-Federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match expected, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds. The nature of the contribution (cash versus in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration in the review process, with cash being the preferred method of contribution. The NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements: (1) No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and (2) The

probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement. Applicants must specify in their proposal the source and amount of the proposed match and may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated contributions. In the case of a waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver. Additional information to be submitted in regard to matching funds can be found above in Section III. Eligibility Information, B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Additional information regarding the address for application submission can be found in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, A. Address to Request Application Package.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements. Failure to follow these requirements will result in the proposal being returned without review. The instructions in this document are designed to help applicants in preparing and submitting an application for Federal funding under the GCRC. The cover sheet, project summary, the narrative description of the budget and proposed project, and applicable supporting documentation must be complete and must follow the format described here. The Federal forms do not need to be submitted with the pre-application.

Applicants must identify the specific priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list first on the application the priority that most closely reflects the objective of the proposals. Applications should support the “National Coral Reef Action Strategy” and one or more of the following goals of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force “National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs” or the “Local Action Strategies”: A. II. Assess and Monitor Reef Health; A. IV. Understand Social and Economic Factors; B.I. Improve Use of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); B. II. Reduce Impacts of Fishing; B. IV. Reduce Pollution; B. V. Restore Damaged Reefs; and B. VI. Improve Education.

Applicants must consult with all relevant state, territory, and local governmental and non-governmental entities involved in coral reef activities in developing the application. Local government agencies that must be consulted include coastal zone management, water quality, and wildlife and/or marine resource agencies. In addition, proposed activities should be coordinated, where appropriate, with ongoing and proposed NOAA mapping, monitoring, and coral reef or fishery management initiatives, and DOI Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service coral reef activities.

For each project proposed, the application should not exceed 20 pages, including descriptions of qualification, letters of support and no more than five pages of other attachments,

and should use 12-point font on letter size paper. Applications must include the following information:

a. Cover Sheet:

A cover sheet must be included for each project. The cover sheet must list (1) the project title, (2) applicant organization, (3) principal investigator or contact, (4) contact information, (5) program category, (6) geographic location of the project, (7) amount of grant funds requested, (8) amount of matching funds provided, and (9) a one paragraph project summary. Additional information regarding the required cover sheet for application submission can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, B. Content and Form of Application Package.

b. Project Summary (1-page limit):

Each proposal must contain a summary describing:

- Status and magnitude of the issues in the jurisdiction where the project will occur.
- Recent actions undertaken to address the issues, with a focus on Federally funded tasks.
- How the project fits into the jurisdiction's strategy to addressing critical coral reef conservation needs the next 2- to 3-years.
- Summary of work to be performed

c. Narrative Project Description (15 page limit).

The body of the narrative description should be no more than 15 double-spaced pages long (in 12-point font) including a narrative budget justification, and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. Each task within the project must be completely and accurately described. The narrative should include: (1) specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance; (2) relation to longer-term goals of the PI's project; and (3) relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway under Federal Assistance.

Each project must be described as follows:

- i. Identification of problem(s): Identify the problem/opportunity the project intends to address and describe its significance to the conservation of coral reefs.
- ii. Project objectives: Identify the GCRC objective, listed under A. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Program Priorities, to which the project's objective(s) correspond. Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; and; attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.
- iii. Project narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during each budget period of the project. This description

should include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from a successfully completed project. The narrative should respond to the following questions:

(1) What specific activities does the project include and how do these activities relate to the project's goals and objectives?

(2) Who will be responsible for carrying out each activity? Highlight activities that will be conducted by co-investigators or cooperators, or by sub-contractors, volunteers, and others designated as co-investigators or cooperators.

(3) What are the project milestones? List milestones, describing specific activities and associated time lines necessary to meet them. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc.), rather than by specific dates.

(4) What are the major outcomes, results, or products expected? Describe expected outcomes, results, or products that will directly relate to the GCRC objectives. Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities and the potential impacts of this proposed project on the conservation of coral reefs.

iv. List the programs (Federal, state, territorial or local governmental activities) this project would affect and describe how the project coordinates with relevant state, territorial, or local governmental and non-governmental agencies, and if applicable, NOAA regional activities.

v. Project management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. The lead organization/individual and person listed as the technical contact, should be identified as the principal investigator. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.).

d. Narrative Budget Summary:

Provide a detailed breakdown of costs by category and the corresponding direct and indirect cost totals. Provide information regarding the amount of matching funds available to the applicant. If the applicant currently has a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal Government, an amount for indirect costs can be included in the budget. Indirect costs are 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. Indirect costs can be included in the Federal cost as long as the method of calculation is clear and certain rules are followed. If indirect costs are included, the package should include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government.

Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly

encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

We will not consider fees, fund-raising activities, travel for Federal employees, salaries for Federal employees, or profits as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs you incur in accomplishing project activities during the project period. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between you and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the award. Accordingly, we cannot reimburse applicants for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or preparing the application, or in any discussions or negotiations with us prior to the award. We will not accept such expenditures as part of your cost share.

Applicants whose pre-applications are selected for funding will be required to submit with the final application, and letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-applications should be submitted by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on December 10 by electronic mail to coral.grants@noaa.gov. Federal financial assistance forms are not required to be submitted with pre-application. Note that there will be no extensions of the deadline for pre-applications.

If the applicant's pre-application is preliminarily selected and the applicant decides to submit the final application by electronic mail (e-mail), the applicant must also submit by surface mail, one original and two signed copies of the Federal financial assistance forms along with the final application. Information pertaining to this solicitation, complete application packages (including required Federal forms) with instructions and addresses for submission are available from the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation Website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ecosystem/fundingopps.htm> . In addition, the required Federal forms can be downloaded from <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf> .

All applications should be submitted to: David Kennedy, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, Room 10102, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. For any preliminarily selected applications, the revised applications along with the Federal forms must be received by the solicitation deadline. Additional information regarding the dates and times of application submission can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, C. Submission Dates and Times.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this Program are subject to 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. Specific information regarding Intergovernmental Review can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, D. Intergovernmental Review .

5. Funding Restrictions

a. **Pre-award Notification Requirements:** The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register Notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register Notice published October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), is applicable to this solicitation.

b. **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., 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 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. 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.

c. **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 Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

d. **Ineligible Projects:** The following projects will not be eligible for funding:

- Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law;
- Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under Federal or state law; and,
- Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

Applications for the coral reef conservation activities beyond the scope of those legally required by mitigation or restoration activities as described above, are eligible under this program.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Specific information regarding other submission requirements can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, F. Other Submission Requirements..

E. Application Review Information

1. 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.

a. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (Score = 0-40): This criterion ascertains 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 the ability to link those goals and objectives to project activities and the applicability of the project's goals and objectives to the GCRC goals. Reviewers will consider:

- The likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time line specified in the statement of work;
- The sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically;
- The strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results;
- The inclusion of quality assurance considerations if data collection is proposed.
- The contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to coral reef conservation and management;
- The need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction; and, the amount of collaboration with local, state and territorial governments.

b. Technical/ Scientific Merit (Score = 0-20): 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. Applications will be scored based on their clear identification of performance evaluation methods and the suitability of those methods for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives.

Reviewers will evaluate:

- The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description, including clearly stated coral reef conservation objectives and goals, and the extent to which the implementation plan is achievable within the 12-18 month award period.
- The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives on both an ecological and community stewardship level.

- Whether there are effective mechanisms to evaluate project success, including adequate and meaningful monitoring of the effectiveness that includes a clearly stated goals for which results are achievable within the award period.
- For assurance that implementation of the project will meet all Federal, state and local environmental laws by expeditiously obtaining applicable permits, so that on-the-ground activities will begin within the first 12 months after a project's proposed start date.

c. **Overall Qualification of Applications** (Score = 0-10): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

The overall qualifications of the project will be evaluated based on:

- 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. Consideration will be made to previous awards received by the Principal Investigator and outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards. 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 coral reef conservation 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, on the basis of their explanation of characteristics such as education, training and/or experience of primary project participants.
- The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage the restoration work, including the availability of NOAA or other technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion. Applicants with demonstrated or potential NOAA involvement in or support for the proposed project may score higher on this criterion.

d. **Project Costs** (Score = 0-10): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The budget should reflect the ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. The demonstrated need for funding and the overall leverage of NOAA funds anticipated, including the amount of cash match. NOAA will expect cost-sharing to leverage funding or other resources that improve cost-effectiveness and to further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applicants that provide documentation that acceptable secured match is available within the proposed project period, and those that are able to provide cash contributions, are likely to score higher on this criterion.

e. **Outreach and Education** (Score = 0-20): 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.

2. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps, described in detail in this section: initial evaluation, technical review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., the Office of Habitat Conservation, Ecosystem Assessment Division Chief). The peer review step will involve at least 3 individual reviewers per application. 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 peer reviewers as well as the selection factors set in 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 2005 GCRC, and meet all of the eligibility criteria.

Application packages received by NOAA Fisheries, Office of Habitat Conservation will be screened to ensure that they were received by the due date (see Submission Dates and Times); include the entire pre-application package (minus the Federal forms); identify a Principal Investigator and provide current resumes or curricula vitae for both the Principal and Co-Investigators; identify one of the 8 project categories; include supporting documentation from relevant state or territorial governments; and include any relevant permit application cover letters, if applicable. Applications that pass this initial screening will be submitted for technical review.

b. **Technical Review:** Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo an external technical review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (0-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V, A above. This review will involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. NOAA will also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

c. **Final Selection:** Applications for GCRC 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. The proposals will be rated, and reviewer comments and composite project scores and a rank order will be presented to the Selecting Official. Based on these cumulative reviews, the Selecting Official, in consultation with Office of Habitat Conservation staff, will make preliminary funding recommendations. Only those applications having an average score higher than 60 points in the peer review will be considered for funding. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those

recommended for funding.

3. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official, in consultation with Office of Habitat Conservation staff, will select the proposals to be recommended to the Grants Management Division (GMD) for funding and determine the amount of funds available for each approved proposal. Applications will be awarded in rank order of the technical review ratings, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

- (1) Availability of funding
- (2) Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By project types
- (3) State or territorial priorities based on written comments from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted.
- (4) Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies
- (5) Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section A.2.
- (6) Applicant's prior award performance
- (7) Partnerships with/Participation of targeted group

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the two months following the date given in this announcement that the pre-applications are due to the GCRC. NMFS will provide a summary of review comments to each selected applicant. These summary comments will include input from peer reviewers, the solicited jurisdictions, and the NMFS review, and are intended to be used in the applicant's development of the final application. The Program Officer and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds. If insufficient eligible projects are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this program area to a different funding category under the Program.

Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal financial assistance forms, NMFS will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of, and/or response, to comments that were returned to the applicant. NMFS will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA selection panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines. The selection panel will ensure that funding decisions are consistent with the geographic distribution requirements of 16 U.S.C. 6403(d). Specific information regarding anticipated announcement and award dates can be found above in Section VI. . . Award Administration Information, A. Award Notice

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 mail to the Authorizing Official and the Principle Investigator of the project. 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, then destroyed. Additional information regarding award notices can be found in Section VI. Award Administration Information, A. Award Notice.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Specific information regarding administrative and national policy requirements can be found in Section VI. B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements above.

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 October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at: www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish sufficient information to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project. Additional information regarding administrative and national policy requirements can be found above in Section VI. Award Administration Information, B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

3. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer (Office of Habitat Conservation). 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. Additional information regarding reporting requirements can be found above in Section VI. Award Administration Information, C. Reporting.

G. Agency Contact(s)

Technical point of contact for General Coral Reef Conservation Grants Program is Andy Bruckner, 301-713-3459, extension 190 or e-mail at andy.bruckner@noaa.gov.

5. *Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans*

A. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objective

The principal objectives of the Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans Grant Program (FMCGP) are to support programs and projects by the Regional Fishery Management Councils to conserve and manage coral reef fisheries by (1) reducing the adverse impacts of fishing and other extractive uses on coral reefs and associated ecosystems, and (2) incorporating conservation and sustainable management measures into existing or new Federal fishery management plans. This program will support value-added studies or projects by the Councils with responsibilities for fishery management plans that include coral reefs or fishery resources that depend on these reef ecosystems, as established under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), designed to enhance the conservation of coral reef fishery resources. It is not intended to support normal Council activities or responsibilities.

Successful projects will be those that have a high probability of addressing the goals and purposes of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act 16 U.S.C. 6401, 6403, P.L.106-562) and the priorities identified in the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs and the National Coral Reef Action Strategy, specifically pertaining to activities that seek to reduce adverse impacts of extractive uses. First priority will be given to proposals for coral reef activities in the Council's jurisdiction. Proposals for complementary activities of high conservation value within state waters that are fully coordinated with appropriate state, territory or commonwealth management authorities will also be accepted. Proposed activities should be in addition to those currently supported by NMFS and should not replace support for existing Council staff.

2. Program Priorities

For this solicitation, all applications must fall within at least one of the following 9 categories: (a) Identification, mapping and characterization of essential fish habitat, habitat areas of particular concern, and spawning populations; (b) Monitoring reef fish stocks; (c) Efforts to reduce overfishing of coral reef resources; (d) Efforts to identify and address adverse effects of fishing and fishing gear; (e) Efforts to eliminate destructive and habitat-damaging fishing practices; (f) Studies to assess the adequacy of current fishing regulations; (g) Education and outreach efforts to recreational and commercial fishers; (h) Studies to understand and incorporate ecosystem-scale considerations into coral reef fishery management plans; and (i) Efforts to reduce the overexploitation of reef organisms for the aquarium trade.

The priorities are not listed in any particular order and each is of equal importance. The purpose of the priority list is to guide applicants in application development by identifying those applications that will best compete during this grant cycle for these limited funds, and to provide technical reviewers with guidance for their evaluations.

Details of the 9 categories are as follows:

a. Identification, mapping and characterization of essential fish habitat, habitat areas of particular concern, and spawning populations: Studies that identify, map and characterize important essential fish habitat, habitat areas of particular concern, and spawning populations in U.S. coral reef ecosystems, assess the condition of the habitat, and determine the spatial extent of fishing induced disturbance. Special priority will be given to studies associated with coral reef areas that are currently, permanently, or seasonally closed to fishing or that may merit inclusion in an expanded network of no-take ecological reserves. Eligible activities would include multi-beam or sidescan sonar mapping and characterization of such areas on deeper coral reefs, banks and beds.

b. Monitoring reef fish stocks: Monitoring reef fish stocks in existing no-take marine reserves and reference sites on coral reefs in the Council's jurisdiction to evaluate the effectiveness of reserves. Emphasis should be placed on improving stock analysis of species proposed as candidates for endangered species listing, high value fisheries species, species targeted for the aquarium trade, or other indicator species.

c. Efforts to reduce overfishing of coral reef resources: Studies needed to develop proposals to reduce over-fishing of coral reef resources, including compilation of existing background information on currently unassessed coral reef fishery stocks, targeted assessments of such coral reef fishery stocks for which overfishing is strongly suspected, and improved means of data collection from harvesting activity for both target and non-target species. Efforts could include socioeconomic monitoring of fisheries and reporting and implementation of observer programs.

d. Efforts to identify and address adverse effects of fishing and fishing gear: Studies needed to identify adverse effects of fishing and fishing gear on essential fish habitat and implementing actions to reduce these effects.

e. Efforts to eliminate destructive and habitat-damaging fishing practices: Studies, workshops, or consultations with fishers needed to identify and eliminate destructive and habitat-damaging fishing practices.

f. Studies to assess the adequacy of current fishing regulations: Studies, workshops, or consultations with fishers needed to assess the adequacy of current fishing regulations and the need for additional gear and anchoring restrictions to reduce habitat damage on coral reefs and other adverse impacts of fishing within the Council's jurisdiction.

g. Education and outreach efforts to recreational and commercial fishers: Enhanced education and outreach to recreational and commercial fishers specifically targeted to reduce the adverse impacts of fishing on coral reef ecosystems.

h. Studies to understand and incorporate ecosystem-scale considerations into coral reef fishery management plans: Studies needed to understand ecosystem-scale considerations and incorporate them into coral reef fishery management plans. Studies needed to understand ecosystem effects of fishing on coral reefs, including: the development of models and studies to improve our understanding of larval pathways, trophic interactions and their ecosystem impacts associated with fishing, and habitat impacts associated with certain types of fishing gear and practices.

i. Efforts to reduce the overexploitation of reef organisms for the aquarium trade: Studies needed to reduce the overexploitation of reef organisms for the aquarium trade.

3. Program Authority

Authority for the Fishery Management Council Grant Program is 16 U.S.C. 6403.

B. Award Information

1. Funding Availability for FY2005

This solicitation announces that approximately \$1,050,000 may be made available for distribution under the FY 2005 FMCGP, for cooperative agreements to support coral reef conservation activities under this program. In order to ensure the regional balance called for by the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, a maximum of \$525,000 will be available for activities in the Western Pacific, and a maximum of \$525,000 will be available for activities in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean. 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. The exact amount of funds that will be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Awards will range from a minimum of \$175,000 to a maximum of \$525,000. If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA Fisheries has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Funding will be subject to the availability of Federal appropriations. However, activities approved by NOAA will be awarded either as new cooperative agreements by the Pacific Islands Regional Office or NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation.

2. Project/Award Period

This solicitation announces that a maximum of \$1,050,000 may be made available for distribution under the FY 2005 FMCGP, in award amounts of \$175,000 to \$525,000 to be determined by the applications and available funds. Projects for a period of 12- to 18-months will be considered under the FMCGP. Funding for subsequent years will require submission of a new application, which will compete with other project proposals submitted during the subsequent budget period. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of the period, the applicant can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer 30 days prior to the end of the period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension.

3. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund FMCGP as 12-18 month cooperative agreements.

4. 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. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. 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 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis or whether an environmental assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of the NEPA. For those applications needing an environmental assessment, affected applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of a draft of the assessment (prior to award).

If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other Federally designated protected areas, it is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain from the appropriate government agencies any necessary permits or letters of agreement prior to award.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessment) will also delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are limited to the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and Caribbean Fishery Management Council.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

No cost sharing or matching is required under this program. The Administrator has waived the matching requirement for the Fishery Management Councils as discussed in Section VII of the Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program Implementation Guidelines (Federal register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, Friday, April 19, 2002.). This waiver is based on the fact that the Councils are funded solely by awards from the U.S. Federal Government, and therefore, do not have the ability to generate matching funds.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Additional information regarding the address for application submission can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission, A. Address to Request Application Package.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements. Failure to follow these requirements will result in the proposal being returned without review. The instructions in this document are designed to help applicants in preparing and submitting an application for Federal funding under the FMCGP. The cover sheet, project summary, the narrative description of the budget and proposed project, and applicable supporting documentation must be complete and must follow the format described here. The Federal forms do not need to be submitted with the pre-application. Applicants may submit the pre-application by electronic mail to coral.grants@noaa.gov

For applications that are preliminarily selected for funding, the applicant must submit by surface mail, one original and two signed copies of the Federal financial assistance forms along with the final revised application. Information pertaining to this solicitation, complete application packages (including required Federal forms) with instructions and addresses for submission are available from the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation Website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ecosystem/fundingopps.htm>. In addition, the required Federal forms can be downloaded from <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf>.

Note that there will be no extensions of the deadline for pre-applications, and that for any preliminarily selected applications, the revised applications along with the Federal forms must be received by the solicitation deadline.

For each project proposed, the application should not exceed 20 pages, including descriptions of qualification, letters of support and no more than five pages of other attachments, and should use 12-point font on letter size paper. Applications must include the following information:

a. Cover Sheet:

A cover sheet must be included for each project. The cover sheet must list (1) the project title, (2) applicant organization, (3) principal investigator or contact, (4) contact information, (5) program category, (6) geographic location of the project, (7) amount of funds requested, (8) amount of matching funds provided, and (9) a one paragraph project summary. Additional information regarding the required cover sheet for application submission can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, B. Content and Form of Application Package.

b. Project Summary (1-page limit):

Each proposal must contain a summary that describes:

- Status and magnitude of the issues in the jurisdiction where the project will take place.
- Recent actions undertaken to address the issues, with a focus on Federally funded tasks.
- How the project fits into the jurisdiction's strategy to addressing critical coral reef conservation needs the next 2- to 3-years.
- Summary of work to be performed.

c. Project description (15 page limit).

Each task within the project must be completely and accurately described. The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include: specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance; relation to longer-term goals of the PI's project; and relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway under Federal Assistance.

Each project must be described as follows:

- i. Identification of problem(s): Identify the problem/opportunity the project intends to address and describe its significance to the conservation of coral reefs.
- ii. Project objectives: Identify the FMCGP objective, listed under A. Funding Opportunity Description, 2. Program Priorities, to which the project's objective(s) correspond. Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; and attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.
- iii. Project narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during each budget period of the project. This description should include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products

resulting from a successfully completed project. The narrative should respond to the following questions:

(1) What specific activities does the project include and how do these activities relate to the project's goals and objectives?

(2) Who will be responsible for carrying out each activity? Highlight activities that will be conducted by co-investigators or cooperators, or by sub-contractors, volunteers, and others designated as co-investigators or cooperators.

(3) What are the project milestones? List milestones, describing specific activities and associated time lines necessary to meet them. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc.), rather than by specific dates.

(4) What are the major outcomes, results, or products expected? Describe expected outcomes, results, or products that will directly relate to the FMCGP objectives. Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities and the potential impacts of this proposed project on the conservation of coral reefs.

iv. List the programs (Federal, state or local governmental activities) this project would affect and describe how the project coordinates with relevant state, territorial, or local governmental and non-governmental agencies, and if applicable, NOAA regional activities.

v. Project management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. The lead organization/individual and person listed as the technical contact, should be identified as the principal investigator. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.).

d. Narrative Budget Summary:

Provide a detailed breakdown of costs by category and the corresponding direct and indirect cost totals.

Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

We will not consider fees, fund-raising activities, travel for Federal employees, salaries for Federal employees, or profits as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs you incur in accomplishing project activities during the project period. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between you and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the award. Accordingly, we cannot reimburse applicants for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or preparing the application.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-applications should be submitted by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on December 10 by electronic mail to coral.grants@noaa.gov. Federal financial assistance forms are not required to be submitted with pre-application. Note that there will be no extensions of the deadline for pre-applications.

If the applicant's pre-application is preliminarily selected and the applicant decides to submit the final application by electronic mail (e-mail), the applicant must also submit by surface mail, one original and two signed copies of the Federal financial assistance forms along with the final application. Information pertaining to this solicitation, complete application packages (including required Federal forms) with instructions and addresses for submission are available from the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation Website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ecosystem/fundingopps.htm>. In addition, the required Federal forms can be downloaded from <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/pdf>.

All applications should be submitted to: David Kennedy, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, Office of Response and Restoration, N/ORR, Room 10102, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. For any preliminarily selected applications, the revised applications along with the Federal forms must be received by the solicitation deadline. Additional information regarding the dates and times of application submission can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, C. Submission Dates and Times.

4. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this Program are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Specific information regarding Intergovernmental Review can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, D. Intergovernmental Review.

5. Funding Restrictions

a. **Ineligible Projects:** These funds are not intended to support normal Regional Fishery Management Council's activities or responsibilities. The following categories of activities or expenses are not eligible for funding:

i. Meetings and travel necessary to conduct normal Council business including regular Advisory Panel, Stock Assessment Panel or Scientific and Statistical Committee meetings, Environmental Impact Statement hearings; other public hearings; Fishery Management Council meetings; etc.

ii. Regular Council reports and information dissemination, including annual FMP reports, FMP amendments, public notices, advertisements, etc.

iii. Council staff aside from a maximum of one full-time equivalent working exclusively

on Council coral reef conservation activities.

iv. Activities related to FMPs that do not directly include shallow coral reef resources.

b. Pre-award Notification Requirements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification of Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register Notice of October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register Notice published October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109), is applicable to this solicitation.

c. 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., 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 15 percent of the direct costs proposed. 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.

d. Allowable Costs: Costs that are directly related and can be traced to the cost of the project being supported, and that are within approved budget categories may be charged to the award. Generally, costs that are allowable include equipment, supplies, and training for activities specifically pertaining to the agreed upon elements of the proposal, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable." Funds can be used to support a maximum of one full-time position for an individual working exclusively on Council coral reef conservation activities. Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project.

Funds cannot be used to support (1) normal Council activities or responsibilities including regular Council reports and information dissemination, (2) meetings and travel necessary to conduct normal Council business, (3) Council staff involved in activities other than coral reef conservation projects outlined in the proposal, and (4) Council activities related to fishery management plans that do not directly include shallow coral reef resources.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 90 days after the submission of the final, approved application. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Specific information regarding other submission requirements can be found above in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, F. Other Submission Requirements.

E. Application Review Information

1. 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.

a. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal: (Score = 0-40). This criterion ascertains 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 the ability to link those goals and objectives to project activities and the applicability of the project's goals and objectives to the FMCGP goals. Reviewers will consider:

- The likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results in the time line specified in the statement of work;
- The sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically;
- The strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results;
- The inclusion of quality assurance considerations if data collection is proposed.
- The contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to coral reef conservation and management;
- The need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction; and, the amount of collaboration with local, state and territorial governments.

b. Technical/ Scientific Merit: (Score = 0-30). 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. Applications will be scored based on their clear identification of performance evaluation methods and the suitability of those methods for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description, including clearly stated coral reef conservation objectives and goals, and the extent to which the implementation plan is achievable within the 12-18 month award period.
- The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives on both an ecological and community stewardship level.
- Whether there are effective mechanisms to evaluate project success, including adequate and meaningful monitoring of the effectiveness that includes a clearly stated goals for which results are achievable within the award period.
- For assurance that implementation of the project will meet all Federal, state and local environmental laws by expeditiously obtaining applicable permits, so that on-the-ground

activities will begin within the first 12 months after a project's proposed start date.

c. Overall Qualification of Applications: (Score = 0-10). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. The overall qualifications of the project will be evaluated based on:

- 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. Consideration will be made to previous awards received by the principal investigator and outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards.
- The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage the restoration work, including the availability of NOAA or other technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion. Applicants with demonstrated or potential NOAA involvement in or support for the proposed project may score higher on this criterion.

d. Project Costs: (Score = 0-10). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The budget should reflect the ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. Reviewers will also evaluate 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.

e. Outreach and Education:(Score = 0-10). 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.

2. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps, described in detail in this section: initial evaluation, technical review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., the Office of Habitat Conservation, Ecosystem Assessment Division Chief). The peer review step will involve at least 3 individual reviewers per application. 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 peer reviewers as well as the selection factors set in 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 2005 FMCGP, and

meet all of the eligibility criteria.

Application packages received by NOAA Fisheries, Office of Habitat Conservation will be screened to ensure that they were received by the due date (see Submission Dates and Times); include the entire pre-application package (minus the Federal forms); identify a principal investigator and provide current resumes or curricula vitae for both the principal and co-investigators; identify one of the 8 project categories; include supporting documentation from relevant state or territorial governments; and include any relevant permit application cover letters, if applicable. Applications that pass this initial screening will be submitted for technical review.

b. Technical Review: Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo an external technical review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (0-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section E.1. above. This review will involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. **NOAA will also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted.** The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

c. Final Selection: After applications have undergone technical review, NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation staff will summarize panel rankings by averaging the scores and prepare recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official. **Based on these cumulative reviews, NMFS will make preliminary funding recommendations, which may not be the highest scoring proposals. However, only those applications having an average score higher than 60 points in the peer review will be considered for funding.**

3. Selection Factors

The technical 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 rank order of the technical review ratings unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

- (1) Availability of funding
- (2) Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
- (3) Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/Federal agencies
- (4) Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section A.1 and A.2.

- (5) Applicant's prior award performance
- (6) Partnerships with/Participation of targeted group

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the two months following the date given in this announcement that the pre-applications are due to the FMCGP. NMFS will provide a summary of review comments to each selected applicant. These summary comments will include input from peer reviewers, the solicited jurisdictions, and the NMFS review, and are intended to be used in the applicant's development of the final application. The Program Officer and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds. If insufficient eligible projects are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this program area to a different funding category under the Program.

Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal financial assistance forms, NMFS will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of, and/or response, to comments that were returned to the applicant. NMFS will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA selection panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines. The selection panel will ensure that funding decisions are consistent with the geographic distribution requirements of 16 U.S.C. 6403(d). Specific information regarding anticipated announcement and award dates can be found above in Section: IV. Application and Submission Information, C. Submission Dates and Times .

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 mail to the authorizing official and the principle investigator of the project. 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, then destroyed. Additional information regarding award notices can be found above in Section: VI. Award Administration Information A. Award Notice.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Specific information regarding administrative and national policy requirements can be found in Section VI. B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements above.

3. Reporting

Cooperative agreement recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer (NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation). 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. Additional information regarding reporting requirements can be found above in Section: VI. Award Administration Information, C. Reporting.

G. Agency Contact(s)

Technical point of contact for Projects to Improve or Amend Coral Reef Fishery Management Plans Grants Program is Andy Bruckner, 301-713-3459, extension 190 or e-mail at andy.bruckner@noaa.gov.

International Coral Reef Conservation

A. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objective

The purpose of the International Coral Reef Conservation Program is to support the "National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs" which calls on the United States "... to exercise global leadership in the international arena in shaping and developing environmentally sound and comprehensive coral reef policy, strengthen international conventions and foster strategic partnerships with other countries, international organizations and institutions, the public and private sectors, and non-governmental organizations to address international threats to coral reef ecosystems."

2. Program Priorities

In FY 2005, the International program consists of the following four project categories:

1. Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and Bermuda: The National Action Plan encourages the U.S. to "provide assistance in managing and conserving reef ecosystems and their watersheds." Further, the U.S. and its partners are launching the *White Water to Blue Water* Initiative presented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This Partnership emphasizes a cross-sectoral approach to marine resources management beginning with the upstream watershed and extending to the adjacent marine environment, comprising coral ecosystems, including those that may be found within marine protected areas. It is intended

to help implement international agreements and programs, for example, the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (the Cartagena Convention) and its three protocols (including The Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities), and the International Coral Reef Initiative. Therefore, IPO will fund activities that implement best management practices that reduce or control runoff to near shore coral reef ecosystems, including exemplary programs that prioritize marine protected areas and the conservation of biodiversity within watershed planning and management through the implementation of the NOAA/IUCN/WCPA principles and guidelines to incorporate marine protected areas into integrated ocean and coastal management (See <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>); assess effectiveness of these management practices; engage stakeholders and government agencies in collaborative partnerships to implement these practices; and recommend a set of best management practices that can be applied to small island Caribbean systems.

2. Enhance Management Effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): The “National Action Plan” calls for strengthening the protection of resources within existing MPAs. NOAA has launched a strategic partnership with the World Conservation Union’s (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International to improve the management of MPAs by providing managers, planners and other decision makers with methods for assessing the effectiveness of MPA sites. Therefore, IPO will fund activities in 2 subcategories at coral MPA sites that are building an adaptive management and evaluation program and will conduct an assessment of management effectiveness in order to strengthen and achieve the site goals and objectives. The first subcategory of the Management Effectiveness category will emphasize single site projects and the second subcategory will emphasize regional capacity building in the WCPA-Marine/WWF methodology.

3. Encourage Regional Approaches to Further No-Take Marine Reserves in the Wider Caribbean, Bermuda, Brazil, and Southeast Asia: The “National Action Plan” highlights the role that highly protected areas play in creating a network of coral marine protected areas for biodiversity, conservation and sustainable fisheries management. Through this program, IPO will fund regional level activities that benefit existing or proposed marine reserve networks of 2 or more sites in one or more countries. Preference will be given to projects that involve 2 or more countries. Furthermore, proposed regional level activities must address the needs of no-take marine reserves in the regions as identified in the WCPA - Marine Caribbean Regional Enhancement Plan and the WCPA-Marine Southeast Asia Regional Action Plan. The plans with the priority themes can be found at <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>.

4. Promote Socio-Economic Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, East Africa, South Pacific, and Southeast Asia: The “National Action Plan” highlights that the human dimension is often overlooked in developing coral reef management strategies and calls for measures to enhance understanding of stakeholder benefits and resolve important user conflicts. Recognizing the importance of the human dimension, the GCRMN published The Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management, in partnership with NOAA,

WCPA, and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), a guide to conducting socioeconomic assessments of reef user groups. As follow-up, the GCRMN, WCPA-Marine and NOAA are working with ICLARM, the University of West Indies and other partners in the regions to develop socioeconomic monitoring programs specific to Southeast Asia and the Wider Caribbean. These regional programs include three key phases: (1) development of SocMon, i.e., standardized, simple socioeconomic monitoring guidelines for each region; (2) socioeconomic training workshops for reef managers to learn how to conduct SocMon, specifically how to establish socioeconomic monitoring programs at their sites; and, (3) establishment of socioeconomic monitoring programs at participants' coral reef management programs. Under this project category, IPO will fund phase three - the establishment of socioeconomic monitoring programs at coral reef sites in the eligible regions. Proposals for such work must utilize the methodology in either the SocMon Caribbean Guidelines or the SocMon-Southeast Asia Guidelines. Both sets of Guidelines can be found at <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>.

3. Program Authority

Specific information on program authority can be found in Section I.C. Program Authority.

B. Award Information

1. Funding Availability

Approximately \$400,000 may be available in FY 2005 to support grants and cooperative agreements under this program. Approximately \$75,000-\$100,000 may be allocated to each of the four project categories listed below, with the following award ranges:

- a. Watershed Management: \$30,000-\$40,000
- b. Management Effectiveness:
 - (1) Single site projects: \$20,000-\$40,000
 - (2) Regional capacity building projects: \$80,000
- c. Marine Reserves: \$25,000 - \$40,000
- d. Socio-economic Monitoring: \$15,000 - \$25,000

Applications with requests over the limit of each category will not be accepted. Applications must be submitted under only ONE of the above mentioned categories. Funding will be subject to the availability of federal appropriations. Support in out-years after FY 2004 is contingent upon the availability of funds.

2. Project/Award Period

Applicants may submit applications covering a 12-to 18-month period with an anticipated start date of October 1, 2005.

3. Type of Funding Instrument

The NOS International Program Office will review applications for grants and cooperative agreements (see Section II. C. Type of Funding Instrument above for examples of substantial involvement).

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include all international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations. The proposed work must be conducted at a non-U.S. site and eligible countries are defined as follows. The Wider Caribbean includes the 37 States and territories that border the marine environment of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the areas of the Atlantic Ocean adjacent thereto, and Brazil and Bermuda, but excluding areas under U.S. jurisdiction. The South Pacific Region includes South Pacific Regional Environment Program's 19 Pacific island countries and territories, including the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, but excluding U.S. territories and four developed country members. Southeast Asia Region includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. East Africa includes Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, and South Africa.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Specific information to be submitted in regard to matching funds can be found in above Section III. B. Cost Sharing or Matching."

3. Other Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria is also contingent upon whether activities undertaken with respect to the application would be consistent with any applicable conditions or restrictions imposed by the U.S. government.

4. Project Specific Eligibility Criteria: Specific guidance for each International program project category is noted below:

a. Projects proposed under "**Promote Watershed Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, and Bermuda**" must include:

- (1) Activities that support the implementation of the annexes of The Protocol concerning Pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities to the Cartagena Convention (for details, refer to <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>);
- (2) Activities that support NOAA/IUCN/WCPA principles and guidelines to incorporate marine protected areas into integrated ocean and coastal management (See: <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html>)
- (3) Letter of support for the proposed project from the government agency responsible for planning and development;

- (4) Project site that includes near shore fringing reef system (with description of project site uniqueness) that is impacted by agricultural runoff or intensive land-based development associated with tourism sector activities;
- (5) Evidence of local stakeholder support, for example, agricultural businesses, NGOs, tourism sector, and port facilities;
- (6) Demonstration of local or national potential for developing enforceable policies and mechanisms for long term watershed management; and,
- (7) Evidence of potential organizational capacity to promote coordination of governmental agencies and stakeholder involvement.

b. Projects proposed under "**Enhance Management Effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas**" will be considered under two subcategories:

(1) Single site projects that must:

- i) Incorporate the approach being developed by the WCPA-Marine/WWF International MPA Management Effectiveness Initiative. The approach can be found in the working draft of *How is Your MPA Doing? Guidebook for Evaluating Effectiveness of MPA's* posted at <http://effectiveMPA.noaa.gov> ;
- ii) Have a management program in place, including a management plan, on-site staff, and infrastructure to carry out effectiveness assessments;
- iii) Implement a comprehensive assessment at each MPA represented in the project, utilizing the guidebook, including use of indicators from each of the biophysical, socioeconomic and governance categories;
- iv) Demonstrate the intent to incorporate the assessment of indicators into management planning and review process and incorporate assessment results in adaptive management; and,
- v) Include a letter of support for the project from the MPA managing authority or site supervisor that also demonstrates the involvement of the authority/supervisor in the project if the agency is not proposing the work.

(2) Regional capacity building projects, including at least 3 MPA sites, that must:

- i) Conduct regional capacity building, including a training workshop, in the Management Effectiveness methodology developed by the WCPA-Marine/WWF International MPA Management Effectiveness Initiative. The approach can be found in the publication *How is Your MPA Doing? Guidebook for Evaluating Effectiveness of MPA's* posted at <http://effectiveMPA.noaa.gov> .
- ii) Have a management program in place at each MPA site, including a management plan, on-site staff, and infrastructure to carry out effectiveness assessments;

- iii) Implement a comprehensive assessment at each MPA represented in the project, utilizing the guidebook, including use of indicators from each of the biophysical, socioeconomic and governance categories;
- iv) Demonstrate the intent to incorporate the assessment of indicators into management planning and review process at each MPA site represented in the project and incorporate assessment results in adaptive management;
- v) Include a letter of support for the project from each of the MPA managing authorities or site supervisors represented in the project, that also demonstrates the involvement of the authority/supervisor in the project if the agency is not proposing the work, and.

c. Projects proposed under "**Encourage Regional Approaches to Further No-Take Marine Reserves in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, and Southeast Asia**" must:

- (1) Follow the themes of the Caribbean Regional Coordination Plan and the Southeast Asia Regional Action Plan posted at <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html> ;
- (2) Benefit 2 or more potential or existing marine reserve sites in one or more countries in the region;
- (3) Involve managers from the reserves or the management authority of the site; and,
- (4) Include letters of support for the project from the marine reserve management authorities from all sites that are involved in the project.

d. Projects proposed under "**Promote Socio-Economic Monitoring in Coral Reef Management in the Wider Caribbean, Brazil, Bermuda, East Africa, South Pacific, and Southeast Asia** " must:

- (1). Demonstrate a link with an existing or planned marine resource management program (e.g., MPA, fisheries management, or coastal management program) with clearly defined socioeconomic goals as suggested in the SocMon Guidelines (e.g., improve livelihood, increase environmental awareness);
- (2) Include a letter of support for the project from the marine resource management authority;
- (3) Describe the plan for socioeconomic monitoring, including preparatory activities, data collection and analysis and long-term monitoring after the first assessment. For Southeast Asia sites, the plan should reflect the variables and methods in the SocMon-Southeast Asia Guidelines. For the Wider Caribbean sites, the plan should reflect the variables and methods in SocMon-Caribbean Guidelines. Both SocMon-Caribbean and Southeast Asia Guidelines can be found at <http://ipo.nos.noaa.gov/coralgrants.html> .;

- (4) Include a social scientist that will be actively engaged in the socioeconomic monitoring, planning, data collection, and analysis either from staff or elsewhere (e.g., local university);
- (5) Demonstrate involvement of coral management staff in the proposed monitoring even if personnel not engaged in site-management are overseeing the monitoring; and,
- (6) Explain how the assessment team will translate the socioeconomic data into useful information for coral reef managers and decision makers (e.g., making written management recommendations to policy makers or managers, and presenting results and recommendations to management staff and other stakeholders).

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

Specific information regarding the address for application submission can be found in above Section IV. A. Address to Request Application Package

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Specific information regarding the required cover sheet for application submission can be found in above Section IV. B. Content and Form of Application Submission above. International pre-applications may be submitted by e-mail, fax (301-713-4389), or express air courier and must be received by NOAA on or before the date established in Section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times above. Each application must clearly describe the proposed work in 20 pages or less, including letters of support and attachments. Font size should be 12 point. Applications should not be bound or stapled, but can be bundled, for example, by rubber bands or binder clips. All applications, letters of support and attachments must be written in the English Language. In addition to the cover sheet, each application must include the following elements (a-c):

- a. Description of the qualifications of the individual(s) who will conduct the project;
- b. Project Description that must address the specific project category eligibility criteria described in this International section under Section C. 4. Project Specific Eligibility Criteria above and also include:
 - (1) Project need;
 - (2) Objectives;
 - (3) Implementation strategy;
 - (4) Identification of how project fits into applicant (and site) strategy for management;
 - (5) Project products and outcomes;
 - (6) Partner justification and roles;
 - (7) A methodology to evaluate the success of the project;
 - (8) A Summary Budget that includes a detailed breakdown of costs following the categories on the Federal Form 424A for both the Federal and non-Federal

shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project. Also include an appropriate justification in a narrative for both the federal and non-Federal shares. Intended sources of matching funds and whether they have been secured must be stated in the application. The application must also state whether the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere. Applicants whose applications are recommended for funding will be required to submit with the final application, letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds; and,
(9) Task timetable with interim benchmarks linked to clearly defined work projects.

c. Evidence of support for the project from the local management authority where the work is conducted at specific sites must indicate that the project supports local management objectives. In those cases where training is proposed, indication that participants will apply these techniques at their local sites is requested. Please include evidence of coordination with relevant national and regional project partners, including a list of agencies consulted in developing the proposal and assurances that any necessary permits will be secured prior to the use of U.S. Federal funds.

3. Submission Dates and Times

Specific information regarding the dates and times of application submission can be found in Section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times above

4. Intergovernmental Review

Specific information regarding Intergovernmental Review can be found in Section IV. D. Intergovernmental Review above

5. Funding Restrictions

Eligibility is also contingent upon whether activities undertaken with respect to the application would be consistent with any applicable conditions or restrictions imposed by the U.S. government.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Specific information regarding other submission requirements can be found in Section IV. F. Other Submission Requirements above.

E. Application Review Information

1. Evaluation Criteria

Once a full application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. IPO will provide for a merit-based peer review and standardized documentation of that review for proposals that meet the eligibility requirements. Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of three individuals with knowledge of the subject of the proposal. Each reviewer will submit a separate and individual review and reviewers will not provide a consensus opinion. The identities of the peer reviewers will be kept anonymous to the degree permitted by law. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and rank proposals using the evaluation criteria provided below. The merit reviewers' ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

- a. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate the need for the proposed coral reef management activity to fill gaps in the jurisdiction.
- b. Technical/scientific merit (25%): This 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 this management activity.
- c. Overall qualifications of applicants (20%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate coordination with applicable ongoing local, state, territorial, and Federal coral reef management activities;
- d. Project costs (20%): The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, the budget should reflect the ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed.
- e. Outreach and education (10%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources.

NOAA may also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from agencies with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted, as described in Section X(1) of the Guidelines. Under the international grant program, NOAA will request and consider written comments on the proposal from relevant U.S. government agencies such as the Agency for International Development and Department of the Interior; foreign governments and their coral management agencies; and other international entities as necessary. Each entity will be provided 21 days to review and comment on subject proposals. Comments submitted will be part of the public record.

2. Review and Selection Process

IPO will review the applications, consistent with the equally weighted criteria listed in Section X(3) of the Guidelines, taking into consideration comments received from peer, agency, and jurisdiction reviewers. Based on these reviews, IPO will rank order the applications, and provide preliminary funding recommendations, and summary comments on each selected proposal to each applicant. These comments will include input from peer reviewers, agencies, jurisdictions, and IPO, and are intended to be used in the applicant's development of the final proposal. Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal forms, IPO will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of, and response to, comments that were returned to the applicant. IPO will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines to ensure that the Coral Reef Conservation Act requirements for geographic funding distribution and consistency with the overall program goals outlined in the Strategy. In making the final selections, the Selecting Official will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors listed below. The Program Officials and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds.

3. Selection Factors for Projects

In addition to the to equally weighted criteria described in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and comments received from peer reviewers, the following selection factors will be used:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors. These are listed in International Sections A.1, A.2 and C.4 above.
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups

The Program Officer and/or Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds. If insufficient eligible projects are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this program area to a different funding category under the Program.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Specific information regarding anticipated announcement and award dates can be found in Section V. D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates above.

F. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notice

Specific information regarding award notices can be found above in Section IV. F. Other Submission Requirements.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Specific information regarding administrative and national policy requirements can be found above in Section VI. B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

3. Reporting

Specific information regarding reporting requirements can be found above in Section VI. C. Reporting.

G. Agency Contact(s)

Technical point of contact for International Coral Reef Conservation is Arthur Paterson, 301-713-3078, extension 217 or e-mail at arthur.e.paterson@noaa.gov .