

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Culture and Restoration in Chesapeake Bay; and, Chesapeake Bay Non-native Oyster Research to Support the Environmental Impact Statement
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.457, Chesapeake Bay Studies
- **Dates:** Applications must be received by 5 p.m. eastern time on July 6, 2004. Applications received after that time will not be considered for funding. Statements of Intent (see SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION) should be submitted by June 23, 2004.
- **Application Submission:** Completed applications should be sent to: Derek Orner, Program Coordinator, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The Chesapeake Bay Studies submerged aquatic vegetation Program's main purpose is to enhance and increase this important fisheries habitat in Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries. Funding will be directed to complement existing and future efforts in this area by Federal, State, and local agencies, and community watershed organizations. NOAA is serving as a cooperating

agency on the non-native oyster EIS. In this capacity, NOAA's role is to serve as the science agency ensuring adequate scientific input is obtained to inform the EIS assessment and final decision. The Chesapeake Bay Studies non-native oyster research program will specifically address the research needs identified in "Identifying and Prioritizing Research Required to Evaluate Ecological Risks and Benefits of Introducing Diploid *Crassostrea ariakensis* to Restore Oysters in Chesapeake Bay."

## **FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT**

### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

#### A. Program Objective

The Chesapeake Bay Studies submerged aquatic vegetation Program's main purpose is to enhance and increase this important fisheries habitat in Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries. Funding will be directed to complement existing and future efforts in this area by Federal, State, and local agencies, and community watershed organizations.

Principle investigators will be expected to prepare for and attend one or two workshops with other NCBO supported researchers to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, and presentation of supported work.

(2) Non-native oyster research to support an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

NOAA is serving as a cooperating agency on the non-native oyster EIS. In this capacity, NOAA's role is to serve as the science agency ensuring adequate scientific input is obtained to inform the EIS assessment and final decision. The Chesapeake Bay

Studies non-native oyster research program will specifically address the research needs identified in "Identifying and Prioritizing Research Required to Evaluate Ecological Risks and Benefits of Introducing Diploid *Crassostrea ariakensis* to Restore Oysters in Chesapeake Bay" (available on-line at <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/fish> or by request (see ADDRESSES)).

## B. Program Priorities

Proposals should exhibit familiarity with related work that is completed or ongoing. Where appropriate, proposals should be multi-disciplinary. Coordinated efforts involving multiple eligible applicants or persons are encouraged. Proposals must address one of the areas of interest listed here. If the proposal addresses more than one area of interest, it should list first on the application the area of interest that most closely reflects the objective of the proposal.

### (A) *Submerged Aquatic Vegetation*

Proposals should follow and refer to the guidance in the Chesapeake Bay Program's "Strategy to Accelerate the Protection and Restoration of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation in the Chesapeake Bay" which is available at: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/> or via Derek Orner.

All proposal should address the manner in which the applicant will obtain the necessary permits (if applicable) for collection of plant materials from tidal waters and bottom disturbance or putting structures in tidal waters. For collecting permit requirement in Maryland, see:

<http://mddnr.chesapeakebay.net/savrrc/index.html>. For permit information for Virginia tidal waters, see: <http://www.mrc.state.va.us/page3.htm>.

These areas of interest are not listed in any particular order of

importance:

(1) Enhance supply of SAV propagules for restoration in Chesapeake Bay. Propagate seeds, vegetative propoagules (winter buds), rooted cuttings, and/or whole plants of SAV species native to Chesapeake Bay to use in restoration projects. Priority will be given to proposals to produce seeds of species that are know to grow well from seed, especially eelgrass (*Zostrea marina*) and wild celery (*Vallisneria americana*). Proposals for other propagation techniques that will minimize the ongoing need to harvest plant materials from the field are also encouraged. Source materials should come from the Chesapeake Bay watershed if possible. If a proposal is solely for propagation, the application should list organizations that are interested in using the plant material they produce in restoration projects in Chesapeake Bay. If the propagules produced will be sold, the applicant must explain the proposal how this income will be used to promote program objectives.

(2) Applied research to increase the success of planting SAVE directly from seeds and/or vegetative propagules. Investigate factors directly related to improving the large-scale cultivation and planting os SAV from seeds in Chesapeake Bay. For some species this research could also include tubers, winter buds, and other vegetative propagules. These factors may include the following: optimal conditions for production and maturation; viability and germination; harvest and storage methods; natural modes of seed transport and fates of seeds that disperse naturally; distribution and viability of seed banks and tubers; and other factors. Collecting information useful to the direct planting of seeds and/or vegetative propagules of wild celery(*Vallisneria americana*), sago pondweed (*Stuckenia pectinata*), and/or redhead grass (*Potamogeton perfoliatus*) is encouraged.

(3) Large-scale SAV planting in Chesapeake Bay in 2004

and/or 2005. Conduct large-scale SAV restoration, including one or more projects that will plant one acre or more per site and can be done in fall 2004 and/or in 2005. Proposed projects may be expansions of projects already planned, especially if done in 2004. Projects should use native species that have grown well when planted in past Chesapeake Bay projects and sites that have been assessed and shown to have a good chance of SAV survival, including regular evaluations of success for at least two years from date of planting. Projects that involved harvesting whole plants from donor beds and transplanting them are discouraged.

(4) Site assessments needed to choose SAV planting sites in Chesapeake Bay for 2006. Conduct site assessments in 2004 and 2005 of potential sites for large-scale planting projects to be done in 2006 or later. Sites that are assessed should be prescreened for good SAV growth potential using a GIS targeting tool that uses existing monitoring data. Site assessments may include measuring light availability (water clarity), salinity, temperature, bottom substrate characteristics, water depth, waves and currents, and epiphyte occurrence; mapping current and historical SAV presence by species; conducting small test plantings or other bioassays; and measuring other pertinent water chemistry and environmental parameters.

(5) Integrated SAV and native oyster restoration projects that include measures to abate tidal sediment from two sources: tidal shoreline erosion and nearshore sediment resuspension. Projects should be designed with three elements (SAV, native oysters, and tidal sediment abatement) in physical proximity in ways that are designed to enhance the success of the other projects. Evaluation of project success should include an assessment of the effectiveness of any tidal sediment abatement measured in enhancing the survival and growth of both SAV and oysters. Projects that include only two of the three elements will also be considered, especially SAV and native oysters.

(B) *Non-native Oyster Research*

NOAA seeks proposals for projects that will provide data and information to support a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed introduction of a non-native oyster species to the Chesapeake Bay and other tidal waters of Maryland and Virginia. The EIS is being prepared by federal and state agencies in response to a proposal by the states of Maryland and Virginia to introduce *Crassostrea ariakensis*. Neither the potential risks nor the potential benefits of such an introduction are adequately known at this time. The EIS will evaluate the proposed action and seven identified alternatives for restoring self-sustaining oyster populations. Proposals submitted under this area should address one or more of the research priorities identified in the research plan document: "Identifying and Prioritizing Research Required to Evaluate Ecological Risks and Benefits of Introducing Diploid *Crassostrea ariakensis* to Restore Oysters in Chesapeake Bay" (available online at <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/fish> or by request (see ADDRESSES)). Proposals should address one of the following areas of interest which are not listed in any particular order of importance:

(1) **Reproduction and Genetics:** Genetic variation among *C. ariakensis* strains, and phenotypic variation within strains, that would affect which strain is best suited for introduction; reproductive rates and processes of adults; reproductive interference between *C. ariakensis* and *C. virginica*.

(2) **Physiology:** Growth, environmental tolerances and other vital responses of adults and larvae; behavioral and settlement responses of larvae; postsettlement mortality.

(3) **Ecological interactions among oyster species:** Competition between *C. ariakensis* and *C. virginica*; how the timing of reproduction is likely to affect the outcome of competition.

(4) Environmental Services: Growth form and reef building potential of *C. ariakensis* under a variety of environmental conditions; consequences of those growth forms to other organisms.

(5) Modeling and Prediction: Models to predict larval dispersal, the potential for population growth, and habitat effects on these processes; incorporation of results into oyster population models.

(6) Oyster Disease: *Bonamia* susceptibility; Herpes virus vertical transmission; the potential for increased disease transmission between species of *C. ariakensis* and *C. virginica*.

C. Program Authority: 16 USC 753a, 16 USC 661-666c

## **II. Award Information**

### **A. Funding Availability**

This solicitation announces that approximately \$550,000 may be made available through the Chesapeake Bay Studies submerged aquatic vegetation Program and a separate amount of approximately \$2,000,000 may be made available through the Chesapeake Bay Studies non-native oyster research program. There are no specified award limits for proposals submitted under this solicitation. This document describes how interested persons can apply for funding and how funding decisions will be made for both initiatives.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so solely at their own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, there is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when the award is made.

#### B. Project/Award Period

Under this solicitation, NCBO will fund Chesapeake Bay Studies projects as 12 month cooperative agreements or grants. Proposals may be submitted for up to a 2 year project period. However, funds will be made available for only a 12-month funding period and any continuation of the award period will be subject to an approved scope of work, satisfactory progress, a panel review, and available funding to continue the award. No assurances for a funding continuation exists; funding will be at the complete discretion of NOAA.

#### C. Type of funding instrument

Whether the funding instrument is a grant or a cooperative agreement will be determined by the degree of NOAA's involvement in the project. A cooperative agreement will be used if NOAA shares responsibility for management, control, direction, or performance of the project with the recipient. Specific terms regarding substantial involvement will be contained in special award conditions.

#### D. 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 NEPA analysis or whether an Environmental Assessment is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. 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). 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.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants include state, local and Indian tribal governments, institutions of higher education, other non-profit organizations and commercial organizations.

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

## B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

NOAA strongly encourages applicants applying for either initiative to share as much of the costs of the award as possible. Funds from other Federal awards may not be considered matching funds. The nature of the contribution (cash versus in-kind) and the amount of matching funds will be taken into consideration in the final selection process. Priority selection will be given to proposals that propose cash rather than in-kind contributions.

## **IV. Application and Submission Information**

### A. Address to Request Application Package

You can obtain an application package from: Derek Orner, Program Coordinator, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403. You can also obtain the application package from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office Grants Home Page <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/grants>.

### B. Content and Form of Application Submission

A statement of intent to submit a full proposal is requested although not required. This statement should be sent to Derek Orner ([derek.ornier@noaa.gov](mailto:derek.ornier@noaa.gov)) and will assist the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office in setting up technical reviewers. It is requested that this statement provide a project title, associated investigators and approximate budget. Statements of Intent should be submitted by June 23, 2004.

All proposals must include a full description of the activities and budget for the first year as described in this announcement,

and should include a summary description of the proposed work for each subsequent year and an estimated budget by line item (without supporting budget detail pages) for review and analysis. If selected for funding, the applicant will be required to submit a full proposal for the second year by the deadline announced in the following year's competitive cycle. Proposals will be evaluated through a review panel process, but will not be subject to competition with new proposals. Projects should not be scheduled to begin before September 1, 2004.

Proposals must be complete and must follow the format described in this notice. Potential recipients may submit separate proposals for each area of interest and/or initiative. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the NOAA as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

1. *Proposal format*: Applicants are required to submit one signed original and two copies of the full proposal (submission of five additional hard copies is encouraged to expedite the review process, but it is not required). Proposal format must be in at least a 10-point font, double-spaced, unbound, and one-sided. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are not included in the 15-page limitation. Appendices may be included but must not exceed a total of 15-pages in length. Appendices may include information such as curriculum, resumes, and/or letters of endorsement. Additional informational material will be disregarded. Proposals must include the following information:

a. *Project summary (1-page limit)*: It is recommended that each proposal contain a summary of no more than one page that

provides the following:

- (1) Organization title.
- (2) Address, telephone number, and email address of applicant.
- (3) Area of interest for which you are applying (see section II).
- (4) Project title.
- (5) Project duration (1 year project/funding period beginning to end dates, starting on the first of the month and ending on the last day of the month).
- (6) Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
- (7) Project objectives.
- (8) Summary of work to be performed.
- (9) Total Federal funds requested.
- (10) Cost-sharing to be provided from non-Federal sources, if any. Specify whether contributions are cash or in-kind.
- (11) Total project cost.

b. *Project description (15-page limit)*: Each 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:

(1) *Identification of problem(s)*: Describe the specific problem or area of interest to be addressed (see section II above).

(2) *Project objectives*: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why", and; attainable within the time, money and human resources

available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.

(3) *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 must include the specific methodologies, by project job activity, proposed for accomplishing the proposal's objective(s).

Investigators submitting proposals in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to develop inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary research teams in the form of single, integrated proposals or as individual proposals that are clearly linked together. The project narrative must include a milestone table that summarizes the procedures/objectives that are to be attained in each project month covered. Table format should follow sequential month rather than calendar month (i.e. Project period Month 1, Month 2... versus October, November...).

(4) *Benefits or results expected:* Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities.

(5) *Need for Government financial assistance:* Demonstrate the need for assistance. Explain why other funding sources cannot fund all the proposed work. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.

(6) *Federal, state and local government activities:* List any programs (Federal, state, or local government or activities, including Sea Grant, state Coastal Zone Management Programs, NOAA Oyster Disease Research Program, the state/Federal Chesapeake Bay Program, etc.) this project would affect and describe the relationship between the project and those plans or activities.

(7) *Project management:* Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Include resumes of principal investigators. List all persons directly employed by the

applicant who will be involved with the project. If a consultant and/or subcontractor is selected prior to application submission, include the name and qualifications of the consultant and/or subcontractor and the process used for selection.

(8) *Results from prior NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office support:* If any PI or co-PI identified on the project has received support from the NCBO in the past 5 years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:

- (a) The NOAA award number, amount and period of support;
- (b) The title of the project;
- (c) Summary of the results of the completed work, including, for a research project, any contribution to the development of human resources in science/biology;
- (d) Publications resulting from the award (Reprints may be submitted, and are requested, for documentation if applicable);
- (e) Brief description of available data, samples, physical collections and other related research products not described elsewhere; and
- (f) If the proposal is for renewed support, a description of the relation of the completed work to the proposed work.

(9) *Monitoring of project performance:* Identify who will participate in monitoring the project.

\_\_\_\_(10) *Project impacts:* Describe how these products or services will be made available to the science and management communities.

(11) *Education and outreach:* How will this project provide a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nations' natural resources?

(12) *Evaluation of project:* The applicant is required to provide an evaluation of project accomplishments and progress towards the project objectives and performance measures at the end of each funding period and in the final report. The

application must describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to determine technical feasibility, or to quantify the results of the project in promoting increased production, product quality and safety, plant survival, or other measurable factors.

c. *Total project costs and budget narrative:* Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and include contributions and donations.

Explain the calculations and provide a detailed narrative to support specific items or activities, such as personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs. The budget detail and narrative submitted with the application should match the dollar amounts on all required forms. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness.

2. *Funding restrictions.* Please note the following:

a. The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal Government, see Administrative Requirements, Section VI, B.

b. 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.

3. *Supporting documentation:* Provide any required documents and any additional information necessary or useful to the description of the project. The amount of information given in this section will depend on the type of project proposed, but should be no

more than 15 pages. The applicant should present any information that would emphasize the value of the project in terms of the significance of the problems addressed. Without such information, the merits of the project may not be fully understood, or the value of the project may be underestimated. The absence of adequate supporting documentation may cause reviewers to question assertions made in describing the project and may result in lower ranking of the project. Information presented in this section should be clearly referenced in the project description.

#### C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by 5 p.m. eastern time on July 6, 2004. Applications received after that time will not be considered for funding.

Statements of Intent (see SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION) should be submitted by June 23, 2004.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

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

#### E. Funding Restrictions

##### 1. Indirect Cost Rates

Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award, or the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the

award based on the indirect cost rate approved by an oversight or cognizant Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. However, the Federal share of the indirect costs may not exceed 30 percent of the total proposed direct costs for this Program. Applicants with indirect costs above 30 percent may use the amount above the 30 percent level as cost sharing. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

## 2. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget 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." Funds cannot be used for construction activities beyond minor facility upgrades, *e.g.*, adding tanks or plumbing.

## F. Other Submission Requirements

1. Statements of Intent and completed applications should be sent to: Derek Orner, Program Coordinator, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403.

2. Federal forms

Applicants may obtain required Federal forms from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office Web site (see **ADDRESSES**) or from the NOAA Grants Web site: <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~grants/index.html>

1. *Cover sheet*: All applicants must use Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Form 424 (revised 7/97) as the cover sheet for each project.

2. *Budget form*: All applicants must use a Standard Budget Form (SF-424A) required for all federal grants.

3. *Form CD-511*: All applicants must submit a CD-511, "Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying".

4. *SF-424B*: All applicants must submit a SF-424B, "Assurances of Non-Construction Programs".

5. *CD-346 "Applicant for Funding Assistance"*: Required for the following individuals- Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations, Joint Venture, Non-profit Organizations.

## **V. Application Review Information**

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

1. *Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals* (15 points)

This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Chesapeake Bay Studies Program this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate a knowledge and comprehension of the problem? Is the applicant familiar with related work that is completed or on-going?

2. *Technical merit* (15 points)

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 the Chesapeake Bay Studies Program this includes the following questions: Are the objectives defined in the proposal focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? Does the project design include a project evaluation that ensures that the goals and objectives of the project will be met?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (5 points)

This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Chesapeake Bay Studies Program this includes the following question: Does the applicant show the capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects?

4. Project costs (10 points)

This budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Chesapeake Bay Studies Program this includes the following questions: Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to leverage other resources? Is the nature of the cost share cash or in-kind? Is the budget request reasonable and does the applicant justify the proposed budget request? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and/or are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project?

5. Outreach and education (5 points)

This assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the Chesapeake Bay Studies Program this includes the following

questions: Does the project involve external sharing and communication through peer-reviewed publication and presentation at scientific symposium and conferences?

## B. Review and Selection Process

### 1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications

NCBO will review all applications to assure that they meet all the requirements of this announcement, including eligibility and relevance to the NCBO. Proposals that do not support the technical and management areas of interest of the Chesapeake Bay, as defined in section II. above will not be considered for funding.

### 2. Technical Review

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo an external technical review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three mail reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-50 points) using the criteria provided in Section IV.A. This review normally will involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. 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.

### 3. Funding Decision

The Program Coordinator may, in consultation with NCBO staff, review the ranking of the proposals and the technical review comments and make recommendations to the NCBO Director. The average numerical ranking from the technical review will be the primary consideration in deciding which of the proposals will be recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Officer.

C. The NCBO Director shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon

1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds: geographically; by type of institutions; by type of partner; by research areas; by project type
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I.A. and B, and III.B.
5. Applicants' prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.

Projects considered for renewal will be evaluated by the Director of the NCBO, in consultation with the Program Coordinator, to determine whether to be renewed for funding. If there has been satisfactory prior award performance, projects considered for renewal may take priority over new proposals.

The exact amount of funds awarded to each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the Grants Office, and the Program staff. Potential grantees should not initiate projects in expectation of Federal funding until an award document signed by an authorized NOAA official has been received.

Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program office for a period of at least 12 months, then destroyed.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Projects should not be scheduled to begin before September 1, 2004.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued 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.

### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm)). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In 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

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 (Northeast Fisheries Science Center). Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. The comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration.

### **VII. Agency Contact(s)**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Derek Orner, Program Coordinator, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, telephone: (410) 267-5660, or e-mail: [derek.ornier@noaa.gov](mailto:derek.ornier@noaa.gov).

