

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC)

Funding Opportunity Title: 2011 REPP Pulley Ridge

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-NCCOS-2011-2002586

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.478, Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research - Coastal Ocean Program

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 3 p.m. EST on October 21, 2010. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copy proposals will be accepted, and date recorded when they are received in the NCCOS/CSCOR program office. Electronic or hard copies received after the deadline will not be considered, and hard copy applications will be returned to the sender.

Funding Opportunity Description: The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NOAA/NOS/NCCOS/CSCOR, in partnership with the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office, and Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team, is soliciting proposals under the Regional Ecosystem Prediction Program for a project of up to 5 years in duration to conduct research to improve the understanding of population connectivity of key species between the southernmost portion of Pulley Ridge on the West Florida continental shelf, and downstream to the coral ecosystems of the Florida Keys. Coral ecosystems upstream of Pulley Ridge can be considered if directly relevant to population connectivity or to provide context to the overall study. This information will be used to improve the ability of Gulf of Mexico resource managers to proactively develop strategies to manage and protect poorly understood mesophotic coral ecosystems, including coastal and marine spatial planning and the siting of marine protected areas and marine protected area networks for shallow and mesophotic coral ecosystems. Funding is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2011 Federal appropriations. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by early Calendar Year 2011, and that any project funded under this announcement

will have a September 1, 2011 start date. One project is expected to be supported for up to 5 years, with an annual budget up to \$1,000,000.

Electronic Access: Background information about the NCCOS/CSCOR efforts can be found at [www.cop.noaa.gov](http://www.cop.noaa.gov). Proposals should be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>.)

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

The Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), develops and improves predictive capabilities for managing the Nation's use of its coastal resources through competitive research programs. NCCOS/CSCOR also supports efforts to translate the results of its research investments, and those of others, into accessible and useful information for coastal managers, planners, lawmakers, and the public to help balance the needs of economic growth with those of conserving the resources of our Nation's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

NCCOS/CSCOR provides a focal point for regional ecosystem-scale, multidisciplinary coastal ocean research within the NOAA National Ocean Service. Together with partners in NOAA and other organizations responsible for coastal resources, NCCOS/CSCOR advances the scientific understanding needed to protect coastal resources and ensure their viability for future generations. This increased understanding of the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes directly benefits the management of U.S. coastal resources, and helps NOAA, other Federal agencies, and state, tribal, and local governments achieve their coastal stewardship responsibilities.

A key objective of NCCOS/CSCOR research is the production of user-driven predictive tools that will enable resource managers to assess alternative management strategies to reverse degraded ecosystems and protect healthy ones. Research supported is outcome-oriented towards predictions, as well as increased scientific understanding that will provide managers and the public with sound scientific information for making decisions in support of societal objectives. Articulation of outcome-based management goals is required in proposals (see Section IV.B.), and recipients will be expected to report progress toward achieving outcome-based goals annually.

NCCOS/CSCOR uses a mix of issue- (ecosystem stressors) and place-based (regional ecosystem research) approaches. The aim of the ecosystem stressor approach is to advance understanding of high impact natural and human-induced stressors on ecosystem structure and function including hypoxia, harmful algal blooms, and climate change. The aim of the regional ecosystem research approach is to develop multidisciplinary regional ecosystem forecasting capabilities with an emphasis on transition to operation and/or application. Research priorities are currently determined through a multi-tiered process which includes Congressional direction, NOAA mandates and strategic plans, engagement of resource

managers and stakeholders, and identification of strategic opportunities by the scientific community.

NCCOS/CSCOR Regional Ecosystem Research is implemented on a geographic basis, in the following regions:

Great Lakes

Northeast Shelf

Southeast Shelf

Caribbean Sea

Gulf of Mexico

California Current

Alaska Ecosystem Complex

Pacific Islands Ecosystem Complex.

Although there are different coastal management concerns in each of these areas, there are also many fundamental similarities in the types of problems between regions and the science needed to address them. Therefore, it is important in a national program such as the Regional Ecosystem Prediction Program (REPP) that relevant science constructs (e.g. modeling frameworks) developed nationally and internationally are fully utilized and adapted to the particular issue and regional of interest so as to gain efficiencies from past research investments.

A critical complement to the predictive science developed under REPP is a clear understanding and engagement of the management end users and stakeholders to insure that research products are targeted to the critical knowledge gaps preventing action on societal priorities. These research products must also be delivered in a manner that can directly support decisionmaking and policy formulation. Therefore, NCCOS/CSCOR requires applicants to include explicit plans to work closely with user groups and stakeholders during the course of the research project to insure that resultant products will have direct application to regional management needs.

NCCOS/CSCOR provides the capability to leverage both internal and external scientific expertise through long-term, integrated, multidisciplinary efforts directed toward issues of importance to NOAA and the Nation. Specifically, the topics solicited in this competitive request for proposals address the NOAA Ecosystem Goal objective to protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management and activities within the NOAA 5-year Research Plan (Fiscal Years 2008-2012)

focused on the following topics: 1) assessments and forecasts of coastal and marine ecosystems, 2) scenario development to support specific management actions and decisions; and 3) capacity building and knowledge transfer for improved resource management. This announcement also addresses the Presidential memorandum, issued on June 12, 2009, on developing a National Policy for the Oceans, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes, which directed the development of a framework for coastal and marine spatial planning, and the NOAA Annual Guidance Memorandum priority to support comprehensive coastal and marine spatial planning.

All NCCOS/CSCOR research programs adhere to the NOAA Research Plan with respect to the transfer of research results to the management community (see the NOAA Policy on Transition of Research to Application for more information at [http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap\\_216/naos\\_216\\_105.html](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap_216/naos_216_105.html)). Projects selected for funding under NCCOS/CSCOR announcements are required to develop tools, such as ecological forecasting models and/or data syntheses for decisionmaking that provide actionable information for resource managers to make decisions that support the protection, conservation, and restoration of regional ecosystems in the face of impacts such as climate change, coastal land-use, invasive species, extreme events, and pollution. Such tools must have the capacity to predict ecosystem health in response to alternative management scenarios to assess and prioritize management strategies, as well as to explore the social, cultural, and economic context.

During the implementation phase of research projects funded under this announcement, regardless of the funding mechanism used, NCCOS/CSCOR Program Managers will analyze financial statements and progress reports for each continuing multi-year project, and will have dialogue with the Principal Investigators and Authorized Representatives of the recipient institutions to discuss research progress and expected time lines for the remaining award period. NCCOS/CSCOR Program Managers will consider the length of time remaining for each project, the amount of funds available, the tasks to be completed in the upcoming fiscal year, the pace of research, and any delayed progress relative to that originally proposed, before determining the amount of funds to allocate to continuing research projects in any given fiscal year.

As identified in all NCCOS/CSCOR competitive announcements, funding for ongoing multi-year research awards is contingent upon the availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance relative to proposal metrics, and is at the sole discretion of the agency.

## B. Program Priorities

## Regional Ecosystem Prediction Program: Understanding Coral Ecosystem Connectivity in the Gulf of Mexico Pulley Ridge to the Florida Keys

The NCCOS/CSCOR Regional Ecosystem Prediction Program (REPP) was established to provide resource managers with predictive tools and capabilities to improve their ability to protect, conserve, and restore the Nation's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems. The program identifies key regional research needs that are limiting the ability of resource managers to address one or more issues from a regional ecosystem perspective. NCCOS/CSCOR, in partnership with the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER), National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office (NMFS/SERO), and Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team, is soliciting proposals for a project under REPP to improve the understanding of population connectivity of key species between the southernmost portion of Pulley Ridge on the West Florida continental shelf, and downstream to the coral ecosystems of the Florida Keys. Coral ecosystems upstream of Pulley Ridge can be considered if directly relevant to population connectivity or to provide context to the overall study. This information will be used to improve the ability of resource managers to proactively develop strategies to understand and protect poorly understood mesophotic coral ecosystems, including coastal and marine spatial planning and the siting of marine protected areas (MPA) and MPA networks for shallow and mesophotic coral ecosystems.

Mesophotic coral ecosystems (MCEs) are characterized by the presence of light-dependent corals and associated communities typically found at depths from 30-40 m and extending to over 150 m in tropical and subtropical regions. MCEs may be regarded as extensions of shallow coral ecosystems including sharing common species. MCEs may serve as refugia for shallow-water populations, as evidenced by the relatively intact trophic structure of MCEs such as Pulley Ridge and the Puerto Rico-U.S. Virgin Islands platform that appear to harbor a high proportion of shallow water fish species including many species that tend to be heavily fished in shallow reef environments. Thus, MCEs may serve as potential sources to reseed or replenish degraded shallow water populations. Additionally, MCEs may include species that are endemic to this depth range, making them especially vulnerable to disturbances. For resource managers, it is important to understand what types of ecological roles MCEs play, as well as the connectivity of these ecosystems with shallow coral ecosystems and other MCEs. (More information on mesophotic coral ecosystems can be found at: [http://www.cop.noaa.gov/ecosystems/coralreefs/current/MCE\\_Res\\_strat.aspx](http://www.cop.noaa.gov/ecosystems/coralreefs/current/MCE_Res_strat.aspx).)

Connectivity can be broadly defined as the exchange of materials (e.g., nutrients and pollutants), organisms, and genes and can be divided into three categories: (1) genetic or evolutionary connectivity that concerns the exchange of organisms and genes, (2) demographic or ecological connectivity, which is the exchange of individuals among local groups, and (3) oceanographic connectivity, which includes flow of materials and circulation patterns and variability that underpins much of all these exchanges. At present, very little is

understood about connectivity. Yet, the success of management measures (e.g., MPAs and MPA networks) to protect, conserve, and restore marine habitats or populations hinges on the establishment of ecologically relevant boundaries that take into account propagule (spores, eggs, and larvae) connectivity, as well as the movements of juveniles and adults.

This announcement targets the Gulf of Mexico, one of our Nation's most shared ocean spaces. The Gulf of Mexico supplies over 50 percent of the total U.S. crude oil and natural gas production, is home to seven of the top ten U.S. ports (ranked by tonnage in 2008), generates over 620,000 jobs related to tourism services, and commercial fisheries landings averaging 1.3 billion pounds per annum from 2006 to 2008. The waters of the Gulf of Mexico also provide ecosystem services, i.e., fundamental life-support processes upon which all organisms depend such as, regulating climate and weather, maintaining biodiversity, and providing food and essential fish habitat.

The anthropogenic and natural pressures placed on the marine ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico can have lasting impacts on ecosystem condition as evidenced by the seasonal hypoxic zone off the Louisiana continental shelf, which is largely the result of anthropogenic nutrient inputs. In general, MCEs are vulnerable to the same pressures that affect shallow-water coral ecosystems such as climate change, fishing, pollution, invasive species, coastal uses, and extreme events (e.g., hurricanes and oil spills).

Portions of the Gulf of Mexico seafloor are comprised of hard-bottom and coral reef habitats with some areas densely populated by diverse assemblages of corals, sponges, algae and fishes. Many of these habitats share commonalities with the tropical ecosystems of the Caribbean, as well as more temperate ecosystems. Oceanographically, the Gulf of Mexico is part of a connected system, dominated by the Loop Current, which links to the Caribbean Sea via the Yucatan Current and the Atlantic Ocean via the Florida Current. Scientists have hypothesized that the oceanographic connectivity between the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Florida reef tract facilitates genetic or ecological connectivity between the biologically important habitats that ring the Gulf of Mexico because they share common species. However, in general, quantitative data to support this hypothesis is limited.

Within the Gulf of Mexico, the West Florida Shelf provides habitat for both tropical and temperate species in the northern portion (e.g., Florida Middle Grounds) and tropical Caribbean species in the southern portion (e.g., Pulley Ridge and Dry Tortugas), including habitat for commercially-important groupers and snappers. In 2008 alone, over 50 percent of the 25 million recreational fishing trips made were in the Federally-managed waters off west Florida. The recreational and commercial importance of these waters, as well as the presence of tropical Caribbean species that also inhabit the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary increases the interest of management in whether there is connectivity between the West Florida Shelf and the Florida Keys reef tract.

Pulley Ridge, located along the West Florida Shelf, is approximately 300 km in length and 15 km wide, consisting of cemented coastal carbonate deposits. The southernmost portion of Pulley Ridge (approximately 30 km) is a drowned barrier reef island with the deepest known (60-75 m), light dependent, MCE on the U.S. continental shelf. The dominant communities providing structural habitat in southern Pulley Ridge are coralline algae and scleractinian corals. Fish species present at Pulley Ridge represent a mix of both shallow- and deep-water species. A portion of Pulley Ridge has been designated as a Habitat Area of Particular Concern under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Prohibitions include no bottom anchoring (of fishing vessels), bottom trawling, longlines, buoy gear, and traps/pots. Pulley Ridge is not protected from anchoring by non-fishing vessels, impacts from divers, and other uses.

The proximity of Pulley Ridge and other similar upstream coral ecosystems to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and its Tortugas Ecological Reserve, combined with the influence of the Loop current, has managers asking whether southern Pulley Ridge could serve as an up-current source of larvae for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Little research has been undertaken to answer the larger question of the ecological role that Pulley Ridge and other similar upstream ecosystems may play in the replenishment of coral reef ecosystems of the Florida Keys. In an era of significant coastal ocean changes and the well-documented decline of coral reef ecosystems in the Florida Keys, it is important to understand the degree of connectivity between Pulley Ridge, a comparatively healthy coral ecosystem based on the percentage of coral cover, and shallow and other mesophotic coral ecosystems located both upstream and downstream of Pulley Ridge. The results of this study will not only provide a better understanding of the underlying processes that regulate Pulley Ridge, but also help determine if the area would benefit from further protections and if that protection would help sustain coral reef communities upstream and downstream.

The goal of this study is to improve the ability of Gulf of Mexico resource managers to proactively develop strategies to manage and protect shallow and mesophotic coral ecosystems, including coastal and marine spatial planning and the siting of MPAs and MPA networks. Proposals should further the understanding of the Pulley Ridge ecosystem and its connectivity to the downstream coral ecosystems of the Florida Keys and directly relevant coral ecosystems upstream of Pulley Ridge. Proposals should also address quantifying the biological, chemical, and physical processes, to the extent necessary, for a functional understanding of the coral ecosystems of Pulley Ridge. Research priorities include:

- a. Characterize trophic structure and underlying processes that regulate Pulley Ridge coral ecosystems;

- b. Determine the horizontal and vertical population structure for a set of key mobile and sessile species (i.e., two or more from each group) of shallow coral ecosystems and MCEs and to what extent there is genetic and ecological connectivity horizontally and vertically;
- c. Identify the dominant mechanisms for this connectivity, including their temporal and spatial dynamics;
- d. Determine whether MCEs can serve as refugia and reseed shallow reefs (or vice versa);
- e. Consider ecosystem stressors (e.g. episodic events and oil spills) and their associated effects on ecosystem condition, as appropriate; and
- f. Assess how changes in climate and ecosystem conditions may impact factors that drive and influence this connectivity.

Conducting research on MCEs (found at depths from 30-40 m and extending to over 150 m) will require specialized technology beyond standard SCUBA diving, such as advanced diving technologies (e.g., mixed gas SCUBA diving and closed-circuit rebreathers), remotely operated vehicles (ROV), autonomous underwater vehicles (AUV), and/or shallow diving submersibles. Applicants should include all operating costs for these specialized technologies and the necessary ship costs in their proposals. Additionally, up to 15 days per year for two years of AUV time on the MolaMola AUV will be provided by the OER National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology (OER/NIUST). The MolaMola AUV (<http://niust.org/index.php/SeaBED-AUV-TEST/>) will be available, subject to appropriations, for applicants to use at no additional cost for the time specified above, including AUV operating personnel. If applicants wish to use the MolaMola AUV for the time stated above, they must include it as part of their proposal. The MolaMola AUV is used for close-up, sub-sea photographic and multi-beam site investigation, which can be used to construct spatial, high-resolution photomosaics of the target area. For more information on the capabilities of the MolaMola AUV, contact OER/NIUST (see information below).

OER will administer the operations for applicants that do not have access to deep water technologies (e.g., advanced diving technologies, ROVs, and AUVs) and the necessary safety oversight through their home institutions. Operational costs for conducting the research must be included in the proposal. To develop operational cost estimates, applicants should contact OER Headquarters (see information below).

Priority will be given to funding a single comprehensive proposal that includes a set of subprojects led by individual Principal Investigators. This multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional collaborative team should be led by a single Principal Investigator. The Lead Principal Investigator provides strong leadership for the project enabling it to be fully integrated and effectively implemented to insure production of the expected outputs and

outcomes. Successful projects typically include a senior-level Project Program Manager that interacts with the NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager on a regular basis to ensure that the project is well-coordinated, responsive to management needs, and presents a comprehensive and integrated set of research results.

#### Expected Outputs and Outcomes:

The intended outcome of this research is to provide Gulf of Mexico resource managers with the scientific information and predictive tools necessary to improve management effectiveness with respect to coastal and marine spatial planning in Pulley Ridge and the Florida reef tract, and in the development and implementation of MPAs and an MPA network in the Gulf of Mexico. The primary management end users of the information will be NOAA (ONMS Southeast Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Regional Office and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, NMFS/SERO, the Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team) and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Results from this research will also be of interest to the NOAA MPA Center and Coral Reef Conservation Program, the State of Florida, and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Transition of research results to use by managers and policy-makers is a central objective of NCCOS/CSCOR. Clear articulation of outcome-based management goals is required (more information can be found at: <http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/outcomes.aspx>). The Lead Principal Investigator will be expected to work with the NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager to establish an effective method of transferring research results to the end users. To facilitate the transition of information to resource managers, the Lead Principal Investigator shall hold at least one meeting per year of subproject Principal Investigators that will be open to the above mentioned end users. The purpose of the annual meeting will be to present results of the research to date and to interact with end users to ensure that the research results are packaged for optimal utility by management. The end users can then facilitate the transfer and utilization of information derived from this work for management applications, including sustainable fisheries management, habitat conservation and protection, and protection of listed threatened and endangered species. Applicants should include all costs associated with the annual meetings (with the exception of end user travel costs) in their proposal.

#### Expected outputs from this research include:

(1) Predictive tools (e.g., models) that will identify the degree of connectivity (oceanographic, genetic, and ecological) between Pulley Ridge and shallow coral ecosystems and other MCEs both upstream and downstream (i.e., Florida Keys and Dry Tortugas reef tracts).

(2) Conceptual model of trophic structure and underlying processes that regulate Pulley Ridge coral ecosystems;

(3) Propagule connectivity information determined for key sessile and mobile species;

(4) Information on the role that the coral ecosystems of Pulley Ridge play in the replenishment of downstream (or upstream) shallow coral ecosystems and other MCEs and its potential as a refuge for shallow coral reef species; and

(5) Information on the implications of research results in the context of ocean space usage in the region as to whether additional management measures are warranted for Pulley Ridge and upstream and downstream coral ecosystems as well as potential impacts of climate change on population connectivity.

In addition to the above outputs and outcomes, the applicant will be expected to work with the NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager, ONMS, OER, NMFS/SERO, and the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team to develop outreach and education materials, such as, materials for websites and handouts. The proposal must describe a process to include resource management agency participation at the onset of program implementation. Under the provisions and intent of the funding mechanism, a Cooperative Agreement, the NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager will work closely with the Lead Principal Investigator to engage the appropriate management representatives, as end users of the program outputs, and establish a clear mechanism to involve these representatives as advisors so that the program outputs are on track throughout the life cycle of the program to be delivered to resource agencies to achieve program outcomes.

#### Contact Information:

For overall information regarding the REPP-Connectivity-Pulley Ridge announcement contact: Kimberly Puglise, NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager, 301-713-3338/ext 140, internet: Kimberly.Puglise@noaa.gov.

For information regarding the MolaMola AUV and its capabilities contact: Arne Diercks, AUV Manager, OER/NIUST Undersea Vehicle Technology Center, 662-915-5479, internet: arne.diercks@usm.edu.

For information regarding operations (except for the MolaMola AUV) contact: Jeremy Potter, OER Headquarters, 301-734-1025, internet: jeremy.potter@noaa.gov.

#### C. Program Authority

33 U.S.C. 1442

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Funding is contingent upon availability of Federal appropriations. NOAA is committed to continual improvement of the grants process and accelerating the award of financial assistance to qualified recipients in accordance with the recommendations of the Business Process Reengineering Team. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, this solicitation announces that for the REPP-Connectivity-Pulley Ridge announcement the award amount will not exceed \$1,000,000 per year of up to 5 years.

Applicants are hereby given notice that funds for this announcement and the use of the MolaMola AUV have not yet been appropriated for this program. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of other agency priorities. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

Publication of this notice does not obligate any agency to any specific award or to obligate any part of the entire amount of funds available. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

### B. Project/Award Period

Full proposals may cover a project/award period of up to 5 years, but shorter-term project proposals will also be welcomed. Multi-year awards may be funded incrementally on an annual basis, but once awarded those awards will not compete for funding in subsequent years. Each award requires a project description that can be easily divided into annual increments of meaningful work representing solid accomplishments.

The following is a description of multi-year awards for those applicants subsequently recommended for award. Multi-year awards are awards that have an award/project period of more than 12 months of activity. Multi-year awards are partially funded when the awards are approved, and are subsequently funded in increments. One of the purposes of multi-year awards is to reduce the administrative burden on both the applicant and the operating unit. For example, with proper planning, one application can suffice for the entire multi-year award period. Funding for each year's activity is contingent upon the availability of funds

from Congress, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency. Multi-year funding is appropriate for projects to be funded for 2 to 5 years. Once approved, full applications are not required for the continuation out years.

During the implementation phase of research projects funded under this announcement, regardless of the funding mechanism used, CSCOR Program Managers will analyze financial statements and progress reports for each continuing multi-year project, and will have dialogue with the Principal Investigators and Authorized Representatives of the recipient institutions to discuss research progress and expected time lines for the remaining award period. Program Managers will consider the length of time remaining for each project, the amount of funds available, the tasks to be completed in the upcoming fiscal year, the pace of research, and any delayed progress relative to that originally proposed, before determining the amount of funds to allocate to continuing research projects in any given fiscal year.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument will be a Cooperative Agreement. A cooperative agreement implies that the Federal government will assist recipients in conducting the proposed research. The application should be presented in a manner that demonstrates the applicant's ability to address the research problem in a collaborative manner with the Federal government. A cooperative agreement is appropriate when substantial Federal government involvement is anticipated. This means that the recipient can expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance. Substantial involvement exists when: responsibility for the management, control, direction, or performance of the project is shared by the assisting agency and the recipient; or the assisting agency has the right to intervene (including interruption or modification) in the conduct or performance of project activities.

Additionally, the NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager may seek the input of other partners and end users in providing advice to the funded project.

NOAA will review the applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Before issuing awards, NOAA will determine whether a grant or cooperative agreement is the appropriate instrument based upon the need for substantial NOAA involvement in the project. If a cooperative agreement is determined to be the appropriate instrument, the NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager will participate in important activities which may include education about and discussion of research activities, participation in meetings, guidance on NOAA philosophy, directions, and priorities, and research strategy discussions.

In an effort to maximize the use of limited resources, applications from non-Federal, non-NOAA Federal and NOAA Federal applicants will be competed against each other.

Research proposals selected for funding from non-Federal researchers will be funded through a project grant or cooperative agreement. Research proposals selected for funding from non-NOAA Federal applicants will be funded through an interagency transfer, provided legal authority exists for the Federal applicant to receive funds from another agency and NOAA applicants will be funded through an intra agency transfer. PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from the applicants, the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. section 1535) is not an appropriate basis. Support may be solely through NCCOS/CSCOR or partnered with other Federal offices and agencies.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, state, local, Indian Tribal Governments, commercial organizations, U.S. Territories, and Federal agencies that possess the statutory authority to receive financial assistance. DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications to the CSCOR programs. In addition, 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 underserved areas. DOC/NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions

Please note that:

(1) NCCOS/CSCOR will not fund any Federal Full Time Employee (FTE) salaries, but will fund travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual personnel costs associated with the proposed work.

(2) Researchers must be employees of an eligible entity listed above; and proposals must be submitted through that entity. Non-Federal researchers should comply with their institutional requirements for proposal submission.

(3) Non-NOAA Federal applicants will be required to submit certifications or documentation showing that they have specific legal authority to receive funds from the Department of Commerce (DOC) for this research.

(4) Foreign researchers may apply as subawards through an eligible US entity.

(5) Non-Federal researchers affiliated with NOAA-University Cooperative/Joint Institutes should comply with joint institutional requirements; they will be funded through grants either to their institutions or to joint institutes.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

None

#### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

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

### IV. Application and Submission Information

#### A. Address to Request Application Package

Applications submitted in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to be submitted through the Grants.gov web site. The full funding announcement for this program is available via the Grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov>. This announcement will also be available by contacting the program official identified below. You will be able to access, download and submit electronic grant applications for NOAA Programs in this announcement at <http://www.grants.gov>. The closing dates will be the same as for the paper

submissions noted in this announcement. NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

Please refer to important information in Submission Dates and Times (Section IV.C.) to help ensure your application is received on time.

Applicants should contact the Program Manager for non-electronic submission instructions.

Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of full proposals will not be accepted.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Technical Information. Kimberly Puglise, NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager, 301-713-3338/ext 140, internet: Kimberly.Puglise@noaa.gov.

Business Management Information. Laurie Golden, NCCOS/CSCOR Grants Administrator, 301-713-3338/ext 151, Internet: Laurie.Golden@noaa.gov.

#### B. Content and Form of Application

This document requests full proposals only.

##### 1. Proposals

The provisions for full proposal preparation provided here are mandatory. Proposals received after the published deadline (refer to DATES) or proposals that deviate from the prescribed format will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Information regarding this announcement and additional background information are available on the NCCOS/CSCOR home page: <http://www.cop.noaa.gov/stressors/Default.aspx>. An example proposal can be found: [http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/pdf/sample\\_application.pdf](http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/pdf/sample_application.pdf) and FAQs are also available.

##### 2. Required Elements

For clarity in the submission of proposals, the following definitions are provided for applicant use: Funding and/or Budget Period - The period of time when Federal funding is available for obligation by the recipient. The funding period must always be specified in multi-year awards, using fixed year funds. This term may also be used to mean budget period. A budget period is typically 12 months. Award and/or Project Period - The period established in the award document during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends. The term award period is also referred to as project period in 15 CFR 14.2(cc).

Each proposal must include the following thirteen elements or it will be returned to sender without further consideration. The Summary title page, Abstract, Project Description, References, Biographical Sketch, Current and Pending Support, Budget Narrative and Collaborators List must be in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. The thirteen elements are as follows:

(1) Standard Form 424. At the time of proposal submission, all applicants requesting direct funding must submit the Standard Form, SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for their institution for the whole project period. This form is to be the cover page for the original proposal. Multi-institutional proposals must include signed SF-424 forms from all institutions requesting direct funding. Original signatures are required on SF-424 forms provided to a lead institution by a collaborating institution for grants.gov submission.

(2) Summary title page. The Summary title page identifies the project's title, starting with the short title: REPP-Connectivity-Pulley Ridge and the Principal Investigator's (PI) name and affiliation, complete address, phone, FAX and E-mail information. The requested budget for each fiscal year with and without ship funding should be included on the Summary title page. Multi-institution proposals must also identify the lead investigator for each institution and the requested funding with and without ship funding for each fiscal year for each institution on the title page. Lead investigator and separate budget information is not requested on the title page for institutions that are proposed to receive funds through a subaward to the lead institution;

(3) One-page abstract/project summary. The summary (abstract) should appear on a separate page, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost (with and without ship funds), and budget period. It should be written in the third person and not exceed one page in length. The summary is used to help compare proposals quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words. Project summaries of applications that receive funding may be posted on program related websites.

The project summary shall include an introduction of the problem, rationale, scientific objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of work to be completed.

(4) Project description. The description of the proposed project must include narratives of the Proposed Research and of the Applications to Management.

The Proposed Research Narrative must be thorough and explicitly indicate its relevance to the program goals and scientific priorities by:

(a) Identifying the topic that is being addressed by the proposal;

(b) Describing the proposed scientific objectives and research activities in relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and in relation to previous and current work by the proposing principal investigator(s);

(c) Discussing how the proposed project lends value to the program goals;

(d) Identifying the function of each PI. The Lead PI (s) will be responsible for communicating with the Federal Program Manager on all pertinent verbal or written information. The Proposed Research Narrative should provide a full scientific justification for the research, rather than simply reiterating justifications presented in this document. Specific research activities must be divided into annual increments of work that include specific objectives and methodology.

The Applications to Management Narrative should establish the connection to relevant resource management needs by explicitly identifying the end user group(s) including evidence of the linkage between the scientific questions and management needs. If applicable, the format and role of management and technical advisory committees should be included in this section. If required, proposals should specifically identify direct participation of resource manager(s) as co-Principal Investigators.

The Applications to Management Narrative should describe the proposed mechanism for establishing the connections to relevant resource management needs by explicitly identifying the frequency and method of interaction with end users. The Management Narrative should also provide evidence of the linkage between the scientific questions and management needs. This narrative should provide the management justification for the research by:

(a) Articulating the coordination with one or more end users;

(b) Discussing the expected significance of the project to resource management priorities and needs. Specific management targets, with proposed outputs and outcomes, should describe how this project will improve management capabilities. Outputs are defined as products (e.g. publications, models) or activities that lead to outcomes (changes in management knowledge or action). Definitions and examples of outputs and outcomes can be accessed at <http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/outcomes.aspx>. The timeline for achieving outcomes should be included in the Milestone Chart (below).

(c) Describing specific activities, such as workshops or development of outreach materials, that will enhance information transfer from project scientists to relevant management entities, other end-users, or the public.

The project description must not exceed 25 pages in 12-point, easily legible font with 1 to 2 pages for the Applications to Management Narrative and the balance used for the Proposed Research Narrative, inclusive of figures and other visual materials, but exclusive of

references, a milestone chart, letters of intent from unfunded collaborators, and letters of endorsement.

(5) References cited. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publications, the article title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publications. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the page limits given above for proposal descriptions.

(6) Milestone chart. Provide time lines of major tasks covering the duration of the proposed project.

(7) Standard Form 424A. At time of proposal submission, all applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form which identifies the budget for each fiscal year of the proposal. Place each fiscal year in separate columns in Section B of page 1 on the SF424A. (Note that this revised 424A Section B format is a NOAA requirement that is not reflected in the Instructions for the SF 424A). For 5 year projects, use two SF424As. Place the first four years on one form in Section B columns one through four. The first four years will total in column five. Place the total from the first form onto the second form in Section B column one and use column two for the fifth year budget figures. The budget figures must correspond with the descriptions contained in the proposal. Multi-institution proposals must include a SF-424A for each institution, and multi-investigator proposals using a lead investigator with a subaward approach must submit a SF-424A for each subaward. Each subaward should be listed as a separate item.

Provide separate budgets for each subaward and contractor regardless of the dollar value and list all subaward and contractor costs under line item 6.f. contractual on the SF-424A. Signed approval from the institution of each subaward and contractor must be provided. Indirect cost may not be applied to ship costs.

(8) Budget narrative and justification. In order to allow reviewers to fully evaluate the appropriateness of costs, all applications must include a detailed budget narrative and a justification to support all proposed budget categories for each fiscal year. Personnel costs should be broken out by named PI and number of months requested per year per PI. Support for each PI should be commensurate with their stated involvement each year in the milestones chart (see Required Elements (6) Milestone chart).

Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) should be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to PI personnel costs above. The contribution of any personnel to the project goals should be explained. Describe products/services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each subaward and contractor. Travel costs should be broken out by number of

people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Equipment costs should describe the equipment to be purchased, and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. For additional information concerning each of the required categories and appropriate level of disclosure please see [http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/other\\_instructions.aspx](http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/other_instructions.aspx).

Any ship time needs must be clearly identified as a component of the proposed budget within the allowable annual award amount. The applicant is responsible for requesting ship time through appropriate channels and for meeting all requirements to ensure the availability of requested ship time. Copies of relevant ship time request forms (e.g. UNOLS ship request forms at <http://www.gso.uri.edu./unols/ship/mainmenu.html>. should be included with the proposal.

If any NOAA personnel will be present during ship operations, vessel safety clearances must be obtained through the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) in advance of the cruise. Required information and procedures are detailed in a Charter Vessel Acquisition and Safety NOAA Administrative Order which can be accessed via the OMAO website at <http://www.oma.noaa.gov/charterreq.html>.

A separate budget justification is required for each institution in a multi institutional project and for each subcontract. Signed approval from each subaward and contractors institution is also required.

(9) Biographical sketch. All principal and co-investigators, including unfunded collaborators making a substantial contribution to the research, must provide summaries of up to 2 pages that include the following:

(a) A listing of professional and academic credentials and mailing address;

(b) A list of up to five publications most closely related to the proposed project and five other significant publications. Additional lists of publications, lectures, and the rest should not be included;

(10) Current and pending support. Describe all current and pending federal financial/funding support for all principal and co-investigators, including unfunded collaborators making a substantial contribution to the research, continuing grants must also be included. The capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects should be addressed. Therefore, please discuss the percentage of time investigators and collaborators have devoted to other Federal or non-Federal projects, as compared to the time that will be devoted to the project solicited under this notice. A current and pending support form is not required but is available on the CSCOR web site for your use:

[http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/initial\\_submission.aspx](http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/initial_submission.aspx). You must respond to the requirement whether or not you have any current and/or pending support.

(11) A list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work. You must respond to this requirement element whether or not permits are required.

(12) Provide one list that includes all (US and Foreign) collaborators, advisors, and advisees for each investigator (principal and co-principal investigators, post-docs, and subawardees), complete with corresponding institutions. Submit only one, combined and alphabetized list per proposal. Collaborators are individuals who have participated in a project or publication within the last 48 months with any investigator, including co-authors on publications in the resumes. Collaborators also include those persons with which the investigators may have ongoing collaboration negotiations. Advisees and Advisors do not have a time limit. Advisees are persons with whom the individual investigator has had an association as thesis advisor or postdoctoral sponsor. Advisors include an individual's own graduate and postgraduate advisors. Unfunded participants in the proposed study should also be listed (but not their collaborators). This information is critical for identifying potential conflicts of interests and avoiding bias in the selection of reviewers.

(13) Evidence of accomplishments from prior CSCOR support. Please supply a list of manuscripts published or other products, such as models, developed as a result of prior CSCOR support including projects not yet completed. You must respond to the requirement whether or not you have accomplishments from prior CSCOR support

Proposal format and assembly. Proposals submitted via Grants.gov APPLY should follow the format guidelines below:

Attachments must be submitted in Adobe Acrobat PDF format to maintain format integrity. Please submit the required documents as described below.

Follow the instructions found on the Grants.gov web site for application submission into the Grants.gov system. All required forms that do not have specific placeholders in the Mandatory Document box must be submitted in the Optional Form box as Other Attachments and labeled with the document name i.e., budget narrative, project description, milestone chart etc.

For a multi institutional proposal: Combine all of the required documents for the individual institution into one PDF file in the Optional Form box as Other Attachments and submit the file labeled with the name of the institution. Repeat this procedure for each collaborating institution.

Save your completed application package with two different names before submission to avoid having to re-create the package should you experience submission problems. If you

experience submission problems that may result in your application being late, send an e-mail to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) and call the Grants.gov help desk. Their phone number is posted on the Grants.gov web site. The Program Manager associated with the RFA will use programmatic discretion in accepting proposals due to documented electronic submission problems. Please note: If more than one submission of an application is performed, the last application submitted before the due date and time will be the official version.

In addition to the thirteen required elements, it is requested the SF-424B, CD-511, Key Contact form( available on the CSCOR web site at [http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/initial\\_submission.aspx](http://www.cop.noaa.gov/opportunities/grants/initial_submission.aspx) and the indirect rate agreement be provided upon application submission. It is allowable for applicants to suggest merit reviewers on the Summary Title Page.

These forms can be uploaded in to the Optional Form box under Other Attachments in Grants.gov. Signed approval from each subaward and contractor's institution is also requested.

Lead applicants of multi-institutional proposals should include in their submission complete application packages for each institution requesting direct funding. PLEASE NOTE: Signed SF424s from each applicant requesting direct funding is a submission requirement.

Lead applicants using the Co-PI subaward approach should include SF424A, budget justification, current and pending support, and CVs, for each subaward.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 3 p.m. EST on October 21, 2010. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline.

If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copy proposals will be accepted, and date recorded when they are received in the NCCOS/CSCOR program office. Electronic or hard copies received after the deadline will not be considered, and hard copy applications will be returned to the sender.

Note that late-arriving hard copy applications will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that:

1) the application was provided to a delivery service with delivery to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, Mail Station 8240 8th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3282;

2) delivery was guaranteed by 3 pm, Eastern Time on the specified closing date; and,

3) the proposal was received in the NCCOS/CSCOR office by 3 p.m., Eastern Time no later than 2 business days following the closing date.

Investigators submitting proposals electronically are advised to submit well in advance of the deadline.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(a) (2), an opportunity for public notice and comment is not required for this notice relating to grants, benefits and contracts. Because this notice is exempt from the notice and comment provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act, a Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is not required, and none has been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

#### E. Funding Restrictions

**Indirect Costs:** Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which DOC will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of (a) the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award or (b) the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by a cognizant or oversight Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date. NCCOS/CSCOR will not fund start up or operational costs for private business ventures and neither fees nor profits will be considered as allowable costs. Ship costs may not be included in indirect cost calculations. NCCOS/CSCOR will not pay for ship overhead expenses.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

Full proposals must include evidence of linkages between the scientific questions and management needs, such as the participation of co-investigators from both scientific and management entities. Proposals previously submitted to NCCOS/CSCOR FFOs and not recommended for funding must be revised and reviewer or panel concerns addressed before

resubmission. Resubmitted proposals that have not been revised will be returned without review.

Please refer to important information in submission dates and times above to help ensure your application is received on time.

Each proposal must also include the thirteen elements listed under Proposal Submission/Required Elements, (1)-(13) or it will be returned to sender without further consideration. A check list with the required and requested proposal elements can be found in Section VIII

Applications must be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), unless an applicant does not have internet access. In that case, hard copies with original signatures may be sent to:

Laura J. Golden

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research

1305 East West Highway

Routing Code: N/SCI2

Building SSMC4, Room 8240

Silver Spring, MD 20910

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals: This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. This should also include a detailed review of the management relevance of the proposed work. For the purposes of this review, the proposal should be evaluated on the likelihood that the applicant addresses: the program's goal to further the understanding of the population connectivity of Pulley Ridge to

downstream (Florida Keys) and upstream coral ecosystems and the program's scientific priorities by looking at both mobile and sessile species in an ecosystem context. (30 percent)

2. Technical/scientific merit: 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. The proposed work should have focused objectives and a complete and technically sound strategy for project design, methodologies, data management, data analysis, and development of products and outcomes in support of the objectives. (30 percent)

3. Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This includes the capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work as evidenced by past research accomplishments, previous cooperative work, timely communication, and the sharing of findings, data, and other research products. (15 percent)

4. Project costs: The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. (10 percent)

5. Outreach and education: 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. The applicant must demonstrate clear connections to the relevant management entities that will use the results of the proposed work and define the specific products, outcomes, and timing of the proposed work that will be used in achieving this goal. For the purposes of this review, the applicant must demonstrate how they will interact with end users to ensure that the research results are packaged for optimal utility by management. (15 percent)

## B. Review and Selection Process

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. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by independent peer mail review and/or by independent peer panel review. Both Federal and non-Federal experts may be used in this process. The peer mail reviewers will be several individuals with expertise in the subjects addressed by particular proposals. Each mail reviewer will see only certain individual proposals within his or her area of expertise, and score them individually on a scale of one to five, where scores represent respectively: Excellent (5), Very Good (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1).

The peer panel will comprise 3 or more individuals, with each individual having expertise in a separate area, so that the panel, as a whole, covers a range of scientific expertise. The panel will have access to all mail reviews of proposals, and will use the mail reviews in discussion and evaluation of the entire slate of proposals. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually. The peer panel shall rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria and scores provided above and used by the mail reviewers. The individual peer panelist scores shall be averaged for each application and presented to the Program Manager. No consensus advice will be given by the independent peer mail review or the review panel.

The Program Manager will neither vote or score proposals as part of the independent peer panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the proposal. Those proposals receiving an average panel score of Fair or Poor will not be given further consideration, and applicants will be notified of non-selection.

For the proposals scored by the panel as either Excellent, Very Good, or Good, the Program Manager will (a) create a ranking of the proposals to be recommended for funding using the average panel scores (b) determine the total duration of funding for each proposal; and (c) determine the amount of funds available for each proposal subject to the availability of fiscal year funds. Awards may not necessarily be made in rank order. In addition, proposals rated by the panel as either Excellent, Very Good, or Good that are not funded in the current fiscal period, may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without having to repeat the competitive review process.

Recommendations for funding are then forwarded to the selecting official, the Director of NCCOS, for the final funding decision. In making the final selections, the Director will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the selection factors listed below in C.

Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the applicant. Declined applications will be held in the NCCOS/CSCOR for the required 3 years in accordance with the current retention requirements, and then destroyed.

### C. Selection Factors

Based on the panel review scores, the Program Manager will provide a listing of proposals in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A Program Manager may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying the

selection factors below. The Selecting Official 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. Refer to section 1. B. Program Priorities
5. Applicant's prior award performance.
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the grants officer.

Awards may also be modified for selected projects depending on budget availability or according to the selection factors listed above.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will begin in December 2010. Applicants should use a start date of September 1, 2011.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

The notice of award is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided by postal mail or electronically through the Grants Online system to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

## 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 February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) 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)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, [http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap\\_216/naos\\_216\\_6.html](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap_216/naos_216_6.html) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.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.

In conformance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements section 15 CFR 14.36, any data collected in projects supported by NCCOS/CSCOR should be delivered to a National Data Center (NDC), such as the National

Oceanographic Data Center (NODC), in a format to be determined by the institution, the NDC, and the Program Manager. Information on NOAA NDCs can be found at <http://www.nodc.noaa.gov>. It is the responsibility of the institution for the delivery of these data; the DOC will not provide additional support for delivery beyond the award. Additionally, all biological cultures established, molecular probes developed, genetic sequences identified, mathematical models constructed, or other resulting information products established through support provided by NCCOS/CSCOR are encouraged to be made available to the general research community at no or modest handling charge (to be determined by the institution, Program Manager, and DOC).

### C. Reporting

All performance (i.e. technical progress) reports shall be submitted electronically through the Grants Online system unless the recipient does not have internet access. In that case, performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Program Manager. All financial reports shall be submitted in the same manner. All ship time use must be reported by the PI or Chief Scientist on each cruise within the performance reports.

## VII. Agency Contacts

Technical Information. Kimberly Puglise, NCCOS/CSCOR Program Manager, 301-713-3338/ext 140, internet: [Kimberly.Puglise@noaa.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Puglise@noaa.gov).

Business Management Information. Laurie Golden, NCCOS/CSCOR Grants Administrator, 301-713-3338/ext 151, Internet: [Laurie.Golden@noaa.gov](mailto:Laurie.Golden@noaa.gov).

## VIII. Other Information

### Collection of information requirements

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, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

This notification involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040 and 0348-0046.

Check List for Required and Requested Documents

SF-424

Title Page

Abstract

Project Description

References

Milestone Chart

SF-424A (One for the lead institution and each institution in a multi-institutional project and/or each subcontract)

Budget Narrative and Justification (One for the lead institution and each institution in a multi-institutional project and/or each subcontract).

Bio Sketch

Current and Pending Support

Permits

Alphabetized Collaborator List

Accomplishments from prior CSCOR support

SF-424B (requested)

CD-511 (requested)

Indirect Rate Agreement (requested)

Signed Approval from subaward/contractor institutes