

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Fiscal Year 2013/2014 Scallop Research Set-Aside

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC-2013-2003410

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.454, Unallied Management Projects

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 5 p.m. EDT on August 20, 2012.

Funding Opportunity Description: NMFS, in coordination with the New England Fishery Management Council (Council), is soliciting Atlantic Sea Scallop (scallop) research proposals to utilize scallop Total Allowable Catch (TAC) that has been set-aside by the Council to fund scallop research endeavors through the 2013/2014 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. No federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, proceeds generated from the sale of RSA quota will be used to fund research activities and compensate vessels that participate in research activities and/or harvest set-aside quota.

Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance the knowledge of the scallop fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which scallop management decisions are made. Priority will be given to scallop research proposals that investigate research priorities identified by the Council, which are detailed under the Program Priorities section of this announcement.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Scallop RSA Program was established through the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to address scallop research priorities identified by the Council. NMFS, in coordination with the Council, is soliciting proposals for scallop research to be conducted under the 2013/2014 Scallop RSA Program. Set-aside quota will be awarded to successful applicants.

B. Program Priorities

Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance understanding of the scallop resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. NMFS and the Council will give priority to funding research proposals in the following areas:

2013/2014 Scallop RSA Program Needs and Priorities

HIGHEST PRIORITIES (not listed in order of importance):

1. An intensive industry-based survey of each of the existing access areas (Closed Area I, Closed Area II, Nantucket Lightship, Delmarva, and Hudson Canyon). The primary objective of these surveys would be to estimate TACs under the rotational area management program if the data from these surveys are available by August of the prior fishing year.

2. Identification and evaluation of methods to reduce the impact of the scallop fishery on bycatch. This includes efforts to determine seasonal bycatch rates, characterize spatial and temporal distribution patterns, and/or identify discard mortality rates of yellowtail flounder and other bycatch species.

3. An intensive industry-based survey of areas that may be candidate access areas in the future (i.e., open areas with high scallop recruitment or closed areas that may open to fishing in the future, such as groundfish mortality closed areas or current habitat closed areas).

MEDIUM PRIORITY (not listed in order of importance):

1. Other resource surveys to expand and/or enhance survey coverage in areas that have the potential to be important resource areas, but currently have a lack of comprehensive survey coverage.

2. Research to support the investigation of the loggerhead turtle behavior in the Mid-Atlantic (via satellite tagging or other means) to understand their seasonal movements, vertical habitat utilization, and how and where interactions with dredge gear are occurring. This priority topic also includes monitoring of scallop dredge and trawl operations, and the development of further gear modifications if monitoring should indicate current designs are not eliminating the threat or harm to sea turtles or are resulting in unacceptable scallop catch loss.

3. Studies addressing issues identified as research priorities during the latest assessments as indicated in the Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) 50 report, incidental gear mortality, discard mortality and seasonal growth of scallops.

OTHER PRIORITIES (not listed in order of importance):

1. Other scallop biology projects, including studies aimed at understanding recruitment processes (reproduction, larval and early post-settlement stages), growth, and natural mortality (including predation and disease).

2. Investigation of variability in dredging efficiency across habitats, times, areas, and gear designs to allow for more accurate quantitative estimates of scallop dredge impacts on the seabed and development of practicable methods to minimize or mitigate those impacts.

3. Habitat characterization research including (but not limited to): video and/or photo transects of the bottom within scallop access areas, closed scallop areas, and in comparable fished areas that are both subject and not subject to scallop fishing before and after scallop fishing commences (BACI or before after control impact dredge impact studies); identification of nursery and overwintering habitats of species that are vulnerable to habitat alteration by scallop fishing; and other research that relates to habitats affected by scallop fishing, including (but not limited to) long-term or chronic effects of scallop fishing on marine resource productivity, other ecosystem effects, habitat recovery potential, and fine scale fishing effort in relation to fine scale habitat distribution. This includes projects supporting the evaluation of present and candidate Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) closures to assess whether these areas are accomplishing their stated purposes, and to better define the complex ecosystem processes occurring in these areas.

4. Scallop and area management research, including but not limited to: evaluation of ways to control predation on scallops; research to actively manage spat collection and seeding of sea scallops; social and economic impacts and consequences of closing areas to enhance productivity and improve yield of sea scallops and other species; and estimation of factors affecting fishing power for each limited access vessel.

5. Development of methodologies or alternative ways for the scallop fleet to collect and analyze catch and bycatch data on a near real-time basis (i.e., collection of scallop meat weight and quality data, specific bycatch information, etc.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under sections 303(b)(11), 402(e), and 404(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. 1881(c), respectively. The Scallop RSA Program is established through the Scallop FMP (69 FR 35193, June 23, 2004) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 648.56.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

No federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, funds generated from the sale of landed scallop RSA quota shall be used to cover the cost of research activities, including vessel costs. The Federal Government is not liable for any costs incurred by the researcher or vessel owner should the sale of set-aside quota not fully reimburse the researcher or vessel owner for their expenses. Any additional funds generated through the sale of set-aside landings, above the cost of the research activities, shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for the use of his/her vessel.

Amendment 15 set the scallop RSA TAC at 1.25 million pounds per fishing year (March 1 - February 28), and established the program as a multi-year offering to correspond with the framework specification cycle. Applicants may apply for RSA TAC for 2013, 2014, or both. Applicants may not request 2013 RSA TAC to fund research that is proposed to be conducted in 2014. Projects that encompass both years are acceptable, but must provide a detailed work plan, broken down by year, in the budget and project narrative. All scallop RSA quota awards will be made in pounds of scallops, and will not be associated with a specific fishing area or days-at-sea allocation.

In the unlikely event that the entire scallop RSA TAC is not fully expended for each year, NMFS may award unused RSA quota to compensate projects in the event of low scallop prices or to expand a project. In such an instance, a separate notification from the NEFSC Grants Program Office will be made to the applicants of the awarded RSA projects. The notification will explain the process and results will be posted on the NMFS Northeast Cooperative Research website (www.nefsc.noaa.gov/coopresearch).

To apply for set-aside quota, applicants must submit a budget that is based solely on monetary needs, which includes funds necessary to execute the research plan and funds necessary to compensate vessel owners harvesting set-aside quota. Upon project selection,

NMFS will negotiate with successful applicants on the specific RSA quota award. Priority will be given primarily to the higher technically ranked proposal, although additional factors such as individual project needs and cost effectiveness may be considered during negotiations. NMFS will establish a common scallop price estimate, based on the best and most recent data available, to determine the amount of set-aside necessary to cover research and compensation fishing expenses.

B. Project/Award Period

Proposals may be submitted for research activities that encompass all or part of the 2013 and 2014 scallop fishing years.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement depending upon the amount of collaboration, participation, or involvement by NOAA in the management of the project. Examples of substantial involvement may include but are not limited to, proposals for collaboration between NOAA scientists and a recipient scientist. Funding for contractual arrangements for services or products for delivery to NOAA is not available under this notice.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

1. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, institutions of higher education, hospitals, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, individuals, state, local, and Native American tribal governments, Federal agencies and institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. Additionally, employees of any Federal agency or Regional Fishery Management (RFM) Council are ineligible to submit an application under this program. However, RFM Council members who are not Federal employees may submit an application.

2. DOC/NOAA supports cultural and gender diversity and encourages women and minority individuals and groups to submit applications to the RSA program. 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.

3. DOC/NOAA encourages applications from members of the fishing community and applications that involve fishing community cooperation and participation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

None Required

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

1. Research proposals submitted under the 2013/2014 Scallop RSA Program must be received within the application submission period to be eligible for consideration.

2. Proposals for different and distinct projects must be submitted separately in accordance with the format requirements in Section IV.B. Multiple stand-alone projects in the same proposal will not be accepted.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application information is available at <http://www.grants.gov>. Electronic copies of the Standard Forms for submission of research proposals may be found on the Internet in a PDF (Portable Document Format) version at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/ago/grants/forms.cfm>. Delays may be experienced when registering with grants.gov near the end of a solicitation period. Therefore, NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through grants.gov. Applicants without Internet access may contact Eric Eidswick, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, by phone 508-495-2009, fax 508-495-2004, or email eric.eidswick@noaa.gov. To apply for this NOAA Federal Funding Opportunity, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, and use the following funding opportunity #: NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC-2013-2003410.

B. Content and Form of Application

Should a recipient wish to include a coversheet with his/her proposal, the coversheet should summarize key information already contained in detail within the proposal. Such information might include, for example, the program name, date, applicant name, project title, project duration, principal investigator(s), program priorities addressed, pounds requested, and funds requested broken down by research, compensation, and total value.

Applications must adhere to the provision under "Applications" and the nine requirements under "Required Elements" and must be submitted by the stated deadline. Failure to follow these provisions will result in proposals being returned to the applicant without review.

1. Applications

a. Applications submitted to the 2013/2014 Scallop RSA Program must include a Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance), including a detailed budget using Standard Form 424A, (Budget Information--Non-Construction Programs), Standard Form 424B (Assurances--Non-Construction Programs), Commerce Department Form CD-511, (Certification Regarding Lobbying), and if applicable, Standard Form SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities). These forms are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. These forms should be submitted through the Grants Online website. Applicants submitting hard copy must include one signed original and two signed unbound copies of the application (including supporting information).

b. The Standard Form SF424 must include the estimated monetary value of the entire project, including costs of compensation fishing and research project costs. This value must be recorded under item 18. Estimated Funding (e) "Other" on the SF424.

c. The Standard Form SF424A must report the total value under "Non-Federal."

d. Applicants must identify the specific research priority or priorities to which they are responding. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, it should list the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of the proposal first. Each application must address only one research investigation. If an application does not fulfill a priority category, it must be clearly stated in the application. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NMFS as to the relative merits of the project described in the application.

2. Required Elements

Proposals should be limited to 10 pages, excluding item "e" below. The format may vary, but must include:

a. A narrative project description to include project goals, objectives, and the year(s) in which they are hoping to win TAC quota. Compensation fishing can occur either during or after the research year, but cannot occur in the year prior. Funding objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but avoiding the "how and why;" and attainable within the time, funding, and resources available. Proposals should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures, describing how investigators foresee research results being used in the management and/or science arena to enhance the understanding of the scallop resource or contributing to the body of information on which management decisions are made (see Section I.B.). The main body of the narrative should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and include: (1) Project design and management, including who is responsible, expected products, and participants other than applicant; (2) project year, or years, including the duration (starting on the first day of the month and ending on the last day of the month);

(3) names and affiliations of the principal investigator(s) (PI); (4) contribution and relevance of the proposed work; and (5) a summary of the existing state of knowledge related to the project;

b. A detailed budget, including a description of the funds needed to execute the research plan and compensate vessels that harvest set-aside quota. The budget must include a breakdown of research costs including labor, vessel contracts, equipment, supplies, and overhead, as applicable. The proposal must state how the proceeds from the sale of compensation fishing activities, including those derived from incidental catch, will be divided between the vessel and applicant. Proposals must provide a description of the safeguards that will be used to ensure that the TAC set-aside will not be exceeded;

c. A list of any federal regulations that the applicant needs to have waived and a brief justification for such a waiver;

d. Each proposal must identify the activities for the vessel(s) participating in the project, including research and compensation fishing activities. All vessel(s) selected by the applicant to participate in the study should be listed in the proposal, if possible;

e. Supporting documents, including resumes, letters of intent for vessels to participate in research activities, and any relevant contracts; and

f. As part of this application process, questions from The Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants, OMB Approval Number 0648-0538, must be answered and submitted with the application. These questions include: A1-A3, A11, A12, B1, C1, D1-D3, E1, E4, F1-F3, F10-F13, H1-H24, H26, H27-H31. This form is located at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>. Failure to complete all of the indicated questions with current and relevant information will result in the application being considered incomplete.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 5 p.m. EDT on August 20, 2012.

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 program office. Electronic or hard copies received after the deadline will not be considered, and hard copy applications will be returned to the sender. Mark hard copy proposals "Attention-2013/2014 Scallop Research Set-Aside Program."

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applicants will need to determine if their State participates in the intergovernmental review process. This information can be found at the following website: www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html. This information will assist applicants in providing either a Yes or No response to Item 16 of the Application Form, SF-424, entitled "Application for Federal Assistance."

E. Funding Restrictions

1. The DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 Fed. Reg. 7696), are applicable to this solicitation.

2. The research project period may encompass all or part of the 2013/2014 fishing years. Proposals to fund research started before final approval of the project for TAC set-aside awards are eligible for consideration, but any project expense incurred prior to the final determination is done solely at the researcher's risk.

3. The 2013 RSA quota is only available to applicants that propose to conduct research in 2013. The 2014 RSA quota is available for projects that propose to conduct research in 2013 or 2014.

4. Framework Adjustment 24 to the FMP, currently under development, will establish the access area schedule for 2013 and 2014, among other measures. The harvest of 2013 RSA quota from access areas may not occur until Framework 24 is effective. The harvest of 2013 RSA quota from open areas is not predicated on the Framework 24 effective date, and could occur at the start of the 2013 fishing year (March 1, 2013), but must occur within 15 months from the start of the fishing year from which the award was made. For example, scallops awarded from the 2013 scallop RSA quota must be harvested by May 31, 2013.

5. Any portion of the 2013 or 2014 fishing year TAC awarded to compensate for research costs and participation must occur within 15 months from the start of the fishing year from which the award was made. For example, scallops awarded from the 2013 scallop RSA quota must be harvested by May 31, 2013.

6. The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred in connection by any applicant to this announcement or any proposed or selected application or project.

F. Other Submission Requirements

1. Applications should be submitted through www.grants.gov. If an applicant does not have Internet access, hard copies should be sent to NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science

Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA, 02543. Mark proposals "Attention?2013/2014 Scallop Research Set-Aside Program."

2. NOAA employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not permitted to assist in the preparation of an application, except that staff may provide information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, NMFS and NOAA employees will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or write letters of support for an application. However, the Council or NMFS contact person may provide assistance to researchers who are seeking vessels to participate in the collection of set-aside species or directly in research projects. NMFS, in consultation with the Council, may decide to hold a meeting with the public to discuss general topics concerning past RSA program accomplishments and ways to enhance communications on funding priorities and associated potential study methods. Such meetings will be publicized by NMFS through a Federal Register notice, and through the public mailing list maintained by the Council office.

3. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal assistance opportunities, including special fishing privileges. The TAC set-asides were considered under the Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment 15, and are further being evaluated under Framework 24. Applications that propose research and/or compensation fishing that is not within the scope of the NEPA analysis for Amendment 15 and Framework 24 may require the applicant to provide additional information that will serve as the basis for any further analyses.

4. Permits and Approvals

a. If field research will occur in state or federal waters, investigators must secure the appropriate vessel documentation, as determined by the Northeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division. Such documentation may include a Letter of Acknowledgment, Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), Exempted Educational Activity Authorization, or Temporary Possession Letter of Authorization. Investigators will be notified if there is no required or recommended research specific vessel documentation. In order to assist NMFS in determining whether or not the proposed research would require a permit, researchers should briefly address the following:

i. Location and Time of Year - Specify time of year and areas where research will occur (e.g., coordinates, 10-minute squares, closed areas; include map if possible);

ii. Gear Type - Specify type(s) of gear, including mesh Size or gear modification (trawl; pot; gillnet; dredge; acoustic gear, including frequency and amplitude);

iii. Effort - Specify the number of vessels, number of tows, length of tows, number of pots, duration of tended gear, sampling frequency, etc.;

iv. Catch - Specify the anticipated species composition and amount (directed catch and bycatch);

c. If an exemption from Federal regulations is proposed, include a list of the specific regulations, along with a brief justification, for each regulation that needs to be waived. Should the applicant submit a request for an EFP to NMFS, the completed application should be received by NMFS at least 60 days before the requested start date of the proposed research. NMFS may not exempt a vessel from any requirement imposed by any state. Therefore, applicants are urged to discuss with state fisheries agencies any proposed landings in their state(s), and must obtain any additional permits that may be required by such state(s).

d. Successful applicants must obtain compensation fishing permits from NMFS prior to initiating compensation fishing. NMFS will issue letters of authorization to federally permitted scallop vessels as identified by the Project Coordinator, thereby authorizing such vessels to take compensation fishing trips.

e. Projects may not have more than 50 vessels authorized to conduct compensation fishing at any given time, unless sufficient rationale can demonstrate that more than 50 vessels are needed. In addition, principal investigators and project coordinators should be aware that it may take NMFS up to 4 weeks to process requests to revise the list of vessels that are authorized to conduct compensation fishing.

f. Amendment 15 established a list of scallop management measures from which vessels that are conducting research funded by the scallop RSA program could be exempted via a letter of authorization. These management measures include crew restrictions, seasonal closures in access areas, and the requirement to return to port if fishing in more than one area. The review and issuance of these permits would not entail additional environmental review or public comment beyond that which was conducted for Amendment 15. These authorizations would apply only to dedicated research activities, and would not be available to vessels harvesting scallops for sale.

5. Applicants must specify if they are requesting 2013 and/or 2014 set-aside quota. If both, applicant must specify the amount of quota being requested for each year.

6. Successful applicants will be required to submit project results in electronic form in accordance with data collection protocols of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) and/or other data base formats as may be required by NMFS.

To apply, please go to <http://www.grants.gov>, and use the following Funding Opportunity Number (FON) #NOAA-NMFS-NEFSC-2013-2003410. Applicants without Internet access may contact Eric Eidswick, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543, phone 508-495-2009, fax 508-495-2004, or email eric.eidswick@noaa.gov.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The review panel convened by NMFS to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this Funding Opportunity Announcement (see the Review and Selection Process section of this document), will evaluate proposals by assigning scores up to the maximum indicated for each of the following criteria:

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of the proposed project: This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. Proposals should provide a clear definition of the problem, need, issue, or hypotheses to be addressed. Proposals should include a description as to their relevance to RSA program priorities, and detail how the data gathered from the research will be used to enhance the understanding of the fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. If not directly related to priorities listed in the solicitation, provide justification as to why the proposed project should be considered. (25 points)

2. Technical/scientific merit: This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Special emphasis will be given to proposals that foster and improve cooperative interactions. Proposals should provide a clear definition of the approach to be used, including descriptions of field work, theoretical studies, and laboratory analysis to support the proposed research in the area and time proposed. The time frame for utilizing research TAC and conducting the proposed research should be clearly specified. Activities that take place over a wider versus narrower geographical range, where appropriate, are preferred. (25 points)

3. This criterion assesses whether the applicant and team members possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This includes demonstration of support, cooperation and/or collaboration with the fishing industry, and qualifications/experience of project participants. Where appropriate, combined proposals involving multiple principal investigators are preferred, versus separate stand-alone proposals on closely related projects. For proposals involving multiple vessels, special attention will be given to specification of safeguards to ensure that the authorized TAC set-aside will not be exceeded. (15 points)

4. Project costs: This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. Cost-effectiveness of the project will be considered. (25 points)

5. Outreach and education: This criterion assesses whether the project involves a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This includes identification of anticipated benefits, potential users, likelihood of success, and methods of disseminating results. Where appropriate, data generated from the research must be formatted in a manner consistent with NMFS and ACCSP databases. A copy of this format is available from NMFS. (10 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

NMFS will solicit written technical evaluations from three or more appropriate public and private sector experts to determine technical merit of the proposal. A rank score will be provided for each project proposal based on the criteria described in the Evaluation Criteria section of this document. Following completion of the technical evaluation, NMFS will convene a panel, including Council members and technical experts, to review and individually critique the proposals. This review will serve to enhance NOAA's understanding of the proposals. Successful applicants may be required, in consultation with NMFS, to refine/modify the study methodology as a condition of project approval. No consensus recommendations will be made by the review panel.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings will provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. A program officer may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official based upon the selection factors below. 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 funds.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:

- a. geographically,
- b. by type of institutions,
- c. by type of patterns,
- d. by research areas, and
- 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.

5. Applicant's prior award performance.

6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.

7. Adequacy of information necessary to conduct a NEPA analysis and determination.

Key program policy factors to be considered by the Selecting Official are: (1) time of year the research activities are to be conducted; (2) ability of the proposal to meet the experimental fishery requirements discussed under the Permits and Approvals section of this document; (3) redundancy of research projects; and (4) logistical concerns. Therefore, the highest scoring projects may not necessarily be selected for an award. All sea scallop research must be conducted in accordance with provisions approved by NOAA. The Selecting Official will make final funding recommendations for RSA quota awards based primarily on the technically higher-ranked proposal, but additional factors such as individual project needs and cost effectiveness may be considered.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Review of proposals will occur during the 3 months following the date given in this announcement that the proposals are due to NMFS. Initiation of approved RSA project activities should begin during the spring of 2013 for most projects. March 1, 2013, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that their applications have been recommended for selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not authorization to begin project operations. An official notification of selection, signed by

the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that grants the set aside award and allows a project to begin. These notifications will be issued via email to the Authorizing Official and the Principal Investigator of the project. Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified either electronically, or in written hardcopy.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl, http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.

Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish sufficient information to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project. NOAA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) staff must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by NEPA, for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal assistance opportunities, including special fishing privileges. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following websites: www.nepa.noaa.gov , www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf , and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html. Consequently, applicants are required to provide, under the description of program activities, detailed information on the activities to be conducted. This shall include locations, sites, species and potentially effected habitat, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns which 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, etc.). Applicants may be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an Environmental Assessment if it is determined such 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 associated with their proposed research activities. Failure to do so shall be grounds

for rejecting an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

C. Reporting

1. Recipients will be required to submit the following financial and performance (technical) reports. These are to be submitted electronically through the Grants online system. Hard copy submissions will be accepted only if the recipient does not have Internet access. A final Financial Status Reports (SF-425) is required to be submitted to the Grants Officer no later than 90 days after the award expiration.

a. The SF425 must report \$0.00 on every line item and the comment section should read: "This is an RSA grant award which has no federal dollars associated with it. The final accounting information will be submitted with the final report."

2. Performance or progress reports are required to be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer semi-annually. These reports will be due no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of an award. The final report is due no later than 90 days after the award expiration. The format of the final report may vary, but the report must contain:

a. A brief summary of the completion report (200-word or less abstract);

b. A description of the issue/problem that was addressed;

c. A detailed description of methods of data collection and analyses;

d. A discussion of results and any relevant conclusions presented in a format that is understandable to a non-technical audience. This should include benefits and/or contributions to management decision-making;

e. A list of entities, firms, or organizations that actually performed the work, and a description of how the work was accomplished;

f. A detailed accounting of the following items is required: All fish caught during compensation fishing and research (including catch by vessels operating under a Letter of

Acknowledgment), fish landed, fish sold, and, if applicable, the disbursement of any additional funds generated through the sale of set-aside landings above the costs of the research activities; and

g. Data from research projects must be submitted in electronic format with appropriate documentation to NMFS, as requested.

3. All RSA quota that is landed, including fish landed for research purposes, must be reported to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) per the Interactive Voice Response system instructions provided by NMFS. Non-compliance with this reporting requirement could be cause for not awarding future NOAA projects.

4. The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000. “

5. Data Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), free of charge or at minimal cost to the user that is no more than the cost of distribution, except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements.

Unless otherwise noted in the federal funding announcement, a Data Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the expected temporal and spatial coverage of the data; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; and procedures for providing access, sharing, and security. Because NOAA believes it important that data sets developed with its support should be shared with the scientific community, PIs should also indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past. The Data Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criterion “Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the mission goals.”

The Data Sharing Plan (updated as needed) must be made available publicly at time of award and must remain available until the Environmental Data are made available publicly.

VII. Agency Contacts

Information may be obtained from Deirdre Boelke, New England Fishery Management Council, phone (978) 465-0492, fax (978) 465-3116, or email dboelke@nefmc.org, from Eric Eidswick, NMFS, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, phone 508-495-2009, fax 508-495-2004, or email eric.eidswick@noaa.gov, or from Ryan Silva, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, phone (978) 281-9326, fax (978) 281-9135, or email ryan.silva@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Limitation of Liability

In no event shall NOAA or DOC be responsible for application/proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures application to Federal financial assistance awards.

Freedom of Information Act

DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, "Public Information," which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the Act. Applications submitted in response to this Federal Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under FOIA. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, the applicant should identify and bracket such information or data, marking it as "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information- Limited Use." Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be maintained to the extent permitted by law.