

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: National Sea Grant College Program Aquatic Invasive Species Research and Outreach

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: OAR-SG-2008-2001200

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.417, Sea Grant Support.

Dates: Applications must be received by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) or the state Sea Grant Program by 4 PM EDT on October 11, 2007 for preliminary proposals and by 4 PM EST on February 14, 2008 for full proposals.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Sea Grant College Program seeks to fund research and outreach projects addressing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species. The goal of the program is to discover and develop information and tools that can lead to the prevention, detection, monitoring and control of aquatic invasive species threatening United States coastal, oceanic and Great Lakes communities, resources and ecosystems.

The opportunity seeks especially to support NOAA-relevant regional research and outreach priorities identified by the Regional Panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. These are discussed in section I.B., Program Priorities, below.

ADDRESSES:

Applicants from Sea Grant states must submit applications to their state Sea Grant Program, to the addresses provided by that Program. Consult your state Sea Grant Program for information on addresses. A list of Sea Grant states and contact information is provided in section IV.F., 'Other Submission Requirements' below.

Applicants not in Sea Grant states may submit applications to a nearby state Sea Grant Program, in which case they must consult the state Sea Grant Program for information on addresses. Alternatively, applicants not in a Sea Grant state may submit applications directly to the NSGO. If they are sent directly to NSGO, preliminary proposals must be submitted in paper hardcopy, to: National Sea Grant Office, Attn: Mrs. Geraldine Taylor, Invasive Species, 1315 East-West Highway, R/SG, Rm 11732, Silver Spring, MD 20910, telephone 301-734-1072. Full proposals must be submitted electronically via <http://grants.gov>, addressing opportunity number OAR-SG-2008-2001200. Applicants without internet access should consult section

IV.F., 'Other Submission Requirements', below.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The National Sea Grant College Program seeks to fund research and outreach projects addressing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species. The goal of the program is to discover and develop information and tools that can lead to the prevention, detection, monitoring and control of aquatic invasive species threatening United States coastal, oceanic and Great Lakes communities, resources and ecosystems.

The program seeks especially to support NOAA-relevant regional research and outreach priorities identified by the Regional Panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. Consult the full Federal Funding Opportunity for these priorities.

B. Program Priorities

Proposals must be for research, outreach, or both that is relevant to the National Sea Grant College Program's mission to discover and develop information and tools that can lead to the prevention, detection, monitoring and control of aquatic invasive species threatening United States coastal, oceanic and Great Lakes communities, resources and ecosystems.

Appropriate areas of research may include: biology and life history research, population dynamics, genetics, physiology, behavior, and parasites and diseases of invasive species, ecological and environmental tolerances of invasive species, impacts of invasive species at each stage of their life history on the environment, resources, and human health, research into invasive species control measures (engineering, physical, chemical, biological, physicochemical, administrative, and educational), and economic impact analysis of invasive species on marine and coastal resources, sport, commercial and tribal fisheries, the recreation and tourism industry, the shipping and navigation industry, and municipal and industrial water users.

Other appropriate areas of endeavor may include: use of research results to provide a scientific basis for developing sound policy and environmental law, public education and technology transfer, research and outreach into identifying vectors of aquatic invasive species introduction, and education and outreach activities that will transfer this information to the appropriate users.

The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's mission support goal of: Ecosystems - Protect, Restore, and Manage Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through Ecosystem-Based Management .

REGIONAL PRIORITIES. Based on input from the Regional Panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, regional invasive species research and outreach priorities for this program have been identified. Subject to appropriations and number and quality of applications received, the following programmatic priority will be applied: an attempt will be made to fund at least one project responsive to a priority of each of the regions listed below. To avoid a conflict of interest, applications from the chair, co-chair, or host entity of the Regional Panel that supplied a regional priority will not be eligible to compete for that regional priority.

(a) Great Lakes Regional Priorities:

(i) Research

Research to analyze and forecast potential changes in ballast water sources and aquatic invasive species risk to the Great Lakes based on projected trends in global trade patterns over the next 20 years; research to profile and characterize the risk to the Great Lakes associated with aquatic organisms-in-trade pathways and high-risk species. For the full list of Great Lakes Panel priorities and additional details please refer to the following document posted online at:

<http://glc.org/ans/documents/GLPResearchPriorities2007.pdf> .

(ii) Information/Education

Information and Education (I/E) priorities of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species can be found at www.glc.org/ans/pdf/I-EPriorities4-12-05.pdf . At the current time, the committee recommends a pathway-based focus on (1) developing educational tools and products to disseminate prevention messages and best management practices, (2) providing risk assessment based training concerning interrupting pathways of introduction and spread, and/or (3) systematically designing marketing strategies that identify and utilize information on economic, environmental, human health and societal impacts. To leverage benefits of existing programming, priority should be given to programs which (1) implement national campaigns (e.g., HAACP, Habitattitude, Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!) on the regional or local level, (2) scale successful local and/or regional programs (e.g., MN Sea Grant's Water Gardening project) to the regional and/or national level, and/or (3) extend successful initiatives to new pathways (e.g., extension of Habitattitude to biological supply houses, extension of HAACP to plants in trade). All projects should include funding for strong formative and summative evaluation components which incorporate measurable objectives, target stakeholders to identify successful elements, and identify types of I/E activities and materials that are considered most effective in promoting practices that advance AIS prevention and control.

(b) Gulf of Mexico/Southeast Atlantic Regional Priorities:

(Outreach) Research to determine the most effective means to change the attitudes and behaviors of people in regards to practices leading to the release or spread of nonindigenous species.

(Research) Investigations into the methodology for predicting range extensions for known invaders based upon their basic life history biology, with particular reference

to the potential effects of natural disasters (hurricanes and floods) and extreme climatic events.

(c) Mid-Atlantic Regional Priorities:

- (i) Addressing High Priority Species: Evaluate existing, and develop new, control options for Mid-Atlantic region high priority species, including the newly introduced Chinese mitten crab, mute swan, phragmites, purple loosestrife, nutria, resident Canada goose, snakehead, water chestnut and zebra mussel.
- (ii) Vector Evaluation: Evaluate the vectors of AIS introduction that pose the greatest ecological, economic and societal risks.
- (iii) Assessment of Impact: Assess the ecological, economic, and societal impacts of not investing in eradication of a species in the early stage of its invasion. In particular, efforts should focus on testing/measuring and predicting impacts from the introduction of AIS.
- (iv) Effective Rapid Response: Determine critical factors necessary to evaluate the feasibility of implementing rapid response under different conditions.
- (v) Effectiveness of Local Control: Evaluate the effectiveness of control programs implemented by local watershed organizations and NGOs.
- (vi) Susceptibility to Invasion: Evaluate what affects the susceptibility of ecosystems, either one that is a healthy, functioning or a stressed ecosystem, to invasions success.
- (vii) Detection Success: Rapid response assumes detection and it is unclear if current detection methods for tracking changes in AIS occurrence and new incursions of species are adequate for the region. Determine AIS detection effectiveness and opportunities for improvement.

(d) Mississippi River Basin Regional Priorities:

Barrier Technologies: Develop and test barrier technologies designed to prevent range expansion of Asian carp from large river system (e.g., Illinois River) into the Great Lakes.

(e) Northeast Regional Priorities:

The Northeast region is concerned about the spread of a marine invasive sea squirt (*Didemnum* sp.) that is found in nearshore, hard surface areas and offshore on cobble areas in Georges Bank, a highly productive fisheries and scallop area. This compound sea squirt can grow over other attached organisms and appears to interfere with bivalve feeding, if not overgrowing species and causing their demise. The species can fragment and regrow into large colonies when conditions are favorable. Throughout the region, it is growing aggressively and spreading quickly.

The organism has not been identified to species and therefore its region of origin, its ecology, and tolerances are largely unknown. There is a need to:

- (i) identify the species using molecular probes,
- (ii) identify its life cycle and relationship to competitors and predators,
- (iii) identify ways to prevent its further spread and to manage and control the species in nearshore and deeper water ecosystems.

The greatest challenge is to limit its spread and manage the species in Georges Bank where it may interfere with the scallop and groundfish productivity and cause even greater economic hardship to the fishing industry.

(f) Western Regional Priorities:

Proposals that target non-native aquatic nuisance species (ANS) within the western region are of the utmost priority. Proposals that focus on an ANS whose impacts or potential impacts cover or extend to a large geographic area are preferred. Proposals should address one or more of the following:

- (i) economic and environmental impacts;
- (ii) monitoring and rapid response;
- (iii) vectors of introduction;
- (iv) methods to raise awareness of decision makers;
- (v) methods to prevent, control and eradicate ANS; and
- (vi) education and outreach to pathway groups and the public.

C. Program Authority

Program Authority for the Aquatic Invasive Species Research and Outreach Program is provided by 33 U.S.C. 1121-1131.

D. Cost Principles

n/a

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Depending on the overall funding appropriation for the National Sea Grant College Program, a total of up to \$2,000,000 for FY 2008 and FY 2009 is anticipated to be available to support invasive species research and outreach projects of up to two years duration. Federal funding will be limited to between \$30,000 and \$300,000 per project. Depending on appropriations, we anticipate making around 6 awards of between \$30,000 and \$300,000 in 2008 and around 6 additional awards in 2009. We do not anticipate issuing a separate solicitation for this program in FY2009.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects can be for a maximum of two years' duration. Proposed start dates should be no earlier than August 1, 2008. Applicants selected for award in 2009 may be asked to change their start dates.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Awards may be made either as grants or, if there is substantial involvement by one or more Federal agencies, as cooperative agreements. Examples of substantial involvement may include collaboration in research, participation in selection of key personnel, or approval of key stages in the project before subsequent steps are undertaken.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, State, local and Indian tribal governments, foreign governments, and international organizations are eligible. Only those who submit preliminary proposals by the deadline are eligible to submit full proposals.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Each proposal must include additional non-federal matching funds equivalent to at least 50% of the federal funds requested; for example, a proposal requesting \$100,000 in federal support must include at least an additional \$50,000 in matching funds.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Chairs, co-chairs, and host entities of the Regional Panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force are eligible to submit applications, but are not eligible to compete for the regional priority for their region described in section I.B.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

APPLICANTS FROM SEA GRANT STATES: Applicants from Sea Grant states may obtain application information from the Sea Grant Program in their states - application package instructions may vary slightly with the applicant's state. (See section IV.F 'Other Submission Requirements' for State Program contact information.)

APPLICANTS *NOT* FROM SEA GRANT STATES: The application package is available through the nearby State Sea Grant Program to which they will submit their applications. (See section IV.F 'Other Submission Requirements' for State Program contact information.) If submitting directly to the NSGO, the full application package is available at Grants.gov under Federal Funding Opportunity number OAR-SG-2008-2001200. If an applicant does not have access to Grants.gov, materials may also be requested from Dorn Carlson listed in the Agency Contacts section.

SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAMS: Application package available at Grants.gov under Federal Funding Opportunity number OAR-SG-2008-2001200.

B. Content and Form of Application

To prevent the expenditure of effort on proposals that may not be successful, applicants must first submit preliminary proposals. Only those who submit preliminary proposals are eligible to submit full proposals.

1. FORMAT REQUIREMENTS (PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS)

If submitted in paper hardcopy, a signed original and two (2) copies of the preliminary proposals must be submitted. The number of pages in the preliminary proposal must be in accordance with the page limitations specified under "Required Elements" (i.e. project description, resumes). All printed pages in the preliminary proposal must be on metric A4 (210mm x 297mm) or 8.5" x 11" paper with at least a 10-point font. If submitted electronically, all attached documents must meet the above format requirements when printed out.

2. CONTENT REQUIREMENTS (PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS)

Preliminary proposals must include the following three elements:

(a) Signed title page: The title page should be signed by the institutional representative for the organization submitting the application. The title of the project should start with the letters "AISR:" (for Aquatic Invasive Species Research) or "AISO:" (for Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach) as appropriate. The title should then include a brief descriptive title of the project, followed by a hyphen, the letters "PI", and the last name of the Principal Investigator. If the proposal addresses a regional priority outlined in section I.B.1., the title page should include a subtitle

based on this sample format:

"A proposal addressing a Great Lakes Regional Priority." The title page should also include the name, affiliation, telephone number, email address and mailing of the Principal Investigator and the institutional representative for the organization submitting the application. It should also include the names and affiliations of all collaborators, the requested Federal funding, and amount and source of matching funds.

(b) Submit a concise (2-page limit) description of the project, its experimental design, its expected output or products, the anticipated users of the information, and its anticipated impact. Applicants should use the Evaluation Criteria for additional guidance in preparing the preliminary proposals.

(c) Vitae (1-page limit per Principal Investigator).

3. FORMAT REQUIREMENTS (FULL PROPOSALS)

If submitted in paper hardcopy, a signed original and two (2) copies of the full proposals must be submitted. The number of pages in the full proposal must be in accordance with the page limitations specified under "Required Elements" (i.e. project description, vitae). All printed pages in the full proposal must be on metric A4 (210mm x 297mm) or 8.5" x 11" paper with at least a 10-point font. If submitted electronically, the forms available from grants.gov for this competition must be used, and all attached documents must meet the above format requirements when printed out.

4. CONTENT REQUIREMENTS (FULL PROPOSALS)

Full proposals must include the following elements:

(a) Title Page: The title should be constructed as described in the preliminary proposal guidance in section 4.B.2.(a), above. If the title of the full proposal differs from the title of the preliminary proposal, the title page should include a statement in parentheses starting "Formerly: ", and giving the title used on the preliminary proposal. The Principal Investigator and institutional representative should be identified by full name, title, organization, telephone number, e-mail address, and mailing address.

(b) Project Summary: This information is very important. It is critical that the project summary accurately describes the research being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the research. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Project Summary Form 90-2, available at <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html>, but may use their own form as long as it provides the following information:

(1) Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application.

(2) Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project; start with the Principal Investigator.

(3) Funding request for each year of the project, including matching funds.

(4) Project Period: Start and completion dates. Proposals should request a start date of August 1, 2008 or later.

(5) a brief summary of the project objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested.

- (6) a brief summary of the methodology used to achieve these objectives.
- (7) a brief summary of the rationale for choosing these objectives and using this methodology.

(c) Project Description (15-page limit): Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations, are included in the 15-page limitation; literature citations are not included in the 15-page limitation. Conformance to the 15-page limitation will be strictly enforced. The project description should include:

- (1) Introduction/Background/Justification: Subjects that the investigator(s) may wish to include in this section are: (i) current state of knowledge; (ii) contributions that the project will make to the particular discipline or subject area; and (iii) contributions that the project will make toward addressing the invasive species issues.
- (2) Research or Technical Plan: (i) Objectives to be achieved, hypotheses to be tested, how the objectives relate to Program priorities; (ii) Experimental design and statistical analysis to be used; (iii) Plan of work, discuss how stated project objectives will be achieved, how the success of the project at meeting stated objectives will be measured and reported; and (iv) Role of project personnel. This section should 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).
- (3) Outcome: Identify the planned outcomes in objective, quantifiable terms. Describe how the project outcomes will enhance the Nation's ability to prevent, monitor or control aquatic invasive species. If appropriate, describe how the outcomes will affect an identified regional or state invasive species priority. Describe how the outcomes of the project will be measured and reported.
- (4) Coordination with other Program Elements: Describe any coordination with other agency programs or ongoing research efforts. Describe any other proposals that are essential to the success of this proposal.
- (5) References and Literature Citations: Should be included, but will not be counted in the 15-page project description limit.

(d) Budget and Budget Justification: There should be a separate budget for each year of the project as well as a cumulative annual budget for the entire period of the proposed project. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4, available at <http://www.seagrants.noaa.gov/funding/forms.html>, but may use their own form as long as it provides the needed information. Subcontracts, if any, should have separate budget pages. Matching funds equivalent to 50 percent of the federal funds must be indicated. Each annual budget should include a separate budget justification page that itemizes all budget items in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. Please provide details and justifications for travel, supply or equipment items in the

proposed budget.

(e) Current and Pending Support: Applicants must provide information on all current and pending federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated, regardless of source of support. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or submitted concurrently to other possible Federal sponsors, including those within NOAA.

(f) Vitae (2-page maximum per investigator)

(g) NOAA NEPA Questionnaire

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. This form is located at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>. All applicants need to fill in sections A,D,E and F. If you are proposing activities Related to Damage Assessment and Restoration, fill out section G. If you are proposing activities Related to Fisheries Sampling and Research, fill out section H. Failure to complete all of the indicated questions will result in the application being considered incomplete.

(h) Appendices:

APPENDIX A - RESEARCH PROTOCOL. Research activities funded under this program must not cause or accelerate the spread of aquatic nuisance species to non-infested watersheds. Therefore, if the proposed project involves the transport or use of living organisms that are not already established at the site of the project, the proposal must describe the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Plan or other Research Protocol that will be used to assure that these organisms are not intentionally or accidentally released to the environment in a viable state. Applicants are encouraged to examine the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) process for evaluating and managing the risk of accidental release of organisms. Examples of HACCP Plans can be found at <http://www.haccp-nrm.org/>. An alternative protocol for evaluating and managing risk of invasive species release during research activities was developed by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task force and is available at http://www.anstaskforce.gov/Documents/PROTOCOL_FOR_EVALUATING.pdf. Either model is acceptable. Research or outreach proposals that do not involve the transport or use of living organisms do not need to provide this appendix, but the application should include a statement describing why this appendix isn't needed.

APPENDIX B - LETTERS OF SUPPORT (optional).

APPENDIX C - INDIRECT COST AGREEMENT negotiated with the Federal government.

No other appendices are permitted

(h) Standard forms. Applications submitted through grants.gov will include several mandatory electronic standard forms. Applicants without internet access who plan to submit an application in hardcopy will need to submit hardcopy equivalents. Please seek guidance from those listed in section IV.A., Address to request Application Package, above.

C. Submission Dates and Times

1. PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS

All applicants have the same preliminary proposal deadlines, regardless of where the applications are submitted. Preliminary proposals must be received by the appropriate address by 4 PM EDT on October 11, 2007. Applications will be date and time stamped upon receipt.

2. FULL PROPOSALS

All applicants have the same full proposal deadlines, regardless of where the applications are submitted. Applications must be received by the appropriate address by 4 PM EST on February 14, 2008. Submissions through grants.gov will have a date and time indicator on them. Hard copies applications will be date and time stamped upon receipt.

3. FORWARDING OF APPLICATION MATERIALS

Preliminary proposals received by state Sea Grant Programs shall be forwarded by the Sea Grant Program to the National Office by October 18, 2007. Full proposals received by state Sea Grant Programs shall be forwarded by the Sea Grant Program to the National Office via grants.gov by March 13, 2008.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

none

F. Other Submission Requirements

SUBMISSION ADDRESSES

APPLICANTS FROM SEA GRANT STATES must submit applications (both preliminary and full proposals) to their state Sea Grant Program, to the addresses provided by that Program. Consult your state Sea Grant Program for information on addresses. Sea Grant states are: Alabama; Alaska; California; Connecticut; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Illinois; Indiana; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; New York; New Hampshire; New Jersey; North Carolina; Ohio; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Carolina; Texas; Vermont; Virginia; Washington; Wisconsin.

The contact information for Sea Grant College Programs may be found at: <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/SGDirectors.html> or may also be obtained by contacting Dorn Carlson listed in the Agency Contacts section.

Internet links to state Sea Grant Programs can be found at: <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/colleges/textlinks.html>.

APPLICANTS *NOT* FROM SEA GRANT STATES may submit their applications to a nearby state Sea Grant program, or directly to the NSGO. If applications are sent directly to the NSGO, preliminary proposals must be submitted in paper hardcopy, to: National Sea Grant Office, Attn: Mrs. Geraldine Taylor, Invasive Species, 1315 East-West Highway, R/SG, Rm 11732, Silver Spring, MD 20910, telephone 301-734-1072. Full proposals must be submitted electronically, via <http://grants.gov>, addressing opportunity number OAR-SG-2008-2001200. If an applicant does not have access to Grants.gov, full applications may be sent in hardcopy (one signed original and two copies) to the address given above for preliminary proposals. Include a cover letter stating that you are submitting in hardcopy because you do not have access to Grants.gov.

SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAMS must submit applications through Grants.gov.

GRANTS.GOV REGISTRATION: Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks, involving multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, you should register as soon as you decide you intend to apply, even if you are not yet ready to submit your proposal. More detailed instructions on submitting through grants.gov can be found at the grants.gov homepage, <http://grants.gov>.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria for both preliminary proposals and full proposals are as follows:

1. **IMPORTANCE AND/OR RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY** --This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this includes the degree to which the proposed activities are necessary to the goals of the program, the degree to which the potential users of the results have been involved in the planning of the activity, and the degree to which the activity, if successful, will advance the state of the art, science, or industry.

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.

3. **OVERALL QUALIFICATIONS OF APPLICANTS**--This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

4. **PROJECT COST**--This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. This includes the degree to which inter-institutional and multi-disciplinary programs have been developed in order to leverage funds and resources.

5. **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**-- This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For this competition, this includes the degree to which the potential users of the results will be involved in the execution of the activity, the quality of the plan to disseminate the results of the activity to appropriate user groups and the public, whether the project includes ways to assess the effectiveness of proposed activity.

Evaluation Criteria Weights:

The evaluation criteria are weighted differently, depending on whether a research or an outreach activity is proposed.

1. RESEARCH PROPOSAL WEIGHTS

- (a) Importance and/or relevance and applicability (35%).
- (b) Technical/Scientific Merit (35%).
- (c) Overall qualifications of applicants (10%).
- (d) Project cost (10%).
- (e) Outreach and Education (10%).

2. OUTREACH PROPOSAL WEIGHTS

- (a) Importance and/or relevance and applicability (35%).
- (b) Technical/Scientific Merit (10%).
- (c) Overall qualifications of applicants (10%).
- (d) Project cost (10%).

(e) Outreach and Education (35%).

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted at both the preliminary and full proposal stages to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

Preliminary proposals will be subject by peer review by independent government, academic, and industry representatives. Reviewers will provide individual evaluations of each proposal. The reviewers will provide no consensus advice to the Program Officer.

The Program Officer will consider these evaluations in determining which applicants will be encouraged to submit full proposals. Regardless of whether they are encouraged to submit full proposals, all applicants who submitted preliminary proposals in compliance with the deadlines and other requirements of this announcement are eligible to submit full proposals.

Full proposals will be evaluated by an independent review panel consisting of experts in the field from government, academia, and the private sector, who will evaluate each proposal in accordance with the above evaluation criteria and their assigned weights. Panel members will provide individual evaluations of each proposal, and their ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The review panel will provide no consensus advice to the Program Officer.

The Program Officer will consider these evaluations when recommending to the Selecting Official which applications should be selected for award.

C. Selection Factors

The selecting official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - (a) Geographically
 - (b) By type of institutions
 - (c) By type of partners

- (d) By research areas
- (e) By project types

3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies

4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.B.

5. Applicant's prior award performance

6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted group

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, awards for applications selected to be funded in 2008 are expected to be made by August 1, 2008. The proposed start date should be no earlier than this date. Awards for applications selected to be funded in 2009 will depend on the date of 2009 appropriations.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, authorized by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notification will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Principle Investigator of the project either electronically or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS - Administrative and National policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre- Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). A copy of the notice may be obtained at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html>.

2. 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.

3. 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.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm

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 feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition 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.

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. These reports must be submitted electronically unless the recipient does not have Internet access, in which case hard copy submissions will be accepted. All hardcopy financial reports must be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the NOAA Grants Officer.

VII. Agency Contacts

Dorn Carlson, NOAA R/SG, National Sea Grant Office, 1315 East-West Highway, Rm 11839, Silver Spring, MD 20910, telephone 301-734-1080; via electronic mail at invasive.species@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

none