

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: New Bedford Harbor Restoration Projects (IV)

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NMFS-HCPO-2009-2001658

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation.

Dates: Applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 5 p.m. EST on February 17, 2009. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will have a date and time indication on them. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Applications that are postmarked after that time will not be considered for funding. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council (Trustee Council or Council) is responsible for restoration of natural resources injured through the release of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other hazardous substances into the New Bedford Harbor Environment. The Council consists of the: 1) Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; 2) U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA represented by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service); and 3) U.S. Department of the Interior represented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Using settlement funds, the Council plans and implements projects that restore, replace or acquire the equivalent of the natural resources that have been injured. The Council intends to fund up to \$6.0 million for restoration projects addressing the natural resource injury within the New Bedford Harbor Environment. Funding will be provided through grants or cooperative agreements issued through NOAA on behalf of the Council. Approved projects that involve activities not eligible for NOAA Grants may receive funds through other Trustee agencies.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

New Bedford Harbor is located in Southeastern Massachusetts at the mouth of the Acushnet River on Buzzards Bay. The communities of Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, and New Bedford are adjacent to the harbor. The harbor and river are contaminated with high levels of hazardous materials, including PCBs, and as a consequence are on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund National Priorities List. This site is also listed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection as a priority Tier 1 disposal site. The contamination resulted both directly from discharges into the Acushnet River estuary and Buzzards Bay and indirectly via the municipal wastewater treatment system into the same bodies of water. To date, a portion of the Inner Harbor has been cleaned up and additional areas have been identified for future remediation.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund, 42 U.S.C. '9601 et seq.) provides a mechanism for addressing the Nation's hazardous waste sites, allowing states and the Federal Government to sue polluters for the clean-up and restoration of designated sites. CERCLA provides for the designation of natural resource trustees: Federal, state, and/or tribal authorities who own, manage or control the injured natural resources. Natural resource trustees may seek monetary damages (i.e., compensation) from responsible parties for injury, destruction, or loss of natural resources resulting from releases of specified hazardous substances. These damages, which are distinct from clean-up costs, must be used by the trustees to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the natural resources that have been injured, after the trustees have approved a restoration plan.

The parties responsible for the New Bedford Harbor discharges were electronics manufacturers who were major users of PCBs from the time their operations commenced in the late 1940's until 1977, when EPA banned the use and manufacture of PCBs. PCBs are human carcinogens that can be introduced to humans through eating contaminated fish and shellfish or other exposure pathways. PCBs also have adverse effects on natural resources such as marine and estuarine fish, shellfish, birds, and mammals.

Executive Order 12580 and the National Contingency Plan, which is the implementing regulation for CERCLA, designate the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, and Interior to be federal trustees for natural resources. Federal trustees are designated because of their statutory responsibilities for

protection and/or management of natural resources, or management of federally owned land. In addition, the governor of each state is required to designate a state trustee.

Trustee responsibilities include assessing damages resulting from the release of hazardous substances, pursuing recovery of both damages and costs from the responsible party(ies), and using recovered funds to restore, replace or acquire the equivalent of natural resources that were injured by the release. For the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site, there are three natural resource trustees on the Council. They are the Department of Commerce (DOC), the Department of the Interior, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Secretary of Commerce has delegated DOC trustee responsibility to NOAA; within NOAA, NOAA Fisheries Service has responsibility for natural resource restoration. The Secretary of the Interior has delegated trustee responsibility to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Governor of Massachusetts has delegated trustee responsibility to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

In 1983, the federal and state trustees filed complaints against the electronic manufacturers in federal district court in Boston alleging causes of action under CERCLA for injuries to natural resources under their trusteeship that had resulted from releases of hazardous substances, including PCBs. The complaints were resolved as of 1992 through settlement agreements with the electronic manufacturers who paid \$109 million for: (1) cleanup of the harbor; (2) restoration of injured natural resources; and (3) reimbursement of federal and state funds already expended. The Council was created as a result of the settlements.

CERCLA defines natural resources to include land, fish, wildlife, biota, air, water, groundwater, drinking water supplies or other such resources belonging to, managed by or under the control of the United States, any state or Indian Tribe. Natural resources within the New Bedford Harbor environment showing documented injury or having a high probability of injury include fish, shellfish, other marine organisms, birds, marine sediment and the water column. The fish species affected include winter flounder, tautog, scup, mackerel, silverside, mummichog, American eels and herring. Shellfish injured by the release of PCBs include blue mussel, soft shelled clam, quahog, eastern oyster, various species of crabs and American lobster. PCB contamination also affected other aquatic organisms such as amphipods, diatoms and copepods that are part of the food web and are a transport pathway for further transmission of PCBs.

The Council issued an initial Request for Restoration Ideas in October 1995 (60 FR 52164, October 5, 1995) (Round I). Fifty-six ideas were received from the local communities, members of the public, academia and state and federal agencies. The ideas were the basis for the alternatives listed in the Council's Restoration Plan for the New Bedford Harbor Environment (Restoration Plan) that was developed to guide the Council's restoration efforts. An environmental impact statement (EIS)

was prepared in conjunction with the Restoration Plan to fulfill requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued on September 22, 1998 for both the Restoration Plan and the EIS. The issuance of the record of decision allowed the implementation of 11 preferred restoration projects evaluated in the Restoration Plan.

A second request for restoration ideas (Round II) was issued in August 1999 (64 FR 44505, August 16, 1999). Thirty-five restoration ideas were submitted to the Council with total requested funding of approximately \$35.0 million from the Trust Account. The Council provided opportunities for public comment on the proposed restoration ideas. As what occurred with Round I, the project ideas were reviewed by the Council's legal and technical advisors. The Council carefully considered all public comment received and the comments of its technical and legal advisors and staff before releasing a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in which the identified alternatives were evaluated and the preferred ideas announced. The Council requested public comments on the EA and preferred ideas (65 FR 46146, July 27, 2000). A record of decision was issued on December 28, 2000 for Round II which indicated that there were 17 approved project ideas.

Round III was announced on February 1, 2005 (70 FR 5161). For Round III the Council chose to use a different method for requesting and funding projects. Rather than requesting restoration ideas, the Council requested formal applications for NOAA grants or cooperative agreements for implementing restoration projects. The applications received were evaluated by using criteria contained within the funding announcement which were consistent with the criteria and priorities previously established in the RP/EIS and used for Rounds I and II. Opportunity was provided for public review and an EA was prepared under NEPA. At the conclusion of the review there was a ranking of the applications and a determination of which projects would receive funding after considering the funds available for Round III. NOAA grants or cooperative agreements were awarded for those projects and applicants eligible to receive such awards. Other restoration projects were funded through contracts or disbursements to Council agencies. A total of six applications were selected for award out of the 15 applications received.

1. Guidance for Development of Natural Resource Project Proposals

Following the conclusion of the first round of funding for restoration projects, members of the public requested further information regarding potential project proposals to be submitted to the Council for consideration in the second round. The Council provided legal guidelines in the announcement of Round II (64 FR 44505, August 16, 1999) to be considered during development of restoration project proposals to be submitted to the Council for funding from the New Bedford Harbor Natural Resource Damages Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund). Copies of these guidelines may be requested through the Coordinator (see above).

2. Round IV Guidance

For Round IV the Council decided to use the Round III process of applying for NOAA grants and cooperative agreements and has established a target level of funding of \$6.0 million. The Council notes that like previous funding rounds the amount that will actually be expended may be more or less than this amount. Applicants should also be aware that this round is likely the last that will be available based on the amount of funds remaining in the Trust Fund and the amount of funding already committed for previously approved restoration projects. Applicants must provide complete scopes of work and complete budgets since there may not be additional funds to amend awards once all Round IV awards are provided. Applicants should anticipate future funding needs and include these in their budget. One example of an expense that should be included is funding for pre- and post-implementation monitoring for project performance.

The Council will not fund a restoration project that will be undone or negatively impacted by EPA's future remediation work, or will interfere with any ongoing remediation related work. The Council intends to continue its close coordination with EPA during development of the remediation plans and to inform the public as to EPA's cleanup schedule so that restoration proposals may be developed and implemented accordingly.

3. General

Although a proponent may have a general sense of the New Bedford Harbor environment and the injured natural resources sufficient for an initial identification of projects, precise legal meanings of certain terms are provided in the Restoration Plan. Please consult the Restoration Plan prior to submitting a project proposal. For example, see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 for the meaning of the affected New Bedford Harbor environment, and Chapter 2.1 for definitions of certain terms including "injury" and "natural resources".

If a municipality proposes a project, the Council suggests that the proposal be reviewed by the municipality's legal counsel prior to submission. In addition, please note that information submitted to the Council by all parties is included in a public record and is subject to disclosure pursuant to the federal Freedom of Information Act and the Massachusetts Public Records Law. Prior to selection of any project for funding, all proposals will be subject to public review and comment as part of an open public comment process.

B. Program Priorities

Restoration Priorities

The Council has identified the following priorities for restoration of injured natural resources for Round IV:

- 1) Marshes and/or wetlands,
- 2) Water column,
- 3) Habitats,
- 4) Living resources, and
- 5) Endangered species.

Applications should address these priorities but respondents are not limited to these areas alone. New priorities can be identified if appropriate and incorporated into the restoration planning process provided that they meet legal requirements, technical feasibility and selection criteria. Highest priority will be given to restoration projects that actually restore, replace or acquire the equivalent of an injured natural resource. Examples of previously funded restoration projects can be found at <http://www.restorenbh.gov>.

Please note that unlike previous funding rounds _recreation areas_ is no longer considered to be a Council restoration priority. The Council urges applicants to focus their attention on the other restoration priorities that would restore injured natural resources rather than the human services lost. The Council believes that sufficient funding has already been provided through previous funding rounds for recreational areas. The Council provided funding to assist the construction of Fort Taber Park and Riverside Park in New Bedford. Further the _habitat_ restoration priority has been used and will continue to be considered to acquire and preserve open space and passive recreational activities through Council-funded land acquisitions or conservation easements.

C. Program Authority

16 USC 661-667e, 42 USC 9601-9626

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that funding of up to \$6,000,000 is expected to be available for the Council's Round IV restoration projects. Based upon previous rounds, the Council anticipates that typical project awards will range from \$20,000 to \$2,000,000. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make

awards for all proposals. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for initiating restoration projects by the applicants, and the merit and ranking of the proposals. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to fund any specific project or obligate all or any parts of any available funds.

B. Project/Award Period

Awards will be made for projects where requested funding will be used to complete proposed restoration and monitoring activities within a period of 36 months from the approved start date of the project. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 150-180 days after the close of this solicitation; applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities. If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Permission to extend the period of performance beyond the 36 month award period is at the total discretion of NOAA (in conjunction with the Trustee Council) and must be requested in writing at least 60 days in advance of an award's expiration date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding mechanism for Round IV will be NOAA grants or cooperative agreements for those projects and applicants eligible to receive such awards. The Council recognizes that some projects or applicants may not be able to receive a NOAA grant or cooperative agreement due to the project or applicant type. NOAA does not have the authority to issue grants to other Federal agencies. NOAA reserves the right to utilize a different vehicle, such as a contract, if a grant or cooperative agreement is determined not to be appropriate vehicle for funding. But in order for all applications to be reviewed and considered consistently and objectively, all applicants, including Federal agencies, will use the Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424). The applications will be reviewed using the same criteria and method used for all other applications. Approved projects that do not qualify for NOAA grants may receive funds through other Trustee agencies.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include state, local and Indian tribal governments,

institutions of higher education, other nonprofit and commercial organizations and

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

One way of extending the fixed amount of funds that the Council has to work with is through cost sharing (often referred to as providing matching funds). While it is not required that applications contain cost sharing, the Council strongly encourages respondents to consider cost sharing, and if it is appropriate for a project, to discuss within the application the degree to which cost sharing may be possible. If cost sharing is proposed, applicants are asked to account for both the Council and non-Council amounts. This information will allow the Council to better plan for potential funding awards and future expenditures.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state and local government permits and approvals as required for the proposed work to be implemented. Applicants are expected to develop and design their proposals so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. Documentation of requests or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. If applicable. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow Council staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications. For more information see Section VI. B. Administrative and National Environmental Policy Act Requirements of this document.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application information is available at <http://www.Grants.gov/Apply>. Applicants without internet access can contact the Council Coordinator: Jack Terrill, New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council, c/o National Marine Fisheries Service, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; by phone at 978-281-9136; or email at jack.terrill@noaa.gov.

Any administrative questions should be addressed to Jack Terrill (see above).

B. Content and Form of Application

The required forms are as follows:

- 1) Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424
- 2) Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A
- 3) Assurances, Non-construction Programs: SF-424B
- 4) Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters: Drug Free Workplace Environment: CD-511
- 5) CD-512 (remains with applicant Do not submit as part of the application package)

Depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:

- 1) Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)
- 2) Application for Federal Assistance: CD-346 (required for the following individuals: Non-profit Organizations, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations and Joint Ventures)

If the standard NOAA application forms and instructions for applicants cannot be downloaded, contact the Council Coordinator (see above). Assistance from Council staff is available by telephone or through meetings. Assistance will be limited to such issues as the Council's goals, restoration priorities, selection criteria, application procedures, and responding to questions regarding completion of application forms. Assistance cannot be provided for conceptualizing, developing or structuring proposals and applications.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

To apply, a complete standard NOAA grant application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each application should include:

- 1) Federal application forms specified above;
- 2) a project summary that follows the prescribed format, not to exceed two pages;
- 3) a narrative project description of no more than 12 pages, including a detailed

narrative budget justification;

- 4) the curriculum vitae or resume of primary project personnel;
- 5) a site location map such as from an internet mapping source or a U.S. Geological Service topographic quadrangle map with site location(s) highlighted;
- 6) a letter documenting private landowner or public land manager support for the proposed project; and
- 7) other relevant supplemental information the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project.

C. Summary Information (not to exceed two pages)

- 1) Applicant Organization (nonprofit, university, government, etc.);
- 2) Project Title;
- 3) Site Location (nearest town or watershed, and geographic coordinates if known);
- 4) Project Start Date (not proposed award start date);
- 5) Impacted Natural Resources to Benefit from the Project - habitat(s), organism(s)(species) currently using the project area or expected to return, and any listed threatened or endangered species in the project area or in the vicinity of the project area;
- 6) Project Scope (Briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds, and proposed techniques that will be used to implement and monitor the restoration);
- 7) Area to be Restored (acreage, stream miles and/or other measurable outcome);
- 8) Project Time Line;
- 9) Permits (identify permits expected to be necessary for this project and current status of applications or consultations);
- 10) Council Funds Requested and Non-Council Match Anticipated; and
- 11) Overall Project Cost.

C. Submission Dates and Times

1. Applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 5 p.m. EST on February 17, 2009. Applications submitted through Grants.gov will have a date and time indication on them. Hard copy applications will be date and time stamped when they are received. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Proposals received after that time will not be considered for funding. No email submissions will be accepted.

2. For paper submissions - Applications must be received by or postmarked by 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time on [insert date 45 days from date of publication in the Federal Register]. Applications received or postmarked after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable.

Applications delivered by a delivery service after the postmark date will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the delivery service on or prior to the specified postmark cut-off date. In any event, applications received later than five (5) business days following the closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Applicants desiring acknowledgment of receipt of their applications should include a self-addressed post card.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete Item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs. Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are necessary and reasonable_ specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Circulars A-122, Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations; A-21, Cost Principles for Education Institutions; A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments; and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 Code of Federal Regulations, subpart 31.2 Contracts with Commercial Organizations. All cost reimbursement subawards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 150-180 days after the close of this solicitation. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed restoration activities.

2. Indirect Costs. The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent,

water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives, and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of an applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Paper applications should not be bound in any manner and should be printed on one side only. Three hard copies (including one original signed in blue ink) of each application are required and must be submitted to the New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council, c/o National Marine Fisheries Service, 1 Blackburn, Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298, Attn: Jack Terrill, 978-281-9136. Applicants may opt to submit additional hard copies (seven are needed for reviewing purposes) if it does not cause a financial hardship. One additional copy should also be submitted on a CD ROM in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF formats. Different applications from the same organization must be submitted in separate envelopes. Proposals submitted via grants.gov/Apply should follow the format guidelines set out on the www.grants.gov Web site.

- Electronic submission online: <http://www.grants.gov>
- Paper submission: New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council, c/o National Marine Fisheries Service, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298, Attn: Jack Terrill, 978-281-9136.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below.

1. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal (35 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA and the Trustee Council activities. For this competition, proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- a. The potential of the project to restore, protect, conserve, enhance, replace or acquire the equivalent of natural resources that were injured as a result of the release of hazardous substances, including PCBs, in the New Bedford Harbor Environment. This is a required provision for project acceptance. Only if a project satisfies this provision will the project be evaluated for the following factors.
- b. The location of the project within the New Bedford Harbor Environment. Projects within the affected marine ecosystem that have a direct, positive impact on the harbor environment will only be considered if they will restore injured natural resources found in or using the New Bedford Harbor Environment.
- c. The potential of the project to give the largest ecological and economic benefit to the greatest area or greatest number of people affected by the injury. Projects that benefit a particular individual rather than a group of individuals will be scored lower under this criterion.
- d. The likelihood that the project will deliver tangible, specific ecological or economic results that are measurable so that changes to the New Bedford Harbor Environment can be documented and a determination of the performance of the project as a success or failure can be made. Those applications that identify parameters and target values are likely to score higher on this criterion.
- e. The potential of the project to enhance the public's ability to use, enjoy or benefit from the harbor environment. Besides a project's success at restoring natural resources, the project will be evaluated on the basis of collateral gains in the public's ability to utilize the New Bedford Harbor Environment.
- f. The potential of the project to enhance the aesthetic surroundings of the New Bedford Harbor Environment while acknowledging the ongoing industrial and other uses of the harbor.

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (25 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, proven and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- a. The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description, including

clearly stated restoration objectives and goals, and the extent to which the implementation plan is achievable within the 36-month award period, including the ability to yield minimum project performance monitoring data.

b. The overall technical feasibility of the project from both biological and engineering perspectives, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives. Preferred projects are those that employ proven technologies that have a high probability of success. To assist in the evaluation of this criterion, the applicant should provide information on whether the technique has been used before and whether it has been successful.

c. Whether there are plans for long-term management of the restored resource, and an effective mechanism to evaluate project success, including adequate and meaningful monitoring that includes a clearly stated goal and at least one ecological structural and one functional monitoring parameter for which results are achievable within the award period.

d. Whether there is assurance that implementation of the project will meet all federal, state and local environmental laws, and will expeditiously obtain applicable permits so that on-the-ground activities will begin within the first 30 months after a project's proposed start date. Projects that require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project, including the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency and documentation of all permits already secured for the project. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, if applicable, are likely to score higher on this criterion.

3. Overall Qualifications of the Applicant (15 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

a. The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the project, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing similar projects. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged. Communities and/or organizations developing their first restoration projects may not be able to document past experience, and therefore will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases, as evidenced by the explanation of characteristics such as education, training and/or experience of primary project participants.

b. The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the

applicant to support and successfully manage the restoration work, including the availability of outside technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion. Applicants with demonstrated or potential outside expert involvement in or support for the proposed project may score higher on this criterion.

4. Project Costs (20 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project scope and time-frame. For this competition, proposals will be evaluated on the following:

a. Their cost-effectiveness. Reviewers will examine the percentage of funds that will be dedicated to each phase of the project including physical, on-the-ground habitat restoration and/or science-based monitoring, compared to the percentage for general program support such as administration, salaries, overhead and travel. Applications proposing to use funds to expand an organization's day-to-day activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. To encourage on-the-ground restoration, funding for salaries must be used to support staff directly involved in accomplishing the restoration work and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task.

b. Whether the proposed budget is realistic, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame, and sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving on-the-ground habitat restoration and a comparison with rental costs should be used to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats and similar items will be considered a low priority. The proposed budget should be complete and anticipate future funding needs for elements such as project performance monitoring.

c. The ability of the applicant to demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. If funds are requested for partial support of a project, the budget will be examined with respect to the overall project budget to allow an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio.

5. Outreach, Education and Community Involvement (5 points)

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and/or outreach strategy regarding the Trustee Council's mission. Provided that a project meets the required provision expressed in evaluation Criterion 1 that a project must "restore, protect, conserve, enhance, replace or acquire the equivalent of natural resources that were injured" will the project be evaluated for the following factors:

a. Whether the activities proposed will involve citizens and broaden their participation

in coastal habitat restoration and/or science-based monitoring, and lead to achievement of long-term stewardship for restored living marine resources and a heightened community conservation ethic. Community participation may include hands-on training, restoration and/or monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews.

b. Public outreach as it relates to the proposed project, including plans to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and their roles, sources of funding and other support provided; and the potential for the proposed project to encourage future shellfish restoration projects or complement other local restoration or conservation activities. Proposals that indicate a commitment to install educational signage at the site identifying the restoration work and recognizing the New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council and other project partners will score higher in this criterion.

c. On the depth and breadth of community support, as reflected by the diversity and strength of project partners, sponsorship by local entities, and/or written support from state and local governments or members of Congress.

d. On the potential of the project to be sustainable and long-lasting, as indicated by assurances by the applicant in the form of a letter of commitment from the affected landowner for a project on private land, or from the appropriate resource agency personnel for a project on permanently protected land, including assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose.

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened by Council staff to determine if they are eligible, complete and in accordance with instructions detailed in the standard NOAA Grants Application Package. Applications that present narrative information in the same order as the evaluation criteria set out above are likely to be more competitive, as reviewers will be more easily able to identify information that directly translates to scoring. Eligible restoration proposals will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process.

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will be evaluated by at least three individual technical reviewers consisting of members of the Council's Technical Advisory Committee or from representatives of member agencies of the Council. All proposals will be individually evaluated, rated, and ranked in accordance with criteria and weights described in this solicitation. Reviewer comments, composite project scores and a rank order will be presented to the Council. The Council will review the recommendations, accept or modify the recommendations, and make a preliminary determination on the approximate number of projects it expects to undertake. Once the Council makes a preliminary determination, the

Council will initiate a 30-day public comment period and hold a public hearing to receive comments on the Council's recommendations.

C. Selection Factors

At the conclusion of the 30-day comment period, the Council will consider the comments from the public and its advisors before making its final decisions on funding. The Council, in consultation with its Technical Advisory Committee, will select the proposals to be recommended to the Grants Management Division (GMD) for funding and determine the amount of funds available for each approved proposal. The proposals shall be recommended 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) the availability of funds; (2) the balance and distribution of funds: a) geographically, b) by type of institution, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas, or e) by project types; (3) duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA and/or other federal agencies; (4) program priorities and policy factors as set out section I.A and B; IV.D. ; (5) the applicant's prior award performance; (6) partnerships with/participation of targeted groups; and (7) adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to GMD. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scoring proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file until the close of the following fiscal year and then destroyed.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applicants generally will be identified approximately 90-120 days after the close of this solicitation. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 150-180 days after the close of this solicitation, when all NOAA/applicant negotiations and NEPA analysis and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities have been completed. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement (if any) with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the Council staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Administrative Requirements.

Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided with a copy of the award by the NOAA Grants Office, and can be found at: <http://oamweb.ossec.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/DOC%20STCsMAR08Rev.pdf>

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Office may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill, and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable.

2. 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 December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) are applicable to this solicitation.

3. 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.

4. NEPA Requirements

NOAA, acting for the Council, must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by NEPA, for restoration projects implemented through Council funding. NOAA will review applications that are likely to be successful candidates for funding consideration for compliance with NEPA under NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6, Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NAO 216-6 is located at: http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/> and the Council on Environmental Quality implementing 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 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, and aquaculture projects).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date listed in award documentation provided by NOAA GMD. Progress reports will be submitted through NOAA Grants-On-Line and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants office.

Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 - March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 - September 30 (due by October 30), and should be submitted directly to the NOAA GMD as per instructions contained in official NOAA award documentation.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information, contact the Trustee Council Coordinator: Jack Terrill, New Bedford Harbor Trustee Council, c/o National Marine Fisheries Service, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298, telephone 978-281-9136, email jack.terrill@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information