

FY2017 Marine Debris Research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Funding Opportunity Description	3
A. Program Objective	3
B. Program Priorities	4
C. Program Authority	10
II. Award Information	10
A. Funding Availability	10
B. Project/Award Period	11
C. Type of Funding Instrument	11
III. Eligibility Information	11
A. Eligible Applicants	11
B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement	11
C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility	13
IV. Application and Submission Information	13
A. Address to Request Application Package	13
B. Content and Form of Application	13
C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)	20
D. Submission Dates and Times	20
E. Intergovernmental Review	21
F. Funding Restrictions	21
G. Other Submission Requirements	22
V. Application Review Information	23
A. Evaluation Criteria	23
B. Review and Selection Process	26
C. Selection Factors	28
D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates	28
VI. Award Administration Information	29
A. Award Notices	29
B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements	29
C. Reporting	33
VII. Agency Contacts	33
VIII. Other Information	33

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Funding Opportunity Title: FY2017 Marine Debris Research

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ORR-2017-2005063

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.999, Marine Debris Program

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, December 19, 2016. Note: When developing your submission timeline, please keep in mind that the registration process in SAM.gov and Grants.gov may take several weeks (see Sections IV. D. and G. of this Federal Funding Opportunity). If you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency's system has received your application. No fax or email applications will be accepted. Use of U.S. Postal Service or another delivery service for paper applications must have a tracking number. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP), authorized in the Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. 1951-1958), provides funding to support eligible organizations to conduct research directly related to marine debris through field, laboratory, and modeling experiments. Funding for this purpose comes through the NOAA Marine Debris Program as appropriations to the Office of Response and Restoration, National Ocean Service. The MDP invites applications requesting funding for research that explores the ecological risk associated with marine debris, determines debris exposure levels, and examines the fate and transport of marine debris in nearshore, coastal environments. Projects may address one or more of these research priorities and should be original, hypothesis-driven projects that have not previously been addressed to scientific standards. Successful proposals through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. Funding of up to \$1,500,000 is expected to be available for Marine Debris Research grants in FY2017. Typical awards will range from \$150,000 - \$250,000. Funding is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 appropriations.

This is not a request for project proposals that address outreach, education, or removal of marine debris.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP), a division of the Office of Response and Restoration, leads national efforts to address marine debris. The mission of the NOAA MDP is to identify and solve the problems that stem from marine debris through research, prevention, and reduction activities, in order to conserve and protect our nation's marine environment and coastal economy from the impacts of marine debris as well as ensure navigation safety. Marine debris is defined as "any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes" (15 C.F.R. § 909.1).

A principal objective of the NOAA MDP is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to organizations with the expertise to successfully develop and execute marine debris research through scientific projects that address the research priorities listed in this announcement. The projects supported through this solicitation will improve our understanding of the ecological risks associated with marine debris including levels of exposure to debris, as well as the fate and transport of marine debris in nearshore, coastal environments. These activities align with NOAA's mission to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources, and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for NOAA trust resources.

NOAA trust resources include living marine resources and their habitats, including commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine fish and shellfish); coastal habitats; diadromous fish species; endangered and threatened marine species; marine mammals and marine turtles; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, other coastal habitats; Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). NOAA trust resources can also include marine habitats and resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves and areas under state coastal management programs, including Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes. NOAA is also interested in proposals for projects in urbanized areas; however, as with all other proposals, such projects must have a primary emphasis on research that benefits NOAA trust resources described above and must clearly lay out the direct links to such resources.

A second objective of the NOAA MDP is to promote scientific application of marine debris research results through collaboration with diverse entities and groups. For this solicitation,

consideration of local and state government resource management objectives with respect to marine debris issues is encouraged as is the communication and dissemination of research findings to relevant management agencies.

B. Program Priorities

The overarching goal of this funding opportunity is to advance the state of marine debris science by funding hypothesis-driven research projects in order to enhance resource management objectives. This goal will be achieved through rigorous, directed inquiry by the scientific community through three research priorities, which are described in further detail in the following pages.

The highest priority for this competition is for research that conducts an ecological risk assessment or uses a risk assessment framework to evaluate the likelihood that adverse ecological effects may occur or are occurring to a managed/regulated recreational, commercial, or aquaculture fishery species population or a habitat-forming foundation species as a result of exposure to marine debris. There are two secondary priorities for this competition. The first includes research that estimates exposure of a managed/regulated recreational, commercial, or aquaculture fishery species or habitat-forming foundation species to a specific type of marine debris and quantifies subsequent biological impacts to the target species. The second includes research that investigates the fate and transport of marine debris in nearshore, coastal environments.

Proposed projects may address one or more of these research priorities. Successful applicants will be those with clearly defined goals, well-articulated research questions and hypotheses, relevant and established methods to fulfill hypothesis-testing requirements including necessary statistical analyses, and thorough data analysis, including assessment of results in relation to the current scientific literature and broader impacts. Proposals are encouraged to involve collaboration among research sectors (e.g., academia, non-governmental organizations, and industry).

Proposals must have a primary emphasis on scientific research to answer discrete questions about risks associated with marine debris, exposure to marine debris, and the fate and transport of marine debris. Proposals are sought to provide a solid framework for understanding debris exposure and subsequent effects to a relevant managed/regulated recreational, commercial, or aquaculture fishery species or a habitat-forming foundation species, or systematically track the fate and transport of marine debris in nearshore, coastal environments. Proposals may choose to focus on one or more of the listed research priorities, but should keep in mind the need for a well-defined and articulated research question. All proposals should provide a rationale for the target species, debris type, habitat, and/or

geographic region of interest.

A recent systematic review of the literature found evidence for demonstrated impacts from marine debris across 13 levels of biological organization from suborganismal levels (e.g., cellular) to the organism and on up to ecological levels (e.g., population). At suborganismal levels, plastic was the most common form of debris causing demonstrated impacts. Studies suggest that roughly 25% of finfish and shellfish sold at markets (and hence, available for human consumption) have microplastics in their stomachs and that microplastics ingested by shellfish can inhibit their reproductive capacities with the potential for impacts at the population level. At higher levels of biological organization (e.g., organismal) derelict fishing gear was the most common form of debris causing demonstrated impacts. Recent research indicates that large numbers of individuals of a target species can be removed annually from a population as a result of derelict fishing gear confinement and that these removals have a substantial economic impact. In addition, some derelict gears can abrade, break, or remove individuals of habitat-forming foundation species. However, the extent to which these demonstrated impacts scale up to the ecological level (i.e., population) is largely unknown. The ability to prioritize the potential ecological risks of marine debris to species that are managed for the purposes of human consumption and focus on the risks presumed to be of greatest magnitude requires sound assessments of risk and exposure.

PRIMARY PRIORITY

1. **ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT:** Research that performs an ecological risk assessment or utilizes a risk assessment framework to evaluate the likelihood that adverse ecological effects may occur or are occurring to a managed/regulated recreational, commercial, or aquaculture fishery species population or population of habitat-forming foundation species as a result of known exposure to marine debris.

a. Ecological risk may be expressed quantitatively through probabilistic estimates of both the exposure elements (e.g., debris concentration) and adverse effect (e.g., confinement, ingestion, abrasion). The likelihood of adverse effects may also be expressed through semi-quantitative or qualitative comparison of exposure and effects.

b. While all species will be considered, we are placing special emphasis on freshwater, estuarine, or marine populations that serve as a seafood resource and are managed as part of an established commercial, recreational, or aquaculture fishery and proposals that emphasize these species will score higher in this competition. We will also consider populations of foundation species recognized as Essential Fish Habitat for a specific commercial, recreational, or aquaculture fishery. Projects should be focused at a regional scale.

c. While all marine debris material types will be considered, proposals that estimate the risk associated with microplastic ingestion as well as the risk of confinement or entanglement of a target species in its respective derelict gear (i.e., not bycatch) will score higher in this competition. Proposals that estimate risk to habitat-forming foundation species as a result of impacts from derelict fishing gear (e.g., abrasion, breakage, removal) will also score higher.

d. Applicants should work closely with local resource managers to ensure that the assessment population of interest reflects management goals. The assessment population of interest must be clearly and explicitly defined. For example, risk may be evaluated for individuals of a species, the general population, certain life stages (e.g., juveniles or adults), or population subgroups that are recognized as highly susceptible and/or highly exposed to marine debris. However, proposals that focus on populations or population subgroups will score higher. Letters of support from management agencies are helpful in demonstrating support for the project.

e. Applicants should work closely with local resource managers to develop and clearly articulate relevant population or subpopulation assessment endpoint(s) of interest with respect to the assessment population (i.e., attribute of the assessment population to be protected) that are ecologically relevant, reflect policy/management goals and societal values and will lead to informed decision making. For individual organisms within the target species population, overall health is an example of an assessment endpoint. Extirpation, abundance, or yield/production are examples of assessment endpoints at the population-level. For habitat, area and quality are examples of assessment endpoints.

f. Applicants should also work closely with local resource managers to also develop and clearly articulate relevant measurement endpoints (i.e., measurable biological effects of exposure to marine debris that relate to or are predictive of the assessment endpoint). Mortality, growth, fecundity are examples of a measurement endpoints for individual organisms. At the population-level, occurrence, numbers/density, or reproductive performance are examples of measurement endpoints. For habitat, photosynthetic rate is an example of an assessment endpoint.

g. The proposal must include a working conceptual model that describes and illustrates the relationships among marine debris, exposure, and ecologically relevant endpoints including assessment endpoints and measurement endpoints (when appropriate). The conceptual model should describe how the marine debris type in question might affect the species at higher levels of biological organization (e.g., population).

h. Use of existing data sets are encouraged to the extent possible and practicable. Please note that NOAA MDP does NOT have data available for researchers to use in a risk assessment. Proposals should describe the datasets likely to be used in the risk assessment, including whether those data already exist or require collection. If data are not available for a critical component of the risk assessment, gap filling experiments and field or modeling studies are acceptable and highly encouraged.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES

1. EXPOSURE/RESPONSE ANALYSIS: Research that estimates the exposure to marine debris for a managed/regulated recreational, commercial, or aquaculture species or habitat-forming foundation species and quantifies/characterizes subsequent biological responses/effects as a result of said exposure.

Data on exposure and response are critical for conducting an ecological a risk assessment, yet these data are not readily available for many species with respect to marine debris exposure. Existing marine debris exposure studies have been conducted in the laboratory or have relied on modeling of both a species' distribution and the distribution of marine debris as opposed to observations/documentation of exposure in the field. Not surprisingly, the available data indicate that high exposure to marine debris is correlated with negative impacts (e.g., ingestion, entanglement, confinement).

a. The exposure analysis should describe how an individual/population comes in contact with debris, including quantification of the amount of contact across space and time (e.g., magnitude, frequency, duration of exposure). The analysis may also describe exposure sources, pathways, routes, and uncertainties in the analysis.

b. We are placing special emphasis on exposure to derelict gear from the respective (or associated) fishery as well as exposure to microplastics. Proposals that consider these debris types will score higher in the competition.

c. We are placing special emphasis on regional field studies designed to describe/ estimate exposure to marine debris (and subsequent biological responses/effects) in a species' natural environment (to the extent practicable). Studies that attempt to estimate exposure at a global scale are not a priority for this competition.

d. Lab experiments will be considered and should examine environmentally relevant

concentrations of marine debris. A sufficient number of debris concentrations (exposure levels) should be evaluated in order to generate an exposure-response curve (e.g., range finding exercise) as a means of determining threshold levels of exposure. As an example, the relationship between environmental debris concentrations (exposure/external dose) and fraction ingested (internal dose) followed by the relationship between amount ingested (dose) and biological impacts (response). Corresponding effects should be documented at each exposure level.

e. While all species will be considered, we are placing special emphasis on freshwater, estuarine, or marine populations that serve as a seafood resource and are managed/regulated as part of an established commercial, recreational, or aquaculture fishery and proposals that emphasize these species will score higher in this competition. We are also emphasizing exposure for foundation species recognized as Essential Fish Habitat for a specific commercial, recreational, or aquaculture fishery. Projects should be focused at a regional scale.

f. Proposed projects will score higher in this grant competition if applicants work together with environmental resource and/or fisheries managers to identify specific management issues or concerns to be addressed. Collaboration with local resource management agencies, policy makers, or industry is encouraged. Letters of support from management agencies are helpful in demonstrating support for the project.

g. Proposals that document the anticipated use of the resulting exposure/response analysis into a future risk assessment or risk assessment framework will score higher in this competition.

2. FATE AND TRANSPORT: Research that investigates the fate and transport of marine debris in surface waters once it enters nearshore, coastal environments.

Recent research focusing on nearshore marine debris transport suggests that for some areas, regional marine debris sources are retained in the nearshore environment but upstream sources within the region (e.g., population center) or maritime activities (e.g., presence of recreational / commercial fishery) can greatly influence the local spatial distribution. Understanding marine debris transport in nearshore, coastal environments would help determine the contribution of local versus foreign sources and sinks of debris and support potential prevention and/or reduction measures (e.g., local waste management practices) and provide valuable data in support of marine debris risk assessment. However, most ocean circulation models used to predict the fate and transport of marine debris operate globally or at the scale of ocean basins and do not incorporate tidal dynamics and other local processes

(i.e., wind, currents) that may influence nearshore, coastal marine debris accumulations or do not couple model predictions with in situ observations of marine debris.

a. Research should focus on the movement of debris from land-based sources (e.g., consumer products and fragments generated from said products introduced from the shoreline or river outflows).

b. Research may focus on a general (e.g., plastic particles) or a specific (e.g., plastic beverage bottles, fishing nets) debris type with justification for the selection.

c. Research may include (but is not limited to) field, lab, and/or modeling studies on:

- i. remobilization dynamics of shoreline-stranded debris
- ii. debris settling rates in nearshore environments
- iii. entrainment rates within nearshore environments
- iv. export rates from nearshore environments to open ocean

d. Due to the dynamic nature of coastal environments, priority will be given to those studies with a regional or local focus. Studies of fate and transport of marine debris at a global scale are not a priority for this competition. Applications should provide justification of the locality selection.

e. Priority will be given to those projects that link the proposed work to a specific regional/local management plan or management objective (e.g., waste reduction), or if collaboration with local policy makers or industry is pursued. Letters of support from management agencies are helpful in demonstrating support for the project.

The priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's Mission to protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystem-based management. This opportunity supports the NOAA commitment to conduct science that benefits living marine resources and navigation safety, as well as NOAA's mission to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our nation's economic, social and environmental needs. The priorities of this opportunity also address the 2016-2020 MDP Strategic Plan research goal of identifying, analyzing, and increasing our understanding of the environmental and societal impacts of marine debris by assessing impacts and risks to targeted species and sectors.

Projects with a primary emphasis on the development of methodologies for sampling marine debris in the environment are not a focus of this grant competition and will receive lower priority. Projects that solely characterize the distribution of marine debris in the environment

are not a focus of this grant competition and will receive lower priority. Proposals emphasizing general program coordination are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization's day-to-day activities or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead, and travel. Because funds are limited, large equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats, and similar items will be a low priority.

Applicants should also note that the following activities, in general, will not be considered for use of federal dollars under project awards: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation.

Applications addressing other types of pollution not fitting the definition of marine debris provided in Section I.A. are not priorities for this solicitation and may not be considered.

C. Program Authority

Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. 1951-1958).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding of up to \$1,500,000 is expected to be available for this grant solicitation. The actual funding amount available is contingent upon the availability of FY2017 Congressional appropriations. NOAA does not plan to fund proposals with a budget less than \$75,000 or more than \$350,000 under this solicitation. Typical project awards range from \$150,000 to \$350,000. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for any or all proposals. The number of awards to be made under this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications invited, the amount of funding requested by recommended applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to NOAA by Congress.

NOAA anticipates that between 2 and 5 awards will be made under this solicitation. The exact amount of funds to be awarded and the number of awards made will be at the discretion of NOAA following pre-award negotiations with highly meritorious applicants. NOAA may request that a highly ranked applicant submitting more than one meritorious proposal combine all or parts of its proposals into one award. Publication of this opportunity does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of available

program funds. Awards may include funding from other programs or agencies.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications shall cover a period of performance of two years in duration. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be August 1, 2017 – applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed project activities. Applicants selected to receive funding may be asked to modify the project start date due to potential delays in federal appropriations. Applications for renewal or supplementation of previously-awarded NOAA MDP projects are allowed, however any proposal to continue work on an existing project will be subject to the competitive process and will not receive preferential treatment. In some cases NOAA may fund a project with incremental funding, usually in a multi-year format. If incremental or multi-year funding is awarded, in which NOAA only obligates funds initially for the first phase of a project, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent time periods; additional funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to program mission and priorities, and the availability of funds.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements. NOAA staff will be substantially involved in several aspects of the project. Involvement may include, but is not limited to, performing NEPA compliance review, support in developing and/or reviewing study approach, methodologies and conceptual models, tracking the progress of research efforts through site visits, progress report evaluation, and conference calls, developing meaningful performance measures to assess project success, reviewing project reports and any subsequent manuscript drafts, and support in developing public-facing communication materials or events to highlight marine debris research activities.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

In accordance with the Marine Debris Act, eligible applicants are state, local, and tribal governments whose activities affect research or regulation of marine debris and any institution of higher education, nonprofit organization, or commercial (for-profit) organization with expertise in a field related to marine debris. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Interested federal agencies may collaborate with eligible applicants but may not receive funds through this competition.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of the NOAA Marine Debris Program is to fund projects that leverage the investment of Federal funds with other contributions from a broad range of public and private partners. To this end, Federal funds may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of a project under the Marine Debris Act. Applicants must provide a minimum 1:1 ratio of non-Federal matching contributions to NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed project. In addition to required cost sharing, NOAA encourages applicants to leverage additional investment where possible.

"Cost share or matching" is defined by 2 C.F.R. 200.29 as "the portion of project costs not paid by Federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by Federal statute)." Any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind contributions, will be accepted as part of an applicant's cost share or matching when the contributions meet the criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. 200.306. For example, matching funds may come from a variety of public and private sources and may include third party in-kind goods and services (e.g., private boat use, volunteer labor, etc.). In addition, applicants are permitted to combine contributions for allowable costs from non-Federal partners when they meet the criteria in Section 200.306, such as not being contributed as match for other projects, and being available within the project period stated in the application. Federal contributions cannot be used as match without a specific legal authority, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants may also choose to designate part or all of their Federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. Refer to Section IV. F. 2. "Indirect Costs".

If the match requirement cannot be met, the Marine Debris Act allows the NOAA Administrator to waive all or part of the matching requirement if the applicant can demonstrate the following:

- 1) No reasonable means are available through which applicants can meet the matching requirement and
- 2) The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

Any applicant wishing to request a match waiver must provide a match waiver request letter or provide other language in the required budget narrative as a part of the application package being submitted. The request must contain a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, descriptions of attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the incorporation or local availability of matching contributions.

In accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA has waived the requirement for local matching funds to applicants in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All applicants should also note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4. "Project Costs." As such, if available, the inclusion of matching contributions is encouraged.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the cost share amount reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should carefully document cost sharing, including but not limited to, the computed value of services and/or resources provided by the applicant's organization or a third party (i.e., real property, equipment, supplies and expendable goods) as well as facilities and administration costs. Letters of commitment for any secured matching contributions expected for an award should be submitted as an attachment to the application.

The Marine Debris Act also allows the NOAA Administrator to authorize, as appropriate, the non-federal share of the cost of a project to include money paid pursuant to, or the value of any in-kind service performed under, an administrative order on consent or judicial consent decree that will remove or prevent marine debris. See 33 USC 1952(c)(3).

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

The Marine Debris program adheres to the principles of scientific integrity. This policy can be found at: <http://nrc.noaa.gov/scientificintegrity.html>.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms, general instructions, and supplementary instructions specific to the NOAA Marine Debris Research Grants competition, can be found on Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If the application forms and instructions for applicants cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 240-533-0425).

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications should be sufficiently detailed in accordance with the guidelines and information requirements listed in this Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), and should be able to be completed within the specified project period.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through the Grants.gov website. Applications submitted through the Grants.gov website should combine the proposal's files as much as possible, to reduce the number of files uploaded to an application.

Please visit <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants> for helpful information on putting together and submitting the above documents/information.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application must be mailed to the NOAA Marine Debris Program (see Section IV. G. "Other Submission Requirements" for complete mailing information). Forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511 paper-copy submissions must be signed by the application's Authorized Representative. **IF PAPER COPY APPLICATIONS ARE NOT SIGNED BY THE AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE, THE APPLICATION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR REVIEW.** Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound or stapled in any manner. NOTE: applications must adhere to page limits and any pages that exceed the limit for each section may not be reviewed. Files that cannot be opened or downloaded will not be reviewed. Full proposals will not be accepted if sent via fax or email.

Each full proposal application must contain the following documents, unless otherwise noted below:

- SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A - Budget Information, Non-construction Programs
- SF-424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs
- CD-511 - Certifications Regarding Lobbying
- SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: (if applicable)
- Cover Sheet (described below, 1 page or less);
- Project Description (described below, 15 pages or less);
- Data Sharing Plan (described below, 2 pages or less);
- Budget Narrative (described below, 4 pages or less, and include a budget table);
- Curriculum vitae or résumé of each of the primary project personnel;
- Maps with site location(s) highlighted, where applicable;
- Letter(s) documenting partner support; and
- Other relevant attachments important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as summaries of regional marine debris action plans or project site photographs, or documentation about any permits necessary to perform the project (max. 10 pages).

The following sections describe the proposal's content requirements.

1) Cover Sheet (1 page or less):

- a) Project Title;
- b) Principal Investigator and Co-PI Information: Name, Organizational/ Institutional affiliation, Physical Address, Telephone Number and Email Address.
- c) Project Overview: Briefly describe the objectives of the research project, methods to be utilized and potential for advancing the state of marine debris science, and broader impacts/benefits to marine resources and society..
- d) Project Location: Please indicate the State or general geographic area where the project will take place.
- e) Budget and Duration: approximate Federal funds requested, non-Federal match anticipated, and project duration (in months).

2) Project Description (15 pages or less).

When writing the Project Description, applicants should understand the components of the evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. "Evaluation Criteria" in this announcement), as they explain how proposals will be scored for the application to be competitive. The Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Figures, tables, and other visual materials such as photographs are included in the 15-page limitation. URLs that provide supporting information should not be used.

The Project Description should clearly describe the work to be undertaken and must include:

- a) Introduction : A summary of the current understanding of the state of marine debris science (as it relates to the research priority chosen for study) that establishes the context of the work being proposed. Please discuss how the proposed work relates to the current state of marine debris knowledge, the scientific significance, as well as how the project will make broader contributions to the field. Include the type(s) of marine debris to be addressed (i.e., specific derelict fishing gear, land-based debris, microplastics, etc.). Include a justification for the chosen target species (for ecological risk assessment and exposure level priorities) as well as for the study area/region of interest (all priorities).
- b) Hypothesis or Research Question: A clearly stated hypothesis or research question that directly addresses risk management or resource/environmental management objectives in the specified region.
- c) Methods and Study Area: An outline of the general plan of work, including the

broader study design and a clear, concise outline of methods, procedures, and activities to be performed. For the fate and transport priority, please describe how the nearshore environment is delineated (e.g., distance from shoreline or other criteria).

i. If addressing the ecological risk assessment priority, please include a conceptual model or adverse outcome pathway that outlines the cause-and-effect relationships or provides the direct/indirect lines of evidence that link marine debris impacts across biological levels of organization.

ii. Expected Results: Describe potential outcome measures that will be used to track the success of the project. Research outcome measures may include (but are not limited to) the following:

iii. A description of how the proposed project will advance knowledge in the field of marine debris particularly resource management decisions;

iv. Potential benefits the research may have on living marine resources and society;

v. Anticipated submission of a manuscript to a peer-reviewed, scientific journal;

vi. Identification of appropriate management/regulatory actions to be taken in response to the identified risk;

vii. Lessons learned - identification of critical themes that may (or may not) be exportable to other situations; and

viii. Communication strategy for informing appropriate stakeholders.

d) References Cited: This section should include all references to source materials cited within the Introduction and Methods sections. Please follow any accepted scholarly format for citations that includes authors' names, year of publication, article and journal (or chapter and book) title, volume number, and page numbers. The Reference Cited section is not included in the 15-page limit but should include bibliographic references only (i.e., no additional parenthetical information)

e) Project Implementation Timeline with Milestones: Describe the anticipated project duration (not to exceed 24 months) and the timeline and milestones for completing project objectives.

If sub-awards are part of the proposal, briefly describe the process that will be used to identify recipients and justification for that process.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires NOAA to analyze a project's potential environmental impacts, hence applicants are required to provide detailed information on the project's activities. To support NOAA's analysis the Project Description should include details about site locations (please be specific as possible with location), species and habitat(s) to be affected, on-the-ground project activities and processes proposed, the time of year that work will take place, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, potential

introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, impacts to coral reef systems). Successful applications cannot be recommended for funding until NOAA completes the NEPA process. Applicants may be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants may 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. Failure to accommodate such measures may result in denial of an award. Special award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding NEPA compliance requirements. Projects that would require permits to complete the project should list them and include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, documentation of all permits already secured for the project, and an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired. The type of detailed information described in this paragraph is critical to evaluating the significance of a project and its readiness to use available funding. See Section VI. B. 10. of this FFO for more information.

5) Organizational Structure and Project Staff: Describe the organizational structure of the applicant, and the qualifications of project staff. Include a CV for all key personnel. If applicable, describe any previous NOAA involvement in and/or support for the project and include name(s) of any relevant NOAA staff.

3) Data Management Plan (2 pages)

Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how environmental data and information collected or created under a NOAA Marine Debris Program cooperative agreement will be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, if requested. Such data must be made available in a timely fashion (typically within two years), and should be free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction.

The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in Section VI. B. 9. below. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible.

A sample Data Management Plan may be found at: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants>

4) Budget Justification (4 pages or less, including a budget summary table)

To help draft the proposal budget, a Budget Narrative Guidance document (including content, format) can be found at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/training.html>.

The narrative budget justification should describe in detail the information listed in the applicant's SF-424A budget. It should describe total project costs, which include both the Federal and non-Federal shares, and should be organized by the object class categories from the SF-424A. Each object class should be described in as much detail as possible. The object class breakdown should match those found on SF-424A.

The narrative budget justification should also indicate if the proposal has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The source of any matching funds, including applicant or third party in-kind contributions, should be explained. If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a summary budget for the entire project should be provided; any funding other than the proposal request and match should be considered additional leverage.

The narrative budget justification should also indicate if the applicant is requesting a waiver of all match requirements, as outlined above in Section III. B. "Cost Share or Matching Requirement." As previously stated, in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA has waived the requirement for local matching funds to the insular areas defined above in Section III. B.

NOAA assesses budgets to determine the reasonableness, necessity, and adequacy of proposed costs for accomplishing the project objectives, and performs a cost analysis to assure that costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable in accordance with applicable federal cost principles.

Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving the project's stated goals, and a comparison with rental costs should be provided to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats, and similar items will be a low priority.

5) Other Application Submission Information

Participant safety is critically-important during project implementation. Proposals should

demonstrate meaningful consideration for the safety of project participants during project activities. It should be noted that all funded projects will be required to have a written safety plan governing all project-related activities, especially regarding the safety and management of interns and volunteers. The safety plan should consider safety at all project sites during and after project implementation and take into account potential safety concerns for current and future uses of the project site.

If a project requires scuba diving or the use of surface-supplied air, it is the responsibility of the recipient organization to ensure that divers are qualified and trained to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. The organization must describe their capacity (appropriate insurance, safety policies, etc.) to effectively oversee all proposed diving activities in the proposal. All diving activities must meet, or be specifically exempted from, OSHA guidelines. Assuming all other relevant safety conditions are satisfied, divers that are not advanced divers may perform only simple activities, such as underwater surveys and/or removal of light, non-entangling objects. Advanced divers are divers with advanced diving training for the proposed tasks and in compliance with OSHA guidelines. Snorkeling activities are similarly restricted, in that snorkelers should complete only simple activities such as surveys and removal of light, non-entangling objects. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any diving activities under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of diving being undertaken.

Activities that should be performed only by advanced divers include but are not limited to the following:

- Using hand tools or moving or lifting heavy objects where the tools or objects weigh more than 25 pounds underwater;
- Performing underwater tasks that require substantial physical exertion;
- Using lift bags; and
- Underwater removal of potentially entangling debris, such as nets, crab or lobster pots, or fishing line.

Applicants should not assume NOAA has any prior knowledge relative to the merits of the project described in the proposal. As such, proposals should include the relevant level of detail. Letters of support from partners, local and state government resource management agencies, and Congressional representatives are also helpful in demonstrating support for the project. Inclusion of supplementary materials (e.g., letters of support, copies of secured permits) are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the project narrative page limit, although supplementary materials should not exceed 10 pages. Such supplementary

information should be combined and submitted as a single file in the Grants.gov application.

Files uploaded to Grants.gov should not have any special characters in the filename (example: &, @, *, %, /, #, -), and filenames should be limited to less than 50 characters.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants should: (1) Be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting an application; (2) provide a valid Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number on an application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. The federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant. Applicants should allow a minimum of seven days to complete the SAM registration, although complete registration for SAM may take several weeks if problems arise. Registration is required only once but must be periodically renewed. Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.

D. Submission Dates and Times

BEGIN YOUR APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS EARLY.

Proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, December 19, 2016. Note: When developing your submission timeline, please keep in mind that the registration process in the online System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and Grants.gov may take between three and five business days or as long as several weeks (see Section IV. G. of this announcement). If you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning whether NOAA's system has received your application. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after 11:59 p.m. EST, December 19, 2016 will not be considered for funding.

PAPER APPLICATIONS RECEIVED LATER THAN 5 BUSINESS DAYS FOLLOWING THE CLOSING DATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. No fax or email applications will be accepted.

IMPORTANT: Applicants are strongly advised to submit in advance of the deadline. For all applicants, adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Volume on Grants.gov is at times extremely heavy. Applicants may submit in paper format according to the requirements of this announcement. Applicants submitting a paper application should allow adequate time to ensure it will be received on time.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grants programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications for federal financial assistance are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." All applications for funding under this competition are required to complete item 19 on the 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 SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

F. 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. Currently, allowable costs are determined by reference to 2 C.F.R. 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." All sub-awards are also subject to these federal cost principles. Award recipients are subject to 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.326 when implementing contracts under an award.

Any pre-award costs incurred before the NOAA Grants Office provides a notice of award are at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be August 1, 2017. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing plans for proposed project activities. Pre-award costs are allowable only with the written approval by NOAA under 2 C.F.R. 200.458 except to the extent allowed for research awards under 2 C.F.R. 200.308(d)(4).

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. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates may propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been Federally-approved and documentation is readily available.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: The NOAA contact for indirect costs is Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division; lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

G. Other Submission Requirements

NOAA WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE SUBMISSIONS. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Applicants should note that it may take up to four weeks or even six weeks for first time users to register with Grants.gov and the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register with SAM. Applicants should allow a minimum of five days to complete SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically.

NOTE: Even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or its SAM registration (formerly Central Contractor Registration [CCR]) may need to be renewed or updated prior to submitting to Grants.gov. (Note that an old CCR username will not work in SAM; you must create a new SAM User Account to renew or update your registration). Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days. All applicants have to be registered in SAM in order to apply via Grants.gov and to be funded by NOAA. For further information please

visit the SAM web portal (<http://www.sam.gov>). See also 2 C.F.R. 25. Electronic submission is encouraged.

Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

In addition, the Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete following submission through Grants.gov. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application package (as outlined in Section IV. B. "Content and Form of Application") must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, December 19, 2016. Mailed applications must have a tracking number and be received within 5 business days of the deadline. The mailing address for paper applications is: Tom Barry, NOAA Office of Response and Restoration, ATTN: MDP Project Applications, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4 Rm. 10239 N/ORR5, Silver Spring, MD 20910

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Technical 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. Applications that address the issues contained in these criteria are likely to be more competitive.

1) Importance and Applicability of Proposal (20 points):

This criterion ascertains whether the proposed work is relevant to the goals set out by the NOAA Marine Debris Program in this Federal Funding Opportunity. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The proposal adequately addresses a marine debris research priority as described in this funding opportunity (i.e., ecological risk assessment, exposure/response analysis, or nearshore fate and transport) and priority species and debris types as described in Section I. B. are the focus of the study. (10 points)

- The proposed research relates to the current state of marine debris knowledge, is based on sound rationale, and is scientifically significant. The potential of the proposed work to advance knowledge and understanding within the field of marine debris on the topic(s) of ecological risk, exposure/response, and fate and transport in nearshore environments. (10 points)

2) Technical and Scientific Merit (40 points):

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- The proposal has clear objectives with identification of a specific research question(s) or testable hypothesis(es) that will advance the state of knowledge of marine debris on the topic(s) of ecological risk, exposure/response, and fate and transport in nearshore environments. The overall method/approach is well-organized and is appropriate to addressing the project's questions with a scientifically sound experimental design and technical feasibility. The timeline for the project is reasonable and the proposal contains all critical/relevant design elements as described in Section IV. B. 2. (20 points)

- The extent to which the proposed research addresses specific resource management objectives/applications, and whether collaboration with local resource managers or industry is pursued. The proposal provides realistic mechanisms to assess project success (10 points)

- The proposal includes a Data Management Plan including descriptions of the types of environmental data and information created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. (5 points)

- The extent to which the applicant provides sufficient detail to complete a NEPA review, and provides assurances that implementation will meet all federal, state, and local environmental laws. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed debris research activities are legally permissible in the project area are likely to score higher on this criterion. See Sections IV. B. 2. and VI. B. 10. for more information. (5 points)

3) Overall Qualification of Applicant (10 points):

This criterion ascertains whether the funding applicant has the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The demonstrated ability or the potential of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the Principal Investigator (PI) and any co-PIs, in designing, implementing, and effectively managing and overseeing marine debris research projects. (8 points)

- The facilities, grants management staff, and/or administrative resources available to the awardee are adequate to support and successfully manage project/grant responsibilities. (2 points)

4) Project Costs (20 points):

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. 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. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The total project budget is likely to result in an effective and successful project, and is based on the applicant's stated objectives and timeframe. Applications proposing to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. (8 points)

- The proposed budget is sufficiently detailed, realistic, and reasonable. The budget breakdown and justification is organized by object class as listed on form SF-424A, and cost share or match is clearly identified. (5 points)

- The overall leverage of other anticipated project funding, including cost share or match. Other than those proposals eligible for a waiver according to Section III. B. "Cost Share or Matching Requirement" (above), NOAA requires non-federal cost-sharing at a minimum 1:1 ratio of required matching contributions to federal funds. These funds or other resources should improve cost-effectiveness and further encourage partnerships among government, management, industry, and academia. Applications that provide documentation of secured

match are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

- The demonstrated need for NOAA funding to carry out the project and whether NOAA support is critical for project activities to be implemented. (2 points)

5) Communication of Results (10 points):

This criterion assesses whether the proposed activities provide a focused strategy to share the research findings with resource managers, the public and other stakeholders, and clearly explains how this will be executed. Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The level of professional engagement (ie. presentations of results at relevant scientific venues) and the potential for the proposed project to encourage future research studies. This includes the likelihood of project researchers to publish study results in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. (5 points)

- Whether letters of support from local and state government resource management agencies or other project collaborators are included with the proposal, and are positive and indicate support for the project's objectives. (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened to determine if they are eligible, complete and responsive to this funding announcement. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application with a minor administrative discrepancy that can be easily rectified or cured. Eligible proposals will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process.

Applications will be evaluated by at least three professionally and technically qualified reviewers according to the evaluation criteria and weights described in this solicitation. Reviewers may include NOAA officials, officials from other Federal agencies and state agencies with subject matter expertise, (e.g., coastal management agencies and fish and wildlife agencies), and other private and public sector experts. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project. If more than one non-Federal reviewer is used, reviewers may discuss applications with each other, but scoring will be on an individual basis and no consensus advice will be given. After the technical review, a panel will be convened to make final recommendations to the Selecting Official regarding which proposals best meet the program objectives and priorities (Sections I.A. and I.B.). The panel will be comprised of federal employees and may convene in person or by teleconference or video conference. The panel will be presented with the top ranked applications (based on the

results of the technical review), technical review scores, and comments for each application. The panel will rate all top ranked proposals on the following scale:

3 (Excellent) - Application exceptionally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B., and was highly responsive to Evaluation Criteria;

2 (Good) - Application partially addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B. and was strongly responsive to Evaluation Criteria; or

1 (Fair) - Application marginally addresses program priorities outlined in Section I.A. and I.B. and was moderately responsive to Evaluation Criteria.

This rating will be presented to the Selecting Official for funding consideration and will be the primary consideration of the Selecting Official in deciding which applications will be recommended to the NOAA Grants Management Division, pending the application of selection factors below. The Selecting Official will recommend proposals for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division.

Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an

applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

C. Selection Factors

The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the selection of a proposal out of rank order is justified based on one or more of the following factors:

1. The availability of funding
2. The balance/distribution of funds...
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By institution type
 - c. By partner type
 - d. By habitat type
 - e. By debris type
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I.A and B of this FFO
5. The applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups
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 NOAA Grants Management Division.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored 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 in accordance with the policies set forth in the Department of Commerce Grants Manual, which in general is 3 years.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by May 1, 2017 and notifications to all applicants are anticipated to be made as soon as possible thereafter. Typically, the earliest start date for projects will be August 1, 2017, dependent on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities. Applicants should consider this timeline when developing requested start dates for proposed project activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Award notification will be made electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, is available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNMR>.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions: Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>. If the Department of Commerce publishes revised Standard Terms and Conditions prior to issuance of awards under this solicitation, the revised Standard Terms and Conditions will apply.

2. Special Award Conditions: In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as the required use of the NOAA Marine Debris Program Performance Progress Report approved by OMB under control number 0648-0718 for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

3. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements: Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

4. Department of Commerce (DOC) Pre-Award Notification Requirements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this solicitation.

5. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, you should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552) are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

6. Certifications Regarding Tax Liability and Felony Criminal Convictions: When applicable under appropriations law, NOAA will provide certain applicants a form to be completed by the applicant's authorized representative making a certification regarding Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

7. Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the DOC be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. This program is subject to the availability of funds.

8. Executive Order 12866: This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

9. Data Management:

(a) Data Management Guidance: Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Marine Debris Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or

international standards.

(b) Funding recipients are responsible for establishing their own procedures and hosting capabilities for collected environmental data in order to ensure that public access to grant-produced data is enabled to the maximum extent practical. The NOAA Marine Debris Program does not require any specific data format, access method, or other technical guidance beyond what is described in this section, however the use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged. The proposal budget may include reasonable costs associated with compliance with this guidance.

(c) Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied (see Section IV. B. 6 above). The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance described in this section. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

(d) The NOAA Marine Debris Program may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

(e) Applicants are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

(f) Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted

Data Management Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

(g) Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf

10. NEPA Requirements: As stated in Section IV. B., NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations. Consequently, as part of an applicant's award 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, 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 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. Failure to do will result in denial of an application.

Applicants proposing marine debris research activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA Marine Debris Program's Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be informed after the peer review stage and may be asked to help prepare an EA prior to an award being made or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities, if one exists. NOAA may make funding recommendations based on the level of effort needed to fulfill NEPA requirements. The NOAA Marine Debris Program PEA and FONSI can be found on the NOAA Marine Debris Program website:

http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/mdp_pea.pdf.

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to

design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA Marine Debris Program 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 along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

C. Reporting

Reporting requirements are described at 2 C.F.R. 200.327-.329 and in the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6 month periods. Progress reports are to be submitted to NOAA via NOAA's electronic Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each 6 month project period ends. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information. The project progress report template will be provided by the NOAA MDP. Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 to March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 to September 30 (due by October 30) throughout the award period and are submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division via NOAA Grants Online system. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (16 U.S.C. 6101 note) includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.fsrs.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 240-533-0425).

VIII. Other Information

Not Applicable.