



Welcome!

Getting started as a grantee
with the National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
Marine Debris Program

Photo: Hudson River Community Sailing

Congratulations

on receiving your NOAA award!

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Program (NOAA MDP) is excited to partner with you on your project to reduce the impacts of marine debris on our nation's marine and coastal resources. The following document highlights a few important first steps you need to take, and responsibilities you will have throughout the life of your award. As always, please feel free to get in touch with any questions or concerns.

We look forward to implementing a successful project together!

— NOAA Marine Debris Program Staff



NOAA Staff Contact Information

The NOAA MDP has staff at NOAA's headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, as well as at regional offices across the country. We are available to help you throughout the duration of your award. The Federal Program Officer is the administrative point of contact for your award, serves as an information source on program priorities, and ensures compliance with NOAA's financial assistance policies and procedures. Technical Monitors are scientific/technical experts on marine debris issues, and serve as a local point of contact to assist, oversee, and support your marine debris project. Technical Monitors also ensure regulatory compliance with environmental statutes, review progress reports, and provide a critical link between the work being done on the ground with NOAA MDP headquarters. Our communications staff is available to help with planning events, drafting press releases, developing joint events, and other communications needs. NOAA Grants Management Division staff review and process the final approval of your grant award, review financial reports, and process changes to the award.

The type of financial assistance you are receiving is a cooperative agreement. This means that NOAA intends to have meaningful involvement in the activities under the award and should be kept in the loop on major project decisions.

Getting Started

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE please complete the following set-up tasks which you need to successfully manage your award.

Register with the ASAP System

- ▶ The [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#) (ASAP) system enables you to draw down funds from the grant into your bank account. For new grantees with no previous ASAP registration, you begin this process by submitting an Organization Profile Change Request to NOAA in the Grants Online system. **This process should be initiated immediately after signing your award, as it may take a few weeks to complete.** Click [here](#) to see a step-by-step guide of the full process. For grantees that have received a NOAA award previously, or who have an active ASAP account from an award with another agency, please contact your Federal Program Officer for help in linking your account with your new NOAA award.

Create User Profiles in Grants Online

- ▶ For **key** personnel that will be involved in the implementation and administration of your award, now is the best time to set them up in Grants Online with their roles. Once entered into the system, each user is automatically given the appropriate permissions that pertain to their role. At a minimum, you should have an Authorized Representative, a Recipient Administrator and a Business Representative identified. These may be different people, or may be the same person, depending on the structure of your organization or grants administration procedures. The Recipient Administrator will either assign roles, usernames, and passwords to all users in the organization, or pick another person to perform that administrative role. Click [here](#) to see a step-by-step guide of the process. Click [here](#), and see below, for information on user role definitions.

Role	Definition
Recipient Authorized Representative	Recipient Authorized Official users are individuals with signature authority who sign official grant documents such as an SF-424 (application), or countersigns an Award document such as a CD-450 (new Award) or CD-451 (amendment). More than one person can have this role at any organization; however on each Award one person will be designated the primary Authorized Representative.
Recipient Administrator	Recipient Administrators have the permissions needed to set up other people in their organization as users of the GrantsOnline system and to give them access to specific awards as appropriate.
Business/Financial Representative	Business/Financial Representative users are able to fill out Federal Financial Reports in Grants Online.
Principal Investigator	The Principal Investigator role is assigned to the PI and CoPI in an organization. Users with this role can initiate an "Award Action Request" but cannot submit it directly to NOAA. Instead it will be sent to the Authorized Representative for their organization.
Key Personnel	Persons with the role of Additional Key Personnel will be able to view the Awards for their organization; however they will not be able to initiate any actions or otherwise perform tasks within the system.

Understand the Terms of the Award

- ▶ The award's Terms and Conditions are both important and useful. They lay out your responsibilities as a federal grantee and the requirements in administering federal funds. They also provide useful information on processes related to reporting, award amendments, and other grants administrative procedures. These can be found in the CD-450, which is accessible from the Grants Online grants file (under the 'Award File 0' sub-document).

Grants Online

NOAA's Grants Online system is a web-based platform that both you and NOAA will use to manage your grant. You will not receive any paper documents from NOAA regarding your grant. The agreement itself is signed electronically by both your organization and NOAA through Grants Online, and can be found in the online grant file. Please note, the NOAA Grants Online system is separate from Grants.gov, the website that allows you to search and apply for federal grants. **You must use Grants Online for all grant actions (also known as "Award Action Requests") you wish to initiate.** These include accepting the award offer from NOAA, requesting amendments to the agreement (e.g., no-cost extension requests, requests to change the project scope or budget), assigning user roles for members of the organization, and submitting progress and financial reports.

NOAA staff uses Grants Online to review your progress reports and process Award Action Requests. NOAA's Grants Management Division also uses Grants Online to process award action requests and track the financial aspects of the award.

The [Grants Online Training website](#) has resources to help you learn how to navigate through and complete tasks using Grants Online. The [Quick Reference Guide](#), at the top of the training website, provides much of the information that you need to get started in Grants Online, and we suggest you refer to this first when you need to perform an action in Grants Online. There are also more detailed instruction manuals available on the training website. Of course, if you have questions please feel free to contact your Federal Program Officer.

Web Address: <https://grantsonline.rdc.noaa.gov>

If you forget your password or get locked out of the system, please contact the **Grants Online Help Desk**. The Authorized Representative for an award must also request login and password information for other users within the organization from the Help Desk. They can be reached at:

(301) 444-2112 or (877) 662-2478 toll free
GrantsOnline.Helpdesk@noaa.gov

Getting Paid

The Department of Treasury's [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#) (ASAP) system is the way in which all NOAA funding recipients draw down award funds. **You must enroll in ASAP in order to access funding from this grant.**

The ASAP system allows you to have funding directly transferred from your organization's established ASAP account to your organization's bank account. Except for certain organizations, drawdowns from ASAP can be made on an **as-needed basis** for payment on project related expenses and require no advance approval from NOAA. Funds may be drawn down before a payment is to be made, but drawdowns from ASAP that are not paid out by your organization in a timely manner should be returned to the ASAP account. Information about this system can be accessed at the Department of Treasury website and the [ASAP website](#). To register for ASAP, follow the instructions found at the [NOAA ASAP Enrollment Guidance document](#).

You should begin the ASAP registration process immediately following your official acceptance of the award. Once you complete the initial steps in Grants Online, NOAA will verify and enter your organization's data into ASAP. After this step, your organization's point of contact, which you designated in Grants Online, will receive a username and password for ASAP via USPS mail, along with instructions on how to complete the enrollment process. If you do not receive this mailing within 2 weeks, contact the ASAP.gov Help Desk (see below). Timely completion of the steps in this process is critical, as there are multiple steps that can take some time to complete.

Once you are set up in the system you are able to make a drawdown from the grant. Click [here](#) for a step-by-step help document of that process.

Web Address: <http://www.asap.gov>

If you need help with enrollment or any other aspect of the ASAP.gov system, please contact the **ASAP Help Desk at (855) 868-0151**.

Progress Reporting

Progress reports detailing the funding being spent and the work being done through the award are due every six months, according to the schedule described in the Special Award Conditions. You have 30 days after the end of the six-month reporting period to submit **both** a Financial Report (SF-425) and a Performance Progress Report through Grants Online. A task for each report will automatically appear in your Grants Online inbox at the end of each six-month reporting period. Note: Performance Progress Report and Financial Reporting periods may not be synced to each other, therefore, due dates may be different for each type of report.

Performance Progress Reports: Performance Progress Reports must include the following general project information: grant number, recipient organization, project start and end dates, and reporting period end date. Most importantly, they must include a performance narrative. Performance narratives should include a description and status (e.g., completed, not-completed, on-going) of the major award activities conducted to-date, and how they have achieved the short and long-term goals of the project. Progress on project goals is a critical aspect of reporting, so the performance narratives

should also have an explanation of any delays, missed targets, or other unforeseen circumstances impacting the project. The Performance Metrics should include those measures that can quantitatively communicate the success and accomplishments of your project. Standard metrics for marine debris removal projects include the weight of debris removed (lbs), the weight or percentage of debris diverted from landfills into other more 'sustainable' or innovative disposal options, the footprint of habitat restored (acres); the volume of debris removed (cubic yards); and the amount of volunteers or volunteer hours contributed to the project. Standard metrics for marine debris prevention or education projects may include such measures as the number of K-12 students reached or engaged. Whatever type of project you are conducting, your NOAA MDP Federal Program Officer and Technical Monitor will work with you to determine the appropriate parameters to be used as performance measures for the project. Generally, these will include the amount of debris removed (if applicable), the number of volunteers involved with the project, and the number of work hours that the volunteers contributed, among others. A general breakdown of funding expenditures for the reporting period should also be provided. Other attachments (e.g., pictures, press coverage, etc.) should also be included. Click [here](#), or visit the [Grants Online Training Resources page](#) for step-by-step instructions on submitting a progress report. Research awards will use the NOAA standard Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR), which uses a different format, but requires similar information on the status of the award and research objectives.

Financial Reports: Financial reporting is also done through Grants Online, and is separate from the Performance Progress Reporting process. "SF-425" is the name of the Financial Report you will need to submit. Unlike Performance Progress Reports, Financial Reports are always due each October 30 and April 30. Note: the SF-425 is not a separate report form, but rather, a web form built into the Grants Online system. As such, unlike the Performance Progress Report, no attachment of reporting documents is required for the Financial Report. Click [here](#) for a step-by-step of the Financial Reporting process.

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109–282; codified at 31 U.S.C. 6101 note) (FFATA): This Act is meant to increase transparency to the public on how federal funding is being spent. **You (the prime recipient) are required to file a FFATA sub-award report only if you make a sub-award greater than or equal to \$25,000 to another entity for work on your project**, per 2 CFR part 170. These reports are filed through the [Federal Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System](#). If you will be providing any sub-awards under your grant greater or equal to \$25,000 per sub-award, you must register with FSRS and report on them. Reports for each sub-award are due by the end of the month following the month in which your organization awards any sub-grant. See Public Law 109–282, as amended by section 6202(a) of Public Law 110–252 (see 31 U.S.C. 6101 note). The DOC incorporates the award term required by Appendix A of 2 CFR part 170 into all financial assistance awards.

Comprehensive final reports (both Performance Progress Report and Financial Report) covering all activities and expended funds during the award period are required and must be submitted to NOAA within 90 days after the end date of this award.

There may also be separate requirements for project monitoring that require more in-depth or extensive reporting through separate monitoring forms or reports. Your Federal Program Officer or Technical Monitor will work with you to determine the frequency and intensity of monitoring requirements for your award.

Award Amendments

Requests to change an aspect of your grant (e.g., how funding is allocated within the budget, no-cost extensions to the award expiration date, etc.) are known as Award Action Requests (AARs). AARs must be submitted via the Grants Online system. However, we suggest that you first discuss the changes with your Federal Program Officer, so that we can provide the appropriate guidance on the process. Directions on how to submit Award Action Requests are available on the [Grants Online Quick Reference Guide for Grantees](#), or from the [Grants Online Training page](#). Additional guidance on what information should be included in a No-Cost Extension Request is also available.

Regulatory Compliance

Before funds can be released for you to use on your project, NOAA staff must conduct an analysis of environmental impacts to ensure we are in compliance with a variety of environmental laws and regulations governing our funding programs. Laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, among others, require that federal agencies consider the environmental and species impacts for proposed actions of any projects which are financed, assisted, conducted, regulated, or approved by the agency. **Depending on the complexity or nature of your project, this analysis may delay receipt of, or your ability to use, project funds.** While this is a requirement that NOAA is responsible for completing, we may need you or any sub-recipients to provide information on the project to help us fulfill these requirements. This may include information on the scale of the project; the impact of proposed actions (both beneficial and adverse); impacts to public health or safety; any controversies or risks associated with the project; potential loss to scientific, cultural, or historic resources; compliance with federal, state, and local laws; acquisition of state and local permits; the potential spread of non-native species; impacts to threatened or endangered species; and other individual or cumulative impacts. This process usually begins and ends before you have even been notified of your award. However, it may last until after your project start date, especially if there are activities whose impacts cannot be assessed until design or other preliminary or project planning activities are complete.

You and any sub-recipients should ensure that any recommendations or work plan adjustments that are required as a result of consultations with regulatory agencies that we make under this process are integrated into the project and carried out. Any deviations from those requirements must be discussed ahead of time or as soon as possible after. Close coordination with the NOAA MDP is encouraged throughout the life of the award.

It is your responsibility to obtain any state or local permits, as necessary. As a grantee, you should be aware of all conditions and restrictions required by your permits and consultations, and should immediately stop activities and contact your NOAA MDP Technical Monitor if events occur that threaten to violate the conditions or restrictions required by your permits and consultations.

You must maintain project files for all marine debris removal or prevention activities taking place under this award. These files must contain, at a minimum, project work plans and copies of all required federal and state permits/consultations associated with project implementation. The permits should be available to provide to NOAA upon request.

Safety

Safety is a critical consideration for marine debris project implementation. You and any sub-recipients must have a written safety plan for management of employees, contractors, and volunteers working on the project, as applicable. You should ensure that a safety briefing is conducted for all project participants immediately prior to their involvement in hands-on field activities under this award, and require that any volunteers sign a liability release waiver. The safety plan should consider safety in and around project sites during and after project construction, and take into account potential safety concerns with regard to the current and future use of the sites.

If a proposal has any SCUBA, and/or other use of compressed gas a breathing medium (e.g., surface supplied air) for diving activities, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that SCUBA divers are certified to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any SCUBA diving activities using federal grant funds under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of SCUBA diving being undertaken.

Your organization must have the capacity (i.e., appropriate insurance, safety policies, etc.) to oversee all proposed diving activities. 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 simple activities, such as underwater surveys and removal of light objects. Advanced divers are divers with advanced diving training **for the proposed tasks** and compliance with OSHA guidelines. Activities that should only be performed by advanced divers include, but are not limited to:

- Moving of lifting heavy objects, or using hand tools, weighing more than 25 pounds underwater
- Performing tasks requiring substantial physical exertion
- Use of lift bags
- Underwater removal of potentially entangling debris, such as nets, crab pots or fishing line.

Snorkeling activities are similarly restricted, in that snorkelers should only complete simple activities such as surveys and removal of light objects.

Data Management

As a recipient of a federal grant, it is important to remember the work being done is meant to serve a public purpose. **Accordingly, NOAA requires that all environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made available to the general public.** Below are the NOAA MDP's Data Management requirements associated with your award.

Additionally, if you will be generating a publication as a result of this award, please ensure NOAA is provided a final copy of the manuscript. NOAA requires that all such publications are made available publicly on [NOAA's Institutional Repository](#). This may require you to provide final publications to NOAA after the award has officially closed. For more information, see this [guidance document](#) about the NOAA Institutional Repository process.

NOAA MDP data sharing requirements are as follows. If you have any questions regarding any of these requirements, please contact your Federal Program Officer.

- (a) **All environmental data collected or created under this award 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 MDP.** Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format (machine-readable means the data are stored on a computer in a digital format whose structure is well described and the data can be read without the aid of a human), preferably a widely-used or open-standard format (an open-standard format is one that does not require proprietary software to be read), and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), based on widely used or international standards.
- (b) Funding recipients are responsible for ensuring that data is discoverable and accessible to the general public in the required timeframes. The NOAA MDP requires that grant-produced data be accessible by one of the following methods (1) data hosting by the NOAA MDP; (2) the recipient establishing their own procedures and hosting capabilities for collected environmental data; or (3) hosting by another authorized organization (such as NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information). Regardless of the hosting method, the recipient is responsible for collecting, managing, and appropriately structuring data and metadata. The NOAA MDP 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 widely used methods is encouraged. The proposal budget may include reasonable costs associated with compliance with this data management guidance. The NOAA MDP encourages grantees to coordinate with NOAA staff on the best approach to meet this public access requirement. In some cases, as appropriate, NOAA may request project data and share/post project data on NOAA systems, potentially in addition to the agreed data sharing/access approach. Funding recipients may request permission not to make data publicly accessible and should explain rationale for lack of public access and obtain approval from the Federal Program Officer.
- (c) Projects funded by NOAA MDP must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the guidance described here. 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. If you foresee any needed costs for data preparation, accessibility, or archiving, please discuss with your Federal Program Officer.
- (d) The NOAA MDP may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates), 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) Final scholarly articles (if open access) or pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly articles (if paywalled article) produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than one year upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal (or after the embargo period ends as determined by the journal). Manuscripts submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository must also be Section 508 compliant. For more information about the repository, see <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/welcome>.
- (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

Outreach

Review of External Communications

To ensure consistent and coordinated communication, recipients must collaborate with the NOAA Marine Debris Program on their plans for outreach, such as events, products, and media coverage associated with the project. NOAA may require a preproduction review of project communications, for example publications, signage, social media, outreach and educational materials, and media plans, developed under this award. Please coordinate with your project's Federal Program Officer or Technical Monitor regarding outreach plans and planned media releases. Please notify your project's Federal Program Officer or Technical Monitor in a timely manner about any unplanned media engagement.

Use of NOAA Emblem (Logo)

Outreach products produced under this award must acknowledge NOAA Marine Debris Program as a funding contributor, as appropriate. All project materials containing the NOAA emblem or name must be reviewed and approved by the NOAA Marine Debris Program communications team to determine whether its use is appropriate and consistent with agency guidance.

Reporting

Recipients should provide copies of final outreach products, website mentions, press materials, videos, and photographs to NOAA or include them as attachments to progress reports. Photographs should be high-resolution originals and should clearly show before, during, and post-implementation status of project sites and/or outreach efforts, demonstration of changed behaviors, and community involvement, when applicable. Recipients should ensure that photograph credits, captions, and date are included.

Project Close-out

As your award begins to wind down, please remember there are a number of administrative requirements you need to comply with before the award can be officially closed out. Please ensure you address each of these, and if you have any questions please contact your Federal Program Officer.

- Six months prior to the award end date: assess how the project is going and whether all grant objectives will be fully completed on time. Discuss any potential issues or needed changes with your NOAA MDP Technical Monitor and Federal Program Officer. In the event an extension might be needed, discussions should focus on reasons for project delays and how an extension would avoid similar delays to the project. If an extension is warranted, your Federal Program Officer will advise on the appropriate action to take.
- Award closeout: grantees are given 90 days after the award end date to complete all award related administrative requirements; this is known as the “closeout period”. Final reports can be submitted at any time during the closeout period. You may draw down funds from ASAP during the closeout period to pay previously incurred award costs, however, no new programmatic work may take place (final report writing, publication costs, and administrative closeout activities are permitted).
- Final reports: the final report should use the same reporting form/template as your regular reporting, and the Performance Narrative should be a **comprehensive description of project activities and accomplishments that covers the entire award period**. Please feel free to include other documentation, products, or reports that are relevant to the grant. If you need to mail anything (e.g., outreach products), you can send those to your Federal Program Officer. The NOAA MDP will review all reporting materials and will let you know of any questions or needed edits. All final reports are posted publicly to the [NOAA MDP Information Clearinghouse](#).
- The final progress report should contain the following components:
 - Overall short- and long-term goals and background, including relevance of the project to reducing the impacts of marine debris on NOAA trust species populations and habitats and/or advancing awareness about marine debris issues or the state of marine debris science.
 - What are any NOAA trust species or habitats that the project benefited?
 - How important is this project to a particular species or habitat? How important is it to human use values of a given resource (e.g., commercial, recreational uses, or other ecosystem services).
 - Methodology used to undertake project activities, including materials used.
 - Specific monitoring techniques, if any (greater detail may be provided in a separate final monitoring report).

- Describe lessons learned (e.g., best management practices or protocols followed, new techniques tested, innovative solutions implemented, partnerships developed, etc.), any deviations from original plans, and challenges faced.
 - Accomplishments (e.g., results and outcomes). Remember to provide any details needed to explain the project's performance measures, for instance:
 - Removal: Report tons removed, acres restored, etc.
 - Research or Monitoring: Provide a summary of research or monitoring results.
 - Prevention: Provide information on the number of students reached, benefits to communities, and/or results of behavior change studies.
 - Description of outreach activities and products (please include copies of any outreach or public facing products produced from this grant funding).
 - Next steps for prevention efforts, debris removal, restoration and monitoring, or research needs, as applicable.
- Any equipment purchased with NOAA funds must follow the requirements set forth in 2 CFR 200.313. Bottom line: you may retain any equipment purchased under the award unconditionally as long as it is being used for the same purpose for which it was acquired by the grant. If equipment is no longer needed, you must submit an SF-428 Equipment Disposition form to NOAA to formally request disposition instructions. In this case, contact your Federal Program Officer for clarification.
 - As described above, all environmental data generated by the award activities must be made publicly available in accordance with the project's Data Management Plan. With certain exceptions related to the volume of data or file size/types, the NOAA MDP can house all project data on the [NOAA MDP Information Clearinghouse](#). Work with your Technical Monitor and Federal Program Officer on this when data is available to publicize, which, depending on your Data Management Plan, may sometimes be after the award and closeout period have ended.

Questions?

Please feel free to contact your Federal Program Officer at any time with any questions or concerns.

Our website has a number of helpful resources that you may find of value in administering and implementing your NOAA award. The web address is:

<https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/award-specific-guidance-current-grantees>

Again, congratulations and we look forward to working with you!

For more information about the NOAA MDP:

Website: <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/>

Blog: <https://blog.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>

Clearinghouse: <https://clearinghouse.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>

