



Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership - NOAA Community-Based Restoration Grant Program Request for Proposals & Proposal Guidelines

Deadline for Proposal Submission: Oct. 21, 2011

Introduction: The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program request proposals for their matching grant program to restore marine, estuarine, and riparian habitats to benefit living marine resources through community involvement. This multi-year, regional partnership between SARP and NOAA supports on-the-ground projects in the southeast region of the U.S. which further the goal of the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan (SAHP) as applied to NOAA trust resources and the habitats that support them.

SAHP's goal is to maintain, restore, and conserve the quantity and quality of freshwater, estuarine, and marine habitats to support healthy, sustainable fish and aquatic communities and sustainable public use for the benefit of all in the southeastern region and the entire U.S.

NOAA's trust resources include

- *commercial and recreational fishery resources*
- *diadromous fish species*
- *endangered and threatened marine species and their habitats*
- *marine mammals, turtles, and their habitats*
- *marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and other coastal habitats*
- *all resources associated with the National Marine Sanctuaries and the National Estuarine Research Reserves.*

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include nongovernmental organizations (e.g. community associations, watershed user groups, cooperatives, civic groups), municipalities, universities, schools, state and tribal governments. Federal agencies are not eligible to apply.

Project Specifications: In order to achieve sustainable outcomes, the request for proposals is annually tailored to current conditions and available funds. For this 2011 request, grants through this partnership will support projects located in or associated with watersheds along the South Atlantic coast from Albemarle/Currituck Sound, North Carolina, to the southern tip of Florida. While SARP works in both the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, there are other current funding sources available for Gulf of Mexico habitat restoration from our partners such as the Gulf of Mexico Foundation and the Gulf of Mexico Alliance.

All projects must:

1. Result in **on-the-ground aquatic habitat restoration** benefitting NOAA trust resources;
2. Have applicability to **one or more of the eight objectives of the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan (SAHP)**. The SAHP can be found at <http://southeastaquatics.net/programs/southeast-aquatic-habitat-plan-sahp>;
3. Ensure **lasting benefits and enhanced community stewardship** through a focused and effective education and outreach element;
4. Provide a **minimum 1:1 non-federal match** to the partnership funds requested;
5. Include a **mechanism to monitor and evaluate** the success of the project.

Project outcomes should be one or more of the following:

1. Restore coastal wetlands through shoreline restoration or hydrological reconnection to benefit one or more coastal and marine plant and animal species, including mangroves, sea grasses, shellfish, and/or diadromous species;
2. Improve habitat hydrology and riparian areas of estuarine and inshore habitats to benefit threatened and endangered marine species or species of concern associated with the watershed;
3. Restore shellfish habitat to sustain and improve ecological benefits and ecosystem services;
4. Prepare habitats to respond to climate change and sea level rise, possibly but not limited to restoration or protection of transition zones. (A transition zone can help to mitigate the impacts of climate change on biodiversity by providing potential refugia that will allow species to persist, shift ranges and ultimately adapt to climate change.)

Applicants are strongly urged to discuss project ideas and questions prior to submitting proposals. For questions regarding applicability to the SAHP, contact Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary, SARP Project Manager at 225-892-7470. For technical questions, including those regarding NOAA's trust resources, contact Howard Schnabolk (howard.schnabolk@noaa.gov, 843-740-1328) for projects located in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia; and Daphne McFarlan (daphne.macfarlan@noaa.gov, 727-824-5384) for locations in Florida.

Project Duration: Work conducted for the project is to be completed within 18-24 months of contract approval. Projects should be designed to begin in February 2012.

Funding: Although about \$150,000 is available for projects, the maximum amount available for any one project is \$50,000. Grants must have a minimum **1:1 non-federal match**, which may be in cash, time, goods, or other services. Eligible costs will be paid for work done no earlier than contract approval. Payment will be made on a reimbursement basis with 15% of the grant award allowed up-front.

Grant funds may **NOT** be used to support overhead, permanent staffing costs, political advocacy, scholarships to individuals, deficit reduction activities, projects that have already been completed, or for activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law.

Proposal Requirements: Proposals should be no more than 10 pages in length, formatted as described in Appendix A. Although this page limitation does not include photos, diagram attachments and support materials, no more than 15 total pages will be reviewed. Timelines may use a February 1, 2011 starting date, but the actual start date will be determined by completion of the contract document.

Proposal Selection Process: Final projects will be selected for funding following review by the SARP–NOAA Selection Committee on the basis of the criteria below. The Committee consists of the SARP Coordinator and representatives from NOAA, each of the SARP South Atlantic coastal states (NC, SC, GA, FL), USFWS, USGS, and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. All applicants will be notified of awards within eight to ten weeks of the proposal deadline.

Evaluation criteria: Projects will be scored according to criteria in five categories:

- **Category 1: (25%) Importance and Applicability**
 - Does the project support the identified habitat conservation objective(s) of the SAHP?
 - Does the project contribute to the restoration, conservation, or enhancement of NOAA trust resources?
 - Considered in the context of the existing local environment, will restoration activities in the target habitat make a significant positive impact on site and upstream?
 - Will the project deliver tangible, specific results that are measurable (acres, stream miles, volunteer hours, adequate monitoring parameters, etc)?

- **Category 2: (35%) Technical/Scientific Merit**
 - Can the project be completed within 18-24 months of receiving funding (excluding monitoring and evaluation)?
 - What is the overall technical feasibility of the project, from both a biological and an engineering perspective?
 - Is the proposal technically sound in its use of appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives on both ecological and community stewardship levels?
 - Does the project address the root causes of habitat degradation or loss, ensuring that the restoration project will sustain itself over time?
 - Does the proposal provide assurance that the project will meet all Federal, state and local environmental laws and follow applicable permit requirements so that on-the-ground activities will begin soon after the project's proposed start date?
 - Does the proposal provide landowner assurance of support and dedication to protecting the project for its useful life (such as letter of support, conservation easement, or significant financial investment)?
 - Does the proposal include an effective mechanism to evaluate project success that includes an appropriate, clearly stated goal and at least one structural and one functional monitoring parameter?

- **Category 3: (5%) Applicant Qualifications**
 - Do project leaders have the appropriate qualifications and technical expertise or access to appropriate expertise to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed project?

- **Category 4: (15%) Project Costs**
 - Is the proposed budget realistic and cost-effective, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame, and sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification?
 - Does the proposed budget include an appropriate ratio of match leveraged from other sources?
 - Does the proposed budget include match in excess of the minimum?

- **Category 5: (20%) Outreach, Education, and Community Involvement**
 - Does the project contribute to the aquatic habitat conservation outreach goals of SARP or foster a community conservation ethic through citizen involvement?

Does the project involve public outreach, and seek to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and the sources of funding and other support provided, or otherwise compliment or encourage other local restoration or conservation activities?

Does the proposal have significant community support as demonstrated by letters of support or match commitments from a diversity of active, contributing partners and/or sponsors?

Administrative Requirements: Applicants will be required to demonstrate that all necessary permits and consultations have been completed prior to conducting any earth moving activities. Each project will be assigned a NOAA technical monitor that, upon request, can assist with aspects of project implementation.

NEPA: NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>. In order for NOAA staff to complete a NEPA analysis, applicants will be asked 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. introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

Minimum Monitoring/Evaluating: In support of the Estuary Restoration Act of 2000, a quantitative monitoring program is required. Project proposal should identify at least one structural and one functional parameter of the restoration project site to be quantitatively monitored. These parameters should reflect a major objective or goal of the project. The monitoring plan summary in the proposal should define a target value (realistic outcome) for the parameter after restoration as well as a reference value (ideal value) for the parameter. After funding, SARP and NOAA will work with successful applicants to finalize monitoring parameters and develop success targets to evaluate project results. Applicants are encouraged to contact NOAA staff or use guidelines at http://coastalscience.noaa.gov/ecosystems/estuaries/restoration_monitoring.aspx to effectively identify the parameters in the proposal and, later, to develop the entire monitoring plan.

Permitting: It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted including Endangered Species Act consultations as appropriate. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment.

Safety Plan: Successful applicants will be required to develop and adhere to a written safety plan for management of projects. The plan is due with the first progress report.

Reporting: The contract will include specific reporting requirements as follows:

- Progress reports will be submitted to SARP every six months; dates will be supplied in the final contract. A progress report form will be supplied. Each progress report will describe progress to date. Photos of the site and project are encouraged.
- A final report, including documentation of the completed project and financial report, will be submitted to the project administrator within 30 days of the end of the grant period.

Submission process: Although electronic submission is encouraged, applicants may submit proposals in print or electronic form. Original copies of proposals submitted by US Postal Service must be postmarked by **October 21, 2011** to:

Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary
Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
22182 Fen St.
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

Originals submitted electronically should be sent by email to marilyno@southeastaquatics.net by the same date. Proposals received after that date will not be considered.

Appendix A Proposal Format

Please use the format below to ensure a complete application. Proposal text (A-D below) should not exceed 10 pages. Proposal packages with optional items (E below) such as maps, photos or letters of support should not exceed 15 pages.

A. Applicant information:

Name and address of applicant organization
Name, title, and contact information of principal investigator or project leader

B. Project Information (a list):

Title
Location (GPS coordinates if possible)
Project focus (identify watershed(s) and target species)
Intended outcome(s)
SAHP objective(s) benefitting from this project
NOAA Trust Resource(s) benefitting from the project
Acreage of area to be restored (differentiate by habitat type if more than one type will benefit)
Estimated on-the-ground start and end dates (not award date)
Land ownership (public or private) associated with the project
Estimated total cost as amount requested from grant and estimated total cost
List of partners.

C. Project Description (largest portion of proposal; a narrative)

1. **Project overview** to include a *brief* historic overview of the site, the existing relevant habitat conditions and the desired or targeted conditions, size of area to be restored, NOAA trust resources that will benefit from the restoration activity and the specific restoration methods and techniques that will be used. **The project overview is a critical part of the application** that should provide reviewers with sufficient detail to fully understand the proposed project. Please review the Evaluation Criteria above to ensure that all relevant information has been included.

2. **Monitoring plan overview** summarizes the parameters as described above under Administrative Requirements: Minimum Monitoring/Evaluation, including project goals, monitoring parameters, monitoring methods and schedule, and target and reference values. Guidelines for

monitoring available online at http://coastalscience.noaa.gov/ecosystems/estuaries/restoration_monitoring.aspx. A complete monitoring plan will be required for funded projects, and will be due with the first progress report.

3. **Outreach plan overview** summarizing critical activities for stakeholder/community involvement and project sustainability. Proposal should outline estimate number of volunteers and volunteer hours to be achieved.

4. **Provisions to protect the restoration project site after project completion**, including provisions for long term maintenance if needed.

5. **List of permits** needed (Federal, state, local, indicating any that have already been secured), status and list of any other environmental compliance issues to be considered (i.e. endangered species, cultural resource concerns, etc.)

6. **Project timeline.** Projects should be designed to begin winter 2012.

D. Budget:

1. Use the budget table below to indicate budget for amount requested from the SARP-NOAA Community-based Restoration program and anticipated amount of matching contributions, both in kind and cash. Federal funds cannot be used as match. Calculate value of anticipated volunteer hours at \$21.36/hr.

Budget Table

Categories	Grant Amount	Match Amount	Type of Match	Match Source	Other	Total
Personnel						
Fringe						
Travel						
Equipment*						
Supplies						
Contractual						
Other						
Total						

*Equipment is any individual item over \$5,000. Even if an item is tangible, nonexpendable, and having a useful life of more than one year, items costing less than \$5,000 should be placed under Supplies. Such large purchases should be anticipated in the contract. For an unplanned purchase at that level, a purchase request will be required, detailing type of equipment, price, vendor, and a brief justification of why the purchase is necessary. Comparison to rental costs (if applicable) will be required.

2. A brief budget narrative should further explain how the funds will be used. For example, costs under personnel should identify individuals who will work on the project by name, title and role, and how the cost for their participation was calculated. Explanation of fringe benefits and travel costs should be provided. Major equipment and supplies should be identified, and specific contracts should be described.

E. Supporting materials (in addition to A-D above; total package limited to 15 pages):

1. Maps, diagrams, and/or aerial or on-the-ground photos of the proposed project site. Though not required, these visual aids will help to support the proposal. Photos taken from the ground should show the current condition of the site. All photos should be identified with date of photo and location.
2. Appropriate letters of support from community leaders, stakeholders, public and private site landowners, and resource agency personnel may be included.
3. Vita of Principal Investigator or Principal Grant Contact, limited to 2 pages, should demonstrate qualifications and skills as described under Evaluation Criteria 3 above.

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