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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 9, 2006

NOAA Sea Grant Awards Funds to Eight Regions for Research, Information Plans

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) awarded funding to eight regions for the National Sea Grant College Program's Regional Research, Information Planning, and Coordination competition. The following regions received awards: Alaska, Pacific Northwest, Southwest, Insular Pacific, Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Gulf of Maine.

"The competition is intended to encourage the development of regional research and information plans for U.S. coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes areas," said Leon Cammen, acting director of the National Sea Grant College Program, which is part of NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. "We want to use Sea Grant's university network to foster discussions among the broad range of regional ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes stakeholders to help identify and rank critical resource management problems and associated research and information needs necessary for practical solutions."

A total of \$250,000 of federal Sea Grant funds will be made available for each region over two years to cover completion of the plans. Each of the eight recipients will provide an additional \$125,000 in matching funds.

Regional Sea Grant Programs will facilitate the planning effort, which will be as inclusive as possible, involving a wide array of stakeholders.

Given the scope of management-critical problems to be addressed, and the limited resources available, effective planning and ranking of research and information needs will be critical to guide the scientific and management communities, according to reports from the National Research Council and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy ("Bridging Boundaries through Regional Marine Research," National Research Council, 2000; "An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century," U.S. Ocean Commission Report, 2004).

To focus resources where there is the greatest opportunity for change, the U.S. Ocean Action Plan (2004), committed the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology to develop a national ocean research priorities plan and an implementation strategy.

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“This will be a valuable step forward, but given the necessary broad scope of a national plan, there will need to be complementary and parallel planning efforts to address more specific issues at the regional level,” said Cammen.

Each region will be expected to:

- Establish a regional coordination group to oversee the planning and implementation of the research and information strategy;
- Conduct a bottom-up needs assessment with broad user and stakeholder input;
- Identify research and information gaps;
- Develop a research and information plan for the region that ranks actions according to management-critical needs;
- Develop coordination mechanisms to ensure the transfer of technology and information to the appropriate end users; and
- Provide an ongoing platform for coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing among participants.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) was established by Congress to promote responsible use and conservation of the nation’s marine and Great Lakes resources. Sea Grant carries out NOAA’s mission of stewardship of our country’s oceans and atmospheres through a broadly based network of universities.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

In 2007, NOAA celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1807 to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in these early agencies that became one under NOAA in 1970.

Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.