**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name(s): National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant), Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce**
- **Funding Opportunity Title: Regional Research, Information Planning and Coordination**
- **Announcement Type: Initial Announcement**
- **Funding Opportunity Number: OAR-SG-2006-2000429**
- **Statutory Authority: 33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq., as amended.**
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s): 11.417, Sea Grant Support**
- **Dates: Applications must be received by March 1, 2006.**
- **Funding Opportunity Description: To encourage the development of regional research and information plans for U.S. coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes areas, NOAA Sea Grant will make available $750,000 in FY 2006, $1,375,000 in FY2007, $925,000 in FY2008, $550,000 in FY2009, $550,000 in FY2010, and $250,000 in FY2011 (assuming appropriations are available) for grants to regional planning teams. This is a one-time announcement that will fund approximately 6 regions beginning in year one (FY2006) and 5 regions beginning in year two (FY2007). It is expected that Sea Grant programs within each region will work together and submit one proposal that covers a 2-5 year period. The objective is to use Sea Grant's university capabilities to facilitate discussions among the broad range of regional ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes stakeholders to help identify and prioritize critical resource management problems and associated research and information needs necessary for practical solutions.**

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Introduction And Background

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.

To achieve balance among ecological, environmental, and social influences in our Nation's

coastal, ocean and Great Lakes regions, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has committed to adopting ecosystem-based approaches to management (http://www.spo.noaa.gov/pdfs/STRATEGIC%20PLANS/Strategic_Plan_2006_FINAL_04282005.pdf). The transition to ecosystem approaches must be incremental and collaborative, and to accomplish that goal will require an enhanced level of coordination among local and regional stakeholders and state and federal agencies. Decision-makers will require an understanding of how specific ecosystems are affected by human activities and natural phenomena. The ability to forecast and evaluate the results of potential management decisions will depend on fully integrated observations, and the availability of modeling tools to interpret and synthesize the data.

Given the broad array of management-critical problems to be addressed, and the limited resources that can be brought to bear; effective planning and prioritization of research and information needs will be critical to guide the scientific and management communities ("Bridging Boundaries through Regional Marine Research," National Research Council, 2000; "An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century," U.S. Ocean Commission Report, 2004). NOAA's Strategic Plan calls for integrating the concerns, priorities, and expertise of all citizens and sectors in the management of coastal and marine resources.

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

Almost 15 years ago, the Regional Marine Research Program (RMRP) was established to set priorities for regional marine and coastal research in support of efforts to safeguard the water quality and ecosystem health of 10 ocean and coastal regions around the U.S. (the Great Lakes was covered under separate legislation). For each of the RMRP regions, research plans were developed by regional committees that involved an array of regional stakeholders and were chaired by Sea Grant Directors. These regional plans serve as useful examples of a well-designed planning process and sources of carefully considered priorities for research toward NOAA's goals. RMRP activities, however, were limited to planning with the exception of the Gulf of Maine where funds were made available to implement the plan that was developed.

This Request for Applications is intended to provide support to develop regional research and information plans that will complement the national planning efforts by providing a bridge between national and local research and information needs for U.S. ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes areas.

**B. Program Guidance**

Following the recommendation of an August 2004 workshop, NOAA has designated eight regional ecosystems to serve as the focus of NOAA's developing ecosystem approach to management. The eight regional ecosystems, which are based upon Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs), are the North Atlantic Shelf, Southeast, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, California Current, Alaskan, Pacific Islands and Great Lakes. Sea Grant's regional planning initiative is intended to develop comprehensive research and information plans that will help focus research, technology transfer, and outreach efforts on the highest priority issues within each region.

In recognition of the fact that many of the issues of concern to coastal residents will be best dealt with at smaller scales than LMEs, to more closely parallel the regional structure proposed by Ocean.US for

coastal observing systems, and to be consistent with the previous RMRP plans, this planning effort will use the "regions" that were defined under the RMRP with two changes: the addition of the Great Lakes region, and the breakout of the Caribbean into a separate region. For the most part, these regional boundaries either coincide with the boundaries of the NOAA's regional ecosystems, or represent what NOAA would consider "sub-regions". For all regions, the boundary extends outward to include the U.S. EEZ. The landward boundary will be established as part of the planning process to be consistent with the scope of issues that are identified as priorities. The regions to be used are as follows:

1. the Gulf of Maine region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the State of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts (north of Cape Cod);
2. the greater New York bight region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the States of Massachusetts (south of Cape Cod), Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, from Cape Cod to Cape May;
3. the mid-Atlantic region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the States of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, from Cape May to Cape Fear;
4. the South Atlantic region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, from Cape Fear to the Florida Keys,
5. the Caribbean region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands;
6. the Gulf of Mexico region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the States of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, along the Gulf coast from the Florida Keys to the Mexican border;
7. the Southwest region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the State of California, from Point Reyes to the Mexican border;
8. the Pacific Northwest region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the States of California, Oregon, and Washington, from Point Reyes to the Canadian border;
9. the Alaska region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the State of Alaska;
10. the insular Pacific region, comprised of the marine and coastal waters off the State of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Freely Associated States; and
11. the Great Lakes region

Regional Sea Grant Programs will facilitate the planning effort, which should be as inclusive as possible, involving a wide array of stakeholders. Participants could include, for example, state and federal agencies, universities, scientists, local government, industry, and non-governmental organizations. Existing regional organizations such as the Regional Fishery Management Councils and the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Regional Associations, as well as major NOAA programs, laboratories, and joint institutes within each region, should be included in the planning process. For issues which cross regional boundaries, the appropriate set of stakeholders should be included, and the efforts coordinated among the regions.

Each region will be expected to: 1) Establish a regional coordination group to oversee the planning and implementation of the research and information strategy; 2) Conduct a bottom-up needs assessment with broad user and stakeholder input; 3) Identify research and information gaps; 4) Develop a research and information plan for the region that prioritizes actions according to management-critical needs; 5) Develop coordination mechanisms to ensure the transfer of technology and information to the appropriate end users; and 6) Provide an ongoing platform for coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing among participants.

The regional planning efforts are expected to consider the full scope of issues outlined in the U.S. Ocean Commission Report, but the final priorities may be more limited in scope. The research and information plans that result from these efforts must address the essential regional information requirements outlined in the Ocean Commission Report: research; data collection, monitoring, and observations; development of useful information products; and outreach, education, training, and technical assistance for decision makers. Potential investigators are encouraged to review Chapter 5 of the Ocean Commission Report for further guidance as to the content and intent of these plans.

Plans should include a clear statement of the major regional ocean and coastal management issues, an outline of existing scientific and informational resources, an analysis of the information necessary to address the critical issues, and a prioritized list of actions to be taken. In addition to addressing research needs, the plans should discuss how observational data and decision-support tools might be integrated with the research to best support the needs of the management community. Each plan will include a prioritized list of forecast products that would aid in the transition toward regional ecosystem-based management.

The plan should take into account existing plans and ongoing planning efforts by various regional and local organizations. Where there is already substantial ongoing activity, the planning efforts should be designed to add value to those efforts, for example by expanding the scope of existing plans, or by establishing priorities among already identified needs.

### C. Program Authority

Authority for the Regional Research, Information Planning and Coordination is provided by 33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq., as amended. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s): 11.417, Sea Grant Support

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

A total of $250,000 of federal Sea Grant funds will be made available for each region over two years to cover the completion of a regional research and information plan (assuming appropriations are available). In FY2006, $750,000 will be made available for six regions. In FY2007, $1,375,000 will be made available for all eleven regions. In FY2008, $625,000 will be made available to complete the five regional plans that were initiated in FY2007. Proposals may request up to an additional three years of staff support (up to $50,000 per year) to help implement completed regional plans. NOAA will make available $300,000 in FY2008, $550,000 in FY2009 and FY2010, and $250,000 in FY2011 to support these regional staff. Additional support may be made available in subsequent competitions for regional research and outreach activities.

Approximately 11 awards will be made, with 6 beginning in FY2006 and 5 beginning in FY2007. It is expected that multiple Sea Grant Programs and institutions will be involved in each region, but only one award will be made to the designated managing Program. All other Sea Grant Programs and institutions must be handled through subawards.

### B. Project/Award Period

Awards are anticipated to start on June 1, 2006. Proposals may request up to 5 years support.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through grants. There will only be one award per region.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Applicants

Proposals may be submitted only by the designated managing Sea Grant College or Institutional Program.

### B. Cost Sharing Or Matching Requirement

Matching funds equal to at least 50 percent of the Federal funding must be provided to support the proposed regional planning.