

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer, Alaska 99645

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Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Regular Meeting

April 10, 2025

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DSJ Bldg, Palmer. Remote Participation: See agenda.

Planning and Land Use Department - Planning Division

<http://www.matsugov.us> • planning@matsugov.us

2025 FWC Legislator Meetings Summary

by Gabe Kitter and Jim Sykes

April 10, 2025

MatSu Fish and Wildlife Commissioners Gabe Kitter and Jim Sykes met with 27 legislators at the Capitol March 12 and 13, 2025. Most of those we visited included Chairs, Co-Chairs and Members of Finance, Resources, Fish, and Rules committees. A copy of our CAPSIS request for funding was provided, along with bullet points of our main concerns. The latest edition of “It Takes Fish to Make Fish” booklet was also made available. In a few cases we met with legislative staff members.

All of non-MatSu legislators we met were generally supportive. We outlined our dire situation with King and Coho runs, and the need to restore them. We referred to our bullet points and discussed the need to develop better data and real time data for managers during fishing season. Legislators were generally glad to know about previous line test fisheries that the State of Alaska previously conducted.

- Update the 2015 Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan for Upper Cook Inlet
- More Consistent Funding for Weirs, Sonar and Genetic Studies
- Provide an Update to the 'Economic Contributions of Sportfishing on the Cook Inlet Region in 2017' Study
- Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish Passage Program
- Resume Operation of the Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Test Net Fishery
- Execute Pike Suppression Projects
- Ensure Additional Cataloging of Local Streams, Rivers, and Habita
- Cook Inlet Staff Prioritization
- Enhance State Investment in Fishery Data and Research

A good number of legislators wondered why a lot of our projects were not budget priorities within the Fish and Game Department budget. There was also discussion about tracking projects approved by the legislature for activity, completion and spending.

The only bullet point that received a cool reception was the update of the 2017 report on economic impacts of fishing in Mat-Su. The suggestion was the MatSu Borough should fund that. In essence, there was positive support for solving the fishing downturns here and in other parts of the state.

While most legislators showed strong support for the FWC's work, they also were doubtful about the ability of funding our requests with the current budget deficit of nearly \$2 billion. We fully understood their current financial difficulties and the legislators seemed to understand the importance of our crisis to restore fish runs, and all the needed support activities, in order to provide an opportunity for people to catch fish and have it as a basic food source.

A recurring theme in the conversations was the suggestion that the FWC seek alternative funding sources, such as federal matching funds or collaboration with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), to improve future chances of project approval. Some legislators questioned why key FWC priorities, like pike suppression and fish passage improvements, were not already included in the ADF&G's budget, while others recommended raising licensing fees or exploring new revenue-generating initiatives to support these efforts.

We believe our visit was useful and important. We look forward to discussing the need for additional outreach among the public, interested groups along with federal and state fish and game managers for stronger support.

We would like to thank our Borough Lobbyist, John Harris, who helped schedule meetings during the very busy time we visited the Capitol.

Respectfully submitted,

Gabe Kitter and Jim Sykes

- **Update the 2015 Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan for Upper Cook Inlet**

Revise the decade-old strategic plan to incorporate updated goals, strategies, and collaborative engagement to support healthy salmon populations and habitats.

- **More Consistent Funding for Weirs, Sonar and Genetic Studies**

Secure, stable funding for Northern District weirs and genetic analyses, vital tools for managing and monitoring fish populations effectively. Judd Lake (need a dollar figure)

- **Provide an Update to the 'Economic Contributions of Sportfishing on the Cook Inlet Region in 2017' Study**

Conduct a new analysis of the economic impact of sportfishing in the region, reflecting recent data and trends.

- **Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish Passage Program**

Continue support for the nationally recognized program ensuring free movement of fish through habitat restoration and infrastructure improvements.

- **Resume Operation of the Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Test Net Fishery**

Reestablish the test fishery and operations for Susitna River Sockeye Salmon mark/recapture studies to gather critical abundance data.

- **Execute Pike Suppression Projects**

Implement targeted efforts to reduce invasive pike populations and protect native fish species from predation and competition.

- **Ensure Additional Cataloging of Local Streams, Rivers, and Habitat**

Expand documentation of critical habitats, especially those affected by developments like the proposed West Susitna Access Road, to support conservation efforts.

- **Cook Inlet Staff Prioritization**

Advocate for adequate staffing to ensure efficient implementation and management of fisheries programs and conservation initiatives.

- **Enhance State Investment in Fishery Data and Research**

In light of federal management over Upper Cook Inlet's commercial fishery and reduced state control, prioritize investments in research and data collection to sustain Alaska's fisheries. This need is heightened by potential federal funding cuts under the current administration, emphasizing the importance of robust state-driven efforts.

Legislators Visited List by FWC

March 12-13, 2025

SENATORS

Matt Claman, Resources Vice-Chair
Mike Cronk, Finance
Forrest Dunbar, Finance
Elvi Gray-Jackson, Chair Senate LB&A, State Affairs+
Shelley Hughes, Resources
Scott Kawasaki, Resources
Jesse Kiehl, Finance
Robert Myers, Resources
Mike Shower, Minority Leader, Rules
Gary Stevens, Senate President, Rules Vice Chair
Löki Tobin
Bill Wielechowski, Rules Chair, Resources Co-Chair
Robert Yundt

REPRESENTATIVES

Ted Eischeid
Zack Fields, Resources
Alyse Galvin, Finance
Rebecca Himshoot, Fish
Nellie Unangiq Jimmie, Finance
DeLena Johnson, Finance
Chuck Kopp, Majority Leader, Rules, Vice-Chair Fish
Kevin McCabe, Fish
Elexie Moore, State Affairs
Mike Prax
George Rauscher, Resources
Calvin Schrage, Finance Co-Chair, Rules
Louise Stutes, Rules Chair, Fish Chair
Cathy Tilton, Rules
Jubilee Underwood

Proposed scope summary:

The mission of this project is to provide an update to the 2015 Matanuska-Susitna Salmon Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Plan for Upper Cook Inlet. Similar to the 2015 plan the update should encompass the current interests of partners and governing agencies in guiding funds towards information needed to manage, protect and improve Mat-Su Borough salmon stocks for optimum benefits while maintaining biological productivity and diversity (Beamesderfer et al. 2014). The approach used for engaging interested parties in reviewing and updating management objectives and potential project designs will be similar to the process used for the 2017 plan and would include: working with MSB and partners to develop a plan for research in Cook inlet, develop research priorities, convene and facilitate workshops, assist with project solicitation and summary reporting.

The overall budget estimate for this effort is \$250,000.



and local ventilation) or administrative control measures (e.g., workplace policies and procedures) shall be considered and implemented to prevent exposure, where feasible.

(ii) *Hazard communication.*

Requirements as specified in § 721.72(a) through (f), and (g)(1), (2)(i) through (iii) and (v), (3)(i) and (ii), and (5). For purposes of § 721.72(e), the concentration is set at 1.0%. For purposes of § 721.72(g)(1), this substance may cause: acute toxicity, skin irritation, serious eye damage, skin sensitization, genetic toxicity, and specific target organ toxicity.

Alternative hazard and warning statements that meet the criteria of the Globally Harmonized System and OSHA Hazard Communication Standard may be used.

(iii) *Industrial, commercial, and consumer activities.* Requirements as specified in § 721.80(f), (k), and (t). It is a significant new use to import the substance other than in solution, unless in sealed containers weighing 5 kilograms or less. It is a significant new use to process the substance in any way that generates dust, mist, or aerosol in a non-enclosed process. It is a significant new use to manufacture the substance longer than 9 months.

(b) *Specific requirements.* The provisions of subpart A of this part apply to this section except as modified by this paragraph (b).

(1) *Recordkeeping.* Recordkeeping requirements as specified in § 721.125(a) through (i) are applicable to manufacturers, importers, and processors of this substance.

(2) *Limitation or revocation of certain notification requirements.* The provisions of § 721.185 apply to this section.

[FR Doc. 2025-05480 Filed 4-3-25; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 250331-0057; RTID 0648-XE507]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Cook Inlet; Proposed 2025 Harvest Specifications for Salmon

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Proposed rule; harvest specifications and request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes 2025 harvest specifications for the salmon fishery of the Cook Inlet exclusive economic zone (EEZ) Area. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for salmon during the 2025 fishing year and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ off Alaska (Salmon FMP). The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the salmon resources in Cook Inlet EEZ Area in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

DATES: Comments must be received by May 5, 2025.

ADDRESSES: A plain language summary of this proposed rule is available at <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/NOAA-NMFS-2025-0017>. You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2025-0017, by any of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Visit <https://www.regulations.gov> and type NOAA-NMFS-2025-0017 in the Search box. Click on the "Comment" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- *Mail:* Submit written comments to Gretchen Harrington, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

Electronic copies of the draft Environmental Assessment for the Harvest Specifications of the Cook Inlet Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ Off Alaska (EA); and the draft Finding of No Significant Impact prepared for this action are available from <https://www.regulations.gov>. The

Environmental Assessment (EA)/Regulatory Impact Review for amendment 16 (A16 EA/RIR) to the Salmon FMP are available from the [NMFS Alaska Region website at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/amendment-16-fmp-salmon-fisheries-alaska](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/amendment-16-fmp-salmon-fisheries-alaska). A preliminary version of the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) was presented at the February 2025 North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and NMFS incorporated the recommendations of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and posted the final SAFE at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/alaska-stock-assessments>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Adam Zaleski, 907-206-5802, adam.zaleski@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS prepared the Salmon FMP under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*). Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the Salmon FMP appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679.

The proposed harvest specifications include catch limits that NMFS could implement—subject to further consideration after public comment. Regulations at 50 CFR 679.118(b) require that NMFS consider public comment on the proposed harvest specifications and publish the final harvest specifications in the **Federal Register**. The final harvest specifications will take effect only after publication of a final rule for the instant action. NMFS would publish the final 2025 harvest specifications after: (1) considering comments received within the comment period (see **DATES**); (2) considering information presented in the draft EA (see **ADDRESSES**); and (3) considering information presented in the final 2025 SAFE report prepared for the 2025 Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fisheries. See 50 CFR 679.118(b)(2) for additional considerations regarding the final harvest specifications.

Proposed 2025 Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) Specifications

NMFS compiled and presented the preliminary 2025 SAFE report for the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon stocks and stock complexes, dated January 2025 (see **ADDRESSES**) at the February Council meeting. The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses and estimates of biological parameters for seven stocks of Pacific salmon and provides recommendations to the SSC

regarding the appropriate tiers for each stock, the status determination criteria (SDC) that will be used to evaluate overfishing (including OFL), and the appropriate ABC, which acts as a ceiling when NMFS specifies TACs.

The Salmon FMP specifies methods to calculate OFLs and ABCs for each stock's tier in the Cook Inlet EEZ salmon fishery, with annual tier recommendations provided in the SAFE report. The tiers applicable to a particular stock or stock complex are determined by the level of reliable information available. Tier 1 stocks have the highest level of information quality available, while Tier 3 stocks have the lowest level of information quality available. NMFS uses this tier structure to calculate OFLs and ABCs for each salmon stock or stock complex (a stock complex is an aggregate of multiple stocks of a species) according to the methods specified in the Salmon FMP.

For Tier 1 stocks, as defined in the Salmon FMP, the SAFE report relies on forecasts of the coming year's salmon runs as the basis for the recommended OFLs and ABCs, which are included in the 2025 SAFE report. For Tier 1 stocks, SDC and harvest specifications are calculated in terms of potential yield for the Cook Inlet EEZ Area. The potential yield is the total forecasted run size minus the number of salmon required to achieve spawning escapement targets and the estimated mortality from other sources including in other fisheries.

For 2025, no stocks were recommended to be Tier 2.

For Tier 3 stocks, as defined in the Salmon FMP, NMFS used fishery catch estimates from prior years to inform the 2025 harvest specifications.

The SSC and Council reviewed NMFS's preliminary 2025 SAFE report for the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fishery in February 2025. From these data and analyses, the SSC recommended an OFL and ABC for each salmon stock and stock complex. After considering the SSC's recommendations, the Council unanimously took action to recommend TACs for the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fishery. Through this action, NMFS is proposing to implement the OFLs and ABCs recommended by the SSC and TACs consistent with the Council's recommendations.

Following the February Council meeting, NMFS updated the 2025 SAFE report to incorporate SSC recommendations (see ADDRESSES). The proposed specifications are based on SSC recommendations contained in the final 2025 SAFE report, which represents the best scientific information available on the biological condition of salmon stocks in Cook Inlet and other social and economic considerations.

NMFS is required to publish and solicit public comment on proposed annual specifications as soon as practicable after consultation with the Council (see 50 CFR 679.118(b)(1)) and

the proposed harvest specifications in table 1 of this rulemaking satisfy these requirements. The recommended specifications of OFL, ABC, and TAC are consistent with the harvest strategy outlined in the Salmon FMP, the biological condition of salmon as described in the 2025 SAFE report, SSC and Council recommendations, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act, including the National Standards. The recommended ABCs would be less than the OFLs for each stock or stock complex and the TACs would be set equal to the aggregate ABCs for each species (table 1). Because it is not practicable to differentiate among stocks of the same species during the fishing season, NMFS will rely on its experience managing the fishery in 2024 and its inseason management tools to ensure ABC is not exceeded for any stock or stock complex.

The proposed 2025 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are based on the best scientific information available—primarily the 2025 SAFE report. The SAFE report was subject to peer review by the SSC, which recommended the ABCs that NMFS proposes in table 1, consistent with 50 CFR 600.310(f)(3) and 600.315(c) through (d). The proposed TACs are set equal to the proposed ABCs and are less than the OFLs for all salmon stocks or stock complexes. These proposed OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are subject to change pending consideration of public comment.

TABLE 1—PROPOSED 2025 COOK INLET EEZ AREA SALMON OFLs, ABCs, AND TACs IN NUMBERS OF

FISH	Stock or stock complex ¹	OFL	ABC	TAC
Kenai River Late-Run sockeye salmon		514,761	360,332	800,126
Kasilof River sockeye salmon		664,294	285,646	
Aggregate Other sockeye salmon		181,351	154,148	
Aggregate Chinook salmon		373	261	261
Aggregate coho salmon		67,013	16,753	16,753
Aggregate chum salmon		97,508	78,006	78,006
Aggregate pink salmon		58,174	52,357	52,357

¹ The TAC for sockeye salmon is combined for Kenai River Late-Run, Kasilof River, and Aggregate Other sockeye salmon because it is not possible to differentiate among stocks of sockeye at the time they are caught.

Directed Fishing Closures and Inseason Adjustments

In accordance with 50 CFR 679.118(c)(1)(i), NMFS will prohibit fishing for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area if NMFS determines that any salmon TAC has been or may be reached for any salmon species or stock. NMFS may also make adjustments to a TAC for any salmon species or stock, or open or close a season, in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area, if necessary to prevent overfishing among other reasons, consistent with 50 CFR 679.25. Changes to the salmon

fisheries in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area will be posted at the following website under the Alaska filter for Management Areas: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/news-and-announcements/bulletins>.

Classification

NMFS is issuing this proposed rule pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Through previous actions, the Salmon FMP and regulations are designed to authorize NMFS to take this action (see 50 CFR 679.118). The NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this

proposed rule is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Salmon FMP, and other applicable laws, subject to further consideration after public comment.

This action is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866 because it only implements annual catch limits for the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fishery.

NMFS prepared the draft EA for the 2025 harvest specifications of the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fishery, which incorporates by reference the EA/RIR for amendment 16 to the Salmon FMP (see ADDRESSES). These analyses evaluate the

potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of three alternative catch limits for the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fishery, as is consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

This Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) was prepared for this proposed rule, as required by section 603 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (5 U.S.C. 603), to describe the economic impact that this proposed rule, if adopted, would have on small entities.

The IRFA: (1) describes the action; (2) the reasons why this proposed rule is proposed; (3) the objectives and legal basis for this proposed rule; (4) the estimated number and description of directly regulated small entities to which this proposed rule would apply; (5) the recordkeeping, reporting, and other compliance requirements of this proposed rule; and (6) the relevant Federal rules that may duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this proposed rule. The IRFA also describes significant alternatives to this proposed rule that would accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and any other applicable statutes, and that would minimize any significant economic impact of this proposed rule on small entities. The description of the proposed action, its purpose, and the legal basis are explained earlier in the preamble and are not repeated here.

For RFA purposes only, NMFS has established a small business size standard for businesses, including their affiliates, whose primary industry is commercial fishing (see 50 CFR 200.2). A business primarily engaged in commercial fishing (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 11411) is classified as a small business if it is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field of operation (including its affiliates), and has combined annual gross receipts not in excess of 11 million dollars for all its affiliated operations worldwide. In addition, the Small Business Administration has established a small business size standard applicable to charter fishing vessels (NAICS code 713990) of 9 million dollars.

Number and Description of Small Entities Regulated by This Proposed Rule

This proposed rule directly regulates commercial salmon fishing vessels that operate in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area, and charter guides and charter businesses fishing for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ

Area. Because NMFS expects the State of Alaska to maintain current requirements for commercial salmon fishing vessels landing any salmon in upper Cook Inlet to hold a Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) drift gillnet (S03H) permit, NMFS does not expect participation from non-S03H permit holders in the federally-managed salmon fishery in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area. Therefore, the number of S03H permit holders represents the maximum number of directly regulated entities for the commercial salmon fishery in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area. From 2019 to 2023, there was an average of 552 S03H permits in circulation, with an average of 311 active permit holders, all of which are considered small entities based on the 11 million dollar threshold. The evaluation of the number of directly regulated small entities and their revenue was conducted via custom query by staff of the Alaska Fish Information Network utilizing both ADF&G and Fish Ticket revenue data and the CFEC permits database. Similarly, the draft EA provides the most recent tabulation of commercial charter vessels that could potentially fish for salmon within the Cook Inlet EEZ Area (see ADDRESSES).

The commercial fishing entities directly regulated by the salmon harvest specifications are the entities operating vessels with Salmon Federal Fisheries Permits (SFFPs) catching salmon in Federal waters. For purposes of this analysis, NMFS assumes that the number of small entities with SFFPs that are directly regulated by the salmon harvest specifications is the average number of S03H permits in circulation (*i.e.*, 552 permits). This may be an overstatement of the number of directly-regulated small entities since some entities may hold more than one permit.

The commercial charter fishing entities directly regulated by the salmon harvest specifications are the entities that hold commercial charter licenses and that choose to fish for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area where these harvest specifications will apply. Salmon charter operators are required to register with the State of Alaska annually and the numbers of registered charter operators in the Cook Inlet area varies. Available data indicates that, from 2017 to 2022, the total number of directly regulated charter vessel small entities that have participated in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area has been as high as 377. However, from 2019 to 2022, there was an average of 94 charter guides that fished for salmon at least once in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area. All of these entities, if they choose to fish in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area, are directly

regulated by this action and all are considered small entities based on the 9 million dollar threshold.

Description of Significant Alternatives That Minimize Adverse Impacts on Small Entities

The action under consideration is the proposed 2025 harvest specifications for the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fishery. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for Cook Inlet salmon harvested within the EEZ during the 2025 fishing years and is taken in accordance with the Salmon FMP and pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The establishment of the harvest specifications is governed by the process for determining harvest levels for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area in the Salmon FMP and regulations. Under this process, harvest specifications typically will be made annually for specifying the OFL, ABC, and TAC for each salmon stock or stock complex. This includes identifying the stocks and stock complexes for which specifications are made. Salmon stocks or stock complexes may be split or combined for purposes of establishing a new harvest specification unit if such action is desirable based on the commercial importance of a stock or stock complex, or if sufficient biological information is available to manage a stock or stock complex as a single unit. Those stocks and stock complexes are separated into three tiers based on the level of information available for each stock and stock complex, and the corresponding tier is used to calculate OFL and ABC.

For each stock and stock complex, NMFS establishes harvest specifications prior to the commercial salmon fishing season. To inform the harvest specifications, NMFS prepares the annual SAFE report, based on the best scientific information available at the time it is prepared, for review by the SSC and the Council. The SAFE report provides information needed for: (1) determining annual harvest specifications; (2) documenting significant trends or changes in the stocks, marine ecosystem, and fisheries over time; and (3) assessing the performance of existing State of Alaska and Federal fishery management programs. The SAFE report provides a summary of the most recent biological condition of the salmon stocks.

For the proposed 2025 harvest specifications, NMFS prepared the preliminary 2025 SAFE report and consulted with the Council consistent with the Salmon FMP and implementing regulations. The proposed TACs recommended by the

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Council are based on the preliminary SAFE report, which represents the best scientific information available at that time for the stock and stock complexes identified by NMFS. In February 2025, the SSC reviewed the preliminary 2025 SAFE report and recommended changing the buffers that reduce ABCs from the OFLs for the Kenai and Kasilof sockeye stocks. Ultimately, the Council recommended the harvest specifications without any additional buffers to reduce TACs from the ABCs. The proposed TACs are consistent with the Salmon FMP process for determining harvest levels for salmon in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area. In light of the manner in which the fishery will operate—including the limited number of openers—and NMFS's ability to monitor the TAC for each salmon species and implement closures in-season, as well as NMFS's success last year in managing the fishery to ensure no ABC was exceeded, NMFS has determined that these TACs will prevent exceeding the ABC (and therefore ACL) for any stock or stock complex. Furthermore, the proposed TACs will prevent overfishing while, for combined sockeye salmon, being above the recent 10-year average estimated EEZ harvest.

Under this action, the proposed ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs and the TACs do not exceed the biological reference points (*i.e.*, the ABCs and OFLs) recommended by the SSC. The Salmon FMP specifies that annual TAC determinations would be made based on

social and economic considerations, including the need to promote efficiency in the utilization of fishery resources (*e.g.*, minimizing costs); the desire to conserve, protect, and rebuild depleted salmon stocks; the importance of a salmon fishery to harvesters, processors, local communities, and other salmon users in Cook Inlet; and the need to promote utilization of certain species (see 50 CFR 679.118(a)(2)(ii)). The proposed TACs are set equal to ABCs and account for these considerations. TACs cannot be set higher than the ABCs.

This action is economically beneficial to entities operating in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area salmon fishery, including small entities. The action proposes TACs for commercially-valuable salmon stocks that allow for the prosecution of the salmon fishery in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area, thereby creating the opportunity for fishery revenue. The TACs proposed for each commercially-valuable salmon stock or stock complex, except for aggregate coho, are higher than the recent ten-year average catch estimated to have been harvested in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area, which may help to reduce foregone yield and allow for additional harvest opportunity.

Based upon the best scientific information available and in consideration of the objectives for this proposed action, it appears that there are no significant alternatives to this proposed rule for salmon harvest specifications that have the potential to comply with the Salmon FMP,

accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act or any other statutes, and minimize any significant adverse economic impact of the action on small entities while preventing overfishing. After a public process during which the Council and NMFS solicited input from stakeholders and after consultation with the Council, NMFS has determined that the proposed TACs recommended by the Council would best accomplish the stated objectives articulated in the preamble for this proposed rule, and in applicable statutes, and would minimize to the extent practicable adverse economic impacts on the universe of directly regulated small entities.

This action does not modify recordkeeping or reporting requirements or duplicate, overlap, or conflict with any Federal rules.

This proposed rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 1540(f); 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 3631 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 105-277; Pub. L. 106-31; Pub. L. 106-554; Pub. L. 108-199; Pub. L. 108-447; Pub. L. 109-241; Pub. L. 109-479.

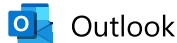
Dated: March 31, 2025.

Samuel D. Rauch III,
*Deputy Assistant Administrator for
Regulatory Programs, National Marine
Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2025-05764 Filed 4-3-25; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

4/10/25, 1:05 PM

Mail - Maggie Brown - Outlook



Fwd: ADF&G Advisory Announcement: UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET SALMON FISHING

From Andy Couch <fishing@fish4salmon.com>
Date Thu 4/10/2025 1:01 PM
To Maggie Brown <Margaret.Brown@matsugov.us>

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Maggie,

Would you please add this notice to the supplemental handouts for today's meeting.

Andy Couch
Fishtale River Guides
(907) 746-2199
fishing@fish4salmon.com

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <DFG.DCF.AdvisoryAnnouncementService@alaska.gov>
Date: Thu, Apr 10, 2025 at 12:01 PM
Subject: ADF&G Advisory Announcement: UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET SALMON FISHING
To: <DFG.DCF.AdvisoryAnnouncementService@alaska.gov>

UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET SALMON FISHING

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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
ADVISORY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has published the following advisory announcement for immediate viewing on the department's web site.

2025 Advisory Announcement #Set Gillnet Outlook

Title: UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET SALMON FISHING
Publication Date: 4/10/25 12:01 PM

Location: Central Region-Cook Inlet-Upper Cook Inlet .
Species Group: Salmon .
Gear Type: Gillnet .
Activity: Commercial Fishing .

4/10/25, 1:05 PM

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Internet Link: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1664462500.pdf> .

Advisory Announcement Content:

UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL SET GILLNET SALMON FISHING

Sockeye Salmon Forecast

In 2025, a run of approximately 6.9 million sockeye salmon is forecast to return to Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) with an estimate of 4.9 million available for harvest (commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence).

The Kenai River sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 4.2 million fish. The 2025 Kenai River forecast is 302,400 (7.5%) fish more than the historical (1986?2024) average run of 3.9 million, but 968,000 (26%) fish more than the recent 10-year (2015?2024) average run of 3.2 million. For sockeye salmon runs 2.3?4.6 million fish, the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (KRLSSMP) stipulates ADF&G manage to the SEG range of 750,000?1,300,000 and achieve an inriver goal of 1.1 to 1.4 million fish. The department will formally reassess the UCI sockeye salmon run after July 20.

The Kasilof River sockeye salmon run forecast is approximately 1.2 million fish. The 2025 forecast is 311,000 fish (29%) greater than the historical (1986? 2024) average run of 930,000 fish and 261,000 fish (24%) greater than the recent 10- year (2015?2023) average run of 978,000.

Approximately 404,000 and 105,000 sockeye salmon are forecast to return to the Susitna River and Fish Creek respectively in 2025. The 2025 Susitna River sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 22,600 fish (6%) below the historical (2002?2024) average run of 430,000 fish but approximately 29,500 fish (7.5%) greater the recent 10- year (2015?2024) average run of 380,000 fish. The 2025 Fish Creek sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 2,600 fish greater than the recent 10-year average run size (2.5%) of 102,400.

2025 Sockeye Salmon Forecasts and Escapement Goals

System	Forecast	Goals
Kenai River b,c	4,186,000	1,100,000?1,400,000
Kasilof River b,d	1,238,000	140,000?320,000
Susitna River	404,000	
Larson Lake	N/A	15,000?35,000
Chelatna Lake	N/A	20,000?45,000
Judd Lake	N/A	15,000?40,000
Fish Creek	105,000	15,000?45,000
Unmonitored Systems e	1,008,000	N/A
Total	6,941,000	

a Goals listed here are as follows: Kenai River: Inriver; Kasilof River: Biological Escapement Goal (BEG); Susitna River: SEG (weir goals); and Fish Creek: Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG).

b Kenai River goal is DIDSON-based; Kasilof river is Aris-based.

c Kenai River SEG is 750,000?1,300,000 sockeye salmon.

d Kasilof River optimal escapement goal (OEG) is 140,000?370,000 sockeye salmon.

e Unmonitored systems are estimated to be ~15% of monitored systems.

Set Gillnet Season Opening Dates

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Season opening dates in 2025 for the various fisheries around the inlet are as follows:

- ? Northern District directed king salmon fishery: The directed king salmon fishery is closed to start the 2025 season (EO # 2-F-H-1- 25).
- ? Northern District set gillnet fishery: June 26, unless modified by emergency order. Weekly fishing periods are Mondays and Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (Figure 1).
- ? Big River fishery: The Big River fishery will begin closed (EO #2-F-H-4-2) due to forecasted poor king salmon returns, restrictions to subsistence fishing, and consecutive years of not meeting escapement goals in Northern Cook Inlet.
- ? Western Subdistrict set gillnet fishery: June 16, weekly fishing periods are Mondays and Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- ? Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet fishery (ESSN): The ESSN fishery will begin closed (EO # 2-F-H-2-25) and may only open if Kenai late-run king salmon projections indicate achievement of the recovery goal of 14,250 large (>75cm mid eye to tail fork) fish.
- ? All remaining set gillnet fisheries, except the ESSN fishery: June 26, weekly fishing periods are Mondays and Thursdays from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (Figure 2).

Northern District Set Gillnet Salmon Fishery Overview

- ? The 2025 Deshka River pre-season king salmon forecasted total run of 5,208 fish is below the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) of 9,000-18,000 fish. Based on this forecast and recent low king salmon production throughout the Susitna River Drainage, the department issued an Emergency Order (EO # 2-KS-2-06-25) which closed king salmon directed sport fisheries throughout the Susitna River drainage, including the Deshka River.
- ? As stipulated by the Northern District King Salmon Management Plan (NDKSMP), the 2025 directed king salmon commercial fishery in the Northern District (ND) will start the season closed (Figure 1). Escapement of king salmon into the Deshka River will be closely monitored. If the run is stronger than expected and sport fishing of king salmon is allowed in the Deshka River, the directed king salmon commercial fishery may occur.
- ? Beginning Thursday, June 26, the ND set gillnet fishery is managed per provisions found in the Northern District Salmon Management Plan (NDSMP). This plan provides for two 12-hour weekly fishing periods and follows standard regulatory gear stipulations.
- ? While Susitna River sockeye salmon were removed from stock of yield concern status at the 2020 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting, restrictive actions to commercial fisheries that harvest this stock were retained in regulation. According to the NDSMP, the legal complement of gear in the ND set gillnet fishery may be reduced to either one, two, or three nets per permit from July 20 through August 6 to conserve Susitna River sockeye salmon. However, in that portion of the General Subdistrict south of the Susitna River, options for gear reduction are limited to two nets per permit after July 30. Commercial fishing periods may be further restricted for conservation of coho salmon dependent upon in-season run strength assessment.
- ? The UCI set gillnet fishery will be closed for the season by EO when catch and effort cease for multiple open commercial periods.

Central District Set Gillnet Fisheries in Chinitna Bay, Western, Kustatan, and Kalgin Island Subdistricts of the Set Gillnet Salmon Fisheries Overview

- ? Chinitna Bay, Western, Kalgin Island, and Kustatan subdistricts management will generally follow regulatory fishing periods and schedules, except for that portion of the Western Subdistrict south of Redoubt Point, where fishing may be allowed three days per week based on increasing harvest rates of Crescent River sockeye salmon.
- ? The Kalgin Island Subdistrict may also be given up to one extra fishing period per week if the Packers Lake sockeye salmon assessment shows that the escapement goal (15,000-30,000) is projected

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to be achieved.

? The fisheries will be closed for the season by EO when catch and effort cease ~ October 1.

Upper Subdistrict Set Gillnet (ESSN) Fishery Overview

? The 2025 Kenai River late-run king salmon forecast projects a total run of 8,742 large (>75cm mid eye to tail fork) fish. The newly established recovery goal for Kenai River late-run king salmon is 14,250-30,000 large fish. The recovery goal was established with the listing of Kenai River Late-run king salmon as a stock of a management concern and adoption of The Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan (KLKSOC). The KLKSOC established regulation that closes the sport fisheries in the Kenai River and in the salt waters of

Cook Inlet north of the latitude of Bluff Point to the taking of king salmon and closed the commercial set gillnet fishery in the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District. Limited commercial or sport opportunity is only available when inseason projections of escapement are greater than 14,250 large fish when incorporating estimated harvest/mortality and projection error.

? On February 11, 2025, the department issued an EO (# 2-KS-1-03-25) closing the king salmon sport fishery in the Kenai River beginning June 20, 2025. Subsequently, the department issued an EO (# 2-F-H-2-25) closing set gillnet fishing in the Kenai, East Forelands, and Kasilof sections to start the 2025 season.

Kenai Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan Regulations for ESSN Fishery Kasilof Section from June 20 ? June 30

? The ESSN fishery is closed to begin the 2025 season until projections of Kenai Rive late-run king salmon exceed 14,250 large fish. If inseason projections of large late-run Kenai king salmon are greater than forecasted and indicate the recovery goal can be achieved, then fisheries may be opened for two eight-hour periods with one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth.

Full ESSN From July 1 ? July 14:

? Closed until Kenai Rive late-run king salmon are delisted from stock of concern status. Kasilof, Kenai, and East Foreland Sections from July 15 ? July 27

? The ESSN fishery is closed to begin the 2025 season until projections of Kenai Rive late-run king salmon exceed 14,250 large fish. If inseason projections of large late-run Kenai king salmon are greater than forecasted and indicate the recovery goal can be achieved, then fisheries may be opened for four eight-hour periods with one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth.

Kasilof, Kenai, and East Foreland Sections from July 28 ? August 15

? The ESSN fishery is closed to begin the 2025 season until projections of Kenai Rive late-run king salmon exceed 14,250 large fish. If inseason projections of large late-run Kenai king salmon are greater than forecasted and indicate the recovery goal can be achieved, then fisheries may be opened for two eight-hour periods with one set gillnet that is not more than 35 fathoms in length and 29 meshes in depth.

Commercial Dip Net Fishing

? Dip net commercial fishing opportunity was instituted to provide a live release gear type for set gillnet permit holders to utilize while set gillnet fishing is closed. This gear may be allowed only when set gillnet fishing is closed and based on abundance of sockeye salmon.

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- o The department may allow up to five, 12-hour commercial dip net periods per week, Monday through Friday from June 20 ? July 31 when set gillnet fishing is not open.
- o The area allowed for both shore and vessel-based fishing is the current set gillnet open areas excluding the Kasilof River Special Harvest Area. Shore-based fishing may only occur from DNR and City of Kenai shore lease sites.
- o Retention of king and coho salmon is prohibited. King and coho salmon caught, may not be removed from the water and must be immediately released unless the fish is mortally wounded or dead and brought on board.
- o Participation is limited to SO4H permit holders. Each permit holder may operate up to four dip nets at a time, each dipnet must be operated by the permit holder or a licensed crew member.
- o All standard CFEC reporting requirements apply in addition to the stock of concern requirements listed for the set gillnet fishery above.
- o The number of any king or coho salmon that are released must be recorded on a fish ticket under the disposition code (94) for live release.
- o A legal dip net is defined as (5 AAC 39.105 (d)(24)):
 - z a dip net is a bag-shaped net supported on all sides by a rigid frame; the maximum straight-line distance between any two points on the net frame, as measured through the net opening, may not exceed five feet; the depth of the bag must be at least one-half of the greatest straight-line distance, as measured through the net opening; no portion of the bag may be constructed of webbing that exceeds a stretched measurement of 4.5 inches; the frame must be attached to a single rigid handle and be operated by hand.

Set Gillnet Registration and Buoy Stickers

All Cook Inlet setnet permit holders are required to register prior to fishing for one of three areas of Cook Inlet prior to fishing for the season: 1) the Upper Subdistrict of the Central District; 2) the Northern District; or, 3) all remaining areas of Cook Inlet (Greater Cook Inlet). Once registered for one of these three areas, permit holders may fish only in the area for which they are registered for the remainder of the year. No transfers will be permitted. Dual set gillnet permit holders are required to register both permits in the same registration area.

Set gillnet permit holders fishing in the Northern District or the Greater Cook Inlet area can register at ADF&G offices in Soldotna, Homer, or Anchorage or by mail. Forms are available at area offices or on the department's Upper Cook Inlet commercial fishing homepage at:

[https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#/management.%20#management)

[adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#/management.%20#management](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#/management.%20#management) Permit holders wishing to register in person for the Upper Subdistrict must register in the Soldotna ADF&G office and must purchase buoy stickers at the time of registering. Electronic registration and buoy sticker purchasing may be completed online. Permit holders will need to create an ADF&G profile to access the new registration/sticker application.

Permit holders that purchased buoy stickers in 2023 or 2024 will not be charged for 2025 buoy stickers. ADF&G will roll forward funds from previous years until set gillnet opportunity is provided and all buoy stickers are utilized. Any permit holder that plans to fish in the Upper Subdistrict with set gillnet or dip net gear will need to register with ADF&G prior to fishing in 2025.

Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Update:

The 2025 Central District drift gillnet fishery outlook is released as a separate document.

General information and Contact Numbers

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 262-9611. The most recent EO announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement and test fishing information is included whenever possible. The same recording may be accessed at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.main> and clicking on the UCI Commercial Fisheries Information Recording player.

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAQkADQ2Mzk4M2E0LWM5OGQtNDBjNi1hMmVILTVMzk1MWM4ZDAwYwAQABNEV1tbibRji2vq72s0fcg%3...> 5/6

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All EO announcements are also faxed or emailed to processors as quickly as possible and posted at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon>. If you would like all EOs and News Releases emailed to you as soon as they are released, you can subscribe at this website for that service. For very general information, the Commercial Fisheries web page is found at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercial.main>.

If, during the summer, fishermen have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Division of Commercial Fisheries staff can be reached by phone at 262-9368, by fax at 262-4709, or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.

UCI Commercial Fisheries Area Management Biologist Colton Lipka office 907-260-2907

Colton.Lipka@alaska.gov

UCI Commercial Fisheries Assistant Area Management Biologist Lucas Stumpf office 907-260-2916

Lucas.Stumpf@alaska.gov

Figure 1. ? Upper Cook Inlet Northern District commercial set gillnet subdistricts and statistical areas.

Figure 2. ? Upper Cook Inlet Central District commercial set gillnet subdistricts and statistical areas.

Please note that this text-only version of the advisory announcement does not include elements such as images and tables and does not constitute the complete document. To view the complete document in PDF form use the following link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1664462500.pdf> .

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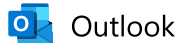
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Fwd: ADF&G Advisory Announcement: UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET SALMON FISHING

From Andy Couch <fishing@fish4salmon.com>
Date Thu 4/10/2025 1:04 PM
To Maggie Brown <Margaret.Brown@matsugov.us>

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Maggie,

Would you please add this notice to the supplemental handouts for today's meeting.

Andy Couch
Fishtale River Guides
(907) 746-2199
fishing@fish4salmon.com

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <DFG.DCF.AdvisoryAnnouncementService@alaska.gov>
Date: Thu, Apr 10, 2025 at 12:12 PM
Subject: ADF&G Advisory Announcement: UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET SALMON FISHING
To: <DFG.DCF.AdvisoryAnnouncementService@alaska.gov>

UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET SALMON FISHING

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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
ADVISORY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has published the following advisory announcement for immediate viewing on the department's web site.

2025 Advisory Announcement #Drift Gillnet Outlook

Title: UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET SALMON FISHING
Publication Date: 4/10/25 12:01 PM

Location: Central Region-Cook Inlet-Upper Cook Inlet .
Species Group: Salmon .
Gear Type: Gillnet .
Activity: Commercial Fishing .

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Internet Link: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1664306824.pdf> .

Advisory Announcement Content:

UPPER COOK INLET 2025 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL DRIFT GILLNET SALMON FISHING

Sockeye Salmon Forecast

In 2025, a run of approximately 6.9 million sockeye salmon is forecast to return to Upper Cook Inlet (UCI) with an estimate of 4.9 million available for harvest (commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence).

The Kenai River sockeye salmon forecast is approximately 4.2 million fish. The 2025 Kenai River forecast is 302,000 (7.5%) fish more than the historical (1986?2024) average run of 3.88 million fish and 968,000 (26%) fish more than the recent 10-year (2015?2024) average run of 3.2 million fish. For sockeye salmon runs 2.3?4.6 million fish, the Kenai River Late-Run Sockeye Salmon Management Plan (KRLSSMP) stipulates ADF&G manage to the SEG range of 750,000?1,300,000 and achieve an inriver goal of 1.1 to 1.4 million fish. The department will formally reassess the UCI sockeye salmon run after July 20.

The Kasilof River sockeye salmon run forecast is approximately 1.2 million fish. The 2025 forecast is 311,000 fish (29%) greater than the historical (1986?2024) average run of 930,000 fish and 261,000 fish (24%) greater than the recent 10- year (2015?2024) average run of approximately 978,000.

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b Kenai River goal is DIDSON-based; Kasilof river is Aris-based.

c Kenai River SEG is 750,000?1,300,000 sockeye salmon.

d Kasilof River optimal escapement goal (OEG) is 140,000?370,000 sockeye salmon.

e Unmonitored systems are estimated to be ~15% of monitored systems.

General Information for the UCI State of Alaska waters Drift Gillnet Fishery:

? All descriptions in this document will be for State of Alaska (SOA) waters only (Figure 1).

? For more information on commercial drift gillnet salmon fishing regulations in the Federal waters of Upper Cook Inlet see the link below:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/commercial-fishing/salmon-management-federal- waters-cook->

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAQkADQ2Mzk4M2E0LWM5OGQtNDBjNi1hMmVILTVMzk1MWM4ZDAwYwAQAH5eD827fDZLlUOpPi9KcnQ...>

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Upper Cook Inlet Statistical and Drift Areas

? Openings that include Drift Areas 1 and 4 will be in State of Alaska (SOA) waters only (Figure 2). It is the responsibility of fishery participants to ensure they are fishing in legal areas.

? Drift gillnet statistical areas were updated in 2024 to reflect the new jurisdictional boundaries and management strategies in UCI (Figure 1).

o Statistical Area 244-60 will not be used.

o UCI Federal waters (EEZ) will be identified under statistical code 244-64.

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable-fisheries/cook-inlet-eez-area-maps>

o During the State of Alaska fisheries, drift gillnet permit holders will be required to declare which specific statistical area fish were caught in. If while fishing, a set crosses statistical area boundaries, then record harvest in the statistical area that the set ends in or where the majority of fishing time is spent for that set. If drift corridors are open, then use the correct code for the corridor representing the statistical areas that were fished.

Central District Drift Gillnet fisheries Overview

? The department manages the UCI drift gillnet fleet primarily under the guidance of the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan (CDDGFMP). The purpose of this management plan is to ensure adequate escapement of salmon into Northern Cook Inlet drainages and to provide the department with management guidelines. All the following regarding the drift gillnet fishery is applicable to the waters of the SOA only (Figure 1).

? The drift gillnet fishery opens the third Monday in June or June 19, whichever is later.

? The 2025 drift gillnet fishery may open June 19 by regulatory period.

? Drift gillnet openings follow regulatory Monday/Thursday fishing periods; 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

? Drift gillnet fishing is closed within 2 miles of the Kenai Peninsula shoreline per stipulations in the Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Stock of Concern Management Plan (5 AAC 21.382) until the stock is delisted.

? Drift gillnet fishery openings are stipulated in the CDDGFMP by date and sockeye salmon abundance.

? Additional fishing time may be added based on sockeye salmon abundance considering Chinook and coho salmon abundance.

? Beginning August 1, if the department determines that less than one-percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 2).

Inseason Management

? Prior to July 8,

o Regulations specify 12-hour SOA waters District Wide Monday/Thursday fishing periods. These periods will coincide with the established federal periods in federal waters. Under federal rules, drift gillnet vessels who participate in the federal fishery cannot participate in any SOA fisheries on the same day. This means that if a permit holder chooses to fish the federal waters they cannot move into state waters on the same day.

o Additional time may be allowed in SOA waters district wide or restricted as needed.

? From July 9 through July 15,

o Drift gillnet fishing is restricted for both regulatory fishing periods to the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections (Figure 1), and SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area1 (Figure 2). For Kenai River sockeye salmon runs greater than 2.3 million fish, one additional fishing period may be opened in the

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Expanded Sections and Area 1. Any additional fishing time is allowed only in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections.

? From July 16 through July 31,

o For runs of 2.3-4.6 million Kenai River sockeye salmon, fishing during one regulatory period per week will be opened in one or more of the following areas: the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, the Anchor Point Section, and SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area 1. The remaining regulatory period will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Sections and Anchor Point section of the Upper Subdistrict. Any additional time shall be restricted to the Expanded Kenai Section, the Expanded Kasilof Section, and the Anchor Point Section.

? From August 1 through August 15,

o Regular Mon/Thurs fishing periods will be restricted to one or more of the following: Expanded Kenai Section, Expanded Kasilof Section, Anchor Point Section, SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area 3, or SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Area 1. Any additional fishing time will be dependent upon meeting sockeye and coho salmon escapement objectives but is limited to the Expanded Kenai or Kasilof and Anchor Point Sections.

o Two one-percent rules apply to drift gillnet fishing in August. If the entire ESSN fishery is closed per its own one-percent rule, or if the department determines that less than one-percent of the season total drift gillnet sockeye salmon harvest has been taken per fishing period, for two consecutive fishing periods by drift gillnets, then regulatory fishing periods will be restricted to SOA waters of Drift Gillnet Areas 3 and 4 (Figure 2).

o The department uses harvest from all (state and federal) open drift gillnet periods, regardless of the area(s) open to fishing, to calculate the drift gillnet one-percent rule per stipulations in Fishing seasons (5 AAC 21.310).

? From August 16 until closed by EO,

o SOA waters of Drift Areas 3 and 4 are open for regulatory periods.

o Chinitna Bay may be opened by EO only, based upon chum salmon escapement objectives being met or when the chum salmon run is complete.

? State of Alaska waters drift fisheries close for the season by EO, when effort ceases, which is generally mid- to late-September.

General information and Contact Numbers

The UCI commercial fisheries information line will again be available by calling 907-262-9611. The most recent EO announcement is always available on the recorded message line and catch, escapement information is included whenever possible. The same recording may be accessed at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.main> and clicking on the UCI Commercial Fisheries Information Recording player.

All EO announcements are also faxed or emailed to processors as quickly as possible and posted at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareauci.salmon#fishery>. If you would like all EOs and News Releases emailed to you as soon as they are released, you can subscribe at this website for that service. For very general information, the Commercial Fisheries web page is found at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercial.main>.

If, during the summer, permit holders have information or questions concerning the commercial fishery, the Soldotna Division of Commercial Fisheries staff can be reached by phone at 262-9368, by fax at 262-4709, or by mail at 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Road, Suite B, Soldotna, 99669.

UCI Commercial Fisheries Area Management Biologist Colton Lipka office 907-260-2907

Colton.Lipka@alaska.gov

UCI Commercial Fisheries Assistant Area Management Biologist Lucas Stumpf office 907-260-2916

Lucas.Stumpf@alaska.gov

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Figure 1.? Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Statistical Areas. Updated May 2024.

Figure 2.? Map of Upper Cook Inlet Drift Gillnet Areas. Updated May 2024.

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Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RE: Letter of Support for the Knik Tribe's Salmon Rehabilitation Project

To Whom it May Concern,

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) is pleased to extend our support for the Knik Tribe's application for the Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience grant, which will fund a \$6 million, four-year salmon rehabilitation project.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) and our residents have faced decreasing salmon runs over several years due to many factors including the introduction of invasive northern pike into the area. Northern pike have spread from lake to stream to river and infected many historically salmon bearing areas within the MSB, exhibiting drastic consequences on fish populations and the overall ecosystem.

The Knik Tribe's project to mitigate northern pike populations, in collaboration with Alaska Department of Fish & Game pike and salmon experts, is a cost-effective and comprehensive approach to implement actions that have previously been unavailable due to capacity and funding shortfalls. The key component of this project is to eradicate northern pike to allow salmon to return to historical rearing and spawning habitat. The proposed project will contribute significantly to ecosystem resilience in the region. If awarded, this grant will enable the implementation of critical invasive species mitigation work using rotenone to treat areas infested with northern pike.

The FWC recognizes the importance of this work, as we represent fishing, wildlife, and habitat interests in the MSB. Area residents have cultural, recreational, and commercial interests in salmon populations, any measures taken to ensure the resilience of the salmon and the ecosystem will have positive lasting effects for MSB residents. The FWC supports the Knik Tribe's application and urges National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to fund this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Peter Probasco
Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair

Narrative:**Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals.**

Salmon have long been an important cultural and subsistence resource for tribal members, supported commercial fisheries, and contributed to a thriving sport fishery. The recovery of the salmon is vital to the sustained success of the community and the ecosystem. In 2024, the king salmon fishery in the Susitna River was closed due to a sustained period of low productivity. The previous year no king salmon escapement goals were reached according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG).

The Fish Creek drainage is a documented Coho and Sockeye rearing habitat and Sockeye spawning habitat-but these populations are on quick decline. Similarly, the Meadow Creek and Willow Creek drainages are anadromous waters that have seen sharp declines in returning salmon. All five species of salmon are native to this region, and their importance extends beyond their value as a resource, they are keystone species essential to the success of the entire ecosystem.

In freshwater systems, they are necessary for balancing nutrient cycles and sediment transport that support healthy conditions for many native aquatic plants and animals. In marine ecosystems, they once contributed to a robust fishery that has since declined. This project aims to restore spawning and rearing habitat for salmon by mitigating invasive Northern Pike populations, which are outcompeting and preying on juvenile salmon.

Native to interior Alaska but invasive in Southcentral, northern pike have spread rapidly throughout rivers, streams, and lakes in the region. Northern pike consume salmon eggs, fry, and smolts, outcompete native species, and alter stream habitats. The project aim is to conduct invasive predator control to support the recovery of salmon in the watersheds of the Mat-Su Borough (MSB). Aligning with program goals, mitigating invasive northern pike in the MSB will assist in sustaining productive fisheries and strengthening ecosystem resilience.

Juvenile salmon are preyed on by northern pike in many lakes, rivers and streams across the MSB. In many parts of the borough, northern pike have nearly eradicated salmon populations, preventing their return for spawning and rearing and reducing the overall salmon stock. This has a drastic effect on the salmon fishery.

Removing the primary invasive predator of juvenile salmon from the Mat-Su Basin will increase the chances of salmon surviving to adulthood, fostering productive marine and freshwater fisheries and strengthening the ecosystem. Many residents of the MSB rely on salmon productivity to feed their families and fulfill cultural needs. Pike removal will assist the community in regaining their connection to salmon in the borough.

Guidance for the project has come from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as well as fishery management plans including the Technical Guidance and Management Plan for Invasive

Northern Pike in Southcentral Alaska: 2022-2030 written by the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership. Stated objectives are to increase public awareness of invasive northern pike, implement scientifically sound management, and restore fish populations that have been impacted by northern pike introductions. Removal of invasive northern pike will help restore fish habitat for salmon, trout, lamprey, and other native species.

Salmon reintroduction within the Mat-Su Basin is nearly impossible with the extensive northern pike infestation. Reintroduced juvenile salmon will immediately be preyed upon without the removal of this invasive predator, limiting salmon recovery and sustainability. Miles of waterways within the Mat-Su Basin are infested with northern pike; this project aims to treat roughly 15,000 acre-feet of ecosystem to address this issue.

In recent years, residents have had to travel to other cities and towns to harvest salmon for the season. Restoring salmon in the MSB will **enhance community resilience** by re-localizing harvest and stimulating the local fishing economy. An economic analysis conducted by Southwick Associates, Inc. found that sportfishing in Southcentral Alaska accounts for about 75% of the region's total economic fishing contribution. Reductions in salmon harvests in the local area have had serious effects on the local economy. While it's difficult to quantify the individual economic impact of salmon loss on residents, the burden becomes clear when you consider residents must travel 100 miles, rather than 5 miles, to harvest salmon. This may require taking extra days off work and purchasing additional food to support the trip, creating an economic hardship for many households and reducing access to quality, healthy food. Additionally, lodges and guides lose money on northern pike infested waters, negatively affecting their success.

As northern pike are significantly reduced or even eradicated, salmon stocks may begin to naturally repopulate areas where pike had outcompeted them. In cases where salmon do not naturally return, there may be options for artificial reintroduction. With their return, access to recreational, subsistence, and cultural fishing opportunities will be restored. The return of keystone species like salmon will have positive effects on the ecosystem, helping promote riparian vegetation growth along streambanks and in wetlands which can help reduce erosion and aid in floodplain management. Lodges and guide service will be able to hire more staff, creating quality job opportunities, in addition to those that may arise from further research and mitigation work on northern pike in the area.

The Knik Tribe will foster important habitat restoration that is both culturally and regionally important to the tribal community. Salmon are culturally significant species to the Knik Tribe and other Native organizations. All 5 species are traditional food sources for Native Alaskans, who have travelled throughout Southcentral Alaska to harvest them for generations. Salmon are depicted in Native Alaskan art and fables, and they are a consistent source of healthy food. Salmon nourish the whole family, including the dog teams, and are vital to cultural identity and health.

The ADFG has a northern pike team in Southcentral Alaska that quantifies pike infestations through surveys, provides public access pike distribution data, and implements mitigation efforts. Additionally, the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership has worked to identify the history, spread, and mitigation strategies for northern pike. This project will partner with and expand on work already done by both these groups by building additional capacity and providing critical funding.

A strategic action plan for conserving salmon habitat, written by the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, highlights the impacts northern pike have on the ecosystem and how this alters salmon habitat. Northern pike directly prey on salmon and indirectly reduce ecosystem biodiversity and the transfer of marine-derived nutrients to terrestrial ecosystems. The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership has identified multiple goals to improve salmon habitat through invasive pike control, including public outreach and direct management. This program aligns with those goals through multiple deliverables.

The Knik Tribe will share information on invasive northern pike-including their life history, links to the ADFG pike mapper, and details on treatment efforts-via the Knik Tribe website. In collaboration with ADFG and any additional partners that may arise, the Tribe will implement control actions to include containment and eradication. Given the connectivity of waters within the Mat-Su Basin and the extensive spread of northern pike, multiple sites within the basin will be targeted. Collectively, these efforts will benefit the greater geographic area and target northern pike source lakes, where treatment is more feasible prior to treating downstream rivers and streams.

The proposed project is set to be carried out by the Knik Tribe in partnership with ADFG. Treatment sites will all be located within the Knik Tribal Service Area. Resilience benefits will directly affect the tribal community allowing salmon to be returned to the ecosystem.

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

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Executive Summary

Federal Agency Name

Fisheries Habitat Conservation Program Office (HCPO)

Funding Opportunity Title

NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Round 3

Announcement Type

Competitive

Funding Opportunity Number

NOAA-NMFS-HCPO-2025-29526

Assistance Listing Number(s)

11.463

Dates

The application deadline is April 16, 2025, at 11:59 PM Eastern time. Applications must be received by www.Grants.gov.

NOTE: We strongly encourage all prospective applicants to begin required registrations as early as possible. Completing the required registrations can take four to six weeks, and possibly longer. Submission due dates will not be extended because of registration delays. Applicant organizations must register for three different federal systems prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov (SAM.gov, eRA Commons, and Grants.gov).

Applicant organizations must first register with SAM.gov and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). After you obtain your UEI, you can complete your Grants.gov and eRA Commons registrations concurrently.

See Section IV(G) for detailed instructions on registration requirements. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Agency Contacts in Section VII for submission instructions.

Funding Opportunity Description

The principal objective of this solicitation is to support transformational habitat restoration projects that restore marine, estuarine, coastal, or Great Lakes ecosystems, using approaches that enhance community and ecosystem resilience to climate hazards. NOAA anticipates up to \$100 million will be available under this opportunity, of which up to 15% will be specifically available as direct awards and subawards to Indian tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. Section 5304(e)) and Native American organizations that represent Indian Tribes through formal legal agreements (e.g. tribal commissions, tribal consortia, tribal conservation districts, and tribal cooperatives). The remaining funding will be available to all eligible applicants. Funding will prioritize habitat restoration actions that: demonstrate significant impacts; rebuild productive and sustainable fisheries; contribute to the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species; promote climate-resilient ecosystems, especially in tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; and improve economic vitality, including local employment. This solicitation is authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) (BIL, Public Law 117-58), 135 STAT.1356 (Nov. 15, 2021).

This funding opportunity seeks habitat restoration projects that enhance coastal resilience. Coastal areas support the nation's largest and often fastest-growing population centers, as well as key natural assets. Strengthening coastal resilience means preparing and adapting coastal communities to mitigate the impacts of, and more quickly recover after, extreme weather events such as hurricanes, coastal storms, and flooding, as well as longer-term climate hazards, such as sea level rise. Habitat restoration and natural and nature-based infrastructure are critical to doing so, by protecting lives and property; sustaining commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing; recovering threatened and endangered species; and maintaining and fostering vibrant coastal economies. This funding opportunity – along with other opportunities through programs such as the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, Coastal Zone Management, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities – aims to fund projects that support the overarching goal of enhancing coastal resilience. This funding opportunity is also aligned with actions outlined in the Biden-Harris Administration's Ocean Climate Action Plan, including nature-based solutions that support natural coastal and ocean systems while reducing the impacts of climate threats. This funding opportunity will prioritize high-value, transformative projects that advance resilience and support habitat restoration.

Applicants should address the following set of program priorities: 1) sustaining productive fisheries and strengthening ecosystem resilience; 2) enhancing community resilience to climate hazards and providing other co-benefits; 3) fostering regionally important habitat restoration; and 4) providing benefits to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, including through partnerships. This solicitation will fund projects that demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the geographic region where restoration actions are proposed.

Projects that are most responsive to the program priorities and are more transformative (i.e., have greater positive impact) will be more competitive. Proposals may include the following types of project phases: planning and assessments; feasibility studies; engineering design and permitting; on-the-ground implementation; pre- and/or post-implementation monitoring. Proposals may also include capacity-building and community engagement to support the proposed restoration. Applicants proposing pre-implementation activities should demonstrate how these efforts will support or catalyze subsequent on-the-ground restoration.

Proposals that include on-the-ground implementation will be given priority compared to those that include only pre-implementation activities. Proposals that include multiple sites should demonstrate how projects collectively contribute to the priorities within the same geographic area or watershed, and applicants should demonstrate the capacity to manage concurrent habitat restoration projects over multiple years. Priority will be given to activities with the highest certainty to occur within a 2-3 year award period.

NOAA is committed to the goals of advancing equity and support for underserved communities. NOAA

encourages applicants to include and demonstrate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through proactive, meaningful, and equitable community engagement in the identification, design, and/or implementation of proposed projects. NOAA also encourages applicants to propose projects with benefits to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, and projects that appropriately consider and elevate local or indigenous knowledge in project design, implementation, and evaluation. Applicants should identify if the project is located within tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, and/or whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities. This program will advance the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 Initiative. Established by Executive Order 14008 on "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," the Justice40 Initiative has established a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments in climate, clean energy, and other areas will flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment.

Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. NOAA encourages a period of performance of up to three years, with the potential for up to five years, if necessary. NOAA anticipates typical federal funding for awards will range from \$4 million to \$6 million over three years. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$750,000 or more than \$10 million total for the entire award. We only expect a small number of awards (between 3-5) that will be funded near or at the cap of \$10 million. Funds will be administered by the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation, as directed in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The principal objective of this solicitation is to support transformational habitat restoration projects that restore marine, estuarine, coastal, or Great Lakes ecosystems, using approaches that enhance community and ecosystem resilience to climate hazards. Up to 15% of the available funding will go to Indian tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. Section 5304 (e)) or Native American organizations that represent Indian tribes through formal legal agreements (e.g., tribal commissions, tribal consortia, tribal conservation districts, and tribal cooperatives) through direct awards or subawards. Funding will prioritize habitat restoration actions that: demonstrate significant impacts; rebuild productive and sustainable fisheries; contribute to the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species; promote resilient ecosystems, especially in tribal or underserved communities; and improve economic vitality, including local employment. This solicitation is authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) (BIL, Public Law 117-58), 135 STAT.1356 (Nov. 15, 2021).

Extreme weather events and climate hazards can have significant impacts on coastal ecosystems and human communities. Strengthening ecosystem resilience in a changing climate is critical to promoting the recovery of threatened and endangered species, as well as enhancing the sustainability of commercial and recreational fisheries. Additionally, strengthening the resilience of coastal communities can reduce vulnerability and alleviate negative effects from extreme weather and climate hazards, such as flooding and coastal storms.

This funding opportunity will invest in transformational projects that have the greatest potential to provide holistic benefits, through habitat-based approaches that strengthen both ecosystem and community resilience. Examples of habitat restoration projects that are transformational at a regional or national scale include, but are not limited to: projects that provide significant benefits for ecosystems and community resilience; projects that catalyze broad initiatives or partnerships; large-scale projects; innovative projects, which may include new techniques for restoration; and projects that connect to or build upon other restoration or resilience work in a watershed. Projects that are most responsive to the program priorities and are more transformative will be more competitive, by providing important and lasting changes that make a difference for coastal communities and ecosystems.

NOAA also desires cost sharing to encourage partnerships among government, community, industry, and academia. Though not required, applicants are strongly encouraged to combine NOAA federal funding with formal matching contributions or informal leverage from a broad range of sources in the public and private sectors. Such cost sharing and leveraged funds are an element considered in the evaluation criteria.

Entire segments of our society have been marginalized, underserved, or underrepresented in efforts to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and adapt to weather and climate impacts, despite being at greater risk due to lack of resources, accessibility constraints, and systemic institutional barriers. This includes tribes and indigenous people, who are disproportionately affected by climate change and face additional institutional barriers in order to adapt to the most severe impacts (Fourth National Climate Assessment). Executive Order 14096 on “Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All” (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/04/26/2023-08955/revitalizing-ournations-commitment-to-environmental-justice-for-all>) and Executive Order 13985 on “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government” (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racialequity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>), emphasize the need for federal agencies to take actions to redress unfair disparities and remove barriers to government programs and services. E.O. 14096 places even greater urgency on the federal government to “. . . build upon and strengthen its commitment to deliver environmental justice to all communities across America.” This program will advance the Biden-Harris Administration’s Justice40 Initiative. Established by Executive Order 14008 on “Tackling

the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” the Justice40 Initiative has established a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments in climate, clean energy, and other areas will flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment.

We anticipate that this will be the final round of funding available under the Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competition. Consequently, NOAA will prioritize proposed activities that have a high certainty of completion within a 2-3 year award period. NOAA is seeking both projects that are ready for implementation (“shovel ready”) and projects that are still in development.

The following definitions of key terms apply to this funding opportunity.

Ecosystem resilience. This term refers to the capacity of an ecosystem to absorb, withstand, respond to, and/or recover rapidly from disturbances linked to extreme weather events and climate hazards. Resilient ecosystems can resist damage from extreme weather events or climate hazards, while retaining or having the ability to recover their inherent structure and ecological function.

Community resilience. This term refers to the capacity of a human community to absorb, withstand, respond to, and/or recover rapidly from disturbances linked to extreme weather events and climate hazards. Community resilience can also include the ability to plan and prepare for adverse effects of extreme weather events or climate hazards, and the capacity to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Tribes. For this funding opportunity, this term refers to Indian tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. Section 5304 (e)) and Native American organizations that represent Indian tribes through formal legal agreements (e.g., tribal commissions, tribal consortia, tribal conservation districts, and tribal cooperatives). 25 U.S.C. Section 5304 (e) states that “Indian tribe” or “Indian Tribe” means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

Tribal Entities. For this funding opportunity, this term refers to any tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community, and any organization that self-identifies as an Indigenous or Native organization.

Underserved communities. This term refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. Underserved communities are defined in Executive Order 13985: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>

Meaningful engagement. This term refers to communities having an opportunity to be an integral part of the visioning, decision-making, and/or leadership for activities that may affect their environment and/or health and well-being. Meaningful engagement relies on the involvement of those potentially affected in a manner that builds trust and addresses barriers to community participation. This ensures that the scope of the activities is inclusive of the priorities and needs of communities, and that the benefits of the activities flow back to the communities.

Indigenous knowledge (including Tribal Knowledge and Traditional Ecological Knowledge [TEK]): This term refers to the cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. NOAA recognizes the importance of indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge for understanding the environment, adapting to environmental change, and mitigating negative environmental impacts. Our definition is drawn from NOAA guidance and is consistent with the November 15, 2021 Executive Memo on Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Federal Decisions Making, found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/111521-OSTP-CEQ-ITEK-Memo.pdf> .

Habitat restoration. This term applies to techniques or strategies that aim to directly improve the quality and function of habitats, for the purpose of supporting the recovery or sustainability of the target species or fisheries and/or improving community and ecosystem resilience. A variety of habitat types are eligible within this funding opportunity, ranging from marine, estuarine, and coastal ecosystems at the land-sea interface (including coastal rivers), to the freshwater coastal ecosystems of the Great Lakes. Example habitats include, but are not limited to: coral reefs; oyster reefs; coastal wetlands and marshes; freshwater or tidal rivers and streams; shoreline and near-shore ecosystems; seagrass beds; kelp forests and rocky reefs; and mangroves. Applicants with proposals focusing exclusively on fish passage techniques that remove in-stream barriers, such as dams or culverts, are encouraged to reach out to agency contacts (see Section VII) to discuss additional funding opportunities that could be applicable to the proposed work.

Co-benefits of restoration. This term refers to the multiple benefits of restoration that extend beyond biologically relevant benefits to target species. This may include: contributions to ecosystem and community resilience; increases in business opportunities; revitalization of public communities; improvements in access to recreational, subsistence, and/or culturally important fishing opportunities; reductions to safety hazards; and/or reductions in operation and maintenance costs. Co-benefits are often measured through socioeconomic methods.

Nature-based solutions. This term refers to actions that protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use, and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems. These solutions effectively and adaptively address social, economic, and environmental challenges, while simultaneously providing benefits for human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience, and biodiversity.

Coastal areas. This term refers to geographies within coastal shoreline counties (or parishes), or within coastal watershed counties (or parishes). Coastal shoreline counties are directly adjacent to the open ocean, estuaries, or the Great Lakes. Coastal watershed counties are located along inland rivers and streams with a significant impact on coastal and ocean resources.

B. Program Priorities

Successful proposals will be those that meet the evaluation criteria (Section V.A) most strongly, including those criteria related to the program priorities described here. Applicants should address the following set of program priorities: 1) sustaining productive fisheries and strengthening ecosystem resilience; 2) enhancing community resilience to climate hazards and providing other co-benefits; 3) fostering regionally important habitat restoration; and 4) providing benefit to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, including through partnerships.

For more information on the program priorities outlined below, applicants should visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/program-priorities-habitat-restoration-grants>

1) Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience.

Applicants should describe how the proposed habitat restoration actions align with relevant plans to recover and/or manage the target species or fisheries. Proposals should also address how restoration will strengthen resilience within the target habitat and the surrounding ecosystem. Potential benefits for fisheries habitat will be evaluated based on how the proposed restoration actions will:

(a) Contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that are under NOAA jurisdiction (hereafter, Listed Species);

(b) Sustain or help rebuild fish stocks managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (hereafter, Managed Species), which includes benefits to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for recreationally and commercially important species and their prey;

- (c) Enhance the sustainability of saltwater recreational fisheries by the restoration of habitat that supports the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy and Implementation Plans; or
- (d) Improve habitat to support native fish species of the Great Lakes.

2) Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Hazards and Providing Other Co-benefits.

Applicants should describe how the proposed restoration will benefit human populations within or near the project site(s), and how these actions will increase resilience to extreme weather and climate hazards (e.g., storms, flooding, erosion) that are most threatening to the local communities. Applicants may also describe how the proposed work will enhance the ability to plan and prepare for adverse effects of extreme weather events or climate hazards, or provide additional co-benefits to the community (e.g., economic vitality, increased access to natural resources). Co-benefits are defined in Section I.A.

3) Fostering Regionally Important Habitat Restoration, including sites and species prioritized by tribal communities.

This solicitation will prioritize restoration actions that demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within a defined geographic region. This solicitation also prioritizes restoration of habitats that improve fish populations that are important to tribes, including usual and accustomed areas, habitat important for enhancing tribal treaty reserved fishing rights or native subsistence fishing, and tribal trust fishing opportunities. Applicants should describe the context of the proposed work within the landscape, watershed, or other geographically defined boundary. As relevant, applicants should also refer to tribal knowledge, watershed plans, resilience plans, or other fishery-related strategic planning, conservation, or management documents to show the tribal importance of the proposed work. Descriptions should explain how the work may complement other current or proposed restoration efforts, including projects that will help to build climate resilience through other funding opportunities supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (e.g., National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, Coastal Zone Management, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities) or the Inflation Reduction Act (e.g., Climate Resilience Regional Challenge).

Applicants should refer to watershed plans, resiliency plans, or other fishery-related strategic planning, conservation, or management documents, as appropriate, to support the proposed work. Comprehensive planning documents may range in scale and scope from the level of a local watershed plan, to a state- or basin-wide plan. Proposals should identify how the habitat restoration aligns with such comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and if the proposed actions demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the defined geographic area. Proposals that include multiple sites should demonstrate how projects collectively contribute to the priorities within the same geographic area or watershed.

4) Meaningfully engage Tribal, Indigenous, and/or Underserved Communities and augment capacity, as needed, to support their role as stewards of natural resources for cultural, spiritual, economic, subsistence, and recreational purposes.

This solicitation will prioritize restoration actions that demonstrate that Tribal, Indigenous, and/or Underserved Communities have an opportunity to be an integral part of the visioning, decision-making, or leadership for activities that may affect their environment and/or health and wellbeing in a manner that builds trust and addresses barriers to community participation. Furthermore, this program aims to ensure that the benefits of funded activities flow back to the community where the project is located. NOAA is committed to the goals of advancing equity and support for tribal, indigenous, and underserved communities. Applicants should identify if the project is to be carried out in full or in part by a tribal government; if the project is located within tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; and/or whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities. This is a Justice40 covered program, and applicants should review Section IV.B. "Project Narrative" for information pertaining to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) to assist in identifying disadvantaged communities.

Additional resources for Program Priorities are available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/program-priorities-habitat-restoration-grants>

C. Program Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the following statutes to provide grants and cooperative agreements for habitat restoration and conservation: Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act 16 U.S.C. 661, as implemented by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970; Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, 16 U.S.C. 1891a; and Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1535. The NOAA Administrator is authorized under the America COMPETES Act, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 893a, to support formal and informal educational activities at all levels. This solicitation is authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) (BIL, Public Law 117-58), 135 STAT.1356 (Nov. 15, 2021).

I. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA anticipates up to \$100 million will be available under this funding opportunity. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$750,000 or more than \$10 million over the entire award period. NOAA anticipates typical federal funding for awards will range from \$4 million to \$6 million. Up to 15% of available funds will be specifically available to Indian tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. Section 5304 (e)) and Native American organizations that represent Indian tribes through formal legal agreements (e.g. tribal commissions, tribal consortia, tribal conservation districts, and tribal cooperatives), as direct awards or subawards. The remaining \$85 million will be available to all eligible applicants (see Section III.A). NOAA expects that only a few habitat restoration projects with significant ecological impacts, credible and detailed cost estimates, and construction readiness will be awarded the maximum allowable request (\$10 million).

Funds will be administered by the Community-based Restoration Program within the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Any funds provided to successful applicants for subsequent-year funding requests will be based on progress towards stated milestones and availability of funding. This determination is at the discretion of the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation and the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD).

Neither NOAA nor the Department of Commerce are responsible for direct costs of application preparation. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. The number of awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for habitat restoration, and the merit and ranking of the applications.

B. Project/Award Period

NOAA requests a period of performance of two to three years. The earliest anticipated start date for awards will be January 1, 2026. Both federal and non-federal match pre-award costs, incurred up to 90 days prior to the award start date, may be requested and will be considered during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA. Incurring pre-award costs before NOAA GMD offers a grant is at the applicant's own risk. Award periods may be extended, at the discretion of NOAA and based on project needs, up to the extent legally allowable. This is typically a maximum award length of five years.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements, as described in 2 C.F.R. §200.1, meaning that NOAA expects to be substantially involved in many aspects of the awards. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, collaborating on the scope of work, providing assistance with technical aspects of the habitat restoration, reviewing and commenting on design plans, and reviewing procurement materials to the extent authorized by 2 C.F.R. § 200.325.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. territories, and state, local, and tribal governments. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies and employees are not allowed to receive funds under this solicitation, but may serve as collaborative project partners. Foreign entities can participate as partners (contractors, sub-recipients, or informal collaborators) of a prime recipient based in the U.S.

This opportunity includes up to 15% of funds available to Indian tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. Section 5304 (e)) and Native American organizations that represent Indian tribes through formal legal agreements (e.g. tribal commissions, tribal consortia, tribal conservation districts, and tribal cooperatives). Funding to Indian tribes and Native American organizations may be direct awards or subawards. 25 U.S.C. Section 5304 (e) states that "Indian tribe" or "Indian Tribe" means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians. Applicants demonstrating a connection to a tribe, tribal entity and/or an underserved community may do this through proposed subawards, contracts, informal collaboration, or other engagement with, or approval of, one or more tribes, tribal entities, and/or underserved communities. The application will be evaluated based on the strength of the partnership with the underserved community or communities. The partner submitting the application is required to provide supporting documentation in the application demonstrating that they have been endorsed by one or more tribes, tribal entities, and/or underserved communities for the specific work proposed. The documentation may be provided in the form of letters of support from one or more tribes, tribal entities, and/or underserved communities for the specific work proposed, and should be attached with other Supplemental Materials. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. However, federal agencies or employees may serve as unfunded collaborative project partners. Foreign entities should participate as partners (contractors, sub-recipients, or informal collaborators) of a prime recipient based in the U.S.

Applicants must propose work in coastal, marine, or estuarine areas that benefit species or fisheries outlined within the program priorities (Section I.B). See Section I.A. for a definition of coastal areas. Eligible applicants for Great Lakes projects must propose work within the Great Lakes basin within one of the eight U.S. Great Lakes states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). Applications that propose projects in the Commonwealth and Territories of the United States, for this solicitation defined as American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, are eligible, but those in the Freely Associated States are not eligible to submit an application.

B. Cost Share or Matching Requirement

There is no non-federal matching requirement for this funding. NOAA desires cost sharing to encourage partnerships among government, community, industry, and academia. To this end, applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered within the evaluation criterion entitled "Project Costs" (see Section V.A). NOAA encourages applicants whose proposed initiatives exceed the budgetary limits for this competition to apply to this competition and also for other, complementary federal funding for separate components of their larger initiatives. In these situations, NOAA will coordinate as necessary with other agencies to assure that funding is not duplicated and that the complementary components will support completion of the larger initiative.

Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.306 for cost sharing or matching policies. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates, and who are planning to provide cost sharing, may find it convenient to 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. Refer to Section IV.F "Funding Restrictions" for information on indirect costs. Refer to Section II.B "Project/Award Period" and Section VI.A. "Pre-Award Costs" for information on pre-award costs.

For applications including non-federal match funds within the proposed budget, the ratio of approved NOAA funds to non-federal match funds will be legally binding within the award document signed by NOAA's GMD, if the application is selected for funding. NOAA is under no obligation to amend the match contributions once the award document is signed by the recipient, but the amount may be amended based on extenuating circumstances. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

All applications must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Application submission date and time should be documented by the applicant by electronic submission to Grants.gov, a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt. Applicants should consider the possibility of unforeseen impacts from natural hazards that could affect Internet access and use of Grants.gov on or before the application due date. Applicants should be aware that localized hazardous weather or other situations that impact the ability to submit application packages may not result in changes to the application deadline. Information regarding electronic submission through Grants.gov is contained in Section IV.G. Applications must contain all required forms and proposals will be reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this funding announcement. Failure to submit forms may result in disqualification from this competition. Information regarding electronic submission through Grants.gov is contained in Section IV.G. NOAA will not accept proposals with a federal funding request of less than \$750,000 or more than \$10 million over the entire award.

The following information describes ineligible project proposal types and activities:

- 1) Proposals that focus solely on marine debris prevention and removal are not eligible. To find out about funding opportunities related to marine debris, please check with the NOAA Marine Debris Program and the National Sea Grant College Program at <https://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov> and <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/funding>
- 2) Proposals that focus solely on acquisition of real property are not eligible.
- 3) Proposals that focus solely on beach renourishment for recreational purposes are not eligible.
- 4) Proposals addressing hard infrastructure only for water quality improvement are not eligible. Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to, wastewater treatment plant upgrades, elimination of combined sewer outfalls, replacement of failing septic systems, and implementation of agricultural animal waste management plans. However, projects that improve water quality through the creation or enhancement of

fisheries habitat are eligible, as are projects that increase the amount of streamflow (i.e., water storage projects).

5) Activities that are required by a separate local, state, or federal consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation are not eligible. Applicants planning to combine grant or matching funds with mitigation should review the Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources; Final Rule at 73 Fed. Reg. 19594 (April 10, 2008). NOAA plans to follow the approach adopted by some other federal agencies on Page 19636 that describes scenarios where mitigation credits may or may not be obtained in association with federal financial incentives.

6) Effectiveness monitoring and research are not eligible project types. The NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation values effectiveness monitoring and research, but funds are not included within this solicitation to support monitoring and research-focused projects. Effectiveness monitoring examines how well the project performs, is longer-term than implementation monitoring, and often requires detailed field investigations of multiple physical, biological, and geochemical processes. Implementation monitoring, as discussed in Section IV.B and V.A.2(c), is an eligible activity, as is the tracking of performance measures and metrics. To find out more about effectiveness monitoring and regional contacts with which to discuss ideas, visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration-projects>

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms and instructions, can be found on www.Grants.gov. If a prospective applicant is having difficulty downloading the application forms from www.Grants.gov, contact www.Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. Information about the recommended format for applications is contained in Section IV.B. The instructions for these forms are available at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-individual-family>

B. Content and Form of Application

A complete, standard NOAA financial assistance application package should be submitted, as described below. Each proposal must include the following federal application forms. The Standard Form (SF)-424 family and form instructions are available in the [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) application package, but may be downloaded from:

<https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/>

- 1) SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance
- 2) SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-construction Programs
- 3) SF-424B: Assurances for Non-construction Programs
- 4) CD-511: Certification Regarding Lobbying
- 5) SF-LLL (if applicable): Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

In addition to the federal application forms, NOAA recommends the following components as part of a complete application package. Page limits assume an 11- or 12-point font and 1- inch margins. Components should be organized into a maximum of three (3) flattened PDF files outlined below, with a maximum length of 75 combined pages. It is recommended that file sizes not exceed 100MB in order to preserve the applicant's formatting. Additional information on formatting attachments can be found here: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/format-attachments.htm>

- PDF 1. Project Summary and Project Narrative (20 page limit)
- PDF 2. Budget Narrative (10 page limit)
- PDF 3. Supplemental Materials and Project Designs (45 page limit)

Reviewers will only evaluate the first 75 pages of the submitted materials (in addition to required forms). The application should follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V.A) to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The information provided below may help to address the evaluation criteria.

PDF 1. Project Summary and Project Narrative (20 page limit).

Project Summary (2 page limit).

1) Applicant Organization

2) Project Title

3) Site Location. Include the geographic coordinates and the nearest town or watershed. If multiple sites are proposed, please include geographic coordinates for each site.

4) Brief Project Description. Describe the extent to which the proposed work aligns with the stated program objective (Section I.A) and program priorities (Section I.B). The description should outline the expected benefits for the target species or fisheries, and how ecosystem resilience will be strengthened. Explain how your proposed work will enhance community resilience to climate hazards. Describe the proposed work within the context of the landscape, watershed, or other geographically defined boundary. The description should identify how the restoration aligns with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and if the proposed actions demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the geographic area. Identify if the project is located within tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities and/or whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities.

5) Timeline. Provide a timeline of all project activities. This includes all work to be supported with requested NOAA funds, and any non-federal formal matching contributions or informal leverage.

6) Funding Request. Outline the total request for NOAA funds for each year of the project period. If non-federal matching contributions are proposed, include the status of the funds (e.g., not applied for; pending; secured). If other financial support beyond NOAA federal funds and non-federal match funds will be used to complete the proposed work, outline the sources and amount of these leveraged funds. If you have submitted (or plan to submit) your proposal to other relevant funding opportunities, please identify the funding source and/or title(s) of the competition(s), amount of funds requested, and approximate decision date(s) for anticipated award selection. If space is limited, provide a summary here and include a full description in the Supplemental Materials.

Project Narrative (18 page limit).

Proposals are evaluated based on the criteria described in Section V.A. Please review the evaluation criteria for a full description of topics to include in the project narrative. The following information provides guidance for how to respond to the evaluation criteria in context, which may or may not apply to the project type you are proposing. For more information on program priorities and other goals outlined below, applicants should visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-financial-services/program-priorities-habitat-restoration-grants>

1. Importance / Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals.

(a) Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience. Applicants should identify one or more species targeted by the proposed habitat restoration, and describe the general historic and current status of the population(s). Applicants should describe how the proposed actions support the recovery or sustainability of Listed Species, Managed Species, saltwater recreational fisheries, or native fish species of the Great Lakes. For proposals addressing Listed Species, proposed actions should align with ESA Recovery Plans. For proposals targeting Managed Species, proposed actions should be

consistent with Fishery Management Plans and should address benefits to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for recreationally and commercially important species and their prey. For proposals addressing saltwater recreational fisheries, applicants should identify how proposed actions align with one of the six guiding principles of the National Saltwater Recreational Angler Policy. The policy's goal of supporting sustainable saltwater recreational fisheries resources, including healthy marine and estuarine habitats, is guided by the principle of supporting ecosystem conservation and enhancement through restoration and science-based enhancements and conservation of forage fish. For proposals targeting the Great Lakes, applicants should describe how the habitat restoration actions will benefit native fish species.

Applicants should describe and quantify a measurable effect that the restoration actions will have on the ecosystem (e.g., acres of habitat restored, stream miles opened for fish passage). Descriptions should provide context for the current condition of the habitat, and outline the issues that are limiting recovery or sustainability of the target species or fisheries. Proposals should also address how restoration will strengthen resilience to climate change within the target habitat and the surrounding ecosystem. Proposals can describe the disturbance or stressors that will be minimized or prevented, or how restoration actions will strengthen capacity for adaptation to environmental changes.

(b) Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Hazards and Providing Other Co-benefits. Applicants should describe how the proposed habitat restoration will benefit human populations within or near the project site(s), and how habitat restoration actions will promote resilience to the climate hazards that are most threatening to the local communities. Applicants may also describe how the proposed work will enhance the ability to plan and prepare for adverse effects of extreme weather events or climate hazards. Examples of co-benefits include, but are not limited to: protection from flooding and extreme weather events; reduction in erosion impacts; increases in job opportunities; improvements in access to recreational, subsistence, and cultural fishing opportunities; and creation of public spaces. Proposals should include descriptions of anticipated resilience benefits and other co-benefits that will result from habitat restoration within the spatial and temporal context of the proposed activities. Co-benefits are defined in Section I.A.

Proposals may include specific metrics within the Project Narrative to capture the impact or scale of the proposed work on community resilience and other expected co-benefits such as public safety or community enhancement. Public safety benefits may include infrastructure improvements, removal of physical hazards, or flood risk reduction, with potential metrics such as: number of structures improved; number of structures protected from flooding or storm surge; or changes in flood heights. Community enhancement benefits may include recreational or economic improvements, with potential metrics such as number of new recreational access points or avoided or reduced maintenance costs. For more information on developing socioeconomic performance metrics for restoration projects, applicants should visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/priorities-habitat-restoration-grants>

(c) Fostering Regionally Important Habitat Restoration, including sites and species prioritized by tribal communities. Applicants should explain why the proposed work is meaningful within the selected geographic region, and if relevant, its significance to tribal communities. Descriptions should explain how the work may complement other current or proposed restoration efforts, including projects that will help to build climate resilience through other funding opportunities supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (e.g., National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, Coastal Zone Management, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities) and Inflation Reduction Act (e.g., Climate Resilience Regional Challenge). Applicants should refer to watershed plans or other fishery-related strategic planning, conservation, or management documents, as appropriate to the proposed work. Furthermore, to demonstrate the significance of the proposed work to tribal communities, applicants should refer to tribal knowledge, watershed plans, resilience plans, or other fishery-related strategic planning, conservation, or management documents. Proposals should identify how the restoration aligns with relevant resources, and if the proposed actions demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the defined geographic area. Proposals that include multiple sites should demonstrate how projects collectively contribute to the priorities within the same geographic area or watershed.

(d) Meaningfully engage Tribal, Indigenous, and/or Underserved Communities and augment capacity, as needed, to support their role as stewards of natural resources for cultural, spiritual, economic, subsistence, and recreational purposes. Applicants should identify if the proposed work is to be carried out in full or in part by a tribal government or if the project is located within a tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved community. Applicants should indicate whether a portion of the resilience benefits from the proposed work will flow to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities and how those benefits will be measured. As needed, to assist with identifying and assessing the marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities that are connected to their proposed restoration actions, NOAA encourages the use of the Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) (at <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>) as the primary mapping tool. Applicants are encouraged to use the information available through CEJST, other relevant tools, and direct engagement of tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities to assist in assessing how the benefits of a project will reverse or mitigate the burdens of disadvantage.

Proposals may include activities that build capacity (such as supporting staff positions), may include Tribal partnerships, to work on the habitat restoration project development, including reviewing project locations, reviewing design plans, conducting field assessments, leading fish passage projects guided by tribal knowledge as relevant, and/or managing project design and construction.

2. Technical / Scientific Merit.

(a) Project Methodology. Applicants should provide evidence to support the feasibility of the techniques, and address whether the methods are technically sound and safe for the public. Proposals that include multiple sites should describe the restoration methods for each location. For each restoration site, applicants should clearly identify the project phase(s) (e.g., feasibility study, engineering and design, on-the-ground implementation) and the proposed restoration techniques.

(b) Project Detail. The project narrative should include a timeline with key milestones and deliverables identified and detail how the actions will be completed within a 2-3 year award period. If multiple restoration sites are included within one proposal, the proposed actions should be fully described for each site. Applicants should identify interim milestones that correspond to funding year increments. This includes identifying all consultation and permitting requirements and the current document status (e.g. not applied for, pending, secured), and incorporating the likely award start date and species-specific work windows. For projects with permits or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents completed or under development, please indicate the status and level of NEPA review (Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment, or Environmental Impact Statement), lead federal agency, contact information for the lead agency person, and where public copies of the document are available. See also Section VI.B of this announcement.

(c) Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation. Applicants should describe the habitat-based metrics or other quantitative performance measures that will be used to evaluate the success of the proposed restoration actions. Specifically, on-the-ground restoration projects should include ecological targets that can be evaluated within approximately one-year post- implementation. Proposals that focus solely on pre-implementation activities, such as planning, feasibility, and/or engineering and design, should include baseline monitoring. Proposals requesting funding for on-the-ground implementation activities should include a Monitoring Plan (2 page limit) as part of the Supplemental Materials. Applicants should be willing to work with NOAA to adjust planned monitoring activities, if necessary, to ensure that the proposed parameters are appropriate and meet the requirements below.

Proposals that include one of the NOAA Restoration Center's four primary restoration methods (coral reef restoration; oyster reef restoration; hydrologic restoration; fish passage) should incorporate the applicable implementation monitoring parameters found in the NOAA Restoration Center Implementation Monitoring (Tier 1) Guidance. The guidance document provides an overview of the preferred structure for Monitoring Plans. The monitoring guidance and regional contact persons can be found at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/monitoring-and-evaluation-restoration->

[projects#more-information](#)

Proposals that do NOT include one of the NOAA Restoration Center's four primary restoration methods named above should propose sufficient, cost-effective monitoring metrics that will assess whether the restoration actions were carried out as designed.

Proposals should: 1) include parameters that evaluate short-term structural changes at the project site(s) (e.g., as-built surveys), and may also include a basic measure of success (e.g., presence/absence of target species); 2) propose pre-implementation data collection, when applicable; 3) include parameters with quantitative or clearly defined targets; and 4) include parameters with targets that can be evaluated within approximately one year after project implementation.

While the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation values effectiveness monitoring and research, funds are not included within this solicitation to support these efforts. Effectiveness monitoring examines how well the project performs, is longer-term than implementation monitoring, and often requires detailed field investigations of multiple physical, biological, and geochemical processes. Proposals for effectiveness monitoring that do not qualify for other NOAA competitive funding may be eligible for NOAA's Broad Agency Announcement, posted on Grants.gov.

(d) Sustainability. The narrative should describe future management, beyond the award period, including mechanisms to protect, maintain, or sustain the restoration site(s) so the effects of the funded project(s) can benefit the target species and habitat into the future. If applicable, a description of a landowner agreement may contribute to this element. For new or replacement structures, the estimated design life of a project should be noted, including any factors (such as changing weather patterns) that may shorten the expected functional life of the project. Applicants should also describe how the proposed restoration design, methodology, and techniques provide for ecosystem resilience to extreme weather events, self-sustaining habitats, or adaptation to potential climate change impacts at the project site. An operations and maintenance plan should be considered when applicants are proposing to install structures that require ongoing operation and maintenance in order to be effective, such as fish passage devices, fishways, or tide gates. The proposal should include discussion of an operations and management plan that specifies the entity responsible for the structure(s) and how they will be operated and maintained throughout the life of the structure(s) to ensure lasting habitat benefits.

Applicants proposing to enhance existing tidal wetlands, including beneficial reuse of dredged material to increase substrate elevation to keep pace with sea level rise and subsidence effects, should provide information on the source of the dredged materials, the site-specific rate of sea level rise and subsidence, target substrate elevation(s), and how the restored site is expected to keep pace with the rate of sea level rise and subsidence. Proposals for oyster reef restoration should identify whether the site(s) will be located in areas protected from harvest, and whether the site(s) will serve as a larval source within the targeted ecosystem. Proposals including living shoreline techniques should provide site specific context to demonstrate that the specified design components are appropriate for the location. If plants or animals will be introduced to the restoration site(s), include the origin/source and regional genetic stock of the plant or animal, and describe the proximity to any existing or remnant sources of similar type in the area.

(e) Data Management Plan. Applicants should include a Data Management Plan under PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs). See Section VI.B. of this announcement, regarding NOAA's Data Sharing Policy.

3. Overall Qualification of Applicant.

(a) Restoration and Conservation Qualifications. Within the project narrative, applicants should describe the restoration and conservation qualifications of the project team (staff and/or partners), including experience with planning, design, engineering, implementation, and/or monitoring for habitat restoration projects. Resumes or curriculum vitae (CVs) for up to five (5) key personnel should be included within PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs), and the documents should highlight relevant education, experiences, and training.

(b) Management Capacity. Within the project narrative, applicants should describe the project team's ability to successfully manage a federal award. Applicants should demonstrate a strong capacity to maintain financial and administrative records and fulfill reporting requirements. Within the attached resumes or CVs, applicants should highlight relevant experience with management of federal funds or other significant grant awards. Applicants should address whether the project team has the capacity to complete the proposed work on time, even in the face of adverse conditions.

4. Project Costs. Applicants should follow the guidance provided under PDF 2. Budget Narrative.

5. Outreach and Education.

(a) Community Support. NOAA encourages robust public support for restoration projects, as evidenced by letters from a diverse range of participants and partners. A diverse range of groups may include community associations, local environmental justice organizations, business / agricultural groups, adjacent landowners, and state, local, and tribal governments. If landowner support is essential to implementing the restoration actions, a letter of support or permission should be included. Applicants should indicate which letters, if any, are from identified underserved communities or tribes. Letters of community support should be included in PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs).

(b) Inclusive Planning and Engagement. Proposals should include opportunities for meaningful engagement of local communities. Proposals should outline how any barriers to engaging in project planning or accessing the project benefits will be addressed, with a focus on tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, when relevant. Applicants should describe how the project(s) will meet the holistic needs of the community, and may wish to consider developing partner relationships (including contracts or subawards) with other organizations to facilitate the inclusion of tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities. A clearly outlined strategy to engage a diverse range of community groups in restoration actions should be included. Applicants who are interested in partnering with conservation corps, veteran groups, Minority Serving Institutions, or other organizations should describe how they plan to implement those partnerships and outline the objectives of their participation. Meaningful engagement concepts and examples of activities are described in the NOAA Restoration Center Meaningful Engagement of Tribes and Underserved Communities overview document available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/program-priorities-habitat-restoration-grants#how-do-i-demonstrate-the-meaningful-engagement-of-local-tribal-and-or-underserved-communities-in-my-project?>

(c) Community Outreach and Education. Applicants should describe the strategy to share information and educate the public about the restoration actions. Strategies may include, but are not limited to: various formats of outreach content (e.g., signage, newsletters, online content); materials in multiple languages, if applicable; events and volunteer opportunities for community members; informal education and mentoring for interns or early career professionals, including those from underrepresented groups in ocean and atmospheric science and policy careers; opportunities for press visits; or other outreach that encourages support for restoration and environmental stewardship. Applicants should consider collaborating with local community members to incorporate volunteer, education, and/or hands-on opportunities for their communities.

PDF 2. Budget Narrative (10 page limit)

Reviewers will evaluate project costs by reviewing the budget narrative. Project costs should be divided into the following categories, also referred to as SF-424A Object Classes: Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual, and Other. The sum of funds requested under these Object Classes should be recorded as Total Direct Costs. The costs required for organizational operation that cannot be easily associated with an individual project or program should be recorded as Indirect Costs. Organizations with a federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) should include a copy of the approved NICRA in PDF 3 (Supplemental Materials and Project Designs). Organizations without a NICRA may claim the 15% de minimis rate for calculating indirect charges on the Modified Total Direct Costs or may negotiate a rate, as outlined below (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 for definitions). Refer to Sections

IV.F. and VI.B. of this announcement for more information about indirect costs. All Object Class costs in the budget narrative should equal those entered on the SF-424A. These totals should also be recorded on the SF-424A. NOAA staff will review budget information in recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, necessary, and realistic.

For projects with contractual components, applicants must follow procurement standards set forth in 2 C.F.R. § 200.317-200.327. If the proposal is considered for funding, NOAA Grants Management Division reviewers will be looking for information on the procurement methods used for each contract, as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.320. Applicants are encouraged to provide separate budgets for each contract and they must provide budgets for each contract in excess of \$250,000, to determine whether proposed costs are reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable. For contracts that are not yet in place at the time of submitting the proposal, the budget narrative must include an explanation of how contractual costs were estimated and what procurement methods they will use to select contractors.

In addition to dividing the budget narrative into Object Classes, separating costs by milestone or purpose may be valuable to reviewers. Award costs should be divided into annual funding requests to show anticipated expenditure rates. If NOAA funding will be used to complete part of a broad-scale project, a budget overview for the entire project should be provided to demonstrate how the NOAA request relates to the overall project budget and how NOAA funds are needed for successful implementation.

If a project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, applicants should include the amount requested or secured from other funding sources, and whether the funds are federal or non-federal in origin. Applicants should clearly indicate if funds are proposed as official, non-federal match, or if the funds are informal leverage. Applicants should refer to 2 C.F.R. § 200.306 for explanations of match funds, which must generally be used during the award period. Match is entered on federal forms, recorded on award documents, and becomes a legally binding component of the award. Leverage refers to all other funding support that contributes to completion of the project(s). Leverage can be either federal or non-federal in origin, and can include funds expended toward the project(s) either before or during the award period. The NOAA Restoration Center has provided guidance regarding the level of detail required to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, necessary, and realistic in the "Supplemental Instructions" at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/resources-noaa-restoration-center-applicants#restoration-budget-guidance>

PDF 3. Supplemental Materials and Project Designs (45 page limit)

All supplemental materials should be combined into a single PDF, including a cover page that lists all of the documents and associated page numbers. The cover page does not count toward the 45 page limit. The compiled PDF should be uploaded under the "Other Attachments Form" in Grants.gov.

- 1) Include maps and/or aerial photos with nearby towns and/or roads labeled and with the site location(s) highlighted.
- 2) Include resumes or CVs for up to five key personnel (maximum of 1 page per person), as described in the guidance (Section IV.B) under Overall Qualification of Applicant.
- 3) Include letters of support from a diverse range of partners, as described in the guidance (Section IV.B) under Outreach and Education. If applicable, include a letter documenting support or permission from any private owners or public land managers to conduct work at the proposed site(s).
- 4) Include a Data Management Plan (2 page limit). The plan should follow the "Guidance for Data Management Plans" document at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2024-05/Grantee-Guidance-for-Tier-1-Monitoring.pdf>. See Section VI.B of this announcement for a complete description of NOAA's Data and Publication Sharing Directive for NOAA Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Contracts.
- 5) If applicable, include a Monitoring Plan (2 page limit) for proposals that involve on-the-ground implementation, as described in the guidance (Section IV.B) for the "Implementation Monitoring and

Evaluation” sub-criterion under Technical / Scientific Merit.

6) If a proposal includes fish passage activities within Great Lakes habitat, include appropriate documentation demonstrating consultation with, and support from, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sea Lamprey Control Program.

7) Include any other relevant supporting materials, such as: a federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA); documentation of confirmed sources of formal, non-federal matching contributions or informal leveraged funds; additional site photos; etc.

8) If available, project designs and basis of design reports should be included in the application in order for reviewers to comprehensively assess the technical merit of the proposed restoration. Relevant sections of construction specifications, scopes of work for services, and cost estimates may also be provided. Please do not attach feasibility studies or watershed plans. The critical components of those documents should be summarized in the Project Narrative. Please remember that reviewers will only evaluate a maximum of 75 pages for each application package.

Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan (up to 2 pages). See Section VI.B., Administrative and National Policy Requirements, below for additional information on what the plan should contain.

No reference to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questionnaire is required in proposals.

C. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the System for Award Management (SAM), which may be accessed online at SAM.gov.

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier (UEI) in its application; and (iii) 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. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA 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.

D. Submission Dates and Times

The application deadline is April 16, 2025, at 11:59 PM Eastern time. See Section III.C and IV.G. for more information.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 19 on 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, contact the official listed in Section VII of this announcement for referral information. The information can also be reviewed at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SPOC-list-as-of-2023.pdf>

F. Funding Restrictions

The budget may include indirect (facilities & administrative [F&A]) costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. As defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, indirect (F&A) costs are incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefited, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved (e.g., lights, rent, water, and insurance). A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect (F&A) cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), an applicant that does not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to: charge a de minimis rate of 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC); describe all costs as direct costs in the budget narrative; or establish a new rate through their cognizant agency for indirect costs as defined under 2 C.F.R. § 200.1. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: Jennifer Jackson in the NOAA Grants Management Division (jennifer.jackson@noaa.gov).

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants should submit applications electronically through www.Grants.gov. Users of [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) will be able to create an online application workspace to submit the application. If an applicant has problems accessing the online workspace at [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov.

Applications must be submitted by the due date and time provided in Section IV.D. Late applications may not be considered for funding. Applicant organizations must complete and maintain three registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive an award, as described at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-financial-services/grant-application-process>. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. The complete registration process for all three systems can take 4 to 6 weeks, so applicants should begin registration activity as soon as possible. If an eligible applicant does not have access to the internet or other technical issues prevent electronic submission, please contact the agency contacts listed in Section VII. Registration for all three systems is free.

After electronic submission of the application, applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgment from [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) that contains a [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) tracking number. Applications submitted through [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) will be accompanied by four automated responses (the first confirms receipt; the second validates that the submission is acceptable and timely; the third confirms that the application has been forwarded to eRA for further processing; and the fourth verifies that eRA has accepted the application). Please follow the submission guidelines available [here](#). If all notifications are not received, applicants should contact the [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) help desk to confirm the application was successfully submitted. After submitting the application package, applicants should download a copy of the submitted application for offline record-keeping and to verify the contents of the submission zip file. [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) recommends downloading the submitted application via the Details tab of the workspace and verifying the contents of each file in the zip (<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-fags.html>).

Submission time will be documented by electronic submission to [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), a U.S. Postal Service postmark, or a delivery service receipt for paper applications. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Paper applications received later than seven business days following the closing date may not be accepted, if the application is too late to be integrated into the merit review process.

H. Address for Submitting Proposals

Electronic applications are strongly encouraged; however, paper applications will also be considered. Paper applications should be sent to: NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA Fisheries (F/HC3), 1315 East

West Highway, Rm. 14853, Silver Spring, MD 20910. ATTN: Round 3 Transformational Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants. All applications MUST contain ALL required forms. Failure to submit forms may result in disqualification from this competition. Applicants are responsible for tracking their own applications. Proposal application packages, including all letters of collaboration or support, shall be submitted together in one package. Please notify the contact official in Section VII of this announcement by email regarding any paper submissions by mail, and/or for any technical difficulties using Grants.gov.

V. Application Review Information

Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA Evaluation Criteria and the respective weights specified below. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive. See Section IV. B for suggested details to address the evaluation criteria.

1. Importance / Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (35 points): This criterion ascertains the extent to which there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, tribal, state, or local activities. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

(a) Sustaining Productive Fisheries and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience. To what extent will the proposed actions restore habitat for the benefit of: 1) Listed Species, through actions that are prioritized in ESA Recovery Plans; 2) Managed Species, as described in Fishery Management Plans; 3) saltwater recreational fisheries, as described in the National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy and Implementation Plans; or 4) native fish species in the Great Lakes? To what extent will the habitat restoration help to strengthen ecosystem resilience? Proposals including on-the-ground implementation will be prioritized. For proposals that solely include pre-implementation activities, such as planning, feasibility, and/or engineering and design, what is the likelihood that the proposed work will provide direct habitat benefits and strengthen ecosystem resilience, once implemented? (11 points)

0 – proposed actions will not result in habitat restoration, and no specific ecosystem or fisheries benefits are identified; 6 – proposed actions will result in a moderate level of habitat restoration, with some potential for strengthened ecosystem resilience and direct benefits to the target species or fisheries; 11 - proposed actions include on-the-ground implementation and will result in a substantial level of habitat restoration, with high likelihood of strengthened ecosystem resilience and direct benefits to the target species or fisheries.

(b) Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Hazards and Providing Other Co-benefits. To what extent will the proposed actions enhance community resilience to climate hazards? To what extent will the proposed actions result in additional co-benefits to the community, which could include socioeconomic metrics that are targeted to the proposed work? For pre-implementation activities (such as future project development planning and feasibility studies, engineering and design, permitting, and community engagement) and/or organizational capacity building, what is the likelihood that the proposed work will result in enhanced community resilience or other co-benefits, once restoration actions are implemented? (9 points)

0 – proposed actions will not enhance community resilience to climate hazards or provide other co-benefits; 5 – proposed actions will result in moderate enhancement of community resilience to climate hazards, with potential to provide other co-benefits; 9 – proposed actions include on-the-ground implementation and will result in substantial enhancement of community resilience to climate hazards, with a high likelihood of providing other co-benefits.

(c) Fostering Regionally Important Habitat Restoration, including sites and species prioritized by tribal communities. To what extent does the proposal demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the geographic region where restoration work is proposed? Does the proposal describe the relative

importance and context within the geographically defined boundary, and identify if the proposed restoration actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources? (10 points)

0 – no evidence that proposed actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and no evidence is provided to demonstrate importance within the region; 5 – proposed actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, but the proposal lacks evidence regarding level of importance and transformative potential within the region; 10 – proposed actions are aligned with comprehensive planning documents or other relevant resources, and proposal provides evidence to demonstrate high priority and transformative potential within the region, including those important to tribes, as relevant.

(d) Meaningfully engage Tribal, Indigenous, and/or Underserved Communities, and augment capacity, as needed, to support their role as stewards of natural resources for cultural, spiritual, economic, subsistence, and recreational purposes. Has the applicant demonstrated that the proposed work is located within a tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved community, as defined within Section I.A? Has the applicant demonstrated alignment with stated priorities and needs of tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities? Will the benefits of restoration flow to or build capacity of tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities? (5 points)

0 – proposed actions will not benefit or meaningfully engage tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; 3 – proposed actions have strong potential of providing benefit or meaningfully engage to tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities; 5 – proposed actions are located within tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities and/or have a high likelihood of providing benefit to or meaningfully engaging tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities.

2. Technical / Scientific Merit (25 points): This criterion assesses whether the restoration activity or approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant has described a realistic and thorough restoration plan that includes:

(a) Project Methodology. To what extent are the proposed actions feasible from a biological, engineering, and community perspective, including whether the approach is technically sound and safe for the public? (7 points)

0 – proposal does not provide support for the methodology; 4 – proposal provides moderate support for the feasibility of the methodology; 7 – proposal provides substantial support for the feasibility of the methodology.

(b) Project Detail. To what extent does the proposal completely describe the proposed restoration actions, including a realistic timeline, key milestones and outcomes to be achieved within a 2-3 year award period, and the status of permitting and environmental compliance? For projects with multiple sites, does the proposal include sufficient detail about the proposed work at each site to assess the merit of the planned activities? (7 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail regarding restoration actions, realistic timeline, key milestones, and project status; 4 – proposal provides moderate detail regarding restoration actions, realistic timeline, key milestones, and project status; 7 – proposal provides substantial detail regarding restoration actions, realistic timeline, key milestones, and project status.

(c) Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation. To what extent will the project measure near-term implementation success, following the provided guidance (see Section IV.B: Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation)? If no baseline monitoring will be performed for pre-implementation activities, does the applicant clearly explain the rationale for the lack of monitoring or evaluation measures? (5 points)

0 – proposal does not include habitat-based monitoring metrics to evaluate project success, or does not provide a rationale for the lack of assessment measures; 3 – proposal includes satisfactory habitat-based monitoring metrics to evaluate project success, or provides a satisfactory rationale for the lack of

assessment measures; 5 – proposal includes meaningful habitat-based monitoring metrics or other performance measures to evaluate project success, or provides a clear rationale for the lack of monitoring or assessment measures.

(d) Sustainability. To what extent does the proposal describe the sustainability of the methodology and the susceptibility of the project site(s) to climate change impacts? Has the applicant described future management, beyond the award period, including mechanisms to protect, maintain, or sustain the restoration site(s)? Does the proposed methodology enhance ecosystem resilience to extreme weather events and adaptation to potential climate change impacts anticipated at the project site, and throughout the watershed? Is there evidence that the applicant has chosen, or has a plan to select, the most self-sustaining restoration techniques to accomplish the proposed goals? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides negligible detail regarding sustainability of the methodology; 3 – proposal provides moderate detail regarding sustainability of the methodology; 5 – proposal provides substantial detail regarding sustainability of the methodology.

(e) Data Management Plan. Has the proposal included a Data Management Plan, as outlined in Section VI.B. If no data will be collected through the project, the applicant must clearly explain the rationale for the lack of data collection in order to receive points. (1 point)

0 – proposal does not include a Data Management Plan, or a rationale for the lack of data collection; 1 – proposal includes a sufficient Data Management Plan, or a sufficient rationale for the lack of data collection.

3. Overall Qualification of Applicant (10 points): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to support the proposed award. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following (as demonstrated by attached resumes or CVs that highlight relevant project management and financial management, and accomplishments of the key technical and financial staff):

(a) Restoration and Conservation Qualifications. Does the applicant demonstrate the capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work? Does the project team (staff and/or partners) demonstrate the necessary education and experience in planning, design, engineering, implementation, and/or monitoring efforts, in order to successfully carry out the scale and scope of the project? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides no documentation of capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work; 3 – proposal provides documentation of adequate capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work; 5 – proposal provides documentation of substantial capacity and knowledge to conduct the proposed work.

(b) Management Capacity. Does the applicant describe the necessary experience, facilities, equipment, and administrative resources available to successfully fulfill the responsibilities associated with managing a federal award? Does the applicant demonstrate an ability to maintain financial and administrative records, and fulfill reporting requirements? (5 points)

0 – proposal provides no description of experience or available resources to manage the award; 3 – proposal describes adequate experience and available resources to manage the award; 5 – proposal describes extensive experience with federal grants (or grants of similar complexity) and available resources to manage the award.

4. Project Costs (15 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the proposed needs and time-frame. For this competition, applications will be evaluated on the following:

(a) Budget Detail. Has the applicant provided a budget that includes sufficient detail, divided into SF-424A Object Classes? Does the budget clearly outline the NOAA funding request and, if applicable, any other potential funding sources, such as non-federal match? If funds are requested for partial support of a broader restoration effort, or for projects with multiple sites and/or phases, does the proposal include the full project budget and/or a budget for each site or project phase? (3 points)

0 – proposal does not provide a detailed budget; 2 – proposal provides a moderately detailed budget; 3 – proposal provides a very detailed budget.

(b) Funding Allocation and Cost-effectiveness. Does the budget allocate the majority of direct costs within the federal funding request to support the proposed habitat restoration actions (e.g., project planning, feasibility, engineering and design, implementation monitoring, and/or on-the-ground implementation), compared to the percentage used for activities that are not supporting the proposed projects? Has the applicant demonstrated that a significant overall benefit will be generated at a reasonable cost, based on the applicant's stated objectives? If funds are requested for capacity-building, does the applicant demonstrate how these efforts will support the proposed restoration? (7 points)

0 – budget is not cost-effective, and allocates only a small amount of direct federal funds to support the proposed habitat restoration activities; 4 – budget is moderately cost-effective, and allocates a moderate amount of direct federal funds to support the proposed habitat restoration activities; 7 – budget is very cost-effective, and allocates all direct federal funds to support the proposed habitat restoration activities.

(c) Cost-sharing and Leveraging Funds. To what extent will the applicant complement NOAA's investment with other funding sources, including formal, non-federal matching contributions and/or informal leverage? Confirmed matching and/or leveraged funding sources should be documented in the Supplemental Materials. Note whether the other funding sources are non-federal or federal, and whether the funds are secured or pending. (5 points)

0 – budget does not include any formal, non-federal matching contributions or informal, leveraged funds; 3 – budget includes formal, non-federal matching contributions and/or informal, leveraged funds, with a combined total that is less than a 1:1 ratio of matching or leveraged funds to NOAA funds; 5- budget includes formal, non-federal matching contributions and/or informal, leveraged funds, with a combined total that meets or exceeds a 1:1 ratio of matching or leveraged funds to NOAA funds.

5. Outreach and Education (15 points): NOAA assesses whether the project is based on broad community support and the award can deliver a focused and effective outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the nation's natural resources through habitat restoration. For this competition, applications will be evaluated based on the following:

(a) Community Support. Does the proposal demonstrate a broad base of community support from partners that are meaningfully contributing to the project? Has the applicant provided support letters from a diverse range of actively contributing partners (and from the landowner, if applicable)? (5 points)

0 – proposal does not demonstrate a wide base of community support; 3 – proposal demonstrates moderate community support; 5 – proposal demonstrates substantial community support through a diverse set of partners.

(b) Inclusive Planning and Engagement. Does the proposal demonstrate early and meaningful engagement of the local community, including tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities, in decision-making processes? Does the proposal describe how any barriers to engaging in project planning and/or accessing the project benefits will be addressed? Is there a clearly outlined strategy to maintain engagement of a diverse range of community groups, including underserved communities, in the proposed restoration actions? Engagement can occur directly, or in collaboration with a local partner, including through contracts and subawards. (5 points)

0 – proposal does not describe an engagement strategy; 3 – proposal describes an adequate engagement strategy; 5 – proposal describes a meaningful engagement strategy, and includes tribal, indigenous, and/or underserved communities in the process.

(c) Community Outreach and Education. Does the proposal include an outreach and education strategy to share information about restoration goals and results to a broad and diverse audience? The strategy may include traditional forms of outreach but may also include informal education and mentoring or hands-on activities that encourage future habitat restoration and conservation actions? (5 points)

0 – proposal does not include an outreach strategy; 3 – proposal includes an adequate outreach strategy; 5 – proposal includes a meaningful outreach strategy, and has strong potential to encourage future habitat restoration and conservation actions.

Review and Selection Process

Applications will undergo an initial administrative screening to determine if the packages are eligible and complete. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications are screened to ensure that they were received by the deadline date, that the applicant is eligible to apply, and that the application includes a project narrative, budget, and supporting documentation as outlined in Section IV.B. NOAA is not required to screen applications before the submission deadline, to identify deficiencies that would cause the application to be rejected or to receive a poor evaluation. However, if deficiencies are identified by NOAA or the applicant before the deadline, the applicant may correct any deficiencies by submitting a revised application. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it.

Eligible applications will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process to determine how well they meet the program priorities and evaluation criteria of this solicitation and the mission and goals of NOAA. Eligible applications will be evaluated by three or more merit reviewers as part of a technical review based on the evaluation criteria listed in Section V.A. After the technical review, a panel may convene 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 composed of qualified persons with appropriate subject-matter expertise who may be from federal, state, or tribal agencies, for profit or non-profit organizations, or academic institutions. To the extent that non-federal panelists are involved, the panel will not provide consensus advice. The panel may convene in person or by teleconference, video conference, or other electronic means to discuss applications.

If convened, the panel will be presented with the top-ranked applications, per the results of the technical review. Panelists will also receive the technical review scores and comments for each application. The panelists will individually rate top-ranked proposals on the following scale:

1 – Fair: application marginally addresses the program objective and priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was moderately responsive to the evaluation criteria;

2 – Good: application adequately addresses the program objective and priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was strongly responsive to the evaluation criteria;

3 – Excellent: application exceptionally addresses the program objective and priorities outlined in Sections I.A and I.B, and was highly responsive to the evaluation criteria.

If a panel is held, the panel's ranked list will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding. If a panel is not held, the technical review ranking will be the ranking considered by the Selecting Official for recommending applications for funding.

If an application is recommended for funding, staff from the NOAA will contact the applicant to negotiate a final application package. 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. In the event further funding becomes available after the initial selection, NOAA may select additional proposals without repeating the competitive process. 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 choose to award partial funding as part of a multi-year award, in limited circumstances. Once funds are awarded, recipients of multi-year awards will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years

for the same award. NOAA expects, but is not obligated, to provide additional funding to multi-year awards in subsequent years. In this case, a budget narrative and SF-424A that identifies each separate year of requested funding will be required prior to an award offer. Adding funds to multi-year awards is contingent on the availability of funds and satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of NOAA.

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 Management Division, and NOAA program staff. The NOAA Grants Officer makes the final approval decision and issues an award, as described in Section VI.A. and B.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their application was not among those recommended for funding. Notifications will be delivered in written form after the selection process is complete, approximately in the summer or fall of 2026. The notification will describe the selection decision based on the evaluation criteria and selection factors outlined in the funding opportunity announcement. Unsuccessful applications submitted will be kept on file in accordance with NOAA records requirements and then destroyed.

Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will recommend applications for funding in rank order, unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following selection factors. Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored applications.

- 1) Availability of funding;
- 2) Program priorities and policy factors set out in Sections I.A and I.B;
- 3) Balance/distribution of funds by: a) geographic area, b) type of institutions, c) type of applicants, d) research areas, or e) project types;
- 4) Whether the proposal duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
- 5) Applicant's prior award performance;
- 6) Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups (including the extent to which projects benefit tribes, indigenous, and/or underserved, marginalized, underrepresented, environmental justice, and/or disadvantaged communities); and
- 7) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation (Section VI.B) before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA GMD.

Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants should anticipate the earliest start date for awards will be January 1, 2026.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

PRE-AWARD COSTS. Per 2 CFR 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant's own risk without approval from NOAA and in accordance with the applicant's internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award. This

does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 CFR 200.460). In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for direct proposal preparation costs. Pre-award costs will be a portion of, not in addition to, the approved total budget of the award. Pre-award costs expended more than 90 days prior to the period of performance start date require approval from the Grants Officer. This does not change the period of performance start date.

GRANTS OFFICER SIGNATURE. Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not considered awards until the Grants Officer has signed the grant agreement. Only Grants Officers can bind the Government to the expenditure of funds. The Grants Officer's digital signature constitutes an obligation of funds by the federal government and formal approval of the award.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY. Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the programs listed in this notice. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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 applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

RESEARCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS. For awards designated on the CD-450 as Research, the Commerce Terms, and the Federal-wide Research Terms and Conditions (Research Terms) as implemented by the Department of Commerce, currently, at <https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/rtc.jsp>, both apply to the award. The Commerce Terms and the Research Terms are generally intended to harmonize with each other; however, where the Commerce Terms and the Research Terms differ in a Research award, the Research Terms prevail, unless otherwise indicated in a specific award condition.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRE-AWARD NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS. 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 and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC) TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in eRA at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

BUREAU TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Successful applicants who accept an award under this solicitation will be bound by bureau-specific standard terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will be provided in the award package in NOAA's Grants Online system. For NOAA awards only, the Administrative Standard Award Conditions for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Financial Assistance Awards U.S. Department of Commerce are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/financial-assistance>

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH. For research projects involving Human Subjects an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or an exemption determination will be required in accordance with DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions Section G.05.i "Research Involving Human Subjects" found at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/policy/financial-assistance-policy>.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (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 federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/NEPA-40CFR1500_1508.pdf. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their 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 feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT. Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS. The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to increasing the participation of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), i.e., Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and institutions that work in underserved communities.

DATA SHARING PLAN. 1. 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 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. 2. 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. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in the Announcement. 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. 3. NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan 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. 4. Proposal submitters 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.

More information can be found on NOAA's Data Management Procedures at:

https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0_remediated.pdf and at NAO 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information:

<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/nao-212-15-management-of-environmental-data-and-information>

NOAA SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE POLICY.

NOAA requires organizations receiving federal assistance to report findings of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment, regarding a Principal Investigator (PI), co-PI, or any other key personnel in the award.

NOAA expects all financial assistance recipients to establish and maintain clear and unambiguous standards of behavior to ensure harassment free workplaces wherever NOAA grant or cooperative agreement work is conducted, including notification pathways for all personnel, including students, on the awards. This expectation includes activities at all on- and offsite facilities and during conferences and workshops. All such settings should have accessible and evident means for reporting violations and recipients should exercise due diligence with timely investigations of allegations and corrective actions.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.noaa.gov/organization/acquisition-grants/noaa-workplace-harassment-training-for-contractors-and-financial>.

SCIENCE INTEGRITY. 1. Maintaining Integrity. The non-Federal entity shall maintain the scientific integrity of research performed pursuant to this grant or financial assistance award including the prevention, detection, and remediation of any allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, and the conduct of inquiries, investigations, and adjudications of allegations of violations of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. All the requirements of this provision flow down to subrecipients. 2. Peer Review. The peer review of the results of scientific activities under a NOAA grant, financial assistance award or cooperative agreement shall be accomplished to ensure consistency with NOAA standards on quality, relevance, scientific integrity, reproducibility, transparency, and performance. NOAA will ensure that peer review of "influential scientific information" or "highly influential scientific assessments" is conducted in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review and NOAA policies on peer review, such as the Information Quality Guidelines. 3. In performing or presenting the results of scientific activities under the NOAA grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement and in responding to allegations regarding the violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct, the non-Federal entity and all subrecipients shall comply with the provisions herein and NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D, Scientific Integrity, and its Procedural Handbook, including any amendments thereto. That Order can be found at <http://nrc.noaa.gov/ScientificIntegrityCommons.aspx>. 4. Primary Responsibility. The non-Federal entity shall have the primary responsibility to prevent, detect, and investigate allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct. Unless otherwise instructed by the grants officer, the non-Federal entity shall promptly conduct an initial inquiry into any allegation of such misconduct and

may rely on its internal policies and procedures, as appropriate, to do so. 5. By executing this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement the non-Federal entity provides its assurance that it has established an administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigating, and reporting allegations of a violation of scientific integrity or scientific and research misconduct; and that it will comply with its own administrative process for performing an inquiry, investigation, and reporting of such misconduct. 6. The non-Federal entity shall insert this provision in all subawards at all tiers under this grant, financial assistance award, or cooperative agreement.

REVIEW OF RISK. After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the Grants Office will perform administrative reviews, including an assessment of risk posed by the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 200.206. These may include assessments of the financial stability of an applicant and the quality of the applicant's management systems, history of performance, and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied. Applicants may submit comments about any information concerning organizational performance listed in the Responsibility/Qualification section of SAM.gov for consideration by the awarding agency.

REVIEWS AND EVALUATION. The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with the Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with §200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

REQUIRED USE OF AMERICAN IRON, STEEL, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS Buy America Preference. Recipients of an award of Federal financial assistance from the Department of Commerce (Department) for a program for infrastructure are hereby notified that none of the funds provided under an award may be used for an infrastructure project unless:

1. all iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States – this means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States;
2. all manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States – this means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States; and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard that meets or exceeds this standard has been established under applicable law or regulation for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product; and
3. all construction materials are manufactured in the United States – this means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The construction materials standards are listed below.

Incorporation into an infrastructure project. The Buy America Preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy

America Preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

Categorization of articles, materials, and supplies. An article, material, or supply should only be classified into one of the following categories: (i) Iron or steel products; (ii) Manufactured products; (iii) Construction materials; or (iv) Section 70917(c) materials. An article, material, or supply should not be considered to fall into multiple categories. In some cases, an article, material, or supply may not fall under any of the categories listed in this paragraph. The classification of an article, material, or supply as falling into one of the categories listed in this paragraph must be made based on its status at the time it is brought to the work site for incorporation into an infrastructure project. In general, the work site is the location of the infrastructure project at which the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials will be incorporated.

Application of the Buy America Preference by category. An article, material, or supply incorporated into an infrastructure project must meet the Buy America Preference for only the single category in which it is classified.

Determining the cost of components for manufactured products. In determining whether the cost of components for manufactured products is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components, use the following instructions:

- a. For components purchased by the manufacturer, the acquisition cost, including transportation costs to the place of incorporation into the manufactured product (whether or not such costs are paid to a domestic firm), and any applicable duty (whether or not a duty-free entry certificate is issued); or
- b. For components manufactured by the manufacturer, all costs associated with the manufacture of the component, including transportation costs as described in paragraph (a), plus allocable overhead costs, but excluding profit. Cost of components does not include any costs associated with the manufacture of the manufactured product.

Construction material standards. The Buy America Preference applies to the following construction materials incorporated into infrastructure projects. Each construction material is followed by a standard for the material to be considered "produced in the United States." Except as specifically provided, only a single standard should be applied to a single construction material.

1. Non-ferrous metals. All manufacturing processes, from initial smelting or melting through final shaping, coating, and assembly, occurred in the United States.
2. Plastic and polymer-based products. All manufacturing processes, from initial combination of constituent plastic or polymer-based inputs, or, where applicable, constituent composite materials, until the item is in its final form, occurred in the United States.
3. Glass. All manufacturing processes, from initial batching and melting of raw materials through annealing, cooling, and cutting, occurred in the United States.
4. Fiber optic cable (including drop cable). All manufacturing processes, from the initial ribboning (if applicable), through buffering, fiber stranding and jacketing, occurred in the United States. All manufacturing processes also include the standards for glass and optical fiber, but not for non-ferrous metals, plastic and polymer-based products, or any others.
5. Optical fiber. All manufacturing processes, from the initial preform fabrication stage through the completion of the draw, occurred in the United States.
6. Lumber. All manufacturing processes, from initial debarking through treatment and planing, occurred in the United States.

7. Drywall. All manufacturing processes, from initial blending of mined or synthetic gypsum plaster and additives through cutting and drying of sandwiched panels, occurred in the United States.

8. Engineered wood. All manufacturing processes from the initial combination of constituent materials until the wood product is in its final form, occurred in the United States.

Waivers

When necessary, recipients may apply for, and the Department may grant, a waiver from these requirements. To help federal agencies and recipients meet BABA requirements, the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST), Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) National Network™ provides a service to connect stakeholders, including recipients, to U.S. manufacturers that have relevant production capabilities and capacities to help fulfill current market and supply chain needs. Recipients considering a BABA nonavailability waiver are strongly encouraged to contact the NIST/MEP for assistance with supplier scouting services prior to seeking a BABA nonavailability waiver. Further information on the NIST/MEP supplier scouting services is available at: <https://nist.gov/mep/supply-chain/supplier-scouting>.

When the Department has made a determination that one of the following exceptions applies, the awarding official may waive the application of the Buy America Preference in any case in which the Department determines that:

1. applying the Buy America Preference would be inconsistent with the public interest (public interest waiver);
2. the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality (nonavailability waiver); or
3. the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent (unreasonable cost waiver).

A request to waive the application of the Buy America Preference must be in writing. The Department will provide instructions on the format, contents, and supporting materials required for any waiver request. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15 days and must be reviewed by the Made in America Office.

There may be instances where an award qualifies, in whole or in part, for an existing waiver described on the Department's Build America, Buy America website found at <https://www.commerce.gov/oam/build-america-buy-america>.

Definitions

"Buy America Preference" means the "domestic content procurement preference" set forth in section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act, which requires the head of each Federal agency to ensure that none of the funds made available for a Federal award for an infrastructure project may be obligated unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials incorporated into the project are produced in the United States.

"Construction materials" means articles, materials, or supplies that consist of only one of the items listed in paragraph (1) of this definition, except as provided in paragraph (2) of this definition. To the extent one of the items listed in paragraph (1) contains as inputs other items listed in paragraph (1), it is nonetheless a construction material.

1. The listed items are:

- Non-ferrous metals;
- Plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables);
- Glass (including optic glass);

- Fiber optic cable (including drop cable);
- Optical fiber;
- Lumber;
- Engineered wood; and
- Drywall.

2. Minor additions of articles, materials, supplies, or binding agents to a construction material do not change the categorization of the construction material.

“Infrastructure” means public infrastructure projects in the United States, which includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property; and structures, facilities, and equipment that generate, transport, and distribute energy including electric vehicle (EV) charging.

“Infrastructure project” means any activity related to the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States regardless of whether infrastructure is the primary purpose of the project. See also paragraphs (c) and (d) of 2 CFR 184.4.

“Iron or steel products” means articles, materials, or supplies that consist wholly or predominantly of iron or steel or a combination of both.

“Manufactured products” means:

1. Articles, materials, or supplies that have been:

1. Processed into a specific form and shape; or
2. Combined with other articles, materials, or supplies to create a product with different properties than the individual articles, materials, or supplies.

2. If an item is classified as an iron or steel product, a construction material, or a Section 70917(c) material under 2 CFR 184.4(e) and the definitions set forth in 2 CFR 184.3, then it is not a manufactured product. However, an article, material, or supply classified as a manufactured product under 2 CFR 184.4(e) and paragraph (1) of this definition may include components that are construction materials, iron or steel products, or Section 70917(c) materials.

“Predominantly of iron or steel or a combination of both” means that the cost of the iron and steel content exceeds 50 percent of the total cost of all its components. The cost of iron and steel is the cost of the iron or steel mill products (such as bar, billet, slab, wire, plate, or sheet), castings, or forgings utilized in the manufacture of the product and a good faith estimate of the cost of iron or steel components.

“Section 70917(c) materials” means cement and cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives. See Section 70917(c) of the Build America, Buy America Act.

C. Reporting

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.328-9 and the terms and conditions of the award, financial reports are to be submitted semiannually on Oct. 30 and April 30 and performance (technical) reports are to be submitted on the same schedule as financial reports. Reports submitted Oct. 30 will cover April 1-September 30. Reports submitted April 30 will cover October 1 - March 31. Reports are submitted electronically through eRA.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the FFATA Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at <https://www.fsrs.gov/> on all subawards over \$30,000. Refer to 2 CFR Part 170.

Performance (technical) reports shall use the NOAA Restoration Center's progress report narrative format and form approved by OMB under control number 0648 0718, or a successor form. This form will be provided to awardees by the NOAA Federal Program Officer. In addition, award recipients proposing multiple site locations may be required to complete individual reports for each site, or provide a project/site list including status and expenditures. A comprehensive final report covering all activities during the award period is required and must be received by NOAA within 120 days after the end date of this award.

If selected for funding, award recipients will be expected to use North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes to characterize project expenses. Applicants will also report the number of jobs created or retained, and for what duration, in labor hours. NOAA will use this information to analyze the effects of habitat restoration spending on employment and economic output. Applicants selected for funding will receive further guidance on reporting labor hours using NAICS codes to record project expenses.

Recipients will be obligated to assist NOAA in complying with all relevant requirements and implementing guidance issued to federal agencies by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), particularly with respect to any requirements related to the BIL that may be determined at a later time.

VII. Agency Contacts

Supplemental Guidance regarding application writing and FAQs about this Announcement can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/coastal-habitat-restoration-and-resilience-grants>. For further information contact Rina Studds or Amanda Cousart at 301-427-8651 or 301-337-9447, or by e-mail at resilience.grants@noaa.gov. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact NOAA Restoration Center staff before submitting an application to discuss their NOAA project ideas with respect to technical merit and NOAA's objectives. NOAA will make every effort to respond to prospective applicants on a first come, first served basis. These discussions will not include review of draft proposals or site visits during the application period.

VIII. Other Information

NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation anticipates releasing four total funding opportunities for the final round of BIL funds. In addition to this opportunity, the other opportunities are: Restoring Tribal Priority Fish Passage through Barrier Removal, Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants, and Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities. This will include the remaining BIL funding for Fish Passage and Habitat Restoration. All Inflation Reduction Act resources have been allocated through Rounds 1 & 2.

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out an award. 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. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, codified by the Department of Commerce at 1327.101. All cost reimbursement sub-awards (e.g. subgrants, subcontracts) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

The DOC encourages the use of public signage on projects funded in whole or in part by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, IIJA), the CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the American Rescue Plan (ARP), and other federally funded projects as appropriate. Clear and prominent construction signage on projects is one of several ways to inform taxpayers about how federal funds from these laws are being spent and advance the goals of accountability and transparency. Construction signs should be displayed throughout the construction phase of the project in an easily visible location that can be directly linked to the work taking place, and be maintained in good condition throughout the construction period. Award-specific conditions

for construction signage may require the use of the official Investing in America emblem, and refer to the general guidelines and design specifications for applying the emblem and corresponding logomark available in the Official Investing in America Emblem Style Guide: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Investing-in-America-Brand-Guide.pdf>

If the project is installing a plaque citing the origins or history of the project, the plaque should identify the project as a “project funded by [Insert name of the law].” Costs associated with signage must be reasonable and limited, and recipients are encouraged to use recycled or recovered materials when procuring signs. Signs should not be produced or displayed if doing so results in unreasonable cost, expense, or recipient burden.