

Regional Ocean Partnership Funding from NOAA

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Services Center recently announced the availability of competitive grant funding for Regional Ocean Partnerships (ROPs). Information regarding this funding opportunity is located on the Grants.Gov website under: [NOAA Regional Ocean Partnership Funding Program - FY2011 Funding Competition](#)

NOAA is soliciting proposals for competitive funding advancing effective coastal and ocean management through regional ocean governance and the goals for national ocean policy set out in the July 2010 [Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force](#) which highlights a national Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) Framework. All state, local, territory and tribal governments, institutions of higher learning, non-profit and for-profit organizations that may receive and expend federal funds as legal entities are eligible to apply.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, each proposal must directly involve or include a letter of endorsement from the lead ROP for the relevant region. The lead ROP for the Mid-Atlantic is the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO). The Federal Funding Opportunity states that, "The letter should confirm that the proposed project has been evaluated for its contributions to regional ROP priorities, and specifically indicate concurrence with recommended approach and proposal funding amounts."

Projects to be undertaken in the Mid-Atlantic region (NY, PA, NJ, DE, MD, and VA) will therefore need a letter confirming the coordination with and support of MARCO. Those wishing to receive such a confirmation letter from MARCO must follow the process and time schedule outlined below.

Process for Receiving MARCO Endorsement Letter for Regional Ocean Partnership Funds

Applicants should review Appendix A that lists MARCO's highest priorities for funding through the NOAA ROP competitive grant. Appendix B lists additional MARCO priority issues that may have only a limited opportunity for funding under this competitive grant.

In order to receive MARCO endorsement, proposals must:

- Address the regional priorities as described in the appendices
- Demonstrate how the proposed activities will build upon current activities in the region
- Describe how the proposed activities will be integrated with ongoing MARCO efforts
- Benefit all States in the region or provide a pilot project that is clearly scalable and/or transferable to the region
- Engage appropriate entities including federal agencies, academia, industry and other stakeholders
- Meet the eligibility requirements in the Federal Funding Opportunity for ROP funding. Eligibility will be determined by NOAA, not MARCO. Among the eligibility requirements are that the project or applicant must meet one or more of the following criteria, as applicable to the proposed project and Focus Area:

- Represent or directly partner with a member of an existing regional ocean governance partnership;
- Possess the authority, proven capacity, and regional relationships to effectively coordinate the development of a regional ocean governance priorities that engages affected coastal states and territories and their management agencies, including the approved coastal zone management program;
- Demonstrate formal commitments with existing regional ocean governance partnerships and coastal states or territories (including the approved coastal zone management program) to adopt the plan(s), product(s) or outcome(s) of a proposed project into regional or state ocean management planning processes or coastal and ocean resource management policies.

Additional factors that will guide the MARCO endorsement process include:

- (1) MARCO Geographic Information System (GIS) Portal: The States recognized early on that it would be necessary to create a GIS portal through which all the States could view data layers and use decision support tools that will aid in marine spatial planning. MARCO has an on-going project to add additional data layers, refine tools, and develop interactive decision support tools for the Portal. MARCO will give higher priority to those projects that enhance the existing GIS portal.
- (2) New Data Acquisition: While new data acquisition is a high priority for MARCO, only limited funds are available through the NOAA competitive grant. Therefore, MARCO will consider endorsing only those data acquisition projects that address the following issues:
 - New data acquisition must be a subtask of a larger management-oriented project that is submitted to address MARCO's priorities (see appendices).
 - Projects for data collection must contain reasonable costs only.
- (3) Stakeholder Engagement: MARCO convened a 135-participant Mid-Atlantic Ocean Stakeholder Conference in December 2009 in recognition of the essential role that nongovernmental organizations, academia, industry, citizens and state and federal government play in sustainable ocean management. The goals were to raise public awareness of ocean issues, provide opportunities for mutual learning, build a broad constituency for ocean issues, and provide opportunities to create strong, lasting partnerships with and among stakeholder interests across the region. MARCO will give higher priority to those projects that build on the Conference's goals and outcomes. See: [Stakeholders Conference](#)
- (4) Geographic Scope: MARCO States are working together to leverage limited resources to address Mid-Atlantic ocean issues. While there is a strong linkage between the ocean, estuaries and bays, at this time MARCO will give higher priority to those projects that focus on the ocean. MARCO will consider endorsing only those estuary and bay related projects that demonstrate how the activities will be integrated with MARCO efforts.

We encourage applicants to discuss their proposals with their MARCO state lead (listed below) as soon as possible. Applicants must email a copy of their proposal to each of the five States no later than November 1, 2010. Proposals received after November 1 may not be considered for endorsement due to time limitations and workloads.

NY: Michael.Snyder@dos.state.ny.us

NJ: Kevin.Hassell@dep.state.nj.us

DE: Brian.Kelly@state.de.us

MD: GSchultz@dnr.state.md.us

VA: Laura.McKay@deq.virginia.gov

By December 3, a representative of MARCO will respond to the applicant with either an endorsement letter or a letter stating that the proposal is not consistent with MARCO's needs for this funding call. Endorsement letters may state that:

1. the project is consistent with MARCO's needs for this funding,
2. the project is critical to meeting MARCO's needs for this funding, or
3. only certain parts of the project are consistent and/or critical to meeting MARCO's needs for this funding.

If deemed necessary by MARCO, the endorsement letter may include additional comments regarding the recommended approach and funding amounts.

Appendix A

MARCO Priorities for Funding Through The NOAA Regional Ocean Partnership Competitive Grant

Marine Spatial Planning

The MARCO States are each taking steps that will aid in development of a marine spatial plan for ocean waters of the region and will coordinate through MARCO to ensure the plans are integrated across the Mid-Atlantic region. As MARCO moves forward, we will also coordinate with, and be responsive to, the Ocean Policy Task Force's Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) process.

Priorities for Funding:

- A. Develop and implement a short and long term, multi-faceted framework for active stakeholder engagement to ensure ample opportunities to consider all ideas and concerns and for stakeholders to participate in the development of any marine spatial process, plan or plans. The framework should build public understanding, identify shared regional resources, consider stakeholder interests and concerns, and integrate knowledge from ocean users across the region.
- B. Develop planning tools, guidance documents, design guidelines, and/or training materials that will expand MARCO's capacity to make informed and grounded CMSP decisions. Types of decisions include, for example, how to achieve management objectives by addressing complex spatial and temporal conflicts and how to make decisions in the absence of sufficient background ecological or human use data.
- C. Develop new and/or enhanced decision support tools for application on the MARCO GIS Portal, which should be officially online by Fall 2010. The new and/or enhanced applications should build upon MARCO's existing and planned efforts that will be ongoing between now and October 2011.
- D. Develop a plan to ensure the long-term hosting and maintenance of the MARCO GIS Portal.

Habitat

One of MARCO's goals is to ensure that key ocean habitats of the Mid-Atlantic are protected from activities that threaten their sensitive and unique features, marine populations, and ecological processes.

MARCO objectives to address this goal are to:

1. Seek measures to protect the region's major offshore canyons from harmful or damaging activities.

2. Identify other key Mid-Atlantic habitats, including important migratory pathways that might be at risk from harmful or damaging activities and seek appropriate protection measures.
3. Create a regional internet habitat mapping system to aid in identifying and protecting key habitats and migratory pathways.
4. Develop Mid-Atlantic marine habitat protection and restoration policies to guide the decision-making and management of key priority habitats.

Priorities for Funding:

- A. Enhance understanding of key ocean habitats:
 - a) Document key habitats, their fish and wildlife resources, and information to assist in evaluating impacts of proposed activities on characteristics of the habitat that are essential to the habitat's values. This could include acquisition of new data such as high-resolution benthic mapping for corals or migratory pathways for birds, marine mammals, and sea turtles. Applicants should review the "additional factors that will guide the MARCO endorsement process" that are listed on page 2.
- B. Identify opportunities for the States to implement an effective and regionally consistent management approach for protection of the region's key offshore habitats.
 - a) Identify existing state policies and programs for offshore habitat protection that can be aligned across the region.
 - b) Assess whether existing policies identified in item a, above, are compatible across States and, if not, recommend how to make them compatible.
 - c) Develop new proposals for policies that will address outstanding issues not identified in item b, above.

Offshore Energy

One of MARCO's goals is promoting sustainable development of offshore renewable energy resources by addressing regulatory barriers and regional issues regarding potential impacts of development.

The MARCO objectives to address this goal are to:

1. Develop shared research and monitoring protocols for proposed energy development in the marine environment, which will be incorporated into the permitting process.
2. Examine and define regulatory steps, timeframes and identify potential barriers to developing offshore renewable energy.
3. Create an offshore use mapping and decision-support tool(s) to aid in responsible siting of offshore renewable wind energy projects.

Priorities for Funding:

- A. MARCO has begun to develop consistent survey and monitoring protocols for individual offshore wind projects based on ecological baseline studies recently conducted in the region. Areas of focus for the baseline studies included birds, bats, and marine mammals. The MARCO States are also participating in the Atlantic Offshore Wind Energy Consortium

and exploring the use of that forum as a means to leverage greater federal investment in research related to planning and siting decisions and potential impacts of wind energy development. MARCO is seeking support in the following ways:

- a) Identify data collection and monitoring needs; determine the best scientific methodologies for data collection; and develop consistent survey and monitoring protocols for biological, geological, physical data to be used in planning, siting decisions and to assess impacts of individual offshore wind projects.
 - b) Identify other data needs (e.g., shipping/navigation corridors and safety zones, recreational/commercial fisheries compatibility issues, military, other existing uses) and the best means to gather such data.
- B. In order to provide a more consistent and predictable siting process for offshore wind facilities, MARCO is seeking support for the following:
- a) Identify opportunities for existing state siting criteria that might be expanded to cover the entire region to influence siting outcomes. Examples of siting criteria might be risk assessment protocols and addressing competing ocean uses.
 - b) Assess whether existing criteria identified in item a, above, are compatible across States and, if not, recommend how to make them compatible.
 - c) Develop new proposals for siting criteria that will address outstanding issues not identified in item b, above.

Appendix B

MARCO Priority Issues That May Have Only a Limited Opportunity For Funding Under This Competitive Grant Solicitation

Climate Change

One of MARCO's goals includes preparing the region for the impacts of climate change, primarily sea level rise impacts on regional infrastructure, coastal habitat, and shoreline management.

The MARCO objectives to address this goal are to:

1. Identify regional transportation infrastructure that is vulnerable to sea level rise and increased flood hazards.
2. Acquire data needed to assess regional vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise impacts to infrastructure and coastal habitats.
3. Create a means of storing and delivering the data needed to make decisions.
4. Institute sharing of coastal vulnerability, community resiliency and management information
5. Initiate sea level rise adaptation measures to collectively reduce the region's vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise.

Water Quality

One of MARCO's goals is to protect human and environmental health and increase the ocean-related economic value of the region's coastal waters by maintaining and improving the region's water quality.

The MARCO objectives to address this goal are to:

1. Promote greater and smarter federal investments for infrastructure upgrades to the nation's aging and inadequate wastewater treatment infrastructure.
2. Reduce or eliminate trash and waste entering waterways and the ocean.
3. Improve delivery of and expand collection of water quality data, which will improve water quality management.
4. Develop a plan to address atmospheric sources of pollution