

**Request for Letters of Interest
To Support the Northeast Regional Ocean Council's Response to the NOAA Regional Ocean
Partnership Federal Funding Opportunity**

DUE November 4, 2010

Introduction

The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC), created by the six New England Governors in 2005, is a state and federal partnership whose goal is to engage in regional protection and balanced use of ocean and coastal resources. NROC's coordinated approach reaches across state boundaries to find and implement solutions to the region's most pressing ocean and coastal issues. For more about NROC, see <http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/nroc/default.aspx>

Several states in the Northeast region, along with collaborating federal agencies and non-governmental entities, are recognized nationally as leaders in coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP). With the National Ocean Policy and CMSP Framework released in July, 2010¹, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) anticipates moving into a leadership role in regional coastal and marine spatial planning.

NOAA has released a Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) for a competitive grant program to support Regional Ocean Partnerships.

<http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&oppId=57212>

NROC will develop a core proposal (or set of proposals) in response to the NOAA FFO that will focus on coastal and marine spatial planning, based on NROC's October 2010 *Framework for Marine Spatial Planning in the Northeast* (see attached.)

The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) requests Letters of Interest from non-governmental organizations interested in supporting regional comprehensive marine spatial planning (CMSP) in the Northeast. This Request for Letters of Interest is an information-gathering solicitation intended to assist NROC in developing the strongest possible proposal(s) in response to the FFO, and is intended to recognize and draw from the wealth of expertise, experience and capacity from a broad array of non-governmental entities including nonprofit organizations, universities, research institutions, private firms and others. NROC will use responses to this solicitation to inform its proposal(s) to NOAA, and may or may not incorporate some or all of any responses received to this solicitation, at its discretion. While NROC anticipates collaborating with one or more interested potential partners to further develop and submit its proposal, the decision on the elements of the proposal to NOAA will occur following the November workshop (see timeline below).

¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans>

NROC's preference is to develop a core proposal to meet the region's identified needs. Acknowledging the schedule constraints (the FFO requires responses by December 10), NROC is requesting responses by November 2 to enable their consideration and inform NROC deliberations. Because of the tight timeframe, NROC is requesting sufficient information in the responses to inform the development of its proposal, but at this point is not requesting detailed work plans or budgets. See below for NROC expectations for responses to this Request.

NROC's approach to the development of its proposal to NOAA will include the following steps:

- 1) Continued deliberations by NROC's CMSP workgroup, Executive Committee and full membership (ongoing)
- 2) Consideration of Letters of Interest (November 4th -8th)
- 3) Consideration of the results of NROC's CMSP workshop on November 9th, 2010 and members-only meeting on November 10th, 2010
- 4) Further consultation with potential partner organizations to shape specific components of the core proposal or additional proposals to NOAA. (November 15th-November 30th)
- 5) Review and approval of draft proposal(s) by NROC Executive Committee
- 6) Submittal of final proposal(s) to NOAA (December 10th)

NROC's CMSP Priorities

Per the guidelines contained in the NOAA FFO, NROC's proposal(s) for CMSP will include projects that can be completed during a two-year time frame. Considering that preparation of a regional CMSP cannot be completed in that timeframe, NROC anticipates a focus on the following elements of its framework during the NOAA grant period:

1. Identification of stakeholders (federal, regional, statewide, local) and creation of public involvement mechanisms that will be used during all stages of plan development.
2. Build out of a regional data portal, including data requirements (including capturing existing data and developing new data products based on existing data), functional needs, and short- and long-term maintenance; identification of future data needs to further management objectives.
3. Identification and analysis of approaches, models, and/or frameworks for developing an ecosystem service-based approach for organizing and characterizing data. A main purpose is to assist NROC in considering the merits of such an approach.
4. Identification and analysis of approaches, models, and/or frameworks for developing and reviewing planning scenarios based on tradeoffs analysis (see Objective 4.1 of the DRAFT Outline of Regional Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Process for New England).
5. Planning for regional data collection necessary to understand seafloor conditions, such as impacts of built structures on sediment transport and location of geologic framework for critical species.
6. Review and analysis of existing approaches to habitat identification/mapping; identification of data needs and existing data gaps associated with these approaches. Approaches regarding benthic, pelagic, and above-sea-surface habitats are all of interest to NROC.
7. Review and analysis of approaches to assessing existing levels of human activity. Examples of existing human uses include commerce (shipping), commercial and recreational fishing,

additional recreational activities, energy provision and related infrastructure; identification of data needs and existing data gaps associated with these approaches.

8. Review and analysis of approaches to modeling or assessing reasonably foreseeable levels of human activities by considering technological implications, existing infrastructure limitations or opportunities (e.g., grid issues/connection points, presence of existing infrastructure), or other associated factors that influence future types and locations of human development in the region.
9. Review and analysis of existing federal and state statutory and regulatory programs that are related to ocean planning and development review to identify opportunities to achieve plan goals and potential regulatory gaps or issues.

Letter of Interest Requirements

- 1) Respondents must submit their Letter of Interest via electronic mail, no later than 5pm on Thursday, November 4, 2010. Submissions should be in the form of a single PDF and directed to Kathleen Leyden, Director, Maine Coastal Program at kathleen.leyden@maine.gov.
- 2) All submittals must include:
 - Organization / institution name, address, phone, e-mail.
 - A description of the concepts, methods, and/or approaches to accomplish specific elements of NROC CMSP Framework Outline. (Limit 5 pages)
 - A rough estimated budget for the effort. At this point, NROC is not looking for a detailed spreadsheet with budget amounts by task or organized by lead PI. NROC is requesting a ballpark cost for the proposed approach. A useful accompaniment would be a description of if and how the proposed concepts/methods are scalable depending on existing budget availability.
 - Identify leveraged resources, if any: summarize leveraging opportunities, i.e. previous work that can be built on, availability of in-kind support, potential partners, etc.

NROC expects to issue a subsequent solicitation, after funding is secured, to solicit detailed, formal project proposals and to formalize project partner teams. NROC anticipates selection of project partners on an ongoing basis to work on specific plan elements over the course of the planning process. Failure to respond to this letter of intent or the quality of responses received will not preclude participation in any future solicitations.

Questions about this RFI should be directed to NROC state leads:

Maine – Kathleen Leyden kathleen.leyden@maine.gov

New Hampshire – Ted Diers ted.diers@des.nh.gov

Massachusetts – Deerin Babb-Brott -- Deerin.Babb-Brott@state.ma.us

Rhode Island – Grover Fugate -- gugate@crmc.ri.gov

Connecticut – Brian Thompson -- Brian.thompson@po.state.ct.us