

essential fish habitat and implementing actions to reduce these effects;

(5) Studies, workshops, or consultations with fishers needed to eliminate destructive and habitat-damaging fishing practices;

(6) Studies, workshops, or consultations with fishers needed to assess the adequacy of current fishing regulations and the need for additional gear and anchoring restrictions to reduce habitat damage on coral reefs within the Council's jurisdiction;

(7) Enhanced education and outreach to recreational and commercial fishers specifically targeted to reduce the adverse impacts of fishing on coral reef ecosystems;

(8) Studies needed to understand ecosystem-scale considerations into coral reef fishery management plans;

(9) Studies needed to understand ecosystem effects of fishing, including: the development of models and studies to improve our understanding of larval pathways, trophic interactions and their ecosystem impacts associated with fishing, and habitat impacts associated with certain types of fishing gear and practices; and

(10) Studies needed to reduce the overexploitation of reef organisms for the aquarium trade.

b. *Ineligible Activities:* The following categories of activities or expenses are not eligible for funding:

(1) Meetings and travel necessary to conduct normal Council business including regular Advisory Panel, Stock Assessment Panel or Scientific and Statistical Committee meetings, Environmental Impact Statement hearings; other public hearings; Fishery Management Council meetings; etc.

(2) Regular Council reports and information dissemination, including annual FMP reports, FMP amendments, public notices, advertisements, etc.

(3) Council staff aside from a maximum of one full-time equivalent working exclusively on Council coral reef conservation activities.

(4) Activities related to FMPs that do not directly include shallow coral reef resources.

2. Application Format

Cooperative Agreement proposals must include:

a. A cover page as described in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section at the beginning of this Guidance.

b. An introduction, not exceeding one page, that describes:

(1) The status and magnitude of the coral reef fisheries conservation issues in the Council's jurisdiction; and

(2) The Council's strategy to address critical coral reef fisheries conservation

needs over the medium term (the next 2- to 3-years) and how the proposed activities support this strategy.

c. A summary, not exceeding three pages, of the status and accomplishments of activities by the Council funded under the Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program in FY 2002.

d. A description of each proposed task that should include:

(1) Objective of the task of study;

(2) Clear identification of the work to be completed, who will perform the work, brief description of the methods to be used, specific study sites (for field projects), expected deliverables, and how the project fits into the Council's strategy for addressing the larger coral reef fisheries conservation issue;

(3) How the project coordinates with relevant local governmental and non-governmental agencies and, if applicable, NOAA regional activities;

(4) Summary budget for each discrete task item including personnel costs (contract and Council staff), other contract costs, travel, supplies or equipment;

(5) Task timetable with interim benchmarks and clearly defined work products; and,

(6) Project priority as compared to all other proposed projects.

F. Application Evaluation and Selection Criteria

1. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be peer-reviewed on the following equally weighted evaluation criteria by individuals with coral reef conservation experience:

a. Documented need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction of the Council;

b. Demonstrated coordination with applicable ongoing local, state, territorial, and Federal coral reef management activities;

c. Technical merit of the proposed activity;

d. Ability of the work to be completed for the funding and timing proposed and cost effectiveness of proposed activity; and,

e. Evidence presented of the capacity of the applicant to conduct the proposed work, including past performance on similar projects or programs involving coral reef ecosystems, and progress on Coral Reef Conservation Grant activities funded in FY 2002.

NOAA will also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted, pursuant to Section X(1) of the Guidelines.

A NMFS team of representatives from the OHC, the Southeast Region, the

Southeast Fishery Science Center, the Pacific Islands Area Office and the Honolulu Laboratory will review the applications, consistent with the equally weighted criteria listed in Section X(3) of the Guidelines and consider comments received from peer reviewers and appropriate management authorities.

Based on this review, the team will make preliminary funding recommendations. These preliminary funding recommendations will be submitted to the NOAA review team, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines.

2. Selection Criteria

Based on these cumulative reviews, NMFS will provide comments to each selected applicant. These comments will include input from peer reviewers, solicited jurisdictions, and the NMFS review team, and are intended to be used in the applicant's development of the final proposal.

Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal financial assistance forms, the NMFS team will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of and/or response to comments that were returned to the applicant. The team will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines.

If proposals from one or more Councils are ineligible to receive funding, NOAA may award those residual funds for eligible activities proposed by another Council or move the residual funds to a different funding category under the Program. NOAA will work with each Council to ensure the greatest degree of success in meeting the goals of the Strategy.

G. Program Authority

Specific authority for this program is found in 16 U.S.C. 6403. These cooperative agreements will be reviewed and awarded by the NMFS under title, *Regional Fishery Management Councils*, CFDA Number: 11.441.

VII. International Coral Reef Conservation

A. Program Description

This description provides guidance for applying for funding appropriated by Congress to NOAA in FY 2003 to support the international conservation and management of coral reef ecosystems. These funds will be administered by NOS International Program Office (IPO).