

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[Docket No. 030109007-3007-01; I.D. 111802D]

RIN 0648-AQ62

**New England Fishery Management Council; Notice and Request for Sea Scallop Research Proposals**

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

**ACTION:** Notice of solicitation for applications.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS issues this document to describe how you, the researcher, may submit a proposal for and be selected to perform sea scallop research projects during the 2003 fishing year (March 1, 2003, through February 29, 2004), and how NOAA and the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) will determine whether to select your proposal. Because of the time required to complete the grants process, the document explains that it is likely that project activities will not be authorized until 1–2 months after the start of the fishing year on March 1, 2003. Research projects would be funded by a 1-percent set-aside of the scallop total allowable catch (TAC) that is proposed under Framework Adjustment 15 to the Council's Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Funding of projects under the TAC set-aside is contingent upon approval of Framework 15 by NMFS.

**DATES:** To be considered under this solicitation, all research proposals that would utilize the fishing year 2003 TAC set-aside must be received between January 17, 2003 and 5 p.m., EDT, on February 7, 2003. Postmarks indicating the proposals were mailed on this date will not be sufficient. Facsimile applications will not be accepted. For further information related to the timeframe and procedures for submission, review, and selection of proposals to be conducted with TAC set-aside funds from the Hudson Canyon and Virginia Beach Areas, see Section A, Background, under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** of this document.

**ADDRESSES:** Proposals must be submitted to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Regional Office, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark proposals "Attention--Sea Scallop Research Proposals."

Copies of the Standard Forms for submission of research proposals may be found on the Internet in a PDF (Portable Document Format) version at <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/~grants/index.html> under the title "Grant Application Forms and Budget Guidelines," or by contacting the NMFS office (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Patricia M. Fiorelli, New England Fishery Management Council, (978) 465-0492, or Peter Christopher, NMFS, (978) 281-9288.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**A. Background**

On September 29, 2002, the Council approved Framework 15 and voted to submit the action to the Secretary of Commerce for approval. A proposed rule for Framework 15 will be published in the **Federal Register** following review by NMFS. Framework 15 would continue a Scallop Area Access Program for the Hudson Canyon and Virginia Beach Areas. Under the proposed area access program, limited access sea scallop vessels would be allowed to land scallops in excess of the proposed possession limit, or to take additional trips above those proposed in the program, and use the proceeds of the excess catch or additional trips to offset the costs of the research proposals submitted in response to this notice. The proposed areas would remain open until one of three events triggered a closure: (a) The fishing year ends (February 29, 2004); (b) the scallop landings from an area exceed the TAC and it is closed by the Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator); or (c) the vessels use all authorized trips to fish for scallops within one or both of the areas. Framework 15 would authorize three trips per vessel for each area unless modified by action taken by the Regional Administrator. NOAA, in cooperation with the Council, is soliciting proposals for sea scallop research for the 2003 fishing year utilizing proposed TAC set-aside from the Hudson Canyon and Virginia Beach Areas. Contingent upon approval of Framework 15 by NMFS, vessels participating in an approved project and fishing in the Sea Scallop Access Areas would be authorized by the Regional Administrator to take additional trips into the areas and/or to land scallops in excess of the proposed 21,000-lb (9,525.4-kg) possession limit.

All research proposals to be conducted with TAC set-aside funds from the Hudson Canyon and Virginia

Beach Areas must be received during the submission period identified in the DATES section of this document. Applicants must submit one signed original and two signed copies of the completed application (including supporting information). Once the applications are received, NOAA will either seek comments from the Council through the Council's public review process, or convene a Review Team, which will include representatives from the Council and may include independent technical experts, for the purpose of reviewing proposals in closed meetings under the direction of NOAA.

The total set-aside available for research is 172,953 lb (78.05 mt), an amount of scallops that has an approximate value of \$579,392 (based on a projected scallop value of \$3.35 per pound, with prices varying according to season and availability). The TAC set-aside for sea scallop research would be as follows: 170,638 lb (77 mt) for the Hudson Canyon Area; and 2,315 lb (1.05 mt) for the Virginia Beach Area.

**B. Authority**

Issuing grants is consistent with sections 303(b)(11), 402(e), and 404(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. 1881c(c), respectively.

**C. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance**

11.454, Unallied Management Projects.

**D. Funding Instrument and Project Period**

NOAA will award a grant to applicants with approved proposals through its grant award process. The project period for sea scallop research can not predate the beginning of the Atlantic sea scallop fishing year, March 1, 2003. The project period may not extend beyond February 29, 2004. Any portion of the 2003 fishing year TAC awarded must be caught for compensation by February 29, 2004. Proposals to fund research started on or after the project period are eligible for consideration. However, if the project is not approved, any research or expenditures related to this project will be the sole responsibility of the researcher without any further compensation from the TAC set-aside funds. Because of the time required to complete the grants process, it is likely that project activities will not be authorized until 1–2 months after the start of the fishing year on March 1, 2003.