

### E. Funding Availability

No Federal funds are provided for sea scallop research under this notice. The Federal Government's contribution to the project will be a Letter of Authorization (LOA) that will provide special fishing privileges in response to sea scallop research proposals selected to participate in this program. The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred in the conduct of the project. The funds generated from the additional landings authorized in the LOA shall be used to cover the cost of the sea scallop research, including vessel costs, and to compensate vessel owners for expenses incurred. Therefore, the owner of each fishing vessel selected to land scallops in excess of the trip limit or from additional authorized trips must use the proceeds of the sale of the excess catch to compensate the researcher for costs associated with the research activities and use of the vessel. Any additional funds above the cost of the research activities (or excess program income) shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for the use of his/her vessel.

### F. Scope of Sea Scallop Research

Projects funded under the proposed sea scallop TAC set-aside program should enhance understanding of the scallop resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. Sea scallop research may be conducted in or outside of the Hudson Canyon and Virginia Beach Areas, within or outside of the Sea Scallop Area Access Program timeframe, and on board a fishing or other type of vessel. Sea scallop research conducted with these TAC set-aside funds also may or may not involve the harvest of scallops. Funds generated from the set-aside landings shall be used to cover the cost of the research activities, including vessel costs, and to compensate boats for expenses incurred during the collection of set-aside scallops. For example, these funds could be used to pay for gear modifications, monitoring equipment, additional provisions (e.g., fuel, ice, food for scientists) or the salaries of research personnel. The Federal Government is not liable for any costs incurred by the researcher or vessel owner, should the sale of the excess catch not fully reimburse the researcher or vessel owner for their expenses.

### G. Eligibility Criteria

All commercial organizations; non-profit organizations; state, local or tribal governments; institutions of higher

education; and individuals are eligible to apply, provided that all proposal requirements are satisfied and the proposal is received by the date specified in this document.

Pursuant to Executive Orders 12876, 12900, and 13021, the Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities in its educational and research programs. The DOC/NOAA vision, mission and goals are to achieve full participation by Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in order to advance the development of human potential, to strengthen the nation's capacity to provide high-quality education, and to increase opportunities for MSIs to participate in, and benefit from, Federal Financial Assistance programs. DOC/NOAA encourages all applicants to include meaningful participation of MSIs.

### H. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must be submitted to NOAA and must identify the sea scallop research to be conducted and the Sea Scallop Access Area within which the research and/or compensation trip is to be conducted, and the total amount of scallops requested for the project, including, using a scallop meat value of \$3.35 per pound, their average estimated monetary value based on Framework 15 analyses. Additionally, each proposal must identify the requirements for the participating vessel(s) that would make a Sea Scallop Access Area trip to collect the scallop set-aside. The vessel selected by the applicant should be listed in the proposal, if possible, or specifically identified prior to final approval by NOAA. The proposal must also include the agreement between the vessel owner and researcher that shows exactly how the research activity is to be paid for, if possible, or such agreement must be provided prior to final approval by NOAA. Proposals may request that the scallop set-aside be collected separately from the sea scallop research trip or other related research trip. The separate sea scallop research compensation trips do not necessarily have to be conducted by the same vessel. The Council or NMFS contact person may provide assistance to researchers who are seeking vessels to participate in the collection of set-aside scallops or directly in research projects. The Council or NMFS may publish a list of those vessel owners willing to

participate through their respective homepages.

### I. Confidentiality of Information

In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant does not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, the applicant should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 15 CFR part 4, "Public Information," which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. To the extent permitted under FOIA, the contents of applications and proposals submitted by successful applicants may be released in response to FOIA requests. Based on the confidential information identified by the applicant, the confidentiality of the information provided will be protected to the degree possible.

### J. Project Funding Priorities

Sea scallop research projects that identify and evaluate gear to reduce groundfish bycatch and habitat impacts and that provide improved information concerning scallop abundance estimates are considered high priority by the Council. Sea scallop research that involves evaluating the distribution, size composition, and density of scallops also will be considered high priority. Other research needs (not listed in order of priority) that also will be considered by the Council and NOAA follow:

1. Evaluation of ways to control predation on scallops; research to actively manage spat collection and seeding of sea scallops;
2. Social and economic impacts and consequences of closing areas to enhance productivity and improve yield of sea scallops and other species;
3. High resolution surveys that include distribution, recruitment, mortality and growth rate information;
4. Estimation of factors affecting fishing power for each limited access vessel;
5. Demonstration projects to identify ways to reduce discard mortality, increase efficiency without increasing fishing power (e.g., decreasing processing time with sorters) and improve safety;
6. Research to identify scallop habitat and ecological relationships that affect