

reproduction, recruitment mortality and growth, including those enhanced/impaired by area closures;

7. Quantification of fishing costs related to fishing for sea scallops in specific areas (e.g., fishing gear modification, steaming time, and opportunity cost);

8. Experimental designs with control areas using alternative management strategies, such as area licensing and rotational closures (projects should include an analysis of yield improvement, habitat impacts and social impacts, including conflict resolution across fisheries);

9. Identification of fishermen's perceptions about area-based management and alternative strategies;

10. Processing and analyzing of data that will be collected or that have already been collected;

11. Broader investigations of variability in dredging efficiency across habitats (substrates, current velocities, etc.) times, areas, and gear designs; and

12. Research that provides more detailed sea scallop life history information (especially on age-and area-specific natural mortality and growth) and to identify stock-recruitment relationships.

K. Evaluation Criteria

The Council or the Review Team convened by NOAA will evaluate proposals based on the assigned score for each of the following criteria:

1. A clear definition of the problem, need, issue or hypothesis to be addressed (10 points);

2. A clear definition of the approach to be used, including theoretical studies, laboratory analyses, and/or field work (15 points);

3. Adequate justification as to how the project is likely to achieve its stated objectives (20 points);

4. Identification of anticipated benefits, potential users and methods of disseminating results (10 points);

5. Relevance of the project to the research needs identified by the Council (20 points);

6. Demonstration of support, cooperation and/or collaboration with the fishing industry (15 points); and

7. Cost-effectiveness of the project (10 points).

L. Selection Procedures

Applications may be reviewed and evaluated by either the Council, at the request of NOAA, or by the Review Team convened by NOAA. Both the Council review and the NOAA review are included to allow the Council to retain its responsibility to consider research in fishery management plans

and to allow NOAA to conduct the reviews if the overall Council process prohibits their review in a timely manner. If the Council is requested to review the proposals, the proposals will be reviewed in a public meeting process by representatives of the Council, based on the criteria contained in Section K of this notice. The Council's representatives would then make recommendations to the Council. The Council would consider recommendations of its representatives, the Evaluation Criteria identified in Section K of this notice, and may also consider the time of year the research activities are to be conducted, ability to meet requirements under Section O of this notice, and logistic concerns. The Council would then make its recommendations to the Regional Administrator through a formal vote or by consensus recommendations, as determined appropriate by the Council. Recommendations from the Council would be given to the Regional Administrator in rank order based on average scores of the projects, taking into consideration numerical scores based on Section K of this notice and considerations of other factors listed above. In deciding the projects to select, the Regional Administrator will take into account the recommendations of the Council, the time of year the research activities are to be conducted, ability to meet requirements under Section O of this notice, including evaluations of proposals through the Experimental Fishery Procedures contained in 50 CFR 600.745 and 648.12, and logistic concerns. As a result, projects may not be selected in the order recommended by the Council. NOAA will authorize selected vessel(s) to exceed the possession limit, take additional trips, or be exempt from the regulations specified in the FMP through written notification to the applicant.

If the Council does not participate in the evaluation of the proposals, NOAA will solicit written technical evaluations based on the evaluation criteria contained in Section K of this notice from three or more private and/or public sector experts to determine the technical merit of the proposal and to provide a rank score of the project based on the evaluation criteria specified in Section K of this notice. Following completion of the technical evaluation, NOAA will convene a Review Team to review and individually critique the scored proposals to enhance NOAA's understanding of the proposals. No consensus recommendations will be made. Based on the results of the

technical review, rank order based on averages scores, comments provided by the review panel, and the following program policy factors, NOAA will select the successful proposals and inform the Council of its recommendations. The program policy factors are: (1) The time of year the research activities are to be conducted; (2) the ability of the proposal to meet the experimental fishery requirements discussed under Section O of this notice; and (3) redundancy of research projects. Therefore the highest scoring projects may not necessarily be selected for an award. The Regional Administrator will provide final approval of the projects to allow NMFS to exempt selected vessel(s) from regulations of the Scallop FMP. All sea scallop research must be conducted in accordance with provisions approved by NOAA and provided in an LOA or EFP issued by NMFS.

Approval of proposals submitted in response to the subject RFP would be contingent upon approval of Framework 15 by NMFS. Framework 15 will be reviewed by NMFS and published as a proposed and final rule in the **Federal Register**. Should Framework 15 be disapproved by NMFS, projects would not be funded and notification would be sent to applicants. In addition, unsuccessful applications will be returned to the submitter. Successful applications will be incorporated into the award document.

M. Proposal Format

Proposals should be limited to 6 pages, excluding item 5 under this Section M. The format may vary, but must include:

1. A project summary;
2. A narrative project description to include: (a) Project goals and objectives; (b) the relationship of the proposed project to management needs or priorities identified by the Council; (c) a statement of work (project design and management—who is responsible, expected products, participants other than applicant); and (d) a summary of the existing state of knowledge related to project and contribution and relevance of the proposed work;
3. A description of all funding sources (including revenues derived from the sale of scallops harvested under the research TAC set-aside) and funding needs. This element of the proposal must include: (a) the amount of scallop TAC set-aside requested; (b) state which scallop closed area the research and/or compensation trip is to be conducted in, and the expected funds to be generated by the sale of those scallops; and (c) state the expected percentage of funds to