

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

[Docket No. 030502111-3111-01; I.D. 031103C]

RIN 0648-ZB43

Financial Assistance for Environmental Education Projects in Connecticut and Rhode Island

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

ACTION: Notice of availability of funds.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this notice is to invite the public to submit proposals for available funding to implement environmental education projects in the following two areas of interest: "Meaningful" Outdoor Experiences for Students and Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers. Potential recipients may submit separate proposals for each area. Funds are available to institutions of higher education, community-based and nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, interstate agencies, and Indian tribal governments. This notice describes the conditions under which project proposals will be accepted and criteria under which proposals will be evaluated for funding consideration. Depending upon the level of Federal involvement in individual projects, selected recipients will enter into either a cooperative agreement or a grant.

DATES: Applications must be received by 5 p.m. eastern daylight savings time on June 12, 2003. Applications received after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications will not be accepted electronically nor by facsimile machine submission.

ADDRESSES: You can obtain an application package from and send completed proposals to: Seaberry J. Nachbar, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 107A, Annapolis, MD 21403. You can also obtain the application package from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office Education Home Page <http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/education.htm>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Seaberry J. Nachbar, Education Coordinator, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, telephone: (410) 267-5664, or e-mail: seaberry.nachbar@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Introduction**A. Authority**

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended, at 16 USC 661, authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to provide assistance to, and cooperate with, Federal, State, and public or private agencies and organizations in the development, protection, rearing, and stocking of all species of wildlife, resources thereof, and their habitat, in controlling losses of the same from disease or other causes, and in minimizing damages from overabundant species. Under 15 U.S.C. 1540, the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements and other financial agreements with any nonprofit organization to aid and promote scientific and educational activities to foster public understanding of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its programs.

B. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)

The projects to be funded are in support of the Chesapeake Bay Studies (CFDA 11.457), under the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training Program.

C. Program Description

As a Federal agency that is committed to the stewardship of our Nation's coastal and marine resources, NOAA can and should play a major role in creating an environmentally literate and informed citizenry. The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program was established in 2002 to improve the understanding of environmental stewardship of students and teachers. The B-WET Program has an opportunity to create a population that is knowledgeable about the environment by supporting organizations that use the environment as the context for learning. Using the environment, a bay, stream, or the surrounding landscape, provides the opportunity to teach students about their connection to the greater environment. This has been shown to increase a student's academic achievement performance, enthusiasm and engagement for learning, and encourages greater pride and ownership in the environment. The environment can provide a platform upon which educators can create a curriculum that interests learners and revitalizes teachers. Environmentally educated individuals can become effective future workers, problem solvers, and

thoughtful community leaders and participants.

II. Areas of Interest

Proposals should address one of the two areas of interest: (1) "Meaningful" Outdoor Experiences for Students; or (2) Professional Development in the Area of Environmental Education for Teachers. Potential recipients may submit separate proposals for each area.

A. "Meaningful" Outdoor Experiences

The B-WET Program seeks proposals for projects that provide opportunities for students in Connecticut or Rhode Island (K through 12) to participate in a "meaningful" outdoor experience. The environment provides an excellent opportunity for education. In many cases, tidal and non-tidal waters and the surrounding landscape can provide "hands-on" laboratories where students can see, touch, and learn about the environment. In other cases, the environment can be brought alive to the classroom through a strong complement of outdoor and classroom experiences. The environment can provide a genuine, locally relevant source of knowledge that can be used to help advance student learning skills and problem-solving abilities across the entire school curriculum. The B-WET Program is strongly committed to expanding the knowledge and participation of a diverse student population in marine and environmental education. This population may include, for example, disabled or minority students, or students who are from rural communities in Connecticut or Rhode Island.

Proposals submitted under this area should address the following elements and types of activities:

1. *"Meaningful" outdoor experiences should make a direct connection to the marine or estuarine environment:* Experiences should demonstrate to students that local actions can impact the greater water environment (i.e., Connecticut's Long Island Sound and Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay). Experiences do not have to be water-based activities as long as there is an intentional connection made to water quality, the watershed, and the larger marine or estuarine system, outdoor experiences may include terrestrial activities.

2. *"Meaningful" outdoor experiences are hands-on and investigative or project-oriented:* Experiences should include activities where questions, problems, and issues are investigated through data collection, observation, and hands-on activities. Experiences should stimulate observation, motivate