

more than 5 percent of grant funds may be used for administrative expenses, and no funds may be used for lobbying activities or representational expenses. Construction is not an allowable activity under this program, so applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

#### V. Cost Sharing

Cost-sharing is not required for this fisheries disaster program.

#### VI. Eligibility Information

State, local and Indian tribal governments and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply.

#### VII. Application Information

##### *Content, Form and Submission of Applications*

Project applications must include a narrative project description to include (1) documentation that the blue crab fisheries have been affected by reduced harvests and sales of blue crab; (2) documentation of the amount of blue crab landed in the state each year from 1999 to 2001; (3) project goals and objectives which provide a clear presentation of the proposed work; (4) a statement of work (project design and management, including who is responsible, expected products, and participants other than the applicant; (5) methods for carrying out the project; and (6) a summary of the existing state of knowledge related to the project, and contribution and relevance of how the proposed activities will fulfill the purposes of the disaster assistance, as described in Section II above. Project applications must identify the principal participants and include copies of any agreements describing the specific tasks to be performed by those participants. A budget, which includes a detailed breakdown by category of expenditures, with appropriate cost estimates and justifications as they relate to specific aspects of the project, must be provided.

Applications must be one-sided and unbound. You must submit one signed original and two signed copies of the completed application (including supporting information). We will accept neither facsimile applications, nor electronically forwarded applications.

The three copies (one original and two copies) should be submitted to either the NMFS Southeast Regional Office, State/Federal Liaison Office or the NMFS Northeast Regional Office, State, Federal and constituent Programs Office (see **ADDRESSES**). We must receive your application by close of business 5 p.m. eastern daylight time on June 27, 2003. Applications received after that

time will not be considered for funding. All incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant.

Applications received after the deadline (see **DATES**) will not be considered for funding. Postmark prior to the end of the receipt period will not be sufficient. Facsimile applications will not be accepted. Generally, applicants will be notified within 45 days from the date of publication of this notice whether their applications have been recommended for funding. It may take up to an additional 30 days for the Grants Office to process the awards. Applicants should consider this processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications.

#### VIII. Application Review and Selection Process

When we receive applications we will screen them to ensure the following: that they were received by the deadline date (see **DATES**); that the included SF 424 was signed and dated by an authorized and eligible representative; that the proposal addresses the program purpose; and that a budget, statement of work, milestones, and clearly identified principal investigators and organizations carrying out work under the proposed project are included.

Merit Review - Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by three individuals having expertise in fisheries disaster funding assistance in order to determine their merit. Reviewers will assess the applications on the criteria listed below, which are weighted equally. Each reviewer will provide individual evaluations of the proposals. Based on these individual evaluations, NMFS, as applicable, will rank the applications received on behalf of the blue crab fisheries fishing industries of each the state.

The following Evaluation Criteria will be applied by the reviewers: (1) Importance/relevance and applicability of the application - how the application relates to the accomplishments of the program's purpose; (2) Technical and/or scientific merit - whether the application has sufficient technical and scientific merit that will adequately address project goals and objectives; (3) Overall qualifications of the applicant - experience with the fishing industry; (4) Project costs - whether the proposed costs are reasonable and consistent with Section II, Program Description and Purpose, and Section III, Funding Availability; and (5) Outreach and education - whether the scope of the applicant's proposed activities are sufficient to disseminate disaster relief information.

Following the merit review, the applications will be provided to the Regional Administrator, Southeast Region or the Regional Administrator, Northeast Region who are the selecting officials for their respective regions. In determining the projects to be recommended for funding, the Regional Administrators will consider the evaluation and rankings of the review panel members, along with the following selection factors: Availability of funding; balance/distribution of funds by geography/institutions/project types; duplication of effort through other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies; program priorities and policy factors; applicants' prior award performance; and partnerships with/participation of targeted groups.

#### IX. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices - Successful applicants of proposed projects generally will be notified approximately within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. Projects must not be initiated until a signed award is received from the NOAA Grants Office. Unsuccessful applications will be returned to the applicant.

2. Administrative Requirements - If you are selected to receive a grant award for a project, you must:

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the project, be responsible for the performance of all activities for which funds are granted, and be responsible for the satisfaction of all administrative and managerial conditions imposed by the award.

- Keep records sufficient to document any costs incurred under the award, and allow access to these records for audit and examination by the Secretary of Commerce, the Comptroller General of the United States, or their authorized representatives; and, submit financial status reports (SF 269) to the NOAA Grants Office in accordance with the award conditions.

3. Reporting - Successful applicants will be required to:

- Submit semiannual project status reports on the use of funds and describing the progress of the project and other acceptable deliverable to NMFS within 30 days after the end of each 6-month period. You will submit these reports to the individual identified as the NMFS Program Officer in the funding agreement.

- Submit a final report within 90 days after completion of each project to the NMFS Program Officer. The final report must describe the project and include an evaluation of the work you performed and the results and benefits