

conservation needs on a multi-state or regional scale, and to work with neighboring states where appropriate for the conservation of coastal and estuarine resources within the region. State plans must be developed through a public process, which would include a public scoping process and comment period. If a state CELC plan incorporates existing plans, or elements thereof, that were developed and vetted through a public review process, the state may choose to seek comment on whether those plans or elements should be incorporated into the CELC plan, rather than seeking comment on the substance of those plans or elements.

a. State CELC plans must include the following information:

- A map or description of the geographic extent of coastal and estuarine areas within the state, as defined for the purposes of the CELCP;
- A description of the types of lands or values to be protected through the program and the need for conservation through acquisition;

- Identification of "project areas" that represent the state's priority areas for conservation, including areas threatened by conversion, based on state and national criteria (listed below) for the program;

- A description of existing plans, or elements thereof, that are incorporated into this plan;

- A list of state or local agencies, or types of agencies, that are eligible to hold title to property acquired through the CELCP;

- A description of the state's process for reviewing and prioritizing qualified proposals for nomination to the national selection process. The vetting process should, at a minimum, involve representatives from the state's coastal zone management program, NERR(s), and any other agencies or entities that the state considers appropriate; and
- A description of public involvement and interagency coordination that occurred during the development of the plan.

b. State plans must address the following national criteria for projects and project areas as they relate to the purpose of the CELCP:

- Protects important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses;

- Gives priority to lands which can be effectively managed and protected and that have significant ecological value;

- Directly advances the goals, objectives, or implementation of the

state's coastal management plan or program, NERR management plans approved under the CZMA, national objectives of the CZMA, or a regional or state watershed protection plan involving coastal states with approved coastal management plans; and

- Is consistent with the state's approved coastal management program.

### 3.2 Approval of Plans

The Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management or his/her designee, shall be the approving official for plans submitted to NOAA under this program. Upon approval of its plan, a state will be eligible to receive competitive funding under the CELCP.

### 3.3 Update of Plans

States must update their CELC plans at least once every 5 years to reflect changes that have taken place within the state or region and submit the updated plans to OCRM.

## 4. Application, Review and Ranking Process

### 4.1 State Nomination and Selection Process

a. Solicitation of Projects. Based on notification from NOAA of the availability of funding to implement this program in any given year, states with approved CELC plans may notify and solicit project applications from qualified entities. States may, at their discretion, focus their annual project solicitation toward specific priorities or areas identified in their approved CELC plan.

Based on the requirements of the state's solicitation for project applications, eligible applicants should submit proposals to the state's lead agency. A project proposal that includes several separate and distinct phases may be submitted in phases, but any succeeding phases must compete against other proposals in the year submitted.

#### b. State Review and Prioritization

i. Proposal acceptance. The state lead agency determines whether a proposal should be accepted for consideration on the basis that it is complete and eligible under the criteria identified in section 2. If the application is incomplete, the lead agency may provide an opportunity for applicants to submit any information that is missing.

ii. Proposal review and ranking. The state lead agency reviews and prioritizes project applications through the process described in its CELC plan. Projects should be ranked according to the degree to which it meets the state's

CELC plan. A list of prioritized projects is then submitted to NOAA for consideration at the national level.

### 4.2. Information Required in Project Applications to NOAA

Applications submitted to NOAA for the national competitive process must contain the following:

a. A completed and signed Project Application Checklist (Appendix B). The checklist addresses some of the information requested in items b. through f., below. NOAA may modify this checklist as needed to effectively implement the project application and selection process;

b. Project Description. A statement that describes:

- The nature of the project, including acreage and types of habitats or land values to be protected, the legal rights to be acquired (i.e., fee title or easement), how the funds (Federal and non-federal) will be used, and conversion threats to the property, as well as a description of these same characteristics for any property that will be used as match;

- How the proposed project meets the state and national criteria and its expected benefits in terms of coastal and estuarine land conservation;

- Any pre-existing uses of the property, the nature of those uses, and whether those uses will continue after acquisition;

- Discrete benchmarks for completing the project within a specified time period. These benchmarks should indicate whether the project is "ready to go," has any deadlines associated with it, and whether the project is likely to be completed within the award period;

- The types of activities that would be allowed to take place on the land and a strategy for long-term stewardship, including support for long-term operations, such as maintenance or enforcement against illegal uses; and

- Whether this project has been submitted in application for other sources of Federal funding, and if so, which Federal program(s) and year(s).

c. Project Location. Two maps, as follows:

- A map of the state or coastal county showing the general location of the project;

- A map of the project site, which shows the location and extent of the proposed acquisition, and its relationship to significant natural features (slope, wetlands, dunes, floodplains, access points, etc.), as well as adjacent land uses.

d. Project Budget and Justification of Proposed Costs/Appraisal.