

**ACTION:** Notice of solicitation for applications.

**SUMMARY:** The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (hereinafter "we" or "us") issues this document to solicit applications for Federal assistance under the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (Prescott Grant Program). This document describes how to submit applications and proposals for funding under the 2003/2004 Prescott Grant Program and how we will determine which proposals will be funded. We will provide financial assistance (up to \$100,000 in Federal funds, with a 25 percent non-federal match) to eligible stranding network participants working within waters under United States jurisdiction for proposals pertaining to cetaceans and pinnipeds, except walrus. Proposals must fall primarily within one of the following categories: (A) recovery or treatment (i.e., rescue and/or rehabilitation) of live stranded marine mammals, (B) data collection from living or dead stranded marine mammals for scientific research regarding marine mammal health, and (C) facility operations directly related to the recovery or treatment of marine mammals or collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals. Proposals will be reviewed for eligibility, technical merit, and consistency with the Prescott Grant Program's national and regional funding priorities. Final selection will be based on results of the on-line reviews, peer reviews, merit review, equitable distribution of funds among regions, as well as other policy considerations.

**DATES:** Proposal packages for the annual award cycle must be postmarked by April 14, 2003. For proposal packages submitted under the emergency assistance component of the Prescott Grant Program no submission deadline applies (see Section I. A.).

**ADDRESSES:** Proposal packages for the annual award cycle should be sent to NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, Attn:Michelle Ordonez, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 12604, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283, phone 301-713-2322 ext 177. Proposal packages for the emergency assistance component of the Prescott Grant Program should be sent to the NMFS Regional Office that oversees the area of action (see the NMFS Prescott Grant Program web page at:[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot\\_res/PR2/Health\\_and\\_Stranding\\_Response\\_Program/Prescott.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Health_and_Stranding_Response_Program/Prescott.html) for addresses).

All proposal packages must include: (1) one signed original of the entire proposal and all required forms, and (2) two paper copies of the entire proposal and all required forms (including supporting documentation). One electronic copy on CD or diskette (in Microsoft Word v. 97 or earlier or WordPerfect v. 6.1 or lower) of the entire proposal, including supporting documentation but minus all required forms, is also requested (although not required). Federal forms and required elements of the proposal packages can be obtained from the NMFS Protected Resources Home Page (see section I. L. Electronic Access Addresses). We cannot accept completed applications via the Internet or facsimile at this time.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Simona Perry, Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, phone 301-713-2322 ext 106 or via email:Prescott Grant FR.comments @ noaa.gov.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **I. Introduction**

The Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000 amended the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to establish the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1)(hereafter referred to as the Prescott Grant Program). This notice describes how to submit proposals to the Prescott Grant Program for funding using fiscal year (FY) 2003 and 2004 funds and how we will determine which proposals will be funded.

##### **A. Background**

The Prescott Grant Program is conducted by the Secretary of Commerce to provide federal assistance to eligible stranding network participants (see section I. E. of this document) for (A) recovery or treatment (i.e., rescue and/or rehabilitation) of live stranded marine mammals<sup>1</sup>, (B) data collection from living or dead stranded marine mammals for scientific research regarding marine mammal health, and (C) facility operations directly related to the recovery or treatment of stranded marine mammals and collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals. The Prescott Grant Program

is administered through the NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP).

The MMHSRP was formalized in 1992 to fulfill the mandates of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Act, which amended the MMPA in 1992 (16 U.S.C. 1421). The MMHSRP was established to achieve 3 broad goals: (1) to facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild; (2) to correlate the health of marine mammals and marine mammal populations in the wild with available data on physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters; and (3) to coordinate effective responses to unusual mortality events. To achieve these goals, the MMHSRP (through close coordination with regional stranding networks) has the following objectives: improve the rescue, care and treatment of stranded marine mammals; collect life history data and other biomedical data from live and dead stranded marine mammals; develop baselines of "normal" stranding causes; improve the rapid detection of unusual mortality events; collect archival samples for future retrospective studies on causes of mortality or illness and for placement in the National Marine Mammal Tissue (and Serum) Bank; and develop comprehensive and consistent guidance for the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals, collection of specimens, quality assurance, and analysis of tissue samples. It is anticipated that awards funded through the Prescott Grant Program will facilitate achievement of the MMHSRP goals and objectives by providing financial assistance to eligible stranding network participants.

It is NMFS's intent to also reserve a portion of the funds to make emergency assistance available for unexpected, significant stranding events throughout the year on an as-needed basis. This emergency assistance is available to eligible network participants regardless of whether they are already receiving funds from the Prescott Grant Program's annual award cycle for another project. Responders to such stranding events should contact the NMFS Regional Office that oversees the area of action for further information and submit the proposal package to the NMFS regional stranding coordinator for review and approval of the need for such an award. For addresses of appropriate NMFS Regional Offices and stranding coordinators, see the MMHSRP web site:[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot\\_res/PR2/Health\\_and\\_Stranding\\_Response\\_Program/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Health_and_Stranding_Response_Program/)

<sup>1</sup>For purposes of this document, a stranded marine mammal is a marine mammal in the wild that is (1) dead and on a beach, shore, or in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States or (2) is live and on a beach or shore of the United States and unable to return to the water, is in apparent need of medical attention, or is in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance.