

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration**

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program  
FY 2016

**Notice of Funding Opportunity and Application Instructions**

Program Overview Information

**Federal Agency Name:**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) and The National Wildlife Refuge System,  
Division of Habitat and Resource Conservation

**Funding Opportunity Title:**

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

**Announcement Type:**

Announcement of availability of grants for fiscal year (FY) 2016 and request for applications (RFA).

**Funding Opportunity Number:** F15AS00087

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 15.614

**Dates:** State applicants must submit applications through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) (Grants.gov) by the deadline. The deadline for receipt is Wednesday June 24, 2015, 11:59 p.m. EDT. The Service recommends that you submit early enough to address any unforeseen technical complications. The Service will not consider applications received after the deadline.

We expect to announce the awards by January 2016.

**I. Description of Funding Opportunity**

The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Section 305, Title III, Public Law 101-646, 16 U.S.C. 3954) established the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (NCWCGP) to acquire, restore, and enhance wetlands in coastal States through competitive matching grants to State agencies. The primary goal of the NCWCGP is the long-term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems. In FY 2015, the NCWCGP will fund 25 individual projects encompassing 11,353 acres of coastal habitat.

The Final Rule establishing the requirements for participation in the NCWCGP was published in the Federal Register July 30, 2002 (67 FR 49264). The program regulations are in 50 CFR 84. Additional information about the Program is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants>. Before applying for a grant, please carefully review this entire announcement, Attachment A, Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and General Program Questions, and the program regulations in 50 CFR 84.

Coastal wetlands are valued, in part, because they protect against flooding, help maintain water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife. Coastal environments are also important economically, generating billions of dollars annually through such industries as commercial fishing and tourism.

The NCWCGP provides States with financial assistance to protect and restore these valuable resources. Projects can include (1) acquisition of a real property interest (e.g., conservation easement or fee title) in coastal lands or waters (coastal wetlands ecosystems) from willing sellers or partners for long-term conservation or (2) restoration, enhancement, or management of coastal wetlands ecosystems. All projects must ensure long-term conservation.

Examples of restoration efforts that may be funded include:

- Restoring wetland hydrology by plugging drainage ditches, breaking tile drainage systems, installing water control structures, dike construction, or re-establishing historic connections with waterways, or
- Planting native vegetation and/or removing invasive plants and animals that compete with native fish and wildlife and alter native habitats.

We rank applications based on criteria published in 50 CFR 84.32. See Attachment A to this announcement that clarifies select ranking criteria and addresses questions regarding 50 CFR 84.

**New in FY 2016:**

- Due date, funding opportunity number, and other annual updates.
- In Section IV. Application Requirements, required forms, we added a request for information about indirect costs, single audits, and lobbying (pages 7 and 8).
- In Section IV. Application Requirements, we changed the project statement page limit to 7 pages (page 8).
- In Section IV. Application Requirements, in the project statement, approach section, we added clarifying questions to be addressed with projects with restoration activities. These questions include: 1) How likely is the proposed restoration technique to succeed? 2) How much maintenance is involved, and who will conduct it and who will support it (page 8)?
- Clarification that planning, design, and monitoring costs are not included in the “10 percent limit” applied to costs unrelated to site protection and restoration, but should be reasonable and necessary to completing the project objectives (page 11).

- Other administrative requirements and updates to reflect the Office of Management and Budget Super Circular, 2 CFR 200 (page 14).

## **II. Award Information**

The Fish and Wildlife Service expects that approximately \$16 million will be available for grants from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program in FY 2016. Awards typically range from \$125,000 (there is no specific minimum) to a maximum of \$1,000,000. We expect to announce the awards in January 2016.

## **III. Basic Eligibility Requirements**

### **Eligible Applicants:**

Eligible applicants are any State agency or entity designated as eligible by the Governor of a coastal State. It is usually a State natural resource or fish and wildlife agency. If your agency is uncertain of its eligibility, please contact the Regional Service WSFR Office (see section VIII., Agency Contacts). The Regional WSFR Offices maintain the list of certified eligible agencies in each coastal State in the Region.

Eligible coastal States are States bordering the Great Lakes (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin); States bordering the Atlantic, Gulf (except Louisiana), and Pacific coasts (Alabama, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington); and American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Louisiana is not an eligible coastal State for this program as provided in the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (16 U.S.C 3955 (b)(1)).

If you would like to be a subgrantee, check with the eligible agency in your State for their deadlines and requirements to apply.

Federal law mandates that all entities applying for Federal financial assistance must have a valid Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). The SAM registration requirement does not apply to individuals submitting an application on their own behalf and not on behalf of a company or other for-profit entity, state, local or Tribal government, academia or other type or organization.

### **A. DUNS Registration**

Request a DUNS number online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. U.S.-based entities may also request a DUNS number by telephone by calling the Dun & Bradstreet Government Customer Response Center, Monday – Friday, 7 AM to 8 PM CST at the following numbers:

U.S. and U.S Virgin Islands: 1-866-705-5711

Alaska and Puerto Rico: 1-800-234-3867 (Select Option 2, then Option 1)  
For Hearing Impaired Customers Only call: 1-877-807-1679 (TTY Line)  
Once assigned a DUNS number, entities are responsible for maintaining up-to-date information with Dun & Bradstreet.

#### **B. Entity Registration in SAM**

Register in SAM online at <http://www.sam.gov/>. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly urged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure that SAM is up to date and in synch with changes that may have been made to DUNS and IRS information. Foreign entities who wish to be paid to a bank account in the United States must enter and maintain valid and current banking information in SAM.

Entities that had an active record in CCR have an active record in SAM do not need to do anything in SAM unless a change in business circumstances requires updates to your Entity record(s) or the Entity record is due to expire. SAM will send notifications to migrated Entity users via email 60, 30, and 15 days prior to expiration of the Entity record. To update or renew your Entity records(s) in SAM your Entity user(s) will need to create a SAM User Account and link their account(s) to your migrated Entity record(s). Entities migrated from CCR can find complete instructions on accessing their SAM Entity records online at <http://www.sam.gov/>.

#### **C. Excluded Entities**

Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program.

#### **D. Cost-Sharing or Matching**

The maximum Federal cost share for this Program is 75 percent of total project costs in States that have a fund established and used for acquiring coastal wetlands, other natural areas, or open spaces. States that do not have a fund are limited to a maximum 50 percent Federal cost share. The following insular areas: American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are not required to cost share, in which case the Federal government may provide 100 percent of the project costs. Puerto Rico is not exempt from the cost share requirements of this Program.

The maximum Federal cost share of 75 percent is based on project costs, i.e., the amount requested from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program plus the amount of non-Federal cost share. Other funds that are related to the project or are part of a larger project, but are not designated as cost share will not count towards project costs when calculating the maximum Federal cost share.

The cost share requirements are detailed in 50 CFR 84.46. The requirements allow for in-kind contributions for the required non-Federal match. To receive points under the ranking criterion “Federal share reduced” (50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11)), however, match above the required non-Federal share must be cash. See Attachment A, *Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and General Program Questions* for more information.

***Cost share examples (State with dedicated fund):***

**Example 1 – State agency requests maximum Federal share (75%) and the maximum award amount (\$1 million)**

Total project cost: \$1,333,334  
NCWCGP Request: \$1,000,000  
Non-Federal cost share: \$333,334.

**Example 2 – The proposed project will be part of a larger effort costing \$10 million, but the application is to acquire and restore a distinct parcel with project costs of \$1,333,334. State agency requests maximum Federal share (75%) and the maximum award amount (\$1 million).**

Total project cost: \$1,333,334  
NCWCGP Request: \$1,000,000  
Non-Federal cost share: \$333,334  
The other costs are not associated with the project, and therefore are not listed on the SF-424.

**Example 3 – State agency requests maximum Federal share (75%) and less than the maximum award amount.**

Total project cost: \$600,000  
NCWCGP Request: \$450,000  
Non-Federal cost share: \$150,000

**Example 4 – State agency requests less than maximum Federal share to maximize points for ranking criterion 11 and the maximum award amount (\$1 million).**

Total project cost: \$1,454,555  
NCWCGP Program Request: \$1,000,000  
Non-Federal cost share: \$454,555 (with \$90,916 of this amount in cash)

- required non-Federal share = 25% = \$363,639
- cash above required non-Federal share = \$454,555 - \$363,639 = \$90,916
- percent above required non-Federal share = \$90,916 / \$363,639 = 25% = 5 points

**Example 5 – State agency requests less than maximum Federal share to maximize points for criterion 11 and less than the maximum award amount.**

Total project cost: \$654,555

NCWCGP Request: \$450,000

Non-Federal cost share: \$204,555 (with at least \$40,916 of this amount in cash)

- required non-Federal share = 25% = \$163,639
- cash above required non-Federal share = \$204,555 - \$163,639 = \$40,916
- percent above required non-Federal share = 40,916 / \$163,639 = 25% = 5 points

To apply for a 75 percent Federal cost share, applicant must provide either a description of the State trust fund that supports a request for a 75 percent Federal share (in sufficient detail for the Service to make an eligibility determination), or a statement that eligibility has been previously approved and there has been no change in the fund.

**If you propose to use land as all or a portion of the non-Federal share, you should explain in the project overview how the land is necessary to accomplish the project objectives.**

**Applicants should include information on both (a) parcels proposed for acquisition/restoration with NCWCGP funds, and (b) match parcels in adequate detail for each ranking criteria so reviewers can make informed scoring decisions.**

You must document in the application all third-party matching funds, those supplied by organizations or individuals other than the State applicant, with a signed letter of financial commitment from an authorized representative of the match provider. The letter of financial commitment must detail the amount of matching funds or value of donated land and/or services. The State is responsible for ensuring the full amount of the non-Federal match as listed on the SF-424.

**Please note that if a third-party provides match, and the letter of financial commitment is missing and/or late, the match will not count, and the application may be ineligible.**

#### **E. Other**

Although only approved State agencies can apply for and receive grants from this Program, we encourage partnering with Tribes, Federal agencies, other State agencies, non-governmental organizations, local governments and others. Please note that any contributions from Federal sources cannot be used or counted as non-Federal match unless authorized by Federal statute.

#### **IV. Application Requirements**

To be considered for funding under this funding opportunity, an application must contain:

##### **Required Federal Forms (no page limit)**

1. Application for Federal Assistance, i.e., Standard Form 424.
  - a. For budget information in Box 15, State applicants should enter their match contribution on the Applicant line or the State line, not both.
  - b. Please list the project area Congressional district in box 16.

2. Budget Information, i.e., estimated costs to achieve the project objectives with various activities or components broken out by cost and by partner.
  - a. You should provide sufficient detail for reviewers to understand proposed costs. If you will be conducting acquisition and restoration, please detail the anticipated costs for each activity and each individual sub-activity and the entity that will carry it out.
  - b. Applicants are encouraged to include a detailed project budget table in addition to Standard Form 424C.
  - c. As the State agency applying, please include one of the following indirect cost statements that apply to your organization. When applicable, please also include a copy of your organization's current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.

We are:

- A State government entity receiving more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We submit our indirect cost rate proposals to our cognizant agency. A copy of our most recently approved rate agreement/certification is attached.
- A State government entity receiving less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We are required to prepare and retain for audit an indirect cost rate proposal and related documentation to support those costs.
- A State government entity that will charge all costs directly.

All applicants are hereby notified of the following:

- Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award.
- Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs under the award unallowable.
- Only the indirect costs calculated against the Federal portion of the total direct costs may be charged to the Federal award. Recipients may not charge to their Service award any indirect costs calculated against the portion of total direct costs charged to themselves or charged to any other project partner, Federal and non-Federal alike.
- Recipients must have prior written approval from the Service to transfer unallowable indirect costs to amounts budgeted for direct costs or to satisfy cost-sharing or matching requirements under the award.
- Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

For more information on indirect cost rates, see the Service's Indirect Costs and Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements guidance document on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/grants/>.

3. Statement of Assurances of compliance with applicable Federal laws, regulations, and Policies, i.e., Standard Form 424D (unless your State agency has an approved Statement of Assurances on file with the Regional WSFR Office).

4. Single Audit Reporting: Please include a statement regarding if your organization was/was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the organization's most recently closed fiscal year and, if so, state if that report is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse Single Audit Database website. Following 2 CFR 200.501, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit an A-133 Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System.
5. Lobbying Activities. Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with this project AND the project budget exceeds \$100,000, complete and submit the **SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities** form. See 43 CFR, Subpart 18.100 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying.

### **Project Statement (7 page limit)**

A concise project statement that does not address the ranking criteria, but rather identifies and describes:

1. The need for the proposed project;
2. Discrete, quantifiable, and verifiable objectives to be accomplished during a specific time period;
3. Expected results or benefits in terms of coastal lands and waters, hydrology, water quality, or fish and wildlife dependent on the wetlands (please refer to the ranking criteria and page number for specific benefits in that section of the application rather than repeat them);
4. The approach to be used in meeting the objectives, including specific procedures, schedules, key personnel, and cooperators. Please include (if applicable):
  - a. The organizations that will act as a subgrantee and their role(s) in meeting the project objectives;
  - b. What organization will hold title to the real property being acquired or restored;
  - c. What type of ownership interest is involved, e.g., fee-simple, easement, combination, etc., and the related acres;
  - d. What organization (or individual) will manage the real property interest;
  - e. What will be involved in the restoration? Why did you choose that approach? How likely is the proposed restoration technique to succeed? How much maintenance is involved, and who will conduct it and who will support it? Please provide successful examples of this restoration approach in similar nearby ecosystems, if available.

5. The project location, including GPS Coordinates in minutes, degrees, seconds;
6. Either a description of the State trust fund that supports a request for a 75 percent Federal share in sufficient detail for the Service to make an eligibility determination, or a statement that eligibility has been previously approved and no change has occurred in the fund;
7. List of other current coastal acquisition, restoration, enhancement and management actions; agencies involved; relationship to the proposed grant; and how the application fits into comprehensive natural resource plans for the area; and
8. Any public involvement or interagency coordination on coastal wetlands conservation projects that has occurred or is planned that relates to the application (Specify the organization or agencies involved and dates of involvement).

**Ranking Criteria (20 page limit)**

A description, with appropriate documentation, of how the proposed project addresses each of the **13 numeric ranking criteria in 50 CFR 84.32**. We recommend that you address each ranking criteria individually with a brief statement or table.

If land is proposed as match, applicants should include information on both (a) parcels proposed for acquisition/restoration with NCWCGP funds and (b) match parcels in adequate detail for each ranking criteria so reviewers can make informed scoring decisions. Activities provided as cost share, including land acquisition, are part of the project and must be eligible activities.

**Drawings/Maps/Photographs (no page limit)**

1. We recommend that you include the following clearly marked drawing(s) or photographs of the overall proposed project that include:
  - a. Existing state of the project area;
  - b. Proposed project area (in one or more maps, photographs, or images);
    - i. Detail which areas will be part of the grant funded activities, delineating the project boundaries;
    - ii. Detail which areas are part of the cost share, if applicable;
    - iii. Detail what restoration activities will take place and where, if applicable;
    - iv. Detail which areas, if any, are part of a larger effort that will be funded outside of the grant and cost share;
    - v. Detail wetland types (please include National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), State Wetlands Map, or other wetland delineation, if available); and
    - vi. Any other information that will assist reviewers to identify project components or factors involved with ranking.
2. Two maps of the project location: a map of the State showing the general location of the application and a map of the project site.

**Letters of Commitment (no page limit)**

1. Signed letter(s) of financial commitment from an authorized representative of all third-party match provider(s). The letter(s) of financial commitment must detail the amount of matching funds or value of donated land and/or services.

2. In projects with land acquisition, we encourage you to include a letter or statement that certifies that the landowner has been contacted, that negotiations are underway, or the current level of interaction regarding the possible sale of the property to help reviewers determine the feasibility of the proposed project compared with other projects.

All letters of financial commitment are due with the application by the June 24, 2015 deadline. We will not consider letters received after the deadline.

Application packages should be arranged in the following order:

1. SF 424
2. SF 424 C (or budget table)
3. SF 424 D
4. Project statement
5. Ranking criteria
6. Drawings/Maps/Photographs
7. Letters of commitment

Applications should be formatted to print on 8.5" X 11" paper, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides, and page numbers at the bottom of the page. Fonts should be legible, i.e., preferably 12 point Arial, Times New Roman, or other commonly used font. Please number your pages starting with the Project Statement.

In accepting Federal funds, applicants must comply with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Evidence of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and other Federal laws must be provided if selected for award.

### **Funding Restrictions**

Eligible grant activities include:

1. Acquisition of a real property interest in coastal lands or waters from willing sellers or partners (coastal wetlands ecosystems), providing that the terms and conditions will ensure the real property will be administered for long-term conservation.
2. The restoration, enhancement, or management of coastal wetlands ecosystems, providing restoration, enhancement, or management will be administered for long-term conservation.

Ineligible activities include but are not limited to:

1. Projects that primarily benefit navigation, irrigation, flood control, or mariculture;
2. Acquisition, restoration, enhancement or management of lands to mitigate habitat losses;
3. Creation of wetlands where wetlands did not previously exist;
4. Enforcement of fish and wildlife laws and regulations, except when necessary for the accomplishment of approved project purposes;
5. Research;
6. Planning as a primary project focus;
7. Operations and maintenance, including long-term invasive species management;

8. Acquisition and/or restoration of upper portions of watersheds where benefits to the coastal wetlands ecosystem are not significant and direct; and
9. Projects providing less than 20 years of conservation benefits.

**Any proposed walkways, viewing platforms, or other recreation-related project components must contribute to the project objectives and the long-term conservation of the coastal wetlands ecosystems. Costs unrelated to protection and restoration of the site must be limited to 10 percent of the NCWCGP Federal Share and the required match. Planning, design, and monitoring costs are not included in the 10 percent limit but should be reasonable and necessary to completing the project objectives.**

#### **V. Submission Instructions**

State applicants must submit applications through Grants.gov by the deadline. The deadline for receipt is June 24, 2015, 11:59 p.m. EDT. The Service recommends that you submit early enough to address any unforeseen technical complications. All letters of financial commitment will be due with the application by the June 24, 2015 deadline. The Service will not consider applications or letters received after the deadline.

#### **Intergovernmental Review**

Before submitting an application, U.S. state and local government applicants should visit the [Intergovernmental Review \(SPOC List\)](#) to determine whether their application is subject to the state intergovernmental review process under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372 “Intergovernmental review of Federal Programs.” E.O. 12372 was issued to foster the intergovernmental partnership and strengthen federalism by relying on state and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development. The E.O. allows each state to designate an entity to perform this function. The official list of designated entities is posted on the website. Contact your state’s designated entity for more information on the process the state requires to be followed when applying for assistance. States that do not have a designated entity listed on the website have chosen not to participate in the review process.

#### **Address to Request/Submit Application Package**

You can download the application package for the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program on Grants.gov here: [https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms\\_apps\\_idx.html](https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/forms_apps_idx.html), searching by CFDA 15.614 or Funding Opportunity F15AS00087. You can also download application forms through the WSFR Toolkit under “[Forms.](#)” The [Standard Form 424](#) is available here. If you have trouble accessing the online forms, you can contact one of the Service WSFR Offices (see Section VII., Agency Contacts).

States should submit applications online at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Funding Opportunity. It can be located by doing an advanced search by CFDA 15.614 or Funding Opportunity F15AS00087. We suggest that applicants verify that their version of Adobe Reader is compatible with Grants.gov to avoid problems in submitting and/or downloading application forms. The Grants.gov homepage has a

link that allows users to verify compatibility of Adobe Reader. Please note that file names must comply with grants.gov specifications (e.g., file names must not exceed 20 characters, etc.), or there may be problems when submitting your application.

**As a courtesy, all applicants are also encouraged to send a single pdf file comprising their entire application package, including all standard forms (424, 424C, 424D), project overview, ranking criteria information, maps and photos, and letters of financial commitment to their Regional WSFR contact (see contact information in section VII., Agency Contacts.) by the deadline.**

For further information or questions on electronic submission, contact your Regional WSFR Office.

**Important note on Grants.gov application attachment file names:** Please do not assign application attachments file names longer than 20 characters, including spaces. Assigning file names longer than 20 characters will create issues in the automatic interface between Grants.gov and the Service's financial assistance management system.

## **VI. Application Review**

### **A. Ranking Criteria**

Criteria for reviewing and ranking projects were established in the final rule for administering the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (67 FR 48264; 50 CFR 84).

Attachment A to this announcement clarifies select ranking criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and answers general program questions. A brief summary of the 13 ranking criteria follows:

- 1. Wetlands conservation.** Will the project reverse coastal wetland loss or habitat degradation in decreasing or stable coastal wetland types?
- 2. Maritime forests on coastal barriers.** Will the application significantly benefit maritime forests on coastal barriers?
- 3. Long-term conservation.** Will the project ensure long-term conservation of coastal wetland functions? The project must provide at least 20 years of conservation benefits to be eligible.
- 4. Coastal watershed management.** Will the completed project help accomplish the natural resource goals and objectives of one or more formal, ongoing coastal watershed management plan or effort?
- 5. Conservation of threatened and endangered species.** Will the project benefit any federally listed endangered or threatened species, species proposed for Federal listing, recently delisted species or designated or proposed critical habitat in coastal wetlands? Will it benefit State-listed species?
- 6. Benefits to fish.** Will the project provide, restore or enhance important fisheries habitat?
- 7. Benefits to coastal-dependent or migratory birds.** Will the project provide, restore, or enhance important habitat for coastal-dependent or migratory birds?
- 8. Prevent or reduce contamination.** Will the project prevent or reduce input of

contaminants to the coastal wetlands and associated coastal waters that are already contaminated?

- 9. Catalyst for future conservation.** Will the project leverage other ongoing coastal wetlands conservation efforts in an area or provide additional impetus for conservation?
- 10. Partners in conservation.** Will the project receive financial support, including in-kind match, from private, local or other Federal interests?
- 11. Federal share reduced.** Does the application significantly reduce the Federal share by providing more than the required match amount? (Only cash above the required match applies.)
- 12. Education/outreach program or wildlife-oriented recreation.** Is the project designed to increase environmental awareness and develop support for coastal wetlands conservation?  
Does it provide recreational opportunities that are consistent with the conservation goals of the site?
- 13. Other factors.** Do any other factors, not covered in the previous criteria, make this project or site particularly unique and valuable?
  - Describe how the proposed project addresses climate change concerns, how it will be affected by climate change impacts, and include references to any relevant plans and models.
  - Provide any information regarding how the proposed project supports the 50 State Report for the America's Great Outdoors Initiative and/or the Department of the Interior River Initiative.

## **B. Review and Selection Process**

Project selection is a three-step process: application acceptance, application ranking, and application selection.

1. Application acceptance - The Regional WSFR Offices determine agency eligibility and whether applications are complete, substantial, and contain only activities that are eligible. Applications that are ineligible are returned to the State agency. Revision and resubmission of returned applications is allowable up until the identified deadline for application submittals.
2. Application ranking - Once an application is accepted by the Regional WSFR Office, they forward the application to Division of Habitat and Resource Conservation, who coordinates an internal, cross-programmatic review of all accepted applications by a National Review Panel.
3. Application selection - The National Review Panel scores and ranks all accepted applications and provides the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service with a list of recommended projects for funding. The final list of awards is determined by the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The awards will be announced by January 2016. Successful applicants will receive a letter informing them that their application was awarded funding and the amount of the award.

## **VII. Award Administration**

### **Award Notice**

Successful applicants will receive a letter informing them that their application was awarded funding, the amount of the award, and the remaining process needed to complete the grant award. The Service will also publish on its website a national press release announcing the awards.

### **Domestic Recipient Payments**

Prior to award, the Service program office will contact you/your organization to enroll in the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system.

### **Transmittal of Sensitive Data**

Recipients are responsible for ensuring any sensitive data being sent to the Service is protected during its transmission/delivery. The Service strongly recommends that recipients use the most secure transmission/delivery method available. The Service recommends the following digital transmission methods: secure digital faxing; encrypted emails; emailing a password protected zipped/compressed file attachment in one email followed by the password in a second email; or emailing a zipped/compressed file attachment. The Service strongly encourages recipients sending sensitive data in paper copy to use a courier mail service. Recipients may also contact their Service Project Officer and provide any sensitive data over the telephone.

### **Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

When a project is awarded funding, compliance with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies, including environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act, and applicable executive orders must be satisfied before the Service can approve an award and make funding available.

In accordance with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006, eligible State agencies, as prime recipients, must register with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) at <http://www.sam.gov>. Eligible State agencies and sub-award recipients must also obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number through <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

All financial assistance awards are subject to Federal financial administration requirements. The Regional WSFR Offices will work with applicants to ensure that all financial arrangements comply with these requirements.

To find out more about the rules, including administrative requirements and cost principles, please review 2 CFR 200 and 50 CFR 84. This applies to all recipients.

### **Reporting**

Reporting requirements include retention and access requirements that are specified in 2 CFR 200.333-337. Additional details regarding new requirements, guidance, consequences, etc. are available in 516 FW 1 and 516 FW 2.

Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the supported activity. In such cases, recipients are required to notify the Service in writing as soon as the following types of conditions become known:

- Problems, delays, or adverse conditions that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of any corrective action(s) taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation.
- Favorable developments that enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

#### **VIII. Agency Contacts**

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is administered jointly by the Divisions of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration and the National Wildlife Refuge System, Division of Habitat and Resource Conservation. National level program information can be obtained by contacting:

Chris Darnell  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
The Refuge System - Division of Habitat and Resource Conservation  
5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: NWRS  
Falls Church, VA 22041  
703-358-2236  
Chris\_Darnell@fws.gov

or

Christy Vigfusson  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program  
5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: WSFR  
Fall Church, VA 22041  
703-358-1748  
Christy\_Vigfusson@fws.gov

**For project specific information and application details, contact your Regional WSFR Office:**

| <b>Coastal States by Fish and Wildlife Service Region</b>   | <b>Regional Contact Information</b>   |
|---|---|
| American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington                    | Sarah Bielski<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1<br>Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program<br>Eastside Federal Complex<br>911 NE 11th Avenue<br>Portland, OR 97232-4181<br>503-231-6128<br>sarah_bielski@fws.gov      |
| Texas   | Susan MacMullin<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2<br>Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program<br>P.O. Box 1306<br>500 Gold Avenue, SW, Suite #9019<br>Albuquerque, NM 87103<br>505-248-7476<br>susan_macmullin@fws.gov |
| Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin  | Paul Glander<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3<br>Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program<br>5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990<br>Bloomington, MN 55437-1458<br>612-713-5130<br>paul_glander@fws.gov                |
| Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, and the Virgin Islands           | Torre Anderson<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 4<br>Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program<br>1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 240<br>Atlanta, GA 30345-3319<br>404-679-4168<br>torre_anderson@fws.gov                  |
| Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia | Dan Leahy<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5<br>Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program<br>300 Westgate Center Drive<br>Hadley, MA 01035-9589<br>413-253-8687<br>dan_leahy@fws.gov                                     |

| <b>Coastal States by Fish and Wildlife Service Region</b> | <b>Regional Contact Information</b>  |
|---|--|
| Alaska  | Cliff Schleusner<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 7<br>Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program<br>1011 East Tudor Road, MS 261<br>Anchorage, AK 99503<br>907-786-3631<br>cliff_schleusner@fws.gov |
| California  | Susan Boring<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 8<br>Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program<br>2800 Cottage Way Room W-1729<br>Sacramento, CA 95825<br>916-414-6507<br>susan_boring@fws.gov        |

**IX. Other Information**

The Federal government is not bound to fund any project until the Service Regional WSFR representative has approved the award.

OMB Control Number 1018-0109, Expiration date Sept. 30, 2015

**X. Paperwork Reduction Act Statement**

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires us to tell you why we are collecting this information, how we will use it, and whether or not you have to respond. We will use the information that we collect to evaluate applications submitted to acquire funding for National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant Program funds. Your response is required to receive funding. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. We estimate that it will take an average of 40 hours to complete the application. The average estimated annual burden associated with writing and submitting required performance reports is 6 hours. You may send comments concerning the burden estimates or any aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041.

**Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and  
General Program Questions**

Sections of this attachment have been revised for FY 2016 – please read

The purpose of this attachment is to provide clarification of certain criteria in 50 CFR 84. General questions are listed first, followed by questions specific to ranking criteria.

**General Questions:**

**Are lands used for match purposes used in calculating points for ranking criteria?**

Yes. Because lands that are used for match purposes are part of the project area, reviewers consider both lands being proposed for acquisition/restoration with grant funds and lands proposed for contribution as match when assigning points for ranking criteria. Therefore, information on both parcels proposed for acquisition/restoration and match parcels should be described in adequate detail for each ranking criteria so reviewers can make informed scoring decisions.

**Does land used for all of or part of the non-Federal cost share need to be necessary and reasonable?**

Yes. All non-Federal cost share must be necessary and reasonable to achieving project objectives, land acquisition included. Please explain how the match parcel(s) relate to the overall project and remember to detail information about the match parcel for all ranking criteria.

**If a project includes a conservation easement, what information about the conservation easement is helpful for reviewers?**

Applicants should describe the general terms of the conservation easement, including the length of the conservation easement, who will hold the conservation easement, allowable and prohibited uses, and plans for long-term monitoring and stewardship of the easement. This information helps reviewers understand the conservation benefit(s) of the conservation easement.

**Who holds title to land acquired under this program or contributed as match?**

Title to real property acquired under a grant or subgrant or contributed as match will vest upon acquisition in the grantee or subgrantee, respectively, as directed by 43 CFR 12.71 and 43 CFR 12.64.

**Should applicants include letters of support that are not financial commitment letters or those detailing scientific information specific to a project?**

Given the volume of material reviewers must read, letters of general support for a project should not be included in the application package. However, it is required to include letters of financial commitment from third-party sources.

**What are “total costs” in 50 CFR 84, including 84.21(f), 84.32(a)(11), and 84.46?**

“Total costs” are the costs to complete a project, including the total amount of funds requested from the NCWCGP and the non-Federal share. It does not include other Federal funds or nonmatching funds.

For example, if total costs of a project are \$1,333,334, the maximum Federal share (National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program request) would be either \$1,000,000 (75%) or \$666,667 (50%), depending on whether or not the State has a designated fund (see definition of fund in 50 CFR 84.11).

**Does “maximum Federal share” under 50 CFR 84, including 84.32 (a)(11) and 84.46 (h), refer to the maximum percentage of Federal dollars of the project costs, i.e., 75% or 50%, or the maximum grant amount from the NCWCGP, i.e., \$1 million?**

“Maximum Federal share” refers to the percentage, i.e., 75% or 50%, of Federal dollars of the project costs, not the maximum grant amount from the NCWCGP, i.e., \$1 million. For example, if total project costs are \$1,333,334, the maximum Federal share would be either \$1,000,000 (75%) or \$666,667 (50%), depending on whether or not the State has a designated fund. If the applicant only provides the minimum non-Federal share (25% or 50% of total project costs), no points will be awarded for reducing the Federal share (50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11), Criterion 11).

**What changes are allowed to an application after its submission?**

Applications submitted to the Service for consideration in the national competition must be in final format by the due date specified in the Request for Applications. The only application changes that will be accepted after the due date are those that will not impact the project scoring or project scope, such as small corrective or clarifying statements. Regional Office and/or Washington Office representatives may also request that the applicant make modifications to an application after the due date to correct inconsistencies within an application or change any other error that would cause the National Review Panel difficulty in accurately assessing the application during review. If an application contains ineligible activities, the entire application is ineligible.

### **Who determines if an application is eligible?**

Service Regional WSFR personnel determine whether an application is eligible and whether we should consider it for ranking by the National Review Panel. If Regional personnel have questions regarding the eligibility of a project, they are encouraged to consult with the Service National WSFR Office.

Service National WSFR Office will reexamine the application's eligibility if questions arise. If deemed ineligible, we will not consider the application for funding.

### **50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1) (Criterion 1):**

#### **Must a score of 7 be given for all applications that result in over 50% of the project area conserving, restoring, or protecting decreasing coastal wetlands types?**

Yes. Applications that document that over 50% of the project area will be, upon project completion, decreasing coastal wetlands types will receive the full 7 points. You may find specific guidance on how reviewers score this criterion at 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1).

#### **Should a graduated scale be used to further delineate applications?**

The program regulations in 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1) provide guidance on the use of intermediate scores (i.e., less than 7 points) for projects that document that, upon project completion, a minimum of 50% of the project area will be a combination of decreasing and stable types of wetlands, and for projects that are less than 50% wetlands.

### **50 CFR 84.32 (a)(2) (Criterion 2):**

#### **What qualifies as a maritime forest?**

A thorough description of what is considered to be a maritime forest for the purpose of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant program is found in the program regulations in the Definitions section, 50 CFR 84.11.

#### **How will this criterion be scored?**

In order to receive the maximum 7 points for this criterion, the project must significantly benefit maritime forests which meet the following descriptions: 1) are located on coastal barriers (see definition of "Coastal barrier" in 50 CFR 84.11) along the mainland coast from Delaware to Texas, and 2) are broad-leaved forests. Examples of maritime forests are primarily characterized by a closed canopy of various combinations of live oak, upland laurel oak, pignut hickory, southern magnolia, sugarberry, and cabbage palm.

Intermediate scores of less than 7 points are acceptable (1) for applications in which the significance of the benefit to maritime forests is unclear, or (2) for applications in which it is unclear if the forests meet the strict definition of maritime forest.

**50 CFR 84.32 (a)(5, 6, 7) (Criteria 5, 6, and 7):**

**What information should I include about threatened and endangered species, fish, and coastal dependent or migratory birds in responses to ranking criteria 5, 6, and 7?**

You should include the information requested in the ranking criteria. It is important to also note if species have been observed within the project boundary or only in the general vicinity. It is suggested that applicants supply this information in table format. The column headings can include: common name, scientific name, status (Federally listing, delisted within the last 5 years, State listing, etc.), observed within project boundary, habitat type provided, restored, or enhanced (nesting, breeding, feeding, nursery areas), etc. See ranking criteria language for additional information.

**50 CFR 84.32 (a)(10) (Criterion 10):**

**Do non-Federal partners' financial contributions need to be included on the SF-424 as match to receive points for this criterion?**

Yes, to be considered a non-Federal partner for this criterion, the application must receive financial support, including in-kind match, from a third-party that is listed as non-Federal match on the SF-424. You must document all third-party matching funds, those supplied by organizations or individuals other than the State applicant, with a signed letter of financial commitment from an authorized representative of the match provider. The letter of financial commitment must detail the amount of matching funds or value of donated land and/or services. The State is responsible for ensuring the full amount of the non-Federal match as listed on the SF-424. All of these items must be contained in the application by the due date.

Please note that if a third-party provides match, and the letter of financial commitment is missing and/or late, the match will not count, and the application may be ineligible.

**Can applications receive points for more than one State agency's participation in a proposed project?**

In general, applications will only receive credit for one State agency. The exception to this practice will occur when an application includes multiple States. In these instances, the application may receive points for each additional State that is participating in the proposed project.

**What documentation is required to receive points for this criterion for non-Federal partners?**

A signed letter of financial commitment of matching funds or in-kind match from an authorized representative of any third-party match provider or partner(s) must accompany the application to receive points. Applicants are ultimately accountable for third-party commitments of financial support.

**What documentation is required to receive points for this criterion for Federal partners?**

A signed letter committing project involvement that is necessary and reasonable to completing the project objectives from an authorized representative of the Federal partner(s) must accompany the application to receive points. Project involvement that is not necessary or reasonable to complete the project objectives will not be counted as a partner for this criterion.

**50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11) (Criterion 11):**

**Can in-kind services or contributions be used as the required State match?**

Yes. In-kind services can be used for the entire portion of the State's required cost share (i.e., 25% or 50%). However, the applicant will not receive points for this ranking criterion.

**Can in-kind services or contributions, including bargain land sale, be used to score points for this criterion?**

No. We only consider cash contributions that exceed the required match when scoring points for Criterion 11. Cash is a liquid asset and can be tracked easily through audit procedures and also serves as a proxy for the State's commitment towards a project. Federal regulations and guidance clearly identify a landowner's acceptance of a reduced price for his or her property as an in-kind service or contribution, not cash. As such, so-called "bargain sales" cannot be used to receive points for decreasing the Federal share.

**Can the in-kind contribution of a landowner accepting an offer below market value for his property be used for the required State match?**

Yes. The in-kind contribution of a landowner accepting a reduced price for his property can be used as part of or all of the State's required cost share of 25% or 50%.

**50 CFR 84.32(b)(4) (Additional considerations):**

**Please clarify the ‘provides lands as part of the State matching share’.**

The purpose of this tie-breaking factor is to consider applications which include the donation of lands owned by a third party as part of the overall project. Such donations increase the overall acreage of land managed by the State agency, increasing the likelihood that the land will be managed to conserve the natural resources and increase the management options for the grant property.