

research under this notification. Rather, proceeds generated from the sale of RSA quota will be used to fund approved activities and compensate vessel owners.

Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance the knowledge of the scallop fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which scallop management decisions are made. Priority will be given to proposals that investigate research priorities identified by the Council, which are detailed under the Program Priorities section of this announcement.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some surveys scheduled to occur in 2020 were delayed until 2021, which will influence survey selection decisions under this competition. For example, because a Stellwagen Bank dredge survey was delayed until next year, funding an additional Stellwagen Bank dredge survey under this solicitation is not a high priority. Information on delayed RSA surveys can be found on the RSA webpage (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/funding-and-financial-services/research-set-aside-programs>).

AMENDMENT 21 to the FMP under development may increase the amount of set aside available to be awarded under this competition.

Recipients may be asked to provide RECEIPTS or other proof of purchase for any equipment or supplies costing \$5,000 or more..

As a reminder, YOU MUST SUBMIT A DATA SHARING PLAN WITH YOUR PROPOSAL in accordance with Section VI.B. Award Administration Information/Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

The new NEPA QUESTIONNAIRE FORM can be found at <https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-Grants-Questionnaire-final.pdf>

The Department of Commerce implemented a RESEARCH PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT (RPPR) for research awards in accordance with the requirement for non-Federal entity submission of performance reports using OMB-approved government-wide standard information collections per §200.328. The recipient must complete the RPPR directly in Grants Online. Also, the RPPR format and instructions are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Scallop RSA Program was established through the Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to address specific research priorities identified by the Council. NMFS, in coordination with the Council, is soliciting proposals for scallop research to be conducted under the 2021/2022 Scallop RSA Program. Set-aside quota will be awarded to successful applicants.

B. Program Priorities

Projects funded under the Scallop RSA Program must enhance the understanding of the scallop resource or contribute to scallop fishery management decisions. Priority is given to funding research proposals addressing 2021 and 2022 Scallop Research Priorities as set forth below.

Applicants are encouraged to consider previously funded scallop research projects when developing proposals. Applicants responding to scallop survey priorities are encouraged to review and consider the findings of the Scallop Survey Methodologies Peer Review which was convened by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in March 2015. Reports and additional information for this peer can be requested via e-mail to cheryl.corbett@noaa.gov.

Highest Priority - Surveys

1. Survey Related Research

Survey results must be available by early August of the year in which the survey is conducted (e.g., survey results that would inform 2022 fishing effort decisions must be available by mid-August 2021). The survey or surveys do not need to be carried out by a single grant recipient. Survey data will be used to develop estimates of total and exploitable biomass to be used for setting fishery catch limits and allocations. Successful projects may be asked to provide data in a standardized format. The primary objective of these surveys would be to provide additional biomass estimates in addition to the federal survey to improve the overall precision of the scallop biomass estimate produced by the Scallop Plan Development Team.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some surveys scheduled to occur in 2020 were delayed

until 2021, which will influence survey selection decisions under this competition. For example, because a Stellwagen Bank dredge survey was delayed until next year, funding an additional Stellwagen Bank dredge survey under this solicitation is not a high priority. Information on delayed RSA surveys can be found on the RSA webpage (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/funding-and-financial-services/research-set-aside-programs>).

1a. An intensive industry-based survey of each of the relevant scallop rotational areas (Closed Area II, Closed Area I, Nantucket Lightship, Elephant Trunk and Hudson Canyon) that will provide estimates of total and exploitable biomass to be used for setting fishery catch limits under the rotational area management program.

1b. an intensive industry-based survey of areas of importance (i.e., open areas with high scallop recruitment or areas of importance to the fishery). For 2021, priority areas include the Great South Channel, New York Bight, and Long Island SAMS areas, and areas of the Gulf of Maine that have recently been or are likely to be fished.

1c. a resource wide industry-based survey of scallops within Georges Bank and/or Mid-Atlantic resource areas.

High Priority - Non-survey research (in ranked order)

2. Turtles: Research to support the investigation of turtle behavior in the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank (via satellite tagging or other means). This could include, but is not limited to, research to understand their seasonal movements, vertical habitat utilization, and the status and range of the population in response to climate change. This research could assist in the collection of data that may be required by current or future biological opinions.

3. Scallop Biology: Research on scallop biology, including studies aimed at understanding recruitment processes (reproduction, timing of spawning, larval and early post-settlement stages, age and growth, and yield), examination of environmental stressors on reproduction and growth, and mass mortality event, i.e. the disappearance of 50 million pounds of scallops in Nantucket Lightship-West. This priority also includes research on natural mortality, such as scallop predation (e.g., starfish, crab, snails, and dogfish), discard mortality, and juvenile mortality events.

General Research Needs (not in rank order)

4. Scallop Recruitment Supplementation: Research to develop the tools, such as spat

collection, grow out of juvenile scallops, predator control, and offshore seeding, to supplement natural recruitment of scallops.

5. Bycatch: Identification and evaluation of methods to reduce the impacts of the scallop fishery with respect to bycatch of small scallops and non-target species. This would include projects that determine seasonal bycatch rates of non-target species, characterize spatial and temporal distribution patterns, collect and analyze catch and bycatch data on a near-real time basis, as well as the associated discard mortality rates of key bycatch species. Research efforts focusing on non-target bycatch should provide results that would help the scallop industry avoid pending or potential implementation of accountability measures. Projects should consider the enforceability and feasibility of regulations in the commercial fishery.

6. Gear: Commercial dredge research to improve scallop catch efficiency, improve scallop size selectivity, reduce scallop damage, reduce non-target species bycatch, and to reduce fuel consumption.

C. Program Authority

Statutory authority for this program is provided under sections 303(b)(11), 402(e), and 404(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. 1881c(c), respectively. The Scallop RSA Program is established through the Scallop FMP (69 FR 35193, June 23, 2004) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 648.56.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

No federal funds are provided for research under this notification. Rather, funds generated from the sale of landed scallop RSA quota shall be used to cover the cost of research activities, including vessel costs. The Federal Government is not liable for any costs incurred by the researcher or vessel owner should the sale of set-aside quota not fully reimburse the researcher or vessel owner for their expenses. Any additional funds generated through the sale of set aside landings, above the cost of the research activities, shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for the use of his/her vessel.

The Scallop RSA sub-Annual Catch Limit (ACL) is 1.25 million pounds per scallop fishing year (April through March). Under the previous 2020/2021 Federal Funding Opportunity, NMFS awarded 345,941 pounds of scallops from the 2021 sub-ACL. Consequently, under this solicitation there are 904,059 pounds available from the 2021 RSA sub-ACL, and 1.25