

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Bluefin Tuna Research Program (BTRP)

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-SE-2013-2003427

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.472, Unallied Science Program

Dates: Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on August 20, 2012 to be considered for funding. Hard copy applications arriving after the closing date given above will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time; in any event, hard copy applications received by NMFS later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The BTRP program provides opportunity to compete for financial assistance for projects which seek to increase and improve the working relationship between fisheries researchers from the NMFS, state fishery agencies, universities, other research institutions and U.S. fishery interests (recreational and commercial) focusing on northern bluefin tuna in the Atlantic Ocean. The program is a means of advancing research objectives to address the information needs to improve the science-based fisheries management for Atlantic bluefin tuna. This program addresses NOAA's mission goal to "Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through an Ecosystem Approach to Management."

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

The objective of the program is to provide a basis for advancing science-based fisheries management for Atlantic bluefin tuna. Such advancement will depend upon improvements in understanding of the fisheries harvesting and the biology of bluefin tuna, especially regarding the effects of mixing and movement between the eastern and western Atlantic stocks on monitoring stock abundance. Contracting Parties to the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), of which the US is one, and other partners have embarked upon a \$25 million research program on bluefin tuna, expected to span 6 years as a step toward improving ICCAT's science based management approach for fisheries affecting bluefin. Research sponsored under this funding opportunity represents a contribution to this partnership.

#### B. Program Priorities

Proposals must address one of the priority areas listed below as they pertain to Atlantic bluefin tuna Federal fisheries management plans. The priorities are not listed in any particular order of importance. If you select more than one priority, you should list first on your application the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. Projects should focus on the greatest probability of collecting data that aids in recovering, maintaining, or improving the status of the bluefin stocks upon which fisheries depend; improving the understanding of factors affecting recruitment success and long-term sustainability of fisheries; and/or generating increased values and opportunities for fisheries.

The main premise for a Bluefin Tuna Research Program (BTRP) project is to provide usable and relevant information to aid fishery researchers, scientists, and managers to make informed management decisions. As such, priority needs are for information that can be utilized for assessments in the future. The Standing Committee for Research and Statistics (SCRS) of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Southeast Data Assessment Review (SEDAR) conducts these assessments and has established priorities for research needed to support those assessments. The priorities are not listed in any particular order of importance.

Research priorities for this funding opportunity include:

1. Sampling of tissues and otoliths for studies of population genetics, age growth and fecundity, and micro-constituent or other analysis in order to characterize the stock composition of catches;
2. Large-scale, conventional and genetic tagging experiments to estimate abundance;
3. Data mining to sharpen estimates of catch, catch composition, fishing effort, and spatial aspects of catch;
4. Modeling to simulate the effects of stock mixing and efficacy of alternative management regimes;
5. Archival tagging to track individual movement in the eastern and western stocks, and
6. Aerial survey of schools or other approaches to support development of fishery-independent indices of abundance.

#### C. Program Authority

Authority for the BTRP is provided by the following: 16 U.S.C. 661.

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Approximately \$600,000 may be available in fiscal year (FY) 2013 for projects. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon FY 2013 Congressional appropriations. The NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center estimates awarding approximately 5 projects that will range from \$25,000 to \$300,000. The expected average award is \$125,000. Publication of this notice does not obligate NMFS to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement or any of the available funds.

### B. Project/Award Period

The period of awards can be for a maximum period of up to 12 months. Applicants will need to compete for additional years of funding and must include a statement identifying concrete deliverables and accomplishments from the previous year's effort as well as satisfactory performance of previous funding.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a cooperative agreement. NMFS is substantially involved as a partner in the BTRP activities with the recipient. Substantial involvement includes planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing proposed project activities and frequent contact with the grantee to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants may be institutions of higher education, nonprofits, commercial organizations, individuals, and state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible. Foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations are excluded for purposes of this solicitation since the objective of the BTRP is to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

All applicants must include a written agreement with a person employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who will act as a partner in the proposed research project. This written agreement must be signed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) Director or Lab Director.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). If applicants do not have internet access, applications may be requested from: national Marine Fisheries Service, State/Federal Liaison Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

## B. Content and Form of Application

### 1. Format Requirements:

All pages must be single-spaced and should be composed in at least a 12-point font with one inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. The project description may not exceed 25 pages, exclusive of title page, project synopsis, literature cited, budget information, resumes of investigator, and letters of support (if any). Applications that do not follow format requirements will be rejected and returned.

Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirements when printed out.

### 2. Content Requirements:

The following information must be included. Failure to submit it will result in an application not being reviewed.

a. Signed Title Page: The Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) must be signed by the authorized representative. Electronic signatures submitted through grants.gov satisfy this requirement.

b. Project Synopsis (1-page limit): It is critical that the project synopsis accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the activities. It is imperative that potential applicants tie their proposals to one of the program priorities described in Section I.B. The Project Synopsis must identify the principal investigator(s) and a brief statement of their qualifications.

c. Project Description (25-page limit): The applicant should describe and justify the project being proposed and address each of the evaluation criteria as described below in Section V. Project descriptions should include clear objectives and specific approaches to achieving those objectives, including methods, timelines, and expected outcomes.

d. Literature Cited: If applicable.

e. Budget and Budget Justification: There should be a detailed budget justification accompanying the SF-424 budget forms. Indicate matching funds, if provided, in a separate column. Provide justifications for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested.

f. Resumes (2 pages maximum for each major participant).

g. Standard Application Forms: Please refer to the appropriate application package available through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

h. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, applicants are required to answer the following questions:

1. Has any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or other environmental compliance documentation (e.g., Endangered Species Act Biological Opinion; Letter of Concurrence or Biological Assessment/Evaluation; Clean Water Act permit; State Historic Preservation Officer consultation; state environmental compliance documentation (mini-NEPA); etc.) been completed? If yes, list the environmental compliance documentation that has been completed and provide copies of the documentation as appropriate.

2. Would the proposed activity or environmental impacts of the activity be subject to public controversy? If yes, describe the potential controversy.

3. Would the proposed activity have potential environmental impacts that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks? If yes, describe the impacts that are uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

4. Is the proposed activity related to other activities (both NOAA and non-NOAA that together may cumulatively adversely impact the environment? For example, the proposed activity is one of a series of projects that together may cause a change in the pattern of pollutant discharge, traffic generation, economic change, flood plain change, or land use. If yes, briefly describe the other activities and discuss how the related projects would have cumulative impacts on the environment.

5. Would the proposed activity involve a non-native species? If yes, describe how the nonnative species is involved.

6. Would the proposed activity occur within a unique geographic area of notable recreational, ecological, scientific, cultural, historical, scenic or aesthetic importance. If yes, describe the area, including the name or designation if known.

7. Would the proposed activity affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources? If yes, describe the impact.

8. Would the proposed activity affect public health or safety? The effects may be adverse or beneficial and temporary, long-term, or permanent. If yes, describe the effects and the circumstances that would cause these impacts.

9. Would the proposed activity affect directly or indirectly, in an adverse or beneficial manner, any listed endangered, threatened, or otherwise protected species or their critical habitat under federal and state laws including the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act? If yes, name the species and/or habitat that will be impacted and describe the circumstances that would impact the species and/or habitat.

Applications must identify the principal participants, and include copies of any agreements describing the specific tasks to be performed by participants. Project applications should give a clear presentation of the proposed work, the methods for carrying out the project, its relevance to managing and enhancing the use of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna fishery resources, and cost estimates as they relate to specific aspects of the project. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown, by category of expenditures, with appropriate justification for both the federal and non-federal shares.

Applications should exhibit familiarity with related work that is completed or ongoing. Successful applicants are required to collect and manage data in accordance with standardized procedures and format approved or specified by NMFS and to participate with NMFS in specific cooperative activities that are determined by consultations between NMFS and successful applicants before project grants are awarded. All data collected as part of an awarded grant must be provided to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

All applicants must include a written agreement with a person employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who will act as a partner in the proposed research project. The NMFS partner will assist the applicant to develop a design for the project to assure that the outcome will provide suitable, scientific data and results to support needed fisheries management information.

#### C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by 5:00 pm, Eastern Time on August 20, 2012 to be considered for funding. For applications submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), a date and time receipt stamp must be included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard-copy submissions will be dated and time stamped when they are received in the NMFS office. Hard-copy applications arriving after the closing date given above will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time; in any event, hard copy applications received by NMFS later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted. Faxed or emailed copies of applications will not be accepted.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any

applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of E.O. 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

#### E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs - The indirect rate is fixed at 25 percent to maximize the funds available for actual research and to allow applicants to recover a reasonable indirect cost. If the applicant does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, then they may direct cost all charges, or submit a request to establish a rate. The federal share of indirect costs awarded will not exceed 25 percent of the total direct costs identified on Standard Form 424A Budget Information.

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

Please refer to important information in "Submission Dates and Times" above to help ensure your application is received on time.

Applications must be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) unless an applicant does not have internet access. In that case, hard copies with original signatures, may be sent to: National Marine Fisheries Service, State/Federal Liaison Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

### V. Application Review Information

#### A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by three or more appropriate private and/or public sector experts to determine their technical merit. These reviewers will provide individual evaluations of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given. These reviewers provide comments and assign scores to the applications based on the following criteria, with the points shown in parentheses:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (30 points):

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this program, this

includes: Does the proposal address issues that are responsive to the research priorities identified and advertised in the Federal Funding Opportunity?

2. Technical/scientific merit (30 points):

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this program, this includes: Does the proposal clearly identify and describe, in the project outline and statement of work, scientific methodologies and analytical procedures that will adequately address project goals and objectives?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (20 points):

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

4. Project costs (20 points):

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For this program, this includes: Does the budget appropriately allocate and justify costs?

5. Outreach and education (no points):

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This criterion is not used by the BTRP program.

## B. Review and Selection Process

When we receive applications we will screen them to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see Submission Dates and Times); include SF 424 authenticated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible applicant; address one of the funding priorities for federally managed species; and include a budget, statement of work, and milestones, and identify the principal investigator. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it.

If your application does not conform to these requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be returned without further consideration.

Following the technical review, we will determine the score for each individual review and average the individual technical review scores to determine the final technical score for each application. Then, we will rank applications in descending order by their average technical scores. The top twenty applications will be forwarded to a panel for further review. Those applications that are not in the top twenty category will be eliminated from further consideration.

Those applications that meet the top twenty ranking will be presented to a panel of bluefin fishery experts known as the BTRP panel. Each member of the BTRP panel individually considers: if needs of the Agency are addressed in each proposal and if the project addresses issues that are important to Atlantic Bluefin Tuna fishery management. Needs of the Agency follow the information identified in the Magnuson- Stevens Act, Title III, Sections 301 and 404. The individuals on the Panel provide comments and rate each of these proposals as either "Recommended for Funding" or "Not Recommended for Funding". The Panel will give no consensus advice. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of preferred funding based on the number of Panel members recommending the proposal for funding. In the event that there are two or more projects tied in the panel's percent selected category that are competing for the final available funds, all tied projects will be given equal consideration by the selecting official regardless of their peer review score. The selecting official will resolve any ties by selecting the projects that are most pertinent to the research needs as listed under the program priorities at the time of selection. Program priorities are not listed in order of importance because the importance can change over time.

### C. Selection Factors

The BTRP panel ratings will be provided in rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
  - a. geographically
  - b. by type of institutions
  - c. by type of partners
  - d. by research areas
  - e. by project types

3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies

4. Program priorities and policy factors

5. Applicant's prior award performance

6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate funds.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, successful applications are usually recommended for funding within 365 days from the date of publication of this notice. The earliest start date of awards (1st of a month) is approximately 425 days after the date of publication of this notice. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications. It is suggested that a September 1, 2013, start date be requested on the application.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NMFS cooperative involvement with the activities of each project are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office and the NMFS Program Office. Recipients must not initiate projects until an approved award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been approved for funding by the NOAA Grants Office with the issuance of an award signed by a NOAA grants officer. This is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. The award will be issued electronically to the authorizing official of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposals were not selected for recommendation by the NMFS Program Office.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency

Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010),

[http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl),

[http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl).

## B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.

Limitation of Liability - Funding for potential projects in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site at [www.nepa.noaa.gov/](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/), including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA website at

[http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap\\_216/naos\\_216\\_6.html](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap_216/naos_216_6.html) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations website at

[http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm)

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, number and species expected to be caught, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required.

Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the grants officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

### C. Reporting

Unless otherwise specified by terms of the award, performance and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Performance reports should include progress on identified milestones. Electronic submission of reports is required and conducted through the use of NOAA's Grants Online system. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. In addition to the financial and performance reports, grant recipients will be required to submit a comprehensive final performance report 90 days after the project end date.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over \$25,000.

### Data Sharing Plan

1. Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), free of charge or at minimal cost to the user that is no more than the cost of distribution, except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements.

Unless otherwise noted in the federal funding announcement, a Data Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the expected temporal and spatial coverage of the data; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; and procedures for providing access, sharing,

and security. Because NOAA believes it important that data sets developed with its support should be shared with the scientific community, PIs should also indicate how and when they have made their data accessible and usable by the community in the past. The Data Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criterion "Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the mission goals."

2. The Data Sharing Plan (updated as needed) must be made available publicly at time of award and must remain available until the Environmental Data are made available publicly

## VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Dax Ruiz, State/Federal Liaison Branch, (727) 824-5324, or [Dax.Ruiz@noaa.gov](mailto:Dax.Ruiz@noaa.gov).

## VIII. Other Information

Applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number ([www.dnb.com](http://www.dnb.com)) and be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) ([www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov)). Allow a minimum of thirty days to receive a DUNS number and to be registered in CCR. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through <http://www.grants.gov>.