

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Names:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Department Of Commerce)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program
- **Announcement Type:** Initial announcement
- **Catalog of Federal Assistance Number:** 11.417, Sea Grant Support; 15.FFA, Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance.
- **Dates:** Preliminary proposals must be received by 5:00 pm Eastern time, February 13, 2004. Full proposals must be received by 5:00 pm Eastern time, February 17, 2004. Only those who submit preliminary proposals meeting the preliminary proposal deadline and other requirements of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) expect to entertain proposals to conduct ballast water treatment technology testing and demonstration projects. Depending on Congressional appropriations, NOAA and the Service expect to make available in FY 2004 about \$2 million to support these projects. In addition, MARAD expects to make available several vessels for use as test platforms. The maximum amount of award will vary with the scale of the proposed project. Anticipated maximum awards for laboratory-scale experiments will be \$200,000, for full-scale demonstration projects, \$400,000. Technology demonstration proposals must include a long-term development plan that outlines how the technology will be developed from its current state into an effective, commercially viable ballast water treatment system, and how the proposed project is an essential part of this development. Statutory authority for this program is 16 U.S.C. 4701 et seq.; 33 U.S.C. 1121-1131; 46 U.S.C. App 1211 (2000); 50 U.S.C. App 1744 (2000).

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objectives

The Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program supports projects to develop, test, and demonstrate technologies that treat ships' ballast water in order to reduce the threat of introduction of aquatic invasive species to U.S. waters through the discharge of ballast water. The technologies being proposed for investigation should have promise of being effective at removing, inactivating, or preventing the transfer of aquatic organisms in the ballast water,

should be practicable from the standpoint of ship operations, safety, environmental protection, and the ability to meet all regulatory requirements, and should have the potential to be developed into a commercially viable product.

It is expected that treatment development will normally be conducted using a phased approach, starting with small-scale experiments proving the proposed treatment technology concept, followed by larger-scale experiments demonstrating the feasibility of the technology, then full-scale demonstrations under conditions close to real world (for example, ship-board technologies would be demonstrated on board a ship). Ultimately, prototype treatment units would be field-tested under actual conditions experienced in the maritime industry.

Projects supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program typically cover just one phase of technology development. Consideration for a project at a particular phase of development would depend on the success of projects in earlier phases. This year, we ask that applicants identify the program area, as described below in (a)-(d), into which their proposal best fits.

(a) Basic or applied research that provides information necessary for the development of a ballast water treatment technology. Research may be in any relevant area of science, including biology, chemistry, engineering, ecology, economics, mathematics, or physics. The maximum allowable request for a single proposal in this area is \$200,000.

(b) Laboratory-scale to pilot-scale controlled experiments that demonstrate the feasibility and development potential of ballast water treatment technologies. Pilot-scale experiments should only be proposed for technologies that have proven their potential in prior laboratory-scale experiments. Prior experiments need not have been supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program. The maximum allowable request for a single proposal in this area is \$200,000.

(c) Full-scale controlled experiments that demonstrate the practicability and effectiveness of ballast water treatment technologies in a close to real-world setting. Experiments may be land- or ship-based, and must involve technologies that have demonstrated their feasibility and potential for development in prior pilot-scale experiments. Prior experiments need not have been supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program. Proposals in this category may request the use of a MARAD vessel. If a vessel-based test is proposed, the proposal must demonstrate the importance of that vessel use to the outcome of the experiment. Use of a MARAD vessel is not required. The maximum allowable request for a single proposal in this area is \$400,000.

(d) Prototype or commercial ballast water treatment technology field tests that demonstrate their effectiveness and viability under real shipping conditions. Technologies must have previously demonstrated their effectiveness and practicability, for example by pilot- or full-scale controlled experiments or by prior field tests with well-documented results. Prior experiments need not have been supported by the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program. The maximum allowable request for a single proposal in this area is \$400,000.

B. Program Priorities

The overall goal of the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program is to develop and demonstrate ballast water treatment technologies that may ultimately be effectively used in a real world commercial maritime setting. The Program's priorities include supporting projects in the above program areas that score well in all the evaluation factors described below, to develop and demonstrate technologies that show the most promise of meeting the scientific, commercial, and regulatory requirements of successful ballast water treatment systems.

Geographical distribution. Because the problems associated with invasive species from ballast water occur wherever there is maritime commerce, the program seeks to develop and demonstrate technologies appropriate to all areas of the country engaged in maritime trade. This goal may be met by a suite of technologies adapted to particular regions or water conditions, or by one or more technologies that may be applied universally. In some years in the past, Congress has directed that the Program must give special attention to the Chesapeake Bay or the Great Lakes regions. Congressional direction in 2004, if any, concerning areas of special attention, will be provided to pre-applicants when it becomes available.

Commercialization potential. Because even powerful ballast water treatment technologies will only stop invasions if they are actually employed by the maritime industry, the Program seeks to emphasize support of technologies with clear potential to be commercially viable. Proposals demonstrating this potential may include these features: participation of commercial interests in developing and executing proposed projects, commercial investments of manpower, funding, or other resources, in the technology, and well-thought out long-term development plans.

Coast Guard approval. Because discharge of ballast water is regulated, the ability to meet regulatory requirements is an important factor in the demonstration of ballast water technologies. For this reason, proposals requesting experimental approval from the Coast Guard will be given the following priority: subject to the quality and number of proposals received and availability of funds, an attempt will be made to fund at least one prototype or commercial ballast water treatment technology field test (program area (d), above) that also requests experimental approval from the Coast Guard under 16 U.S.C. 4711(b) (1).

II. Award Information

A. Resource Availability

1. Funding

Depending on Congressional appropriations, NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expect to make available up to about \$2 million in FY 2004, and MARAD expects to make available several vessels for use as test platforms, to support ballast water treatment technology demonstration projects. The maximum amount of award will vary with the

scale of the proposed project. Anticipated maximum awards for laboratory-scale experiments will be \$200,000; for full-scale demonstration projects, \$400,000. If \$2 million is made available, approximately 10 grants with a median value of about \$160,000 are anticipated to be awarded.

2. Use of Ships as Test Platforms for Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Projects

The U.S. Maritime Administration is making available a limited number of vessels to be used as test platforms for ballast water technology demonstration projects. Proposed projects that have demonstrated their merit through success in previous phases and have high impact and high scientific or professional merit will be given higher priority for use of a MARAD vessel, provided that a vessel appropriate to that project is available and all other requirements of MARAD for vessel use are met.

Applicants may apply for both funding and the use of a MARAD vessel to support a single ballast water project, but it is not necessary to request use of a MARAD vessel in order to receive consideration for funding, nor is it necessary to request funding in order to receive consideration for use of a MARAD vessel. Any proposal requesting both funding and the use of a MARAD vessel, however, will only be awarded funding if it (a) is selected for funding; (b) is approved by MARAD for use on a vessel; and (c) meets all requirements posed by MARAD as conditions of use of the vessel, throughout the duration of the project. Funding may be denied to an otherwise worthy proposal requesting both funding and the use of a MARAD vessel, if discussions between the applicant and MARAD are incomplete at the time funding decisions are made.

Note: Availability of MARAD vessels is not automatic; MARAD reserves the right to agree to, or decline any request. Due to security restrictions in the aftermath of 9/11/01, the number and frequency of visits to a participating vessel, and the number of visitors at any given time, may be limited. All visits must be scheduled and approved in advance by a vessel's Point of Contact (POC) (to be designated). Also, approval for use of a MARAD vessel for testing will take into consideration the degree to which existing systems may be disturbed. In no case may operational or mission capability be compromised. Decisions in this regard will be made solely by MARAD.

B. Project/Award Period

Projects should be completed within two years of their start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through project grants or cooperative agreements. We will use cooperative agreements if the proposed project includes substantial involvement by the federal agency funding the project that will be described in the award. Examples of substantial involvement may include collaboration in research, participation in selection of key

personnel, or approval of key stages in the project before subsequent steps are undertaken.

Proposals selected for funding from Federal applicants will be funded through inter-agency transfers. Contact Dorn Carlson, listed under Agency Contacts, with questions about grants, cooperative agreements, or inter-agency transfers.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, Federal, State, local and Indian tribal governments, foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations. Applications from non-Federal and eligible Federal applicants (including NOAA employees) will be evaluated in the same selection process. Note: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded by NOAA, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 USC 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

Only those who submit preliminary proposals by the preliminary proposal deadline are eligible to submit full proposals.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

None.

C. Other

Proposals must meet all appropriate statutory requirements including the requirement in 16 U.S.C. 4714 that installation and construction of the technologies and practices used in the demonstration program be performed in the United States.

Certain actions, such as discharge of water containing materials defined as pollutants by authorized regulatory agencies, or discharge of unexchanged ballast water from beyond the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone into the Great Lakes, may require regulatory approval. A proposal that requires such approval in order to carry out its work plan may be considered ineligible for funding if (a) the applicant does not request approval from the appropriate regulatory body, (b) the regulatory body denies the request, or (c) the regulatory body has not decided whether to grant the request at the time funding decisions under this program are made.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Applicants may obtain Federal SF 424 and SF 424B, as well as Sea Grant forms 90-2 and 90-4 from the Sea Grant web site:

(www.nsgo.seagrant.org/research/rfp/index.html#3) or from Dorn Carlson at the National Sea Grant Office (listed under Agency Contacts) or for purposes of using a MARAD ship, from Debra Aheron U.S. Maritime Administration (listed under Agency Contacts).

B. Content and Form of the Application Submission

General Requirements. Proposals are expected to have: a rigorous, hypothesis-based scientific work plan, or a well-defined, logical approach to address an engineering problem; a strong rationale for the proposed work; and a clear relationship with the ultimate users of the information. Projects undertaken jointly with industry, business, multiple investigators, or other agencies with interest in the problem are encouraged. Their contribution to the project may be in the form of collaboration, in-kind services, or dollar support.

Applicants are encouraged to consult the "Lessons Learned" document and other materials available at www.nsgo.seagrant.org/research/nonindigenous/ballast.html, or from the individuals listed in Agency Contacts, for information that may be useful in preparation of a proposal.

Format Requirements. All pages must be single- or double-spaced, printed or typed in at least a 10-point font, and printed on metric A4 (210 mmx297 mm) or 8.5"x11" paper. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 2 pages in the preliminary proposal, and 15 pages in the full proposal. Tables and visual materials, including figures, charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations, are included in the page limitation for the Project Description. As noted below, literature cited, budget information, current and pending support, vitae of investigators, and letters of support, if any, are not considered part of the Project Description and are not included in the page limitation. Conformance to the page limitation will be strictly enforced.

All information needed for review of the proposal should be included in the main text; no appendices, other than support letters, if any, are permitted. Failure to adhere to the above limitations will result in the proposal being rejected without review.

Three copies of the proposal are required, as well as three copies of the required Federal forms. Facsimile and electronic mail transmissions of proposals will not be accepted.

Content Requirements—preliminary proposals. The following information must be included:

1. Signed Title Page: The title page must be signed by the Principal Investigator and should clearly identify the program to which the proposal is submitted by including in the project title the words "basic research," "applied research," "laboratory study," "pilot study," "full scale study," or "field test," (as appropriate). Principal investigators and collaborators should be identified by affiliation and contact information, including, if available, email addresses. The total estimated project costs (Federal funds being

requested and matching funds, if any) should be listed as well as the source of the matching funds.

2. A concise (2-page limit) description of the project, its experimental design, its expected output or products, the anticipated users of the products, and its anticipated impact. Proposers should consult the Evaluation Criteria for additional guidance in preparing the preliminary proposals.

3. Resumes (1-page limit per investigator) of the Principal Investigators.

No institutional signatures or Federal government forms are needed while submitting preliminary proposals.

Content Requirements—full proposals. The following information must be included:

1. Signed Title Page: Identify the program area of the proposal by using one of the following terms in the title: "basic research," "applied research," "laboratory-scale," "pilot-scale," "full-scale land-based," "full-scale ship-based," "prototype field test," or "commercial unit field test." The full proposal title should be the same as was used on the preliminary proposal; if it is different, follow the full proposal with former title in parentheses, preceded by the word "Formerly:". The title page should be signed by the Principal Investigator and the institutional representative. Identify the Principal Investigators and collaborators and the institutional representative by affiliation and contact information. List the total amount of Federal funds being requested for each budget period; for projects involving multiple institutions, the total should include all subrecipient budgets.

2. Project Summary: It is critical that the project summary accurately describes the research being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the research. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Project Summary Form 90-2, but may use their own form as long as it provides the following information:

(a) Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application.

(b) Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project. Start with the Principal Investigator.

(c) Funding: Report the funding request for each year of the project, including matching funds if appropriate.

(d) Project Period: Give the start and completion dates. Propose a start date of September 1, 2004, or later. Project activities can extend for up to two years.

(e) Project objectives, methodology, and rationale: Provide a brief statement of the rationale for the project, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, a summary of work

to be completed, and a description of how results will be documented and disseminated.

3. Project Description (15-page limit):

(a) Introduction/Background/Justification: The applicant may wish to include in this section: (i) current state of knowledge; (ii) contributions that the study will make to the particular discipline or subject area; (iii) contributions and impacts the study will make toward ballast water technology development; and (iv) as appropriate, contributions of investigator's previously funded research results to current proposal.

This section should also include a discussion of the prior technical research that indicates the likelihood of success of the proposed project. If the proposal is for a pilot-scale project, this discussion should include a description of laboratory experiments on the proposed technology, and the results of those experiments; if the proposal is for a full-scale project, the discussion should include prior laboratory- and pilot-scale experiments and results. Wherever possible, cite the peer-reviewed literature where these results were published.

(b) Research or Technical Plan: include the following:

(i) objectives to be achieved, hypotheses to be tested;

(ii) plan of work - discuss how stated project objectives will be achieved;

(iii) role of project personnel;

(iv) if appropriate, Research Protocol. Research activities funded under this program must not cause or accelerate the spread of aquatic nuisance species to non-infested watersheds. Therefore, if the proposed project involves the use of ballast water or simulated ballast water to which living organisms are added that are not already established at the site of the project, or if the project involves increasing the population or viability of living ballast water organisms that are not already established at the site of project, the proposal must describe the research protocol that will be used to assure that these organisms are not released to the environment in a viable state. Proposals meeting the above conditions that lack a suitable protocol will not be considered.

Proposals that do not involve addition, concentration, enrichment, or increasing the viability of living organisms do not need to include this research protocol. Guidelines for developing suitable protocols are available from the internet website <http://www.ANSTaskForce.gov/resprot.htm>, or from Dorn Carlson, listed under Agency Contacts.

(c) Output: Describe the project outputs and impacts that will directly enhance the Nation's ability to reduce the impacts of aquatic nuisance species in ballast water. Describe the contribution of the

project to the ultimate successful widespread availability and field use of a mature ballast water technology.

(d) Coordination with other Program Elements: Describe any other proposals that are essential to the success of this proposal. Describe any coordination with other agency programs or ongoing research efforts. Include the following where appropriate:

(i) If the proposal involves the discharge of any chemical, such as a biocide or water modifying agent, or chemical decomposition products or residuals, into waters of the United States, describe the coordination with the appropriate State environmental or natural resource agency responsible to determine if a discharge permit is needed and will be issued.

(ii) If the proposal involves the discharge of unexchanged ballast water originating beyond U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone into waters of the Great Lakes or the Hudson River, describe the coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard to determine if approval is needed and will be issued.

(iii) If the proposal involves the installation of prototype equipment on an operating ship, describe the coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard concerning whether approval is needed.

(iv) If the proposal involves the discharge of ballast water in any jurisdiction that places other limitations or conditions on that discharge, describe the coordination with the agency responsible for determining if that discharge meets those limitations or conditions.

(e) Vessel Selection (if appropriate): Applications proposing shipboard demonstrations of ballast water management should address the requirements and priorities listed in the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 (16 U.S.C. 4711-4714) for selecting vessels for demonstration projects. These requirements are available through the National Sea Grant Office web site (www.nsgo.seagrant.org/research/nonindigenous) or from Dorn Carlson at the National Sea Grant Office or Debra Aheron U.S. Maritime Administration (listed under Agency Contacts, above). Additionally, applicants must indicate whether they are coordinating with MARAD with respect to using a MARAD ship.

(f) Long term development plan. Describe the activities that will be necessary to further develop the ballast water technology to the point where it is commercially viable. Include in this discussion not only optimization of the technology's treatment capabilities, but also the operational, safety, regulatory and business factors that must be considered to transition this technology to ultimate commercial field use, and how these factors are being addressed in the proposed project and planned future work. If the proposal is for a full-scale controlled experiment or a prototype or commercial ballast water treatment technology field test, this description must include a detailed discussion of the steps needed to transition this technology from the research and development arena to the commercial sector, including an anticipated timeline for this transition, a discussion of the financial and other resources needed at each step to make the transition, and anticipated sources of these resources.

Note: To foster continuity in ballast water technology development and demonstration, Ballast Water Technology Demonstration requests for proposals (if any) in FY 2005 and beyond may include as a selection factor the extent to which the proposal is a component of a long-range development plan for this technology. Proposals that are continuations of successful earlier projects, and that are consistent with the long term development plans provided in earlier proposals, would be scored favorably in this selection factor.

4. Literature Cited

5. Budget and Budget Justification: Although proposals are funded from a single year appropriation (fiscal year 2004), project activities may extend for up to 2 years. There should be a separate budget for each year of the project, as well as a cumulative annual budget for the entire project. Applicants are encouraged to use the Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4, but may use their own form as long as it provides the same information as the Sea Grant form. Subcontracts should have a separate budget page. Indicate matching funds if provided. Provide justification for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested.

For those applications to be supported by NOAA, regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which the Department of Commerce will reimburse the Recipient shall be no greater than the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the negotiated rate with the cognizant Federal agency as established by audit or negotiation.

6. Current and Pending Support: Provide information on all current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. Include the proposed project and all other projects or activities using Federal assistance and requiring a portion of time of the principal investigator or other senior personnel. Describe the relationship between the proposed project and these other projects, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or submitted concurrently to other possible sponsors, including those within the Departments of Commerce, the Interior, and Transportation.

7. Vitae (2 pages maximum per investigator).

8. Federal Standard Application Forms: Standard Forms (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance, and 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs, (Rev 4-88) must be provided. Please note that both the Principal Investigator and an administrative contact should be identified in Section 5 of SF 424. Leave section 10 of SF 424 blank.

Applicants may obtain Federal SF 424 and SF 424B, as well as Sea Grant forms 90-2 and 90-4 from the Sea Grant web site: (www.nsgo.seagrant.org/research/rfp/index.html#3) or from Dorn Carlson at the National Sea Grant Office (listed under Agency Contacts) or for

purposes of using a MARAD ship, from Debra Aheron U.S. Maritime Administration (listed under Agency Contacts).

This notice contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0338-0043, 0348-0040, and 0348-0046. The use of NOAA Forms 90-2 and 90-4, or equivalents, has been approved by OMB under the control number 0648-0362.

C. Additional instructions for applications for use of a MARAD vessel

Applications for shipboard testing must satisfy all MARAD requirements for the use of their vessels as test platforms. For purposes of this test phase, vessels cannot be moved from their existing locations. However, testing may be conducted under certain conditions during temporary vessel movements such as sea trials. Applicants for use of a MARAD vessel (for Ballast Water technology projects) must submit with their preliminary proposal a Standard Form 424 containing the name, affiliation, address and phone number of the principal investigator requesting the use of a MARAD vessel. The applicant must also provide:

The type and location of the vessel required, from a list of available vessels (obtainable from Debra Aheron, listed under Agency Contacts), and the projected time and duration of tests.

To assure timely vessel assignments, applicants are strongly urged to contact Ms. Aheron, listed under Agency Contacts as soon as possible to discuss vessel availability and vessel use requirements.

A description of the project proposed to be conducted on the ship. If the applicant is also applying for funding under this Request for Proposals to support this project, a copy of the complete application for funding submitted may be provided as the description of the project.

In response to this application, MARAD will open a dialog with the applicant, during which additional information relating to the logistical and other requirements of the project will be required of the applicant.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Preliminary proposals must be received by 5:00 pm Eastern time, [INSERT DATE 28 DAYS FROM THE DATE OF ANNOUNCEMENT PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. Full proposals must be received by 5:00 pm Eastern time, February 17, 2004.

E. Address for Submitting Proposals

Proposals must be submitted to: National Sea Grant College Program, R/SG, Attn: Ballast Water Competition, Room 11841, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone number for express mail applications is 301-713-2435).

F. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

G. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

H. Other Submission Requirements

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The technical evaluation criteria for full proposals submitted under this announcement are as follows:

(1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (60 percent): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program competition, this includes: The effect the proposed activity will have on the development and ultimate use of ballast water treatment technologies, or the need for this activity as a necessary step toward such technology development; and the potential for the proposed technology to be the basis of a commercially successful treatment system that is effective against a significant fraction of organisms, and is usable on a significant fraction of ships and voyage conditions. (A "significant fraction" does not mean that the technology must act against most or all organisms on most or all ships or conditions. A smaller fraction may still be significant, especially if the technology acts on organisms, ships or conditions, that are not easily otherwise addressed.)

(2) Technical/scientific merit (24 percent). 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 the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program competition, this includes: Scientific quality of the experimental design, including appropriateness of the experimental design to the current level of development of the technology; degree to which the principles of the technology have been proven in appropriate prior experiments; and the degree to which scientific, technical, logistical, and business considerations have been integrated in the proposal and long term development plan.

(3) Overall qualification of applicants (8 percent). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program competition, this includes: the degree to which the investigators are qualified to execute the proposed activity; the degree to which potential users of the proposed technology were involved in planning the activity and will be involved in the execution

of the activity as appropriate; and the investigators' record of achievement with previous funding, including publication of results.

(4) Project costs (4 percent). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program competition, this includes: the degree to which the proposed budget is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

(5) Outreach and education (4 percent). 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. For the Ballast Water Technology Demonstration Program competition, this includes: the effectiveness and timeliness of proposed actions to make the results of this work available to appropriate users of the information.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted at both the preliminary and full proposal stages to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Preliminary proposals will not be subjected to a selection process. Preliminary proposals will be used to assess the nature of full proposals to be expected, to select appropriate technical reviewers for full proposals, and to tailor technical and formatting guidance that will be supplied to all applicants who submitted preliminary proposals, to assist them in writing their full proposals. All those (and only those) who submitted preliminary proposals meeting the deadline and other requirement of this notice are eligible to submit full proposals.

Full proposals will be subjected to peer review and ranked in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by an independent panel consisting of government, academic, and industry experts. Panel members will provide individual evaluations on each proposal, and there will be no consensus advice. Their recommendations and evaluations will be considered by the Federal Program Officers for NOAA, the Service, and MARAD, who will award in rank order of the merit review ratings unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon 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 given in section I.B., above
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

Federal Program Officers from NOAA, the Service, and MARAD will make the final determinations concerning proposals for funding and will work together to reach decisions, but the final responsibility for making decisions regarding disposition of funds and other resources rests with the agency that is providing that resource.

Applicants may be asked to respond to questions or modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Subsequent grant administration procedures will be in accordance with current DOC or DOI grants procedures. A summary statement of the technical evaluation by the peer panel will be provided to each applicant.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

We anticipate that funding decisions on proposals will be made by May 31, 2004, and that successful applicants will be able to initiate projects approximately September 1, 2004.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Administration

Projects selected for funding by NOAA in Sea Grant states may be administered through the Sea Grant Program in that state. (Sea Grant states are: Alabama; Alaska; California; Connecticut; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; New York; New Hampshire; New Jersey; North Carolina; Ohio; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Carolina; Texas; Vermont; Virginia; Washington; Wisconsin.)

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Unsuccessful applications for funding will be held in the National Sea Grant Office for a period of five (5) years and then destroyed.

C. Reporting

An annual report showing satisfactory progress must be submitted at the end of the first year. Project activities should include identified milestones for each project year.

In addition to producing an annual progress report and a final report, successful applicants will be expected to attend an annual ballast water investigators meeting in the continental United States during each year that the project is ongoing. Applicants should consider travel costs to these meetings when preparing their budgets.

D. Other Requirements

MARAD will determine which proposals will be permitted to use a MARAD ship, which components of the selected projects will be funded or performed on a MARAD ship and the total duration of MARAD ship use for each proposal. Successful applicants for use of a

MARAD vessel will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or contract with MARAD, which will address in detail MARAD requirements for the use of their vessels as test platforms. Shipboard installations for the testing purposes shall be temporary in nature; successful applicants shall be required to dismantle all temporary installations during vessel activation, if any, at the end of testing and reinstall any equipment removed during the temporary installation. Temporary installations must not impact the vessel's safety at any time during the installation, removal, and testing. Applicants will be required to submit proof of insurance as requested under the MOA.

All Department of the Interior assistance awards are subject to the requirements of 43 CFR Part 12, Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles for Assistance Programs.

VII. Agency Contacts

Dorn Carlson, Program Director for Aquatic Invasive Species, the National Sea Grant Office, NOAA, 301-713-2435, email Dorn.Carlson@noaa.gov; or Pamela Thibodeaux, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 703-358-2493 email Pamela_Thibodeaux@fws.gov; or Debra Aheron, U.S. Maritime Administration, 202-366-8887.