

# Request for Proposals

## Advancement of Shared Mid-Atlantic Priorities for Climate Change Adaptation

*Issued May 1, 2015*

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) is seeking project proposals to support advancement of shared Mid-Atlantic state priorities for climate change adaptation. MARCO will fund one (1) or two (2) proposals that address the following objectives: advance the understanding and use of natural and nature-based features<sup>1</sup> (NNBF) in the Mid-Atlantic to support coastal climate adaptation at the local level; integrate ecosystem goods and services information in decision-making about coastal climate adaptation in the Mid-Atlantic; and identify Mid-Atlantic regional coastal wetland restoration priorities based on risk reduction and associated resilience outcomes. Proposals should focus on increasing the delivery of scientific information and adaptation tools to coastal communities and decision-makers in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. Total anticipated funding for all awards is approximately \$215,000 to \$240,000. The amount of funding per project will depend on the size, location, type, and merits of the project. Selected projects must be completed **no later than** September 15, 2016.

### Background

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) was established in 2009 when the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia signed the Mid-Atlantic Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation. The Agreement established MARCO to address four regional priorities for shared action to improve ocean health and contribute to the high quality of life and economic vitality of the region:

- **Climate Change Adaptation:** Preparing the region's coastal communities for the impacts of climate change on ocean and coastal resources.
- **Renewable Energy:** Collaborating on a regional approach to support the sustainable development of renewable energy in offshore areas.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, we will use the definition of natural and nature-based features used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in *Use of Natural and Nature-Based Features (NNBF) for Coastal Resilience: Final Report* (Bridges, T. S., Wagner, P. W., Burks-Copes, K. A., Bates, M. E., Collier, Z., Fischenich, C. J., Gailani, J. Z., Leuck, L. D., Piercy, C. D., Rosati, J. D., Russo, E. J., Shafer, D. J., Suedel, B. C., Vuxton, E. A., and Wamsley, T. V. 2014. Use of natural and nature-based features (NNBF) for coastal resilience. ERDC SR-15-1. Vicksburg, MS: U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center.)

**Natural Features** are created and evolve over time through the actions of physical, biological, geologic, and chemical processes operating in nature. Natural coastal features take a variety of forms, including reefs (e.g., coral and oyster), barrier islands, dunes, beaches, wetlands, and maritime forests. The relationships and interactions among the natural and built features comprising the coastal system are important variables determining coastal vulnerability, reliability, risk, and resilience.

**Nature-Based Features** are those that may mimic characteristics of natural features but are created by human design, engineering, and construction to provide specific services such as coastal risk reduction. The combination of both natural and nature-based features is referred to collectively as nature and nature-based features (NNBF).

- **Marine Habitats:** Coordinating protection of important habitats and sensitive and unique offshore areas on a regional scale.
- **Water Quality:** Promoting improvements in the region's coastal water quality.

MARCO's climate change adaptation strategy focuses on information sharing across the five Mid-Atlantic States and identifying priority trans-boundary impacts that would benefit from a regional approach. In late 2014, MARCO formed a partnership with the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NALCC) to address regional priorities for climate change adaptation through delivery of scientific information and adaptation tools to communities and decision-makers. Priority actions for the MARCO/NALCC partnership are to:

- Locate, assemble and synthesize information relevant to the Mid-Atlantic on the functions and values of beaches, marshes and shorelines and on the vulnerabilities of human communities and coastal features, at scales and formats appropriate for local applications;
- Make the information more accessible and relevant to coastal decision makers; and
- Help apply this information to inform policy and programmatic decisions that affect the resilience of coastal communities in the Mid-Atlantic.

**Eligible Applicants:** Eligible applicants include: nonprofit organizations; commercial organizations; institutions of higher education; and, state/county/local governments. The lead applicant on any proposal will be responsible for ensuring that allocated funds are used for the purposes of, and in a manner consistent with their proposals, including any funds awarded to an eligible sub-awardee.

**Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements:** There is no requirement for cost sharing, however cost-sharing and inclusion of in-kind contributions is highly encouraged.

MARCO is seeking project proposals that will address one or more of the following objectives:

**OBJECTIVE 1: Advance the understanding and use of natural and nature-based features (NNBF) in the Mid-Atlantic to support coastal climate adaptation at local levels:** Successful proposals addressing this objective will identify the most critical needs/gaps related to implementing natural and nature-based features (NNBF) at local levels. Proposals should also include a final product that will help practitioners understand and use NNBF, as well as a plan for delivering the final product to practitioners in the Mid-Atlantic. Key questions the MARCO Climate Change Action Team (CCAT) has that could be considered in project proposals include, but are not limited to:

- What types of NNBF could be most useful as a strategy for adapting to and mitigating climate change at the local level in the Mid-Atlantic?
  - What do regional and local planners, municipal officials and land managers need to know about NNBF to support implementation and/or what obstacles have they encountered?
  - What methodology can be used to identify areas that are suitable for implementing NNBF as a response to climate change?
  - How does NNBF fit into the suite of options available to a coastal community for responding to climate change?
  - How will future sea level rise and climate change impact the performance of NNBF?

- What data, guidance, policies, regulatory provisions, tools and information are available to implement NNBF at the regional, state and local level?
- Are there policy and/or permitting challenges that may complicate implementation of NNBF projects?
- How can we reduce the numerous uncertainties regarding the performance, timing, and scale of NNBF needed to provide flood risk reduction and decrease storm damages?
- What is the functional life-span of NNBF, especially as compared to structural and non-structural measures?
- What benefits/services does NNBF provide and what are its limitations?
- Is NNBF a good return on investment in comparison to traditional methods of coastal protection?
- What are the ecosystem service values of NNBF and how do we incorporate into current coastal climate adaptation approaches?

**OBJECTIVE 2: Integrate ecosystem goods and services information in decision-making about coastal climate adaptation in the Mid-Atlantic:** In *The Use of Natural and Nature-Based Features*, the USACE defined ecosystem goods and services as “tangible items or intangible commodities generated by self-regulating or managed ecosystems whose composition, structure, and function are comprised of natural, nature-based and/or structural features that produce socially-valued benefits that can be utilized either directly or indirectly to promote human well-being.”<sup>2</sup> The USACE also identified the need to “[Develop] a more complete understanding of the ecosystem goods and services provided by the full range of coastal features, individually and in combination . . . to inform plan formulation and benefit determination for risk reduction strategies.”

Successful proposals addressing this objective will identify the most critical needs/gaps related to integrating ecosystem goods and services information in decision-making about coastal climate adaptation. Proposals should include the development of a final product that will improve the use of ecosystem goods and services information in coastal climate adaptation projects, as well as a plan for delivering the final product to practitioners in the Mid-Atlantic. Key questions the MARCO CCAT has that could be considered in project proposals include, but are not limited to:

- What data/information currently exists on ecosystem goods and services related to coastal ecosystems in the Mid-Atlantic? What are significant data/information gaps?
- What approaches can be used to ensure ecosystem goods and services are considered in coastal climate adaptation projects?
- What are the obstacles to integrating ecosystem service values into current coastal climate adaptation approaches and desired approaches like NNBF (e.g., USACE shoreline management projects, local infrastructure investments, impact fees, wetland mitigation banking, state tidal wetlands, etc.)? What are specific strategies that can be employed at the federal, state and local level to overcome those obstacles?
- How can practitioners more effectively capture ‘Blue Carbon’ benefits of NNBF?

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

**OBJECTIVE 3: Identify Mid-Atlantic regional wetland restoration priorities based on risk reduction and associated resilience outcomes:** In *The Use of Natural and Nature-Based Features*, the USACE concluded that “Regional coordination is needed to identify the vulnerabilities, flood risk issues, and challenges within a region at a system scale and to come up with innovative solutions to resolve them. Improved coordination will also enable improved information exchange and the transfer of best practices.”<sup>3</sup> MARCO is seeking proposals that can enhance the identification of priorities for wetland restoration based on risk reduction and associated resilience outcomes across the entire Mid-Atlantic.

Successful proposals in this category should identify the most critical needs/gaps related to regional wetland restoration priorities based on risk reduction. Proposals should include the development of a final product that will improve the ability of federal and state practitioners to target restoration effort to specific resiliency goals as well as a plan for delivering the final product to practitioners in the Mid-Atlantic. Key questions the MARCO CCAT has that could be considered in project proposals include, but are not limited to:

- What data and information is necessary to create a framework to identify which Mid-Atlantic wetland areas are most vulnerable to climate impacts and which areas would be priorities for restoration?
- How might long-term wetland restoration objectives change in light of climate change impacts and how will that affect prioritization of areas for restoration?
- What are the obstacles to developing a regional strategy for wetlands restoration as a response to climate change? What actions can be taken at a local, state and federal level to overcome these obstacles?
- What are the obstacles to developing a regional strategy for use of dredged material disposal for wetlands restoration purposes? What actions can be taken at a local, state and federal level to overcome these obstacles?

MARCO intends to select one or two projects for funding. Applicants should focus on at least one of the above objectives. MARCO, in consultation with NALLC staff, will decide the number of projects that can be supported based upon the evaluation criteria below. Representatives from each of the five MARCO states will serve as a steering committee to provide overall guidance and direction for successful project implementers.

### **Proposal Guidelines**

The proposal should clearly describe the objectives, rationale, and methodology for the project, as well as the potential benefits and the qualifications of the investigators who would perform the work.

Proposals should include:

- A Cover Sheet including a brief project title, names, address, affiliation, contact information (telephone and email), and total project budget.
- A Project Description of up to 8 single-spaced, single-sided pages of text in 11 point font or larger, including:
  - Goal and objectives
  - Approach and rationale

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

- Methodological approach
- Process for consulting with MARCO CCAT during the project
- Expected outputs of the project/relevance to the regional priorities and thematic areas identified in this RFP
- Plan for identifying practitioners and delivering the outputs to that audience
- Project schedule and milestones
- Detailed budget
- Project PI(s) and any subcontractors (NOTE that their role should be described in the project description, but details on their qualifications should be attached as an appendix)
- Appendices:
  - Qualifications of the applicants to do the work
  - Other information relevant to the proposal

Priority will be given to proposals that:

- Synthesize information relevant to the Mid-Atlantic, and make information available at scales and formats appropriate for local applications.
- Identify methods for making the information developed under this contract more accessible and relevant to practitioners.
- Demonstrate leveraging available resources (such as existing programs, plans, partnerships, tools and trainings across government, industry, and NGOs).
- Provide beneficial outcomes for both coastal communities and ecosystems (i.e., improved water quality, restoration of habitat, improved land and seascapes, etc.)
- Reflect climate change adaptation priorities of coastal managers in the Mid-Atlantic region (New York to Virginia).

#### Award Information

- **Funding Availability:** Total anticipated funding for all awards is approximately \$215,000 to \$240,000. The amount of funding per project will depend on the size, location, type, and merits of the project. The exact amount of funds for each award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and MARCO representatives.
- **Project/Award Period:** Work under this contract must be completed **no later than September 15, 2016**.

#### Evaluation Criteria and Submission Process

MARCO will convene a panel, including representative from the MARCO CCAT, to review the proposals based on the following criteria:

- a. Responsiveness to the objectives identified in this RFP
- b. Overall clarity of approach and methodology
- c. Technical and scientific merit
- d. Usefulness to practitioners of project outputs
- e. Budget
- f. Qualifications of the investigators, including previous experience with similar projects
- g. Knowledge of the Mid-Atlantic landscape



**Submission Process and Deadline:** Proposals should be submitted no later than **5 pm on Friday, June 12, 2015** to the attention of Michelle Lennox, Assistant Director of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) via email to [MLennox@MidAtlanticOcean.org](mailto:MLennox@MidAtlanticOcean.org). Electronic files *must* be a single Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format file.

**Request for Clarification:** Questions and requests for clarifications regarding this solicitation should be sent to Michelle Lennox at [MLennox@MidAtlanticOcean.org](mailto:MLennox@MidAtlanticOcean.org). No phone calls, please.