

FLORIDA “PROTECT OUR REEFS” GRANTS PROGRAM
FUNDING FOR RESEARCH – EDUCATION – CONSERVATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
December 1, 2016

Background

There is tremendous concern for the health of Florida’s coral reefs throughout their entire range. The scientific community considers coral reefs around the world to be threatened and those of Florida to be at great risk. In addition to their environmental and biological importance, Florida’s reefs contribute significantly to the State’s economy. In the Florida Keys alone, tourism generates over \$1.2 billion annually where the primary attraction is the coral reefs, and yet funding to help preserve them is extremely limited. In order to supplement traditional funding sources, Mote Marine Laboratory has been successful in winning approval for the “Protect Our Reefs” specialty license plate. Since its launch, the plate has been extremely well received by the citizens of Florida. A substantial proportion of the proceeds from the sale of these plates is available through grants to support research, education (and outreach), and conservation efforts that deal directly with the preservation of Florida’s coral reefs.

This will be the eleventh year of the Protect Our Reefs Grant Program. During the first eleven years, we have received and reviewed 353 proposals. Grants have been awarded to over 171 projects for a total of over \$3.8 million. When matching funds are included, the total is well over \$6,500,000 for reef related research, conservation, and education.

Scope

The focus of the Grant funding will primarily be directed toward the major reef tract that extends from Miami to the Dry Tortugas. However research, education and conservation proposals that are focused on coral reefs off the coast and throughout the State of Florida will also be considered.

The Grant Program funding will encompass each of the elements of the coral reef ecosystem and will not be limited to stony corals alone:

- Coral Reef: Reefs or shoals composed primarily of corals
- Coral Reef Ecosystem: Corals and other species and communities of reef organisms (including reef plants) associated with coral reefs and the environmental factors that directly affect coral reefs (that together function as an ecological unit in nature).

Eligibility

Eligible organizations shall be based in Florida and engaged in reef research, education or conservation. Applicants must be a public agency, educational institution or non-profit entity as designated by the IRS.

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Funding Availability

The current funding cycle (2016-17), will represent approximately twelve months of Reef Plate revenue from 2015 and awards this year will emphasize more start-up grants of approximately \$10,000-\$15,000 and a fewer medium-sized grants of approximately \$25,000-\$30,000. Up to two “Young-Investigator” awards (up to \$10,000 each) may be awarded to PI’s who are either within one year prior to receiving their Ph.D., or within two years after receiving their Ph.D. Given the size of POR awards, matching funds are strongly encouraged.

Proposal Deadline

In order to be considered, proposals must be submitted as single PDF files to the following email address by 5:00 P.M. (ET) on March 1, 2017: by email to Bryan Davis ((bdavis@mote.org)). Please include the words “POR Proposal” in the subject line of the e-mail. Award notification is projected for mid-end-April 2017 and funds will be available as early as May 1, 2017.

Strategic Priorities

In general, priorities of the POR program will help address coral reef related goals and priorities outlined by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Science Plan, the NOAA-Coral Reef Conservation Program, and the Water Quality Protection Program, among others.. Because of the need to strategically focus the finite resources of POR on critical challenges coral reef ecosystems are facing in the coming decades, priority for funding in all categories of POR proposals (research, education and conservation) will focus for several years at a time on a specific important topic. As an example, the last five years of POR grants have focused on impacts of ocean acidification on coral reefs. Beginning with the 2017 POR grants, that focus will be on the topic of coral reef restoration science, to include the research of new coral restoration technologies, and maintaining genetic diversity and resiliency in the restoration of coral reef ecosystems. Other quality proposals will be given careful consideration, but the priority focus will be on projects that significantly enhance the capabilities of coral reef ecosystem resource managers to more effectively use science-based information in promoting and implementing the restoration and long-term sustainable use of these ecosystems. In addition the 2017 POR grant cycle will also provide the opportunity for other novel ideas, concepts and new upcoming scientists start-up projects. However, all proposals should demonstrate a connection to coral restoration.

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Process

Mote Marine Laboratory has been authorized to administer the funds collected from Reef Plate sales. The final decision as to which proposals will be funded and under what conditions will be made by the Mote President & CEO of Mote, Michael Crosby, Ph.D. To assist in the review process, Dr. Crosby has assembled a Grants Advisory Committee of individuals with broad and diverse backgrounds in coral reef research, education, conservation and management. The Committee will evaluate and rank each of the proposals submitted. Outside experts will also be consulted to peer review the proposals as necessary. The Committee will make recommendations to Dr. Crosby as to which proposals should be selected and suggest appropriate funding levels. The successful applicants will be notified before May 1, 2017.

General guidelines

POR will focus on supporting new “Start-up” grants, in addition to a few medium-sized grants of interest each year.

Significant consideration will be accorded to proposals that involve partnerships or collaboration with Mote Marine Laboratory facilities on Summerland Key, as well as the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.. Evidence of any identified partnerships/collaborations with these institutions must be specifically detailed and documented with letters of commitment from the partnering/collaborating institution. While not required, significant consideration will be accorded to proposals that leverage Reef Plate funding with matching funds or the donation of in-kind services. Evidence of any identified matching funds or in-kind services must be specifically detailed and documented with letters of commitment from the providing institution.

The new facilities that comprise Mote’s International Center for Coral Reef Research and Restoration on Summerland Key will offer a unique research opportunity for investigators, scientists and students. Contact Center Director, Dr. David Vaughan (DVaughan@Mote.org) for more information. In addition, housing is available and information about rates and availability can be made via our housing manager (Retti@Mote.org). For Vessel and Dive Operations contact Erich Bartels (EBartels@mote.org).

A new NSF-funded Ocean Acidification Experimental system is also available at the Center for researchers to carry out temperature and pH controlled research projects. Please contact Dr. Emily Hall (emily8@mote.org) for capabilities, scheduling and rates prior to submitting proposals.

Program funds may not be used in any way for lobbying as defined by the Internal Revenue Service or applicable Florida statutes or for development activities by the applicants.

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Additional Guidelines

Based on our years of experience in evaluating proposals and overseeing projects, along with a more recent strategic thematic approach to more effectively target limited funds, the POR program has developed more specific guidelines to further assist potential proposers and reviewers. The following guidelines should be considered in the context of the overarching priority focus for funding projects that significantly address the restoration of coral reef ecosystems:

- Reef Plate grants are for special projects only and are not intended to fund the proposer’s core operations.
- Research start-up grants should be used to initiate new and novel ideas that can assist our reef managers in the very near future and may not be eligible under traditional funding programs.
- When Reef Plate funds requested are only a portion of a larger project budget the activities they will directly support must be clearly defined.
- Given the high likelihood of longer-term funding needs to follow POR start-up grants, a detailed description of probable future sources and uses of the funds required must be provided.
- Additional consideration will not be given to matching funds where the request has been made but the potential commitment is pending.
- Projects that include volunteers or “citizen scientist” will only be considered if the participants are thoroughly trained and supervised by qualified individuals.
- Research projects must have the potential to produce tangible benefits in less than five years.
- Start up grants must have the potential for other funding in the future.
- Research projects must also have the potential for peer-reviewed published results.
- Capital requests for items such as mooring buoys and equipment won’t be funded.
- Projects will only be considered for species that are more than simply transient users of the reef.
- Education projects must have clearly defined and appropriately targeted audiences, demonstrable needs, and measurable outcomes.
- All proposals must include a clear statement as to how specifically the proposed activities will significantly enhance the capabilities of coral reef ecosystem resource managers to more effectively use science-based information in promoting and implementing the restoration and long-term sustainable use of these ecosystems in an increasingly high temperature and more acidic marine environment.
- All publications and presentations resulting from POR funded projects must include a specific acknowledgement of the POR funding that enabled the project to be conducted.

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Proposals

Mote requires the submission of one electronic copy of the proposal. Risk of delivery by the time and date required will be the sole responsibility of the applicant.

The first page of the proposal should be a completed “Checklist” (attached), which is designed to help the proposers make certain that they have complied with all of the requirements of the RFP

The proposal should also consist of a cover letter (one page maximum) that briefly introduces the proposed project, states the amount of funding requested, establishes the applicant as a Florida based non-profit organization or agency, agrees to the Grant terms and conditions, designates a contact person including contact information, and is signed by the Project Leader.

The project description (5 pages maximum) should describe the critical research, educational or conservation areas to be explored. The significance of the project to the overall goal of preserving Florida’s reefs should also be discussed. The description should include the objectives of the proposal, the scope of work proposed, the goals to be achieved, the proposed deliverables and the deliverable timelines. In addition, the roles and qualifications of all team members should be described. If applicable, the description should also include a detailed discussion of the scientific methods and procedures to be employed.

The proposed project budget (two pages maximum) should describe in detail all proposed expenditures over the life of the project. Personnel expenditures in particular should be sufficiently documented to enable the Committee to determine whether the resources will be efficiently and cost-effectively utilized. The expenditures should include, but not necessarily be limited to: salaries; fringe benefits; materials and supplies; travel; consultants and/or subcontractors; other direct costs; and indirect or overhead costs. If indirect or overhead costs are proposed they should be no higher than the applicant’s reasonable, usual and customary rates. An explanation of the rates should also be included as well as the identification of the applicant’s cognizant agency, if applicable.

Proposals will be evaluated based on criteria relevant to research, education (and outreach), and conservation. This will include: Rationale- how well the proposal addresses the project goals and objectives; Merit- how well the project advances the state of reef research, education, or conservation; Feasibility- ability of the project to be successfully completed within time and/or other constraints; Qualifications- demonstrated ability of the Project Leader and/or team to integrate and complete the project successfully; Budget- is the proposed budget reasonable and adequate to complete the proposed project.

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Program deliverables

A detailed Interim Progress Report and a detailed Interim Financial Report will be due at the mid-point of the project year and no later than six months into the award period. A detailed Final Technical Report and a detailed Final Financial Report will be due at the end of the project and no later than twelve months into the award period. For multi-year projects Interim Reports will be required at six-month intervals with a Final Report due at the end of the project. The acceptability of the Reports will be at the sole discretion of Mote Marine Laboratory. The Reef Plate Logo shall be prominently displayed on all Reports.

In addition all successful applicants will be required to make a Formal Presentation of their project and the results it achieved. The Presentation will be made at an Annual Meeting to members of the Grants Advisory Committee, other grant recipients and interested members of the public. In addition to describing the project results achieved, the Presentation should address how those results can be effectively utilized by resource managers. The Annual Meeting for presentations will be in mid-April 2016.

Lastly, all successful applicants will be required to prominently display Protect Our Reefs license plate marketing materials on their web site and in presentations. Computer-ready marketing materials can be obtained from the Mote Communications Department in Sarasota.

Payment schedule

The final payment schedule will be determined upon review of the proposals recommended for funding. However, in general successful projects will receive 50% of the awarded funds upon contract execution, 25% upon approval of the Interim Report and the remaining 25% upon approval of the Final Report.

Questions

Any questions about the Protect Our Reefs Grants Program should be directed solely to Dave Vaughan (DVaughan@Mote.org)

2015 Protect Our Reefs Grants Proposal Checklist

Please complete this form and check the appropriate boxes to help you make certain that you have fully complied with the requirements of the RFP. Sign and return the form with your proposal.

- One page Cover Letter
 - Project Introduction
 - Amount Requested
 - Non-Profit Credentials
 - Agreement to Terms and Conditions
 - Contact Person
 - Project Leader Signature

- Five page Project Description Page Number
 - Areas to be Explored _____
 - Project Significance _____
 - Proposal Objective (s) _____
 - Scope of Work _____
 - Goals to be Achieved _____
 - Proposed Deliverables _____
 - Deliverable Timelines _____
 - Team Roles and Qualifications _____
 - Scientific Methods, if applicable _____

- Two page Project Budget
 - Salaries _____
 - Fringe Benefits _____
 - Materials/Supplies _____
 - Travel _____
 - Consultants/Subcontractors _____
 - Other Direct Costs _____
 - Indirect/Overhead Costs _____

- Additional Consideration
 - Matching Funds _____
 - In Kind Donations _____
 - Partnerships or Teaming _____

Proposal Title: _____

Lead Agency: _____

Project Leader
Signature: _____

Date: _____