

percent Federal share in sufficient detail for the Service to make an eligibility determination, or a statement that eligibility has been previously approved and no change has occurred in the fund;

(10) A list of other current coastal acquisition, restoration, enhancement, and management actions; agency(ies) involved; relationship to the proposed grant; and how the proposal fits into comprehensive natural resource plans for the area, if any; and

(11) Public involvement or inter-agency coordination on coastal wetlands conservation projects that has occurred or is planned that relates to this proposal (Specify the organizations or agencies involved and dates of involvement.).

Subpart C—Project Selection

§ 84.30 How are projects selected for grants?

Project selection is a three-step process: proposal acceptance, proposal ranking, and proposal selection.

(a) *Proposal acceptance.* (1) The Regional Federal Aid Offices decide whether a proposal should be accepted for consideration by determining if the proposal is complete, substantial, and contains activities that are eligible. Proposals that do not qualify are immediately returned to the State. Revision and resubmission of returned proposals is allowable during this period, which is in June (check with your Regional Office for the exact dates each year). If any of the factors of completeness, substantiality, or eligibility are not met, the Regions should not forward the proposal to the Washington Office.

(2) To be considered for acceptance, the proposal must be substantial in character and design. A substantial proposal is one that:

- (i) Identifies and describes a need within the purposes of the Act;
- (ii) Identifies the objective to be accomplished based on the stated need;
- (iii) Uses accepted principles, sound design, and appropriate procedures;
- (iv) Provides public conservation benefits that are cost effective and long-term, i.e., at least 20 years; and

(v) Identifies obtainable, quantified performance measures (acres enhanced, restored, or protected) that help achieve the management goals and objectives of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. Through this program, the States' efforts and leadership will help the Service meet its Long-Term and Annual Performance Goals as expressed in the Service's Annual Performance Plan.¹

(3) The grant limit is \$1 million. Proposals requesting Program awards that exceed \$1 million will be returned to the appropriate State. Similarly, individual projects that have clearly been divided into multiple proposals for submission in one grant cycle to avoid this limit will be returned to the appropriate State. The State can revise and resubmit the proposal so that the request does not exceed the \$1 million limit.

(b) *Proposal ranking.* Once a proposal is accepted by the Region, the Regional Federal Aid Office sends the proposal to the National Federal Aid Office, which works with the National Office of the Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration Program for distribution to a Review Panel. The Review Panel includes representation from our coastal Regions and from other Service Programs, for example, the Endangered Species Program. The Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program is responsible for coordinating the review and ranking of proposals according to the established criteria, a process that usually involves a national meeting.

(c) *Proposal selection.* The Review Panel's recommendations are forwarded to the Director of the Service for a final review and project selection. The Director announces the selection by October 1.

§ 84.31 An overview of the ranking criteria.

(a) The primary objective of the proposal will be to acquire, restore, enhance, or manage coastal wetlands to

¹The Service's Annual Performance Plan can be found on the Service's homepage at <http://www/.fws.gov/r9gpra>. For more information you might also contact the Budget Office at 202-208-4596 or the Planning and Evaluation Staff at 202-208-2549.

benefit coastal wetlands and the hydrology, water quality, and fish and wildlife dependent upon them. The Program will not provide grants, for example, for construction or repair of boat ramps or docks for recreational purposes and construction or support of research facilities or activities. The purpose of the ranking criteria is to provide a means for selecting the best projects—those that produce the maximum benefits to coastal wetlands and the fish and wildlife that depend on them.

(b) *Proposal ranking factors*—(1) *Ranking criteria*. As explained in § 84.32, we will evaluate proposals according to 13 ranking criteria. These criteria have varying point values. Proposals must address each of these 13 criteria.

(2) *Additional considerations*. Even though the criteria provide the primary evaluation of proposals, we may factor additional considerations into the ranking decision at the national level. In case of a tie, we will use these additional considerations to rank proposals having identical scores.

(c) The criteria in § 84.32 are not listed in priority order.

(d) Points are assigned on the basis of a completed project, rather than current conditions, e.g., count 50 acres of estuarine emergent wetlands if 50 acres of that habitat type will be restored when the project is completed.

(e) A range of points rather than a set point value allows the reviewer to distinguish between, for example, a proposal that provides some foraging habitat for a threatened species versus one that provides critical nesting habitat of several endangered species. Scoring guidance is included with the individual criteria.

(f) A total of 64 points is possible under the scoring system.

(g) If a grant proposal is not selected, the State may resubmit it for reconsideration in subsequent fiscal years. Resubmission of a grant proposal is the responsibility of the applicant.

§ 84.32 What are the ranking criteria?

(a) The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will rank proposals using the 13 criteria listed below. In the following list, a description of each criterion is fol-

lowed by examples and the points they would receive for that criterion.

(1) *Wetlands conservation*. Will the project reverse coastal wetland loss or habitat degradation in decreasing or stable coastal wetland types? Will it conserve wetlands to prevent losses of decreasing or stable wetland types? (Maximum: 7 points)

(i) The majority of the project area (over 50 percent) is nationally decreasing coastal wetland types,² or the majority is regionally decreasing wetlands types in which the case for regionally decreasing is well-documented (Up to 7 points). The nationally decreasing types are estuarine intertidal emergent; estuarine intertidal forested; estuarine intertidal scrub-shrub; marine intertidal; palustrine emergent; palustrine forested; and palustrine scrub-shrub. Describe the wetlands using terms listed above. Include a breakdown showing the percentage of the proposal's total and wetland acreage in decreasing types. Provide National Wetlands Inventory codes/information if available. Information about these can be found on the National Wetland Inventory's web site at <http://wetlands.fws.gov>.

(ii) The majority of the project area (over 50 percent) is nationally stable coastal wetlands types² (Up to 5 points). The nationally stable types are estuarine intertidal non-vegetated and estuarine subtidal. Describe the wetlands using the terms listed above. Include a breakdown showing the percentage of the proposal's total and wetland acreage in stable types. Provide National Wetlands Inventory codes/information if available.

(iii) Wetlands benefited are less than 50 percent of the project area. (Up to 3 points)

(iv) If the project would benefit wetlands in the upper portion of the coastal watershed, but does not demonstrate significant and direct benefits to coastal wetlands, the proposal will not receive any points. (0 points)

(v) We will award a full 7 points to proposals that document that over 50

²These designations are based on the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan. For more information about the plan, or to receive a copy of the document, refer to the contact information provided in § 84.21.