

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: 2009 NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowships in Population Dynamics

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: OAR-SG-2009-2001573

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.417, Sea Grant Support.

Dates: Applications must be received by 4:00 pm, Eastern Time February 20, 2009 by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO). For applications submitted through Grants.gov APPLY, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. The State Sea Grant programs are encouraged to ask for applications from fellowship applicants a month before the due date to facilitate the entry of non-electronic applications into Grants.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description: The Graduate Fellowship Program generally awards two new PhD fellowships each year to students who are interested in careers related to the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing the economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources. Fellows will work on thesis problems of public interest and relevance to NMFS under the guidance of NMFS mentors at participating NMFS Science Centers or Laboratories. The NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowships in Population Dynamics meets NOAA's Mission goal of "Protect, Restore and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources Through Ecosystem-Based Management."

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) established a new Graduate Fellowship Program in Population Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics (Program) in 1999. The intent of the Program is to award a limited number of fellowships each year to students who are interested in careers related to 1) the population dynamics of living marine resources and the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing their status, and 2) the economics of the conservation and management of living marine resources.

This announcement is to solicit applications for fellowships in Population Dynamics. There is a parallel and similar announcement soliciting applications in Marine Resource Economics.

For the FY 2009 competition now being announced, funds are available to award at least two new fellowships in Population Dynamics. The goals of the Program are to 1) encourage qualified applicants to pursue careers in population dynamics and stock assessment methodology; 2) increase available expertise related to the population dynamics and assessment of the status of the stocks of living marine resources; 3) foster closer relationships between academic scientists and NMFS; and 4) provide real-world experience to graduate students and accelerate their career development.

The fellowships will provide support for up to three years for highly qualified graduate students working towards a PhD in population dynamics or related fields of study. Continued support after the first year will be contingent upon the availability of Federal funds and satisfactory performance by the Fellow. In addition to his/her faculty advisor, each Fellow will be required to work closely with an expert (mentor) from NMFS who may provide data for the Fellow's thesis, serve on the Fellow's committee, and host an annual summer internship at the participating NMFS facility.

Mentors will be from participating NMFS Science Centers or Laboratories. Population Dynamics Fellows will be expected to spend 10-20 days at sea per year learning about sampling techniques and problems, commercial fishing, fishery biology, and local and regional issues of importance to fisheries management. Fellows may also work, as necessary, at the participating NMFS facility during some or all of the academic year at the mutual discretion of mentor, faculty adviser, and Fellow.

B. Program Priorities

The National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) is seeking applications for one of its fellowship programs to fulfill its broad educational responsibilities and to strengthen the collaboration between Sea Grant and the NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS). Fellows will work on thesis problems of public interest and relevance to NMFS and work with NMFS mentors at participating NMFS Science Centers or Laboratories. The program priorities for this opportunity (see <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/funding/fisheriesgradfellowship.html>) support NOAA's Ecosystem mission support goal: protect, restore and manage use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystem-based management.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the Population Dynamics Graduate Fellowship Program is provided by the following: 33 U.S.C. 1127(a).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

The Graduate Fellowship Program awards at least two new PhD fellowships each year to students who are interested in careers related to the population dynamics of living marine resources and the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing their status. The award for each Fellowship, contingent upon the availability of Federal funds, will be a multi-year cooperative agreement in the amount of \$38,500 per year for up to three years. This involvement includes serving for 10-20 days aboard a research or commercial vessel during a scientific survey or experimental activity. Additionally, the Fellow may work on his/her thesis research or related activity at a participating NMFS facility. The Fellow's work will be overseen by a NMFS mentor who will provide advice and guidance.

B. Project/Award Period

Award will commence June 1, 2009 and will provide support for up to three years, after the first year, contingent upon the availability of Federal funds and satisfactory performance by the fellow.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The award will be a multi-year cooperative agreement in the amount of \$38,500 per year for three years, contingent upon the availability of Federal funds and the fellow's performance. The award will be a cooperative agreement because of substantial involvement by NMFS in mentoring and hosting successful applicants.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Prospective Fellows must be United States citizens. At the time of application, prospective Population Dynamics Fellows must be admitted to a PhD degree program in population dynamics or a related field such as applied mathematics, statistics, or quantitative ecology at an institution of higher education in the United States or its territories, or submit a signed letter from the institution indicating provisional acceptance to a PhD degree program conditional on obtaining financial support such as this fellowship. Applications must be submitted by the institution of higher education, which may be any such institution in the United States or its territories.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Of the \$38,500 award, 50 percent (\$19,250) will be contributed by NMFS, 33 1/3 percent (\$12,833) by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), and 16 2/3 percent (\$6,417) by the institution of higher education as the required 50 percent match of NSGO funds.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

N/A

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application information may be found at [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) FIND. It may also be obtained from Sea Grant College Program Directors. The addresses of the Sea Grant College Program directors may be found on Sea Grant's World Wide Web home page

(<http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/other/programsdirectors.html>) or may also be obtained by contacting Miguel Lugo at the NSGO (mail address: National Sea Grant College Program, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, R/SG, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone: 301-734-1075; or e-mail: Miguel.Lugo@noaa.gov).

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications must adhere to the provisions under _Applications_ and the nine requirements under _Required Elements_ by the deadline of February 20, 2009. Failure to follow these restrictions will result in applications being rejected without review.

1. Applications

The number of pages in the application must be in accordance with the page limitations specified for certain of the requirements under _Required Elements_ (e.g., project proposal, curriculum vitae, and education and career goal statement).

2. Required Elements

Applications must include the following nine elements:

a. Signed title page: The title page must identify the prospective Fellow, be signed by the faculty advisor and the institutional representative, and provide complete contact information. The proposal title should include "NMFS _ Population Dynamics Sea Grant Graduate Fellowship". The total amount of Federal and matching funds being requested for each project year must be listed.

b. Project summary: The project summary should concisely describe the activity being proposed and the impact that would result from its successful completion. 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 same information as the Sea Grant form. The project summary should include: i. Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application. ii. Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, starting with the Principal Investigator. For Sea Grant Fellowships, the faculty advisor or the state Sea Grant Director may be used. iii. Funding request for each year of the Fellowship, including matching funds, if appropriate. iv. Project period: Start and completion dates. Applications for FY 2009 should request a start date of June 1, 2009. v. Project proposal: This should include the rationale for the proposed activity, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of the work to be completed. The project proposal is intended to be a brief summary of the proposed thesis or the general intended area of study and should not exceed five (5) pages.

c. Budget and budget justification: There should be a separate budget for each year as well as a cumulative annual budget for the entire period of the proposed fellowship. The Sea Grant Budget Form 90-4 should preferably be used. Sub-contractors, if any, should have a separate budget page. Indirect costs are not allowable for either the fellowship or for any costs associated with the fellowship [15 CFR 917.11(e), Guidelines for Sea Grant Fellowships_].

Matching funds equivalent to 50 percent of the NSGO funds must be provided by the Fellow's institution. Allocation of matching funds must be specified in the budget and may consist of up to one/half month's salary for the faculty adviser, waived tuition, equipment and supplies, and any other costs typically used as matching funds. In addition to stipend and tuition for the applicant, the budget should include funds for equipment, supplies, and discretionary travel (see Award Information above).

d. Curriculum vitae of the student, the faculty advisor, and the NMFS mentor (2-page maximum per investigator).

e. Signed letter of commitment from the prospective NMFS mentor.

f. Copies of all undergraduate and graduate student transcripts.

g. Education and career goal statement [not to exceed two (2) pages] from the student indicating the number of years for which fellowship support is being sought and the student's interest in marine population dynamics or the development and implementation of quantitative methods for assessing stock status of living marine resources.

h. Three signed letters of recommendation, including one from the student's faculty advisor.

i. Proof of acceptance (or provisional acceptance), and enrollment in a graduate program in population dynamics or related fields of study.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are to be received in the NSGO from the sponsoring Sea Grant program no later than 4:00 pm, Eastern Time on February 20, 2009. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov APPLY. A date and time receipt indication is included in the electronic application process and will be the basis of determining timeliness. The State Sea Grant programs are encouraged to ask for applications from fellowship applicants a month before the due date to facilitate the entry of non-electronic applications into Grants.gov. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed.

D. Intergovernmental Review

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

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect costs are not allowable for either the fellowship or for any costs associated with the fellowship including waived indirect costs as match [15 CFR 917.11(e), "Guidelines for Sea Grant Fellowships"]

F. Other Submission Requirements

N/A

Applications from Sea Grant programs must be submitted through www.Grants.gov. Facsimile transmission and electronic mail submission of applications will not be accepted.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

1. Academic record and statement of career goals of the student. For the NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program the academic record is important, especially evidence of quantitative coursework, as is the statement of Education and Career goals (30 percent, academic record, 10 percent, Education and Career Statement _ total 40 percent)
2. Quality of project and applicability to program priorities. For the NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program the Project Summary should provide evidence of important and innovative research and relate that research to relevant agency priorities. (30 percent)
3. Recommendations and/or endorsements of student. For the NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program the expertise of major professor and proposed NMFS mentor will be taken into account. (20 percent)

4. Additional relevant experience related to diversity of education; extra-curricular activities; honors and awards; interpersonal, written and oral communication skills. (10 percent)
5. Financial need of student. The NMFS-Sea Grant Joint Graduate Fellowship Program does not use this criterion. (0 percent).

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications will be individually ranked in accordance with the above criteria and assigned weights by an independent review panel consisting of government and academic experts. Panel members will provide individual evaluations of each applicant, and their ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the applications. The selecting official shall award in the rank order within each discipline unless the application is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon any of the selection factors provided below. The selecting official shall make final recommendations for award to the Grants officer who is authorized to obligate the funds and execute the award.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on any of the following factors:

1. Balance/Distribution of funds:
 - a. Across academic disciplines
 - b. By types of institutions
 - c. Geographically
2. Availability of funds
3. Program-specific objectives
4. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought

For Factor 1.c., priority will be given to NMFS Fisheries Science Centers that may not currently have any Graduate Fellows. For Factor 3, program-specific objectives are listed in Section I.A. Program Objective, above.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, funds are expected to be awarded by approximately June 1, 2009, the start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form 424) for successful applications.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. The NSGO will notify each unsuccessful applicant by informing the state Sea Grant Program through which the application was submitted in writing, via e-mail. The state Sea Grant Programs will, in turn, formally notify each unsuccessful applicant and forward the summary comments provided by the NSGO. The applications that are not ultimately selected for funding will be destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The portion of the award provided to each Fellow for salary (stipend), living expenses (per diem), tuition (unless waived), health insurance and other institution fees, will be determined and distributed by the institution in accordance with its guidelines. It is expected that each fellow will attend the Annual Graduate Fellows Seminar each spring and will make at least one visit per year to the mentor's NMFS facility.

Department of Commerce Requirements. Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) below.

Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are canceled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to provide special fishing privileges.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The National Environmental Policy Act: As defined in Sections 5.05 and Administrative or Programmatic

Functions of NAO 216_6, 6.03.c.3, this is a fellowship project for which there are no cumulative effects. Thus, it has been categorically excluded from the need to prepare an Environmental Assessment.

C. Reporting

Fellows will be expected to present a review of the progress on their research during the Annual Graduate Fellows Seminar held each spring. Financial reports are semi-annual and performance reports are annual and should be submitted electronically via Grants Online.

VII. Agency Contacts

Contact Miguel Lugo, National Sea Grant College Program, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; tel: (301) 734-1075; e-mail: Miguel.Lugo@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

Sea Grant Program information collection and reporting requirements in this notice are authorized by the Office of Management and Budget under Control No. 0648-0362.