



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240

JAN 30 2008



In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/AWSR-POP/034699

Dr. Ken Elowe  
Chair, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Management Board  
c/o Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0041

Dear Dr. Elowe:

Thank you for your letter of August 16, 2007, regarding the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (NCWCG). We appreciate your concern about the Program and the interpretation of the ranking criteria detailed in 50 CFR 84.32.

There has been some misunderstanding of the ranking criteria in prior years, and to help alleviate confusion, we provided in the FY 2008 Request for Proposals, Attachment A: Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84 and General Program Questions in the FY 2008 Request for Proposals (attached). Attachment A did not represent a new interpretation of the ranking criteria, but was intended to clarify the ranking criteria and address applicants' questions from prior years about the ranking criteria.

In the Program's ranking criteria, criterion 11 (50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11)) allows for the donation of land value to be used for the required 25 percent match. This is consistent with the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act [§ 3954 (d)(3)], which allows for in-kind contributions to be used for the non-Federal share of project costs. However, criterion 11 specifies that an applicant cannot use in-kind match to receive points for this criterion.

We clarified in Attachment A of the FY 2008 Request for Proposals that Federal regulations and guidance identify a landowner's acceptance of a reduced price in the sale of real property (bargain sale) as a potential in-kind contribution. As such, a NCWCG applicant cannot use a bargain sale to reduce the Federal share and thus score points for criterion 11. We made this determination in consultation with the Solicitor's Office of the Department of the Interior.

We appreciate your interest in the interpretation of the ranking criteria, and we want you to know that we take your concern seriously. We have initiated a review of 50 CFR 84, and we will consider the need to revise or clarify criteria 1, 2, and 11 as you recommended. If we propose changes to 50 CFR 84, please be assured that we will seek input from our partners and the general public.

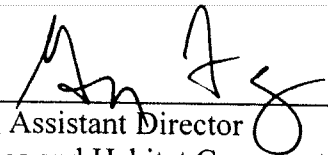
**TAKE PRIDE<sup>®</sup>**  
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You recommended that we consult with the Joint Federal/State Task Force on Federal Assistance Policy (JTF) in a review of criterion 11. We have forwarded your recommendation to the JTF Co-Chairs.

If we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact us.

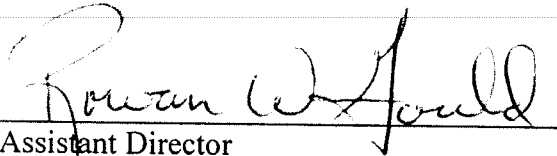
Sincerely,

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Acting Assistant Director  
Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Program

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Assistant Director  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

## National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

FY 2008

Notice of Availability of Federal Assistance

Program Overview Information

**Federal Agency Name:**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)  
Division of Federal Assistance and Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and  
Branch of Habitat Restoration

**Funding Opportunity Title:**

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

**Announcement Type:**

Announcement of availability of grants for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008.

**Funding Opportunity Number:** CWG-08

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 15.614

**Dates:** Hard copy proposals are due to the Regional Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assistance Office by June 29, 2007, 4:00 pm local time of the Regional Office. Electronic proposals must be received by Grants.gov by June 29, 2007, 4:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time. Proposals received after the deadlines will not be considered for funding. The announcement of awards will be in December 2007 or January 2008.

**Additional information:** The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (Section 305, Title III, Public Law 101-646, 16 U.S.C. 3954) established the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program to acquire, restore, and enhance wetlands in coastal States through competitive matching grants to State agencies. The primary goal of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is the long-term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems. In FY 2007, more than \$18 million were awarded to 14 States to fund 25 individual projects.

The final rule establishing the requirements for participation in the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program was published in the Federal Register July 30, 2002 (67 FR 49264). Additional information about the Program is online at <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants>.

## **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

Coastal wetlands are valuable resources. They protect against flooding, help maintain water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife. Coastal environments are important economically, generating billions of dollars annually through such industries as commercial fishing and tourism. The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program provides States with a means of protecting and restoring these valuable resources.

Projects can include (1) acquisition of a real property interest (e.g., easement or fee title) in coastal lands or waters from willing sellers or partners (coastal wetlands ecosystems) for long-term conservation or (2) the restoration, enhancement, or management of coastal wetlands ecosystems for long-term conservation.

Examples of restoration efforts that could be funded include:

- Restoring wetland hydrology by plugging drainage ditches, breaking tile drainage systems, installing water control structures, dike construction, and re-establishing historic connections with waterways.
- Planting native vegetation.
- Removal of exotic plants and animals that compete with native fish and wildlife and alter their natural habitats.

Ranking decisions are based on criteria published in title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 84.32. Also see Attachment A to this announcement that clarifies select ranking criteria and addresses questions regarding 50 CFR Part 84.

## **II. Award Information:**

The Fish and Wildlife Service expects that approximately \$16 million will be available for grants from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program in FY 2008. Awards typically range from \$200,000 (there is no specific minimum) to a maximum of \$1,000,000. Awards are expected to be announced in December 2007 or January 2008.

## **III. Eligibility Information**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants include any agency or agencies designated by the Governor of a coastal State. It is usually a State natural resource or fish and wildlife agency.

Eligible coastal States are States bordering the Great Lakes (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin); States bordering the Atlantic, Gulf (except Louisiana), and Pacific coasts (Alabama, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts,

Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington); and American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

#### B. Cost-Sharing or Matching

The maximum Federal cost share for this Program is 75 percent of total project costs in States that have a fund established and used for acquiring coastal wetlands, other natural areas, or open spaces. States that do not have a fund are limited to a maximum 50 percent Federal cost share. Most States have a fund meeting this criterion. The following insular areas, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands are not required to provide a match. Puerto Rico is not exempt from the match requirements of this Program.

Proposals must include a description of the State trust fund that supports a request for a 75 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, along with the other requirements listed in "IV. Application and Submission Information, B. Content and Form of Application" of this announcement.

Cost-sharing requirements are detailed in 50 CFR 84.46. The requirements allow for in-kind contributions for the required non-Federal match. To receive points under the ranking criterion "Federal share reduced" (50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11)), however, match above the required non-Federal share must be cash.

Any matching funds from a non-State agency must be documented with a signed letter of commitment from an authorized representative of the match provider in the proposal. The State applicant is responsible for ensuring the full amount of the non-Federal match.

#### C. Other

Although only State agencies can apply for and receive grants under this Program, the Program encourages partnering with Tribes, Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, local governments and others.

### **IV. Application and Submission Information**

#### A. Address to Request Application Package

Potential applicants can receive application forms and other material necessary to apply for this Program by contacting one of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Regional Offices. The following is a list of Regional Offices:

Coastal states by Fish and Wildlife Service Region	Regional Contact Information
California	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance 2800 Cottage Way Sacramento, CA 95825 916-414-6457
American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance Eastside Federal Complex 911 NE 11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181 503-231-6128
Texas	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance P.O. Box 1306 500 Gold Avenue, SW, Suite #9019 Albuquerque, NM 87103 505-248-7450
Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building 1 Federal Drive Fort Snelling, MN 55111 612-713-5130
Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, and the Virgin Islands	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 240 Atlanta, GA 30345 404-679-4159
Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035 413-253-8508
Alaska	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance 1011 East Tudor Road Anchorage, AK 99503 907-786-3545

## B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals submitted for funding from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program must include:

1. Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424);
2. Statement of Assurances of compliance with applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies (Standard Form 424B or 424D. Applicants should use SF 424D (Construction Assurances) when the major purpose of the project is construction, land acquisition, or land development); and
3. A project statement that identifies and describes:
  - a. The need for the proposed project;

- b. Discrete, quantifiable, and verifiable objectives to be accomplished during a specific time period;
- c. Expected results or benefits in terms of coastal lands and waters, the hydrology, water quality, or fish and wildlife dependent on the wetlands;
- d. The approach to be used in meeting the objectives, including specific procedures, schedules, key personnel, and cooperators;
- e. A project location, including two maps: a map of the state showing the general location of the proposal and a map of the project site;
- f. Estimated costs to attain the objectives (Standard Form 424A or 424C. Applicants should use SF 424C (Budget Information - Construction) when the major purpose of the project is construction, land acquisition, or land development);
- g. A concise statement, with documentation, of how the proposal addresses each of the 13 numeric ranking criteria in 50 CFR 84.32, addressing each ranking criteria individually;
- h. A description of the State trust fund that supports a request for a 75 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;
- i. List of other current coastal acquisition, restoration, enhancement and management actions; agencies involved; relationship to the proposed grant; and how the proposal fits into comprehensive natural resource plans for the area; and
- k. Any public involvement or interagency coordination on coastal wetlands conservation projects that has occurred or is planned that relates to the proposal. Any matching funds from a non-State agency must be documented with a signed letter of commitment from an authorized representative of the match provider in the proposal.

Proposals should be on 8.5" X 11" paper, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. If the applicant chooses to include color copies in the proposal, we suggest including 12 extra copies of each color page in the proposal package. Forms should be arranged starting with the SF 424, followed by the SF 424 A or C, the SF 424 B or D, the project statement, and then any letters of financial or programmatic commitment by partners. In accepting Federal funds, applicants must comply with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies. Evidence of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other Federal laws will need to be provided if selected for award.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Proposals are due in the Service's Regional Offices or on Grants.gov by June 29, 2007. Hard copy proposals are due by 4:00 pm local time at the Regional Office where the proposal is submitted. Electronic proposals are due on Grants.gov by 4:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time. Late proposals will not be considered for funding.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is subject to Executive Order 12372 "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs". Coastal States and territories that have chosen to participate in the Executive Order process have established Single Points of Contact (SPOCs). Applicants from jurisdictions that have not chosen to participate do not need to take any action regarding E.O. 12372. All other applicants should alert their SPOCs early in the application process. If you as an applicant are required to submit materials to a SPOC, indicate the date of this submittal (or the date of contact if no submittal is required) on the Standard Form 424.

#### E. Funding Restrictions

Ineligible activities include:

- Projects that primarily benefit navigation, irrigation, flood control or mariculture;
- Acquisition, restoration, enhancement or management of lands to mitigate habitat losses;
- Creation of wetlands where wetlands did not previously exist;
- Enforcement of fish and wildlife laws and regulations, except when necessary for the accomplishment of approved project purposes;
- Research;
- Planning as a primary project focus;
- Operations and maintenance;
- Acquisition and/or restoration of upper portions of watersheds where benefits to the coastal wetlands ecosystem are not significant and direct; and
- Projects providing less than 20 years of conservation benefits.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants must submit hard copy proposals to their Regional Office listed in part IV. Application and Submission Information, A. Address to Request Application Package, of this announcement. Electronic proposals should be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). For further information or questions on hard copy or electronic submission, contact your Regional Office.

#### V. Application Review Information

##### A. Criteria

Criteria for reviewing and ranking projects were established in the final rule for administering the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (67 FR 48264; <http://policy.fws.gov/library/02fr49264.pdf>; see 50 CFR 84.32). Attachment A to this announcement contains clarification of select ranking criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and

answers to general program questions. A brief summary of the 13 ranking criteria follows:

- **Wetlands conservation.** Will the project reverse coastal wetland loss or habitat degradation in decreasing or stable coastal wetland types?
- **Maritime forests on coastal barriers.** Will the proposal significantly benefit maritime forests on coastal barriers?
- **Long-term conservation.** Does the project ensure long-term conservation of coastal wetland functions? The project must provide at least 20 years of conservation benefits to be eligible.
- **Coastal watershed management.** Would the completed project help accomplish the natural resource goals and objectives of one or more formal, ongoing coastal watershed management plan or effort?
- **Conservation of threatened and endangered species.** Will the project benefit any federally listed endangered or threatened species, species proposed for Federal listing, recently delisted species or designated or proposed critical habitat in coastal wetlands? Will it benefit State-listed species?
- **Benefits to fish.** Will the project provide, restore or enhance important fisheries habitat?
- **Benefits to coastal-dependent or migratory birds.** Will the project provide, restore, or enhance important habitat for coastal-dependent or migratory birds?
- **Prevent or reduce contamination.** Will the project prevent or reduce input of contaminants to the coastal wetlands and associated coastal waters that are already contaminated?
- **Catalyst for future conservation.** Is the project designed to leverage other ongoing coastal wetlands conservation efforts in an area or provide additional impetus for conservation?
- **Partners in conservation.** Will the project receive financial support, including in-kind match, from private, local or other Federal interests?
- **Federal share reduced.** Does the proposal significantly reduce the Federal share by providing more than the required match amount? (Only cash above the required match applies.)
- **Education/outreach program or wildlife-oriented recreation.** Is the project designed to increase environmental awareness and develop support for coastal wetlands conservation? Does it provide recreational opportunities that are consistent with the conservation goals of the site?
- **Other factors.** Do any other factors, not covered in the previous criteria, make this project or site particularly unique and valuable?

## B. Review and Selection Process

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

- **Proposal acceptance-** The Regional Federal Assistance Offices determine proposals are complete, substantial, and contain activities that are eligible.

Proposals that are not eligible are immediately returned to the State agency. Revision and resubmission of returned proposals is allowable up until the identified deadline for proposal submittals.

- Proposal ranking - Once a proposal is accepted by the Regional Federal Assistance Office, the Regional Office sends the proposal to the National Federal Assistance Office. The National Federal Assistance Office coordinates with the National Office of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration in compiling proposals for review. The National Office of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration coordinates an internal, cross-programmatic review of all accepted proposals by a National Review Panel.
- Proposal selection - The National Review Panel scores and ranks all accepted proposals and provides the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service with a list of recommended proposals. The final list of proposals awarded is determined by the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The grant awards will be announced in December 2007 or January 2008. All applicants will receive a letter informing them whether their proposal was awarded funding. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will also be notified regarding the amount of the award.

### VI. Award Administration Information

#### A. Award Notices

All applicants will receive a letter informing them whether their proposal was awarded funding. The Service will also publish a national press release announcing the awards.

#### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Compliance with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies, including environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act, and applicable executive orders will be satisfied before the Service can approve an award.

All organizations must obtain a DUNS number, a unique identifying number, before applying for federal assistance. On June 27, 2003, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a Federal Register notice (68 FR 38402) that announced its final policy on the use of a universal identifier by financial assistance applicants. The policy requires applicants applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements to obtain a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number. Only private individual landowners are exempted. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling a DUNS number request line at 1-866-706-5711 or on-line at <http://www.dnb.com>.

All financial assistance awards are subject to Federal financial administration requirements. The Regional Federal Assistance offices will work with applicants to ensure that all financial arrangements comply with these requirements.

To find out more about the rules:

<b>Table 1. Federal Financial Administrative Guidance</b>	
<b>Categories of Recipients</b>	<b>Specific Rules and Guidance</b>
Individuals, private firms, and non-profits excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-122	- Federal Acquisition Subpart 31.2 - 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 48 CFR 31 (Contracts with Commercial Organizations)
Non-profit organizations covered under OMB Circular No. A-122	- 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 2 CFR 215 (Administrative Requirements for Grants) - 2 CFR 230 (Cost Principles) - OMB Circular No. A-133 (Audits)
Educational Institutions (even if part of a State or local government)	- 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 2 CFR 220 (Cost Principles) - 2 CFR 215 (Administrative Requirements for Grants) OMB Circular No. A-133 (Audits)
States, local governments and Tribes	- 43 CFR 12 (Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles for Assistance Programs) - 43 CFR 18 (New Restrictions on Lobbying) - 2 CFR 225 (Cost Principles) - OMB Circular No. A-102 (Grants and Cooperative Agreements) - OMB Circular No. A-133 (Audits)

### C. Reporting

Reporting requirements include retention and access requirements that are specified in 43 CFR 12.82.

### VII. Agency Contacts

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is administered jointly within the Fish and Wildlife Service. Additional Program information can be obtained by contacting:

Christy Kuczak  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Division of Federal Assistance  
FA 4020  
4401 North Fairfax Drive  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703-358-1748

Chris Darnell  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration, Room 410a  
4401 North Fairfax Drive  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703-358-2236

Or contact your Regional U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office (see the list under "Address to Request Application Package").

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### **VIII. Other Information**

The Federal government is not bound to financially support any project until an authorized Service financial officer has approved the award.

## Attachment A

### Clarification of Select Ranking Criteria in 50 CFR 84.32 and General Program Questions

The purpose of this attachment is to provide clarification of certain criteria in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 84. This clarification will serve as interim guidance until these issues are addressed through a formal rule revision.

#### 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1) (Criterion 1):

**Must a score of 7 be given for all proposals that result in over 50% of the project area conserving, restoring, or protecting decreasing coastal wetlands types?**

Yes. Proposals that document that over 50% of the project area will be, upon project completion, decreasing coastal wetlands types will receive the full 7 point score. Specific guidance on how reviewers score this criterion is provided in 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1).

**Should a graduated scale be used to further delineate proposals?**

The program regulations in 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(1) provide guidance on the use of intermediate scores (i.e., less than 7 points) for projects that document that, upon project completion, a minimum of 50% of the project area will be a combination of decreasing and stable types of wetlands, and for projects that are less than 50% wetlands.

#### 50 CFR 84.32 (a)(2) (Criterion 2):

**What qualifies as a maritime forest?**

A thorough description of what is considered to be a maritime forest for the purpose of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant program is found in the program regulations in the Definitions section, 50 CFR 84.11.

### **How will this criterion be scored?**

In order to receive the maximum 7 points for this criterion, the project must significantly benefit maritime forests which meet the following descriptions: 1) are located on coastal barriers (see definition of "Coastal barrier" in 50 CFR 84.11) along the mainland coast from Delaware to Texas, and 2) are broad-leaved forests. Examples of maritime forests are primarily characterized by a closed canopy of various combinations of live oak, upland laurel oak, pignut hickory, southern magnolia, sugarberry, and cabbage palm.

Intermediate scores of less than 7 points are acceptable 1) for proposals in which the significance of the benefit to maritime forests is unclear, or 2) for proposals in which it is unclear if the forests meet the strict definition of maritime forest.

### **50 CFR 84.32 (a)(10) (Criterion 10):**

#### **Can proposals receive points for more than one State agency's participation in a proposed project?**

In general, proposals will only receive credit for one State agency. The exception to this practice will occur when a proposal includes multiple States. In these instances, the proposal may receive points for each additional State that is participating in the proposed project.

### **50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11) (Criterion 11):**

#### **Can in-kind services or contributions be used as the required state match?**

Yes. In-kind services can be used for the entire portion of the State's required cost share (i.e., 25% or 50%).

#### **Can in-kind services or contributions, including bargain land sale, be used to score points for this criterion?**

No. Only cash contributions above and beyond the required match can be used to get scoring points for Criterion 11. Cash is a liquid asset and can be tracked easily through audit procedures and also serves as a proxy for the State's commitment towards a project. Federal regulations and guidance clearly identify a landowner's acceptance of a reduced price for his or her property as an in-kind service or contribution, not cash. As such, so-called "bargain sales" cannot be used to receive points for decreasing the Federal share.

#### **Can the in-kind contribution of a landowner accepting an offer below market value for his property be used for the required state match?**

Yes. The in-kind contribution of a landowner accepting a reduced price for his property can be used as part of or all of the State's required cost share of 25% or 50%.

### **What is required for the proof of match?**

The level of documentation required for this criterion differs based on the source of the matching funds proposed for use by the applicant. If the source of the matching funds is from State funds, then a Standard Form 424 will suffice. If the source of matching funds is from a non-State agency partner, then a signed letter of commitment from an authorized representative of the match provider must be included with the proposal to receive points. This information must be included in the proposal package by the time it is sent to the Washington office. State partners are ultimately accountable for third party commitments of financial support.

### **50 CFR 84.32(b)(4) (Additional considerations):**

**Please clarify the 'provides lands as part of the State matching share'.**

The purpose of this tie-breaking factor is to consider proposals which include the donation of lands owned by a third party as part of the overall project as advantageous to those that do not. Such donations increase the overall acreage of land managed by the State agency, increasing the likelihood that the land will be managed to conserve the natural resources and increase the management options for the grant property.

### **General Questions:**

**Do "total costs" under 50 CFR 84, including 84.21(f), 84.32(a)(11), and 84.46, refer to the total cost of the project or the total amount of funds requested from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (NCWCGP) in the proposal?**

"Total costs" refer to the total costs of a project, including the total amount of funds requested from the NCWCGP, the non-Federal share, and any addition Federal contributions to the overall project. If the total costs of a project are \$8 million, the minimum non-Federal share would be either \$2 million (25%) or \$4 million (50%), depending on whether or not the State has a designated fund (see definition of fund in 50 CFR 84.11). The amount of the non-Federal share may in some cases exceed the maximum grant allowed for award by NCWCGP (\$1 million).

**Does “maximum Federal share” under 50 CFR 84, including 84.32 (a)(11) and 84.46 (h), refer to the maximum percentage of Federal dollars of the total project costs, i.e., 75% or 50%, or the maximum grant amount from the NCWCGP, i.e., \$1 million?**

“Maximum Federal share” refers to the percentage, i.e., 75% or 50%, of Federal dollars of the total project costs, not the maximum grant amount from the NCWCGP, i.e., \$1 million. For example, if total project costs are \$8 million, the maximum Federal share would be either \$6 million (75%) or \$4 million (50%), depending on whether or not the State has a designated fund. The Federal share includes all Federal contributions, including money provided to the State by other Federal programs. If the applicant only provides the minimum non-Federal share (25% or 50% of total project costs), no points will be awarded for reducing the Federal share (50 CFR 84.32 (a)(11), Criterion 11).

**What changes are allowed to a proposal after its submission?**

Proposals submitted to the Regional offices for consideration in the national competition must be in final format by the due date specified in the Request for Proposals. The only proposal changes that will be accepted after the due date are those that will not impact the project scoring, such as small corrective or clarifying statements.

In cases where the applicant notifies the Service of a change in a project's scope or the addition of information that may impact the scoring process after the due date of the proposal, the National Review Panel will score and rank the proposal as it was originally submitted.

**Who is responsible for determining eligibility of a proposal?**

Regional Federal Assistance personnel determine whether a proposal is eligible and should be considered for ranking by the National Review Panel (50 CFR 84.30). If Regional personnel have questions regarding the eligibility of a project, then they are encouraged to consult with their Regional Federal Assistance Chief and/or Washington Office staff. This occurs before proposals are sent to the Washington Office.

The Washington Office Federal Assistance office will reexamine the proposal's eligibility if questions arise. If deemed ineligible, the proposal will not be further considered for funding.

**What criteria are applied with in-kind services or donations in order to determine eligibility for consideration with a proposal?**

Regional Federal Assistance personnel and National Review Panel members are responsible for carefully scrutinizing in-kind services and donations submitted as part of a proposal package. In-kind contributions must be determined to be reasonable and necessary to achieve the proposed grant objective and must meet the applicable Federal cost principles in 43 CFR 12.62 (b).

**How far back can contributions toward a project be counted?**

The current program regulations do not identify a time limit or restriction for accepting in-kind or other contributions for a project. In order to be considered for a project, the costs must be considered as reasonable and necessary for achieving the overall project objectives. Additional guidance on determining if a service or donation is reasonable for a proposal can be found in 2 CFR, 220, 225, 230.

**Is the National Review Panel required to score all proposals?**

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Yes. Each member of the National Review Panel is required to score and rank all proposals that meet the basic eligibility standards of the program. If a reviewer has a conflict of interest for a proposal, the reviewer will recuse himself from scoring and ranking that proposal.