Draft Program Priorities

Applications must address one of the four priorities listed below. These priorities are aimed at rebuilding fish stocks, maintaining and restoring healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems, and promoting the economic vitality of fishery working waterfront communities, for the long term benefit of the public and future generations. In addition to the four specific priorities, an overarching evaluation criteria for all applications will be fishing community resilience as described below. While fishing community resiliency is not a stand-alone priority, no less than 10% of funds will be awarded to applications that support community resiliency.

Solicitation Priorities:

Priority #1 –Marine Aquaculture

Develop environmentally responsible marine aquaculture to create jobs in coastal communities, produce healthful local seafood, revitalize working waterfronts, and support traditional fishing communities. Projects should include, where feasible, participation of the fishing communities, aquaculture communities, and the seafood industry. Projects that provide training for fishermen and others in coastal communities in aquaculture production methods are encouraged.

Projects sought should address at least one of the two topics below:

a) Technology development and transfer: Develop, refine, or apply aquaculture technologies that support aquaculture development. Projects that demonstrate aquaculture technologies in operational settings such as through a pilot or commercial-scale project are strongly encouraged.

b) Tools for management: Provide tools to improve the understanding of the environmental effects of aquaculture that will facilitate informed permit and management decision-making.

Projects examples could include but are not limited to:

- Demonstration of the feasibility of culturing marine species identified as potential or suitable candidates for aquaculture including fish, molluscs, and macroalgae;
- Development of hatchery capacity and technologies;
- Investigation of ways to minimize negative interactions and maximize positive

interactions with living marine resources, especially protected and federally managed species and their habitats; and

- Development or validation of genetics/escapes, disease transfer, habitat equivalency, siting, socio-economic, or other models or tools for management of marine aquaculture.

Priority #2 -Adapting to Environmental Changes and Other Long Term Impacts in Marine Ecosystems;

Projects sought should:

a) Assess the impact of ecosystem changes such as ocean acidification, long term fluctuations in water temperature and weather patterns, and other stressors on living marine resources and the communities sustained by these resources.

b) Conduct research that better informs fishery managers on the predator-prey dynamic and the role that density dependence plays on the short-term health of managed stocks.

c) Aid in the understanding and integration of all the interactions that marine and diadromous fish have with predators, competitors, and prey species; other ocean uses e.g. energy projects that can impact fishing, biological communities, and ecosystems; the complex interactions between fisheries and their habitat; the effects of fishing on fish stocks and their habitat, or for the seafood industry to understand, adapt and become more resilient to a change in marine ecosystems.

Research examples could include the following but are not limited to:

- Identify strategies for assisting fishing communities to adapt to potential effects of ecosystem change on fisheries.

- Assess how fishing communities have been impacted and have adapted to direct effects of environmental change, such as increased storms, and other natural events resulting in long term trends.

- Develop stock assessment models that consider potential changes in fishery performance and management effectiveness due to ecosystem change including ocean chemistry.

- Produce long term environmental-change and ocean chemistry forecasting models that incorporate fishery production scenarios.
- Research on cumulative impacts that include long term changes in water temperature and weather patterns.
- Conduct vulnerability assessments to a changing climate at the fishing community level.

Priority #3 – Promotion, Development and Marketing

Projects sought should:

a) Promote better business practices to increase product market value, such as increasing market prices for commercial fish species by promoting business practices such as safe handling (i.e., brining fish, using ozone boxes) and other value -added practices on vessels and onshore to produce higher quality fish for sale. Projects may also include adoption of technologies such as smart phones and tablets that support the fishing industry and the public's interest in the sustainability of marine fisheries by improving the traceability of seafood from fishing vessels to consumers.

b) Develop collaborative and improved regional, national, and global public relations and marketing opportunities that can position the U.S. domestic seafood industries to better compete in globally competitive commodity markets, stabilize and maintain domestic fishing cultures that have faltered due to suppressed prices, improve perception of and confidence in U.S. domestic wild caught seafood products that may be impacted by natural or man-made catastrophes, and improve fish prices. Fishermen will financially benefit from the development of new domestic and foreign markets for abundant low -value and underutilized species.

c) Develop projects that support the creation of new marketing opportunities.

d) Develop usable, value – added, fishery products from economic discards, byproducts of processing, and introduced/nuisance species.

e) Collect data on population dynamics, life histories, etc., of fish not currently under Federal or Interstate fishery management, for the Regional Fishery Management Councils/Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions to determine the feasibility of developing a new managed fishery that could provide additional fishing opportunity.

f) Support development of new products from and markets for seafood processing waste and low value species.

g) Provide consumer and public outreach on the ecological and/or environmental impact, including climate change related impacts such as production of greenhouse gasses, of imported seafood products versus locally landed seafood products.

h) Develop projects that advocate the elimination of Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing activities, support research and development of methods to rapidly detect IUU products in the marketplace, develop traceability projects/programs to protect against IUU products.

i) Develop projects that support monitoring efforts of imports to prevent IUU fish from entering the U.S. market, allowing consumers to have confidence that the seafood they purchase was harvested legally and responsibly.

j) Improve the understanding of the socioeconomic impacts and aspects of fisheries with regards to promotion, marketing and development to increase information on current and future consequences of management choices for use by decision makers and stakeholders. The range of scope includes commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing and fishing -related businesses and fishing communities.

Research examples could include the following but are not limited to:

- Qualitative and quantitative baseline research on specific fishing communities;
- Cost income data; market analyses to determine factors that influence and trace the demand and supply of specific seafood products, including imports;
- Factors limiting fishing community sustainability;
- Research into fishing community innovations in organization/governance, cooperatives, marketing, risk-pooling, access to capital/permits/catch allocations, and other improvements to promote sustainability.

Priority #4– Territorial Science

Projects sought should:

Improve the quality and quantity of fishery information from the U.S. territories covered

by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, including the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands; and the Commonwealths of the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico, that can be used for establishing, enhancing and monitoring Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and ecosystem-based information for Federal fisheries management in these territories.

Project examples could include but are not limited to:

- Improve catch accountability by enhancing fishery statistics in each territory through a variety of techniques, including expanded creel surveys, fish dealer sampling, and other mechanisms;
- Expand fishery bio-sampling and analysis of bio-sampling data, including activities that would include sampling shoreside and at fish dealers the species of fish most relevant for management;
- Conduct fishery independent reef fish and bottomfish surveys;
- Enhance data from aquaculture and fisheries surveys and projects to facilitate resource management decision making;
- Assess the impacts of ecosystem changes on fisheries in the U.S. Territories.
- Build technical capabilities to conduct data collection and analysis in terms of analyzing data for annual catch limits.

Overarching Solicitation Evaluation Criteria

Fishing Community Resiliency

While fishing community resiliency is not a stand-alone priority, no less than 10% of funds will be awarded to applications that develop and support community-based bridge plans that enhance community resilience, from the perspectives of both fishery working waterfront and living marine resource communities.

Recognizing the importance of community based bridge plans that work towards advancing the vitality of these communities, projects are encouraged to help coastal fishing industries adapt to constraints limiting sustainable fisheries development by retooling their fishing fleets, shore services, and port facilities into sustainable and innovative businesses. Many shoreside support services upon which the fishing industry relies are constrained or in

decline due to less fish being landed. These include ice, fuel, haulout, auction, and processing companies. Projects that include creative opportunities that would enhance the short and long term vitality of commercial and recreational fishing related businesses are encouraged.