

USGS-National Park Service Water Quality Partnership Program
Call for proposals for projects initiating in FY2011

Due Dates for proposals:

November 30, 2009 for short proposals for regional evaluation

March 31, 2010 for full proposals (from those selected by regional evaluation)

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Program Web Site: http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/

Introduction

Beginning in FY2010, for projects with initial year funding in FY2011, the NPS-USGS Water Quality Partnership Program will be implementing significant changes to strengthen the program, improve communication between the USGS and National Park Service (NPS), and provide more consistency in the project selection process.

These changes are designed to help standardize how the NPS and USGS interact to develop and select project proposals that address high priority park needs, and how both parties conduct preliminary (regional) screenings of those proposals. The new program model will employ a joint USGS-NPS regional competition and selection process administratively based on USGS regional boundaries (Eastern, Central, Western) to replace the current NPS region-based selection process. The national panel will continue to be represented by USGS and NPS discipline specialists on an equal basis and will continue to include national, regional, park, and Water Science Center (WSC) personnel.

Three fundamental changes to the program will be implemented in the coming year. They are: 1) distribute a well publicized USGS-NPS program-specific call for proposals with a single and common deadline for USGS proposals, 2) initiate a regional selection process based on USGS regions and involving USGS and NPS reviewers with equal representation from both agencies, and 3) request shorter proposals (5 page maximum) for this regional screening. Short proposals will be submitted to the appropriate USGS Regional Water Quality Specialist who will take the lead in organizing and hosting the regional USGS-NPS review panels. Regional panels will evaluate these shorter proposals using four ranking criteria (significance, severity, problem resolution, and scientific merit) with equal weighting. Specific proposal ranking criteria and weighting for regional evaluation are indicated on page three. After regional selection of eight proposals per USGS region, the USGS principal investigators (PIs) for selected proposals will be requested to develop full proposals that meet the current guidelines, and the full proposals will be evaluated by the national panel. All full project proposals will continue to require written approval by both USGS Water Science Center Directors and Park Superintendents and have PMIS numbers assigned by NPS.

Timeline:

On or before October 1, 2009

USGS-NPS water quality partnership call for proposals from USGS and NPS program coordinators goes out to all USGS regions, WSCs, NPS regions, and parks by agency memos.

November 30, 2009

Due date for short (not to exceed 5 pages) proposals. Proposals go to the appropriate USGS region (where the project will be conducted) to the attention of the Regional Water Quality Specialist.

December 1, 2009 - January 31, 2010

Joint USGS-NPS regional panels evaluate and select proposals to forward to national panel.

On or before February 1, 2010

USGS project PI's and benefitting parks of proposals selected to be forwarded to national panel are notified and instructed to expand proposals to meet national standards for full proposals.

March 31, 2010

Expanded proposals and approval letters are collected by USGS regions and sent to NPS-WRD.

April 1, 2010 - May 31, 2010

NPS-WRD finalizes proposal package and coordinates national panel team selection with USGS Program coordinator (same as current process).

Early mid-June 2010

National panel convened to select projects for funding (same as current process).

PIs are informed of selection for FY11 funding at end of panel.

On or before July 1, 2010

Memos from USGS and NPS Program coordinators sent to both agency's offices with new selected, non-selected and existing (ongoing) projects and new project rankings. NPS-USGS Partnership web site updated with new selected projects.

On or before August 31, 2010

Comments from national and regional panels posted to NPS-USGS partnership web site.

Documentation: USGS Water Science Centers must submit a MS Word version of their technical proposal, including author identification, NPS PMIS #, and contact information, in order to compete for FY 2011 funding from this program.

Funding Amount: Approximately \$750,000 is available for new projects in FY 2011. There is no minimum funding level. However, the four types of projects addressed by this funding source have the following maximum funding levels:

1. Intensive Studies: \$100,000/project/year.
2. Synoptic Studies: \$50,000/project/year.
3. Fixed-Station Monitoring Studies: \$50,00/project/year.
4. Technical Assistance Requests: \$50,000/request.

Project Duration: Not to exceed three years.

Number of projects to be selected per USGS Region (Eastern, Central, Western): Joint agency regional panels with equal representation between USGS and NPS regional personnel evaluate and select 5-page proposals submitted by/for parks located in the particular USGS region. Each joint regional panel will select a total of eight proposals in the following funding range for full proposal development and submission to the national panel: four intensive study proposals up to \$100K/year over three years (\$300K total), two synoptic and/or fixed-station monitoring proposals up to \$50K/year over three years (150K total), and two technical assistance proposals up to \$50K for one year. This will result in a maximum of 24 proposals to be considered by the national panel and provide a range of project scopes and durations.

Subject of Projects: Projects will be accepted in the four categories below. Researchers are encouraged to include a data analysis and interpretation component by USGS to make the information immediately applicable by NPS resource managers, and also to include specific provisions for park interpreters and the USGS to present the information to the public.

1. Intensive Studies: Relatively large projects that require in-depth study of park water quality. Designed to characterize known or suspected water quality problems, these projects will also focus on understanding causes of contamination and the implications of water quality impairment to aquatic biota. Most intensive studies are strongly issue-driven and oriented towards priority water quality issues confronting the NPS. Studies which involve multiple NPS units are also eligible.
2. Synoptic Studies: Short-term investigations of water quality from several sites during selected seasonal periods or hydrologic conditions. These projects are designed to focus on park-specific issues that may have broader regional implications. Synoptic studies are intended to provide a quick assessment of aquatic conditions at selected locations and to evaluate the spatial relationships or contributions to those conditions, or to provide baseline data and information where little exists.
3. Fixed-Station Monitoring: Monitoring that documents long-term trends in water quality (if continued) and determines if management actions are achieving water quality objectives. Fixed-station monitoring will be designed to enable park managers to know the health of nationally significant NPS water bodies, know the effects of remediation actions, and document whether external activities adversely affect park water quality. Generally, fixed-station monitoring will be implemented using a "site rotation" concept.
4. Technical Assistance: Short-term assistance provided to the park for purposes of installation of instrumentation, training, scoping water quality issues, or providing technical representation at meetings requiring water quality expertise.

USGS Coordination: Early in the process of assembling short proposals for regional submission, parks and Water Science Centers should communicate to identify park needs, USGS expertise, discuss strategies, and coordinate writing or revising project proposals and addressing the ranking criteria. One or more USGS professionals normally collaborate with the benefiting park and prepare an original short technical proposal

for the project. The USGS collaborators, cooperating WSC, and benefitting park(s) do not necessarily have to be within the same USGS region.

In order for an expanded or full proposal to be considered by the national panel, the local USGS Water Science Center Director must certify each submission with an approval letter, indicating that the work is feasible and the schedule and costs are appropriate. In addition, the local NPS Park Superintendent must certify each submission with an approval letter, indicating that the park approves the project work and is committed to being involved in the project during its implementation.

Criteria, Selection and Approval Process and Schedule: NPS and USGS regions will screen the short project proposals for this partnership program as outlined in the introduction of this guidance that includes all affected parties and gives equal representation between NPS and USGS reviewers on the panels. The Eastern Region panel will include representatives designated by the USGS Eastern Region and from the NPS Northeast, National Capital, Midwest, and Southeast Regions. The Central Region panel will include representatives designated by the USGS Central Region and from the NPS Intermountain, Midwest, and Southeast Regions. The Western Region panel will include representatives designated by the USGS Western Region and from the NPS Pacific West, Intermountain, and Alaska Regions. USGS regions will communicate with NPS Regional Water Resource Coordinators in developing the regional evaluation panels. Following selection of proposals at the regional level, a NPS-USGS national panel will evaluate the full project proposals submitted to the national office and select the projects that will receive funding. The NPS Water Resources Division will participate on the national panel and will provide assistance to parks and NPS regions during all stages of the process. Project funds will be allocated by the USGS national program manager to the USGS WSC's performing the investigations. Parks will collaborate with the USGS Water Science Center offices that will conduct the water quality assessments and monitoring studies necessary to satisfy park needs.

Regional Proposal Submission to the National Panel: USGS Regional offices are responsible for providing the following documents by email to Barry Long no later than March 31, 2010: 1) The USGS full Technical Proposals and 2) Responses to all nine natural resource ranking criteria and approval letters. NOTE: In case of Barry Long's absence, please send the package to Gary Rosenlieb.

Implementation Plan and Reporting Requirements: Brief annual progress reports and a Final Completion Report are required from USGS for all projects funded with these funds. Detailed Implementation Plans are not required from parks.

Proposal Ranking Criteria and Weighting for Regional Evaluation (5-page proposal length maximum)

1. Significance of the resource or issue to the park (25%): Describe why this is an important issue or resource to the park involved. What was the process that identified this as a priority?
2. Severity of resource threat, problem, or need(s) (25%): Is there a time-critical or urgent aspect to this project? What causes this to be an urgent need? How imminent is the threat, and what is its extent? What are the consequences of not doing the project now?
3. Problem resolution (25%): Describe how the proposed project will resolve the problem, as defined in the proposal. Will the project contribute directly to decisions or actions that will meaningfully resolve a management issue?
4. Scientific merit (25%): The project should have clearly stated objectives, well designed procedures, adhere to the scientific method, contribute to key science questions, and have realistically attainable results. Proposals should describe any new or innovative scientific approaches or techniques.

Proposal Preparation/Technical Assistance: Guidance is available from the USGS and NPS-WRD in selecting project statements for submission, preparing the overall project proposal submissions, and facilitating coordination with project partners. To obtain assistance or information please contact Mark Nilles, USGS, Office of Water Quality (manilles@usgs.gov, 303-236-1878) or your Regional Water Quality Specialist. For National Park Service specific information, you may also contact Barry Long, NPS-Water Resource Division, (Barry_Long@nps.gov, 970-225-3519), or Gary Rosenlieb, NPS-WRD, (Gary_Rosenlieb@nps.gov, 970-225-3518). For more information, see the partnership web site at http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/.