USGS-National Park Service Water Quality Partnership Program
Call for proposals for projects initiating in FY2016

Due dates for proposals:
January 30, 2015 for short (5-page) proposals for regional evaluation
May 29, 2015 for full (expanded) proposals selected by regional evaluation

USGS National Program Manager: Mark Nilles, manilles@usgs.gov, 303-236-1878
NPS National Program Manager: Pete Penoyer pete_penoyer@nps.gov 970-225-3535
Program web site: http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/

Introduction: This program employs a USGS-NPS jointly managed competition and project selection process. Key elements of the program are: 1) A well publicized USGS-NPS program-specific call for short (5-page) proposals, 2) a regional selection process involving USGS and NPS regions that gives equal representation to reviewers from both agencies, and 3) short proposals selected to advance after regional competition submit a full proposal for evaluation by a national panel of USGS and NPS scientists. Short proposals are submitted to the appropriate USGS Water Science Field Team-Water Quality Specialist, who leads the organization of joint USGS-NPS regional review panels. These panels evaluate the short proposals using a reduced number of ranking criteria (significance, severity, problem resolution, and scientific merit) with equal weighting. Specific proposal ranking criteria for regional evaluation are indicated on page three, and a template for the 5-page proposals is provided on the program web site. After successful regional selection, the advancing project principal investigators (PIs) are requested to develop full proposals that are evaluated by a national panel represented by USGS and NPS discipline specialists on an equal basis including national, regional, park, and Science Center personnel, using nine ranking criteria.

Timeline:

November 3, 2014
USGS-NPS water quality partnership FY16 project call for proposals from USGS and NPS program coordinators goes out to all USGS areas, Science centers, NPS regions, and parks by agency memos.

January 30, 2015
Due date for short (not to exceed 5 pages) proposals. Proposals go to the appropriate USGS Water Science Field Team (Northeast, Southeast, Central or West) to the attention of the Water Quality Specialist, based on where the project will be conducted.

February 1, 2015 – March 31, 2015
Joint USGS-NPS regional panels evaluate and select proposals to forward to national panel.

On or before April 1, 2015
For those short proposals selected to be forwarded to national panel, USGS project PI's and benefitting parks, are notified and instructed to expand proposals to meet national standards for full proposals.

May 30, 2015
Full proposals and approval letters are due and collected by USGS Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialists.

June 15, 2015
Completed package of full proposals are sent from the Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialists to the NPS-WRD and USGS-OWQ National Coordinators.

July 1 2015
NPS-WRD and USGS-OWQ coordinators organize and commence the national panel review of proposals.

July 31 2015
National panel concludes and selects projects for funding. PI's are informed of selection or non-selection for FY15 funding immediately following the end of panel.

On or before August 31, 2015
The NPS-USGS Partnership web site is updated with FY15 selected projects.

On or before November 2, 2015
Comments from national panel reviewers are posted to the NPS-USGS partnership web site. Memos from USGS and NPS Program coordinators are sent with FY16 new selected, non-selected and existing (FY14-15 start) projects and new project rankings. USGS-NPS water quality partnership FY17 call for proposals from USGS and NPS program coordinators goes out to all USGS regions, Science Centers, NPS regions, and parks by agency memos.

Documentation: USGS Science Centers must submit an Adobe PDF version of their technical proposal in order to compete for FY 2016 funding from this program. A template for short proposals and guidance for full proposals are available on the program web site. All full project proposals require written approval by both USGS Science Center Directors and Park Superintendents.

Funding amount: 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, $300,000 project max.
2. Synoptic or Fixed-Station Monitoring Studies: $50,000/project/year, $150,000 project max.
3. Technical Assistance Requests: $50,000/request max.

Anticipated annual program funding is $1.75M, with 1/3 of this available (on average) annually to initiate new projects.

Project duration: Not to exceed three years, with the exception of Technical Assistance Requests which are limited to one year.

Number of proposals selected by area/regional panels for the national panel: Three joint agency regional panels with equal representation between USGS and NPS personnel evaluate and select short proposals for further evaluation and funding by a national panel. Each joint regional panel (East, Central, West) 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 to NPS resource managers, and also make 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.
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 status and trends (if continued) in water quality 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. Fixed-station monitoring may 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 studies, or providing technical representation to the NPS requiring water quality expertise.

USGS-NPS coordination: Early in the process of assembling short proposals for regional submission, parks and Science Centers should communicate to identify park needs, USGS expertise, discuss strategies, and coordinate writing or revising project proposals and addressing the ranking criteria. Both a USGS and National Park Service partner are required, and one or more USGS professionals normally collaborate with the benefiting park to prepare a short proposal (5 page maximum) for the project. The USGS collaborators, cooperating Science Centers, and benefiting park(s) do not necessarily have to be within the same USGS or NPS region.

In order for a full proposal to be considered by the national panel, the USGS Science Center Director that is partnering with the park 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. Project funds will be allocated by the USGS national program manager to the USGS Science Center performing the investigations. Parks will collaborate with the USGS offices that will conduct the water quality assessments and studies necessary to satisfy park needs.

Proposal submission points of contact and regional review details: NPS and USGS personnel will evaluate the short project proposals utilizing a standard project selection process as stated in the introduction of this guidance that gives equal representation between NPS and USGS reviewers on the panels. USGS Field Team Water Quality Specialists will communicate with NPS Regional Water Resource Coordinators in developing the regional evaluation panels. Both short and full proposals for projects should be sent to the following USGS Water Quality Specialists on the basis of where the project work will be conducted. For multi-state projects, select the appropriate specialist on the basis of where the majority of project work will be performed.

East: Callie Oblinger, oblinger@usgs.gov, 703-648-5803
States: CT DC DE IL IN KY MA MD ME MI NH NJ NY OH PA RI VA VT WI WV

East: Lisa Olsen, ldolsen@usgs.gov, 703-648-5809
States and territories: AL AR FL GA LA MS NC PR SC TN VI

Central: Tim Oden, toden@usgs.gov, 303-236-1470
States: AZ CO KS ND NE MN MO IA NM OK SD TX UT

West: Michael Rosen, mrosen@usgs.gov, 775-887-7683
States and territories: AK CA HI ID MT NV OR WA WY, Pacific Island Territories

Proposal ranking criteria regional evaluation: Template at http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/admin.php
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.

Special note to Partnership participants in recognition of the NPS Centennial: The NPS and USGS are working together to promote the 100th anniversary (the Centennial) of the National Park Service in 2016. A number of past USGS/NPS Water Quality Partnership Projects have been identified as major accomplishments towards the NPS Call to Action/Crystal Clear efforts to improve aquatic systems and knowledge in parks http://www.nature.nps.gov/water/crystalclear/. In support of the Centennial effort, this call for fiscal year 2016 projects includes interest in promoting proposals that build awareness of this important anniversary by working on innovative science and research that complements Centennial goals or events. For more information on the NPS Centennial, please see http://www.nps.gov/subjects/centennial/index.htm.

Full proposal submission package: USGS Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialists are responsible for providing the following documents electronically to Pete Penoyer NPS-WRD and Mark Nilles USGS-OWQ on or before June 15, 2015: 1) Full Technical Proposals 2) Responses to all nine ranking criteria and 3) approval letters.

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 preparation and 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 Water Science Field Team Water Quality Specialist. For National Park Service specific information, you may also contact Pete Penoyer, NPS-WRD, (pete_penoyer@nps.gov, 970-225-3535). For more information, see the partnership web site at http://water.usgs.gov/nps_partnership/.