



FY19 Grant Funding Opportunity

The Barnegat Bay Partnership (BBP) is pleased to announce a grant funding opportunity for projects that lead to improvements in water quality, especially those that reduce nutrients and especially in areas that have been classified as impaired, or to develop and implement conservation/restoration plans for ecologically sensitive habitats. The BBP anticipates that a total of approximately \$60,000 will be available to support one or more projects addressing these priorities.

The ecology of the entire watershed, the health of people and biotic resources living throughout the watershed, the economy of the region, and our quality of life are all dependent on good water quality. Unfortunately, a recent study estimating nutrient input to the bay for the time period of 1989-2011 indicated an increase in the amount of nitrogen being delivered to the bay. This excess nitrogen contributes to eutrophication, a process which can result in an increase in nuisance algal blooms, low dissolved oxygen, and other adverse effects that stress the biota of the bay. Within freshwater streams slightly more than half of sampling sites meet the water quality standards for aquatic life use, though the percentage of sites considered “excellent” has declined during the last sampling interval.

The Barnegat Bay watershed has experienced rapid development over past decades, especially in the northern reaches of the bay. Land-use changes between 1986 and 2012 (NJDEP Bureau of Geographic Information System, 2016) reveals an increase in urban land of 12.4% and 14.1% in the Toms River and Metedeconk River watersheds, respectively. Percentage increases in urban land among the other freshwater watersheds evaluated range from 0.3% to 9.4%. This urbanization has largely occurred in upland forest and wetlands, converting them into developed landscapes. Bulkheading severely limits the bay’s connection to the uplands and eliminates areas that could become marsh as sea level rises. Additionally, major declines in biomass and percent SAV cover have been reported in some sectors of the estuary since the 1970s. A more recent study revealed an ongoing decline in biomass and percent cover of bay bottom attributed to increasing eutrophication due to shading of the shallow SAV beds by algal blooms and attached microalgae on the stems.

ONE OF 28 NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

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The BBP is seeking projects that lead to improvements in water quality, especially those that reduce nutrients and especially in areas that have been classified as impaired, or that develop and implement conservation/restoration plans for ecologically sensitive habitats. Potential projects have been previously identified within our CCMP (<https://www.barnegatbaypartnership.org/about-us/ccmp/>) and 2012-2016 Strategic Plan (<https://www.barnegatbaypartnership.org/about-us/strategic-plan/>), though acceptable submissions are not limited to ideas in those documents. The BBP will also entertain projects that have both habitat restoration and water quality improvement components.

Who May Apply

Proposals are welcome from organizations, government agencies, and individuals, including academic institutions (colleges and universities), governmental or public agencies, private businesses, professional organizations, non-governmental organizations (501[c]3), and other individuals. All projects must identify a project leader (*i.e.*, Project Manager), whose qualifications (education, background, and experience) are a component in the evaluation process. Organizations and individuals may submit more than one proposal.

Application Process and Proposal Review

The following application process will be used to evaluate projects.

(1) All applicants should submit a pre-proposal to the BBP office via email to jvasslides@ocean.edu. The pre-proposal should include a project description of no more than three single-spaced pages consisting of: (1) a project title; (2) project overview and justification; and (3) project proponents and management (*i.e.*, who will perform and oversee the work). An estimated budget (including match requirements, see below) should also be included.

(2) A subcommittee of the BBP Science and Technical Committee will review the pre-proposals and notify applicants as to whether a full proposal should be submitted. This initial review will be based on the criteria identified in (6) below.

(3) Selected applicants will then develop and submit a full proposal; see the section below titled "Proposal Structure and Other Guidelines" for details about the structure and content of the proposal.

(4) The BBP office will then solicit two or more reviews of each proposal from independent, external reviewers (*i.e.*, not affiliated with the applicants) to address the technical merits and limitations of the proposed projects. The BBP Communications and Education Committee (CEC) will provide a review of the education and outreach plan associated with each project. The BBP will use the reviews in subsequent discussion and project selection. All reviewers will remain anonymous; reviews will be shared with applicants upon request at the completion of the selection process. Any questions

generated by the external reviewers or BBP review will be communicated to the applicants prior to their oral presentations (see 5 below).

(5) Selected applicants will give oral presentations of proposed projects to the BBP's Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

(6) The BBP's STAC will rank the proposals using the following evaluation criteria: (a) the description and technical merits of the project; (b) project outcomes and/or benefits, including their assessment; (c) justification of the project, including its relevance to the CCMP and/or Strategic Plan; (d) the budget's consistency with BBP guidelines, including matching provisions; (e) an appropriate education and outreach plan which communicates the project and results to a broader audience; and (f) qualifications, experience, and past performance of project proponents (*i.e.*, managers, Principal Investigators). Please note that organizations associated with any submitted proposals will not participate in the discussion and ranking of proposals to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

Committee members and reviewers may be disqualified from reviewing proposals to which they have any actual or potential conflicts of interest. An individual may not serve on a review panel if he/she has any direct personal/familial or financial relationship or connection with any of the proposals to be reviewed or any of the applicants. In addition, individuals who have other types of relationships with the proposals being reviewed or any of the applicants cannot serve on a review panel if that relationship would impair or influence their objectivity or impartiality in reviewing proposals and the conflict of interest cannot otherwise be mitigated or avoided. Some situations that may constitute a conflict of interest include the following:

- Principal investigators, consultants, or any other participants in proposals cannot serve on review panels to review proposals submitted in response to a solicitation/announcement.
- The application or proposal being considered is from the reviewer's parent institution or member organization. This applies to subcontractors or sub-recipients.
- The reviewer and the applicant are related through family or have been related as a student or thesis/post-doctoral advisor.
- The reviewer and the applicant have collaborated within the last 3 years on a related project, article or paper.
- The reviewer will benefit directly from the project, *e.g.*, as a consultant or paid collaborator.

Funding, Budget, and Reporting Guidelines

- Consistent with previous GFOs, the BBP's Science and Technical Advisory Committee recommends that indirect expenses not exceed 10% of an institution's federally approved indirect rate. Any indirect rate not claimed may be used to fulfill the match requirement. For organizations without a federally approved indirect rate, the allowable indirect would be calculated as 10% of the modified total direct costs.
- Requested salary costs generally should not exceed 25% of the total requested amount. Costs exceeding 25% must be justified.
- The Education and Outreach component of the grant should be a minimum of 5% of the total requested amount unless it can be demonstrated that the education and outreach plan can be effective with less funds than the minimum requirement. Projects with additional plans for education and outreach, outside of STAC funds, are encouraged.
- The applicant must minimally provide a 1:1 ratio of matching funds or in-kind services from non-federal sources. As an example, if you are requesting \$10,000 in funding you must provide at least \$10,000 in match. Federal sources may be used as match with special justification and prior approval from the BBP Program Office. Special consideration will be given to proposals which provide more than the minimum match.
- The scheduling of projects is flexible to accommodate seasonal and other special considerations; however, we anticipate the project should be completed within two to three years of the start date. Projects may be extended under special circumstances with justification from the Principal Investigator (PI) and a supporting recommendation from the PI's agency/organization. The proposal must explicitly identify all project deliverables and a schedule of their delivery.
- The BBP reserves the right to terminate projects that are not initiated and/or completed (including any project deliverables) in accordance with agreed-upon project schedules. In such cases, any remaining payments to the agency/organization will be forfeited. Such termination does not relieve the grant recipient of any reporting requirements.
- Submission of a progress report to the STAC is required at the mid-term of the project. The final payment will not be made until the final report is submitted and a presentation of key findings is given to the STAC. The final report must include detailed descriptions of all work, findings, and the final (as-spent) budget (including match). Except in special circumstances, final reports and all other required materials (see below) are due within 60 days of the project's completion.

- In addition to completing a final report and giving a presentation to the STAC, all grant recipients must develop an outreach product (*e.g.*, newsletter article with photos) which provides an overview of the project for a general audience. All project reports, presentations, and other media presentation must include specific recognition of the funding provided by the BBP.
- The final report and the outreach products become the property of the BBP.
- The successful applicant(s) must be able to provide the appropriate evidence of liability insurance, and be able to indemnify and hold harmless the BBP and Ocean County College from all claims for proposed project activities.

Proposal Structure and Other Guidelines

The full proposal submission will include the following: (1) the proposal cover sheet, (2) a proposal narrative (8-page limit), (3) a detailed budget (2-page limit), which identifies the requested amount and the match; (4) a budget justification (1-page limit); and (5) a *curriculum vitae* for each PI and key support personnel (2-page limit each).

The proposal narrative has an 8-page limit and should include the following sections: (1) project title; (2) lead organization and project manager; (3) project description: including the problem, goals, approach(es), outcomes/benefits, and tasks and schedule; (4) project justification, including how it will lead to water quality improvements or the conservation/restoration of ecologically sensitive habitats; (5) project assessment, *i.e.*, a description of how the project's outcomes and/or benefits will be assessed; and (6) a plan for education and outreach activities, including specific goals and objectives. This plan should also include a way to assess the educational activities and outcomes. Examples of appropriate applications include, but are not limited to, publications, presentations, articles, and multimedia content for websites. Additional guidance can be sought through the BBP CEC for this requirement. Contact with the CEC can be made through Karen Walzer, BBP Public Outreach Coordinator (kwalzer@ocean.edu; 732-255-0472).

A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is required for any environmental data collection and/or data use projects, including modeling and secondary use of data. An EPA-approved QAPP is required before commencement of any environmental data collection and/or use. Data collection must also comply with all state requirements and standards to ensure data can be used by the state. EPA Guidance for the development of QAPPs for environmental monitoring projects can be found at the following link <http://www.epa.gov/region02/qa/documents.htm>. Development of the QAPP is an allowable cost; however, QAPP costs should generally be a minor component of the total budget. Initial QAPP submittal to the BBP will be due within 90 days of the executed contract date. It is anticipated that most QAPPs can be reviewed, revised as needed, and approved within 3 months of initial submission; however more complex projects may require additional time.

Please contact Jim Vasslides (jvasslides@ocean.edu; 732-255-0472) with any questions regarding the proposal guidelines or other issues.

Proposal Schedule

May 18, 2018: Pre-proposals to be submitted electronically to jvasslides@ocean.edu by 5:00 p.m.
June 1, 2018: PIs will be notified if they are selected for development of a full proposal.
August 10, 2018: Submission of full proposals electronically to jvasslides@ocean.edu by 5:00 p.m.
October 10, 2018: Presentation of proposals to STAC (tentative date).
November 2018: Notification to applicants.

About the Barnegat Bay Partnership

The National Estuary Program (NEP) was established in 1987 by Congress pursuant to Section 320 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1330) and reauthorized in 2000 (P.L. 106-457) and 2016 (P.L. 114-104) to promote comprehensive planning, conservation, management, restoration and other activities in nationally significant estuaries threatened by pollution, development, or overuse, and to encourage the preparation of management plans for those estuaries.

The Barnegat Bay estuarine system was accepted into the NEP in 1996. A Management Conference was convened to develop the BBP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (see <https://www.barnegatbaypartnership.org/about-us/ccmp/>), which was approved by the USEPA in 2002; the BBP's 2008-2011 Strategic Plan was adopted in May 2008, and the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan was adopted in December 2011. The BBP is one of only 28 NEPs in the United States and Puerto Rico.