ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name(s):** Coastal Ocean Program (COP),Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR), National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), Department of Commerce

- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Ecological Forecasting (EcoFore)

- **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement

- **Funding Opportunity Number:** EcoFore 2004

- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 11.478, Coastal Ocean Program

- **Program Authorities:** 16 U.S.C. 1456c

- **Dates:** The deadline for receipt of proposals at the COP office is 3 p.m., local time November 4, 2003.

- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The purpose of this document is to advise the public that NCCOS/CSCOR/COP is soliciting proposals for ecological forecasting. NCCOS/CSCOR/COP is soliciting research proposals for projects of 2 to 5 years in duration for the development of ecological forecasting capability and the transition/operationization of ecological forecasts. Funding is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2004 Federal appropriations. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made in early Calendar Year 2004, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a May 1, 2004, start date.

- **Electronic Access:** Background information about Ecological Forecasting is available in a publication by the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Ecological Systems at http://www.nbii.gov/about/pubs/efbrochure/. A NOAA perspective on Ecological Forecasting is available at http://www.nccos.noaa.gov/documents/ecoforecasting.pdf.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The coastal ocean program (CSCOR/COP) is committed to providing decision makers with high quality scientific information and predictive tools in formats appropriate to promoting near-term improvements in coastal ecosystem management. This announcement solicits proposals for projects of 2 to 5 years in duration with the purpose of developing an ecological forecasting capability to balance the protection and wise use of coastal environments.

The NCCOS/CSCOR/COP and other Federal agencies continue to support multi-disciplinary coastal ecosystem studies to improve our understanding of the physical, biological, and chemical processes in these complex systems. In general, these types of large-scale projects have been committed to producing data and information products such as technical reports, peer-reviewed publications, databases, and numerical and conceptual models. However, the delivery of comprehensive information products and technologies to the appropriate management community for application to specific coastal management issues remains the challenge to scientific programs that have been largely focused on research.

The next step in ecosystem research is the development of ecological forecasts, i.e., the capability to predict the effects and interactions of environmental variability and anthropogenic stressors on coastal ecosystems, and the impacts of management actions on ecosystems and coastal economies. In much the same way a weather forecast or economic forecast can help society plan for future contingencies, an ecological forecasting capability could allow environmental managers to consider future possibilities and challenges. Developing ecological forecasts can lead to better decision-making, better communication between scientists and managers, and help to set science priorities for the future.

Depending on the scale of the issue addressed, the type of forecast proposed, and the level of model development, approaches may fall within or span the following two categories:
(1)Development of Forecasting Capability: increase understanding of complex ecosystem functions and interactions through field-based studies, analysis of past trends and events and synthesis/re-analysis of prior data sets; improve the ability to simulate ecosystem complexity and flexibility through the use of coupled physical/ecological models and data assimilation; and develop new models to project ecological outcomes from alternative scenarios and facilitate evaluation of management plans.
(2)Transition/Operationalization of Forecasts: assess forecast accuracy, sensitivity, and error; define an acceptable level of accuracy for proposed forecasts; enhance risk assessment tools for management scenarios; link socioeconomic cost-benefit analysis to ecological forecasts; develop testing and comparison metrics for forecasts; and develop methods to share, visualize, and communicate forecasts and uncertainty to user groups.

B. Program Priorities

Ecological forecasting must include an understanding of the natural system in conjunction with societal and economic influences on it. To make effective ecological forecasts, it is necessary to understand coastal ecosystem structure, functioning, and responses to stress. For the purposes of this announcement, we intend to focus on five key categories of coastal ecosystem stress: 1) climate change, 2) extreme natural events, 3) pollution, 4) invasive species, and 5) land and resource use, with the recognition that several of these categories may be interactive with each other.

Specific topics appropriate to address within the 5-stressor categories could include but are not limited to:

- Climate change/sea level rise and ecological effects on ecosystems, species interactions, organism distributions, and potential human heath impacts;
- Forecasting impacts of anthropogenic and/or natural stressors on coastal systems, fisheries, and economies and how these impacts can be prevented or minimized;
- Linked ecological and economic predictions of coastal ecosystems and their responses to human alterations and coastal demographic trends;
- Quantification of habitat use or habitat quality and its effect on ecosystem function and water quality within and/or adjacent to the target ecosystem;
- Ecosystem susceptibility/resilience to perturbations or species invasions and the potential spread of introduced species and associated ecosystem impacts.

Regions or ecosystems of study can include the coastal ocean of the U.S., the U.S. Great Lakes, estuaries, and coral reefs. Studies which can provide forecasts focused on or applicable to the management of NOAA protected resources and areas such as marine protected areas or estuarine research reserves are encouraged.

Proposals should include justification for the ecosystem chosen, in terms of importance, economic value, and/or ecological significance. Proposals should provide detailed descriptions of the predictive/forecasting capability to be developed, management issue(s) to be addressed, the target audience or users of developed forecasts, and how forecasts will be provided to users. Explicit identification of the end user group(s) is required and should include evidence of linkages between the scientific questions and management needs, in the form of active collaboration or the participation of co-investigators from both scientific and management entities. All proposed forecasts must have a clear application to one or more coastal resource management issues, and be tractable within the time and budget proposed.

C. Program Authorities

_____Authority for the Ecological Forecasting program is as follows:

_____16 U.S.C. 1456c

II. Award Information:

_____A. Funding availability

Funding is contingent upon availability of Federal appropriations. NOAA is committed to continual improvement of the grants process and accelerating the award of financial assistance

to qualified recipients in accordance with the recommendations of the Program Review Team (Information available at www.noaa.gov). In order to fulfill these responsibilities, this solicitation announces that award amounts to be determined by the proposals and available funds typically not exceed $500,000 per project per year with project durations from 2-5 years. It is anticipated that 2-8 projects will be funded. Support in out years after FY 2004 is contingent upon the availability of funds.

Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of other agency priorities.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If one incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, one would do so solely at one's own risk of these costs not being included under the award.

Publication of this notice does not obligate any agency to any specific award or to obligate any part of the entire amount of funds available. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

B. Project/Award period

Full proposals can cover a project/award period of up to 5 years. Multi-year awards may be funded incrementally on an annual basis, but, once awarded, those awards will not compete for funding in subsequent years. Each annual award shall require a project description that can be easily divided into annual increments of meaningful work representing solid accomplishments (if prospective funding is not made available, or is discontinued).

The following is a description of Multi-Year Awards for those applicants subsequently recommended for award. This information can also be found on the COP web site under Grants Information. Multi-Year Awards: Multi Year Awards are awards which have an award/project period of more than 12 months of activity. Multi Year Awards are partially funded when the awards are approved, and are subsequently funded in increments. One of the purposes of Multi Year Awards is to reduce the administrative burden on both the applicant and the operating unit. For example, with proper planning, one application can suffice for the entire multi year award period. Funding for each year's activity is contingent upon the availability of funds from Congress, satisfactory performance, and is at the sole discretion of the agency. Multi-year funding is appropriate for projects to be funded for 2 to 5 years. Once approved, full applications are not required for the continuations into the out years.

C. Type of funding instrument

_____They are project grants and cooperative agreements.

(a) Research Project Grants: A research project grant is one in which substantial programmatic involvement by NOAA is not anticipated by the recipient during the project period. Applicants for grants must demonstrate an ability to conduct the proposed research with

minimal assistance, other than financial support, from NOAA.

(b) Cooperative Agreements: A cooperative agreement implies that NOAA will assist recipients in conducting the proposed research. The application should be presented in a manner that demonstrates the applicant's ability to address the research problem in a collaborative manner with NOAA. A cooperative agreement is appropriate when substantial NOAA involvement is anticipated. This means that the recipient can expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance. Substantial involvement exists when: responsibility for the management, control, direction, or performance of the project is shared by the assisting agency and the recipient; or the assisting agency has the right to intervene (including interruption or modification) in the conduct or performance of project activities.

(c) Determination of which instrument to use: Applicants must specify the type of award for which they are applying, either a grant or a cooperative agreement. The funding agency will review the applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Before issuing awards, NOAA will determine whether a grant or cooperative agreement is the appropriate instrument based upon the need for substantial NOAA involvement in the project.

(d) In an effort to maximize the use of limited resources,
applications from non-Federal, non-NOAA Federal and NOAA Federal applicants will be competed against each other. Research proposals selected for funding from non-Federal researchers will be funded through a project grant or cooperative agreement.

Research proposals selected for funding from non-NOAA Federal applicants will be funded through an interagency transfer, provided legal authority exists for the Federal applicant to receive funds from another agency.

PLEASE NOTE: Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must demonstrate that they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from the applicants, the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. section 1535) is not an appropriate basis. Support may be solely through COP or partnered with other Federal offices and agencies.

Proposals deemed acceptable from NOAA Federal researchers will be funded through an intraagency transfer.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, state, local, Indian Tribal Governments, and Federal agencies that possess the statutory authority to receive financial assistance.

(1) Researchers must be employees of an eligible institution listed above; and proposals must be submitted through that institution. Non-Federal researchers should comply with their institutional requirements for proposal submission.

(2) Non-NOAA Federal applicants will be required to submit certifications or documentation showing that they have specific legal authority to receive funds from the Department of Commerce (DOC) for this research.

(3) NCCOS/CSCOR/COP will accept proposals that include foreign researchers as

collaborators with a researcher, who has met the above stated eligibility requirements; and who also is an employee of an eligible institution listed above.

(4) Non-Federal researchers affiliated with NOAA-University Joint Institutes should comply with joint institutional requirements; they will be funded through grants either to their institutions or to joint institutes.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements:
None

C. Other

Each proposal must also include the nine elements listed under Proposal Submission/Required Elements,(a)-(j) or it will be returned to sender without further consideration.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

_____Submit the original and 15 copies of your proposal to Attn. EcoFore, Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research/Coastal Ocean Program (N/SCI2), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 8th Floor Station 8243, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Technical Information. Beth Turner, ECOFORE 2004 Program Manager, NCCOS/CSCOR/COP, 603-862-4680, Internet: elizabeth.turner@noaa.gov

Business Management Information. Leslie McDonald, NCCOS/CSCOR/COP Grants Administrator, 301-713-3338/ext 155, Internet: Leslie.McDonald@noaa.gov

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

_____NOAA and Standard Form Applications with instructions are accessible on the following CSCOR/COP Internet site: http://www.cop.noaa.gov under the COP Grants Information Section, Part D, Application Forms for Initial Proposal Submission.

Forms may be viewed and, in most cases, filled in by computer. All forms must be printed, completed, and mailed to NCCOS/CSCOR/COP with original signatures. If you are unable to access this information, you may call COP at 301-713-3338 to leave a mailing request.

This document requests full proposals only. The provisions for proposal preparation provided here are mandatory. Proposals received after the published deadline (refer to DATES) or proposals that deviate from the prescribed format will be returned to the sender without further consideration. Information regarding this announcement, additional background information, and required Federal forms are available on the NCCOS/CSCOR/COP home page.

_____1. Proposals

Applications submitted in response to this announcement require an original proposal and

15 proposal copies at time of submission. This includes color or high-resolution graphics, unusually sized materials, or otherwise unusual materials submitted as part of the proposal. For color graphics, submit either color originals or color copies. The stated requirements for the number of proposal copies provide for a timely review process and is cleared by OMB control number 0648-0384. (See Collection of information requirements.) Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of full proposals will not be accepted.

2. Required Elements

For clarity in the submission of proposals, the following definitions are provided for recipient use: Funding and/or Budget Period - The period of time when Federal funding is available for obligation by the recipient. The funding period must always be specified in multi-year awards, using fixed year funds. This term may also be used to mean "budget period" A budget period is typically 12 months. Award and/or Project Period - The period established in the award document during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends. The term "award period" is also referred to as project period in 15 CFR 14.2(cc).

Each proposal must include the following nine elements or it will be returned to sender without further consideration:

(a) Standard Form 424. At time of proposal submission, all applicants anticipating direct funding shall submit the Standard Form, SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of funding proposed for the whole project period. This form is to be the cover page for the original proposal and all requested copies. Multi-institutional proposals must include signed SF-424 forms from all institutions requesting funding.

(b) Signed Summary title page. The title page should be signed by the Principal Investigator (PI). The Summary title page identifies the project's title, starting with the acronym: ECOFORE 2004, a short title (less than 50 characters), and the PI's name and affiliation, complete address, phone, FAX and E-mail information. The requested budget for each fiscal year should be included on the Summary title page. Multi-institution proposals must also identify the lead investigator from each fiscal year for each institution and the requested funding for each fiscal year for each institution on the title page, but no signatures are required on the title page from the additional institutions. Lead investigator and separate budget information is not requested on the title page for institutions that are proposed to receive funds through a subcontract to the lead institution; however, the COP Summary Proposal Budget Form and accompanying budget justification must be submitted for each subcontractor. For further details on budget information, please see Section (7) Budget of this Part.

(c) One-page abstract/project summary. The Project Summary (Abstract) Form, which is to be submitted at time of application, shall include an introduction of the problem, rationale, scientific objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of work to be completed. The prescribed NCCOS/CSCOR/COP format for the Project Summary Form can be found on the NCCOS/CSCOR/COP Internet site under the Grants Information section, Part D.

The summary should appear on a separate page, headed with the proposal title, institution(s), investigator(s), total proposed cost, and budget period. It should be written in the third person. The summary is used to help compare proposals quickly and allows the respondents to summarize these key points in their own words.

(d) Project description. The description of the proposed project must be complete and divided

into annual increments of work that include: identification of the problem, scientific objectives, proposed methodology, relevance to the ECOFORE 2004 program goals, and its scientific priorities. The project description (including relevant results from prior support) should not exceed 20 pages. Page limits are inclusive of figures, other visual materials, and letters of endorsement, but are exclusive of references, a milestone chart, and letters of collaboration from unfunded collaborators.

This section should clearly identify project management with a description of the functions of each PI within a team. It should provide a full scientific justification for the research, rather than simply reiterating justifications presented in this document. It should also include:

(i) The objective for the period of proposed work and its expected significance;

(ii) The relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and relation to previous work and work in progress by the proposing principal investigator(s);

(iii) A discussion of how the proposed project lends value to the program goals;

(iv) Potential coordination with other investigators.

(e) References cited. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors in the same sequence they appear in the publications, the article title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publications. While there is no established page limitation, this section should include bibliographic citations only and should not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the 20-page proposal descriptions.

(f) Milestone chart. Provide time lines of major tasks covering the duration of the proposed project.

(g) Budget. At time of proposal submission, all applicants are required to submit a COP Summary Proposal Budget Form for each fiscal year increment. Multi-institution proposals must include a COP Summary Proposal Budget Form for each institution, and multi-investigator proposals using a lead investigator with a contractor/subgrantee approach must submit a COP Summary Proposal Budget Form for each contractor/subgrantee.

Each contractor or subgrantee should be listed as a separate item. Describe products/services to be obtained and indicate the applicability or necessity of each to the project. Provide separate budgets for each subgrantee or contractor regardless of the dollar value and indicate the basis for the cost estimates. List all subgrantee or contractor costs under line item number 5 - Subcontracts on the COP Summary Proposal Budget Form.

The use of this budget form will provide for a detailed annual budget and for the level of detail required by the NCCOS/CSCOR/COP program staff to evaluate the effort to be invested by investigators and staff on a specific project. The COP budget form is compatible with forms in use by other agencies that participate in joint projects with NCCOS/CSCOR/COP and can be found on the NCCOS/CSCOR/COP home page under Grants Information section, Part D.

All applications must include a budget narrative and a justification to support all proposed budget categories. The SF-424A, Budget Information (Non-Construction) Form, will be requested only from those applicants subsequently recommended for award.

Ship time needs must be clearly identified in the proposed budget. The proposer is responsible for requesting ship time through appropriate channels and for meeting all requirements to ensure the availability of requested ship time. Copies of relevant ship time request forms should be included with the proposal.

(h) Biographical sketch. All principal and co-investigators must provide summaries of up

to 2 pages that include the following:

(i) A listing of professional and academic credentials and mailing address;

(ii) A list of up to five publications most closely related to the proposed project and five other significant publications. Additional lists of publications, lectures, and the rest should not be included;

(iii) A list of all persons (including their organizational affiliation) in alphabetical order, with whom the investigator has collaborated on a project or publication within the last 48 months, including collaborators on the proposal and persons listed in the publications. If no collaborators exist, this should be so indicated;

(iv) A list of persons (including their organizational affiliation) with whom the individual has had an association like thesis advisor or postdoctoral scholar sponsor;

(v) A list of the names and institutions of the individual's own graduate and postgraduate advisors.

The material presented in (c, d, and e) is used to assist in identifying potential conflicts or bias in the selection of reviewers.

(i) Current and pending support. Describe all current and pending federal financial/funding support for all principal and co-investigators, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work in light of present commitments to other projects. Therefore, please discuss the percentage of time investigators and collaborators have devoted to other Federal or non-Federal projects, as compared to the time that will be devoted to the project solicited under this notice.

(j) Proposal format and assembly. The original proposal should be clamped in the upper left-hand corner, but left unbound. The 15 additional copies can be stapled in the upper left-hand corner or bound on the left edge. The page margin must be one inch (2.5 cm) at the top, bottom, left, and right, and the typeface standard 12-point size must be clear and easily legible. Proposals should be single spaced.

C. Submission Date and Time

The deadline for receipt of proposals at the COP office is 3 p.m.,local time. November 4, 2003. (Note that late-arriving applications provided to a delivery service on or before November 4, 2003, with delivery guaranteed before 3 p.m., local time on November 4, 2003, will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the application was provided to the delivery service with delivery to the address listed below guaranteed by the specified closing date and time; and, in any event, the proposals are received in the NCCOS/CSCOR/COP office by 3 p.m., local time, no later than 2 business days following the closing date.)

D. Intergovernmental review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(a) (2), an opportunity for public notice and comment is not required for this notice relating to grants, benefits and contracts. Because this notice is exempt from the notice and comment provisions of

the Administrative Procedure Act, a Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is not required, and none has been prepared. It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs: Regardless of any approved indirect cost rate applicable to the award, the maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which DOC will reimburse the recipient shall be the lesser of (a) the line item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the approved budget of the award or (b) the Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on the indirect cost rate approved by a cognizant or oversight Federal agency and current at the time the cost was incurred, provided the rate is approved on or before the award end date.

F. Other Submission Requirements

All applicants are to submit hard copy proposals only. Electronic proposals are not yet accepted by NCCOS/CSCOR/COP. The hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service or hand-delivery.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (20 percent): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities): For this competition, this refers to the likelihood that the research will make substantial contributions or develop products leading to improved management of coastal resources;

2.Technical/Scientific Merit (40 percent): This assess whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this refers to whether Intrinsic scientific value of the proposed work and the likelihood that it will lead to fundamental advancements, new discoveries or will have substantial impact on progress in that field. The proposed work should have focused science objectives and a complete and efficient strategy for making measurements and observations in support of the objectives. The approach should be sound and logically planned throughout the cycle of the proposed work;

3.Overall qualifications of applicants (10 percent): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project(20 percent): For this competition, this refers to the capability of the investigator and collaborators to complete the proposed work as evidenced by past research accomplishments, previous cooperative work, timely communication, and the sharing of findings, data, and other research products;

4. Project costs:(10 percent): The Budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame: For this competition, this refers to the adequacy of the proposed resources to accomplish the proposed work, and the appropriateness of the requested funding with respect to the total available funds.

5. Outreach and Education (10 percent): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For this competition, this refers to the demonstrated connections to management entities who will use the results of the proposed work; Ability to provide results in accessible format to a variety of audiences including the general public.

B. Review and Selection Process

Once a full application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by independent peer mail review and/or by independent peer panel review. Both Federal and non-Federal experts in the field may be used in this process. The peer mail reviewers will be several individuals with expertise in the subjects addressed by particular proposals. Each mail reviewer will see only certain individual proposals within his or her area of expertise, and score them individually on a scale of one to five, where scores represent respectively: Excellent (1), Very Good (2), Good (3), Fair (4), Poor (5).

The peer panel will comprise 4 to 8 individuals, with each individual having expertise in a separate area, so that the panel, as a whole, covers a range of scientific expertise. The panel will have access to all mail reviews of proposals, and will use the mail reviews in discussion and evaluation of the entire slate of proposals. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually. The peer panel shall rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria and scores provided above and used by the mail reviewers. The individual peer panelist scores shall be averaged for each application and presented to the program officers. No consensus advice will be given by the independent peer mail review or the review panel.

The program officers will neither vote or score proposals as part of the independent peer panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the proposal. Those proposals receiving an average panel score of ``Fair" or ``Poor" will not be given further consideration, and proposers will be notified of non-selection.

For the proposals rated by the panel as either ``Excellent," ``Very Good," or ``Good", the program officers will (a) select the proposals to be recommended for funding by average panel ratings, and/or by applying the project funding priorities listed below; (b) determine the total duration of funding for each proposal; and (c) determine the amount of funds available for each proposal subject to the availability of fiscal year funds. Awards may not necessarily be made in rank order. In addition, proposals rated by the panel as either ``Excellent," ``Very Good," or ``Good" that are not funded in the current fiscal period, may be considered for funding in another fiscal period without having to repeat the competitive, review process.

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order of the proposals. Recommendations for funding are then forwarded to the selecting official, the Director of NCCOS/CSCOR/COP, for the final funding decision. In making the final selections, the Director will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the

factors listed below in C.

Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. When a decision has been made (whether an award or declination), verbatim anonymous copies of reviews and summaries of review panel deliberations, if any, will be made available to the proposer. Declined applications will be held in the NCCOS/CSCOR/COP for the required 3 years in accordance with the current retention requirements, and then destroyed.

C. Selection Factors

The selecting official may choose a proposal out of rank order based upon:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance across national regions, and of types of forecasts developed
3. Duplication of other projects funded by NOAA or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors, as stated above in section **I**.B.
5. Applicant's prior award performance: Unsatisfactory prior performance may be a basis for not funding an applicant
6. Evidence of clear partnerships with management groups

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will begin in November 2003. May 1, 2004, should be used as the proposed start date on proposals, unless otherwise directed by the Program Officer.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Any data collected in projects supported by NCCOS/CSCOR/COP should be delivered to a National Data Center (NDC),such as the National Oceanographic Data Center (NODC), in a format to be determined by the institution, the NODC, and the Program Officer. It is the responsibility of the institution for the delivery of these data; the DOC will not provide additional support for delivery beyond the award. Additionally, all biological cultures established, molecular probes developed, genetic sequences identified, mathematical models constructed, or other resulting information products established through support provided by NCCOS/CSCOR/COP are encouraged to be made available to the general research community at no or modest handling charge (to be determined by the institution, Program Officer, and DOC).

Please note that NOAA is developing a policy on internal

overhead charges, NOAA scientists considering submission of proposals should contact the appropriate NCCOS/CSCOR/COP Program Manager for the latest information.

C. Reporting

All financial and progress reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies). Financial reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer and Performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the NOAA program officer. Financial reports are semi-annual and Performance reports are annual.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Technical Information. Beth Turner, ECOFORE 2004 Program Manager, NCCOS/CSCOR/COP, 603-862-4680, Internet: elizabeth.turner@noaa.gov
Business Management Information. Leslie McDonald, NCCOS/CSCOR/COP Grants Administrator, 301-713-3338/ext 155, Internet: Leslie.McDonald@noaa.gov

VIII. Other Information

Background information about Ecological Forecasting is available in a publication by the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Ecological Systems at http://www.nbii.gov/about/pubs/efbrochure/. A NOAA perspective on Ecological Forecasting is available at http://www.nccos.noaa.gov/documents/ecoforecasting.pdf

Collection of information requirements

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act,
unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

This notification involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040 and 0348-0046.

The following requirements have been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0384; a Summary Proposal Budget Form (30 minutes per response), a Project Summary Form (30 minutes per response), a standardized format for the annual Performance Report (5 hours per response), a standardized format for the Final Report (10 hours per response), and the submission of up to 20 copies of proposals (10 minutes per response). The response estimates include the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding these requirements and the burden estimate, or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to leslie.mcdonald@noaa.gov. Copies of these forms and formats can be found on the CSCOR/COP home page under Grants Information sections, Parts D and F.