

FY2017-FY2018 NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (New England B-WET) Program

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ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY2017-FY2018 NOAA New England Bay Watershed Education and Training (New England B-WET) Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-GARFO-2016-2005001

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.008, NOAA Mission-Related Education Awards

Dates: Complete applications must be received at <http://www.Grants.gov>, or postmarked or provided to a delivery service, with appropriate documentation, no later than 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST), on the closing date, October, 28, 2016. Electronic submission via [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) is preferred. If use of [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) is infeasible or impractical, paper copy applications will be accepted, but use of the U.S. Postal Service or other delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Private, metered postmarks are not acceptable. Postmarked applications received more than five (5) business days after the closing date will not be accepted. Facsimile or email applications will not be accepted.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that submission via www.Grants.gov is preferred. This electronic submission system is complex for first-time users and involves several preliminary registrations to be completed before an application can be submitted. Allow sufficient time for your application to be submitted electronically and to accommodate possible computer delays. Validation or rejection of your application by [Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) may take up to two (2) business days after submission. Any application not adhering to the postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected and returned to the sender without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA's Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET) is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning focused on K-12 students and their classroom teachers. B-WET is a competitive grant program that promotes Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences, also known as "MWEEs". MWEEs are B-WET's signature methodology and include multi-staged activities, both in the classroom and outdoors, that aim to increase the environmental literacy of all participants.

New England B-WET is one of NOAA's seven regional B-WET environmental education programs. Through its competitive grant program New England B-WET promotes high quality environmental education, fosters the growth of new, innovative programs, and encourages capacity-building and environmental education partnerships within six New England states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Successful projects advance ocean, climate, and other environmental literacy goals and incorporate the goals of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan through (1) student hands-on environmental education in New England watersheds and (2) formal K-12 teacher and administrator professional development and support during student MWEEs.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program is an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning and outdoor investigation integrated into formal classroom learning, from kindergarten through grade 12. Established in 2002 first in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, B-WET expanded to New England in 2008. The program currently exists in seven regions: the Chesapeake Bay, the Gulf of Mexico, New England, California, the Pacific Northwest, Hawaii, and the Great Lakes.

Students receive hands-on, place-based outdoor education related to issues affecting watershed, coastal, and ocean ecosystems. Teachers, administrators and other educators who serve in-school K-12 audiences receive professional development to support student learning. The B-WET MWEE methodology integrates field experiences with classroom activities and instruction in science, technology, engineering and math using NOAA assets (such as datasets, reports, websites, curriculum, experts, reserves, and sanctuaries).

Successful applications use Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) best practices to advance ocean, climate and other environmental literacy goals. MWEE best practices were developed using environmental education research and evaluation results, and lessons learned over a decade of B-WET Program implementation. Evaluation has demonstrated tangible links between student participation in B-WET-funded MWEEs and an increase in environmental literacy and stewardship.

The definition of the MWEE and its essential elements, provided in detail below, is used by all seven B-WET regions and can also be found at:

http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/educational_resources/bwet/mwee_definition-final2015-7-29v3.pdf.

For more information about ocean and climate literacy and NOAA's Office of Education (B-WET headquarters), please see:

<http://oceanliteracy.wp2.coexploration.org/ocean-literacy-framework/> and

<http://cpo.noaa.gov/OutreachandEducation/ClimateLiteracy.aspx> and the goals of the NOAA Education Strategic Plan (<http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/leadership/edcouncil/docs/2015-Strategic-Plan-FullText.pdf>).

Defining the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE)

1. Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)-Student Components

Issue definition and background research

Students focus on an environmental question, problem, or issue requiring background research and investigation. They learn more about the issue through classroom instruction, the collection of data, conducting experiments, talking to experts and reviewing credible publications. This process should be age appropriate with practices growing in complexity and sophistication across the grades, starting with educator guided investigation and progressing to student-led inquiry.

Outdoor field activities

Students participate in multiple outdoor field activities sufficient to collect the data or make observations required for answering the research questions and informing student actions, or as part of the issue definition and background research. Students should be actively involved in planning the investigation, taking measurements, or constructing the project within age appropriate safety guidelines, with teachers providing instruction on methods and procedures, data collection protocols, and proper use of equipment as needed. These activities can take place off-site and/or on the school grounds.

Stewardship action projects

Students participate in an age appropriate project during which they take action to address environmental issues at the personal or societal level. Participants in B-WET MWEE activities should understand they have control over the outcome of environmental issues, be encouraged to identify actions to address these issues, and understand the value of those actions. Examples of stewardship activities include:

- * Watershed Restoration or Protection (e.g., create schoolyard habitat, plant trees or grasses, remove invasive species, clean up communities, manage stormwater runoff.)
- * Everyday Choices (e.g., reduce/reuse/recycle/upcycle, composting, energy conservation, water conservation)
- * Community Engagement (e.g., presentations, social media, event-organizing, messaging at community events/fairs/festivals, mentoring, PSAs, flyers, posters)
- * Civic Action (e.g., town meetings, voting, writing elected officials/decision makers, advocating for policy change)

Synthesis and conclusions

Students analyze and evaluate the results of projects and investigations. Students synthesize and communicate results and conclusions to an external audience such as other classrooms, schools, parents, or the community.

2. Support for Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)

In addition to the components identified above, NOAA recommends that the following elements are in place to fully support successful MWEE implementation with students:

- * Teacher participation for the duration of the MWEE

While external partners are entirely appropriate to support MWEEs, teachers should support the experience in the classroom and in the field. Teachers are in the best position to help students make connections and draw on past lessons, serve as environmental role models, and enhance students' overall outdoor education experience, and should be involved in all components of the experiences detailed above. To support them in this role, teachers should have appropriate knowledge of environmental issues and watershed concepts, skill in connecting these issues to their curriculum, and competency in environmental education pedagogy, including the ability and confidence to teach outdoor lessons and to lead students in critical thinking about environmental issues.

- * Integration with classroom curriculum

Experiences should be integrated into what is occurring in the classroom and can provide authentic, age appropriate, engaging multi-disciplinary content to address academic standards. Specifically, elements of science and social studies standards related to questioning and investigation, evidence-based analysis and interpretation, model and theory building, knowledge of environmental processes and systems, skill for understanding and addressing environmental issues, and personal and civic responsibility align well with MWEEs. Non-school activities may enrich traditional classroom curriculum when needed, though this need should be documented and supported by local education agencies.

- * Use of the local context for learning

The local community and environment should be viewed as a primary resource for student MWEEs. Place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in the unique history,

environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a students' schoolyard, neighborhood, town or community, thus offering students and teachers the opportunity to explore how individual and collective decisions impact their immediate surroundings. Once a firm connection to their local environment is made, students are better positioned to expand their thinking to recognize the far-reaching implications of the decisions they make to the larger national and global environment.

* Experiences are a set of activities over time

MWEE includes the full duration leading up to and following the outdoor field experiences. Each component should involve a significant investment of instructional time, incorporate time for reflection, and include all students. Experiences such as tours, simulations, demonstrations, or nature walks may be instructionally useful, but alone do not constitute an entire meaningful watershed educational experience as defined here.

* Includes NOAA assets, including personnel and resources

NOAA has a wealth of applicable products and services as well as a cadre of scientific and professional experts that can heighten the impact of environmental instruction both in the classroom and in the field. Additionally, environmental professionals can serve as important role models for career choices and stewardship. For more on NOAA assets for education please see: <http://www.education.noaa.gov/>, www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/NOAA_assets.html, and http://www.education.noaa.gov/Special_Topics/NOAA_in_Your_Backyard/NIYB_NewEng_LKn_final.pdf.

3. Teacher Professional Development for Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs)

Teachers should be skilled in using environmental education and MWEEs to address multiple subjects' curriculum standards and local education agency initiatives. In order to gain and maintain environmental education competencies, teachers need access to sustained, high quality professional development that includes ongoing support and feedback. Teachers should gain confidence in the value of MWEEs and strategies for conducting them so that they will conduct MWEEs after the B-WET supported program has ended. Specifically, the following elements are recommended for professional development to support teachers implementing MWEEs:

* Increase teachers' knowledge and awareness of environmental issues

Teachers must have an adequate level of content knowledge for their MWEE topic area specific to their grade level and discipline, including an understanding of basic watershed concepts and the human connection to the watershed. Recognizing that environmental issues often include different perspectives and opinions, teachers must also have a deep understanding of the facts related to environmental issues along with an understanding of the various stakeholder values. In addition, teachers who demonstrate environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviors may be role models for their students and increase their ability to guide students in actions to address complex environmental issues.

- * Model environmental education pedagogy

Facilitators/trainers should utilize the same techniques and experiences in trainings that teachers are expected to use with their students, such as hands-on, place-based, outdoor field experiences and environmental issue investigation and action.

- * Allow for adequate instructional time

Professional Development trainings should be multi-day, occurring consecutively or over the course of several months. Trainings should include ample opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and planning for how to use knowledge and skills gained from professional development in the classroom.

- * Provide ongoing teacher support and appropriate incentives

Even in cases where teachers participate in robust multi-day trainings, such as a summer or weekend courses, it is still essential that professional development providers have a structure in place for on-going teacher support and enrichment. This can take the form of follow up meetings, creating web-based forums for communication and feedback, establishing mentor teachers who can serve as points of contact, or including teams of teachers from one particular school. Continuing education credits and stipends can be used to encourage participation in on-going professional development opportunities. Outreach and training opportunities for school administrators may help increase high level support for both environmental education and continuing teacher professional development for teachers.

- * Meet jurisdictional guidelines for effective teacher professional development

Each state has established guidance and recommendations germane to all forms of teacher professional development. When possible, professional development opportunities in

environmental education should adhere to these general guidelines set forth by states or local education agencies.

The New England B-WET Program

The New England B-WET Program is managed by NOAA's Greater Atlantic Region Fisheries Office (GARFO) in Gloucester, Massachusetts and funds projects within six New England states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

The goal of this New England B-WET Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) is to support K-12 environmental literacy programs through student MWEEs investigating New England watersheds, supported by professional development for in-service teachers, administrators, or other educators serving K-12 students. New England watersheds are an excellent resource for environmental education and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning. Tidal and non-tidal waters and the surrounding landscapes provide hands-on, place-based laboratories where students can see, touch, investigate, and learn about their watersheds and the greater environment in an integrated fashion. New England B-WET is committed to expanding the participation and knowledge of low-income and underserved student populations in ocean, watershed, and environmental STEM education. Applicants should provide demographic evidence if their projects target low-income or underserved populations, for example, in Title 1 schools, minority groups including Native American populations and tribal organizations, underrepresented communities, and rural schools.

Information on the New England B-WET program, including examples of projects that have been funded to date, can be found at greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/educationalresources/bwet/.

Potential applicants may contact the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region (contact information in Section VII) before submitting an application with questions about applicability of project activities to B-WET goals and objectives.

B. Program Priorities

This FFO supports four (4) New England B-WET priorities:

1. Backyard B-WET
2. Diadromous Fish
3. Community-Watershed Linkages
4. MWEE Capacity-Building

The first three priorities all require delivery of professional development and student MWEEs following the B-WET MWEE definition described previously. Projects may address more than one priority, but applicants must designate a single, primary priority in their application.

All applications addressing priorities 1 through 3 under this FFO must include MWEEs that directly serve both teachers and their students. Teacher professional development should include support during the school year, including assistance and co-teaching during delivery of student MWEEs. Evaluation results show that teacher training promotes teacher confidence in adopting and sustaining student MWEEs after the B-WET-supported funding has ended. Effective student MWEEs are learner-centered, focus on investigations that require collection, analysis, and communication of data, and promote stewardship action. These activities grounded in proven MWEE best practices and defined within the context of the local community and culture increase student interest and motivation, promote positive attitudes toward scientific inquiry, and foster environmental stewardship. Appropriate student MWEEs will provide students with an understanding of basic watershed concepts, a knowledge of interactions and linkages within natural systems (e.g., wildlife, plants, and the water cycle) and social systems (e.g., among communities, transportation systems, and schools), and the connections between human activities and environmental conditions.

Some project participants may be outside the boundaries of the New England B-WET region, but preference will be given to projects whose primary audience lies within the region. Field investigations should occur within New England watersheds. Experiences proposed outside the watershed must be adequately justified.

1. Priority - Backyard B-WET: School Grounds Investigation of Stewardship and Habitat Restoration

Over 5,000 public schools serve more than two million public school students in New England. There are many private schools in New England as well. Funds for field investigations are often limited, so projects that require transportation or site fees cannot always be sustained after grant periods end. However, there are endless opportunities for MWEE investigations and hands-on stewardship and restoration projects on school grounds or within walking distance of schools.

Restoration projects on school grounds, on land adjacent to schools, or through walking field trips can support each component of the MWEE (issue investigation, outdoor learning, action projects, and information synthesis). When watershed and issue investigation components of the MWEE occur outside of the school grounds, the action element of the

MWEE project should include hands-on habitat restoration such as planting and maintenance of stream buffers, school forests, wildlife habitat, or the creation of outdoor learning environments. Projects that remove impervious surfaces, install barrels, or plant rain gardens are possibilities, but applicants are encouraged to suggest other types of projects. Where non-consumable equipment is critical to continuation of the project post-grant period, budgets may include equipment purchases for schools. Projects that are sustainable, replicable, and that support teachers' abilities and actively involve students in the planning, maintenance, monitoring, and analysis of restoration projects will be most competitive.

Applicants should identify how their project's stewardship outcomes will be monitored and measured. Successful grantees will be asked to report on these stewardship activities and measurable outcomes in their performance progress reports so that NOAA can document the environmental benefits of these projects.

Successful Priority 1 projects will implement environmentally sustainable practices that improve the health of a school's watershed, assure teacher confidence in integrating the program into the classroom curriculum, offer authentic investigation and stewardship experiences for students, and reduce energy and maintenance costs for schools. Competitive projects will include family and community outreach opportunities, such as peer-to-peer sharing in school, presenting at school events or public meetings, or posting at libraries and other community spaces. Backyard B-WET schools may become local examples of responsible environmental practices, reaching into communities and families in ways that few other organizations are able.

2. Priority - Diadromous Fish

Diadromous fish are species that spend part of their life history in marine environments and part in fresh water systems. Anadromous fish are born in fresh water, spend most of their life in the ocean, and then return to fresh water to reproduce. Catadromous fish begin life in the oceans, migrate into fresh water as juveniles, and then return to the marine environment to reproduce. Consequently, these fish are key components of terrestrial, fresh water, and salt water food webs and are a great vehicle for watershed MWEs. They transport nutrients between marine and freshwater systems and are often culturally significant. They represent obvious ecological linkages between land, river, and ocean environments. In New England, several diadromous fish species are vulnerable to multiple threats, are the focus of regional restoration initiatives, and are accessible to stewardship and restoration student action projects:

Atlantic salmon is an anadromous, critically endangered species, recently identified as a

NOAA "Species in the Spotlight" because it is at high risk of extinction in the near future. Current wild populations within the United States are confined to Maine's rivers. Domestic recovery efforts include dam removals and improvements to fish passage at dams and restoration of fresh water spawning habitats. The Penobscot Habitat Focus Area (<https://www.habitatblueprint.noaa.gov/habitat-focus-areas/penobscot-river-maine/>) in Maine, New England's only NOAA-designated Habitat Focus Area, is a hub of NOAA GARFO's Atlantic salmon river restoration efforts.

Shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon are listed as endangered and threatened species (<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected/atlsturgeon/docs/sturgeonfactsheetfinal.pdf>). They occur throughout New England's ocean, coastal, and riverine habitats and suffer from many of the same threats as Atlantic salmon. Existing lesson plans under a NOAA GARFO program (SCUTES) could be incorporated into MWEEs investigating sturgeon.

River herring populations are at very low abundances compared to historic levels and are an Endangered Species Act candidate species for listing. River herring are important to the Gulf of Maine food web, feeding other fish as well as birds, seals, and whales. NOAA Fisheries and its partners monitor and attempt to restore river herring runs by improving fish passage and access to spawning habitat (<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/stories/2013/riverherring.html>) so that the species will not require listing.

The American eel is our only New England catadromous species. Eel live primarily in brackish or fresh water, eventually migrating to the Sargasso Sea in the middle of the Atlantic to spawn.

Successful projects investigating one or more species of these or other diadromous fish, their required habitat, and restoration efforts will use MWEE teacher and student best practices.

3. Priority - Investigation of Community-Watershed Linkages

Community resiliency, specifically fishing community resiliency, is a GARFO Strategic Plan priority. Projects under this New England B-WET priority will support coastal and watershed community resiliency by building knowledge and appreciation for the economic, cultural, physical, geological, or other evidences of coastal, bay, and watershed influences on a community.

Resiliency and sustainability studies show a strong correlation between a community's

appreciation for its heritage and that community's ability to withstand or recover from threats. A survey of fishermen from four Maine fishing communities indicated fishermen recognize this correlation. They believed their resiliency depended on their communities' self-identification as fishing communities and appreciation of their fishing heritage.

Projects under this priority will support curriculum development, teacher training, and classroom and field support or co-teaching to support student investigations of biological, physical, economic, and cultural local resources that reveal their community's connections to coastal, bay and river resources. How did the community's watershed resources contribute to early settlement, cultural heritage, and future potential?

This priority is not restricted to investigations of fishing or coastal communities. Inland communities might study historical cultural connections to rivers and lakes through such early industries as trade and shipping, mills, quarries, agriculture, or ship building. Why populations settled in a place, the impacts humans have had on the landscape, and how those impacts affect future ecological potential or vulnerability can be explored focusing on the importance of the watershed to the place of interest.

A multidisciplinary approach to this priority could involve research and data collection on biological, physical, economic, and cultural local resources that define a community's past and present relationship to its watershed resources. Students could collect and analyze current and historical physical evidence on walking trips, research town archives, collect oral histories from multigenerational community members, research changes in the physical and biological landscape, and review weather and climate databases, census data, or other long-term datasets. Examples of associated stewardship opportunities include site restoration or cleanups, issue identification, and presentations to community groups.

NOAA Sea Grant, Weather Service scientists, and social scientists may be appropriate "NOAA assets" for projects under this priority. NOAA weather datasets may also be useful.

Other potential NOAA assets include but are not limited to:

-- In Their Own Words; Fishermen's Perspectives of Community Resilience. Catherine Schmitt for Maine Sea Grant http://www.seagrant.umaine.edu/files/pdf-global/InTheirOwnWords_062314.pdf

-- Fishing community profiles source document: Community Profiles for Northeast U.S. Fisheries: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/read/socialsci/pdf/NY/montauk-ny.pdf>

-- Oral history examples and protocols: Voices From the Fisheries:

<https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/humandimensions/voices-from-the-fisheries/>

--For coastal communities: Northeast Ocean Data Portal:

<http://www.northeastoceandata.org/>

4. Priority - MWEE Capacity Building

MWEEs are rigorous STEM and environmental literacy pedagogical experiences with multiple elements. They are delivered over the course of days, weeks, or even months. When first implemented, they usually require partners external to the formal school division, along with significant involvement from teachers.

Five of the New England states have recently adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), while the sixth, Massachusetts, has elected to pursue related rigorous, scaffolding science standards. Although each state also has an environmental literacy plan, their environmental literacy standards are optional, not mandatory. Consequently, environmental literacy is often overlooked. A successful project under this priority would build the capacity of agencies or organizations to develop, deliver, and sustain programs to advance environmental literacy at a state or regional level, a potentially valuable resource.

MWEE capacity building proposals can focus on one or multiple New England states. Capacity building may include piloting innovative training for formal educators; developing accessible curriculum/resource guides, websites, or workshops that implement science standards using MWEE best practices; or establishing, developing, or implementing a state environmental literacy plan that includes MWEE best-practices and is aligned to state science standards. Capacity building requires networking among educational organizations. Projects should coordinate and/or link major education or natural resource agencies and organizations throughout a state or region. MWEE capacity building is a complex, long-term effort that can take years to successfully design and implement. Therefore, all capacity building proposals must indicate how the project identified in the proposal is part of a larger state or regional effort and must include documented support from a state or regional organization that specifies how this project meets state or regional needs. Examples of these organizations include but are not limited to governmental entities such as state departments of education or natural resource agencies, or non-profit organizations like state Association for Environmental Education affiliates or science teacher associations. Professional development occurring under capacity building applications must attain the same rigor as professional development training identified in the earlier description of MWEEs.

C. Program Authority

Under 33 U.S.C. § 893a(a), the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is authorized to conduct, develop, support, promote, and coordinate formal and informal educational activities at all levels to enhance public awareness and understanding of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, and atmospheric science and stewardship by

the general public and other coastal stakeholders, including underrepresented groups in ocean and atmospheric science and policy careers. In conducting those activities, the Administrator shall build upon the educational programs and activities of the agency with consideration given to the goal of promoting the participation of individuals from underrepresented groups in STEM fields and in promoting the acquisition and retention of highly qualified and motivated young scientists to complement and supplement workforce needs.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

We anticipate that approximately \$510,000 may be available for New England B-WET awards in FY2017, subject to the availability of appropriations. If funding is available, we anticipate allocating approximately \$300,000 first, to fund continuing projects. These active, multi-year projects were successfully competed under the FY2015 New England B-WET FFO. Renewal of these awards occurs annually pending adequate and timely submission of project performance reports and documentation of adequate progress toward stated objectives.

We anticipate that \$210,000 will be available for three to five new FY2017 New England B-WET awards under this FFO.

If there are no funds available or if funding for new projects is very limited in FY2017, New England B-WET may carry proposals recommended for funding forward until funding does become available. In that case, the results of this competition, including the results of the application review and rankings, will be carried over for FY2018. So, while we anticipate funding three to five proposals in FY2017, additional proposals from this competition may be selected for funding in the next fiscal year (FY2018) should funds be available. The possibility of carrying the results of this competition over to FY2018 depends on determining that the project applications received under this funding opportunity for FY2017 funds remain relevant to NOAA priorities in New England in FY2018.

This alternative to developing another, new FFO for FY2018 acknowledges the great effort required by applicants to develop a strong proposal as well as the work required by the B-WET Program Office and reviewers to conduct panel reviews. If we select proposals from this FY2017 competition for possible funding in FY2018, the standard practice of considering the remaining projects from this FY2017 solicitation in rank order will be followed.

Total Federal funds that may be requested from NOAA should not exceed \$80,000 in any year, and no more than \$240,000 in total for a three-year project. The minimum Federal amount that should be requested from NOAA for one year is \$25,000. NOAA does not anticipate accepting or reviewing applications requesting Federal support from NOAA of less than \$25,000 in any year or more than \$80,000 in any year and more than \$240,000 in total for a three-year project..

Projects that are awarded as multi-year (two- or three-year) awards will receive funding for only the first year of the award in FY2017. Funding for future (“out”) years is dependent on the B-WET program budget and on priorities in those years. Out-year funding for any awarded grant is not guaranteed. We recommend that you include in your project description discrete deliverables that will be completed by the end of each year in the event that future funding is not available.

B. Project/Award Period

The project start date should not be earlier than July 1, 2017. Applications should cover a project period of between one and three years. Projects that request multi-year funding must include in their submission a full description of the activities and estimated budget by line item (e.g. personnel, equipment, supplies, etc.) for all proposed work for each year. We recommend that your project description include a flexible requested start date.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument will be either a grant or a cooperative agreement. This determination will be confirmed by NOAA’s Grants Office. The award will be a cooperative agreement if the proposed project involves substantial NOAA Federal scientific or programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement means that, after award, NOAA scientific or program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in project activities in a partnership role. NOAA will not assume direction, prime responsibility, or a dominant role in the activities. The dominant role and prime responsibility reside with the grantee for the project as a whole, although specific tasks and activities may be shared between the grantee and NOAA. Examples of substantial NOAA involvement may include non-compensated collaboration in research or approval of key stages in the project before subsequent steps are undertaken. The exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA/NMFS representatives.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are K-12 public and independent schools and school systems; institutions of higher education; community-based and non-profit organizations; state, county, local, or Indian tribal government agencies; and regional organizations. For-profit organizations, foreign organizations, and foreign public entities are not eligible to apply. However, for-profit and foreign organizations and foreign public entities may participate with an eligible applicant as a project partner. Individuals and Federal agencies are not eligible applicants.

While applicants do not need to be located in the targeted geographical region specified in the program objectives (i.e., in the New England states), they do need to focus the proposed work on target audiences that reside in this geographical region in order to be a qualified applicant.

The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. The B-WET Program encourages proposals from, or involving, any of the above institutions. Information on minority serving institutions and demographics of K-12 schools can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst.html>.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive funding under this competition; however Federal employees can serve as uncompensated partners on proposals. Should you wish to partner with a NOAA employee in the project, a written agreement of this participation must be provided, detailing their involvement, signed by the employee's supervisor. NOAA involvement could include planning, scheduling, conducting, and evaluating proposed project activities and frequent contact with the applicant to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, i.e., SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, SF-LLL, and the CD-511, is available at <http://www.grants.gov/>

(Grants.gov). Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov. If you do not have internet access, contact Deirdre Kimball (deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov, 978-281-9290) to request an application package.

B. Content and Form of Application

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or if internet access is not available to you or your organization, paper applications will be accepted. Paper applications must be submitted with completed, signed, original forms in hard copy and an electronic copy of the entire application on CD, including scanned, signed forms. If the applicant has completed the entire application in Grants.gov but is unable to submit it via Grants.gov, then this application package should be provided via CD, along with printed and signed versions of forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511. The authorized representative **MUST** sign and date these forms over the printed signature that will appear in the signature box. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound in any manner.

Paper applications without inked signatures on their forms will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. Paper applications must be mailed to the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (see "Section IV. D" for complete mailing information).

Brevity will assist reviewers and Program staff in effectively processing the proposals. However, applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of the New England B-WET Program Office or the reviewers as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Proposals must be in at least a 10-point font, be single-spaced, and not exceed noted page limits.

Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed. Applications that are lacking any of the required elements of the application or do not follow the form prescribed will be rejected/returned.

Federal Forms: The following Federal Forms are required and must be submitted with each application:

* Application for Federal Assistance: Form SF-424. Funding on this form (items 18 a - g) must reflect (1) the total of Federal funding requested for all years, (2) the total match (if appropriate, match is voluntary) for all years, and (3) the total project cost (total Federal

funding plus total match funding) of ALL years requested in the application.

- * Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424A. Separate Form SF424A budget forms should be submitted for each year of requested funding. In Section B, use separate columns to indicate how Federal funds and matching funds (if applicable) are broken down by cost category. If you need guidance on how to complete this form, contact Deirdre Kimball (978-281-9290, Deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov).
- * Assurances, Non-construction Programs: Form SF-424B.
- * Certification Regarding Lobbying: Form CD-51.
- * Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: Form SF-LLL (if applicable). You must complete and submit this form if you have made or have agreed to make payment to any lobbying entity for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of or the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, cooperative agreement, or loan. Recipients may not use funds awarded under a Federal grant or cooperative agreement to conduct such lobbying activities.

Project Summary (described below, two-page limit) The Project Summary should include:

- * Project title.
- * Principal Investigator(s).
- * Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
- * Organization and Partnerships: Briefly describe your organization, and list your partners for this grant, if applicable. Partnerships are encouraged.
- * Priority under which you are applying (Backyard B-WET, Diadromous Fish, Community-Watershed Linkages, or MWEE Capacity Building).
- * Project duration (a 12 to 36 month project period, starting on the first of a month and ending on the last day of the final month). Specify whether the project is being submitted with the intention of continuation beyond the first year.
- * Summary of work to be performed during the project period: Provide a brief statement

that explains the need for your project and its goals and objectives. In addition, identify what NOAA GARFO regional priorities (Backyard B-WET, Diadromous Fish, Community-Watershed Linkages, MWEE Capacity Building) you will address and NOAA assets and educational resources you will use. Your summary should use plain language so that reviewers can understand the purpose and expected outcomes of your educational project, including the number of teachers/students targeted. A person unfamiliar with your project should be able to read your summary and understand your proposal.

- * List primary objectives for the entire anticipated project period, broken out by year (include number of teachers and/or students to be reached, anticipated contact hours, and deliverables each year).
- * Identify delivery method: Explain how you will reach your audience, such as workshops, field experiences, interactive programs, summer institutes, classroom outreach, etc.
- * Audience: Describe the demographics of your target audience including the school division(s) and the number and types of participants you expect to reach, such as teachers and students and the specific grade levels, environmental educators, principals, etc.
- * Budget Information: Total Federal funding requested for FY 2017 and total project costs for FY 2017, including total Non-Federal match. Total multi-year request and match (if applicable). Please list requested amounts in whole dollars and specify whether contributions are project-related cash or in-kind.

Detailed Project Narrative (up to 12 pages):

Describe in detail what your project will achieve with the following headings: What, Why, Who, and How. Explain each aspect of your proposal clearly and address each topic below. The narrative must be detailed enough for reviewers to connect the proposed activities and project costs. The project narrative should track as closely as possible the evaluation criteria (see Evaluation Criteria, Section V.A.).

- * What: Explain the goals and objectives for your project. Include information about how the project will apply the MWEE best practices to contribute to greater understanding and stewardship of the New England watersheds. Identify the single New England B-WET program priority that your project supports, (Backyard B-WET, Diadromous Fish, Community-Watershed Linkages, or MWEE Capacity Building). Please discuss how your project supports ocean, climate or environmental literacy, and the goals of the NOAA

Education Strategic Plan. If your project may trigger consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), provide relevant environmental information in the project description. Any supporting documentation may be included as an attachment. These attachments do not count against the 12-page Project Narrative page limit. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals”.

* **Why:** Briefly describe the need for your project, including any state, regional, or national initiatives that the project supports. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals”.

* **Who:** Identify your target audience, and give a precise location of the project and area(s) to be served. Be sure to include how many students will receive MWEEs annually in your project and how many teachers will receive professional development annually. Provide information regarding the demographics of the audience, including any evidence that your audience includes a substantial percentage of students from low-income or underserved populations. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals”.

* **How:** Outline your objectives and how the proposed objectives will be accomplished. If the proposal is for a multi-year project, provide deliverables for each year. Detail how the project meets or supports the definition of the MWEE as defined in this funding opportunity (including student investigation and stewardship) and what NOAA products, services, or staff will be used in program delivery. This section addresses technical merit of the proposal. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Technical merit”.

* **Sustainability:** Explain how requested funding will build a project that can be sustained after NOAA grant funds expire. List all other sources of funding that have been sought for the project and the status of those requests. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Project Costs”.

* **Outreach and Education:** Projects should include significant external sharing and communication beyond the primary audience (typically students and teachers). Projects should include mechanisms that encourage students and/or teachers to share their knowledge with peers, their school, and their local community. This can include presentation of project design and evaluation at conferences or media outreach about the program but should also include sharing with other students, teachers, administrators, and the community that advances the goal of environmental stewardship. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Outreach and Education”.

* **Project-Level Evaluation:** Evaluation here is defined as the systematic collection and documentation of information about your project's outcomes in order to improve the project's effectiveness, guide judgments about its impact, and/or inform decisions about future programming or funding. In this section, you must explain your plans for meeting the goals and objectives of your project and for tracking and measuring progress on your outputs and your short-term outcomes. If your medium- and long-term outcomes can also be measured within the project period, explain your plans for that evaluation as well. Evaluation plans may be quantitative and/or qualitative and may include, for example, evaluation tools, observation, and/or outside consultation. No more than 10% of the project costs should be spent on the evaluation component of your proposal. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, "Technical Merit".

Grant recipients will report B-WET project-level evaluation results to NOAA. For detailed information on how to create an evaluation plan, visit NOAA's website at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/evaluation/welcome.html>.

BWET National Evaluation: In addition to project-level evaluation, grantees are asked to participate in data collection for the national B-WET evaluation. The B-WET national evaluation consists of two parts: Part 1 is for all recipients of B-WET grants, while Part 2 is only for programs that work with teachers. The B-WET national evaluation monitors program implementation and outcomes on an ongoing basis. Results of this evaluation will be used to improve the B-WET program, document its value, and better tailor it to program audiences. Grantees with teacher participants will be able to view a summary of responses from their participating teachers. Success of this effort depends on grantee participation, so applicants are strongly encouraged to review the information about the national evaluation system (available here: http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet_eval.php) and consider how they can support it as part of their projects. Part 1 (for all B-WET grantees): As part of this evaluation system, one individual from each recipient organization will be asked to voluntarily complete an online questionnaire once per year of the award. The questionnaire is designed to take about 30-60 minutes (depending on the nature of the program) and may require some internal data compilation. Along with completing the recipient questionnaire, the grantee will be asked to provide the email addresses of participating teachers (after notifying teachers that their email will be shared) and to encourage teachers to participate in the national evaluation.

Part 2 (for programs with teacher professional development, i.e. Priorities 1 through 3) For projects that work with teachers, the teacher-participants will be asked to complete one questionnaire at the close of their professional development and another after implementing

a MWEE with their students (at the end of the following school year). Each teacher questionnaire should take about 30 minutes to complete.

B-WET grantees and teachers who respond to the questionnaires will remain anonymous to B-WET and NOAA. NOAA will only view the resulting data in aggregate at the national or regional level. However grantees will receive a password-protected report link to allow them to view data from teacher participants of their project in the aggregate.

All applicants should provide information about how they plan to support this national evaluation system, incorporate it into the project timeline, and ensure responses from participating teachers as part of their application. Applicants may incorporate the staff time required to complete the B-WET national evaluation into their budget proposal. More information, including all of the survey instruments, is available on the NOAA B-WET national website: http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet_eval.php.

Grantees should review the information available for the national level evaluation and take this into consideration in planning for their project-level evaluations. For example:

** Grantees may not need to include questions that will be answered through the national evaluation teacher instrument in their project-level evaluations.

** Wherever possible, grantees should try to incorporate participation in the national evaluation system into existing requirements for professional development program completion. For example, teachers may receive some program incentive upon completion of the teacher professional development instrument.

Note that participation in this national evaluation is not intended to replace project-level evaluation. While grantees will have access to their teacher's results from the national evaluation system, the national evaluation may not provide the level of detail needed to fully understand, describe, and improve specific grant projects.

Additional information about the national evaluation project, including background, FAQs, survey instruments, and suggested text for communicating with your teacher participants about this project, is available here: http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet_eval.php

This data collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines (OMB Control No 0648-0658).

* **Organization and Personnel:** Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Proposals should demonstrate the applicant organization's knowledge and experience in

delivering the project requested in this application. The principal investigator may or may not be an employee of the applicant; however, if not, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., the applicant may be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the work). Include the resume or curriculum vitae (CV) of the principal investigator(s) and any consultants and/or subcontractors, and indicate their level of involvement in the project. Include copies of any agreements between the applicant and the other participants describing the specific tasks to be performed. Agreement documents and resumes/CVs (2-page maximum for each major participant) should be included and do not count toward the project narrative's 12-page limitation. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, "Overall qualifications of applicants".

* **Partnerships:** Describe any partnerships with other organizations and/or schools which are integral to this project. Wherever reasonable, proposals should include partnerships with school districts or divisions and/or the state department of education, if your organization is not one of these entities. Projects are also strongly encouraged to collaborate with NOAA entities as partners. NOAA entities include programs, offices, and organizations, such as the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) or GARFO, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the National Marine Sanctuary Program, the National Sea Grant College Program, the National Weather Service Weather Forecast Offices, the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, the NOAA Cooperative Institutes, and the Northeast Regional Associations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, etc. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, "Overall qualifications of applicants".

* If you anticipate collaborating with other regional B-WET grant recipients to conduct a regional conference or to allow former and current B-WET grant recipients to present their B- WET projects or confer on regional B-WET programming, this should be described in your narrative, and your budget should include in the travel category funds for transportation (airfare, rental car, shuttle, or taxi), lodging, and per diem. Although this is considered an outreach and education opportunity, it should not be the sole justification to meet the outreach and education criterion. Local communication with the public is required as well (see Outreach and Education bullet below). This section will be scored using the valuation criterion, "Outreach and Education".

* **Outreach and Education:** Projects should include a significant external sharing and communication mechanism that encourages students and/or teachers to share their experiences with the public, peers, and the environmental education community. These mechanisms could include the media (newspaper articles, websites, etc.), mentoring opportunities, and presentations at conferences, in-school service days, or other public

forums). This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Outreach and Education”.

Budget Justification

Provide a detailed spreadsheet, with narrative (4-page limit, a separate document from project summary and detailed project narrative), separated into Federal and non-Federal shares (if appropriate) as they relate to specific, requested line items or activities (personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contract costs, and indirect costs). If applying for multiple years of funding, the budget should be separated out by year with a final total budget for all years included as well. Applicants are encouraged to use the B WET budget template found at <http://go.usa.gov/cjQaG>. The budget justification submitted with the application MUST match the dollar amounts and object classes on the required Forms SF-424 and the SF-424A. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Project Costs”.

For multi-year projects: Ensure that there is a detailed budget narrative detailing the budget requested for each year matching each Form SF-424A.

The narrative should explain the need for government financial assistance. It should also explain the total project costs needed to accomplish this project, if there are costs beyond the Federal request and voluntary non-Federal match proposed in this application. List all other sources of funding that will be or have been sought for the project and the status of each request. If no other funding has been sought, explain.

Grant recipients will be encouraged to attend a state or regional B-WET meeting once during the duration of their grant. This will be an opportunity for former and current B-WET grant recipients to present their B-WET projects and learn from each other. This meeting may be part of an existing state environmental or science education conference to minimize travel expenses. Budgets should include, in the travel category, estimated funds for attendance at this meeting (such as meals, lodging, per diem, and transportation including rental car, shuttle, or taxi). No more than \$1,000 should be budgeted for this expense.

The budget may include indirect costs. These are basically overhead costs, for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives, which therefore cannot be assigned to a single project. An applicant requesting indirect costs must provide a current, approved, Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) established with its cognizant Federal agency or an acknowledgement letter from the cognizant agency that the applicant has submitted a request for a NICRA. An

applicant without a NICRA may also propose all allowable project charges as direct costs.

In addition, if an award recipient has never established an indirect cost rate with any Federal agency, the recipient may either request use of the de minimus rate described at 2 CFR 200.414 or they may negotiate a new rate with the Department of Commerce. The negotiation and approval of a new rate is subject to the procedures required by the NOAA and the Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06<http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>, require that within 90 days of the award start date, recipients submit documentation (indirect cost proposal, cost allocation, plan, etc.) necessary to perform the review to establish a new rate. The NOAA contact for information regarding indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer
NOAA Grants Management Division
1325 East West Highway, 9th Floor Silver Spring, MD 20910
Lamar.Revis@noaa.gov

e. Appendices (not included in 12-page limit):

- * Resumes/CVs of major participants.
- * Partnership Letters of Commitment: If the applicant organization has partners, such as school divisions, state agencies, or other organizations, include letters of commitment from partners explaining their role in and/or funding of the proposed project. Do not include letters of endorsement from previous participants, teachers, or others not directly involved in project implementation, except letters demonstrating school or school division support. Letters should be received as part of application submission. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Overall Qualifications of Applicants”.
- * Timeline: The applicant should include a project schedule and work plan that indicates when each action, event, milestone, product development, and evaluation will occur. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Technical Merit”.
- * Logic Model: Projects should be accomplishment-oriented and identify specific outputs and outcomes. Provide a logic model that displays these expected outputs and outcomes. A basic logic model template and instructions are available at <http://chesapeakebay.noaa.gov/b-wet-evaluation.html>. This section will be scored using the evaluation criterion, “Technical Merit”.

* Results from prior NOAA support: If any principal investigator (PI) or co-PI identified on the project has received BWET support from NOAA in the past five years, information on the prior award(s) is required. The following information should be provided:

- ** The NOAA award number, amount and period of support, and title of the project;
- ** Summary of the results of the completed work (including number of teachers/students);
- ** Whether the proposal is for renewed support;
- ** Description of the relationship of the completed work to the proposed work.

* Data Management Plan: Proposals submitted in response to this Announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages. The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the NOAA B-WET Data Management Guidance provided below. This section will be scored using the “Outreach and Education” evaluation criterion.

NOAA may, at its own discretion, make publicly available the Data Management Plan from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data. Final, pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly journal articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

Data Management Guidance: The NOAA B-WET program has developed this guidance to help grant applicants plan to share quality environmental data collected as part of their B-WET funded projects, where applicable. Environmental Data are defined by NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 212-15: Management of Environmental Data and Information as recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans, atmosphere, space environment, sun, and solid earth, as well as correlative data such as socio-economic data, related documentation, and metadata. Digital audio or video recordings of environmental phenomena (such as animal sounds or undersea video) are included in this definition. Numerical model outputs are included in this definition, particularly if they are used to support the conclusion of a peer-reviewed publication. Data collected in a laboratory or other controlled environment, such as measurements of animals and chemical processes, are included in this definition.

Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of

reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely-used or international standards.

Two types of Data Management Plans are anticipated for NOAA B-WET proposals:

* If applicants are not collecting data to share with scientists outside of the educational program, they may request permission not to make data publicly accessible if funded. For example, environmental data may be collected or generated as part of the project but primarily to demonstrate and practice making observations using scientific techniques/methods (e.g. measuring pH of water with a refractometer, measuring atmospheric humidity with a sling psychrometer, measuring percent vegetative cover using a transect, etc.). If this is the case, the application should include a brief paragraph under the heading "Data Management Plan", describing the intended use of the data and requesting an exemption from NOAA's data sharing requirements.

* If environmental data collected/generated as part of the project is for citizen science or for sharing with scientists outside of the educational project, the applicant must identify how data will be shared and made accessible based on this guidance:

Contents of Data Management Plans for projects collecting data for purposes beyond education: A typical Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The plan should describe or reference the data quality control techniques that will be used or note that the data will not be quality controlled. Data that is not quality controlled should include a description on the limitations of the data or an indication of degree of uncertainty.

Data Accessibility: The NOAA B-WET program recommends that public access to grant-produced data be enabled as follows:

- * An existing publicly accessible online data server at the funded institution is to be used to host these data (describe in application); or
- * Data are to be submitted to a public data repository appropriate to this scientific domain (describe in application). (e.g. The GLOBE Program - <http://www.globe.gov/>, CoCoRaHS Community - <http://www.cocorahs.org/>); or

* Funding recipients will establish their own data hosting capability (please describe in application's Data Management Plan).

Proposals may include the costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving in their budgets.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by a Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application (i.e. Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number); and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award, application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

D. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must be received via Grants.gov, via the U. S. Postal Service (official postmark required), or by a delivery service (documented receipt required) on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, October 28, 2016. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after the deadline will not be considered for funding. Private metered postmarks are not acceptable. No fax or email applications will be accepted. Any application received more than 5 business days after the closing date will not be accepted.

Hard copy application packages should be sent to: Deirdre Kimball, NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. PLEASE NOTE: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Consider this timeline in submitting your application.

Submission Process

Electronic submission, preferred and encouraged, is a two-step process. First, the complete application package must be successfully submitted into the Grants.gov system. If that submission is successful, the application moves into NOAA's Grants Online (GOL) system.

Required registrations: You must complete and maintain the following registrations to be eligible to submit an application using the Grants.Gov website:

- * Grants.gov
- * Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS)
- * System for Award Management (SAM)

ALL registrations must be completed before an application can be submitted. Complete registration can take from 3 days to 4 weeks or longer to complete. Begin the registration process early.

* Grants.Gov registration: This is the first step required to submit an online application. It is a one-time registration process.

* Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) registration: All applicant organizations must be issued a DUNS number, a unique nine-digit identifier provided by Dun and Bradstreet. This number is the Universal Identifier you must use when applying for Federal awards. Request a DUNS number by calling 1-866-705-5711 (toll free) or through the internet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. Securing your DUNS number is a free service.

* All applicant organizations must complete and maintain an active SAM registration. This registration must be renewed at least annually. New registrations take an average of 14 business days, and renewal may require as much time as initial registration. SAM registration includes assignment of a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) Code for domestic organizations which have not already been assigned a CAGE Code. To register, go to: <http://www.SAM.gov>. Registration is free.

You must renew and revalidate your entity's registration at least every 12 months from the date you were last certified and submitted the registration in SAM, or sooner than 12 months, if your applicant organization's information has changed. The primary point of contact's email address will receive a message alerting them to the entity's/entities' renewal requirements at 60 days, 30 days, and 15 days prior to SAM registration expiration. If you do not renew your registration, it will expire. You must have an active SAM registration in order to receive contract awards or grant payments, submit financial assistance award applications via Grants.gov, or receive certain payments from some Federal agencies.

Once all three registrations are completed, a registered "Authorized Representative" of the applicant must submit the application to Grants.gov. Applications submitted through

Grants.gov will be accompanied by THREE automated responses to the Authorized Representative:

- * The first email, within 24 to 48 hours, confirms receipt into the Grants.gov system. This acknowledgment of receipt contains a Grants.gov tracking number, which you should keep for your records. This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov ONLY, not receipt by NOAA.
- * The second email will (1) indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system before transmission to the grantor agency (NOAA) or (2) that it has been rejected because of errors. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review, and the time of validation is the official time of NOAA's receipt of the application.
- * The third email validates that the application has been forwarded to NOAA's Grants Online (GOL) System for further processing.

Save all three emails. If all three notifications are NOT received, follow up immediately with both the Grants.gov Support Desk and Deirdre Kimball (978-281-9290, Deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov) to confirm NOAA receipt of the application package. If you use the Grants.gov Support Desk, secure a Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number, and retain a record of it for future reference.

If you experience a Grants.gov "systems issue" (defined as technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete submission before the application deadline, print out a copy of any error message received AND call the Grants.gov Support Desk immediately at 1-800-518-4726 for assistance. Ensure that you obtain a case number from your communication with Grants.gov. Problems with an applicant organization's computer system or equipment are not considered "systems issues." Similarly, an applicant's failure to complete the required registration and/or to ensure that a registered Authorized Representative submits the application on time are not considered "systems issues". A Grants.gov "systems issue" is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of the Grants.gov system, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems. In the event of a confirmed "systems issue," or if a significant natural disaster affects submission, NOAA may allow more time for application submission.

Potential applicants may contact the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (Colleen.Coogan@noaa.gov or Deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov) before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to B-WET goals and objectives, but Federal staff

are NOT allowed to assist in the preparation of an application. BWET program staff may provide you with information and clarification on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, and completion of application forms. Because this is a competitive program, Federal staff will not provide assistance in conceptualizing, developing, or structuring proposals, or writing letters of support for an application or proposal.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program may not be subject to Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, if their states have chosen to participate in this intergovernmental review process. To find out about and comply with your State's procedures under E.O. 12372, see the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc. Any applicant submitting an application for funding from a participating state is required to complete item 16 on the Standard Form (SF) SF-424 regarding clearance by SPOC established by E.O. 12372.

F. Funding Restrictions

Allowable Costs: Federal funds cannot necessarily pay for all costs a recipient incurs in the course of project implementation. Generally, allowable costs include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. For allowable costs, see 2 CFR Part 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles 1 and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards". All sub-awards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are also subject to the Federal Cost Principles in 2 CFR Part 200, effective December 26, 2014.

Pre-award costs are generally not allowed. Any costs incurred before NOAA's Grants Officer issues a notice of award approval are assumed at your own risk.

G. Other Submission Requirements

None.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to applications ranging from 0-100 points based on the following five (5) evaluation criteria and their values:

- * Importance/relevance and application of proposal to program goals (25 points)
- * Technical merit (40 points)
- * Overall qualifications of applications (10 points)
- * Project costs (19 points)
- * Outreach and Education (6 points)

The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. Each criterion includes factors that the reviewers will consider to determine how well an application meets the criterion. Written comments are required to justify provided scores in each section of the review. Applications that best address these criteria will be most competitive. Instructions and guidance about each evaluation criterion follow:

Criterion 1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (25 points): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities.

- a. Does the project make a clear effort to increase environmental stewardship of New England rivers and coastal watersheds in students? (5 points)
- b. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the MWEE (5 points)
- c. Is the audience served within the six New England states? (5 points)
- d. Does the applicant demonstrate that a significant portion of the audience is low income or underserved?(4 points), or

If this is a MWEE Capacity Building project, does the applicant identify partners (education organizations, states, regional groups), programs, and policies to reach underserved populations, and does the applicant show a familiarity with underserved populations within the area and scope of the proposed project? (4 points)

- e. Does the project document support for the NOAA Education Strategic Plan? (3 points)
- f. Does the project document support for the ocean, climate and environmental literacy plans? (3 points)

Criterion 2. Technical merit (40 points): This criterion assesses whether the approach is

technically sound and meets the definition of the MWEE, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear goals and objectives.

- a. For Priorities 1-3 (Backyard B-WET, Diadromous Fish, and Community-Watershed Linkages), will the project result in student experiences that meet the full definition of the MWEE? (10 points), or

For Priority 4 (MWEE Capacity Building), does the applicant demonstrate capacity and networking capabilities to develop materials and conduct workshops and professional development training to promote MWEE environmental programming in formal education across a state or region? Does the applicant indicate how the project fits into and has the support of larger state or regional priorities, science standards, and environmental education plans? (10 pts)

- b. For Priorities 1-3 (Backyard B-WET, Diadromous Fish, and Community-Watershed Linkages) does the project include adequate teacher involvement? Is proposed professional development multi-day, and does it meet criteria set forth in the MWEE definition (10 points), or

For Priority 4 (MWEE Capacity Building), does the applicant demonstrate how the proposed work will increase the quantity and/or enhance the quality of MWEEs in a state or region? Will the scope of work lead to broader MWEE implementation? (10 points)

- c. Are NOAA resources an essential element of the proposed project? (5 points)
- d. Does the logic model show good understanding of desired outputs and outcomes for the project? (3 points)
- e. Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? (5 points).
- f. Does the applicant provide an effective evaluation strategy to determine if project objectives and outcomes are being met? (5 points)
- g. Does the applicant discuss how the B-WET National Evaluation system will be incorporated into their plans for project evaluation? (2 pts)

Criterion 3. Overall qualifications of applicant (10 points): This criterion ascertains whether

the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

- a. Does the applicant demonstrate an understanding of the target community, including an in-depth understanding of schools and school systems? (2 points)
- b. Does the applicant demonstrate the capability and experience to successfully complete similar projects? If the applicant was a previous Federal grantee, was grant implementation and administration successful? (3 points)
- c. Does the proposal include meaningful partnerships, including partnerships with schools that contribute to project implementation? Are those partnerships documented with detailed support letters? (5 points)

Criterion 4. Project costs (19 points) This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

- a. Is there sufficient detail to verify that the budget request is reasonable for the number of participants and/or target audience? (10 points)
- b. Does the proposal adequately address project sustainability after NOAA funding is done? For example, will teachers have the supplies they need to conduct MWEES after training and support ends? (5 points)
- c. Are the requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel directly involved in the implementation of the proposed project? (2 points)
- d. Does the budget adequately detail the amount of time each individual will spend on the project? Is there a reasonable amount of staff time for such a project?(2 points)

Criterion 5. Outreach and education (6 points): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Specially, does the project involve mechanisms for significant external sharing and communication about the project by students, teachers, or project staff?

- a. Community Events that engage parents, other community members, etc., are proposed? (2 points)

- b. Peer-to-peer sharing for teachers and/or students (in-service days, school assemblies, etc.) is proposed? (2 points)
- c. Project will be publicized at conferences and in the media? (1 point)
- d. Does the applicant discuss the relevance of data sharing to their project? (1 pt)

B. Review and Selection Process

There are three review steps for the new application:

* **Minimum Requirements Review:** An initial administrative review is conducted on each timely-received application to assure that it is eligible, responsive, and complete. Applications determine to be ineligible, incomplete, or not-responsive will be eliminated from further review. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured. Applications that are cleared for Minimum Requirements will move forward to merit review and be evaluated by a two-phase process: a preliminary technical review and a panel review. Both phases are conducted by the same set of private and/or public sector expert reviewers. Each review phase is described below:

* **Preliminary Technical Review:** Independent written technical evaluations from three or more Federal, private, or public sector experts with specific subject matter expertise will be obtained to determine the technical merit of each proposal. Their evaluation will be based solely on the information included in the application based on the evaluation criteria described in Section V.A. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score. If more than one non-Federal reviewer is used, no consensus advice will be given. These reviewers will certify that they do not have a conflict of interest concerning the application(s) they are reviewing. NOAA will protect technical reviewer identity to the maximum extent permitted by law. Following completion of the technical review, individual technical scores will be combined and used to determine the final technical score for each application. Applications will be ranked in descending order by their final technical score for each application. A “cutoff” score may be established that is based in part, on the amount of funds available for grants. Applications that scored below the cutoff will be eliminated from further consideration. Reviewers’ comments may be shared with applicants after the competition is over and awards have been made.

* **Panel Review:** For those applications at or above a cutoff technical evaluation score, panel review meetings will be held to discuss these proposals in depth prior to recommendations for selection being made. Because different evaluation criteria will be

applied to Priority 4 (MWEE Capacity Building), a separate panel will be convened for that priority. Depending on the number of applications submitted under each of the other three priorities (Backyard B-WET, Diadromous Fish, and Community-Watershed Linkages), there may be multiple panels. If multiple panels are necessary, each panel will convene separately to review rankings and comments and to discuss the projects under a particular priority as a group. These in-depth discussions raise issues and answer questions that a single reviewer may have called out in his/her preliminary technical review, or it may clarify an issue. During the panel meetings, reviewers can revise their initial technical comments and scores. After discussing each application, panelists provide comments and a final score for each proposal. Each reviewer must individually submit a final score for each proposal he/she has reviewed to the B-WET Program staff by the end of the panel meeting. If more than one non-Federal reviewer is used, no consensus advice will be given by the Panelists on recommendations or scores.

The reviewers' final scores will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals for each panel. If there are multiple panels, the ranked lists from panels will not be combined to establish an overall rank order for all proposals.

C. Selection Factors

New England B-WET Program Office staff will make preliminary recommendations for funding to the Selecting Official, (the GARFO Regional Administrator), based on rank order of each panel and the selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official will recommend funding based on rank order within each panel, unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following seven (7) selection factors:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - Geographic
 - Institution or type of institutions
 - Type of partners
 - Research areas
 - Project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities (see Section I.B).

5. Applicant's performance in a previous award. Factors considered here may include an applicant's fiscal accountability, implementation issues, or compliance with such grant conditions as timely and acceptable reporting.
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of environmental (NEPA) information provided to NOAA staff, if appropriate.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

We anticipate that the competitive selection process and subsequent notification of applications considered for funding will be completed by May, 2017. The earliest start date for projects will be July 1, 2017, depending upon availability of funding, acceptable completion of negotiations with NOAA, including NEPA review, and the provision of supporting documentation, as requested.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Upon completion of the review and selection process, successful applicants will receive notification from the New England B-WET Program Office that the application has been recommended for funding selection to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project and is not a guarantee of funding. Official notification of funding, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. This notification will be issued to the Authorizing Representative of the project either electronically through use of Grants Online or in hard copy. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until the Applicant's Authorized Representative has received official notice of the award from the NOAA Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not recommended for funding or that it was not reviewed because it did not meet the minimum requirements described in Section IV.B (Content and Form of Applications). Unselected paper applications will be returned to the applicant.

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and New England B-WET Program staff.

NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207.

Award documents provided by the Grants Officer may also contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental or other compliance requirements and may lead to modification of the project's scope of work. These special award conditions will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award to ensure they are fully aware of the relevant terms that have been placed on the award.

In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

Pre-Award Notice

Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this Announcement and may be accessed online at

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>.

There is no obligation on the part of NOAA to cover pre-award costs for awards that have not been designated as “research” unless approved by the Grants Officer as part of the terms when an award is made. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for any proposal preparation costs. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded to a meritorious applicant will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Recipients and sub-recipients are subject to all federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. Funded awards are subject to enforcement and termination provisions under 2 C.F.R. 200.338-.342.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Uniform Administrative Guidance

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. 1327.101, applies to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

Limitation of Liability

There is no guarantee that funds will be available to make awards for any or all qualified projects pursuant to this Announcement or that any proposal will be selected for funding.

Applicants are hereby given notice that funds may not have been appropriated yet for the competition described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award funding for specific projects or to obligate available funds. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, it does so at its own risk of not receiving an award or of these costs not being included in a subsequent award.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by NEPA, for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative

Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

Certifications Regarding Tax Liability and Felony Criminal Convictions`

When applicable under appropriations law, NOAA will provide to certain applicants a form to be completed by the applicant's Authorized Representative making a certification regarding any Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law. If a form is provided, an award may not be issued until it is returned and accepted by NOAA.

Executive Order 12866

It has been determined that this notice is not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

C. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.327-.329 and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Financial Status Reports (SF-425) are required to be submitted to the Grants Officer semi-annually, or as outlined in the award conditions. Financial Status Reports should be entered directly into NOAA's electronic Grants Online system. Additional Evaluation Reporting is described in Section IV.B. of this

FFO.

Performance/Progress Reports - Suggested content and guidance related to New England B-WET performance/progress reports can be found here:

http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/educational_resources/bwet/applicants/noaabwet_progress_report_guidance.pdf

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act – This Act (FFATA), 31 U.S.C. 6101 note, includes a requirement for awardees of Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All grant recipients awarded a new Federal grant greater than or equal to \$25,000, are subject to FFATA subaward reporting requirements. All awardees of applicable NOAA grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all subawards over \$25,000. Refer to 2 C.F.R. Part 170 at <http://go.usa.gov/cT8WW>.

VII. Agency Contacts

For information on the grant application and management process, contact Deirdre Kimball, New England B-WET Federal Program Officer, via email at deirdre.kimball@noaa.gov or by phone at 978- 281-9290.

For information on the New England B-WET program, including regional priorities and policies, contact the New England B-WET Program Manager, Colleen Coogan, via email at colleen.coogan@noaa.gov or by phone at 978-281-6181.

Questions about NOAA B-WET and this opportunity may also be directed to Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, via email at bronwen.rice@noaa.gov or by phone at 202-482-6797.

VIII. Other Information

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552). Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information

should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.