



GCFI Ocean Innovation Award Request for Proposals

Innovative Responses to Coral Bleaching Events in the Caribbean

[Marathon, Florida] (July 17, 2015) *The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, Inc. and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are pleased to announce the call for proposals for the first Ocean Innovation Award which will focus on encouraging new responses to coral bleaching in the Caribbean region.*

Thermal related bleaching poses one of, if not the most serious global threats to tropical coral reefs around the world. Over the last several decades coral bleaching has been particularly devastating to the reefs of the Caribbean. In 2005 and 2010, coral reefs suffered major losses as a consequence of high ocean temperatures in the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean. Given our changing climate, coral bleaching events are expected to occur more frequently and be more severe in the future. Already, forecasts from the NOAA Coral Reef Watch 'Coral Bleaching Thermal Stress Outlook' (coralreefwatch.noaa.gov) are highlighting a very real possibility of bleaching in the Caribbean in 2015.

Responses to coral bleaching have focused largely on monitoring the extent and severity of its impacts on coral reefs and their recovery. Although monitoring is important for ground-truthing of forecasts and to provide data for the effective management of coral reefs for enhanced resilience, there is also a role for more innovative responses to coral bleaching that go beyond monitoring to help managers on the ground better respond to bleaching events.

The first Ocean Innovation Award will fund a project or projects that propose innovative approaches to address coral bleaching events as they arise. Projects might focus on mitigation or understanding and building resilience. Although open to applicants and partners throughout the Caribbean, priority will be given to projects that partner with Caribbean marine protected areas (MPAs) within the GCFI-NOAA MPA management capacity building program, which includes nearly 30 MPAs in the following countries and territories: The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands, British Virgin Islands, Sint Eustatius/Saba, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Mexico, Belize and Honduras. Please see the Caribbean MPA Management Capacity Assessment for more details, available online at <http://campam.gcfi.org/CapAssess/CaMPAMCapacityAssessment2011.pdf>.

Reflecting the nature of coral bleaching, GCFI encourages applicants to be flexible in setting the location for their project pending the actual occurrence of forecast coral bleaching in 2015. Through this award we particularly encourage partnerships that enhance capacity, and we will be pleased to help connect project proponents with potential partners on the ground and in the field at priority Caribbean marine protected areas.

Projects that integrate early warning from the NOAA Coral Reef Watch Thermal Stress Outlooks and Monitoring Product Suite will be given priority. The total amount of funding available is \$17,500. No match is required. The duration of proposed projects should be commensurate with the nature of coral bleaching events and in line with the timing appropriate for the proposed solution.

Pre-proposals of no more than one page plus a cover page will be accepted until 5:00 pm EST on 14 August 2015. Applicants of successful pre-proposals will be invited to present their proposal in a GCFI Shark Tank over adobeconnect. The pre-proposal must be in at least 11 point font Times New Roman with 1" margins. The following sections must be include in the pre-proposal:

Cover Page (1 page)

Title of project

Name, affiliation, address, email address, and phone number of Project PI, co-PI's and collaborating investigators

Start and end dates of the project

Total Cost of the project

Project Description Page (maximum 1-page)

Title of project

Needs statement (1-3 sentences)

Project approach (2-3 paragraphs)

Brief overview of budget

Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project has received or expects to receive all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any requirements. In the course of the project, or following its completion, successful applicant(s) will be required to conduct a webinar in the GCFI webinar series. GCFI also strongly encourages the presentation of results at an annual meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute. Please note that GCFI may choose to withhold awarding the grant if none of the proposals adequately meet the objectives of the award program or the criteria for success. US federal government agencies are not eligible to apply for this award.

To submit a proposal or for questions about the Ocean Innovation Award please contact oceaninnovation@gcfi.org.