LOUISIANA SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM

Two – Year Funding Period:  February 1, 2016 -January 31, 2018

Statements of Interest are due February 6, 2015

RESEARCH PROGRAM SUMMARY

General Information

Program Title: Louisiana Sea Grant 2016-2018 Statement of Interest RFP

Synopsis of Program: Louisiana Sea Grant College Program (LSG) seeks Statements of Interest (SoI) for its next funding cycle, February 1, 2016 – January 31, 2018. Research projects within Louisiana coasts focused in three areas will be considered: 1) Healthy Coastal Ecosystems; 2) Resilient Communities and Economies; and 3) Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture. This RFP contains a listing of relevant research questions, and information about the format and timetable for submitting proposals. Proposals must have clear relevancy to Louisiana Sea Grant’s research priorities (see Research Foci in section II of this document) and must include a clear outreach plan for disseminating the results to targeted audiences. Louisiana Sea Grant support is offered on an open, competitive basis.

Program Contacts:
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, 236 Sea Grant Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803

- Robert Twilley, Director: rtwilley@lsu.edu
- Matt Bethel, Director of Research: mbethe3@lsu.edu

Award Information:

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant. Award Duration and Start Date:
Two year duration starting February 1, 2016.
**Anticipated Funding Support:** We hope to support 6 – 8 projects at about $80,000 per award per year, contingent on availability of funds.

**Eligibility Information:** Principal Investigators (PIs) must be affiliated with an academic or research laboratory institution of higher education in Louisiana. Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs) on projects can be from institutions outside of Louisiana and/or non-profit and private research laboratories. Single investigators and multiple investigator research teams from different institutions are encouraged to apply. Louisiana Sea Grant encourages participation from the broad science and social science research community within Louisiana.

**Other requirements:** Statements of Interest (SoI) are required for this announcement. Any applicant that submits a full proposal, but did not submit a SoI by the deadline will not be considered and the proposal will be returned to the proposer without review. Applications received after the closing date and time will not be accepted.

**SoI Preparation and Submission Instructions:**

**A. Statement of Interest Preparation Requirements and Due Dates**

- **Statement of Interest (SOI) Submission:** Required, due February 6, 2015 at 5:00 PM CST
- **Application Instructions:** This solicitation contains specific instructions on the format and content that must be adhered to in each Statement of Interest. Failure to follow the instructions outlined in the full text below is grounds for rejection without review.

**B. Budgetary Information**

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** 50% non-federal cost match is required for each proposal ($1 non-federal match for every $2 of Sea Grant funding).
- **Indirect Cost (F&A):** LSU proposals use the off campus rate of 26% MTDC; other institutions should use their respective rates.

**Statement of Interest Processing**

Statements of Interest will be subject to external electronic and panel reviews. Favorably reviewed investigators submitting a Statement of Interest will be encouraged to submit a full proposal (though all investigators who submitted a timely and complete Statement of Interest are welcome to do so) and 6-8 full proposals are funded.

**Principal Investigators Please Note the Following**
• Funding of all proposals is contingent upon Louisiana Sea Grant’s allocation from NOAA in the FY2016 federal budget. Modification in the number of and funding for individual proposals may be made based upon the final program budget.
• PIs must provide a strong rationale for how their proposed research will affect policy and/or management decisions for coastal Louisiana and how that information will be communicated outside of academia.
• Louisiana Sea Grant encourages Principal Investigators (PIs) to read this document carefully and direct questions concerning the RFP to the Louisiana Sea Grant Office or email early in the Statement of Interest development process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment in 1968, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program has worked to promote stewardship of the state’s coastal resources through a combination of research, education and outreach programs critical to the cultural, economic and environmental health of Louisiana’s coastal zone.

Louisiana Sea Grant, based at Louisiana State University, is part of the National Sea Grant Program, a network made up of 33 programs located in each of the coastal
and Great Lakes states and Puerto Rico. Sea Grant Programs work individually and in partnership to address major marine and coastal challenges.

In this Statement of Interest (SoI), Louisiana Sea Grant seeks responsive research that provides scientific and socioeconomic information, as well as policy guidance for fisheries management, climate change adaptation, and ecosystem restoration in coastal systems and communities in Louisiana. Using laboratory studies, field investigations, models and/or socioeconomic tools, and synthesis products, proposed research should improve understanding of coastal ecosystem function and help predict the responses of ecosystems and communities to natural change or management action. Research proposals must show a connection with users beyond academia, such as resource managers, communities, and/or informal and formal learners. Proposed projects should be for a 24-month maximum duration (but may be less than 24 months), so PIs should focus on outcomes that can be achieved during this period.

II. LOUISIANA STRATEGIC RESEARCH PRIORITIES

This solicitation invites proposals that address issues outlined below and are specifically relevant to the Louisiana Sea Grant Strategic Plan: 2014-2018’s goals and strategies. These goals and strategies link directly with the goals of NOAA’s National Sea Grant Program and are closely tied to the science needs of coastal Louisiana.

Scientific Synthesis: This request for Statements of Interest includes several references to research that focuses on the synthesis of data and information associated with environmental and social sciences. Scientific synthesis can be defined as “The inferential process whereby new models are developed from analysis of multiple data sets to explain observed patterns across a range of time and space scales and may include a five-step synthesis process as follows: 1) Identify challenging science problem, 2) Assemble relevant data, 3) Integrate data by identifying linkages among units, 4) Define alternative models that explain or test problem, and 5) Select simplest model that maximizes explanation. Each of these models provides an iterative cycle of converting data into information and ultimately into synthesized knowledge (Kemp WM & WR Boynton. 2012. Synthesis in estuarine and coastal ecological research: What is it, why is it important, and how do we teach it? Estuaries and Coasts 35: 1-22). Louisiana Sea Grant encourages the university research community include innovative research projects focused on synthesis of existing information to improve modeling, policy analysis, and community design projects.

Louisiana Sea Grant is soliciting research proposals in three focus areas:
A. Healthy Coastal Ecosystems and Habitats
B. Resilient Communities and Economies
C. Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture

A. Focus Area: HEALTHY COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS AND HABITATS
Research Emphasis: Generate, synthesize and communicate credible information from the physical, environmental, and social sciences to support ecosystem-based approaches to managing and restoring Louisiana’s coastal environment. Research to support utilization of integrated ecosystem-based approaches to sustainably manage land, water, and living resources in Louisiana’s coastal areas, as well as to protect, enhance, or restore function and productivity of Louisiana’s degraded ecosystems and habitats. As responses to climate change will affect both ecosystems and human communities, climate-focused research in this focus area is likely to closely couple with the Resilient Communities and Economies focus area described below. Louisiana Sea Grant encourages research with emphasis on the following areas:

- Investigating cost/benefit benchmarks and developing related performance evaluation measures of coastal marsh and/or oyster reef restoration and protection projects, including impacts on the economies, residents, and cultures of coastal communities.
- Improved understanding through data synthesis of how ecosystem services of Louisiana’s wetlands are affected by sediment reintroduction (including river reoccupation and marsh creation) projects.
- Improved prediction of the effects of climate change through data synthesis for coastal Louisiana to include; inundation, coastal erosion, and increased intensity of weather events.
- Multi-disciplinary research to broaden understanding of coupled ecosystem and societal responses to restoration efforts including ecosystem service value.
- Improved models of ecological metrics, hydrologic requirements, and design criteria through synthesis of multiple datasets to assist agencies and other stakeholders in restoring damaged and lost wetlands to the functional equivalent of natural ecosystems, and measuring the long-term stability and performance of those projects.

B. Focus Area: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIES

Research emphasis: Support vibrant and resilient Louisiana coastal communities and economies that include working waterfronts, an abundance of recreation and tourism opportunities, and coastal access for all citizens. Research to support comprehensive planning efforts both to aid Louisiana coastal communities in the efficient use of land, energy, and water resources and to protect the resources needed to sustain coastal ecosystems and quality of life, as well as improve coastal water resources to sustain human health and ecosystem services. PIs are encouraged to consider multidisciplinary research that focuses on understanding and developing adaptation strategies of Louisiana coastal citizens, community leaders, and industries to complex interrelationships among social, economic and environmental values in coastal areas and reduce risks from hazards and climate change. Louisiana Sea Grant encourages research with emphasis on the following areas:
Multi-disciplinary research to develop methods and models to identify and communicate employment alternatives for fishers adapting to ecosystem changes, such as transitioning to local employment opportunities by applying traditional skill and knowledge to the aquaculture of finfish and shellfish or ecotourism.

Developing innovative and effective outreach and science communication methods on the sustainable and responsible use of coastal resources for coastal community residents, community leaders, and business/industry.

Developing decision-making tools and communication strategies for managers and communities to help evaluate possible scenarios for adapting to landscape change, sea level rise, and increased storm surge, as well as assessing the uncertainty, risk, and possible economic and social consequences of these decisions.

Understanding how water management policies, regulations, and socio-economic factors affect the relationship between sustainable communities and healthy aquatic ecosystems and watersheds.

C. Focus Area: SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Research emphasis: Support a safe and sustainable supply of Louisiana seafood to meet public demand. Research to support the implementation and dissemination of ecosystem-based fisheries management to build a comprehensive approach to conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of Louisiana’s coastal resources. Research to evaluate the benefits of new and innovative seafood harvesting, handling, and processing technologies for processors, producers, and consumers. Louisiana Sea Grant encourages research with emphasis on the following areas:

- Understanding important ecosystem issues related to coastal restoration activities for native recreational and commercial finfish and shellfish populations by identifying essential habitats and developing improved protection policies for those habitats crucial to their reproduction, feeding, habitation, and growth to marketable size.
- Advancing and developing practices, technologies, and systems designed for more safe and efficient operation of seafood aquaculture facilities with minimal impact on coastal and oceanic environments and habitats, on natural fisheries, and on the people who depend on natural fisheries.
- Advancing the development of new management, harvesting, handling, and processing technologies, value-added products, innovative waste management practices, and byproduct uses that maximize the quality, safety, and utilization of Louisiana’s seafood products.
- Test seafood harvesting and marketing strategies that both maximize efficiency and profitability, and minimize environmental impacts.

III. SCHEDULE AND DELIVERABLES
A. Statement of Interests and Full Proposal Schedule (full calendar)
- Early December, 2014 — Request for Statements of Interest issued
- February 6, 2015 — Statements of Interests are due to Katie Lea at klea@lsu.edu
- Mid-March 2015 (approximate) — Statements of Interest reviewed, PIs notified, Guidelines for full proposals available
- April 20, 2015 (approximate) — Full proposals due
- Mid-July 2015 (approximate) — Final proposal selection, PIs notified
- Mid October, 2015 (approximate) - Omnibus proposal to NOAA
- February 1, 2016 – January 31, 2018 –Start date and duration of funding cycle

B. Statement of Interest (SoI) Submission
You must submit one electronic version of the complete Statement of Interest to Katie Lea at kea@lsu.edu.

The deadline is February 6, 2015 at 5:00 pm CST. Statements of Interest not received by the deadline will not be accepted. Researchers are reminded to conform to the submission policies of their host institutions particularly with regard to obtaining institutional endorsements and requirements.

IV. STATEMENT OF INTEREST PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Statement of Interest Outline
PIs must follow the instructions regarding the Statement of Interest format as explained in this document or risk Statement of Interest rejection.

PIs are required to use the below sections in the body of the Statement of Interest and a Statement of Interest budget form.

Each Statement of Interest must include the following sections in this sequence:

1. Body of the Statement of Interest (major headings), 2 pages single-spaced limit:
   1.1 Title and Lead Principle Investigator and other co-PI’s
   1.2 Problem Statement
   1.3 Objectives
   1.4 Methods
   1.5 Rationale and Anticipated Benefits
   1.6 Outreach plan
   1.7 Personnel Description
2. References
3. The Statement of Interest budget form
4. 2-page Curriculum vitae of the PI and each co-Pi
5. List of Current and Pending Support
B. Formatting
Use Times New Roman font type, size 11-point or greater. Left justified only, and one carriage return between paragraphs. All margins should be 1 inch. The body of the Statement of Interest should be typed continuously (that is, do not start a new page for each new section). The end matter, including the References, Statement of Interest budget for, the Curriculum Vitae’s and the list of Current and Pending should each start on new pages and are not included in the 2-page single-spaced limit required for the body of the Statement of Interest. Please save the completed statement of interest in PDF format and send to Katie Lea via e-mail.

C. Explanation of Statement of Interest Components
Statements of Interest should present a succinct but sufficiently detailed synopsis of the project in order to evaluate its relevance to the Louisiana’s Sea Grant Strategic Research Foci, its technical feasibility, and the PIs’ qualifications. Statements of Interest are not letters of intent and will be evaluated rigorously in a highly competitive process using Louisiana Sea Grant’s Statement of Interest review sheet (example SoI review sheet provided by clicking on the link).

BODY OF THE Statement of Interest
The body of the SoI is limited to two pages of single-spaced text. Write your Statement of Interest using the headings in the sequence listed previously in this document and following the formatting instructions above.

1.1 Title:

1.2 Problem Statement
Indicate the specific problem addressed by the proposed effort and provide sufficient background information to allow a preliminary assessment of the relationship of the problem to the research questions posed in this RFP.

1.3 Objectives
State the objectives of the research effort as they would appear in a full proposal. Research hypotheses should be clearly stated.

1.4 Methods
You need not explain methods in detail. However, readers should be able to make a preliminary determination of the appropriateness of the proposed approach, including statistical analyses, for achieving the stated objectives.

1.5 Rationale and Anticipated Benefits
Briefly explain the anticipated results and potential implications of those results in relation to Sea Grant program objectives.

1.6 Outreach Plan
Sea Grant is a program with its base in the academic sector and its roots in extension, education, and outreach. Thus, student participation and outreach components in Louisiana Sea Grant funded research is strongly
recommended. Louisiana Sea Grant’s goal is to ensure that 25% of its research funding supports students (and their associated costs) who are working within a project. Proposals with either no or little student contribution will be given low priority. There are several options available in achieving effective outreach components to your proposal, and Louisiana Sea Grant strongly encourages you to have had some contact with an outreach partner prior to the submission of your Statement of Interest which may include engaging Louisiana Sea Grant’s Extension Agents & Specialists, but not limited to extension partnering. Other outreach partners might include state and federal outreach committees, education specialists, NGOs, local authorities, etc. These outreach partners possess both important technical expertise on a wide range of subject matter and knowledge of local geographic, social, and governmental circumstances; and they can prove invaluable to the successful planning and development of your project. Alternatively, when used to their fullest capabilities, partnerships with private businesses, non-governmental organizations, or state agencies can also contribute greatly to the impact and outreach potential of your project. Outreach partners should be engaged early in the proposal development process and identified in the Statement of Interest.

Proposals that do not demonstrate a plan to develop impacts through extension and outreach utilizing any of these potential partnerships to develop outputs to constituents and stakeholders will be given very low priority for funding.

1.7 Personnel Description
List names of PI(s), senior technical staff, and students (if appropriate) and briefly outline their roles in the project.

REFERENCES
List references on a separate page. Reference pages are not included in the two-page maximum for the project description.

STATEMENT OF INTEREST BUDGET FORM
Fill out the budget form, making sure that the project is no more than $80,000 per year for 24 months total duration.

CURRICULUM VITAE
Provide a 2-page (maximum) curriculum vita for each of the professional personnel. Include all applicable sections (Education, Experience, Research Interests, and Professional Activities) and recent publications.

LIST OF CURRENT AND PENDING SUPPORT
This list specifies projects in which PIs are currently involved that are funded by Louisiana Sea Grant and other agencies or are under consideration for such funding. Please provide Sponsoring Agency, Project Title, Months of effort, Duration and Amount

V. STATEMENT OF INTEREST REVIEW PROCESS
A. Statement of Interest Review

Louisiana Sea Grant will conduct an extensive Statement of Interest review to determine those submissions best qualified to compete for inclusion in the 2016-2018 Louisiana Sea Grant College Omnibus funding request to NOAA. This will include a review that will help reviewers to critique and evaluate the following criteria:

1) Relevance and/or importance and applicability of proposed project to Louisiana Sea Grant’s Strategic Research Foci for this RFP (50%)
2) Technical/scientific merit (20%)
3) Outreach and education (20%)
4) Overall qualifications of applicant (5%)
5) Project costs (5%)

Statements of Interest will be evaluated by:
- External Reviewers
- Louisiana Sea Grant’s Extension agents and specialists

All Statements of Interest received by the submission deadline will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by an independent peer panel review. Both Federal and non-Federal experts may be used in this process. The peer panel will comprise 15 to 20 individuals, with each individual having expertise in a separate area, so that the panel, as a whole, covers a range of scientific and resource management expertise related to this opportunity. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually using the above evaluation criterion. The peer panel shall rate the proposals using the scores provided in the rating scale below and shall be averaged for consideration during panel review process.

The Louisiana Sea Grant program officer will neither vote or score applications as part of the independent peer panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the applications. Once proposals are scored by the reviewers, the Louisiana Sea Grant program officer, with guidance from the panel, will create a ranking of the applications to be recommended for a full proposal. After the SoI review process is completed, Louisiana Sea Grant will contact all PIs who have submitted Statements of Interest to provide them their review results.

VI. CONTACTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you would like further information about this request for proposals, please contact either Matthew Bethel (mbethe3@lsu.edu) regarding research priorities, Kelly Robertson (krobe@lsu.edu) regarding budget requirements or Katie Lea (klea@lsu.edu) regarding formatting

Louisiana Sea Grant’s mailing address is:
236 Sea Grant Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803 Phone: 225-578-6710 Fax: 225-578-6331