



Delaware Sea Grant
Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve
Request for Proposals
Healthy Coastal Ecosystems Fellowship

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Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve
Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
Delaware Sea Grant

I. INTRODUCTION and PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Purpose of Solicitation:

The Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve (DNERR) of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and Delaware Sea Grant are announcing the anticipated availability of **two graduate fellowships** for projects to advance our understanding of coastal ecosystems. Successful proposals will investigate physical, chemical, biological, and/or ecological aspects of the ecosystems characterized by the two DNERR components located at the St. Jones and Blackbird Creek Reserves, including wetland, subtidal, and upland habitats. Social science research is also eligible for support provided the investigation fits into the *Project Description* below. All proposed work must address the potential vulnerability of Delaware's coastal ecosystems to climate change, sea level rise, human-impacts, and/or storm-related impacts.

Introduction:

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) is a network of 28 coastal sites and is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the coastal states. Each NERR is designated to protect, preserve, and study place-based estuarine systems.

The Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve (DNERR) has two components in the Delaware Bayshore Region, the St. Jones and Blackbird Creek Reserves, which serve as "living laboratories" for a multitude of research questions as well as long-term monitoring efforts of water quality, weather, and nutrient data as part of the System-Wide Monitoring Program. The St. Jones Reserve is a brackish estuarine system located on the St. Jones River and is just south of the Dover Air Force Base. The Blackbird Creek Reserve is a tidal freshwater estuarine system located in Townsend in New Castle County. At least a portion of the proposed research must be conducted within at least one of the Reserves and should have broader implications related to environmental literacy and/or coastal stewardship.

The DNERR "serves to preserve and manage the natural resources within the Reserve as a place for research, provide education and outreach programs that promote better understanding of Delaware's estuarine and coastal areas, and promote informed coastal decision-making."

Delaware Sea Grant is a federal-state partnership dedicated to providing research, education, and outreach to assist in the wise use of our coastal resources. One of 33 programs around the nation, Delaware Sea Grant is housed within the University of Delaware's College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment.

Project Description:

Delaware's coastal habitats offer a wealth of biodiversity and ecosystem services that provide important social, economic, and environmental benefits to Delawareans. However,

human impacts and natural climate variability, including land-use practices, climate change, coastal storms, and sea level rise have made coastal ecosystems increasingly vulnerable. The DNERR has placed science-driven research as a primary focus area to better inform management and policy-makers of both natural and human-caused impacts on coastal Delaware ecosystems. Likewise, Delaware Sea Grant addresses healthy coastal ecosystems as one of four primary program focuses. This RFP will support graduate student research to advance our understanding of what makes coastal ecosystems sustainable and resilient to past, present and/or future pressures.

These research topics could include:

1. Contributions to our understanding of the observed and predicted effects of climate change, sea level rise, and other human impacts on Delaware's coastal ecosystems
2. Quantification of ecosystems services coastal Delaware habitats provide
3. Examination or implementation of wetland restoration techniques for protecting and enhancing resiliency to contaminants, invasive species, nutrient loading, coastal storms, etc.

These research priorities are designed to improve our current knowledge of Mid-Atlantic coastal ecosystems, as represented by the DNERR, and their vulnerability to human impacts. Applications for the enhancement of coastal stewardship and public awareness through outreach and education will be given consideration in the review process. The final outcome of funded work should clearly identify the end-user utility (such as to help inform management decisions, expand our educational programming, etc). This fellowship opportunity is meant to provide graduate students with additional funds to enhance their research efforts in an area that complements the research priorities of the DNERR and Delaware Sea Grant.

Important Dates and Fellowship Schedule:

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|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 3rd, 2016 | Proposals, including hardcopy, due to Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve office no later than 3:00 pm . <i>Applications received after that time will be returned without review.</i> |
| On or before November 11th, 2016 | Fellowship awards announced and recipients notified |
| December 31st, 2017 | Project completion deadline |

II. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicant Requirements:

Applicants must be a graduate student in good academic standing enrolled in any academic institution working at the local level within the State of Delaware. Applicants can be located outside of Delaware however the research study area must be within the boundaries of the

DNERR. The graduate student must be the primary investigator and provide a letter of support from their advisor(s).

Award Information:

Funding is available to support an anticipated two projects; each grant award will not exceed \$10,000. The award recipients are required to comply with all federal laws and guidelines pertaining to the use of federal funds.

Matching Requirements:

Funding received under this fellowship does not require a match. For additional information please contact the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve Office at (302) 739-6377.

Eligible costs:

Funds from this RFP can be used for graduate student travel to conferences, to purchase research supplies, or for supplemental costs pertaining to their graduate research (such as analytical services, publication costs, etc.).

Ineligible costs:

Funds from this RFP cannot be used for fringe, facilities and administrative (F&A) costs, overhead, or tuition. Additionally, funds may not be used for construction costs, lobbying, scholarships to individuals, deficit reduction activities, projects that have already been completed, or for those activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or federal law. Budgeting for graduate student salary cannot exceed 10% of proposed total amount. The award recipient is required to comply with all federal laws and guidelines pertaining to the use of federal funds.

Project Grant Duration:

Funding for this grant is 1 year with no available extension. Funds for this project are available starting January 1st, 2017 and must be complete by December 31st, 2017. Award recipients will be required to submit one mid-term status report and one final report no later than 1 month after grant project end date. Specific reporting requirements will be defined in the grant award agreement.

III. HOW TO APPLY

Submission of Proposals:

One (1) signed hardcopy original **AND** one (1) electronic copy as a single PDF of the proposal and any supporting materials must be submitted (not post-marked) to Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve Office at the following address **no later than 3:00 pm, October 3rd, 2016**. Please allot extra time if mailing application.

ATTN: SG-DNERR Fellowship Application
Colleen Holstein
Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve
818 Kitts Hummock Rd.
Dover, DE 19901

Electronic Copy: Kari.StLaurent@state.de.us

Fellowship Application:

Grant applicants must contain the following information to be considered a complete application. Standard Times New Roman 11 pt. font, 1" margins must be used. Word limits do not include reference list:

Cover Page: The cover page should include the proposal title, Principal Investigator(s) including contact information, start/completion date of project, requested amount of funding, technical and administrative contacts. This page should include the signature of the responsible party submitting the proposal and organization's DUNS number.

Abstract: Include a short abstract of the project suitable for public distribution and federal grant reports not to exceed 300 words.

Rationale: Describe the compelling need for the research. What is the current understanding of your area of research and what questions remain unanswered? (not to exceed 300 words)

Scope of Work: This section should concisely describe the outcomes of the proposal. Describe in detail the methods, sites and analyses that will be performed. All results must be statistically valid and defensible. Include equipment and technology needs, noting access and availability. Do not to exceed 800 words.

Timeline and Benchmarks: Detail the Scope of Work into tasks with target dates for completion of each task including target milestones and timelines. Additionally, at least one educational or outreach activity should be included. This information will also be used to develop a payment schedule.

Project Budget: Provide a detailed budget description and a justification narrative for eligible costs. Include the amount requested and itemize all expenditures such as salary, travel, equipment, supplies, and contractual costs.

CV: The graduate student submitting the proposal must provide a 2 page CV.

Letter of Support: A letter of support from the student's graduate advisor must be included demonstrating familiarity with the proposed work, support for the student's work, and willingness to provided necessary equipment and supplies for the student to be successful.

Any proposal not containing the information outlined above will be disqualified.

IV. SELECTION PROCESS

Each proposal will receive an initial screening by the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve to ensure the application meets basic eligibility criteria. Eligible proposals will be reviewed and ranked by a committee of resource experts (including reviewers internal and external to DNERR as well as Delaware Sea Grant). Lastly, a panel of the resource experts will convene and make recommendations for funding based upon those rankings. The ranking and review panel comments will be available to all screened applicants during the award announcement upon request.

Proposal Review and Ranking Criteria:

Technical merit (50%)

- Project will deliver tangible, defensible results
- Proposed outcomes meet the RFP intent and had end-user utility
- Methods and analyses described are appropriate to meet the RFP goal
- Project addresses one or more of the critical research and monitoring topics for the DNERR and Delaware Sea Grant

Cost effectiveness and budget detail (20%)

- Detailed budget
- Funds would advance graduate student research
- Overall cost effectiveness

Investigator(s) Qualifications (20%)

- Investigator(s) have the knowledge and experience to successfully complete the project
- Primary Investigator is a graduate student conducting research in the DNERR with demonstrated support of their graduate advisor

Outreach and Education Potential (10%)

- Project outcome can reasonably be translatable to a known audience for educational and/or outreach purposes (e.g., school groups, reserve visitors, docents, blog, policy-makers, etc.)

V. GRANTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Award recipients will be required to submit one semi-annual and one final status report. A template and expectations of the specific reporting requirements will be provided in the grant award agreement. The Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve is providing financial support for projects through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Delaware Sea Grant. All award recipients are required to comply with all federal laws and guidelines pertaining to the use of federal funds.

VI. CONTACT INFORMATION

For further details regarding the Delaware Sea Grant-Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve Fellowship application may contact:

Kari St.Laurent, Ph.D.
 DNERR Research Coordinator
 Kari.Stlaurent@state.de.us
 (302) 739-6377

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The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control solicits and encourages Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) and Women’s Business Enterprises (WBE) in all service contracts and is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and diversity of its workforce.