

2010 Funding Announcement

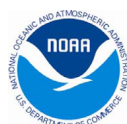
Virginia Coastal and Marine Science Request for Proposal

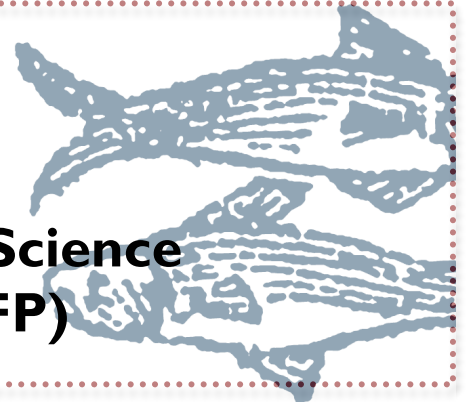
Due date: March 15, 2010

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Virginia Coastal and Marine Science Request for Proposal (RFP)

Deadline: March 15, 2010. Pre-proposals emailed to: vsgproposals@vims.edu

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Virginia Sea Grant—Introduction

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) is a scientific broker, supplying science-based information to citizens, businesses, educators, resource managers, and policy makers to address resilience and sustainability in coastal and marine ecosystems and the communities that depend upon them. VASG funds impactful science aimed at solving important societal problems, with clear links between project results and problem solutions, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the region, and the nation. VASG funds within four strategic focus areas:

- Safe and sustainable seafood
- Healthy coastal and marine ecosystems
- Sustainable and resilient coastal communities
- Coastal and ocean literacy

See the new VASG strategic plan (www.vims.edu/seagrant/) for additional details and the discussion below on funding priorities for specific research objectives within these broader programmatic focus areas.

VASG is headquartered at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, The College of William & Mary. VASG’s mission is to enhance the ecological, economic, and social sustainability of coastal and ocean communities and the ecosystem services they depend upon through university-based research, extension, education, and communication that provide science-based information to decision makers. Sea Grant is a nationwide network (administered through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA]), of 32 university-based programs that work with coastal communities.

Request for Proposal Timeline

VASG is issuing an RFP for research projects of 12-months in duration. Typically VASG issues a biennial RFP for two-year projects; however, to adjust VASG's funding cycle to align with national SG timelines, the 2010 RFP is for projects of one-year in duration. VASG's next RFP will be issued in January 2011 for a typical two-year cycle.

This 2010 RFP includes guidance for pre-proposal submissions; additional guidance will be issued for all pre-proposals that are encouraged to submit full proposals. The timeline for the 2010 RFP is:

- Pre-proposals due: **March 15, 2010**
- Panel review of pre-proposals: Early April, 2010 (~3 weeks from submission)
- Notification to PIs: Mid-April, 2010
- Full proposals due: **June 16, 2010**
- External peer reviews: June—August, 2010
- Notice to PIs with results from external reviews: Late August, 2010
- PI's rebuttal/response to external reviews: Mid- to late-September, 2010 (~3 weeks after notice)
- Peer Review Panel meeting: Mid-October, 2010
- Notice to PIs (after National Sea Grant Office concurrence is obtained by VASG): Early- to Mid-November, 2010
- Funding cycle: February 1, 2011 – January 31, 2012.

Proposal materials not received by the deadlines for submission will not be accepted.

Funding Priorities

VASG has launched a new 2010-14 strategic plan, laying out its priorities in four focus areas: safe and sustainable seafood; healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems; sustainable and resilient coastal communities; and coastal and ocean literacy (see www.vims.edu/seagrant/). The strategic planning process identified higher priority topics, as well as specific approaches to address those topics. Thus, VASG is providing multiple choices of topics and tactics in its 2010 one-year RFP to assess the extent and nature of the coastal and marine science demand in Virginia. The demand for these alternative funding options will inform our next two-year RFP to be issued in early 2011. Pre-proposals should clearly identify both the topical priority being addressed and the tactical approach employed to address that topic—both topical and tactical priorities are listed below.

Priority Topics: Within the four strategic focus areas of interest for VASG, the following topics are of highest priority, as reflected by stakeholder engagement and VASG's new strategic plan. This list does not preclude pre-proposals on other coastal and marine topics consistent with the VASG 2010-14 Strategic Plan; however, other topics will require strong rationales and justifications in order to be encouraged for full proposals (e.g., additional information or needs have emerged since the completion of the VASG Strategic Plan).

Science for ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries, aquaculture, coastal & ocean management

- Understanding ecosystem health, services, and resilience, particularly
 - Coupled biological, physical, and social factors
 - Cumulative and interactive effects of natural and anthropogenic impacts
 - Interactions between fisheries and aquaculture, and the ecosystem's health, services, and resilience
 - Inshore-offshore dynamics
 - Influence of climate change in these relationships.

Human dimensions of coastal & ocean management

- Human dimensions of coastal and ocean land and water resource use, including the socio-economic, legal and policy, and management studies needed to understand resilience and sustainability, as compounded by climate change.
- Understanding link between 1) ecological, social and economic resilience and sustainability, and 2) working waterfronts and coastal access, seafood markets, minority and subsistence fishing communities, recreation and tourism, green coastal and marine jobs, or other human factors.
- Science underlying the development and use of decision-support tools and strategies, e.g., human use and marine spatial mapping data gaps, resilience and sustainability indicators, approaches to multi-use conflict management, etc.

Research & development for sustainable fisheries & seafood safety

- Advances in technology and management practices in seafood safety and processing, sustainable aquaculture operations, and seafood markets, as compounded by climate change.
- Advances in bycatch reduction devices, conservation engineering, and sustainable fishing practices and management for commercial and recreational fisheries.

Tactical Approaches: During the strategic planning process, VASG received many comments regarding the utility of VASG research funding, including the challenges and opportunities it presented. For example, many claimed that the typical award size (\$50-80K per year) was insufficient for a research project. Others noted that smaller seed awards (e.g., \$30-40K) would be more effective at conducting preliminary investigations that lead to more successful, larger proposals to other funders (e.g., NSF, EPA, etc.). Still other comments stated that the typical award was best for funding a student or a narrow research project, but not both.

Thus in response to feedback and to assess the scientific demand and highest impact potential for VASG research funding in Virginia and the region, VASG is providing three alternative funding tactics for investigators under this RFP. In addition to identifying the topical priority being addressed in a pre-proposal, investigators should be clear which tactical approach they are proposing to use:

- *Large research awards.* VASG anticipates funding 1-2 awards of up to \$120,000. These larger awards aim to provide sufficient funding to address significant coastal and marine scientific needs, as identified by the VASG topical priorities. Collaboration with partners and end-users is highly encouraged, including partnership approaches that leverage expertise and resources.

- *Small seed research awards.* VASG anticipates funding 4-8 awards of up to \$40,000. Smaller awards provide sufficient seed funding to conduct critical preliminary and background research on promising concepts or to support and establish new faculty members with high potential for obtaining additional support later from a wide range of funding sources. Further, they could be collaborative research projects designed to solve very specific societal problems. Collaboration with partners and end-users is expected, including partnership approaches that leverage expertise and resources. VASG is particularly interested in projects that demonstrate clear potential for the research and technology development that sustains and creates economic opportunities in sustainable, green jobs and businesses within the Virginia coastal zone.
- *VASG Graduate Fellow.* VASG anticipates funding 4-6 student-only awards. These are graduate student support (tuition, stipend, fees) for students who will be working on a research project that is funded by a different funding agency, but is consistent with the VASG mission and strategic plan. As a value-added addition to their student funding from VASG, the entire class of VASG Graduate Fellows will be provided webinars by VASG on communicating science to non-scientists and the science-to-management process. These additional services will not detract from the primary research responsibilities of the Graduate Fellows, but rather are designed to enhance the students research experience with professional development in science policy, resource management, and outreach concepts.

All VASG-funded research is expected to have clear outreach and dissemination components that advance the science-to-end-user impacts. Discussions and partnerships with extension, education, and/or communication staff are highly encouraged.

National Strategic Investments (NSIs). This RFP applies to core VASG research funding. National Strategic Investments (e.g., past NSIs in oyster disease, Gulf oyster industry, and aquatic nuisance species) are not included in this RFP. Rather, an independent NOAA National Sea Grant Office RFP announces available funding for these programs each year, depending upon Congressional appropriations. VASG will facilitate dissemination and proposal review of NSI RFPs if one is released this year—VASG anticipates forthcoming support in aquaculture and invasive species.

Regional Projects. In the past, VASG has partnered with Maryland and Delaware Sea Grant to announce funding dedicated for regional projects that include investigators from multiple states and address issues of regional scale. While VASG remains committed to regional issues, the 2010 one-year RFP does not specifically include a regional component. Nonetheless, investigators are welcome to propose regional projects by submitting coordinated proposals simultaneously to Virginia and Maryland Sea Grant. We encourage investigators considering a regional proposal to contact both Virginia and Maryland Sea Grant beforehand, and to clearly state on the pre-proposals that an accompanying pre-proposal is being submitted to the other state. Virginia and Maryland Sea Grant will coordinate our reviews and responses to the investigators. Please note Maryland Sea Grant's one-year RFP pre-proposal deadline is February 16, 2010; Delaware Sea Grant will not be issuing an RFP this year.

Funding Levels

VASG has \$670,000 available in this RFP—final value is contingent upon VASG’s federal allocation from NOAA in the FY2011 federal budget. See “Tactical Approach” under funding priorities section below for more information on VASG’s anticipated allocation levels per award.

Matching fund requirement (50%) VASG-funded projects require a 50% funding match. Only non-Federal funds may be committed as matching contribution.

Eligible Applicants

VASG welcomes pre-proposals from any faculty and staff of any higher education institutions within Virginia. The principal investigator (PIs) of a proposal must be affiliated with a Virginia college or university, while co-investigators may have other affiliations and may be out-of-state. In fact, VASG encourages formal collaboration with partners, including end-users of VASG-funded research (e.g., industry, government, non-profits, or other stakeholder community). Faculty and staff supported on core VASG funding (e.g., VASG extension, communication, and administration awards) are not eligible for competitive funds. Only those who submit a pre-proposal by the required deadline are subsequently eligible to submit full proposals.

VASG Pre-proposal—Format

Pre-proposals will be used to evaluate the research concept and its importance, relevance, potential impact, and feasibility. The pre-proposal should be a concise description of the problem being addressed, the methods and approach being used, and the benefits and applications of the projects outcome, if funded.

It is advisable to discuss your project concept with VASG before developing the pre-proposal. Such discussions may help you focus or orient your ideas so that they are better able to compete in the review process; it also gives VASG research administrators a sense of demand, interest, and potential submissions.

An investigator is not encouraged to submit more than one pre-proposal on which s/he is the principal investigator, although there is no limit on the number of pre-proposals on which an investigator serves as a co-investigator.

Format and Content. Adherence to the format requirements is mandatory and ensures fairness across all pre-proposals. Pre-proposals not meeting these format requirements will be returned and not considered. Font size can be no smaller than 11 point and margins must be at least 1 inch on standard 8.5x11 inch paper throughout the document. The content of a pre-proposal should include:

1. *VASG Cover Sheet* can be obtained online: www.vims.edu/seagrant/res-funding.htm. Cover sheet includes: title; detailed contact information for the lead principle investigator and list of co-investigators with affiliations; total amount of funding requested and preliminary budget estimates by general cost categories; project abstract; and institutional

signatures. An abstract should briefly describe the proposed work, but place an emphasis on importance, relevance, application and value to Sea Grant constituents.

2. Project Description (3-pages, single-spaced maximum). The narrative should include the rationale/societal problem statement, project objectives, tactical approach, anticipated benefits, partners/research team, and information transfer and adoption strategy. Please reference the specific VASG strategic plan objective being addressed by the proposed work. Please note that a VASG Graduate Fellow proposal still needs to demonstrate that the research project on which the VASG-funded student would be working is consistent with VASG's strategic plan and mission, even though the research project itself is not funded by VASG.
 - a. Rationale/Societal Problem Statement. Provide the need for the proposed project, background information, and how the proposed project addresses a specific VASG mission and strategic plan focus.
 - b. Objectives. List the objectives of the proposed project, including a brief statement of the context of the proposed project in relation to other related work or fields of related research. Be careful to state the purpose of the work as the objectives rather than list project activities or tasks.
 - c. Approach. Describe the methods, approaches, and techniques that will be used to meet the stated objectives. While a detailed description of methods would be invited in a full proposal, the pre-proposal should provide sufficient information to permit an evaluation of the appropriateness and feasibility of the approach and the potential of the approach to achieve the stated objectives. For the VASG Graduate Fellow pre-proposal, please also describe the role that the student will be playing in the project activities.
 - d. Anticipated Benefits. Describe the results to be achieved for the project, how these results relate to current knowledge of the proposal topic, and of what use the results will be for specific audiences or end-users. Specific information about the outreach, education and dissemination strategies to be used to reach end-users should be included.
 - e. Partners and Research Team. Short description of the research team and their roles and responsibilities. VASG encourages formal collaborations with end-users. Short CV's can be attached separately, so emphasize the roles and responsibilities of team members rather than detailed biographies.
 - f. Information Transfer and Adoption. Discuss how the information generated or technology developed will be transferred to and adopted by decision-makers. Decision-makers could be government policy makers and resource managers, industry members, citizens, educators, etc. These are typically not scientists or the researcher's professional peers.
3. Literature Cited.
4. CV's for project participants (maximum 2-page each).
5. Potential Peer Reviewers. List and provide detailed contact information for 3-5 potential peer reviewers of the proposed concept. VASG may use a sample from the list to guide selection of peer reviewers at this or later stages in the proposal review process.

VASG Pre-proposal—Evaluation

Evaluation procedures and criteria. VASG will assemble a peer review panel with the appropriate disciplinary and professional expertise to enable a thorough review of pre-proposals' importance, merit, feasibility, and likely impact. Panels will be composed predominantly of researchers, but will also include end-users (e.g., extension staff, resource managers, private and non-profit sectors, and/or additional stakeholders familiar with the coastal and ocean resource issues faced by Virginia, the region, and the nation). The panel review is the first examination and screening of proposal concepts and VASG employs a stringent conflict of interest policy throughout the review process. The criteria for review are:

- ***Importance.*** The degree to which the proposed project addresses important coastal and marine issues. Will it advance our understanding of issues relevant to solving clear societal problem(s) in coastal and/or marine issues? Will it likely improve the effectiveness of coastal and marine resource decision-making by end-users?
- ***Relevance.*** The particular societal problem related to coastal and marine issues has a clear significance to Virginia and/or the region. Will addressing the problem have a real impact in Virginia and/or the region? Are there clear deliverables of importance to end-users?
- ***Scientific and Technical Merit.*** Feasibility of the project and likelihood of it being successfully implemented as proposed, given the practicality of the approach proposed, qualifications of the team and their past performance, requested funding and staffing levels, and the ethical and responsible manner of the research approach.
- ***Opportunity for Impacts.*** The degree to which novel approaches are proposed to solve problems or focus on new opportunities. The extent of leveraged expertise, capacity and resources through partnerships and collaborative efforts with end-users. Will there be future opportunities for expanded collaboration and synergistic impacts? What is the likelihood that the proposed information transfer and adoption strategies will broaden the impacts beyond immediate partners?

Investigators whose pre-proposals are approved will be invited to submit full project proposals. Notification will be sent to the principal investigator and it will be her/his responsibility to notify all collaborating partners. Instructions for preparations of full proposals will be provided at that time. The full proposals will be subject to external written reviews of scientific peers and extension staff, and a review panel which makes recommendations to VASG leadership.

Deadline and Submission Information

Pre-proposals must be submitted via email to vsproposals@vims.edu by 5:00pm EST on March 1, 2010 in Word or PDF format. Insert "VASG Science RFP" in the email subject line. Confirmation of pre-proposal receipt will be sent by return email to the originating mailbox only. If you do not have email access, please contact VASG staff at the phone numbers below. Investigators are reminded to follow submission policies of their home institutions, e.g., obtaining institutional review and signatures.

For Additional Information

Please contact Troy Hartley, Director (thartley@vims.edu), (804)684-7248, or Susan Park, Assistant Director for Research, (spark@vims.edu), (804)684-7436. Also see the web-site, www.vims.edu/seagrant/research.htm.