



# COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVES BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW FY 2023 COMPETITIVE FUNDING

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW COMPETITIVE FUNDING

#### Competition Details and Eligibility

- 1. Can partners apply for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competitive projects (including tribal partners)?**

A: Letters of intent must come from the coastal zone management program or research reserve; NOAA would like to ensure that programs are aware of, engaged with, and supportive of the projects submitted through the letter of intent process.

Once a project has been invited to submit a full application to *Grants.gov*, that application may be submitted by an eligible project partner.

- 2. Which entities can apply for, receive, and spend Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competitive funds?**

A: Eligible applicants for coastal zone management Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competitive funds are state and territorial coastal management programs. Coastal management programs may pass through funding to an eligible sub-recipient for execution once awarded, and/or an eligible partner can be a direct recipient in coordination with the program. Coastal zone management programs must be the direct applicant for letters of intent. Coastal zone management partners can serve as direct applicants for projects invited for full applications, in coordination with the coastal zone management program. Coastal management partners can include other state agencies, federally recognized tribes as defined at 15 C.F.R. § 28.105, local governments as defined at 15 C.F.R. § 28.105, non-profit entities, or other local or regional entities, as included in the definition under section 306A(e) of the coastal zone managementA



(16 U.S.C. § 1455a(e)). In such cases, the coastal zone management partner (as the grant recipient) will be responsible for ensuring that allocated funds are used for the approved purposes and in a manner consistent with this program.

Eligible applicants for research reserve Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competitive funds are the lead state agencies or universities designated to reserve research reserve operation funding through a memorandum of understanding with NOAA. The research reserve can pass through funding to an eligible sub-recipient for execution once awarded. In addition, NOAA may, with concurrence of the reserve's lead state agency or university, make a grant directly to an eligible reserve partner to help expedite completion of an approved project. For these projects, the research reserve's lead state agency or university would submit the letter of intent and include a description of which reserve partner would be the final grant recipient. If the reserve is invited to submit a final application for this proposal, then the reserve partner would submit the final application through *Grants.gov*. These final proposals should include a letter of support from the reserve. In such cases, the reserve partner (as the grant recipient) will be responsible for ensuring that allocated funds are used for the approved purposes and in a manner consistent with this program.

Please note: for both reserve and coastal zone management land acquisition projects, ***non-profit entities are not eligible to hold title to lands (fee simple or easement interests) acquired through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds.*** *Non-profit entities therefore should not be a direct recipient or primary subrecipient for land conservation projects (small sub-awards to non-profits to assist in the transaction, such as with due diligence efforts, are allowed. See the "buy and hold" question for more details).*

3. **For research reserve projects, do the memorandums of understanding need to be in place before the partner can submit an application?**

A: No, memorandums of understanding are **not** required for the partner to submit an application to *Grants.gov*.

4. **What is the eligible geography for these projects?**

A: For coastal zone management projects, the eligible geography is the state coastal zone boundary or coastal county. For research reserve projects, the eligible geography is the reserve's boundary, targeted watershed boundary, or, if outside these boundaries, the project must demonstrate the measurable benefits to the reserve or targeted watershed. For those reserves that have not yet designated a targeted watershed boundary, all projects should be located within the reserve's boundary or the boundary of the 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC12) watershed that the reserve is located within, unless the project can demonstrate measurable benefits to the reserve.

Projects across all categories must be implemented on non-federal publicly owned lands, or land where a public entity holds a lease or easement that provides for adequate public control of the property. For the purposes of this competition, Tribal lands held in trust by the federal government are eligible for habitat restoration and habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design projects.

5. **Are the coastal zone management and research reserve Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds *exclusively* reserved for use on non-federal public lands, or are there scenarios in which restoration projects could incorporate or touch private properties?**

A: All projects must provide clear public benefit, consistent with how other on-the-ground projects (such as 306A and Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program) have been administered under the Coastal Zone Management Act. Eligible habitat restoration projects must be located on publicly owned land, or land where a public entity holds a lease or easement or other agreement that provides for adequate public control of the property. Restoration planning, engineering, and design projects should also be for publicly owned or controlled project sites, or for sites where the majority of the project area is under public ownership or control. Land conservation projects must provide for non-federal public ownership by the grant recipient or sub-recipient for conservation in perpetuity.

Projects must provide clear public benefit, as well as adequate long-term public control of the project site. Projects must be primarily for public benefit, and it will be the applicant's responsibility to provide clear evidence of public benefit, as well as public control of the project for the expected life of the project.

6. **Can we submit the same project to multiple Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-funded opportunities?**

A: Yes, you can submit the same projects to multiple funding opportunities. NOAA will be checking across its suite of funding opportunities to ensure that a project is not funded twice under different competitions. Please provide a simple notification in your application if you submitted the project to another competition to help us coordinate with our colleagues and partners.

7. **Can coastal zone management and reserve programs that are working together on a project submit one letter of intent? Can we combine the allocation that coastal zone management and research reserves get?**

A: Each program can submit three letters of intent, and if a joint project is submitted, it counts as one letter of intent for each program. If it is a joint project, it's better to identify which funding opportunity (coastal zone management or research reserves) you are responding to. It is preferred that a project apply to one or the other funding opportunities. Joint projects should always provide clarity between the coastal zone management and research reserve roles for each part of the project.

8. **Is it possible to submit an application that contains multiple types of actions?**

A: The clear approach would be to separate those out in order to show how each action supports on-the-ground habitat restoration. There are instances where some packaging would work, such as planning, engineering, and design. There is also room for doing assessments or prioritization work. As you are developing a package with multiple components, it will be important to ensure that the components of your project come together to meet the goals of the funding opportunity.

**9. Are monitoring plans required for all activities under this funding opportunity?**

A: Monitoring plans will be required for the “habitat restoration” project category, but not for the “habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design” project categories. See section (III) (C)(5) of the federal funding opportunity for more details on one-year post-project monitoring plans that should be included for restoration project proposals.

**10. Can pre-award costs be considered using these funds?**

A: Pre-award costs have to be for activities that are eligible within the scope of work for this particular program, and pre-award costs should be described in the application. Applicants should also know that pre-award costs are taken on at their own risk.

Per 2 C.F.R. § 200.458, NOAA authorizes award recipients to expend pre-award costs up to 90 days before the period of performance start date at the applicant’s own risk without approval from NOAA, and in accordance with the applicant’s internal policies and procedures. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the federal award. This does not include direct proposal costs (as defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.460).

## Habitat Restoration Planning and Engineering

**11. Where should permitting costs be captured—in “habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design” projects, or with the “habitat restoration” projects?**

A: Planning, engineering, design, and permitting costs can be included as a “habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design” project type to move a habitat restoration project closer to “shovel ready.” These costs can also be included as part of a “habitat restoration” project application, keeping in mind that the readiness of the project and the reasonableness of the timeline will be evaluation factors for letters of intent and final applications.

**12. Can engineering and planning for activities necessary to achieve a restoration project be funded? For example, can these funds be used to plan the removal of a road that is necessary to implement our restoration project?**

A: There are no barriers to using the “habitat restoration planning, engineering and design” funds for those types of activities. Ensure that the connection to the implementation of the restoration project is clear in the letter of intent.

**13. Can a reserve or coastal program submit a proposal for one project to fund BOTH planning and implementation, or do they have to choose only one category per proposal?**

A: There are two options:

You can submit one proposal that is eligible for both categories; i.e., one proposal to first plan and then implement a project, as long as the total budget for planning and implementation stays below the cap of \$4 million per project (for reserves) and \$6 million per project (for coastal programs). In your proposal, you would state you want to include engineering and design as the first step toward implementation, and then implement the restoration work. The project period can range from 12 to 36 months, plus an additional 12 months of post-



restoration monitoring—so the total for the one project could be as long as 48 months. You can submit one proposal now for planning only, and then submit a separate proposal in future years to implement the project. The planning project can be 12 to 36 months, and the implementation project could be an additional 12 to 36 months, plus an extra 12 months (48 total) to do a year of post restoration monitoring. (So total time for the two projects could be 36 months plus 48 months.

**14. Is it possible to submit an application that contains multiple types of actions?**

A: The clear approach would be to separate those out in order to show how each action supports on-the-ground habitat restoration. There are instances where some packaging would work, such as planning, engineering, and design. There is also room for doing assessments or prioritization work. As you are developing a package with multiple components, it will be important to ensure that the components of your project come together to meet the goals of the funding opportunity.

**15. Can the planning, design, and engineering funds be utilized for community and stakeholder engagement?**

A: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law planning, design, and engineering proposals can include tasks that provide capacity for coastal zone management and research reserve programs to conduct community outreach and stakeholder engagement related to Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-funded projects.

## Habitat Restoration (Shovel-Ready)

**16. The funding opportunity lists certain activities as ineligible that cannot realistically be separated from restoration (e.g., invasive species removal). Can these activities be included as part of a “habitat restoration” project, provided they are not the sole purpose of the proposed project?**

A: If the activity is part of a larger project, NOAA is supportive of funding that it is necessary for the success of the “habitat restoration” project. NOAA will not support projects that are maintaining existing habitats or infrastructure over the long term.

**17. The funding announcement lists the anticipated funding amounts for research reserve “habitat restoration” projects as “between \$2 and 4 million” and for coastal zone management “habitat restoration” projects as “between \$2 and 6 million.” Are projects smaller in scale and budget allowed, and if so, will they have a chance at being competitive?**

A: These projects are allowed, and will still be competitive. While NOAA is interested in and pushing larger scale projects, we believe smaller scale projects can be impactful, and therefore they will be evaluated the same as larger scale projects. Project scale may also depend on the context of the project (e.g., if it is located in a territory, a significant project in an urban area, etc.).

**18. Can a “habitat restoration” project include the same type of restoration at multiple sites?**

A: Yes. One of the things NOAA will be looking for with these types of projects is connection across the sites. If that connection cannot be clearly made, programs should consider submitting them as multiple discrete projects.

**19. Is there the potential for building removal as part of the restoration process?**

A: If there is a compelling reason described in the letter of intent that the removal of the structure meets the criteria, then we can consider it. However, structure removal is not generally a priority use for these funds, and the project would likely be a better fit for other funding sources.

**20. Are restoration project locations that are not listed in reserve management plans eligible for funding?**

A: Yes, locations that are not explicitly called out in the management plan are still eligible, as long as the applicant indicates other prioritization efforts (e.g., local, state, regional, tribal, or federal plans) that identify the location.

**21. Can projects take place in both aquatic and terrestrial habitat?**

A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not contain a restriction on types of habitat where restoration projects can take place. Applicants should ensure that their project is located within the eligible geography described above and in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

**22. Is dredging allowed for restoration projects?**

A: Dredging is not a preferred activity, but may be allowed in limited cases. For example, there may be minor dredging needed in order to complete a restoration project (e.g., thin layer placement). However, dredging should not be the primary purpose of the proposal.

## Land Acquisition

**23. Are activities related to updating a Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (or other prioritization) plan eligible for both infrastructure capacity-building funding and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competitive funds?**

A: Yes, these activities would be eligible for both funding opportunities, as would a suite of activities to conduct prioritization (data acquisition, modeling, etc). The priority as described in the competitive funding announcement is to support infrastructure projects on the ground or land acquisition. We will need to make sure that the projects that are funded through this competition strike a balance between preparation and on-the-ground benefits, but NOAA wants to support the development of a pipeline for infrastructure projects.

**24. Which entities can hold title to land (fee simple or easement interest) acquired through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds?**

A: Non-federal public ownership (fee-simple title or easement interest) is required. This would include state agencies; federally recognized tribal governments, as defined at 15 C.F.R. § 28.105; local governments, as defined at 15 C.F.R. § 28.105; and entities eligible for assistance



under section 306A(e) of the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 USC 1455a(e)), provided that each has the authority to acquire and manage land for conservation purposes. Non-profit partners are **not** eligible.

**25. Can non-profit entities hold a conservation easement over the property?**

A: No. Non-governmental organizations, including non-profits, are **not** eligible to hold title to lands (fee-simple or easement interest) acquired with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds. However, these organizations may participate as partners with eligible entities in the acquisition, restoration, and long-term stewardship of lands. Their role could include identifying target properties; conducting or assisting in acquisition negotiations; conducting restoration activities; and providing stewardship and management of properties in perpetuity, including holding a *secondary* easement or other stewardship agreement for these lands.

**26. Are “buy and hold” scenarios, where a non-profit temporarily takes ownership before transfer to the final non-federal public entity, eligible?**

A: Yes, there are situations where there can be a buy and hold. Documenting the terms of the purchase agreement carefully will be important. Refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity section III.C.8 for further details about buy and hold scenarios.

Additionally, a non-profit cannot be the direct recipient of an award under this program, and **cannot** be a sub-recipient for the purposes of the actual acquisition or reimbursement of the land.

Non-profits are not allowed to use Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds to acquire interests in lands; non-profits may be eligible to recoup costs for an “assist” (e.g., if they buy a property in advance with intent to transfer to a public entity if Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds are awarded and there are associated expenses [up to 5 percent pursuant to the Notice of Funding Opportunity] or to reimburse for due diligence costs, such as appraisals, title search, or surveys).

A non-profit may receive funding under this program as a seller of interests in land, but is not eligible to receive funding to acquire or retain interests in land. If a non-profit is the seller, they may not be prepaid (or reimbursed) for their acquisition of an interest in lands until such time as title is transferred to the eligible public entity. Funding received under this program should ideally flow through the eligible title holder, and be used to purchase the interests in the lands, at closing. Alternatively, they could be placed in escrow and used to pay for the interests in land at closing.

**27. Can a land acquisition project proposal contain multiple sites in a wetland complex?**

A: All of the parcels proposed for acquisition would need to be public lands, and NOAA will be looking for a clear connection between all of the parcels. If that connection cannot be clearly made, programs should consider submitting them as multiple discrete projects.



**28. Can these funds be used as part of a collection of funding sources to buy a property (i.e., for larger and thus more expensive properties), or must these funds be used to fully acquire the property without other contributing funds?**

A: Yes, you can leverage different funding sources to acquire a property, including other federal, state, local, non-governmental, and private funding sources. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds will need to be tracked separately and clearly, along with clear documentation of the other funding sources and amounts. Also important is documenting the percentage of the property's acreage that the NOAA funding is allocated to.

**29. When acquiring property with federal funds, are purchase prices limited to fair market appraised value, or can funds be used for purchases that exceed this appraisal?**

A: For the most part, we would only support acquisitions at fair market appraised value. We can allow small exceptions, up to five percent over the appraised value, in limited circumstances if sufficient written justification and demonstration of an attempt to negotiate at appraised value is provided. Above that five percent, NOAA does not allow funds to be used to purchase over the appraised value. The recipient can contribute their own funds to make up the difference between appraised value and purchased price, although NOAA discourages transactions that could distort market value of conservation lands.

**30. If an acquisition project is selected for funding and it still needs an appraisal, does that appraisal have to be completed by the start date of the grant, or can it be later? The Notice of Funding Opportunity just says that it needs to be done before funds can be released.**

A: Yes, it can be done later than the start date; however, it must be completed before funds can be released. This means NOAA will put a specific award condition on the grant requiring the program submit the appraisal before the spending funds are released.

**31. How much detail needs to be included in the letter of intent about the willing seller? Can we withhold the identifying details of the seller and parcel location and just provide a description of the parcel in order to protect the seller's decision to sell?**

A: The content of the letters of intent will be confidential throughout the process, and NOAA does not intend to release that information unless we are required to do so through the Freedom of Information Act or another requirement. The level of detail that is required by the Notice of Funding Opportunity is as stated below (Section IV.B.2.j.ii):

“For land conservation projects, identify whether sites have been identified, the property is on the market, and/or negotiations with landowner have resulted in an option or purchase and sale agreement or other evidence that a seller would be willing to sell at a mutually agreeable price and terms; whether appraisal, title opinion, and other documentation have been completed or can be produced within the performance period; and whether the site has any uncertainties (such as liens, judgments, need for remediation) that are not likely to be resolved within the proposed award performance period.”



**32. Can Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding be used for conservation easements (i.e., less-than-fee-simple land acquisition)?**

A: Yes, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding can be used for the acquisition of less-than-fee-simple easement interest in a property if the conservation easement will be held by an eligible public entity.

**33. If the land is already in public ownership, can these funds be used to acquire and transfer ownership to another public entity?**

A: The goal for the land acquisition category of projects is to protect lands threatened by conversion, so in this case the letter of intent should clearly explain how and why this parcel is not already considered protected. These projects could be eligible for funding if they meet the criteria described in section III.C.8, which notes that **property previously acquired and/or managed for a non- conservation purpose** by a public entity can qualify if the agency or entity currently holding title does not have a mission to manage land for conservation purposes, or the agency or entity currently holding title has governing authorities that require sale when transferring property to another public agency.

**34. Could multiple land acquisitions be included in one project, or would they need to be separate projects?**

A: For projects that propose to acquire more than one property, parcels must be located in the same vicinity, be substantially related in terms of conservation values, or have other direct physical or strategic connection (for example, acquiring multiple properties that will be assembled into a single greenway). NOAA recommends that applicants limit the scope to acquiring no more than three separate parcels within a single proposal. Properties containing multiple parcels covered under a single appraisal, title report, and survey plat could count as one parcel (e.g., a subdivided property with the same landowner).

**35. NOAA has stated that planning, design, and engineering funds will be available for restoration projects. Will similar planning and preparation funds be available for land acquisition projects (transactional costs like appraisals, surveys, etc. that are often needed to get a project ready to go)?**

A: The FY 2023 funding opportunities will not include a project category for land acquisition planning or preparation. We will consider this as an option for future year funding competitions. For FY 2023, coastal zone management and research reserve programs may use a portion of their infrastructure capacity-building funding for land acquisition planning costs such as appraisals, surveys, and title research. Alternatively, these costs are eligible for inclusion within a land acquisition project application if the costs will be incurred within the proposed project award period. These costs would also be eligible for reimbursement as pre-award costs if the costs are incurred 90 days prior to the start of the award, and pre-award costs are requested within the project application.

**36. Can an applicant submit a proposal for an acquisition that needs to close ahead of when the award will be issued? For example, if the acquisition closes in June, can the applicant use bridge funding to pay for it, and use Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds (if selected) to pay themselves back?**

A: The cost of land acquisition may be reimbursed as a pre-award cost if the acquisition occurred between the selection date (the date that the NOAA selection official recommends a list of projects for funding) and the start date for an approved grant award. However, please note that at this point in time, NOAA is not able to provide a final project selection date for the FY 2023 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competitions; however, we expect project selections to occur by early April 2024. Reimbursement of funds is subject to NOAA's approval of due diligence documents; closing on a property prior to the award start date is at the applicant's risk.

**37. Are Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) plans required?**

A: No; we are waiving this previous requirement. However, land acquisition projects will be rated on whether or not the proposed acquisition is prioritized or included within a strategic land conservation or other resource management plan. This could be a state's Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program plan, another coastal or statewide acquisition plan, a research reserve management plan, a watershed plan, a regional plan, a tribal plan, etc.

**38. Is there a specific amount of the coastal zone management funds set aside for land conservation? Does this funding still have the 15 percent set aside for the research reserves as Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program previously did, per the Omnibus Land Management Act of 2009?**

A: No, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law does not specify an amount or percentage of the coastal zone management or research reserve portions of funding to be allocated for land conservation projects versus habitat restoration projects.

Coastal zone management programs can recommend land conservation projects that support research reserves, but the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law specified that NOAA is not required to set aside 15 percent of the coastal zone management land conservation funding for projects benefiting the reserves, as was previously the case under the Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program. Instead, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law included a separate funding authority for land acquisitions that benefit the research reserve system.

**39. Are acquisition sites that include areas developable for public access (e.g., docks, boardwalks, kiosks) eligible?**

A: This competition is focused on habitat conservation, but the competition also prioritizes public benefit and public access to conservation sites that are consistent with resource protection. The funding opportunity places an emphasis on providing passive public access to sites acquired with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds. Acquisition of land for active recreation, such as sports facilities, water parks, playgrounds, or similar uses, would be ineligible, except for at a de minimis scale. NOAA will consider allowing trails that do not include hardscape construction.

Please note that this funding is not intended to support public access infrastructure, such as boardwalks, boat ramps, bridges, bathrooms, or walkways. We encourage programs to use Section 306A and National Estuarine Research Reserve System PAC funding for these types of investments.

## COMPETITION PROCESS

### 40. Is a letter of intent required, or just recommended, for each application?

A: The letter of intent is **required**. Only projects that have submitted a letter of intent AND have been invited to submit a final application will be considered for funding.

### 41. Each program can submit up to three letters of intent. Are there limits on how many may move on to the next level?

A: No, there are no limits regarding how many projects per program can move to the final application round. NOAA will consider geographic area, project type, and other factors when making final selection decisions, including the priority of projects for the coastal zone management and reserve program. NOAA may contact programs that have multiple projects with similar scores to determine program preference, if necessary.

### 42. Is there an expectation of state-level competitive grant solicitations?

A: NOAA acknowledges that timing considerations may dictate state-level competitions, but encourages them in preparation for the application process.

### 43. Will NOAA run competitions each year?

A: NOAA's Office for Coastal Management is planning additional competitions in future years for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds. Decisions have not been made regarding the structure of future competitions, and whether any of those future competitions will be multi-year competitions (one competition for several years' worth of funding, such as a competition for FY 2024, and another competition for FY 2025 and 2026), or single-year competitions (separate competitions for FY 2024, 2025, and 2026).

### 44. Will NOAA continue the letter of intent process into future competitions?

A: Yes, based on the FY 2022 competition and feedback received, NOAA will be continuing to utilize the letter of intent process for any future Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competitions.

### 45. Are there any restrictions related to indirect costs on these awards?

A: Indirect costs are subject to normal rules under 2 C.F.R. Part 200, the Uniform Administrative Principles for Grants and Cooperative Agreements. The Notice of Funding Opportunity does NOT include a cap on indirect costs. Whatever the approved negotiated rate is would be applicable to Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds. However, for land conservation projects, there will be a limit on how much of the award funds can be spent on administrative costs such as staffing, due diligence, and initial stewardship, with a cap of five percent of the overall award.

**46. What is the definition and timeline for “ready to go” projects? Would projects that include a design and engineering element be considered?**

A: Projects will be evaluated on project readiness. For “habitat restoration” projects, this will include factors such as permit status and whether project construction plans are design ready (90 to 100 percent complete). For “Land Conservation” projects, this will include factors such as a property’s availability for purchase (e.g., owner’s willingness to sell) and status of due diligence needed to estimate fair market value and identify potential acquisition challenges.

**47. Does the prioritization of projects that are “ready to go” mean that projects that incorporate design, planning, and engineering are eligible, but at a competitive disadvantage?**

A: NOAA intends to fund a combination of projects in each of the three project categories: “habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design,” “habitat restoration,” and “Land Conservation” projects. If looking to submit a “habitat restoration” project application that also includes a design, planning, and engineering element, applicants should consider how advanced the plans are for the overall project. For instance, if the project requires substantial design, planning, and engineering work, then combining project types is likely not viable, which means design and engineering elements should be submitted for the first year, followed by a habitat restoration implementation application the next year (dependent, of course, on the size and scale of the project, as well as the amount of design engineering work needed). If project completion is uncertain within the three-year award period, the application should be separated into different phases. In general, NOAA strongly discourages combining multiple project types into one application, since that application could be at a competitive disadvantage against more focused applications.

**48. Will we be able to combine project types (“habitat restoration,” “habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design”) under the \$6 million (for coastal zone management)/\$4 million (for reserves) umbrella? (Note: \$6 million is the maximum per-project funding amount allowed for the coastal zone management competition; the competition for the research reserves allows a maximum of \$4 million per project.)**

A: The \$4 million and \$6 million caps are on a per-project application basis. Projects should fit primarily into one of the following project types: “habitat restoration,” “habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design,” and “land conservation.” As noted above, it is possible to include planning, engineering, and design elements within a habitat restoration project. However, since all applications will be evaluated for project readiness, we strongly discourage combining multiple project types into one application, since that application could be at a competitive disadvantage against more focused applications.

**49. Is there any opportunity to combine work on multiple project sites within one application?**

A: Yes, in certain circumstances, the competition does allow multi-parcel land conservation projects. As noted in an earlier question, a single land conservation proposal may propose to acquire more than one property if the parcels are located in the same vicinity, are substantially related in terms of conservation values, or have other direct physical or strategic connection.

Similarly, applications focusing on habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design may propose work on multiple related properties. As with land conservation, if an application

combines multiple planning, engineering, and design projects, the project sites should be located in the same vicinity, be substantially related in terms of conservation values, or have other direct physical or strategic connection.

NOAA strongly discourages applications that combine several different on-the-ground restoration projects due to concerns with project readiness and ability to complete projects within the proposed award period. NOAA is looking for distinct and cohesive projects, and will not consider projects without a clear nexus between sites (e.g., a project on multiple adjacent parcels versus sites located in different areas within a watershed).

**50. What is the minimum funding amount per coastal zone management proposal?**

A: Projects funded under the coastal zone management Bipartisan Infrastructure Law competition may range from \$200,000 to \$6 million. However, applicants may propose “habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design” projects with a federal funding request of less than \$200,000.

**51. If the applicant has already completed their required procurement and contracting process and selected partners to work with, can the applicant choose to continue working with those partners, or will they need to go through the procurement and contracting process again if awarded funding?**

A: The key is for applicants to adhere to your procurement processes. If that process has already been completed and nothing else is required, NOAA will not require applicants to undergo the process again. The key is for the applicant to follow their procurement standards and provide documentation as appropriate in order to move forward with the selections they’ve made.

**52. For the research reserve funding, would NOAA consider additional flexibility in the location regarding where the properties and proposed projects are located and allow projects outside of the reserve and the targeted watershed boundaries?**

A: Yes, after evaluating the FY 2022 competition, NOAA will allow projects outside of the reserve and its targeted watershed boundaries. However, project applications must demonstrate that the proposal will have **measurable benefits** to the reserve. The benefits must tie back directly to the reserve and be to the reserve itself, its priorities, or its programs. It is up to the applicant to determine the benefits of the location and justify in the application why exactly they are beneficial to the reserve.

**53. While matching funds are not a requirement for these competitions, formal match and informal leveraged funds are considered in evaluating applications. Does it matter if funds are formal match or leveraged for the purposes of this competition?**

A: No, all additional funds, whether they are formal match or informal leveraged funds, are scored the same under the evaluation criteria. Furthermore, informal leveraged funds are not bound to the same legal requirements as formal matching funds (i.e., if the amount of matching funds decreases, the federal award share must be proportionally decreased), so it is advisable to carefully consider whether you wish to declare additional funds as formal match in proposal applications.