

A Proposal to the
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office for Coastal Management
2018 Digital Coast Fellowship Program

Submitted by the
Coastal State Organization

Project Title:
Coastal Community Support
for Resilience Enhancement through the CRS

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1. Background and Introduction

For the 2018 NOAA Digital Coast Fellowship, the Coastal States Organization (CSO) and the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) propose to take on a Fellow focused on improving the resilience of coastal communities through improved participation in the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP's) Community Rating System (CRS). CSO and ASFPM have seen success in using this approach in concert with other members of the Digital Coast Partnership to addressing flood risk reduction, ecosystem conservation, and climate change resilience in coastal communities, and intend to use this fellowship project to strengthen and perpetuate their work in this area. In turn, the project will provide the Fellow with opportunities to conduct intensive policy research and formulation as well as develop, lead, and facilitate a robust technical assistance program focused on natural infrastructure and the CRS.

A key component of the fellowship project will be to continue the work of the community outreach, education, and technical assistance component of CSO's and ASFPM's "Improving Coastal Resiliency through Community Engagement" project (the CRS Green Guide). The workshop model for this project has provided a valuable format for connecting to states and communities which CSO and ASFPM want to extend. CSO partners with its members—state Coastal Zone Management Programs—to identify community need and interest, potential workshop hosts, and common regional issues and needs. These state agencies have already built strong, practice-based networks with coastal communities in their states spanning across issue areas, and therefore are able to effectively bring local communities to the table. ASFPM uses its local and national ties with FEMA, Insurance Services Office (ISO), and the state floodplain management community of practice to assemble a slate of local and regional experts to target those common issues in the workshop program. CSO and ASFPM activate their in-state contacts to bring the local community practitioners to the workshop as attendees. Workshops don't merely advertise the Guide or provide an introductory tutorial, but instead concentrate on participants' self-identified needs and building practitioner connections with national contacts to get the information and expertise needed to solve them. CSO and ASFPM then follow-up the priorities set at the workshop with ongoing technical assistance to participants. CSO and ASFPM are seeking new opportunities to extend the life of the project's products, sustain its successful model for technical assistance, and continue to enhance its value to coastal communities through new research and new products. The Fellow will take the lead in executing these goals.

The Fellow will also expand the scope of CSO's and ASFPM's work on the CRS as a tool for community resilience through intensive study of and recommendations to address systemic socioeconomic inequities which drive down communities' capacity to participate in the program and, more broadly, achieve resilience. CSO and ASFPM members have encountered widespread nationwide evidence that in many of the most vulnerable coastal communities, economic inequities drive the capacity gaps that prevent so many communities from joining or advancing in the CRS. This study will require the Fellow to work closely with CSO and ASFPM members and communities, and to draw on the resources of Digital Coast, to identify actions to improve the viability of the CRS as a vehicle to build community resilience. The Fellow's findings in this work will steer the CRS technical assistance work of the Fellow, inform CSO and ASFPM practice and policy, and drive new activities to achieve the resilience-building mission.

2. Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of this fellowship project is to enhance coastal resilience to flood hazards in a changing climate, using the CRS as a vehicle for identifying, incentivizing, and implementing cost-effective and ecologically efficient strategies for local communities. CSO and ASFPM, as members of the Digital Coast partnership, play the role of connecting local, county, and state managers to the technical resources and support necessary to implement change on the ground. This project seeks to advance CSO's and ASFPM's work in that area while providing the Fellow with experience planning, coordinating, and implementing major policy analysis and technical assistance projects with national and local stakeholders.

Goal 1: Support coastal resilience to flood hazards and climate change by directly engaging the needs of local governments.

Objective 1.1: Deliver technical assistance through the CRS Green Guide.

Objective 1.2: Assess the systemic socioeconomic factors driving capacity deficits and inequities in CRS participation, and deliver recommendations for addressing the need.

Objective 1.3: Analyze the technical needs of local managers to improve participation in the CRS, identify new opportunities to connect managers with organizations that can perform technical work or provide data and tools, and establish durable connections between the two.

Goal 2: Develop a sustainable, well-integrated, and adaptable training and technical assistance program for coastal communities that builds on the progress the CSO and ASFPM have in ongoing collaborative projects and on the partnership resources available through Digital Coast.

Objective 2.1: The CRS Green Guide training program is institutionalized and integrated into OCM's Engagement, Education, and Training Program.

Objective 2.2: CSO's and ASFPM's technical assistance services are integrated with Digital Coast partners' CRS-related activities, including OCM's process guidance development and the Nature Conservancy's tool development and in-community technical assistance.

3. Project Description

The Fellow will lead CSO's and ASFPM's partnership to promote and improve the CRS as a tool to achieve coastal flood resilience, with special concentration on bridging the gap for communities that do not have sufficient capacity to join or advance in the CRS. The Fellow will do this both through research into the socioeconomic factors that drive the capacity gap, as well as through leveraging the resources of CSO, ASFPM, and Digital Coast to deliver training and technical assistance services to coastal communities in need. This will require the Fellow to act as CSO's and ASFPM's primary point of contact on resilience projects entered into in collaboration with other Digital Coast partners.

The Fellow will take the lead on integrating the work of the CRS Green Guide with the efforts of the Digital Coast partners, and on incorporating the tools and support that the partners provide into the CRS Green Guide's workshops and technical assistance. The Fellow will also support other CSO and ASFPM activities related to CRS, NFIP, and coastal resilience as they arise.

Task 1 – Familiarize with ongoing CSO and ASFPM efforts.

(Fall 2018 – Winter 2018)

At the beginning of the fellowship, the Fellow will work with mentors and colleagues at CSO and ASFPM to learn about the organizations' work and national priorities and those of the Digital Coast Partnership, and will take a deep dive into the workings of the Community Rating System. This will include attending relevant facilitation and CRS trainings as appropriate for the Fellow's experience, making use of Digital Coast trainings and resources.

Outcomes/Milestones:

- Work plan for 2-year fellowship period, created in coordination with CSO and ASFPM mentors.

Task 2 - Address community capacity and inequities in the CRS.

(Fall 2018 – Summer 2019)

During the first year of the fellowship, the Fellow will concentrate on researching, assessing, and identifying solutions for the systemic socioeconomic factors driving capacity deficits and inequities in CRS participation. The Fellow will work with CSO and ASFPM staff as well as with Digital Coast partners to research CRS participation in vulnerable coastal communities, including a literature review and outreach to indicator communities which could serve as case studies. The Fellow will deliver the results of their research in a white paper that will make recommendations for communities, NGOs, state agencies, FEMA, other federal agencies, and Congress to address identified shortcomings and make practicable changes to the CRS to increase participation and success. The Fellow will present their results at CSO and ASFPM annual meetings in 2019. The Fellow's findings in this task will inform their efforts in providing technical support to communities.

Outcomes/Milestones:

- Literature review of existing academic research and grey literature addressing socioeconomic factors affecting participation in CRS and local-scale resilience building in general.
- White paper identifying causes and offering recommendations.
- Presentation of provisional results of the CRS participation white paper at the ASFPM National Conference in June 2019, using the session to solicit input from practitioners and communities.
- Presentation on final results of the CRS participation white paper at the CSO Fall Meeting in October 2019, using the session to conduct outreach to and through state coastal zone management programs.

Task 3 – Lead development of the CRS Green Guide technical assistance program and integrate Digital Coast Partnership CRS technical assistance activities with the Office for Coastal Management's Engagement, Training, and Education Program.

(Spring 2019 – Summer 2020)

Starting at the end of the first year of the fellowship, the Fellow will lead CSO and ASFPM CRS efforts by building on the CRS Green Guide program of workshops and webinars. This will involve collaborating with the Learning Services Division at NOAA Office for Coastal Management, Digital Coast partners, and CSO and ASFPM members to develop new materials. The Fellow will also continue the development of the CRS Green Guide tool itself with new case studies and best practices and with integrating existing and new resources into the tool, such as an upcoming National Association of Counties (NACo) guide for working with elected officials

(under development in partnership with CSO and ASFPM), and tools by Digital Coasts partners and national organizations. The Fellow will work with the Learning Services Division to better integrate the existing CRS training and technical assistance efforts of Digital Coasts partners (including, but not limited to, the CRS Green Guide) into NOAA's Engagement, Training, and Education Program. The goal of this work will be to coordinate CSO and ASFPM efforts with the CRS activities of the other Digital Coast Partners, and to institutionalize and perpetuate the CRS efforts of CSO, ASFPM, and other Digital Coast Partners for the long term.

Outcomes/Milestones:

- Established process, developed in coordination with ASFPM event-planning staff, for CRS Green Guide workshop implementation.
- New resources incorporated into the CRS Green Guide as a living document.
- Digital Coast partners' resources are better integrated with the Engagement, Training, and Education Program.

Task 4 – Facilitate the CRS Green Guide technical assistance program.

(Fall 2019 – Summer 2020)

In the second year of the fellowship, the Fellow will take a leadership role in implementing CSO's and ASFPM's CRS technical assistance efforts in the field, including coordinating and facilitating CRS Green Guide webinars and workshops. The Fellow will be expected to use the insight gained through Task 2 to implement meaningful programmatic strategies to ensure that CSO and ASFPM efforts are responsive to the socioeconomic factors which influence community capacity to participate in the CRS. This Task will involve using ASFPM and CSO contacts to schedule speakers and reach attendees, leading events, executing follow-up technical assistance, and improving products and services based on participant feedback.

Outcomes/Milestones:

- One or multiple CRS Green Guide workshops and follow-through technical assistance are executed in communities with identified need.

4. Fellow Mentoring

CSO and ASFPM are committed to providing the Fellow with independent responsibility, professional development support, and access to national professional networks to advance their career goals through the work they do on the fellowship. The Fellow will work in the Washington, D.C. offices of CSO under the mentorship of Acting Executive Director Bradley Watson and Coastal Policy Fellow John Ryan-Henry. As a member of CSO staff, the Fellow will participate in CSO work groups and national meetings, as well as with CSO's legal council or strategic communications activities according to the Fellow's interests. The mentors will be responsible for the success of the Fellow's experience during their fellowship. They will work with the Fellow to develop an achievable work plan based on the project goals and outcomes described in this proposal to ensure success for this project and the fellow, but will give the Fellow latitude to lead the project themselves, including through convening meetings and webinars with CSO and ASFPM members, Digital Coast partners, and coastal community staff and outside groups. The Fellow will work directly with their mentors at CSO on a daily basis.

Project Manager Jeff Stone will be the Fellow's primary mentor and point of contact at ASFPM. The Fellow will be leading CSO's and ASFPM's collaborative efforts on CRS, and so will be

working closely with ASFPM staff based out of Madison, WI. The fellow will be able to participate in ASFPM's annual conferences in both 2019 and 2020, allowing them to meet with floodplain managers and professionals from across the nation and learn first-hand about the unique challenges and issues each state faces. The fellow will also participate in CSO events and meetings. Each year, CSO holds a Winter Meeting in Washington, DC and a Fall Meeting in the states. The Fall Meeting is focused on setting priorities and goals for the organization and provides events open to the public with numerous speakers discussing a variety of coastal issues. The Winter Meeting gives coastal managers an opportunity to interact directly with NOAA officials and to meet with their elected officials. The Fellow will be able to attend both Fall and both Winter meetings during the fellowship period. Attending the national meetings of CSO and ASFPM will enable the Fellow to gain expert input during deliverable development as well as a venue to present completed deliverables.

The fellow will have the opportunity for professional development through interaction with ASFPM and CSO members and staff, CSO's work groups and ASFPM's Policy Committees, and other leaders engaged through both ASFPM's and CSO's varied and broad partners at the federal, state and local level, both public and private.

5. Project Partners

The Fellowship project sustains and advances CSO's and ASFPM's partnership goal of bridging the gap for communities that do not have the capacity to join or advance in the CRS. "Improving Coastal Resiliency through Community Engagement" began as a Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency project funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). CSO and ASFPM intend to use this fellowship project to transition that project's products and services to a permanent, sustainable program of coastal community technical assistance. Partnering with OCM's Learning Services Division to better integrate existing Digital Coast Partnership efforts into NOAA's training program is a central component of this plan, and will require the Fellow to reach out to and work closely with other Digital Coast Partnership members. The project will also integrate with ongoing collaborations between CSO, ASFPM, other Digital Coast partners, and outside groups, including training and outreach work in the Gulf of Mexico in partnership with NACo.

6. Cost Share Description

CSO will provide the \$15,000 cost-share from the general budget, and will provide in-kind support through office space, computer, equipment, supplies, research subscriptions, internet and telephone service, and other working necessities. CSO will cover travel expenses for the Fellow to attend two annual CSO Fall Meetings outside of DC as well as two annual CSO Winter Meetings at CSO offices. ASFPM will provide funds for travel to ASFPM annual conferences and staff support for the Fellow's work and mentorship.

7. Strategic Focus Areas

In alignment with the strategic focus areas of the 2018 Digital Coast Fellowship Program, the following areas will be addressed through the fellowship project:

- *Healthy Coastal Ecosystems:* The fellowship project will “[s]upport coastal and ocean resource managers through . . . information, tools, training, technical assistance, analysis, and exchange of best practices to strengthen ecosystem policies, build capacity, and implement prioritized management efforts” by implementing the CRS Green Guide technical assistance program, creating process guidance to address the stated needs of coastal communities, and connecting local governments to Digital Coast resources and data.
- *Resilient Coastal Communities:* The Fellow will “[b]uild capacity to pursue strategies such as hazard preparedness, mitigation, and post-hazard redevelopment planning” through training, technical assistance, and policy tools aimed particularly at the needs of communities with systematic socioeconomically-driven capacity gaps. The Fellow’s work will focus on identifying and targeting the issues that keep communities from achieving the known effective risk-wise strategies embodied in the CRS. This approach will center on the engagement of “partners in maximizing the understanding, visualization, and application of risk-wise strategies” by connecting communities to national tools, resources and support.