

when such contracts are the most cost effective method of conducting these functions. This policy documents the framework and conditions under which contracting will be employed to ensure an open and consistent approach. To support this policy, NOAA will maintain a dialogue with private sector organizations and constituent groups. For the purposes of this policy, the term "hydrographic services" is defined in the HSIA to include "the management, maintenance, interpretation, certification, and dissemination of bathymetric, hydrographic, geodetic, geospatial, geomagnetic, and tide and current information, including the production of nautical charts, nautical information databases, and other products derived from hydrographic data."

#### *Policy*

NOAA will acquire hydrographic services from qualified sources in accordance with applicable Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) and as authorized and directed under the Act of 1947 and the HSIA, including use of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, 40 U.S.C. 1101–1104, when appropriate. Commonly known as the "Brooks Act," these contracting procedures are used in certain situations where the professional nature of the services to be procured requires that potential contractors have specialized technical expertise.

NOAA may determine that a particular surveying or mapping activity is inherently governmental. NOAA surveying and mapping activities considered inherently governmental in nature may include services necessary to: (1) Monitor the quality of NOAA products; (2) promulgate and promote national and international technical standards and specifications; (3) conduct basic research and development and ensure the rapid transfer to the private sector of the derived technology; (4) maintain the Federal geodetic and navigational databases necessary to support safe and efficient marine operations; (5) support coastal stewardship ecosystem applications; and (6) support Maritime Domain Awareness and Homeland Security preparation and response, including maintaining a response capability to provide emergency services and support in response to natural and manmade disasters and other unforeseen requirements. To carry out the above activities, and to adequately monitor contracted services, NOAA will maintain a core capability of field and office expertise.

The government's interests and responsibilities for surveying and mapping vary broadly, and experience has shown that maintaining flexibility is essential in responding to the Nation's changing needs for updated surveying and mapping data. Therefore, NOAA may task qualified commercial sources to conduct surveying and mapping services in any part of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone for any NOAA mission-related purpose, irrespective of pre-defined priority categories such as those documented in the NOAA Hydrographic Surveying Priorities.

#### *Ancillary Statements and Actions*

As recommended by the HSRP, NOAA will continue to utilize a mix of in-house and private-sector resources to accomplish its hydrographic services missions. Costs and productivity will be closely monitored within each category (*i.e.*, public and private) to ensure best use of hydrographic services resources. NOAA will also seek to determine the optimal resource allocation between in-house and private-sector resources based on the strength of the governmental interest, the total requirement for mapping and charting services, and the particular operational capabilities of either government or private-sector resources that may make one more suitable.

NOAA will continue to examine ways to improve its contracting process, such as methods of minimizing the turnover frequency of contracting personnel and for reducing the length of time required to award contracts and task orders. NOAA will maintain its offer of debriefings to successful and unsuccessful hydrographic services contractors after final selection has taken place. The purpose of these debriefings is to assist contractors with identifying significant weaknesses or deficiencies in their submissions. NOAA is also exploring the establishment of an Ocean and Coastal Mapping Training Center. The Training Center was initially conceived as a curriculum to support NOAA's in-house hydrographic surveying training requirements. But NOAA now recognizes value in broadening the Center's scope to include training for NOAA and private sector contractors in techniques, standards, and technologies that support NOAA's many shoreline, coastal, and ocean mapping activities. This concept builds an NOAA's annual Hydrographic Training and Field Procedures Workshops currently held for NOAA personnel and its hydrographic services contractors to train and trade valuable lessons learned

from surveying experience. Such training would be beneficial to current or prospective NOAA contractors seeking to strengthen their proposal submissions. To view Appendix A, B, or C; the 1996 National Ocean Service Contracting Policy; the Brooks Act, or the Acts authorizing NOAA Navigation Services programs, visit <http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/ocs/hsrp/archive/library.htm>.

Dated: March 28, 2006.

**Roger L. Parsons,**

*Director, Office of Coast Survey, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.*

[FR Doc. 06–3340 Filed 4–6–06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–JE–M**

## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

#### **NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities Draft**

**AGENCY:** Coral Reef Conservation Program, NOAA, Department of Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice and request for public comment.

**SUMMARY:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) publishes this notice to announce the availability of the Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities for public comment. The Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan is being developed by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program to set priorities and guide NOAA-supported coral ecosystem research for fiscal years 2006 to 2010, including research conducted through extramural partners, grants, and contracts. The Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan covers all coral reef ecosystems under the jurisdiction of the United States and the Pacific Freely Associated States; and is written for a broad audience, including resource managers, scientists, policy makers, and the public.

**DATES:** Comments on this draft document must be submitted by May 8, 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** The Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities will be available at the following location [http://www.nurp.noaa.gov/Docs/NOAA\\_CoralResearchPlanPartII\\_FRN.pdf](http://www.nurp.noaa.gov/Docs/NOAA_CoralResearchPlanPartII_FRN.pdf)

The public is encouraged to submit comments on the Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities electronically to

[coral.researchplan@noaa.gov](mailto:coral.researchplan@noaa.gov). For comments who do not have access to a computer, comments on the document may be submitted in writing to: NOAA Research, c/o Kimberly Puglise, NOAA's Undersea Research Program, 1315 East-West Highway R/NURP, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Kimberly Puglise by mail at NOAA's Undersea Research Program, 1315 East-West Highway R/NURP, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 or phone (301) 713-2427 ext. 199 or e-mail at [coral.researchplan@noaa.gov](mailto:coral.researchplan@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NOAA is publishing this notice to announce the availability of the Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities for public comment. The draft plan will be posted for public comment on April 7, 2006. All interested parties are encouraged to provide comments. The Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities is being issued for comment only and is not intended for interim use. Suggested changes will be incorporated, where appropriate, in the final version.

The Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan is being developed by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program to set priorities and guide NOAA-supported coral ecosystem research for fiscal years 2006 to 2010, including research conducted through extramural partners, grants, and contracts. The Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan covers all coral reef ecosystems under the jurisdiction of the United States and the Pacific Freely Associated States; and is written for a broad audience, including resource managers, scientists, policy makers, and the public.

The Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan consists of two sections: (1) Part I: National Priorities; and (2) Part II: Regional Priorities. At this time, we are requesting your comments solely on the Part II: Regional Priorities Draft.

Part I of the Plan is national in scope and identifies: the role of research in management, including a review of the major stressors and threats facing coral reef ecosystems and an overview of stressor-associated research priorities; the role of mapping and monitoring in management-driven research programs; a discussion of the tools and technologies necessary to conduct research and to manage ecosystems; a discussion of the importance of transferring science and technology into operations; and the importance of using strategic outreach and education to

translate research results to improve management decisions.

Part II of the Plan is regional in scope and reviews the major stressors for coral ecosystems in each region under the jurisdiction of the United States and the Pacific Freely Associated States; identifies key management objectives specific to each region; and the research priorities for fiscal years 2006 to 2010 to help address the stated management objectives in each region. Part II is divided into the following regions: Florida with subsections for the Florida Keys, Southeast Florida, and the West Florida Shelf (also known as the Eastern Gulf of Mexico); Flower Garden Banks; Puerto Rico; the U.S. Virgin Islands; Navassa Island; the Hawaiian Islands with subsections for the Main and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands; American Samoa; the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands; Guam; the U.S. Pacific Remote Insular Areas, which includes Midway Atoll, Rose Atoll, Wake Atoll, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Palmyra Atoll, Jarvis Island, Howland Island, and Baker Island; and the Pacific Freely Associated States with subsections for the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

NOAA welcomes all comments on the content of the Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities. We also request comments on any inconsistencies perceived within the document, and possible omissions of important topics or issues. For any shortcoming noted within the draft documents, please propose specific remedies.

Please adhere to the instructions detailed below for preparing and submitting your comments on the Draft NOAA Coral Ecosystem Research Plan Part II: Regional Priorities. Using the format guidance described below will facilitate the processing of reviewer comments and assure that all comments are appropriately considered. Please format your comments into the following three sections: (1) Background information about yourself (optional); (2) overview or general comments; and (3) specific comments. Section one may include background information about yourself including: your name(s), organization(s), area(s) of expertise, and contact information, such as mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address(s). Section two should consist of overview or general comments on the document and should be numbered. Section three should consist of comments that are specific to particular pages, paragraphs, or lines in the document and should identify the

page and line numbers to which they apply. Please number and print identifying information at the top of all pages.

Public comments may be submitted from April 7, 2006, through May 8, 2006.

Dated: April 3, 2006.

**David Kennedy,**

*Manager, Coral Reef Conservation Program.*

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**BILLING CODE 3510-JE-M**

## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Office of the Secretary

[No. DoD-2006-OS-0060]

### Proposed collection: Comment Request

**AGENCY:** Defense Finance and Accounting Service, DoD.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service announces the proposed extension of a public information collection and seeks public comment on the provisions thereof. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed information collection; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the information collection on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

**DATES:** Consideration will be given to all comments received by June 6, 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments, identified by docket number and title, by any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Mail: Federal Docket Management System Office, 1160 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1160.

**Instructions:** All submissions received must include the agency name and docket number for this **Federal Register** document. The general policy for comments and other submissions from members of the public is to make these submissions available for public viewing on the Internet at