Data Collection Form

Part A: Project Information
(To be completed by all Proposers)

Okaloosa RESTORE Advisory Committee

Approved by the Okaloosa RESTORE Advisory Committee: December 4, 2014
Okaloosa County, Florida

1/17/2014

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this data collection form is to assist Okaloosa County in prioritizing projects submitted for Direct Component ("Pot #1") funds allocated from the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund through the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act).

The following terms are used in this data collection form:

- Applicant - the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
- Project Proposer - the individual or organization completing this form
- Responsible Entity - the Okaloosa County BOCC

Prior to initiating this data collection form, it is recommended the Project Proposer download and review the entire form to understand the range of required information. Tools/data required to complete this form may include: permits, interlocal agreements, comprehensive plans, evidence of property ownership, and estimated project costs. Completing all required information in the collection form may require many hours; this will be a function of project complexity and proposer preparedness.

This data collection form differs from the U.S. Treasury Application Form (RESTORE Act Direct Component Guidance and Application to Receive Federal Financial Assistance; August 2014). This data collection form was designed to assist the Okaloosa RESTORE Advisory Committee (ORAC) in their task of developing a recommended list of potential projects for inclusion in the BOCC's Multi-Year Implementation Plan (MYIP).

Projects that are identified for funding in the MYIP will require additional information from the Project Proposer. Although completion of Part C of this data collection form is not required at this time, the Project Proposer is encouraged to thoroughly review Part C to ensure the ability to fully comply with the minimum information required by the U.S. Treasury for project funding. If a proposed project is ultimately included in the approved MYIP, failure of the Project Proposer to then provide the required project information in Part C may preclude funding for that project.

Per RESTORE Act guidance, the responsible entity shall be solely responsible for the execution of each funded project, including procurement of professional services and/or construction services. The Okaloosa County BOCC (the responsible entity) reserves the right to delegate these services to sub-entities with the demonstrated capability to comply with all County and Federal procurement processes required by the RESTORE Act.

By proposing a project through this data collection form, the Project Proposer acknowledges there is no guarantee the proposed project will be funded. Further, the Project Proposer acknowledges no reimbursement or compensation shall be provided for completing the data collection form or any other activities associated with proposing a project.

Part A: Project Information

NOTE: Incomplete applications will not be considered. By submitting this project proposal, the proposer certifies that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of his/her knowledge. Any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may cause the application to be rejected without the opportunity to re-submit.

A.1 Project Proposer: Provide the name and contact info of the Project Proposer.

Marine Wildlife Response Group
Mary Esther, FL
MWR@cox.net

A.2 Point of Contact: Provide the name and contact information of the person to be contacted on matters concerning this project (POC).

Steve Shippee, PhD
1557 Highway 98 West
Mary Esther, FL 32569
(850) 516-7934
shippee3@cox.net

A.3 Proposed Activity Name: Provide the name of the Proposed Activity.

Destin Dolphin SMART Project

A.4 Claimed in Oil Liability Trust Fund After July 6, 2012: Was this proposed activity included in any claim for compensation paid out by the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund after July 6, 2012***?***

- ☐ Yes (STOP. This activity is not eligible.)
- ☒ No

A.5 Qualifying Eligible Activity: Please check the primary eligible activity in the first column and then all other eligible activities that apply in the second column by placing an 'X" in the column in the row corresponding to the qualifying eligible activity.

Select Primary Activity (Select only one)	Select All Others That Apply	Qualifying Eligible Activity
☐	☒	Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region
☒	☐	Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife and natural resources
☐	☒	Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring
☐	☒	Workforce development and job creation
☐	☐	Improvements to or on State parks located in coastal areas affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill
☐	☐	Infrastructure projects benefitting the economy or ecological resources, including port infrastructure
☐	☐	Coastal flood protection and related infrastructure
☐	☐	Planning assistance
☐	☒	Promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast Region, including recreational fishing
☐	☐	Promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast Region

A.6 Location of Activity: Provide the project location. If there is more than one location for the activity, attach a list of the additional locations.

A.6.1 Address: Provide the actual address for the activity (street address, municipality(ies), county/parish, state, zip code). (If there is no street number, provide the nearest intersection or note boundaries on map submitted with Question A.6.2.)

Latitude/Longitude (if available): N40.390 / W86.510

Street address: 2000 Miracle Strip Parkway

Municipality(ies): Destin, FL

County/parish: Okaloosa County

State: Florida

Zip code: 32541

A.6.2 Map: Provide a map of the project location and the area affected by the project.

A.6.3 Property Ownership: If project requires the use of land, provide details of property disposition to include land acquisition, ownership, agreements to use property, permits, easements, etc.

None required

A.6.3.1 Attach documentation (i.e. letter of commitment, Memorandum of Understanding, deed, etc.)

A.7 Project Schedule: Provide a proposed project schedule to include: start date (MM/YY), end date (MM/YY), and major milestones.

Start Date: Winter 2015; End Date: indefinite

Milestones:
- Jan 2016: Initial implementation of project and organizing of primary participants
- Mar 2016: First Destin Dolphin SMART (DDS) workshop for ecotourism businesses. Subsequent meetings each Mar in next years.
- Apr 2016: Develop DDS monitoring network; coordinate volunteer participants; begin on-water surveys.
- May 2016: Late spring DDS workshop for developing program outreach and dolphin awareness campaigns. Subsequent meetings each fall in future years.
- Jun 2016: Semi-annual Progress report to County Administrator and NOAA Dolphin SMART program office. Second report in Dec 2016 and each Dec in subsequent years.

A.8 Monitoring: During the project & following its completion, will the project be subject to a monitoring program to evaluate project success?

- ☐ No
- ☒ Yes (provide information on monitoring and evaluation)

Program participants will be surveyed after each workshop event to determine project effectiveness, to identify strengths and weakness, and to assess additional program needs. Dolphin populations will be monitored to measure changes in human behavior that reduce harmful outcomes. The Dolphin SMART program includes a secret-shopper evaluation to help participants continue to voluntary follow the program principles and ensure program success.

A.9 Management/Maintenance Program: Will the project be subject to a management/maintenance program to ensure project success?

☐ No

☒ Yes (Provide information on how the project will be monitored and maintained as well as the party (or parties) responsible for performing these tasks.) (240 words max.)

The project is managed through a local small business research enterprise (Marine Wildlife Response Group) that will regularly report progress to the Okaloosa County administrator and to SE region NOAA Office of Protected Resources. The Dolphin SMART program framework includes an annual program review by program partners and participants to modify the program as needed for success.

A.10 PROJECT SUMMARY

Provide a narrative of your project and why this project should be funded. Discuss the following items as a minimum:

- Economics of the project: Explain how the overall budget supports the proposed work
  - Project Expenditures (long term and short term)
  - Project Revenues (sales, donations, etc.)
- Other funds to be used in addition to Direct Component funds
- Key personnel involved with the project
- Specific objectives
- Permits or land acquisition required
- Design status
- Similar project success or if new technology explain
- Environmental impact (species affected, existing plans supported, etc.)
- Risks to implement and maintain the activity
- Jobs Created (short term, long term, and wage scales)

(1,500 words max)

Destin Dolphin SMART:
A Stewardship Program to Promote Responsible Dolphin Ecotourism at Destin East Pass

A proposal from Marine Wildlife Response Group

Dolphin sightseeing is a major ecotourism enterprise in the Destin region, with dozens of tour businesses catering to visitors' interest in observing these charismatic animals in the wild. Viewing bottlenose dolphins in their natural habitat is an exhilarating experience, but requires responsible stewardship to avoid close approaches and rapid boat movements that can harmfully disrupt their behaviors, such as respiration, nursing, mating, feeding, and sheltering (Bejder et al. 2006). Intentionally disturbing the natural behaviors of this protected species is a form of harassment and is illegal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Dolphin populations were severely impacted Gulf-wide by the Deepwater Horizon event (Worthy et al. 2011, Litz et al. 2014, Venn-Watson et al. 2015). Although the oil spill did not have measurable effects on our local dolphins, their survival may be threatened by human interactions and disturbance. Recent research showed that over 100 individual animals are regular residents inhabiting the East Pass area and they make daily movements through the inlet between Choctawhatchee Bay and the near-shore Gulf of Mexico (Shippee 2014), where they attract sightseers on powered vessels and paddlecraft.

Mother dolphins with dependent offspring frequent the sheltered waters surrounding Destin. Young are born during February to June, and are entirely dependent on maternal care. This is also the period of heightened tourism in our region, when visitors congregate in the clear waters of the East Pass and Crab Island where maternal dolphin groups are commonly seen. Interactions occur as overly enthusiastic boaters and swimmers attempt to come in close contact with dolphins, which can result in unintentional injury to the animals and even mortality from boat strikes, line entanglements, and lethal ingestion of foreign objects. Constant daily disturbance of dolphin pods can cause newborn calves to be separated from their mothers and fall prey to predators, or become injured from contact with propellers and fishing lines. Strandings of infant dolphins have increased locally over the past decade, suggesting a population decline as old animals expire and young age classes diminish in size (Shippee 2014).

The resident dolphins of Destin, along with dolphin sightseeing businesses, face an uncertain future if ongoing research indicates decreased reproductive success. This trend can be reversed, however, by implementing a community-supported conservation program designed to encourage responsible stewardship of these animals that symbolize our pristine marine waters.

Dolphin SMART (www.dolphinsmart.org) is a partnership program developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service, National Marine Sanctuaries, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, and the Dolphin Ecology Project. The program operates at several coastal communities in Florida, Alabama, and Hawaii to promote responsible dolphin viewing etiquette. Dolphin SMART advances science-based principles and guidelines in the Marine Mammal Protection Act to:

• Minimize potential wild dolphin harassment by commercial viewing activities.
• Reduce visitor demand for close interaction with dolphins that result in harmful disturbance.
• Guide advertising to eliminate expectations of engaging in activities that constitute harassment.
• Promote stewardship of local coastal waterways and marine wildlife.

The acronym SMART refers to simple actions to follow when viewing dolphins:

S – stay back 50+ feet to give animals space
M – move cautiously around dolphins
A – always use neutral gear when dolphins closely approach
R – refrain from feeding and direct contact
T – teach others to be responsible stewards of dolphins

Dolphin SMART is a voluntary recognition and education program encouraging responsible ecotourism practices. Participation is for commercial businesses that conduct wild dolphin tours, or that may opportunistically view wild dolphins. Promotional incentives are offered for participants that adhere to viewing and advertising guidelines, and that educate customers about the importance of minimizing dolphin harassment. The program also includes an important monitoring component that provides insight about dolphin behavioral characteristics around tourism activities and tracks their population dynamics through a coordinated data collection plan.

We propose expanding Dolphin SMART into Destin using the existing program framework and implementation model, operating as a collaborative program specifically tailored for local marine ecotourism businesses to actively protect the wildlife resources on which their enterprise depends. NOAA will assist with program development, but is unable to solely initiate and administer a Destin project due to agency funding limitations. Therefore, the Destin program is proposed to be locally coordinated by our experienced team of specialists at Marine Wildlife Response Group (MWR) with assistance from the existing Dolphin SMART program partners. MWR is already engaged in dolphin conservation research in the region and is currently collaborating on a project with the Chicago Zoological Society to study human-dolphin interactions in sport fishing (SDRP 2014). This work will complement the Dolphin SMART program and provide cross-benefits in conservation of marine wildlife. Our team will coordinate with commercial dolphin sightseeing operators, jet-ski and pontoon rental companies, and charter fishing captains, and will provide outreach information to promote conservation-based wildlife viewing intended to reduce harmful interactions with our flagship marine mammal species.

The program will host semi-annual meetings for ecotourism participants to learn about local marine wildlife, share information on ways to better protect dolphins while engaging in successful business practices, and collectively communicate a philosophy to the public that encourages responsible wildlife viewing. Workshop presentations will be given by marine mammal experts about dolphin ecology focused on our local area and law enforcement officials will provide discussion on legal issues involving harassment. Information and news updates will be distributed throughout the year to program participants to encourage conservation practices.

A.11 Requested Funding Amount: How much Direct Component (Pot #1) funding is being requested for this project?

$90,000

A.11.1 Other Funding: Is additional funding, outside of this request, being used for the project?

- ☐ No
- ☒ Yes (provide information on all additional funding sources and amounts.)

MWR has a current two-year research contract for ~$51k through Chicago Zoological Society's Sarasota Dolphin Research Project that provides partial salary support for staff, materials & supplies, and boat time. This project will serve as a companion conservation program that will broaden the Dolphin SMART objectives. The existing NOAA Dolphin SMART Program has program materials available (brochures, national internet site, framework documents, training guides) that will augment the local Destin project outreach materials. Other funding support will come from program participant contributions, and eventually sales of promotional materials.

A.11.2 Funding Under $90,000: Is the requested funding under $90,000?

- ☒ Less than or equal to $90,000 (Application is complete)
- ☐ More than $90,000 (Proceed to Part B)

END OF PART A