



NC Water Resources Research Institute & NC Sea Grant  
North Carolina State University | Centennial Campus

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## Graduate Student Research Funding Opportunity

Jointly sponsored by

North Carolina Water Resources Research Institute and  
North Carolina Sea Grant

Issue date: September 7, 2021

SUBMISSION DEADLINE 5:00 P.M.  
November 12, 2021

FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

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## CONTENTS

- I. Overview
- II. Applicant Eligibility
- III. Proposal Eligibility
- IV. Project Funding and Duration
- V. Research Focus Areas
- VI. Submission Process and Due Date
- VII. Proposal Format

## I. OVERVIEW

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is for research projects in the areas of coastal and freshwater resources as prioritized by NC Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI) and NC Sea Grant with input from their Advisory Committees, which comprise stakeholders from a range of sectors and professions working on freshwater and coastal resources throughout North Carolina.

WRRI and NC Sea Grant are providing competitive funding for graduate student research. We intend to fund up to **six** student proposals at \$10,000 per proposal, pending federal appropriation of funds and quality of proposals.

WRRI is part of a national system of 54 institutes authorized by the Water Resources Research Act (WRRRA) of 1984, and represents a federal/state partnership between the US Geological Survey (USGS) and state land-grant universities. WRRI is hosted by North Carolina State University but is a multi-campus program within the University of North Carolina (UNC) system. WRRI's work addresses a suite of topics related to freshwater resources.

NC Sea Grant, also headquartered at NC State University and a UNC system multi-campus program, is one of 33 programs within the National Sea Grant College Program, and represents a federal/state partnership between the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the state. Sea Grant's work addresses a suite of topics including climate resilience, healthy ecosystems, education and workforce development, and fisheries and aquaculture.

Proposals must include language that describes the significance and relevance of the project to North Carolina and the interests of WRRI ([go.ncsu.edu/wrri-plan](http://go.ncsu.edu/wrri-plan)) and/or NC Sea Grant ([go.ncsu.edu/Sea-Grant-Plan](http://go.ncsu.edu/Sea-Grant-Plan)). Projects should also address WRRI and/or NC Sea Grant's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (<https://ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/about-us/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>), and (<https://wrri.ncsu.edu/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>). We strongly encourage proposals from graduate students at HBCUs and MSIs and/or from traditionally underserved and underrepresented communities, as well as from graduate students who can demonstrate how their work and related outreach will benefit underserved and underrepresented communities.

## II. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Only enrolled graduate students in good academic standing attending an accredited college or university (public or private) in North Carolina may apply. Students must have a faculty sponsor willing to ensure the project and associated required reporting will be completed. Post-doctoral fellows are not eligible for funding under this RFP. Undergraduate students may not apply directly for funding, but undergraduate participation in the proposed projects is encouraged.

Only one proposal per student is allowed. There is no limit to the number of students for whom a faculty member may serve as the sponsor.

### III. PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY

Proposed research must take place in the state of North Carolina. Proposals may address research questions and methods in the fields of social science, education, communications, natural science, engineering, economics or policy, or a combination of these disciplines (as applied to the focus areas below). Strong proposals will also include meaningful public engagement, public participation, or collaboration with members of the communities where research is to take place. Projects without a well described outreach plan will not review well.

**Proposals must address a specific research question or address clear, need-based objectives.**

Projects not eligible for funding under this call include those focused on monitoring-only activities, methods development projects, projects focused only on ocean waters, and projects on health effects involving human subjects. Research that addresses the link between environmental and human health as related to the focus areas below is acceptable (which may require IRB approval from the applicant's campus).

### IV. PROJECT FUNDING AND DURATION

Projects should be planned around a 3/1/22 through 2/28/23 timeline. However, the timeline may shift based on when federal funds are available to 9/1/22 through 8/31/23. **Proposed projects should be planned such that they will be successful, regardless of which timeline ensues.** Due to the nature of the one-year USGS budget cycle, projects funded through this competition are not guaranteed access to extensions. Work should be planned accordingly. Funding will be provided via student stipends of \$10,000 to the winning applicants. Funding amount and performance period may be altered based on WRRRI and NC Sea Grant available funding. **Please engage with your faculty sponsor and university office of sponsored research (or similar) for assistance in understanding how this stipend will mesh with your other funding streams.**

### VI. RESEARCH FOCUS AREAS

- Emerging Regulated and Unregulated Contaminants of Concern
- Microplastic Pollution, and Marine Debris
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Harmful Algal Blooms and Associated Toxins
- Nuisance Flooding
- Erosion and Sediment Control

### VII. SUBMISSION PROCESS & DUE DATE

- The deadline for submissions is 5:00 p.m., Friday, November 12, 2021.
- Proposals must be submitted to WRRRI via the eWater portal: [go.ncsu.edu/ncewrri](http://go.ncsu.edu/ncewrri)
- The portal will automatically close at the deadline. Late submissions cannot be accepted for any reason.
- Please do not wait to the last minute to begin your submission process.

- Please note proposal formatting requirements, submission elements and page limits below. These same formatting instructions are available within the portal.
- You will receive an email confirmation of receipt of your proposal. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please check your spam filters. If you still have not received a confirmation, please email [jmfear@ncsu.edu](mailto:jmfear@ncsu.edu) or [mebarrow@ncsu.edu](mailto:mebarrow@ncsu.edu) and we will confirm for you.
- All elements of the proposal (described below) must be combined into a single pdf document for submission.
- Notification of finalists is expected by December 17, 2021.

## **VIII. PROPOSAL FORMAT**

In fairness to all applicants, if we receive a proposal that does not adhere to the following format guidelines, especially font size, margins and section page limits, we will unfortunately have to disqualify that proposal from the competition. Please double-check the formatting of your proposal carefully before submitting.

Proposals must adhere to the following format:

- 1-inch margins all around
- Times New Roman 12-point font
- Strict page limits as listed below
- Page numbers, starting with the cover page as page 1

A complete application package includes items 1-6 as noted below:

1. Cover page
2. Project proposal
3. References cited
4. Letter of support from sponsoring faculty member
5. CVs
6. Data Management Plan

### **1. Cover Page** (limited to 1 page)

Cover pages must include the following elements:

- Proposal title
- Proposed start and end date. Due to the nature of the one-year USGS budget cycle, projects funded through this competition are not guaranteed access to extensions. Work should be planned accordingly.
- Name, academic rank or title, university and department/school, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address for the faculty sponsor.
- Name, degree being pursued, university and department/school, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address for the student researcher/applicant.
- Name, academic rank or title, university and department/school, and e-mail address for any other project participants (i.e. undergraduate assistants).
- One to five keywords for the proposed project

- Statement that “The proposed project would OR would not [pick one] involve funds going to a USGS collaborator.” (This is only for WRRRI administrative purposes and is not a factor in identifying the successful proposals.)
2. **Project Proposal** (limited to 4 pages)

The body of the proposal should have the following sections:

    - Description Describe your project and the RFP focus area/s it addresses. Include what you plan to accomplish in the proposed project in terms of goals, objectives, hypotheses to test, research questions to answer, or needs to be met through communication and information transfer.
    - Methods, Tasks and Timeline Describe your scientific methods, technical approaches, **and** engagement/partnership approaches and/or communication/outreach approaches. Clearly define your tasks including information dissemination; **provide a timeline to complete the tasks (see timeline discussion under item IV above)**; list project milestones. Be specific and provide detail for reviewers to assess the feasibility and appropriateness of your approaches.
    - Significance to North Carolina and Funding Programs Describe the significance and relevance of the project to NC and the interests of NC WRRRI and NC Sea Grant including their commitment to DEI.
  3. **References Cited** (as needed, does not count towards page limit of body of proposal)

Use a standard bibliographic format to list the references cited in your proposal.
  4. **Letters of Support** (no page limit)

Students must include a letter of support from the main faculty PI serving as the official applicant. Other letters, particularly those that speak to the applicability of the proposed project results, are optional but strongly encouraged. Letters may be included from partnering organizations, agencies, community leadership, advisors, other faculty, etc.
  5. **Curricula Vitae** (limited to 2 pages per CV)

CVs are required for the student researcher, and for the sponsoring faculty. CVs can be of any standard format, but are limited to 2-pages.
  6. **Data Management Plan** (limited to 2 pages)

Both USGS (WRRRI’s federal lead funding agency) and NOAA (NC Sea Grant’s federal lead funding agency) require federally funded projects to comply with data and publication sharing directive for grants and contacts. As such, each applicant must develop and submit a data management plan (DMP) with their proposal submission. The DMP does not count toward the page limit above for the body of your proposal.

Please review the guidance document available at [go.ncsu.edu/noaa-dmp](http://go.ncsu.edu/noaa-dmp) or on the WRRRI [research funding page](#) to assist you in preparing your plan. Plans will be included as part of the proposal evaluation process. Plans should be no more than 2 pages and should include: descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the

standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible.

If your project is not expected to develop any environmental data, then your DMP may simply include the declaration: "This proposal is not expected to generate environmental data. Therefore, a Data Management Plan is not required."

## **IX. REVIEW CRITERIA**

A technical review panel will be convened to evaluate proposals. Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria: relevance to North Carolina and the strategic priorities of WRRRI and/or NC Sea Grant, quality of the proposed science; clearly stated research questions/objectives, appropriate timeline to complete the project in one year, quality of the LOS, thoughtfulness of the outreach strategies; and adherence to the instructions provided in this request for proposals.

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