

**Goal: Clean Seas in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**  
*Funding Assistance Application*

**Application Deadline:** August 9th, 2021

**How to Apply**

To apply, please submit all application materials via email to [Mcholnoky@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:Mcholnoky@marinesanctuary.org), [Sara@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:Sara@marinesanctuary.org) and [RFP@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:RFP@marinesanctuary.org) and include in the subject line “**Goal: Clean Seas Florida Keys Funding Assistance Application**”.

**Overview**

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Hurricane Irma struck the Florida Keys with Category 4 winds and caused catastrophic damage both landward and seaward. As a result, areas within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) suffered unprecedented damage from high winds and significant storm surges. Hurricane Irma left in its wake a significant amount of marine debris, presenting challenges to navigation, damaging the sanctuary’s ecosystem, and severely impacting regional tourism and fisheries-based businesses. Hurricane Irma’s unprecedented breadth and scope affected the entire South Florida spiny lobster fishery and displaced and damaged thousands of spiny lobster traps. Approximately 350,000 spiny lobster traps were deployed when the eye of Hurricane Irma went over the Florida Keys. Original estimates indicated that approximately 154,000 traps were displaced or damaged during the storm.

The purpose of this funding assistance application is to engage Blue Star recognized dive operators in locating and removing underwater marine debris and aid in restoration efforts in the Florida Keys NMS.

Goal: Clean Seas Florida Keys has been active with multiple Blue Star participants over the past four years. Most recently dive operators conducted 28 debris removal dives in 2020, which resulted in over 4,642 pounds of debris taken out of the water. In all, divers were able to clean approximately 12,000 square meters of reef and seafloor.

**Application Focus/Objective**

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (Foundation) is supporting the *Goal: Clean Seas Florida Keys* initiative to engage local tour operators and businesses in marine debris removal efforts post-Hurricane Irma. The Foundation is seeking applications that support removal and disposal of marine debris that present high risk for damaging important resources in key sanctuary management areas.

**Eligibility**

Blue Star recognized dive operators are eligible to apply for funding, please refer to the website to see the recognized Blue Star operators and how to apply <https://floridakeys.noaa.gov/onthewater/bluestar.html>. The Foundation will award contracts to Blue Star dive operators to locate (through scoping trips) and remove marine debris including displaced and destroyed lobster traps, fishing gear, and other large debris items from target areas within the Florida Keys NMS. After contracts are awarded, funding will be reimbursed upon receipt of invoices to the Foundation and when proof of work, permit compliance, and Blue Star Program requirement completion is shown.

**Funding Availability and Match**

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation has funds available for these marine debris removal efforts. The Foundation reserves the right to choose to partially fund proposals. Funding is distributed as a reimbursement, and actual funds received may be less than the total approved award based on actual costs requested for reimbursement. Funding reimbursement is contingent on applicants showing proof of work, permit compliance, and Blue Star Program requirement completion.

All proposed projects are required to meet or exceed a 2:1 match (in-kind or cash). For example, if \$2,000 is requested from the Foundation, a \$1,000 match (in-kind or cash) is expected to be contributed to the project. In-kind or cash contributions may include in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, cash, or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. Match contributions should be clearly outlined in the applicant’s budget table. Please contact Maddie Cholnoky, [Mcholnoky@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:Mcholnoky@marinesanctuary.org) if you need ideas for match contributions.

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### Funding Assistance Application

#### Application Package Materials

Fillable applications formats can be downloaded [HERE](#) and should contain the following sections: Overview of Applicant Organization, Scope of Work, Budget, and Required Attachments.

#### 1. Overview of Applicant Organization

- **Explain Eligibility** - Blue Star recognized dive operators are eligible to apply for funding. In order to receive funding reimbursement for marine debris removal work, applicants must complete all Blue Star Program requirements for the current year.
- **Adherence to Permits/Compliance** - Applicants must abide by local, state, and federal regulations and acquire necessary permits for activities within the scope of the proposed project. Applicants must show proof of permits acquired for their scope of work prior to receiving funding. Funding reimbursement is contingent on the applicant showing proof of all necessary permits. More information on permitting requirements can be found in the “Goal: Clean Seas Florida Keys Protocols for Underwater Marine Debris Removals within Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary” document found under the Useful Links and Resources section.
- **Qualifications for Safe Practices** - Proposed projects should indicate a clear understanding/adherence to safe debris recording, removal, and disposal practices. Successful applicants will be required to participate in a training session given by Florida Keys NMS staff and partners on removal protocols prior to any removal efforts. Applicants are expected to ensure all participating divers have the proper training and certifications before engaging in underwater debris removal efforts.

#### 2. Scope of Work - Recommended scope of work metrics include:

- **Project impact** - Applications should outline clear metrics, outcomes, and deliverables of the proposed work. *For example, how much debris will be removed? How many staff will be trained? Will you increase public awareness of marine debris issues?*
- **Removal location** - Removals must occur within Florida Keys NMS. Applicants will be able to participate in scoping trips to identify and determine areas where there may be large amounts of debris to target for removal efforts.
- **Removal Timeline and Deliverables** - Removals must occur between contract award start and end date.
  - Timeline for project
  - Number of trips, trip dates, total dive time per trip
  - Number of traps/debris and lbs. of debris targeted for removal
  - Participants
    - Number of recreational divers for Blue Star operators removal trips with paying guests
    - Number of professional divers requiring stipends for Blue Star operators removal trips with professional divers
- **Data Reporting** - Applicants should adhere to the following data reporting requirements:
  - Applicants must comply with all data and reporting requirements outlined in acquired permits. Under permitted activities, data must be recorded from each trap removed and reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission after each removal is conducted.
  - Applicants should consider taking photos and videos of the debris cleanups, which can be used to promote the removal work. If doing so, applicants should make sure to capture images/videos of the damage that the debris has done to the resource (before and after removal photos are good for this). This data can be used to inform resource managers as they decide how to protect the fragile ecosystems of the Florida Keys NMS.
- **Disposal Methods** - Applications must indicate intended disposal methods/locations for all types of debris removed. Florida Keys NMS is working with partners in the Keys to provide disposal opportunities free of charge, but opportunities may not be available for all locations. Applicants are encouraged to work with the Florida Keys NMS and utilize any disposal opportunities that may develop. In the absence of free disposal methods, applicants should include disposal fees into their application budget. For example, Monroe County charges \$123.50 per ton (2,000 lbs.) for debris disposal and dumpster fees vary. Contact your appropriate solid waste management division to determine what fees may be applicable.
- **Partnerships leveraged** - Applications should include all partners involved in removal efforts and their respective roles in the proposed work.
- **Other desired components** (not required, but will strengthen the application):

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- Community Engagement/Outreach - Applicants are encouraged to identify a community engagement component in the proposed scope of work. An example of a community engagement activity could include presentations to the Sanctuary Advisory Council, schools, and/or local dive clubs.
  - Project sustainability - Applicants are encouraged to identify opportunities to continue marine debris removal efforts after the completion of the proposed scope of work. Examples of ways to continue these efforts could include monthly removals with guests, quarterly staff removal dives, etc.
3. **Budget** - Applications should also include a total budget for debris removal efforts. Budgets should include the total amount requested from the Foundation and the in-kind match provided. See below for budget table example:

<b>Expense Item</b>	<b>Expense Description</b>	<b>Amount Requested from the Foundation</b>	<b>Amount of match (in-kind support or cash)</b>	<b>Total Expense</b>
Scoping Trips	Please indicate cost per scoping trip, for example: x number of trips at rate of \$x cost per trip- indicate what trip cost includes, e.g. gas, equipment, staff, etc.			
Removal trips	Please indicate cost per trip, for example: x number of trips at rate of \$x cost per trip- indicate what trip cost includes, e.g. gas, equipment, staff, etc.			
Professional divers, for stipend reimbursement only	Example: x number of divers at rate of \$x per trip			
Debris disposal	Example: Dumpster, recycling costs per trap number or total lbs. of debris			
Community engagement or project sustainability cost				
<b>TOTAL:</b>				

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4. Required Attachments

- CV/Resume - Applications should include a CV or resume for the project lead or a short bio and job description. If the project lead is not a dive shop owner or manager, written approval from the owner or manager is required.
- Permits, certifications, and other documents outlined in the evaluation criteria
- Letters of support for match contributions signed by manager or company owner

**Evaluation Criteria**

All applications will be screened for relevance and completeness, and will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria:

- Eligibility – Blue Star certified dive operators are eligible to apply for funding. Funding reimbursement is contingent on applicants completing all Blue Star Program requirements for the current year.
- Permit Compliance Requirements – See *Goal: Clean Seas Florida Keys Protocols for Underwater Marine Debris Removals within Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary* for more information. Funding reimbursement is contingent on the applicant showing proof of all necessary permits.
- Geographic Focus – Projects must occur within Florida Keys NMS.
- Technical Merit – Application sets forth a clear, logical, and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design, and implementation to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible.
- Data Reporting Adherence – Projects identify appropriate data reporting sources to be used in removals.
- Metrics and Outcomes – Project outlines clear metrics and outcomes that highlight the impact of the work.
- Budget – Costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with Foundation guidance. Match requirement is at minimum 2:1.
- Community Engagement/Outreach – Applicants are encouraged to identify opportunities for community engagement and outreach. This criteria is not required, but applications that incorporate it will be strongly considered.
- Project Sustainability – Applicants are encouraged to identify opportunities to continue marine debris removal efforts after the completion of the proposed scope of work. This criteria is not required, but applications that incorporate it will be strongly considered.

**Deadline for Submission**

Applications submitted by **August 9th, 2021** will be considered. Applications will be approved and awarded as they are received, based on their ability to meet the evaluation criteria.

**Application Assistance**

For more information about the funding assistance or for questions regarding the application, please contact Maddie Cholnoky, our Community Stewardship Coordinator [Mcholnoky@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:Mcholnoky@marinesanctuary.org) or (518)522-2168 and CC Sara Rankin, Chapter Director Florida National Marine Sanctuary Foundation [Sara@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:Sara@marinesanctuary.org) and CC [RFP@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:RFP@marinesanctuary.org).

For more information about marine debris removal coordination, please contact Marlies Tumolo, Florida Keys NMS Blue Star Coordinator, at [Marlies.Tumolo@noaa.gov](mailto:Marlies.Tumolo@noaa.gov) or 305-434-9385.

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Useful Links and Resources

- *Goal: Clean Seas Florida Keys* Protocols for Underwater Marine Debris Removals within Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (PDF):  
[https://nmsfloridakeys.blob.core.windows.net/floridakeys-prod/media/docs/goal-clean-seas-floridakeys-protocols\\_final.pdf](https://nmsfloridakeys.blob.core.windows.net/floridakeys-prod/media/docs/goal-clean-seas-floridakeys-protocols_final.pdf)
- Blue Star Program Information and Requirements: <https://floridakeys.noaa.gov/onthewater/bluestar.html>. For more information, please contact the Blue Star program coordinators at [bluestar.diving@noaa.gov](mailto:bluestar.diving@noaa.gov).
- Project Aware Dive Against Debris Data Card (PDF):  
[https://www.projectaware.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/569DT\\_DAD\\_Data\\_Card\\_v2\\_2\\_EN\\_formfields.pdf](https://www.projectaware.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/569DT_DAD_Data_Card_v2_2_EN_formfields.pdf)
- Project Aware Dive Against Debris Survey Guide (PDF):  
[https://www.projectaware.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/572DT\\_DAD\\_Survey\\_Guide\\_v2\\_4\\_EN.pdf](https://www.projectaware.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/572DT_DAD_Survey_Guide_v2_4_EN.pdf)
- Florida Keys NMS Marine Zones: <https://floridakeys.noaa.gov/zones/allzones.html>
- Marine Debris Removal Decision Making Flowchart: To request this document please contact Marlies Tumolo at [Marlies.Tumolo@noaa.gov](mailto:Marlies.Tumolo@noaa.gov).
- Florida and Caribbean Marine Debris Collaborative Portal: <https://floridacaribbean-mdc.diver.orr.noaa.gov/home>

*The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, established in 2000, is the official non-profit partner of the National Marine Sanctuary System. The Foundation directly supports America's national marine sanctuaries through our mission to protect species, conserve ecosystems, and preserve America's maritime heritage. We accomplish our mission through community stewardship and engagement programs, on-the-water conservation projects, public education, and outreach programs, and scientific research and exploration. The Foundation fosters innovative projects that are solution-oriented, scalable, and transferable, and develop strategic partnerships that promote the conservation and recovery of species and their habitats.*