
NOAA Ocean Exploration Notice of Funding Opportunity

Process Annual Review

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Outline

- NOAA Ocean Exploration Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Process
- NOFO Proposal Topics
- NOFO Summary FY20-FY24
- NOFO Funded 2024-2026 Fieldwork
- Summary and Recent Changes

NOAA Ocean Exploration NOFO Process

Phase I

Grants
Notice
Created and
Published

Phase II

Pre-Proposals
Submission and
Internal
Assessment

Phase III

Full Proposals
Submission and
Administrative
Assessment

Phase IV

Full
Proposals
External
Review

Phase V

Management
and Business
Review,
Selection,
Award, and
Follow-up

NOFO Develop & Publish



1. Selects regions and/or topics for fiscal year funding announcement based on mission needs and priorities
2. Primary notice publication at Grants.gov
3. Announcement notification:
 - eRA, webinar, email lists, NOAA Ocean Exploration website...etc.

Pre-Proposal Submission & Internal Assessment



1. Applicants: Submit pre-proposals to NOAA Ocean Exploration via email
2. NOAA Ocean Exploration: Assesses pre-proposals using 4 criteria:
 - Relevance to NOAA Ocean Exploration’s missions and priorities
 - Scientific and technical merit
 - Applicant qualifications and competencies (including past performance)
 - Costs for specific items as well as the overall project cost including value of cost sharing and/or in-kind contributions, including strength of National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) partnership for federal applicants.
3. NOAA Ocean Exploration: Encourages/discourages full proposal submission

Full Proposal Submission & Assessment



1. Applicants: Submit full proposals
 - Only if they submitted a pre-proposal by deadline (No exceptions)
 - Nonfederal applicants submit proposals through Grants.gov
 - Federal applicants email proposals to NOAA Ocean Exploration via email
2. NOAA Ocean Exploration: Review proposals for completeness/compliance
3. NOAA Ocean Exploration: Assigns internal/external reviewers

Full Proposal Two-Step Review



1st Step: (e)Mail Review

- NOAA Ocean Exploration sends each proposal to at least three mail reviewers who are experts in their field and of the project topic
- Reviewers review proposals using published evaluation criteria and return by date established by NOAA Ocean Exploration

Full Proposal Two-Step Review



2nd Step: Panel Review

- NOAA Ocean Exploration team: Selects panelists who are field experts and have broad knowledge of the topics
- Panelists*: Review and score each proposal using published evaluation criteria and mail reviews

***Panelists do not rank or compare proposals and are not asked to reach a consensus**

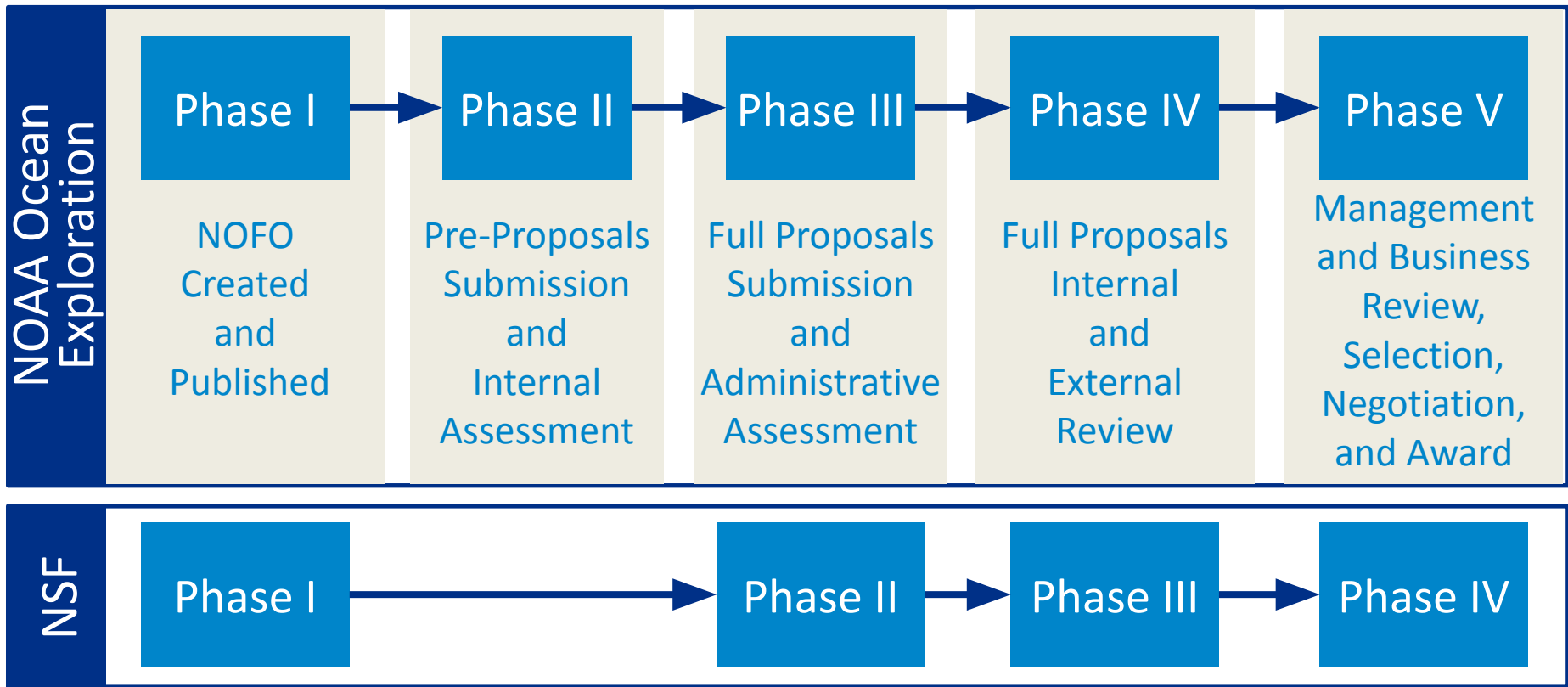
Management & Business Review



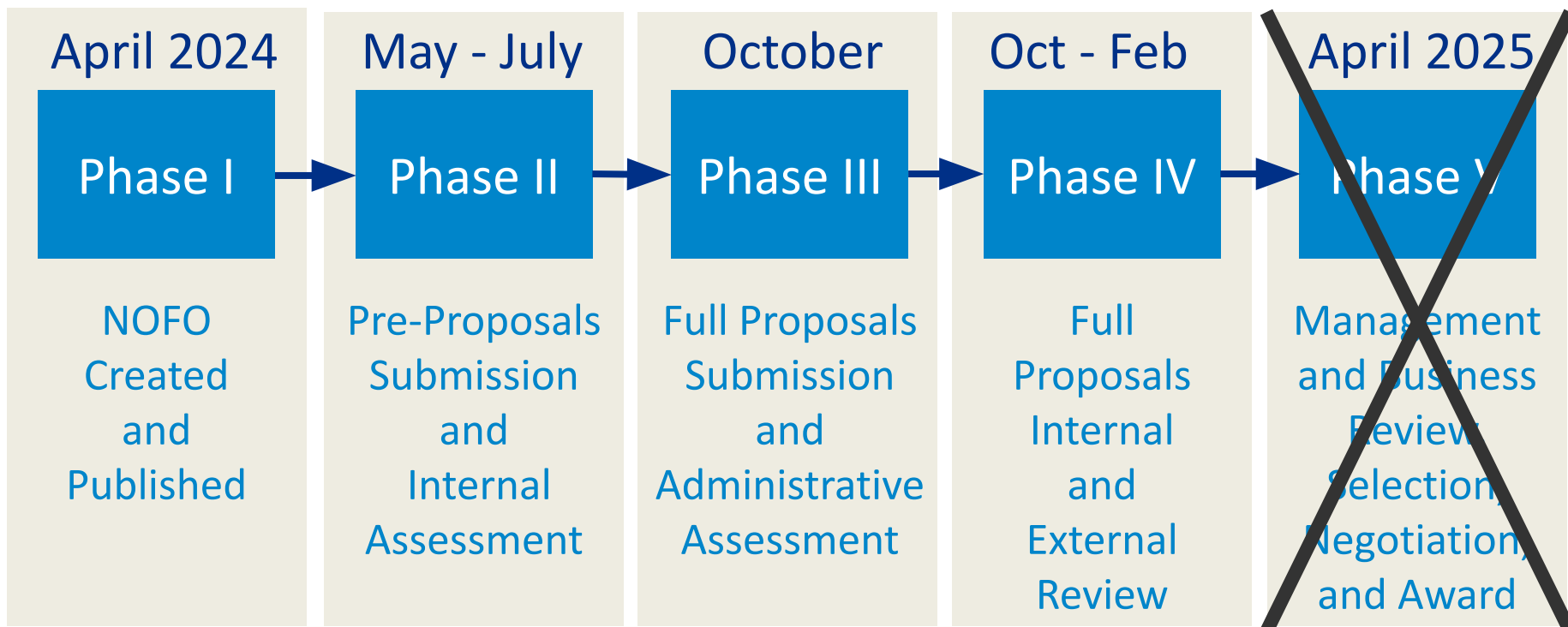
Selection, Negotiations, and Award

1. NOAA Ocean Exploration: Ranks proposals using mail reviews and panel scores
2. NOAA Ocean Exploration: Recommends proposals for funding based on final ranking, office priorities/budget constraints
3. NOAA Ocean Exploration: Negotiates budgets with applicants, if necessary
4. Applicants revise proposals, if necessary
5. Applicants submits any outstanding items from past funded projects prior to funding recommendation, if applicable (e.g., outstanding data, reports, publications, etc.)
6. Grants Management Division reviews final proposal packages and makes grant awards

NOAA Ocean Exploration NOFO Process Compared to NSF



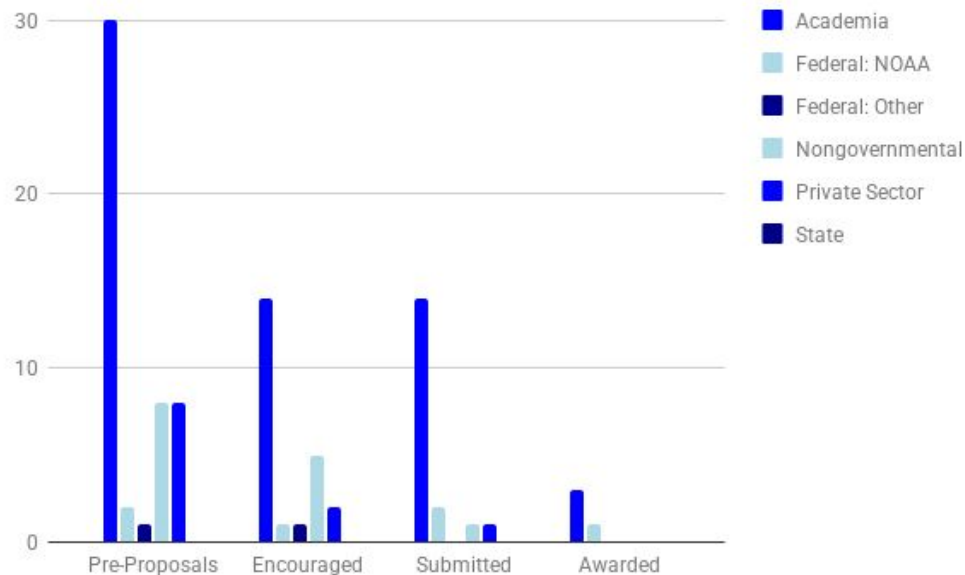
NOAA Ocean Exploration NOFO Process:Fiscal Year 2025



NOFO Request for Proposal Topics (Past 5 Years)

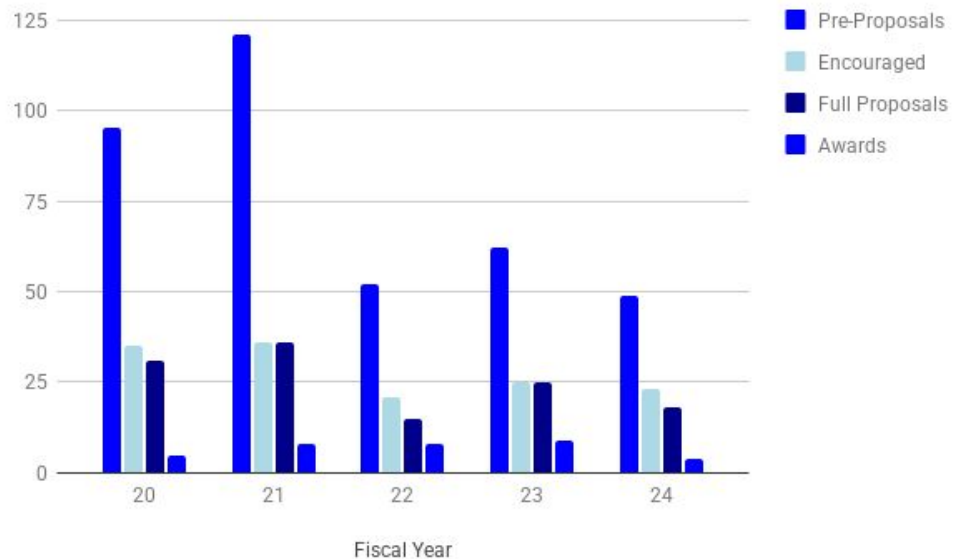
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Geographic Area	Waters under U.S. jurisdiction (inc. U.S. EEZ)	Waters in the Pacific Ocean under U.S. jurisdiction (inc. U.S. EEZ)	Waters under U.S. jurisdiction (inc. U.S. EEZ)	Waters under U.S. jurisdiction (inc. U.S. EEZ) (no limit for Maritime Heritage)	No restrictions
Themes	<p>Exploration of Deep Seafloor</p> <p>Water Column Exploration</p> <p>Maritime Heritage</p>	<p>General Ocean Exploration</p> <p>Maritime Heritage</p> <p>Technological Innovation</p>	<p>Ocean Exploration (Biopharma or Biotechnical Potential)</p> <p>Maritime Heritage</p> <p>Technological Innovation</p>	<p>General Ocean Exploration (tropical mesophotic allowed in shallower waters)</p> <p>Maritime Heritage</p> <p>Technological Innovation</p>	<p>General Ocean Exploration (tropical mesophotic allowed in shallower waters)</p> <p>Maritime Heritage</p>

FY24 NOFO Summary



For further details see the FY2024 Annual NOAA Ocean Exploration
Competitive Grants Fiscal Report

FY20-FY24 NOFO Summary



For further details see the FY2024 Annual NOAA Ocean Exploration
Competitive Grants Fiscal Report

NOFO Funded — 2024-2026 Fieldwork



April 10-21, 2024: [Exploration of Deepwater Habitats off Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for Biotechnology Potential](#)

PI: Esther A. Guzman, Florida Atlantic University; 8 days UxS deployments (ROV)

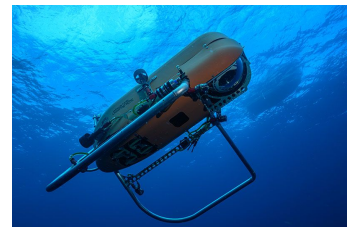
Exploration of sponge and coral communities for natural product use around Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands.



May 12-22, 2024: [Exploring Pelagic Biodiversity of the Gulf of Alaska and the Impact of Its Seamounts](#)

PI: Russ Hopcroft, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

A team of researchers investigated the pelagic diversity in the Gulf of Alaska using a novel, multipronged exploration program that included acoustic, photographic, video, and physical and molecular (DNA) inventories of the small animals (zooplankton and micronekton), like fish, crustaceans, gelatinous animals, and squid, in the water column.



May 16-June 7, 2024: [Autonomous Deep-Ocean Exploration of Diverse Habitats Along the Aleutian Margin](#)

PI: Timothy Shank, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; 13 days UxS deployments (ROV)

The team used cutting-edge tools and approaches, including two autonomous underwater vehicles (i.e. AUV *Orpheus* and *Eurydice*) with imaging and sampling capabilities (including a newly developed deep-sea methane sensor) to geologically, chemically, and biologically map the water column and seafloor along the eastern Aleutian margin.

NOFO Funded — 2024-2026 Fieldwork

July 17-27, 2024: [Exploring Attu's Underwater Battlefield and Offshore Environment](#)

PI: Jason Raupp, East Carolina University; 21 days UxS deployments (ROV)

Researchers used an innovative synthetic aperture sonar system and remotely operated vehicle to survey and inventory maritime heritage sites in the waters of Attu in Alaska's Aleutian Islands. Attu is the site of the only World War II (WWII) battle fought on North American soil.

July 23-31, 2024 (Second of two expeditions): [Characterizing Variability in Pacific Northwest Methane Seeps Using a Fleet of Small AUVs](#)

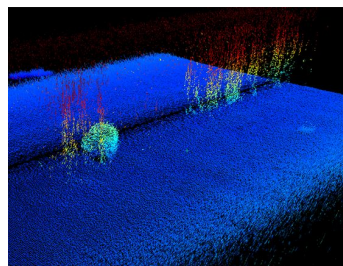
Principal Investigator: Craig McNeil, University of Washington

The team used easily deployable and relatively inexpensive autonomous underwater vehicles equipped with imaging sonars and custom sensors to find and map seeps and measure associated bubbles and dissolved methane right at the source and up through the water column to investigate known seep sites off Oregon/Washington.

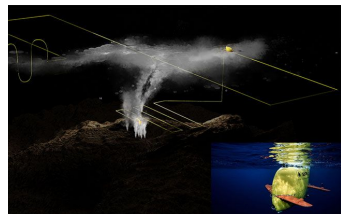
September 23-27, 2024 and February 23-March 10, 2026: [Autonomous, Directional Acoustic Profiling Float for Soundscape Characterization](#)

PI: Kaustubha Raghukumar, Integral Consulting Inc.

To advance deepwater soundscape exploration, this research team will develop and demonstrate the first ever autonomous, near-real-time, directional acoustic profiling float powered by marine renewable energy (ocean thermal energy conversion, OTEC).



NOFO Funded — 2024-2026 Fieldwork



September 1-24, 2024: [Autonomous Localization of Seafloor Fluid Flow Sources](#)

PI: Guangyu Xu, University of Washington

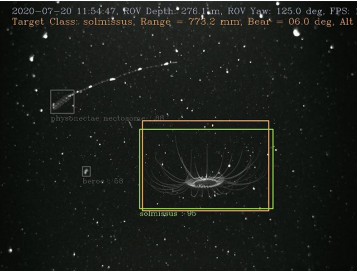
To streamline the process of locating seafloor fluid flow sites, this research team will develop a fully autonomous algorithm to enable AUVs to trace biogeochemistry signatures in the water column that are indicative of vents and seeps using real-time data recorded by onboard sensors, independent of human operators.



October 11-December 5, 2024: [Exploring Deep-Sea Methane Seeps Along the Chile Margin](#)

Principal Investigator: Jeff Beeson, Oregon State University, NOAA Cooperative Institute for Marine Ecosystem and Resources Studies, NOAA Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory; 20 days UxS deployments (ROV)

This project team aimed to fill some of these gaps by searching for, exploring, and characterizing seeps along the coast of Chile — where powerful geologic forces converge and seeps have been confirmed, but not explored — using a suite of state-of-the-art mapping, sensing, and sampling tools and a remotely operated vehicle on Research Vessel *Falkor(too)*.

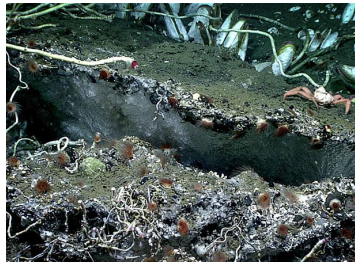


October 22-23, 2024; January 22, 2025; July 7-11, 2025: [Deployable Artificial Intelligence for Exploration and Discovery in the Deep Sea](#)

PI: Kakani Katija (Young), Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute

Research team will use artificial intelligence (AI) to address this significant obstacle to discovery. Specifically, they will develop software for remotely operated and autonomous underwater vehicles to detect, track, and classify seafloor and water column animals in underwater video in real time

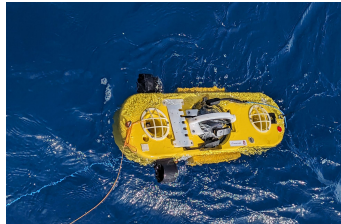
NOFO Funded — 2024-2026 Fieldwork



June 15-July 2, 2025: [The Aleutian Arc: Integrated Exploration of Biodiversity at Priority Benthic Habitats](#)

PI: Amanda Demopoulos, U.S. Geological Survey

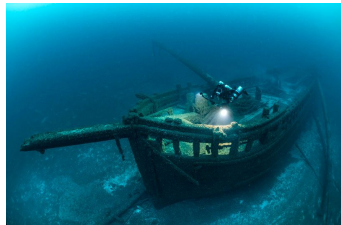
Exploration and characterization of coral and sponge communities, volcanoes and other seafloor hazards, gas seeps, hydrothermal vents, and critical mineral deposits in the Aleutian chain. This was a collaborative effort through NOMEAC.



June 30-July 3, 2025 (Second of two expeditions): [Field Validation of Novel Low-Cost Underwater Robot for Deepwater Exploration and Characterization](#)

PI: Oliver Kroemer, Carnegie Mellon University

A team of engineers and scientists have been developing two low-cost, open-source, underwater vehicle systems for the survey and classification of deep-sea corals and in this project they tested the new system off Florida and Hawaii.

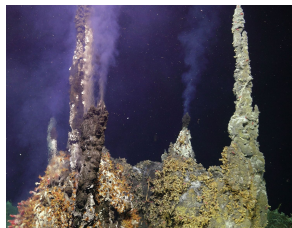


August 2-12, 2025: [Exploring Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary at Scale](#)

PI: Russ Green, Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary; 6 days UxS deployments (ROV, AUV)

Research team will explore and document a collection of nationally significant shipwrecks — 5 unknown and 10 known but minimally documented — in the deep waters (130-480 feet) of Lake Michigan's Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary using a hybrid autonomous underwater vehicle/remotely operated vehicle (AUV/ROV) equipped with acoustic, imaging, and laser scanning sensor

NOFO Funded — 2024-2026 Fieldwork



August 17-September 1, 2025: [Acoustic Mapping and Characterization of Seafloor Hydrothermal Discharge With Multibeam Echosounders on Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles](#)

PI: Guangyu Xu, University of Washington

This research team will develop an innovative approach to identifying, locating, and characterizing hydrothermal discharge using uncrewed underwater vehicles equipped with coordinated multibeam sonars.

Summary Points

- Detailed metrics are in the FY2024 Annual NOAA Ocean Exploration Competitive Grants Fiscal Report
- Despite variation in themes, the number of applications, amounts requested, and funds disbursed have been relatively consistent over the past few years
- Regular bibliographic citation analyses demonstrate program's impact and value: <https://library.noaa.gov/oceanexplorationbib/home>
- Grant funded projects continue to feel the impacts of COVID — still approving multiple no cost extensions (NCEs) due to limited shiptime and UsV availability

Ongoing Improvements for the NOFO

- Focus on data archival and updates to the past awardee website:
<https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/about/funding-opps/ffo-recipients.html>
 - Project data landing pages (over 40 projects are live [had 8 at our last OEAB presentation])
<https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/waf/ocean-exploration-nofo/>
- Continuing to do the presentation and panel discussion at the Deep Submergence Science Committee (DESSC) New User Symposium
- Continuing to co-sponsor a NOAA Science Seminar Series on past funded NOFO projects. First seminar held on June 8, 2022; 20+ seminars held to date



Questions?

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oceanexplorer.noaa.gov

