



NOAA Ocean Guardian School Application | Cover Page

Teachers & Principals,

A NOAA Ocean Guardian School makes a commitment to the protection and conservation of its local watersheds, the world's ocean, and special ocean areas, like national marine sanctuaries. The school makes this commitment by proposing and then implementing a school- or community-based conservation project.

The following application document serves as your school's proposal for a school- or community-based conservation project to take place throughout the 2026 – 2027 school year. Since the program's inception in 2009, we have seen successful conservation projects implemented at over 250 schools across the nation. Successful completion of these projects is highly dependent on strong support from teaching staff and school administrators. **Project proposals require support from at least 1 lead teacher and the principal on campus.** Ancillary support from student club(s), school staff, or parent/community volunteers is encouraged but not required.

By signing below, you – as the lead teacher or principal – are acknowledging you have read the following proposal and are in full support of the proposed project activities and budget. Should you be selected to participate in the 2026 – 2027 cohort, we will be in touch with you both to share introductory project materials to assist with launching your project at the start of the school year.

If you have any questions prior to signing, please do not hesitate to reach out to your regional coordinator. A list of regional coordinator contacts is provided on the following page.

Thank you for your interest in the NOAA Ocean Guardian School program.

Lead Teacher Name

Lead Teacher Signature

Date

Principal Name

Principal Signature

Date

NOAA Ocean Guardian School Application

Prior to completing this application form, please review the Ocean Guardian School Project Guidelines and Requirements on the NOAA Ocean Guardian School "[Apply Now!](#)" webpage.

Please note: The PDF application form requires the use of Adobe Acrobat. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat, you can use a free version - [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).

In order to fill out and save the application form, you must **first** download and save the PDF document to your desktop, then open it with Adobe Acrobat (as opposed to opening the form via your web browser).

Application Instructions

1. Download and save the application form to your desktop. Open the application on your computer via Adobe Acrobat.
2. Complete the application form that you have saved on your computer. Press tab after each response to move throughout the application.
3. Save your completed application form on your desktop.
4. Email your completed application form to the appropriate email address below.

Application deadline: Applications must be submitted no later than July 1, 2026.

Applications for participation **with** funding can be submitted to your regional coordinator.

California schools:

alyssa.leadingham@noaa.gov

Hawai'i:

mahealani.bambico@noaa.gov

American Samoa schools:

isabel.gaoteote@noaa.gov

Oregon & Washington schools:

christine.vandeen@noaa.gov

Commonwealth of Northern
Mariana schools:

janice.e.castro@noaa.gov

mahealani.bambico@noaa.gov

Texas, Florida, Alabama, &
Louisiana schools:

amy.clark@noaa.gov

Alaska schools:

katherine.cornelius@noaa.gov

Georgia schools:

mary.quinn@noaa.gov

Michigan schools:

sarah.a.waters@noaa.gov

Guam schools:

marie.auyong@noaa.gov

mahealani.bambico@noaa.gov

All other schools:

alyssa.leadingham@noaa.gov

Applications for participation **without** funding (for **all regions**) can be submitted to
alyssa.leadingham@noaa.gov

Questions? For more information, contact Alyssa Leadingham (alyssa.leadingham@noaa.gov).



Date

School Name

School Address

City

County

State

Zip Code

School District

What is the name of the watershed in which your school is located? Be as specific as possible.

Is your school Title 1? Yes No **Percent of school on free/reduced lunch:**

Has your school applied for a NOAA Ocean Guardian School grant previously?

Yes No

If yes, please list the following in the box below: the application date(s), the years you received funding, and the number of years you've received Ocean Guardian recognition.

If yes, please indicate whether this application is one of the following.

This project is a continuation of a previously funded project.

This is a new project that falls under a new pathway.

Note: If you are applying for a continuing 4th or 5th year, please answer the 4th/5th year question on page 9 of this application.

NOAA Ocean Guardian School Team

	School Principal	Lead Teacher one contact only*
Name		
Phone		
Email during school		
Email during summer		

** Although we ask for contact information for one Lead Teacher, we understand (and encourage) that a team of teachers may be involved in the project.*

2026 – 2027 Application

Application deadline: July 1, 2026

Project Information

This application is for participation: with funding without funding

If you are applying for funding, how much are you requesting?

This amount should equal the "Total Budget Requested" on your Budget Form and should not exceed \$4,000.

Who will be directly involved in your proposed project?

(E.g. the entire student body, one or more grade(s), one or more class(es), a student club)

List the specific grade level(s) that will be directly participating in the project

Number of classes directly participating in the project

Number of students directly participating in the project

Number of teachers directly participating in the project

Total number of students in the entire school

If you are a high school, are your participating students carrying out the project as part of a: specific class(es) school club school-wide project other

Were any students involved in the development of your project proposal? If so, how were they involved? Examples of student involvement include: identifying the environmental issue that your proposed stewardship project addresses, developing project activities, developing the budget, talking to administrators or others about the project, etc.

Select the project pathway that best connects your proposed project.

School Garden/Habitat

Marine Debris

Energy & Ocean Health

Watershed Restoration

6Rs – Rethink/Refuse/Reduce/Reuse/Rot/Recycle

Project Clearance | Should you be notified that your school has been accepted to participate in the Ocean Guardian School program, your school must be ready and able to move forward with its Ocean Guardian School project as described in this application. At the time you submit your application, your school must have received all necessary permits and/or permissions from school and/or other officials. Please tell us which officials have provided permission for your proposed project to take place. **Check all that apply.**

School Principal

City Officials

City/County/State/National Parks

School District

County/State Officials

Other (please specify):

Project Summary

In summary, provide a 3- to 4-sentence description summarizing the project you are proposing in this application*. To assist with developing your project description, please follow these guidelines. *If you wish to return to this page after completing the entirety of the application (to assist with developing your project summary), please feel free to do so.*

Sentence 1: Provide participation and introductory information relevant to your project. Who is participating (students, teachers, partners, etc.)? What year is your school applying for?

Sentence 2: Describe the project pathway you are applying for and the specific activities associated with this project.

Sentence 3: Detail the proposed outreach strategies for your project.

Sentence 4: What is the proposed outcome of student participation in this project?

Project Summary Example

In their second year as a NOAA Ocean Guardian School, students and teachers at Ocean Middle School will participate in school-wide recycling, composting, and gardening on campus. Under the 6Rs pathway, students will learn about ways to keep campus free of debris in order to lessen their impact on their landfill, watershed, and ocean. To help spread the word about their stewardship efforts, Ocean Middle School students will be presenting on the benefits of adopting the 6Rs to the school board, city council, and a nearby high school. Each of these actions will teach students how their efforts are connected, from reducing waste in the cafeteria to keeping the nearby watershed free from marine debris.

**Project summaries will be utilized by NOAA Ocean Guardian School staff to share your project on the website, internally with NOAA colleagues and program partners, in formal & informal reporting, etc.*

Project Timeline & Outcomes

Enter the main project activities and related outcomes in the table below (at least 5, no more than 9).

- **Time Period / Date** | When is the project activity taking place?
- **Activity / Event** | What is the project activity that is taking place?
- **Outcome** | What is the desired goal you hope to achieve from the activity?

Do not include your Project Introduction Presentation and/or your Wrap-up in the timeline below.

Time Period / Date	Activity / Event	Outcome
<i>September - October (Example)</i>	<i>Green Team conducts first of three waste audits in 4 designated recycle and landfill bins in the cafeteria and out on the playground. They will audit single use plastic items in all bins.</i>	<i>Students learn how to conduct waste audits using specific protocols. Baseline data will be collected on the number of single use plastic items being disposed of in each type of bin.</i>

Measurable Data

What measurable data will you collect during your project? Check all boxes that apply from the pathway lists below. Include any additional data items in the answer box at the bottom of the page (that are not listed below, but are specific to your project).

Note: For those activities marked with an asterisk*, at the end of the year you will be asked to report on the estimated number of total hours your students have participated in those activities.

School Garden / Habitat & Watershed Restoration Activities

- # of native or fruit trees planted *
- # of native perennials/annuals/grasses planted *
- Square meters planted with native or fruit trees *
- Square meters of non-native invasive plants removed *
- Square meters of turf removed *
- Linear meters of bank stabilization *
- Kilograms of food waste diverted from landfill (to compost)
- Kilograms of compost made from school food / garden waste
- # of wildlife habitat structures installed
- Liters of water reclaimed from use of water catchment system
- # of storm drains stenciled *
- # of rain barrels installed

6Rs (Rethink / Refuse / Reduce / Reuse / Rot / Recycle) & Marine Debris Activities

- # of recycling bins installed
- # of compost bins installed
- Kilograms of trash removed from school campus or community *
- Kilograms of food waste diverted from landfill (to compost)
- Kilograms of compost made from school food / garden waste
- # of single-use food packaging items reduced through the adoption of reusable alternatives
- # of single use plastic bottles not used due to reusable water bottles used at a water hydration station
- # of reusable bottles distributed
- # of reusable bags distributed

Energy & Ocean Health Activities

- # of native trees planted *
- Kilograms of food waste diverted from landfill (to compost)
- # of LED or energy saving light bulbs installed
- # of motion detector lights installed
- Total energy savings – include units of measure
- # of bike-to-school days

Other measurable data not listed above that you plan to monitor for your stewardship project:

Project Outreach

During an Ocean Guardian School project year, students are expected to have opportunities to engage in both internal and external outreach activities. Internal outreach activities are focused on communicating Ocean Guardian School projects and related environmental issues within the school community -to other students, teachers, staff, as well as to family and friends. External outreach opportunities are focused outside the school community -to the local community and beyond. Internal and external activities can include both written and verbal communications. Year 1 schools are required to engage students in only internal outreach activities. Continually funded projects (years 2+) must also include external outreach strategies.

Describe your project's internal outreach strategy (Year 1+ schools) Examples of internal outreach activities include but are not limited to: STUDENT posters or art work displayed on school campus; STUDENT created bulletin boards; STUDENT written articles for the school paper, e-newsletters or school website; STUDENT presentations to other classes at school; STUDENT-created PSA or videos; STUDENT presentations to parent-teacher organizations, etc.

Describe your project's external outreach strategy (Year 2+ schools) Examples of external outreach activities include but are not limited to: STUDENT letters or articles written to local papers; STUDENT communications to political representatives, business leaders, community organizations; STUDENT presentations at conferences or community events; STUDENT presentations to city council or local governmental agencies; STUDENT presentations to students at non-Ocean Guardian Schools, school board/district, school site council; STUDENT created educational information distributed to community neighborhoods, businesses, etc.; STUDENT produced PowerPoints, videos, plays, songs, etc. presented to community audiences, etc.



Acknowledging the Ocean Guardian School Program

It is extremely important that you acknowledge the NOAA Ocean Guardian School program when carrying out any outreach/communication tasks. This can be done by using the official NOAA Ocean Guardian logo on any digital or physical products you share, mentioning the grant program in presentations/communications, etc. **Outline below the ways in which you will acknowledge the NOAA Ocean Guardian School program in your outreach efforts.**

4th and 5th Year Applicants

If you are applying for a 4th or 5th year of funding, describe ways in which your project is becoming integrated into the school and becoming a sustainable part of the school's activities/policies/culture. Describe how the stewardship related changes at your school will be sustained after your grant funding has ended.

Indigenous Engagement - *Optional*

The NOAA Ocean Guardian School (OGS) program recognizes the importance of engaging with Indigenous communities in the collective efforts to educate students about environmental conservation and stewardship. Indigenous Peoples are the original stewards of the lands and waters we currently inhabit and possess knowledge that have been practiced for millennia. Their vital perspectives, stewardship experiences, and leadership in natural resource management serves as a model for the underlying goal of the Ocean Guardian School program: to conserve and protect local watersheds, the world's ocean, and/or special ocean areas, like national marine sanctuaries.

The following questions are optional; please only complete them if you are prepared to engage with Indigenous communities (e.g. engagement with elders, knowledge holders, community leaders/organizations, etc.) in an ethical and equitable approach. If you're interested in building your own capacity and knowledge, please reach out to your regional coordinator for guidance.

Do you have the opportunity to collaborate or engage with Indigenous communities through your proposed Ocean Guardian School project?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe how you plan to engage with Indigenous communities as part of your Ocean Guardian School project*.

*Highly recommended and encouraged: If you plan to utilize the time and expertise of an Indigenous representative/organization, please plan to ethically and equitably compensate them for their participation by including a stipend in your project's budget.

Budget

If you are applying for grant funding, please complete the budget form on the following page.

All budget items must directly relate to and support the proposed project including hands-on activities and supplemental learning opportunities. Funds are available for a variety of items including, but not limited to project supplies and materials, signage, field trips (transportation, entrance fees, etc.), stipends, and technology supplies.

Field Trips: Field trips may be included in a project budget; however, the total field trip budget items may not exceed 30% of the project's total budget. Field trips must be school sanctioned. Field trips must supplement project activities and learning opportunities. Field trip expenses may include entrance fees and transportation.

Stipends: The Ocean Guardian School grant will fund stipends for teachers, staff, parents, and/or community partners. Stipends may also include payment for substitute teachers needed during project activities. Total stipends may not exceed 30% of the project's total budget.

Note: Items purchased with grant funds cannot be directly sold to students or any other school/community members. However, an arrangement is permitted where items (purchased with grant funds) may be "given" in exchange for a monetary "donation" to the school's Ocean Guardian project. This arrangement must be clearly communicated to all participants. For example, in exchange for their \$1 "donation" to their Ocean Guardian project, students receive a reusable water bottle (purchased with grant funds) as a gift. In turn, these donated funds should be used accordingly to support the stewardship project.

Important: Before you finalize your budget, please confirm the details with your school administration and district. To avoid delays in retrieving your funds, please determine how you will access your grant funds - who will be in charge of approving purchases and distributing your funds throughout the school year.

Budget Form

For schools applying for funding, please complete this budget form (pages 12 - 13). Show an itemized list of expenses. Be as detailed as possible.

Enter the numeric values without commas or the \$ sign. After entering the values in each column, press the "tab" key. After the final column (Amount Requested from Ocean Guardian), press the "tab" key and the amount will be calculated automatically in "Total Funds Requested" at the bottom of each page.

The first line item is an example and will not be calculated in your budget.

Budget Item (Item, Quantity, Cost/Item)				Total Item	Amount from Other Sources	Amount Requested from Ocean Guardian
CA Live Oak Trees (DO)	10	X	\$15.00	\$150.00	\$50.00	\$100.00
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
(If needed, continue budget on next page)				Total funds requested (page 1)		

Budget Form (page 2)

Enter the numeric values without commas or the \$ sign. After entering the values in each column, press the "tab" key. After the final column "Amount Requested from Ocean Guardian", press the "tab" key and the amount will be calculated automatically in "Total Funds Requested" at the bottom of each page. The Total Funds Requested on page 2 will include the total from page 1.

Budget Item (Item, Quantity, Cost/Item)				Total Item	Amount from Other Sources	Amount Requested from Ocean Guardian
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
		X				
(If needed, continue budget on next page)				Total funds requested (page 2)		
				Total funds requested (page 1 & 2)		

Reminder: Before you finalize your budget, please confirm the details with your school administration and district. To avoid delays in retrieving your funds, please determine how you will access your grant funds - who will be in charge of approving purchases and distributing your funds throughout the school year.

2026 – 2027 Application
Application deadline: July 1, 2026