

Request for Contractor Support for Fisheries Data Collection

Background

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission in collaboration with NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) is looking for contractor support to improve scientific information for the management of fisheries in the US Territories in the Caribbean (U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico) to ensure their cultural, economic, and ecological sustainability. Implementing annual catch limits (ACLs) is hindered by the lack of adequate catch monitoring and biological information in these small-scale, multi-species, multi-gear fisheries that therefore require complex methods and indices to assess.

Since the 2007 reauthorization of the Magnuson Act, shortcomings in the Caribbean stock assessments have become apparent. This region has more managed species than continental US fisheries and insufficient support for monitoring has led to high uncertainty about landings. There is a lack of biological information and fishery independent data for these stocks. These limits on the scientific information to support accurate and timely resource management decisions, threatens the economic and cultural vitality of these communities as well as the sustainability of the territorial fisheries. If these stocks are to be managed with confidence, as mandated by MSA, NOAA must make this focused investment in territorial fisheries science.

Without this investment NOAA will continue to lack the scientific information needed to meet its regulatory mandates under MSA and ESA, diminishing its reputation among stakeholders and its ability to manage stocks, continuing uncertainty and unnecessary economic burdens on Territorial communities. Stock status of many territorial fisheries populations will remain unknown, potentially leading to overfishing and closures, as well as possible ESA petitions and listings. Territorial communities, particularly those dependent on subsistence fishing, may experience the loss of vital near shore resources with severe economic and cultural consequences.

In FY14, SEFSC began implementing this initiative. This Contract will procure a gear selectivity study of the spiny lobster fishery in Puerto Rico.

Statement of Work (SOW)

This study will focus on gear size selectivity for spiny lobsters in Puerto Rico. The timeframe for this study will be calendar year 2020. The primary objectives of this project are to field test and compare size selectivity properties of standard trap designs relative to the size structure of the in water population of spiny lobsters in Puerto Rico.

Activities

The following activities will be carried out in consultation with SEFSC scientists:

1. Gear Selectivity Study

- A. *Scoping/Planning Meetings* – The Contractor will consult with SEFSC scientists to develop the overall approach for conducting the field study. The specific objectives are to understand the length composition of lobsters available to the various trap gears including: 1) the relationship of the minimum size captured by the respective gears to the minimum legal size; 2) differences in the upper end of the length composition among gears; and 3) differences between the length composition of lobsters captured by trap gears and the length composition of the in water population.
- B. *Fisher Interviews* – The Contractor will conduct a series of interviews with trap fishers to determine the range and frequency of use of the various Puerto Rico trap designs and standard soak times.
- C. *Experimental Design* – The Contractor, in consultation with SEFSC, will develop the field experimental design for testing various trap configurations. This includes development of field protocols and data collection procedures.
- D. *Field Implementation* – The Contractor will carry out all aspects of the field sampling following those protocols and procedures developed in activity 1C.

2. Analyses and Reporting of Data

- A. Monthly progress reports will be provided via conference calls to SEFSC staff during the project period.
- B. All raw data shall be provided to SEFSC at the conclusion of the study.
- C. The Contractor will be responsible for evaluating the size selectivity properties and comparisons among trap designs and the in water population.
- D. A final report summarizing methods and results will be provided.

Deliverables

- 1. A final experimental design for the field study (Activity 1C).
- 2. Provide digital database of raw data and brief summary provided within one month of completion of field sampling (Activity 2B).

3. Final project report (Activity 2D). The report will be provided 90 days following completion of sampling.

Timeline

The project timeframe is January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. Any proposed delays in the initiation of sampling may be negotiated with GulfFIN/SEFSC staff. This project cannot extend beyond December 31, 2020.

Within 90 days after contract is awarded:

- Complete experimental design (Activity 1C)
- Hire sampling staff

Within 180 days:

- Begin implementation of the field study

General Proposal Information

All proposals must be submitted to the GSMFC GulfFIN Program Manager in the following standard format:

- Applicant Name: Identify the name of the applicant.
- Project Title: A brief statement to identify the project.
- Requested Award Amount: Provide the total requested amount of proposal.
- Requested Award Period: Provide the total time period of the proposed project.
- Approach: List all procedures necessary to accomplish the desired tasks.
- Cost Summary (Budget): Detail all costs to be incurred in this project, including, but not limited to: personnel, equipment, travel.
- Principal Investigator (PI): List the PIs and their experience in conducting the proposed sampling

Applicants should be willing to work closely with the GSMFC and NMFS SEFSC staff. Proposals will be reviewed by a technical team established in conjunction with the National Marine Fisheries Service. The technical team will make final decisions on project approvals and grant awards in consultation with NMFS. The review and evaluation of all written proposals will take into consideration the description of eligible projects, funding availability and ability to complete project in established timeframe. The entities that receive project funding must abide by the established reporting requirements. If accepted for funding, this project must comply with all federal government audit principles/procedures and the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals:

- Qualifications of personnel assigned to project
- Range of similar activities performed by applicant
- Description of approaches including the statistical validity of those approaches
- Cost of proposal

All proposals must be submitted by December 13, 2019. Proposals can be submitted either in paper or electronic format and addressed to:

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