



## **GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION MARINE AQUACULTURE PILOT PROJECTS GRANT OPPORTUNITY FY2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) is requesting proposals to develop potential marine aquaculture projects in the United States (U.S.) Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) region and the U.S. Caribbean territories (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands). The Commission is making \$600,000 available for the funding period of February 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021. The Commission plans to award several projects ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 each, but will give consideration to projects that can justify a greater need. Past awardees with proven success may submit proposals for consideration to continue their work for another year. Any investigator seeking support for this period must submit, as a single file, an electronic proposal by e-mail no later than **5:00 p.m. CST on Thursday, September 19, 2019**. Please see the *Proposal Guidelines* section for proposal and submission instructions.

### **Background**

More than 90% of seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported, more than half of imported seafood is from overseas aquaculture, and despite possessing the largest exclusive economic zone in the world, the U.S. ranks only 15th in aquaculture job production.

To address the major lost opportunity for job creation in coastal communities and to encourage the development of a domestic seafood supply, we are seeking proposals to conduct regional pilot programs for partnerships between the seafood industry and community partners that can develop, validate and deploy economically and environmentally sustainable aquatic farming techniques and regional business practices to grow U.S. domestic seafood production. To maximize the impact of these pilot grants, we are giving priority consideration to promising but less commercially developed technologies, such as those targeting shellfish (other than oysters), seaweed, and other relative newcomers to the domestic aquaculture industry.

### **Proposal**

The goals for the requested proposals should address at least one or more of the priorities listed below (not in any order) to develop aquaculture ventures in estuarine or marine waters of the Gulf and U.S. Caribbean territories.

Priority 1. Develop commercial techniques that focus on advancing commercial aquaculture in the Gulf and U.S. Caribbean territories. Projects may include:

- Hatchery work in support of finfish, shellfish (other than oysters), or seaweed, aquaculture operations in state or federal waters.
- Academic and private collaboration to provide hatchery space for commercial rearing and production for aquaculture operations in state or federal waters.
- Development of gear and systems appropriate for marine aquaculture production in offshore

waters.

Priority 2. Create pilot projects which demonstrate the feasibility of permitting an offshore aquaculture operation in federal waters of the Gulf and U.S. Caribbean territories.

### **Proposal Guidelines**

Proposals should clearly outline the project objectives, methodologies, research outputs, qualifications of the investigators who would perform the work, where the work would be performed, and a detailed budget. It is critically important to clearly and explicitly articulate how the proposed work addresses the research priorities identified in this document. Proposal should also indicate how the results of the proposed work will be communicated to interested parties and the public. Proposals should not exceed three pages in length (including references) and should follow the instructions for preparing proposals for Commission awards (*Attachment A*).

In addition, the **Abbreviated NOAA Environmental Compliance Questionnaire** (*Attachment B*) should be filled out and submitted with the proposal to facilitate any NEPA and ESA review of the proposed project.

Applicants should be willing to work closely with the Commission staff during the execution and progress of the projects. Funds for this project are provided by NOAA Fisheries. Projects accepted for funding must comply with all federal government audit principles/procedures and the Department of Commerce's Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions ([DOC Terms and Conditions](#)).

### **Duration, Eligibility, and Funding**

This grant program is intended for development of commercial marine aquaculture demonstrations, start-ups, and production. The Commission will fund proposals on a competitive basis. Past awardees with proven success may submit proposals for consideration to continue their work for another year. Proposals from foreign entities are not eligible. Proposals involving multiple investigators are welcome and collaboration is encouraged. Any U.S. federal government agencies or staff, including Regional Fishery Management Council staff, are not eligible to receive funding through this solicitation. These funds can be used to fund a project in its entirety, or in combination with existing funds or additional grant awards. The majority of the proposed work should be conducted in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico region and/or U.S. Caribbean territories. Proposed activities should be completed in the one-year funding period of February 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021.

### **Submittal Instructions**

Investigators must submit by e-mail an electronic copy of the proposal. Electronic files must be a single file in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format and must be sent via e-mail to Steve VanderKooy (svanderkooy@gsmfc.org) for receipt no later than **5:00 p.m. CST on Thursday, September 19, 2019**. "Gulf Aquaculture Pilot Projects" must be specified in the subject line. Proposals not received by the deadline will be returned without review. Proposals failing to comply with content and format requirements will not be accepted.

### **Proposal Evaluation**

All proposals meeting the specified requirements will be evaluated through a technical review of independent experts. Proposals will be ranked based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria.

*Program Goals and Priorities* - The project contributes to the overall conservation goals, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico region and U.S. Caribbean territories.

*Technical Merit* - The project is technically sound and feasible and there is a clear, logical, and achievable work plan and timeline. The project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design, and implementation to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible. Permit needs are considered and the ability to secure proper permits to conduct the proposed work is compatible with project timelines.

*Budget Justification* - Costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with the Commission's project-specific cost categories (*Appendix A*) and are in compliance with *OMB Uniform Guidance* as applicable.

*Stakeholder Collaboration* – Projects including multiple aquaculture-based stakeholders (e.g. commercial fishermen, seafood industry, and/or academia) are strongly encouraged. If applicable, proposals should describe which stakeholders will be involved and what their roles will be.

*Matching Funds* – Matching funds are not required but special consideration will be given to projects that involve additional outside funding and/or in-kind contributions.

Decisions will be disseminated and supplemental information for NEPA and ESA reviews requested from P.I.s no later than November 10, 2019 and research is expected to begin February 1, 2020. **Because of the current funding cycle, no extensions will be available on these awards.**

#### **For More Information**

Contact: Steve VanderKooy  
Interjurisdictional Fisheries Coordinator  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission  
2404 Government Street  
Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39564  
**E-mail:** [svanderkooy@gsmfc.org](mailto:svanderkooy@gsmfc.org)  
**Phone:** (228) 875-5912

## Attachment A

### Instructions for Preparing Proposals for Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Awards

Proposal should be a scientific or technical action plan of activities to be accomplished. Please use the following format when preparing your proposal but restrict your proposal to a maximum of 3 pages in length (including references). Font size should be no smaller than 12. Proposals must include:

1. **Applicant name:** Identify the name of the applicant organization.
2. **Title:** A short descriptive name of the proposal.
3. **RFP Priority:** Identify the priority or priorities that this proposal addresses and how the intended goals of the grant program will be met.
4. **Objective:** State concisely the purpose of the proposal in quantified terms where possible.
5. **Job Title:** A proposal subdivided into two or more jobs must identify each job separately.
6. **Job Objectives:** Provide an objective(s) for each job element, as appropriate.
7. **Job Procedures:** A detailed and concise set of procedures to answer who, what, how, when, and where. Proposals must clearly identify:
  - a. Applicants' activities and deliverables,
  - b. Activities and deliverables of other agencies involved in study, and
  - c. Statement of Authority/Confidentiality, if applicable.
8. **Location:** Describe the location of work.
9. **List of Key Personnel:** List all project personnel and their responsibilities. If personnel are working on the project but are not identified in the project-specific budget, they must be noted as working at no-cost to the project.
10. **Milestone Schedule:** Make a cross-referencing table summarizing, by job, activities that are to be attained each month, including reports.
11. **Project-Specific Budget:** Include a cost estimate breakdown for each cost category covered during the budget period identified. Detailed budget information is required for the following elements:
  - a. Personnel - For each employee, provide the time estimated to be charged to the project; the rate/year, month, day, or hour; and the resulting calculated cost assessed to the project.
  - b. Fringe Benefits - For each employee, identify all fringe-related costs and the rate applied. If the fringe rate is greater than 25%, a copy of the Fringe Rate Agreement must be included.

- c. Travel - Information must be provided on the purpose of travel, destination, daily cost charges, number of days, and number and identity of travelers. All out-of-state and foreign travel must be justified in the proposal.
- d. Equipment (items having a unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more) - Describe how equipment will be used on the project and why it is needed. Identify make and model numbers and unit cost. In addition, a lease versus purchase analysis is necessary for each piece of equipment. Computers and computer-related hardware are often less than \$5,000; due to long-term operational life-span, the need to purchase these items must be clearly explained.
- e. Supplies and Materials - List general categories of supplies and materials, including unit costs and quantities. The terms “miscellaneous” and “etc.” are not allowed.
- f. Contractual/Consulting Services - List each contractor/consultant, describe specific duties to be performed, and how the cost for the service was derived. In addition, a statement as to whether or not the contract or consulting service was competitively selected is necessary. If the service was not competitively selected, a sole source justification is required.
- g. Other Costs - List and describe other costs that are not assignable to the other direct cost categories. Indicate how these costs were derived.
- h. Indirect Costs - If indirect costs are charged, identify the rate used in the calculations, and include **a copy of the current negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with your proposal.**

## Attachment B

### ABBREVIATED NOAA ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

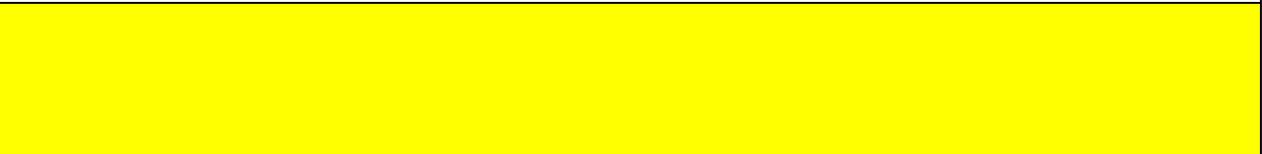
Instructions: Answer EVERY question in the yellow square below it.

Questions are selected from the full 62-question NOAA Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (available at [www.nepa.noaa.gov](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov)), as such questions are not in numerical order.

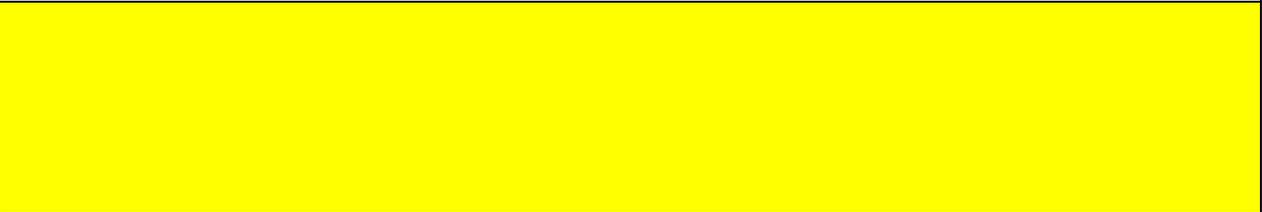
Grant number and/or Project ID (if available)
Project Title
Name and contact information for the person completing this form
State Sea Grant Program
<b><u>PROPOSED ACTIVITY</u></b>
Describe the proposed activity, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The purpose, objectives, and goals</li></ul>

Is the proposed activity a continuation or part of an ongoing activity? If yes, then:

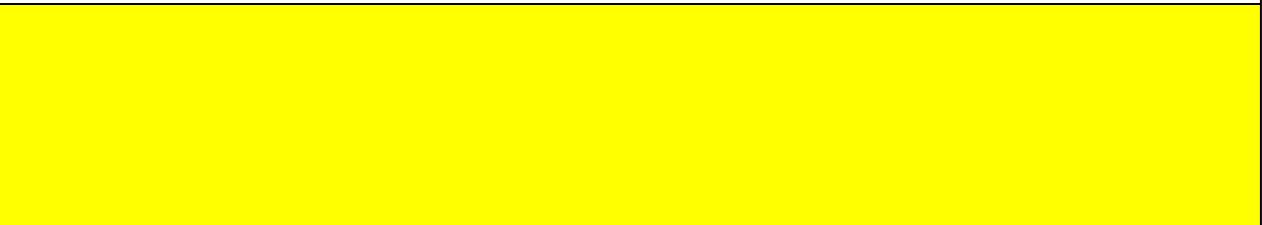
- Describe any changes to the proposed activity since it was initiated, including progress toward achieving its objectives/goals; and
- Provide any additional information, previous environmental review documents, and/or reports from previous years.



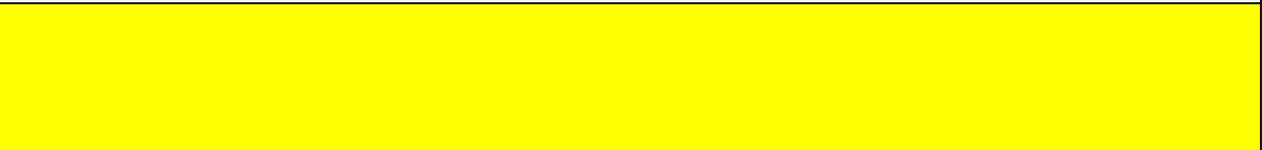
Describe sampling, collecting, or observation protocols and operational procedures



Will the proposed activity require the cataloging and compiling of sources of socioeconomic data? If yes, then please explain.



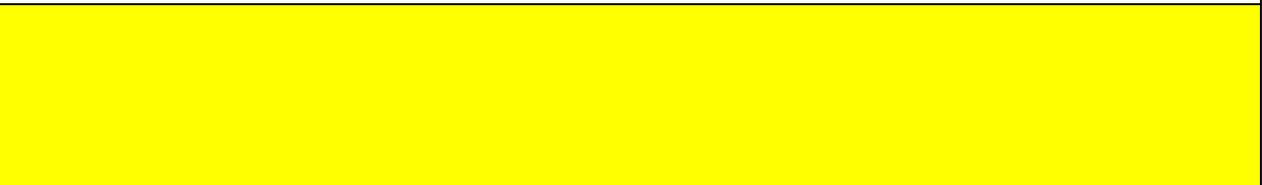
Does the proposed activity consist solely of software research and manipulation? If yes, please explain.



Does the proposed activity utilize a new or untested scientific technology or method? If yes, then describe briefly the technological process or methodology and potential environmental effects of the proposed activity.



What amount (total numbers and/or weight) of fish or invertebrates are proposed to be caught? What is the size (weight, length, and age class) of each species targeted for capture?



List non-target species that may occur in the proposed sampling area and specify how many of each non-targeted species are expected to be caught.

[Redacted]

Will the proposed activity introduce genetically modified organisms, species bred for specific traits (e.g. disease resistant stocks), or non-indigenous species into an area? If so, please include information on the potential genetic impacts (to wild-type or native populations) and the methodology and citations used to arrive at this conclusion.

[Redacted]

Describe the processing methods to be used to conduct the research.

[Redacted]

**LOCATION**

Describe the proposed activity location, including, if available and appropriate, geographic coordinates (latitude, longitude in DD MM.MMM), river mile markers, etc. for all distinct phases of the proposed activity.

[Redacted]

Is the location of the proposed activity in a previously undisturbed area? If yes, then explain if the proposed activity would degrade or disturb the previously undisturbed area.

[Redacted]

Are there pre-existing or ongoing uses at the location of the proposed activity? If yes, then describe and explain the pre-existing or ongoing uses at the location of the proposed activity or, if not known, describe how pre-existing/ongoing uses will be determined.

[Redacted]

Describe the characteristics of the location of the proposed activity by:

- indicating whether it includes unique geographic areas of notable recreational, ecological, scientific, cultural, historical, scenic, economic, or aesthetic importance;
- describing any anticipated changes over time to the natural landscape and/or viewshed that would result from the proposed activity;
- listing any ecologically significant or critical areas in the location of the proposed activity, including areas that are normally inundated by water or areas within the 100- year flood plain;
- essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern designated under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; • listing any critical habitat areas for Endangered Species Act-listed species;
- listing any marine protected areas or national marine sanctuaries in the location of the proposed activity;
- listing any part of refuge lands, wild or scenic rivers, wetlands, or prime/unique farmland in the location of the proposed activity;
- listing any properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmarks, or National Monuments; and
- listing any religious or cultural sites of any Federally recognized Indian Tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations in the proposed activity area.

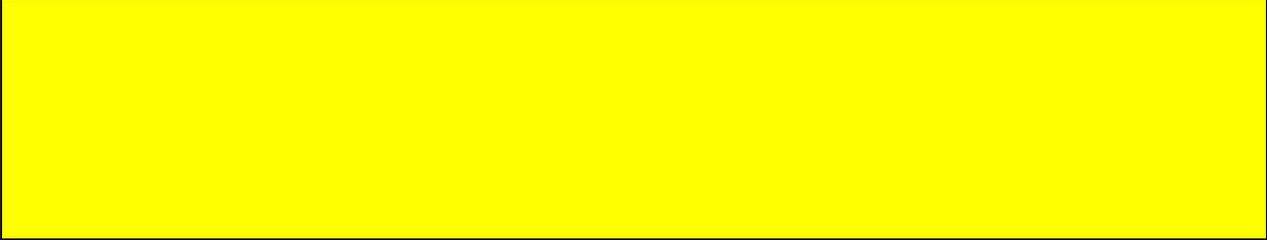
Are minority or low-income communities located in the area of the proposed activity? If yes, then describe how the minority or low-income communities may be impacted by the proposed activity.

**PROPOSED ACTIVITY TIMEFRAME**

Specify the proposed start date and duration of the proposed activity for all distinct phases of the project.

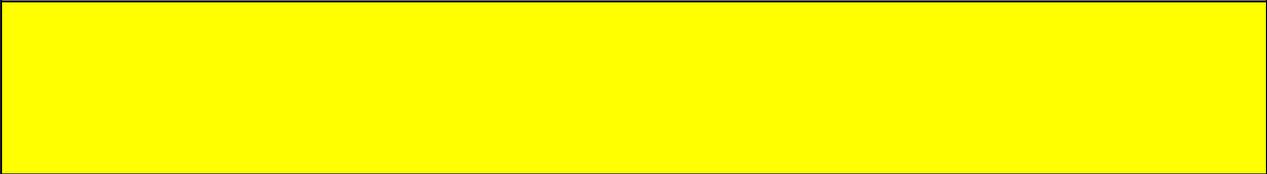
Provide proposed activity schedules for all distinct phases of the proposed activity, including:

- implementation dates of major elements of the proposed activity;
- frequency of activities within the proposed activity schedule (e.g. once per week, 10 days per month, daily); and
- deployment and recovery schedules of equipment or structures that would be temporarily or permanently placed in the environment.



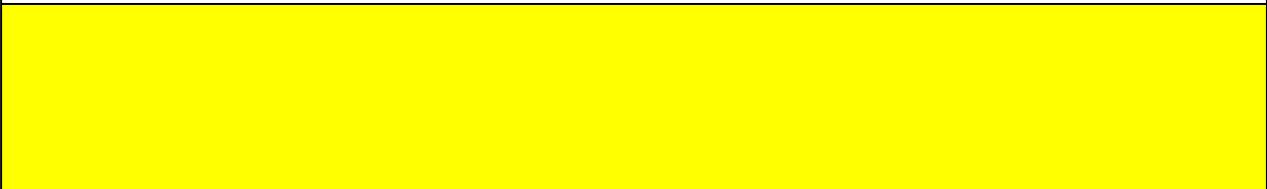
**PROJECT PARTNERS, PERMITS AND CONSULTATIONS**

List all other interested or affected Federal, state, and local agencies, Native American tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private individuals which may potentially be interested and/or affected by the action.



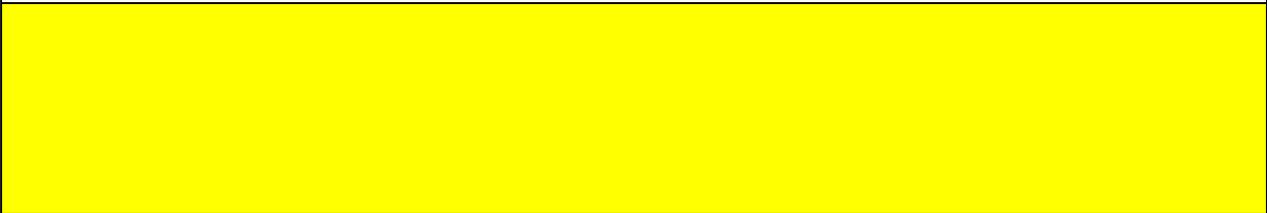
Are Federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, waivers, determinations, or consultations required for the proposed activity to comply with all applicable environmental laws and regulations? If yes, then:

- list and provide the status of all required Federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, waivers, determinations, conditions, and consultations, as applicable; and
- provide copies of all required Federal, state, or local permits, authorizations, waivers, or determinations that you have secured.



**SAFETY**

Describe potential unique or unknown risks to human health or the environment from the proposed activity.



Describe the potential to generate, use, store, transport, or dispose of hazardous or toxic substances. Please include the following:

- a list of any hazardous substances (as defined by 29 C.F.R. 1910.120(a)(3)) that will be involved in this project and any hazardous wastes (as defined by 40 C.F.R. 261.3) that may be generated during the proposed activity;
- any hazardous contaminants that may be uncovered and/or disturbed by the proposed activity; and
- a list of the procedures/protocols that will be followed to ensure safe handling of hazardous substances and proper disposal of all hazardous wastes.

[Redacted area]

**AQUACULTURE (IF APPLICABLE)**

Will the proposed activity be conducted in a closed system mesocosm/aquaculture facility or in open water (coastal or Federal waters)?

[Redacted area]

If using aquaculture gear, describe whether gear would be deployed short-term (1-2 years) or long-term (2+ years) and describe the number of cages/nets, lines, anchors, etc. that would be used during the course of the study. What type and size of cages/nets, lines, anchors, etc. would be used?

[Redacted area]

What amount (total numbers and/or whole weight in pounds) of fish or invertebrates are proposed to be captured for culture purposes (i.e., broodstock)? What is the target size (weight and length) and age class of each species to be captured for culture purposes?

[Redacted area]

What amount (total numbers and/or whole weight in pounds) of fish or invertebrates are proposed to be cultured? What is the estimated size (weight and length) and age class of each species targeted for harvest at the end of each culture period?

[Redacted area]

If the proposed activity involves the use of any specialized equipment that may introduce sound into the environment, then provide a description of the noise(s), including frequency (Hz), amplitude (dB), angle (or degrees) radius the noise may travel from the source, and other relevant technical specifications. Compare the noise(s) generated by the proposed activity with ambient noise conditions, if known. Also, discuss the length of time and frequency of occurrence that the noise is expected to be introduced into the environment.

[Redacted area]

If the proposed activity involves the use of any specialized equipment that may introduce sound into the environment, then provide a description of the noise(s), including frequency (Hz), amplitude (dB), angle (or degrees) radius the noise may travel from the source, and other relevant technical specifications. Compare the noise(s) generated by the proposed activity with ambient noise conditions, if known. Also, discuss the length of time and frequency of occurrence that the noise is expected to be introduced into the environment.

[Redacted area]