



GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION FY2018 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) is requesting proposals to address the technical and regulatory opportunities and challenges of oyster farming in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) region. The Commission is making \$370,000 available for the funding period of March 1, 2018 to February 28, 2019. Individual proposals should not exceed \$75,000. 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 Friday, November 3, 2017**. Please see the *Proposal Guidelines* section for proposal and submission instructions.

Background

The farming of oysters in cages in the Gulf may present an opportunity for the seafood industry to diversify and expand production in the region. Farming of “off-bottom” oysters, defined here as farming of oysters in cages suspended in the water column or in cages placed on the bottom, is one way to produce uniformly sized and shaped oysters sought after by the growing half-shell oyster trade. In the region, traditional wild oyster harvest (utilizing cultch planting methods and naturally occurring reefs) has been limited in recent years for a variety of reasons, including too much fresh water from Mississippi River diversions in the Louisiana area to too little freshwater in Mobile Bay and the eastern part of the Gulf. Even as wild harvest recovers, off-bottom cage culture production of oysters has the potential to complement wild harvest, diversify the region’s seafood products, and help maintain local processing and working waterfront facilities.

Oyster farming, however, presents technical, regulatory, and market challenges. While cage culture of oysters has been underway in the Northwest and Northeast U.S. for years, such farming methods must to be adapted to local physical and water quality conditions in the Gulf. Coastal and marine planning may be required to locate oyster farms in areas that do not conflict with other marine uses and critical habitat areas for protected species. In addition, local, state, and federal permitting requirements and processes need to be developed or adapted to allow for expanded oyster production via cage culture methods in the Gulf region.

In other regions, efforts to coordinate commercial oyster farming activities with oyster restoration efforts have had some success. For example, state shellfish initiatives in Washington, California, Alaska, Connecticut, and Rhode Island have engaged shellfish farmers, environmental and oyster restoration groups, state and local agencies, foundations, and others to find ways to work together to more quickly get mollusks into coastal waters.

Proposal

The goals for the requested proposals should address at least one or more of the priorities listed below (not in any order) to advance the potential development and implementation of an off-bottom oyster farming industry in the Gulf using off-bottom oyster culture methods (culture of oysters in cages suspended in the water column or in cages placed on the bottom).

- (1) Oyster farm planning, siting, and/or coordination which would include:
 - identifying suitable locations for oyster farming,
 - utilizing siting tools,
 - coordinating oyster farming activities with oyster restoration efforts,
 - avoiding and/or resolving user conflicts,
 - avoiding endangered species critical habitat or marine archeological sites, and
 - generating state or regional oyster-focused initiatives;
- (2) Identify regulatory constraints and challenges to oyster farming including:
 - designing or modifying state regulations to allow for off-bottom cage culture,
 - outlining science needs/information to answer production, environmental impact, and permitting questions,
 - developing gear modifications to avoid endangered species impacts, and
 - creating “one-stop-shop” state aquaculture permitting processes;
- (3) Identify production and technical challenges hindering full implementation of oyster farming which may include:
 - designing, modifying, and testing of production methods suitable for oyster farming in Gulf states,
 - implementing genetic selection programs for local stock to improve production performance,
 - monitoring local water quality and environmental impacts on oyster farms, and
 - monitoring environmental impacts of oyster farms on the surrounding area(s).

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 2-3 pages in length.

Please follow the instructions for preparing proposals for Commission awards (*Attachment A*). Applicants should be willing to work closely with the Commission staff. Funds for this project are provided by NOAA Award No. NA15NMF4720399. If the proposal is accepted for funding, the projects must comply with all federal government audit principles/procedures and the Department of Commerce’s Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

Duration, Eligibility, and Funding

The Commission will fund proposals on a competitive basis. Researchers at U.S. academic institutions, research laboratories, for-profit companies/firms, nonprofits, and state agencies are all eligible. Proposals from foreign entities are not eligible. Proposals involving multiple investigators are welcome. The majority of the proposed work should be conducted in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico region. Any U.S. federal government agencies, including Regional Fishery Management Councils, are not eligible to receive funding through this solicitation. Proposed activities should be completed in the one-year funding period of March 1, 2018 to February 28, 2019.

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 Friday, November 3, 2017**. "Gulf Aquaculture Research Proposal" 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.

Technical Merit - The project is technically sound and feasible and there is 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.

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.

Decisions will be disseminated to P.I.s by early December 2017 and research is expected to begin March 1, 2018.

For More Information

Contact: Steve VanderKooy
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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 2-3 pages in length:

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.**