

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Action:

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) seeks a contractor to conduct research on coral reefs in the Gulf that includes identification of significant coral reef resources in the northern and western Gulf; monitor coral resources; and/or assesses the impacts to coral resources.

Scope of Work:

Funding for this research is available from the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program that has solicited applications from the Regional Fishery Management Councils for projects to conserve and manage coral reef fishery resources (72 FR 36244, dated 7/2/07). Projects that can be funded are for activities that: 1) provide better scientific information on the status of coral reef fisheries resources, critical habitats of importance to coral reef fishes, and the impacts of fishing on these species and habitats; 2) identify new management approaches that protect coral reef biodiversity and ecosystem function through regulation of fishing and other extractive uses; and 3) incorporate conservation and sustainable management measures into existing or new Federal fishery management plans for coral reef species.

Program Priorities:

For this solicitation, all applications must fall within at least one of the 7 categories:

- (a) identification, mapping, characterization, monitoring and protection of critically important habitats of coral reef fishes and associated spawning populations;
- (b) monitoring reef fish stocks;
- (c) identification of the adverse impacts of fishing gear and fishing methods and implementation of actions to reduce habitat damage;
- (d) assessment of the adequacy of current coral reef fishing regulations and revision of regulations as needed;
- (e) education and outreach efforts to recreational and commercial fishers;
- (f) enhanced enforcement of fishery regulations and/or no-take fishery resources;
- (g) ecosystem-scale studies and inclusion of ecosystem approaches into coral reef FMP's.

Proposed projects should provide necessary information and contribute to the identification of specific actions to reduce overfishing of coral reef resources and mitigate habitat damage caused by destructive fishing gears or methods.

The priorities are not listed in any particular order and each is of equal importance.

Details of the 7 categories are as follows:

- a. Identification, mapping, characterization, monitoring and protection of critically important habitats of coral reef fishes and associated spawning populations: Studies that identify, map and characterize fisheries habitat (including essential fish habitat, habitat areas of particular

concern, and spawning aggregation sites) in U.S. coral reef ecosystems, assess the condition of the habitat, and determine the spatial extent of fishing activities. Special priority will be given to studies associated with coral reef areas that are currently, permanently, or seasonally closed to fishing, or that may merit inclusion in an expanded network of no-take ecological reserves. Eligible activities include multi-beam or sidescan sonar mapping and ground truthing, habitat characterization, and monitoring of such areas, including deeper coral reefs, banks and beds.

- b. **Monitoring reef fish stocks:** Monitoring reef fish stocks in existing no-take marine reserves and reference sites on coral reefs in the Council's jurisdiction to understand the status of fishery resources and effects of fishing, and to evaluate the effectiveness of reserves. Projects can include targeted assessments of coral reef fishery stocks for which overfishing is strongly suspected, improved means of data collection from harvesting activity for both target and non-target species, and compilation of existing background information on currently unassessed coral reef fishery stocks. Fishery independent and fishery dependent monitoring should focus on efforts that will improve stock analysis for species of concern that may qualify for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing, high value fisheries species, species targeted for the aquarium trade, ecologically important species (e.g., herbivores) and other indicator species. Projects could also include socioeconomic monitoring of fisheries, implementation of observer programs and mechanisms to improve reporting of catch for both food and aquarium species.
- c. **Identification of the adverse impacts of fishing gear and fishing methods and implementation of actions to reduce habitat damage:** Studies, workshops, or consultations with fishermen and other stakeholders to identify and reduce adverse effects of fishing on coral reefs, with emphasis on the effects of specific gear types and inappropriate fishing techniques that contribute to habitat destruction, overfishing and damage to non-target species through bycatch. Projects can include evaluations of the impacts of gear types, and the identification of additional gear and anchoring restrictions.
- d. **Assessment of the adequacy of current coral reef fishing regulations and revision of regulations as needed:** Studies, workshops, or consultations with resource managers, fishermen, local and National governments, and other stakeholders to assess the adequacy of current fishing regulations within the Council's jurisdiction, and to identify new regulations that are needed for commercial and recreational coral reef fisheries. This could include assessment of coral reef regulations for commercial and recreational fisheries in state waters, if these complement Federal FMPs and regulations.
- e. **Enhanced enforcement of fishery regulations and/or no-take fishery resources:** Activities geared towards improving enforcement capacity for fisheries regulations, especially in remote locations and marine protected areas. Projects could involve efforts conducted with federal, State and non-government partners to develop and expand vessel monitoring systems, radar systems and other surveillance programs; workshops to assist enforcement officers in understanding FMPs, recent amendments to these plans and associated regulations; and training efforts to improve the ability of enforcement officers to identify managed species.
- f. **Education and outreach efforts to recreational and commercial fishers:** Enhanced education and outreach to recreational and commercial fishermen specifically targeted to reduce the adverse impacts of fishing on coral reef ecosystems. Activities could include development of web-

based educational tools, outreach brochures, videos and other materials to inform the public of existing and revised fisheries regulations.

- g. Studies to understand and incorporate ecosystem-scale considerations into coral reef fishery management plans: Studies needed to understand ecosystem effects of fishing on coral reefs, including: field research and development of models to improve our understanding of larval pathways, trophic interactions and ecosystem impacts associated with fishing, and habitat impacts associated with certain types of fishing gear and practices.

Past projects of the Gulf Council have been directed at mapping coral reefs and potential areas where coral is likely to occur off the west coast of Florida, including the Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps Marine Reserves and areas adjacent thereto, as well as Pulley's Ridge. Additional work has focused on assessing coral communities (establishing baseline data sets) on banks in the northwest Gulf, with ongoing work on Sonnier and McGrail Banks. Recent funding under the 2007 Coral Reef Research program will involve coral and coral reef outreach/education program and recruitment of habitat use of reef fishes on low and high diversity coral reefs in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

Community involvement and commitment is highly recommended in the form of both individuals and commercial users. Individuals, under the guidance of competent scientists, can serve as safety divers, dive buddies, on board equipment handlers, and record keepers without sacrificing the scientific integrity of the mission. Commercial support can reduce costs to the program through the donations of ship time, equipment, and logistics. Interactions of the scientists and fishers may provide a benefit in the context of logistical support, local knowledge, extra eyes to observe, and a better project.

OFFER SCHEDULE

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (COUNCIL)

Description

The Contractor shall provide the necessary personnel and services to conduct the research in accordance with the Scope of Work, terms, and conditions herein, and perform the necessary service from the date of award, or approximately October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009. Total funding available for project activities is \$120,000.

1. Type of Order

The Council desires a firm-fixed-price contract. The Contractor will be reimbursed for actual expenses in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award.

2. Technical and Price Proposals

Submit one original and three copies of technical proposals describing a project plan that addresses the evaluation factors listed below. The proposal must be 18 pages or less and include:

- (1) the names of proposed key personnel/subcontractors (along with their resumes or curriculum vitae);
- (2) project summary;
- (3) narrative of the project description including goals and milestones;
- (4) budget detail;
- (5) dates for duration of the work; and
- (6) proposed dollar amount.

Offerors must also provide as part of their bid submission a list of Government, industry, private sector, and/or other contracts received during the last two years for identical or similar work to that being procured under this solicitation. The information is to include:

- (1) name of entity;
- (2) contact person and telephone number;
- (3) description of work;
- (4) date(s) of work; and
- (5) dollar amount.

Offerors must also submit two examples of identical or similar final work products.

3. Evaluation Factors

- (1) Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the priorities listed: This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to the priorities.

- (2) Technical/scientific merit: This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.
- (3) Overall qualifications of applicants: This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.
- (4) Project costs: The budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame.
- (5) Evaluation of Price Proposals: The technical quality is more important than price. Price proposals will be evaluated separately from technical proposals. All technically acceptable proposals will have the price evaluated as to whether it is fair and reasonable.
- (6) Evaluation for Award: Award will be made to the Offeror(s) whose proposal(s) is/are most advantageous to the Council, based on consideration of the evaluation factors and price. The Council reserves the right to award the contract on the basis of the initial proposals, without any negotiations; however, the Council reserves the right to negotiate. Offerors are therefore urged to submit their best offer with their original submittal. Offerors are to further note that the award will not necessarily be made for capabilities that appear to exceed the Council's minimum requirements for successful performance of the contract requirements. Likewise, an award will not necessarily be made to the lowest price proposed.

TO APPLY:

Send proposal to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, Florida, 33607. Contact person: Dr. Richard Leard; phone: (813) 348-1630 extension 228; FAX: (813) 348-1711. All proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST, September 14, 2007.