



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

www.gulfcouncil.org

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Develop a Document and Geodatabase for Mesophotic and Deep-water Corals
in the Gulf of Mexico

Proposal Submission Deadline: February 1, 2021

Term of Contract: 12 months

Maximum Funding Available for Work: \$175,000

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) seeks a highly-qualified contractor to compile and synthesize information on deep-water coral and coral related habitats throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The contractor is tasked with producing a report and developing a geodatabase to include: coral presence, coral density, coral species diversity, and benthic habitat composition of areas that support corals more broadly, e.g., deep-water banks, hard-bottom habitats, and isolated patch reefs. The project will focus on mesophotic (30 – 150 m) and deep-water corals (deeper than 50 m) in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico from 9 to 200 nautical miles offshore. Of particular interest are coral taxa in the Coral Fishery Management Unit (FMU) which include species of the Class Hydrozoa (Orders Milleporina and Stylasterina) and the Class Anthozoa (Orders Scleractinia and Anthipatharia), excluding the Subclass Octocorallia Family Gorgonidae. The selected contractor will work with Council staff throughout the process of completing the scope of work as outlined below.

Background: The Council has developed and the National Marine Fisheries Service implemented Coral Amendment 9. This amendment established 13 new Habitat Area of Particular concern (HAPCs) with fishing regulations that prohibit deployment of bottom-tending gear and anchoring by fishing vessels and eight HAPCs without associated fishing regulations. Coral Amendment 9 can be found here: https://gulfcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Coral-9-DEIS-20181005_508C.pdf

In 2014, the Coral Working Group identified potential areas, including existing HAPCs, to be considered for additional conservation and management measures due to the presence of deep-water coral communities. After review by the Council's advisory bodies, the list was shortened to the areas included in Coral Amendment 9. Since then, the Council has directed staff to reconvene the Coral Advisory Panel and Coral Statistical and Scientific Committee to reexamine priority areas to be considered as HAPCs through Coral Amendment 10. This reexamination would include, but not be limited to depth, habitat type, abundance, density, and diversity information for previously considered areas in Coral Amendment 9 that the Council selected not to move forward with, as well as any new information on regional areas. The contractor should also account for the areas being considered in the expansion

plans of the two National Marine Sanctuaries in the Gulf of Mexico: [Flower Garden Banks](#) and [Florida Keys](#).

Scope of Work: The contractor will be responsible for all work products outlined below and are encouraged to contribute additional products and suggestions in the proposal for this work. The selected contractor is also responsible for a mid-term project summary presentation to the appropriate Advisory Panels, Scientific and Statistical Committees, and the Council (i.e., July/August 2021), and a presentation of final results to the Council. The final work product should include the following:

- A comprehensive literature review of mesophotic and deep-water coral areas identified by the Coral Working Group in 2014 **AND** identify other ecologically important coral habitat that may benefit from management measures.
- A compilation of the most up-to-date information on coral taxa in the Coral FMU as it relates to the presence of mesophotic and deep-water corals, coral density and diversity, as well as, other benthic habitat attributes more broadly for those areas where corals have been documented to occur. Areas initially identified by the Coral Working Group in 2014, but not included in [Coral Amendment 9](#), will serve as initial focal areas, though it is expected that more recent data will provide additional insights.
 - Provide all spatial data in an ArcGIS geodatabase format using templates provided by Council staff for point datasets and include metadata in Federal Geospatial Data Committee (FGDC) standard.
- A general ecological assessment of those areas where corals are identified as a conspicuous element of the bottom, and potential risks to corals in those areas and the services that they provide.
 - Identify, to the extent practical, a consistent level of detail for comparison across and among areas.
 - Provide an assessment of vulnerability of corals to disease (e.g., Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease spread) and potential impacts of environmental changes (e.g., changes in ocean circulation patterns, temperature, and pH).
 - If available, include economically important fishery species and their association with the benthic habitat.
- Rank the areas identified above based on ecological function to provide a recommendation on which the Council could use to prioritize the development of management measures.
- Provide citations and source information for each area/region considered, in Mendeley compatible bibliographic format (e.g., RIS).
- Design a web-based dashboard with an interactive map displaying the shape/area and coordinates of the areas to be considered and associated information. This tool will be used to display information to the Council, for decision making, and for outreach purposes.

Outcomes from this work will be refined based on Council input and insights from public comments during appropriate Advisory Panels (e.g., Coral and Shrimp), Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Council meetings.

Contractor Qualifications: The successful applicant or applicant team will have demonstrable experience in multiple areas such as deep-sea coral biology and ecology, oceanography, and/or spatial mapping and resource visualization.

How to Apply: Applicants should submit a proposal to Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council by email (rfp.coral@gulfcouncil.org) by 11:59 pm on February 1, 2021. Requests for additional information can also be accepted at this email address. Proposals should include the following elements:

Executive Summary: A summary of the work proposed as well as brief summary of the applicant's qualifications.

Proposed Plan of Work: A detailed plan for addressing the scope of work described above. This should include a summary of potential work product approaches, a project schedule, a brief summary of how the project will be managed, and a list of all personnel who are anticipated to work on the project. The proposal should be no longer than 10 pages, including the budget. **Supporting Materials:** Summaries and reports from previous meetings, as well as the template to use for the GIS deliverables can be accessed from: <https://gulfcouncil.org/about/request-for-proposals/>

Qualifications of Applicant: A summary of the qualifications of the applicant and other team members, if applicable. A curriculum vitae should be included for each individual who is expected to work on the project.

Milestone Chart: Proposed timeline of accomplishments and deliverables. All work must be completed and a final report submitted to the Council by March 15, 2022.

Proposed Budget: A detailed budget, including the basis for the charges (e.g., hourly rates, fixed fees).

Applicant References: Names, titles, full addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers for three clients for whom the applicant has provided similar services to those requested or are familiar with the applicant's work and the quality of the applicant's work products.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Next Steps: Proposals will be evaluated based on proposed work plan and ability to deliver, in a timely manner, a quality work product as determined by qualifications including prior experience, references, and budget. The Council may request additional information as deemed necessary or negotiate modifications prior to providing support for a proposal. Once a proposal is selected for funding, a formal contract will be provided to the applicants.

Disclaimer

1. This project is being funded by federal funding authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act through NOAA Fisheries Service and the

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council NOAA award number
NA15NMF4410011.

2. The contractor is responsible for all costs associated with the participation of three meetings to present the mid-term project summary to the appropriate Advisory Panels, Scientific and Statistical Committee, and Council (i.e., July/August 2021), and a presentation of final results to the Council (2022). In-person meetings will depend upon travel precautions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Proposals and their accompanying documentation will not be returned, but retained as part of the Councils administrative documents.
4. All applicants included in the proposal must disclose any conflicts of interest and/or pending civil/criminal/fishery legal actions.
5. The Council reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, negotiate with all qualified applicants, cancel or modify this request for proposals in part or in its entirety, or change the application guidelines, when it is in the best interests of the Council.