



# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

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

4107 West Spruce Street, Suite 200

Tampa, Florida 33607 USA

Phone: 813.348.1630 • Toll free: 888.833.1844 • Fax: 813.348.1711

[www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org)

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Updating descriptions of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for federally managed Gulf of Mexico finfish and shrimp species

**Proposal Submission Deadline:** March 24, 2023

**Term of Contract:** 14 months

**Maximum Funding Available for Work:** \$85,000

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) seeks a highly-qualified contractor to update descriptions of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for federally managed Gulf of Mexico finfish and shrimp species. The contractor will be tasked specifically with identifying, synthesizing, and developing metadata for spatial habitat data layers in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Background:** The Council is required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to identify and describe EFH for all federally managed species. Essential Fish Habitat is defined in the MSA as “those waters and substrates necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.” The Council is interested in updating the information used to identify and describe EFH for its managed finfish and shrimp species. To accomplish this goal, a thorough and comprehensive examination of available and contemporary spatial habitat data layers for the Gulf of Mexico is required. The broader objectives of this project are to establish the foundational knowledge to continue work on the Council’s EFH Generic Amendment, provide the Council with the best available EFH description information for future management action, and inform an associate EFH decision webtool.

**Scope of Work:** The contractor will be responsible for all work products outlined below and is encouraged to contribute additional products and suggestions in the proposal to perform this work. The contractor is also responsible for project summary presentation to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and addressing and/or incorporating the SSC’s recommendations before final submission. After SSC review, the contractor is also responsible for providing a summary presentation to the Council. Work products will be developed in close coordination with Council staff as well as National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff and its collaborators.

The work products must be consistent with all special award conditions specific to the Council’s funding requirements (See Appendix A):

- Compile contemporary spatial habitat data layers across the Gulf of Mexico from various sources.

- Use statistical software (i.e. ArcMap, R, etc.) to visualize, analyze, and aggregate feature layers to create Gulf-wide maps for each habitat type.
- All methods used to generate habitat maps should be documented in a final report and supported by peer-reviewed literature sources.
- Generate complete metadata documentation for all spatial data sources used to generate finalized Gulf-wide habitat maps and release for use if applicable.
- Present all draft products (maps, metadata, methods, etc.) at a meeting of the Council's SSC for review. The contractor will need to address any and all input from the SSC's review before final project submission. After SSC review, the contractor is also responsible for a summary presentation to the Council.
- Produce a final report outlining methods, metadata, any cited sources, and provide GIS files (preferably shapefiles) for all identified spatial data layers and finalized habitat maps. Spatial layer products will be warehoused on the Council's GIS server.

**Contractor Qualifications:** Applicants should demonstrate or have collaborators on the team that meet the following criteria and can be assessed in the resumes or curriculum vitae provided:

- Programming knowledge in R or other statistical software
- An advanced degree or higher in GIS, geography, environmental sciences, marine biology, or related field; OR a certification in GIS and at least 2 years related experience
- Proficiency with ArcGIS 10.x (Contractor must have existing software license to be maintained throughout duration of the contract)
- Experience analyzing, editing, manipulating, and summarizing spatial data, and visualizing results as maps
- Experience using common software applications (e.g. Microsoft office suite)
- Effective written and oral scientific communication skills
- Experience working with large datasets
- Ability to work with spatial data in the R-programming language and process the resulting data to support management with modeling, GIS, and other spatial analytical products
- Ability to refine and improve existing approaches to describing EFH in the Gulf of Mexico

**Milestone and progress reporting timeline:**

Months 1-3: Identify appropriate data cooperators and obtain available contemporary spatial habitat data for each habitat category. Assess data layers and investigate methods for aggregating multiple spatial feature layers for all habitat characterizations. At the end of month three, a written project progress report will be submitted to Council staff.

Month 4-6: Create Gulf-wide habitat maps (preferably shapefiles) for each habitat type. Develop outline of report that includes project methods, metadata documentation, and all pertinent spatial habitat data; this should be provided to Council staff for preliminary review. At the end of month six, a written project progress report will be submitted to Council staff.

Month 7: Meet with Council staff to review preliminary feedback, update data and methods as necessary in response to Council staff feedback.

Month 8-11: Prepare and present draft project to SSC for review. Address or incorporate any recommendations provided by the SSC. The presentation will dually function as a project progress report.

Month 12-14: Finalize project and completed report for submission. Provide overview presentation to the Council.

### **How to Apply:**

Applicants should submit a proposal to Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council by email: [rfp.efh@gulfcouncil.org](mailto:rfp.efh@gulfcouncil.org) by 11:59 pm on March 24, 2023. Requests for additional information can also be accepted at this email address. Proposals should include the following elements:

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

*Proposed Scope of Work:* A detailed plan for addressing the scope of work described above. This should include a summary of potential work products, a project schedule, a brief summary of how the project will be managed, and a list of all personnel who are expected to work on the project.

*Qualifications of Applicant:* A brief summary of the qualifications of the applicant and other team members. Resumes or curriculum vitae should be included for all individuals who will work on the project.

*Milestone and progress reporting timeline:* A proposed timeline of accomplishments and deliverables is described above. The applicant should identify personnel responsible for completing tasks within the project timeline. Periodic written and presented updates are also stipulated in the timeline. All work must be completed and a final report submitted to the Council by June 30, 2024 or 14 months from project commencement..

*Proposed Budget:* A detailed budget, including the basis for the charges (e.g., hourly rates, fixed fees including any approved federal negotiated indirect rate).

*References:* The name, affiliation, email address, and phone number of a reference for whom the applicant has provided similar services to those requested or can attest to applicant's quality of work products.

**Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Next Steps:** Proposals will be evaluated based on proposed methodology to complete work products, prior experience, references, qualifications, and budget details. The Council may request additional information as deemed necessary or negotiate

modifications to an accepted proposal. After 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 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) award number NA20NMF4410011. Compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (P.L. 104-208 as amended), the current requirements of the Federal Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Commerce financial assistance standard terms and conditions, the NOAA financial assistance administrative terms, all special award conditions specific to this award and all parts of the Uniform Guidance at Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations must be maintained.
2. The contractor is responsible for all costs related to the preparation of the proposal, conducting the work, and presenting the final results to the Scientific and Statistical Committees and Council.
3. Proposals and their accompanying documentation will not be returned, but retained as part of the Council's 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.

More information on the Gulf Council's EFH management history can be obtained here:  
<https://gulfcouncil.org/fishery-management-2/implemented-plans/essential-fish-habitat/>

## Appendix A

### **Special Terms and Conditions Handling of Environmental Data or Peer Reviewed Publications**

1. Data Sharing: Environmental data collected or created under this Grant, Cooperative Agreement, or Contract must be made publicly visible and accessible in a timely manner, free of charge or at minimal cost that is no more than the cost of distribution to the user, except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or national security requirements. Data are to be made available in a form that would permit further analysis or reuse: data must be encoded in a machine-readable format, preferably using existing open format standards; data must be sufficiently documented, preferably using open metadata standards, to enable users to independently read and understand the data. The location (internet address) of the data should be included in the final report. Pursuant to NOAA Information Quality Guidelines, data should undergo quality control (QC) and a description of the QC process and results should be referenced in the metadata.<sup>1,2</sup>

2. Timeliness: Data accessibility must occur no later than publication of a peer-reviewed article based on the data, or two years after the data are collected and verified, or two years after the original end date of the grant (not including any extensions or follow-on funding), whichever is soonest, unless a delay has been authorized by the NOAA funding program.

3. Disclaimer: Data produced under this award and made available to the public must be accompanied by the following statement: These data and related items of information have not been formally disseminated by NOAA, and do not represent any agency determination, view, or policy.

4. Failure to Share Data: Failing or delaying to make environmental data accessible in accordance with the submitted Data Management Plan, unless authorized by the NOAA Program, may lead to enforcement actions, and will be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions. Funding recipients are responsible for ensuring these conditions are also met by sub-recipients and subcontractors.

5. Funding acknowledgement: Federal funding sources shall be identified in all scholarly publications. An Acknowledgements section shall be included in the body of the publication stating the relevant Grant Programs and Award Numbers. In addition, funding sources shall be reported during the publication submission process using the FundRef mechanism (<http://www.crossref.org/fundref/>) if supported by the Publisher.

6. Manuscript submission: The final pre-publication manuscripts of scholarly publications produced with NOAA funding shall be submitted to the NOAA Institutional Repository at <http://library.noaa.gov/repository> after acceptance, and no later than upon publication, of the paper by a journal. NOAA will produce a publicly-visible catalog entry directing users to the published version of the article. After an embargo period of one year after publication, NOAA shall make the manuscript itself publicly visible, free of charge, while continuing to direct users to the published version of record.

7. Data Citation: Publications based on data, and new products derived from source data, must cite the data used according to the conventions of the Publisher, using unambiguous labels such as Digital

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<sup>1</sup> Failure to perform quality control does not constitute an excuse not to share data.

<sup>2</sup> Data without QC are considered "experimental products" and their dissemination must be accompanied by explicit limitations on their quality or by an indicated degree of uncertainty.

Object Identifiers (DOIs). All data and derived products that are used to support the conclusions of a peer-reviewed publication must be made available in a form that permits verification and reproducibility of the results.