

**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**  
**FY2019 Request for Proposals (RFP)**  
**Regional Pilot Projects in Support of Sustainable Aquaculture**

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) is requesting proposals to develop regional pilot projects in support of sustainable aquaculture. Specifically, pilot programs should partner with industry to develop techniques and business models to grow domestic seafood production. A priority is to consider promising but less commercially developed technologies for species managed by the Commission or those species that contribute to healthy marine habitats, including finfish, shellfish and seaweed.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) FY19 budget contains the “Regional Pilots in Sustainable Aquaculture” provision that authorizes the funding. In addition to this specific item, the budget also focuses renewed interest on maintaining and further developing existing aquaculture capabilities at NMFS.

The Commission is making \$570,000 available for the funding period of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Individual proposals should fall within a range from \$50,000 to \$200,000. 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. EST on Monday, April 15, 2019**. Awards and start dates for successful projects will be announced by May 20, 2019. Please see the *Proposal Guidelines* section for proposal and submission instructions.

**Background**

NMFS has been requested, by stakeholders, to assist in expanding seafood farming operations and production to offset a \$14 billion seafood trade deficit in the U.S. A national seafood competitiveness-aquaculture initiative could address key constraints, regulatory streamlining, and help promote and enhance domestic production. Aquaculture, done right, benefits communities and the environment.

Aquaculture is currently the third most valuable fishery in New England and many participants are from traditional fishing families. Major U.S. seafood companies now own U.S. fish and shellfish farms and public perception of all forms of aquaculture is improving. As some wild stocks continue to decline and others remain at less than optimal levels, aquaculture efforts have the potential to dovetail within the mission of the Commission to provide healthy and sustainable resources and habitats for the future.

The current NMFS regional aquaculture development partnerships focus on three primary efforts: Efficient Permitting, Technology Development and Research, and Business Acceleration. The focus of this request for proposals (RFP), is to solicit projects related to Business Acceleration. Specifically, proposals should focus on the following key objectives:

- Business Incubators
- Extension
- Regional market and economic impact studies
- Infrastructure

- Workforce development
- Trade facilitation
- Social acceptance
- Financial, loan programs

The intent of the RFP is to continue the Atlantic component of this national effort and begin more formal discussions on the aquaculture priorities of the Commission.

### **Proposal**

The goals for the requested proposals should address at least one or more of the priorities listed above (not in any order) to advance the development of aquaculture efforts in the regions of the ASMFC. The following are specific examples of concepts that meet the intent of the RFP:

- Expansions or improvements to aquaculture infrastructure to facilitate growth and development of sustainable aquaculture products.
- Identification and development of Aquaculture Development Zones with pre-planning and pre-permitting for a range of aquaculture activities. May consider local municipalities and outreach efforts to assess public acceptance or objection to aquaculture in local waters.
- Resolution of issues (e.g., enforcement, water quality, public trust concerns or impacts) related to open water finfish farming in state waters.
- Social acceptance of aquaculture products and limitations to acceptance by issues such as view shed and pollution concerns. May include the development of information related to public health (e.g., seaweed farming in prohibited waters) and potential habitat concerns.
- Seafood culture with minimal or no impact to fish habitats.
- Risk assessment of aquaculture gear and identification of best management practices to avoid/mitigate possible endangered species interactions (to help permit agencies expedite permit processing)
- Resolution of SAV (e.g., eelgrass) and ESA issues for particular areas/states by mapping habitat/GIS tools that then opens up areas for aquaculture
- Assess area carrying capacity. Develop method for estimating carrying capacity of the environment for filtering shellfish using the most cost effective parameters, determine those parameters and develop estimates of confidence in results

### **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 RFP priorities. For proposals requiring permits or authorizations, describe the permissions needed to successfully complete the project and feasibility of obtaining permissions within the project timeline. Proposals should also indicate how results of the proposed work will be communicated to interested parties and the public. Proposals should not exceed 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. Project funds are to be provided by NOAA Award No. NA18NMF4720321. If a proposal is accepted for funding, the project will be subjected to thorough environmental review (NEPA compliance) and 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 that develop environmentally responsible marine aquaculture to create jobs in coastal communities, produce healthful local seafood, revitalize working waterfronts, and support traditional fishing communities are encouraged. Projects should include, where feasible, participation of the fishing communities, aquaculture communities, and the seafood industry. Projects that provide training for fishermen and others in coastal communities in aquaculture production methods are also encouraged. The majority of the proposed work should be conducted along the U.S. east coast region. Past awardees with proven success may submit proposals for consideration to continue their work for another year. 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 July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. A final report must be prepared at the end of all awarded projects and submitted to the Commission no later than 1 month from the conclusion of the project. A template that conforms to the NOAA Research & Development Database will be provided.

### **Submittal Instructions**

Investigators should submit an electronic version of the proposal in Word or PDF format via e-mail to Dr. Louis B. Daniel, III (ldaniel@asmfc.org) for receipt no later than **5:00 p.m. EST on Monday, April 15, 2019**. "ASMFC 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. Atlantic coast 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.

Project selection decisions will be disseminated to the P.I.s by May 20, 2019 and research is expected to begin July 1, 2019. Please note that no research may begin until funds are awarded.

## **For More Information**

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## Attachment A – Instructions for Preparing Proposals

The proposal should be an action plan of activities to be accomplished. Please use the following format when preparing your proposal. Proposals should be no more than 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 the proposal addresses and how the intended goals of the grant program will be met.
4. **Objective:** State concisely the purpose of the proposal and general methodologies to be used.
5. **Background:** A section that sets the stage for the work and identifies those RFP priorities that the proposal addresses directly;
6. **Rationale:** Explain why the work should be conducted and how it is relevant to developing U.S. Aquaculture.
7. **Location:** Describe the location of work; project maps are encouraged, where applicable.
8. **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.
9. **Milestone Schedule:** Provide a cross-referencing table summarizing, by job, activities that are to be attained each month, including semi-annual (due in January and July) and final grant reports (due 90 days following project end date).
10. **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**. The Commission has the option to limit award recipient indirect cost recovery at 15%, consistent with the indirect rate applied to the agreement between NOAA and the Commission. Applicants may request a copy of the Commission’s indirect policy if needed for application materials.