

2020 Deepwater Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project

SUPPORTING A HEALTHIER GULF OF MEXICO

Document 2 of 6:

There are several important changes to the project for 2020. Please review these materials carefully.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Project Overview

Why was the Deepwater Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project launched?

Many species of oceanic (or pelagic) fish in the Gulf of Mexico were injured during the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, including tuna, billfish and mackerel, as well as deepwater fish such as lancetfish. The goal of this project is to help restore a portion of the injuries caused by the oil spill to pelagic fish. It is funded from the early restoration funds provided by BP as part of the legal settlement for the spill.

The project was developed by federal and Gulf state natural resource Trustees, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), according to the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) and with opportunities for public review and comment. NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) are working with the pelagic longline fishery in the Gulf of Mexico, which targets species such as yellowfin tuna and swordfish, to implement this temporary (five to 10 years) restoration project. This project includes a voluntary repose — a period during which participating vessel owners will receive financial compensation to refrain from pelagic longline fishing.

To help restore the injured species, in 2016 NOAA and NFWF began working directly with regional fishing vessel owners to get their feedback before implementing this temporary restoration project that launched as a pilot in 2017 and began its first full season in 2018. Throughout the project, representatives from NFWF and NOAA have met with participants and other industry stakeholders to hear their feedback and determine adjustments and enhancements for future project years.

The project is the first one developed by the *Deepwater Horizon* Trustees to focus on working directly with fishermen to help restore fish species injured as a result of the spill. The settlement with BP allocated funding for restoration projects for fish and marine invertebrates, including the *Deepwater Horizon*



Have questions about the project?

Please contact the community liaison assigned to your region if you need assistance.

Community Liaison in Louisiana:

Coastal Community Consulting, Inc.
Phone: 504-393-0066
Email: info@ccc-nola.org

Community Liaison in the Gulf or on the Atlantic Coast:

Gary Graham
Phone: 979-292-6120
Email: glgshrimp@embarqmail.com

To view and download the materials in either English or Vietnamese, please go to www.nfwf.org/pll.

Oceanic Fish Restoration Project. The Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group (OO TIG) is the decision body that develops, selects and oversees projects being implemented with the fish and marine invertebrate funds. The OO TIG is made up of four federal Trustees and is actively developing restoration plans for resources that were injured during the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, including fish and marine invertebrates. Please go to the NOAA Gulf Spill Restoration website for more information: www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/open-ocean.

What are the benefits to participating in the project?

You can help improve the Gulf. Restoring pelagic fish that were injured by the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill will benefit the Gulf of Mexico in the short- and long-term and will help compensate for a portion of the injuries to fish caused by the spill. Reducing fish mortality will allow fish to grow and reproduce, helping support healthier populations of fish throughout the Gulf.

You can contribute to the vibrancy of the pelagic longline fishery. Pelagic longline fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico have a long history of helping to ensure their fisheries are sustainable, from utilizing new types of fishing hooks to adhering to fishing area closures. Through this project fishermen are playing a vital role in the restoration of oceanic fish species injured after the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Vessel owner feedback and participation in the project is an important step in helping to ensure healthy and robust fish populations remain for future generations of fishermen.

You can still fish. You have the option to continue to fish during the repose period using up to two of three alternative gear types provided by the project: **greenstick gear** for BAYS tunas (bigeye, albacore, yellowfin and skipjack); **buoy gear** for swordfish and

BAYS tunas¹; and, **deep drop rod and reel gear** for swordfish. (*Please see more information in the “Project Details and Eligibility Requirements” document.*)

Participants with proper permits and the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) can use a power-hauler for buoy gear. Offering you multiple gear options is intended to provide alternative harvest opportunities and help offset economic impacts of the repose. These alternative fishing gears result in lower bycatch mortality but are relatively underutilized in the Gulf of Mexico. Bycatch mortality occurs when non-target species are accidentally caught and die. This portion of the project will provide an opportunity to study and improve proficiency with new gear types. Furthermore, participants with the proper permits and who have removed their pelagic longline gear can use alternative gear to fish in areas that are closed to fishing with pelagic longline.

You will be compensated. There are two different and separate forms of compensation available to project participants: (1) **repose compensation** to offset revenue lost as a result of participating in the repose period, and (2) **alternative gear compensation** to help offset the costs of alternative gear fishing trips during the repose period. Each will have its own, uniquely determined level of compensation and payment schedule.

How long will the project run? Is it permanent?

No, it is not permanent. The project began in 2017 and NOAA and NFWF anticipate it will run for an additional three to five years. The full length of the project will depend on the level of participation to meet restoration goals. The project is temporary, voluntary and tailored to restore a portion of the fish species that were injured by the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

1 Pending application and approval of an Exempted Fishing Permit from NOAA; for more information: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/atlantic-highly-migratory-species-exempted-fishing-permits>

Background

How did this project come about?

Federal and state agencies are authorized under the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) to act as Trustees on behalf of the public, to assess injuries to natural resources and their services that result from an oil spill, and to plan for restoration to compensate the public for those injuries. Under the OPA, natural resource Trustees develop and implement plans for restoring natural resources under their trusteeship. NOAA is authorized to conduct the OPA Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) process as a federal Trustee and to carry out restoration efforts to implement the project. The project was included and evaluated in the *Deepwater Horizon* Final Phase IV Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessments, which was subject to public review and comment. In September 2015, the Trustees selected this project for implementation to help restore oceanic fish injured by the spill.

Why did the project start so long after the oil spill?

The project was developed under the *Deepwater Horizon* early restoration framework between BP and the natural resource Trustees, as part of a suite of projects for which BP agreed to provide funding before the full settlement was reached. The *Deepwater Horizon* early restoration funding approach was novel and unprecedented. It allowed projects to commence when there was an agreement between BP and the Trustees, prior to finalizing the Natural Resource Damage Assessment or reaching a settlement.

Deepwater Horizon early restoration projects commenced sooner than Trustees are normally able to start projects in most oil spills. Since the settlement was reached in 2016, the Trustees have been actively planning additional restoration activities for fish and marine invertebrates and it is expected that project planning and implementation will continue over the duration of the 15-year settlement payout period, and beyond.

What impacts did the spill have on pelagic fish?

In addition to killing fish outright, the 2010 oil spill had detrimental effects to those fish that survived the initial spill and cleanup. At various depths of Gulf of Mexico waters, scientists found toxic effects on fish, including cardiac (heart) toxicity and other developmental deformities such as a curved spine, reduced growth rates, impaired immune function, reduced swimming performance and inhibited reproduction. The *Deepwater Horizon* Oceanic Fish Restoration Project reduces fish mortality to allow fish to grow and reproduce, helping support healthier populations of fish injured by the spill throughout the Gulf.

Project Success and Enhancements

Were previous project years successful?

Yes, the project has been successful in achieving reduced bycatch compared to pelagic longline gear. For the 2017 pilot year, seven vessel owners from Louisiana participated in a four-month pelagic longline repose and fished using greenstick gear for a collective total of 280 sea-days.

In 2018 and 2019, the repose period took place from January 1 through June 30. In the 2018 project year, seven vessel owners from Louisiana and three vessel owners from Florida participated in the repose. In the 2019 project year, eight vessel owners from Louisiana and two vessel owners from Florida participated in the repose. Participants used greenstick, buoy and deep drop rod and reel gear for almost 500 sea-days in 2018, and more than 500 sea-days in 2019.

Data show clear bycatch benefits: the amount of bycatch species caught using alternative gear was minimal, and most of those that were caught were released alive.

What project enhancements have been made since 2017?

The project has regularly sought out, listened to and benefited from the expertise of pelagic longline

vessel owners. Discussions with vessel owners have shaped future adjustments and enhancements to the project, which have resulted in a clear restoration benefit for oceanic fish in the Gulf. Based on your recommendations NFWF and NOAA have:

- Expanded the types of alternative gear for use in the project;
- Established two separate regional auctions to allow for broader geographic participation;
- Adjusted the payment schedule to better meet the needs of vessel owners;
- Amended the EFP to allow the use of a power haul-back for buoy gear which increased the utility of the gear in the Gulf of Mexico.

Participation

Do I have to participate in the project?

No. The project is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, you are not required to respond to the Request for Quotation.

If I wish to participate, what level of commitment is required?

Participants from previous years must reapply to participate in the 2020 repose. Selected offerors will be provided with a one-year contract for participation in the 2020 project year. The contract will explain the terms and conditions of participation and will include a participation period from January 1 through December 31, 2020. Interested participants will have the option to renew their contract annually pending NFWF review of compliance and performance.

Will I be able to participate in future years of the project?

If you are selected to participate in 2020, you will have the opportunity to renew your contract annually pending NFWF review of compliance and performance.

If you are not selected to participate in 2020, you may have the opportunity to join in the future. Based on an annual review of participation, NFWF may offer additional opportunities each year to enter the project.

If you opt not to renew your contract, and remain eligible to participate, you may reapply to any future opportunities. However, NFWF does not guarantee that future solicitations will occur.

Project Details

If I choose to participate, can I still fish during the pelagic longline repose?

Yes, but not with pelagic longline gear. You may fish in other fisheries if you have the required permits and are in compliance with the terms of your Participant Agreement and any Exempted Fishing Permits. You may fish in other fisheries using bottom longline or any other gear associated with other active permits. (Constraints may apply, please see below.)

During the pelagic longline repose period (January 1 - June 30, 2020), participating vessels will be encouraged to use **alternative gear**² — greenstick, buoy and deep drop rod and reel gear — to harvest BAYS tunas and swordfish. No bluefin tuna may be retained with any gear at any time during the repose period. This portion of the project provides an opportunity for you to study and improve your proficiency with new gear types. You can assess the alternative gear, at no cost, and be at the forefront of developing strategies to fish using these gear types in the Gulf of Mexico.

Can I fish with bottom longline during the repose?

Yes, you can fish with bottom longline during the repose **provided you have the required permits**; however, you cannot have buoy gear on board at the same time. Removal of one of the four components that constitutes pelagic longline gear

² NFWF maintains the right to distribute gear according to availability.

(power-operated hauler, mainline, floats capable of supporting the mainline and gangions with hooks) is a requirement to participate in the project. Highly migratory species (HMS) regulations do not distinguish between the mainlines of bottom longline and pelagic longline; therefore, since bottom longline requires a power-operated hauler, mainline and gangions with hooks to operate, the only remaining option is to remove the floats capable of supporting the mainline (i.e., buoy gear).

Why can't I fish with pelagic longline in other areas beyond the Gulf of Mexico if I participate in the project?

Species injured by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill include those that are highly migratory — moving over very long distances within and outside of the Gulf of Mexico. Participants agree not to fish with pelagic longline gear during the repose inside or outside of the Gulf, because fishing for these species outside of the Gulf would reduce the benefits of the project and its goal to allow fish to grow, reproduce and contribute to the Gulf ecosystem.

Are there new fishing regulations for the pelagic longline fishery in the Gulf of Mexico because of this project?

No. The project is voluntary, temporary and tailored to restore a portion of the fish resources impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. The project does not affect existing management practices or regulations. As a voluntary project, no new regulations are being issued by NOAA or any other government agency.

Will all vessels in the pelagic longline fishery participate?

No. Participation in the repose is limited and voluntary — only a portion of the overall Gulf of Mexico pelagic longline fishing fleet (estimated around 35 active vessels) will be selected to participate in any given year. Limiting participation will help to minimize potential impacts to the shoreside economy, and it will ensure that the Gulf of Mexico pelagic longline fishery continues to produce

high quality products for both domestic and international markets.

Will fishing with the greenstick, buoy and deep drop rod and reel gear impact the quality of the fish that are caught?

Using buoy gear or deep drop rod and reel gear to catch swordfish does not result in lower quality product. The quality of yellowfin tuna caught with buoy gear in the Gulf has not yet been evaluated. While greenstick gear may yield tuna of lesser quality, the project is exploring ways to enhance product quality. Alternative gear trainings and other resources for participants are expected to help improve proficiency with new gear types.

Can I use my pelagic longline gear to harvest mahi in the South Atlantic during the repose period?

No. Pelagic longline vessels participating in the project's voluntary six-month repose agree not to fish with pelagic longline gear inside or outside of the Gulf of Mexico; many of the fish that this gear might catch outside the Gulf may be the same fish or from the same stocks that live within the Gulf. Fishing outside of the Gulf would reduce the benefits of the repose for these species since fishing mortality reduction would not occur.

Compensation

There are two different and separate forms of compensation available to project participants: (1) **repose compensation** to offset revenue lost as a result of participating in the repose period, and (2) **alternative gear compensation** to help offset the costs of alternative gear fishing trips during the repose period. Each will have its own, uniquely determined level of compensation and payment schedule. Compensation for participation in the repose will be determined through two separate auctions, one in each of two regions in the Gulf of Mexico — one in the western Gulf (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas) and one in the eastern Gulf (Florida and the Atlantic Coast).

(For more information on compensation for the repose and using alternative gear, please see the “Compensation and Auction Details” document.)

What is the 2020 auction format?

In 2020, compensation will be determined by a Pay-As-Bid reverse auction. **This means that your compensation for participation in the repose will be equal to your quote.** This is different from previous years which used a uniform price auction to determine compensation.

If I am selected in 2020, and I choose to renew, what will my compensation in future years be?

If you are selected in 2020, and you choose to renew, your compensation in future years will be based upon the quote provided in response to the 2020 Request for Quotation. NFWF may consider modest increases to repose compensation.

What if I want additional compensation for renewing the contract?

Participants are not required to renew their contracts. Participants may choose to respond with a new quotation to a future solicitation, if offered. However, NFWF does not guarantee that future solicitations will occur.

What should I consider in preparing my quotation?

Repose compensation is to offset revenue lost as a result of participating in the repose period. Vessel owners should consider general operating costs associated with participation, including but not limited to insurance premiums, in preparing their quotation.

Why are there separate regional auctions?

Holding the auction in two regions accounts for operational differences between the two areas and encourages broad geographic distribution of participants.

Eligibility

What are the eligibility criteria for participating in the project?

To be eligible to participate in the project, you must:

- Be actively fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. This means you have made at least one pelagic longline set in the Gulf of Mexico during the last two years (January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2018).
- Own a pelagic longline fishing vessel that is seaworthy and operational.
- Possess all three limited access permits necessary to engage in pelagic longline fishing in the Gulf of Mexico: (1) a directed or incidental swordfish permit, (2) a directed or incidental shark permit and (3) an Atlantic Tuna Longline category permit.
- Have sufficient Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) allocation to make a pelagic longline set in the Gulf of Mexico.

When evaluating whether a pelagic longline fishing vessel has made at least one pelagic longline set in the Gulf of Mexico in the last two years, what timeframe will be used?

To be eligible to participate in the 2020 repose, NOAA will consider any trips taken in the Gulf of Mexico between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018 where at least one pelagic longline set was made. If you are interested in the project but are unsure if you meet the eligibility criteria, please contact Gray Redding at NFWF (gray.redding@nfwf.org; 202-595-2438).

I recently obtained a new pelagic longline vessel. Am I eligible?

NFWF and NOAA will determine eligibility dependent on your fishing history and/or that of the vessel. If you are interested in the project, but are unsure if you

meet the eligibility criteria, please contact Gray Redding at NFWF (gray.redding@nfwf.org; 202-595-2438).

Can I choose to use a smaller or different vessel to fish with the alternative gear?

Yes. You may choose to use an alternative vessel to fish with greenstick, buoy or deep drop rod and reel gear in accordance with the fishing gear authorizations of your permits. If you are interested in this option, you will be responsible for applying to NOAA for an Exempted Fishing Permit to use an alternative vessel. (Please talk to your Oceanic Fish Restoration Project community liaison for more information.) NFWF is unable to receive or approve Exempted Fishing Permit applications. Vessel Monitoring Systems units will be required on an alternative vessel. If the alternative vessel is not equipped with a VMS, one will be provided by the project; service fees are the responsibility of the participant.

Do I need insurance to be eligible to submit a quotation?

No, you will not be asked to submit any proof of insurance with your quotation. If selected for the project, you will be required to provide proof of insurance at specified coverage levels prior to installation and use of alternative gear.

(See below for more information on Insurance requirements.)

Participation Requirements

What are the key requirements to participate in the project?

- By agreeing to participate in the project, you will refrain from all pelagic longline fishing during the repose period from January 1 through June 30, 2020.
- Landing of bluefin tuna on any alternative gear is not allowed by participating vessels from January 1 through June 30, 2020.

- You will be required to remove pelagic longline gear from your vessel(s) and will be subject to periodic inspection to ensure no pelagic longline trips are taken during the repose. (Please see more detail below.)
- You must keep your Vessel Monitoring System unit on at all times during the repose.
- You must familiarize yourself and comply with all applicable regulations, including the project's Participant Agreement and any NOAA HMS Exempted Fishing Permit terms.
- If you are properly permitted to fish in non-pelagic longline fisheries, you can continue fishing during the repose using those permits, provided you comply with the terms of your Participant Agreement and any NOAA HMS Exempted Fishing Permit terms.
- If you elect to participate in the alternative gear portion of the project:
 - » You must complete all logbooks and documentation in a timely manner.
 - » You must notify the NOAA Observer Program prior to departure and take observers on board during alternative gear trips when requested.
 - » Participants who use alternative gear must have the minimum insurance coverage. Then, proof of insurance must be provided prior to gear installation and use.

(Read more in the "Project Details and Eligibility Requirements" document.)

What insurance coverage do I need to participate in the project?

All participants in the project must secure adequate insurance and must provide proof of insurance upon request.

In order to participate in the alternative gear portion of the project, participants must secure a minimum amount of insurance coverage. These required

coverages include: (i) hull and machinery to cover the value of your vessel; (ii) Protection and Indemnity (including Jones Act/crew cover), with a minimum limit of \$1 million to include 100% collision liability; and (iii) Pollution coverage with a minimum limit of \$1 million. Participants will be required to provide proof of insurance prior to installation and use of gear.

Annual Renewal

In order to participate in the 2020 Oceanic Fish Restoration Project, all interested and eligible vessel owners must submit a quotation. Vessel owners selected to participate in the 2020 repose will have the option to renew their contract annually, pending NFWF review of compliance and performance.

What do I need to do to renew my participant agreement for an additional year?

If you are interested in renewing your contract, you must continue to meet eligibility requirements and maintain a satisfactory compliance and performance record. This may include but is not limited to passing vessel inspection, renewing your insurance and any exempted fishing permits, and other requirements described in the Eligibility section of this document.

What if I'm not selected for the 2020 repose? Will I get another opportunity to participate?

Please see the section on Participation for more information on participation in future years of the repose.

Can I change my alternative gear selection if I renew my contract?

No. While NFWF will provide additional terminal gear each year, we do not expect to purchase additional sets of alternative gear after 2020. Therefore, the gear you select in the 2020 Request for Quotation form is the gear you must maintain throughout your participation in the project.

I'm not sure I want to use alternative gear in 2020. Can I change my mind in the future?

We cannot guarantee that the alternative gear you want to use will be available in future years.

What if I decide I no longer want to use alternative gear after 2020?

You do not have to use the gear at any time during the repose period, but you will not receive alternative gear compensation. You remain responsible to maintain the gear in working condition throughout your participation in the project and will be expected to comply with periodic gear inspections.

Gear

Do I have to remove the mainline of my pelagic longline gear?

It depends on the alternative gear that you choose. Removal of one of the four components that constitutes pelagic longline gear (power-operated hauler, mainline, floats capable of supporting the mainline and gangions with hooks) is a requirement to participate in the project. The easiest way to accomplish this is to remove the floats. However, buoy gear includes floats that can support the mainline — so if buoy gear is on board, the only option is to remove the mainline of the longline gear. **Therefore, you DO need to remove the longline if you have buoy gear on board, but you DO NOT need to remove the mainline if you have deep drop rod and reel gear or greenstick gear on board, and you remove the floats.** You should consider costs of removal and storage of gear when planning your participation in the project.

Will I be responsible for maintaining the alternative gear?

Yes. Once the gear is transferred to you, you are responsible for keeping the gear in working condition and subject to inspection to confirm that gear is properly maintained. You are also responsible to

notify NFWF as soon as possible if gear is lost, damaged or stolen.

Will I own the alternative gear after installation?

You will hold conditional title to all equipment provided through the project, subject to federal procurement regulation (see 2 CFR 200.313). Until NFWF informs you it is appropriate to return the equipment, you are responsible for the proper use, maintenance, record and storage of it, including replacing any component of the gear or rigging that is broken or lost, or otherwise bringing the gear back to fully functioning condition. You should consider costs that may be incurred due to this requirement when planning your participation in the project.

If I select buoy gear, what options are there to help me keep track of the gear while fishing?

Under federal law, automatic identification systems (AIS) may not be used to track fishing gear and will no longer be provided under the project. Participants may use buoy gear without AIS. Past project participants have used various approaches to tracking the gear while fishing and future participants will be encouraged to experiment. NFWF may offer limited opportunities to experiment with alternative tracking options that may be expanded in the future options.

Observers/Alternative Gear

How often will observers be on board?

This project will have more onboard observer coverage than the HMS pelagic observer program: (1) to ensure compliance with the project rules, (2) to collect data on the gear and (3) to satisfy the requirement of the Exempted Fishing Permit for enhanced observer coverage on buoy gear for tuna trips.

Observers will be placed on board participating vessels to monitor catch rates for alternative gear. You must notify the NOAA Observer Program prior to departure and must take observers on board during alternative gear trips.

Who is responsible for the costs of meals for observers?

You are responsible for the costs of food and drink for observers and must ensure observers are provided living quarters and amenities comparable to crew members. You should consider these costs when planning your participation in the project. Participants will not be reimbursed for these costs.

How do I get reimbursed for other costs of participating in the project?

Alternative gear compensation is provided to help offset the costs of alternative gear fishing trips during the repose period. NFWF will cover the cost of the gear components and costs associated with installation of and training on the alternative gears. You will be responsible for maintenance of the alternative gear. You may purchase, at your own cost, other items to supplement the gear you have been provided. NFWF will not provide reimbursement for costs unless approved in writing prior to purchase.

Retaining Fish

Can I fish for bluefin tuna during the project?

No. Bluefin tuna may not be retained with any gear at any time during the repose.

What if I accidentally catch a bluefin tuna using the alternative gear?

A bluefin tuna that is caught and released alive with alternative gear is not counted against your IBQ allocation. A bluefin tuna that is dead when retrieved cannot be retained and is counted against your IBQ allocation. No bluefin, nor any part of a bluefin, can be retained on any gear type or in any condition during the repose.

Can I retain BAYS tuna with buoy gear during the project?

During the repose, if you are interested in using buoy gear to retain BAYS tuna, you must apply to NOAA for an Exempted Fishing Permit.

- The project Exempted Fishing Permit is only valid during the repose period — from January 1 through June 30. No fishing under the Exempted Fishing Permit is authorized on or after July 1, 2020.
- After the repose, participants may continue to fish using alternative gear, but they may not use buoy gear to retain BAYS tuna since the Exempted Fishing Permit expires after the repose.
- No bluefin tuna may be retained with any gear at any time during repose.

Completing a Request for Quotation Form

How do I participate in the project?

To participate in the project, you **MUST** submit the project's Request for Quotation (RFQ) form to arrive by mail to NFWF no later than October 23, 2019. Community liaisons (contact info listed on page 1) are available to assist with the forms. Completed RFQ forms must be submitted via mail directly to NFWF at:

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
c/o Gray Redding
1133 15th Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20005

The RFQ form may be delivered via U.S. Mail or by an express mail service, but you bear the sole responsibility of ensuring the package arrives to NFWF by the designated date and any risk associated with the delivery method chosen. NFWF is not responsible for mail or deliveries that are lost or misdirected.

You should review your quote carefully before submitting; incomplete, illegible or unsigned forms may be deemed ineligible for consideration. NFWF will deem the RFQ form to be "submitted" only upon receiving the fully completed form.

Quotes will be evaluated, and you should expect to be notified by early November 2019 about whether you have been selected to participate in the 2020 repose.

What information will be requested in the Request for Quotation form?

The form asks for contact information, vessel ID number and basic financial documents. In addition, you must indicate your interest in using the provided alternative fishing gear and interest in using an alternative fishing vessel. The rate of compensation for participation in the repose will be determined through a separate auction in two regions — the western Gulf of Mexico and the eastern Gulf of Mexico. You must name your price for taking part in the project by submitting a quote. *(For a detailed description of the auction, please see the "Compensation and Auction Details" document.)* Applicants should also include the expected cost of their insurance premium. If selected, participants must provide NFWF with proof of adequate insurance before the repose.

What if I own multiple vessels?

You will need to submit a separate RFQ form, including a separate quote, for each individual vessel that you propose to use as part of this project.

How will the Requests for Quotation forms be evaluated?

All received RFQ forms will be evaluated to determine eligibility. In addition to the eligibility criteria outlined above, NOAA will evaluate enforcement history. Past or outstanding violations may preclude participation in the project; however, minor violations that have been resolved are not expected to have any bearing on eligibility. All offerors will be vetted through the General Services Administration's government-wide System for Award Management Exclusions. NFWF and NOAA will evaluate all quotes

received. Quotes received from the western Gulf of Mexico auction and those received from the eastern Gulf of Mexico auction will be evaluated separately but using the same criteria. Offerors will be ranked based on the lowest cost quotes received; quotes will not be compared between regions.

What if there are two identical quotes for compensation in the same region?

If there are two identical quotes for compensation in the same region, NFWF and NOAA will give

preference to participants who have **not** participated in past project years and those who are willing to use the alternative gear. The type(s) of alternative gear you choose will not determine your prioritization or selection to participate in the project.

