



**Request for Proposals  
Oceanic Fish Restoration Project  
Independent Contractor – Communications Support**

**Requesting Organization:**

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
1133 15th Street NW, Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20005

**Contact Information:**

Erika Feller – Director, Marine and Coastal Conservation  
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**Application Deadline: January 28, 2019**

**OVERVIEW**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified independent Contractor to execute and develop periodic updates of a communications plan in support of the *Deepwater Horizon* Oceanic Fish Restoration Project (the Project). The Project is supported through a partnership between NFWF and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Project has a full communications plan to guide the initial and long-term implementation of the project. This plan is updated on at least an annual basis to reflect project changes. In addition, the selected Contractor shall lead the execution of the communications strategies indicated in the plan. The successful Offeror will be selected through a competitive process that assesses the Offeror's plan for achieving stated work items, technical qualifications, and cost considerations. The award level will be based on the NFWF's evaluation of the proposal and budget documentation.

The Contract Period of Performance is estimated to be two years, with NFWF's option to extend for up to four additional years as needed. The selected Contractors should have the willingness and ability to start immediately (within 2 weeks of offer). Travel within the Gulf is expected.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2016, the Natural Resource Trustees for the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill finalized a comprehensive restoration plan for the Gulf of Mexico that includes a settlement of up to \$8.8 billion in order to resolve claims for natural resource damages related to the spill<sup>1</sup>. Initial research and injury assessments indicated injury to various pelagic fish species as a result of the spill, and therefore the Trustees proposed the Deepwater Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project (formerly named the Pelagic Longline Bycatch Reduction Project) through the Phase IV Early Restoration process to compensate for injuries incurred by these species. The Project was one of ten projects included in the *Deepwater Horizon* Final Phase IV Early Restoration Plan

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<sup>1</sup> *Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement*. Available online: [www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-planning/gulf-plan/](http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-planning/gulf-plan/)



and Environmental Assessment<sup>2</sup> released in September 2015.

The Project aims to restore pelagic fish biomass through reductions in incidental bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico pelagic longline fishery. The pelagic longline fishery in the Gulf of Mexico primarily targets yellowfin tuna and swordfish, but incidentally catches and discards non-target species such as marlin, sharks, and bluefin tuna. This Project aims to reduce mortality associated with bycatch and regulatory discards through two integrated actions. First, the Project will establish a voluntary annual 6-month repose period to coincide with the spawning season for many important pelagic fishes. During the voluntary repose participating fishers will be compensated for refraining from all fishing activity using pelagic longline gear. Second, the Project will provide participating fishers with alternative fishing gear (greenstick, buoy gear, and deep drop gear), which can be used to harvest yellowfin tuna and swordfish during the repose period in lieu of pelagic longline gear. The first repose period under the Project was implemented in 2017, and the Project is expected to continue over the next 4-8 years.

This integrated strategy provides for direct benefits to pelagic species through the repose period, while continuing to support local economies through the use of alternative fishing gear. In addition, the Project aims to build on NFWF's investments in the Gulf of Mexico regarding the use of alternative gear types. Alternative gears, such as greenstick and buoy gear, have proven effective at reducing bycatch; however, additional testing and refinement is needed to increase the efficiency of these alternative gear types in catching target species. The Project will support continued testing and refinement of these alternative gear methods.

The selected Contractor will provide communications support for the Project in close coordination with NFWF and NOAA staff.

## **QUALIFICATIONS SOUGHT**

To assist the successful implementation of the Project, this RFP is seeking a qualified entity to serve as an independent contractor to NFWF.

- Expertise and experience developing communication strategies for conservation and environmental restoration projects. Experience with fisheries or marine related projects preferred.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to effectively communicate technical information to a wide range of audiences.
- Excellent organizational skills and attention to detail.
- Ability to work independently in a rapidly changing environment.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The selected Contractor will execute and periodically revise a full communications plan for the Project, working in close coordination with NOAA and NFWF staff. The selected Contractor shall develop and execute a timeline that facilitates the creation of key deliverables associated with Project implementation. Specific Contractor tasks will include, but may not be limited to the following.

**Task 1: Maintain and periodically update Project Communications Plan to guide both current and long-term communications strategies.**

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<sup>2</sup> Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Final Phase IV Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment. Available online: [www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/Final-Phase-IV-ERP-EA.pdf](http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/Final-Phase-IV-ERP-EA.pdf)



**Description:** Project communications are guided by a Communications Plan that guides annual and long-term communication activities for the Project. The selected Contractor will execute the plan through the generation of key deliverables as outlined in the subtasks below, and will also lead annual updates to the plan. Applicants should explain how this will be accomplished and under what timeframe within the work plan description. While additional communication channels are likely to be utilized, NFWF currently hosts a Project webpage that will serve as a key communication platform (<http://www.nfwf.org/pl/Pages/home.aspx>).

**Deliverable:** Annual update to the Project communication plan.

**Timeline:** Annual – First quarter of calendar year.

***Subtask 1: Establish a steering committee to provide guidance and input throughout the creation and execution of the communication plan.***

**Description:** The selected Contractor shall establish and coordinate a steering committee to provide regular guidance and feedback during the review of the communications plan. The steering committee shall consist of NFWF and NOAA staff and shall meet on a regular basis throughout the contract period. The selected contractor will be responsible for organizing the steering committee meetings, which are expected to take place via teleconference on a monthly (or as needed) basis.

**Deliverable:** Establish and coordinate a steering committee.

**Timeline:** Established within the first 2 weeks of the contract period and maintained throughout the project period.

***Subtask 2: Outline all target audiences and identify appropriate messaging strategies for each.***

**Description:** Through initial research, meetings with NFWF and NOAA staff, and conversations with interested stakeholders, the selected Contractor will develop a deep understanding of the different audiences affected by and/or interested in the Project. It is anticipated that various stakeholders will have diverse interests in this program. As such, it is critical that the selected Contractor fully understand the unique interests of each target audience and how best to communicate with each.

**Deliverable:** Create matrix that clearly outlines each target audience, the most appropriate messaging for each audience, under what timeframe, and using which media.

**Timeline:** Within first month of contract period.

***Subtask 3: Generate targeted educational communications materials for eligible fishery participants in the Gulf of Mexico.***

**Description:** As the Project is voluntary, interested fishers must apply to participate in the program. Therefore, the pelagic longline fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico must be informed of the Project so they may determine their interest in participating. The Project will be supported by third-party community liaison contractors that will assist in outreach and direct communication to the fishing industry. In addition, a third-party contractor is also assisting with the development of an economic model that will inform fisher compensation rates. The selected Contractor will be expected to work closely with both NOAA and NFWF staff in addition to other third-party contractors when generating communications materials.

**Deliverable:** Develop an effective messaging strategy to inform potential industry participants, with consideration to language and cultural sensitivities within the Vietnamese-American fishing community. The selected Contractor will generate both print and web-based outreach materials.



**Timeline:** These materials shall be available no later than the start of the open application period, anticipated September of each year.

**Subtask 4: Generate broad educational communications materials tailored to each target audience identified under Subtask 2.**

**Description:** In addition to eligible and participating fishers in the Gulf of Mexico, numerous other stakeholders must be informed of the Project. Based on the matrix developed under Subtask 1, the selected Contractor will generate communications materials to ensure all interested stakeholders remain informed.

**Deliverable:** Develop an effective messaging strategy, tailored to specific audiences as needed. Generate both print and web-based communications materials.

**Timeline:** Materials shall be generated and rolled out based on the timeline developed under Subtask 2.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Address each item in the “Application Criteria” below.
2. Proposals must be submitted electronically as an email attachment to Erika Feller ([erika.feller@nfwf.org](mailto:erika.feller@nfwf.org)), using the following subject line with submission: *Response to RFP for Oceanic Fish Restoration Project Communications Support – [name of respondent]*.
3. The submission should include a narrative statement that addresses each of the application criteria listed below and a budget. Narrative statements must be provided in Word format or searchable.
4. The offer must contain a budget that represents the estimated all-inclusive costs associated with completing the tasks this RFP. The budget must be submitted in Excel format as a separate component of the application package using the budget template provided ([Budget Template](#)). Please include a total cost estimate along with a brief budget narrative to explain anticipated project time and costs. The budget should not exceed a 24-month period of performance and should outline estimates of percent time needed to complete tasks.
5. Offers must be e-mailed no later than 11:59 PM EDT on **January 28, 2019**
6. All questions should be submitted via email to Erika Feller ([Erika.Feller@nfwf.org](mailto:Erika.Feller@nfwf.org)), using the following subject line with submission: *Questions regarding RFP for Oceanic Fish Restoration Project Communications Support*. NFWF will respond to all Offerors at the same time and with the same answers. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be received by NFWF no later than 11:59 PM EDT on **December 14, 2018**.

## APPLICATION CRITERIA

Offerors must prepare a proposal that will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Please organize the proposal based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** A statement of not more than one paragraph demonstrating an understanding of the activities described.
2. **Technical approach.** Provide a description of no more than six (6) pages of a proposed technical approach for conducting the Scope of Work described above. The description should demonstrate a



familiarity and proficiency in using the various research methods and designs determined to be appropriate for conducting the investigation. The statement must contain an estimated timeline to perform each task.

3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** Resumes and/or Vitae of the principal investigator(s) describing relevant professional experience in the following areas, if applicable: (a) communications and/or public relations, (b) technical expertise in content development and graphic design, (c) communications of environmental conservation programs, (d) any experience working with the fishing industry, and (e) experience working with audiences from diverse cultures who may have limited or no proficiency in English.
4. **Record of Past Performance/References.** The proposals should identify at least three past engagements conducting similar work for NFWF or other organizations, identifying the Offeror's quality of work, timeliness, and cost control (hyperlinks to example products are encouraged but attachments should be used sparingly). The Statement should include names, postal and email addresses, and telephone numbers of points of contact for the referenced engagements. If the Offeror anticipates retaining sub-contractors for this task, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well.
5. **Corporate Capacity.** The Offeror shall provide proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements or balance sheets.

#### **SELECTION PROCEDURE**

A panel of NFWF and NOAA staff will review proposals submitted in response to the RFP. The panel will assess each proposal according to the project description and evaluation criteria provided in this RFP. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets prior to final approval of the award. More than one contractor may be selected to carry out the tasks identified in this SCOPE OF WORK. Specific funding amounts will be negotiated with the Foundation and additional funding will be considered annually based upon the expressed needs of the programs. If multiple institutions are involved, they should be handled through subcontracts.

#### **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Eligible offerors are institutions of higher education, nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, and local, state, and Indian tribal governments. Qualified, small, minority and women-owned businesses are strongly encouraged to apply.

#### **TIMELINE**

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| • Proposals Due:                           | January 28, 2019   |
| • Deadline to Submit Questions:            | December 14, 2018  |
| • Responses to Questions Posted:           | December 21, 2018  |
| • Interviews of Selected Finalists         | February 4-6, 2019 |
| • Tentative NFWF Notification to Offerors: | March 1, 2019      |

#### **SPECIAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

1. **Conflicts of Interest**

By submitting a Statement of Quotation in response to this solicitation, the offeror warrants and represents that it does not currently have any apparent or actual conflict of interest, as described



herein. In the event an offeror currently has, will have during the life of the contemplated contract, or becomes aware of an apparent or actual conflict of interest, in the event an award is made, the offeror must notify NFWF in writing in the Statement of Quotation, or in subsequent correspondence (if the issue becomes known after the submission of the Statement of Quotation) of such apparent or actual conflicts of interest, including organizational conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the contractor, the contractor's employees, or the contractor's subcontractors in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests, or otherwise. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the offeror, the offeror's employees, or the offeror's future subcontractors in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the NFWF Contracting Officer will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the offeror to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies NFWF may result in the proposal not being selected for award.

**2. Additional Responsibility Matters**

By submitting a Statement of Qualifications in response to this solicitation, the offeror warrants and represents that it is eligible for award of a contract resulting from this solicitation and that it is not subject to any of the below circumstances:

Has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Was convicted (or had an officer or agent of such corporation acting on behalf of the corporation convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal or State law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Is listed on the General Services Administration's, government-wide System for Award Management Exclusions (SAM Exclusions), in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 C.F.R Part 180 that implement E.O.s 12549 (3 C.F.R., 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 C.F.R., 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension," or intends to enter into any subaward, contract or other contract using funds provided by NFWF with any party listed on the SAM Exclusions in accordance with Executive Orders 12549 and 12689. The SAM Exclusions can be found at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.