



Request for Proposals

Developing a Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Plan for In-water Sea Turtle Data Collection

Independent Contractor – Regional Coordination for Plan Development

Requesting Organization:

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

Contact Information:

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Application Deadline: April 7, 2021 11:59PM EDT

PURPOSE

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified independent contractor to support the *Developing a Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Plan for In-Water Sea Turtle Data Collection* project (Project). The Project is supported through a partnership between NFWF and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Deepwater Horizon (DWH) restoration effort, as detailed in the 2016 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PDARP/PEIS)¹, works to make the environment and the public whole for injuries resulting from the DWH oil spill. The Trustees accomplish this by implementing restoration actions that return injured natural resources and services to baseline conditions and compensate for interim losses, in accordance with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) and associated natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) regulations. The PDARP/PEIS describes the process by which seven Trustee Implementation Groups (TIGs) will plan, implement, monitor, adaptively manage, and administer Deepwater Horizon restoration efforts.

In 2019, the Open Ocean TIG finalized a restoration plan that included the project entitled “Developing a Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Plan for In-Water Sea Turtle Data Collection.” The goal of this Project is to develop a statistically sound plan for the establishment of a coordinated Gulf-wide network for collection and compilation of critical abundance, demographic, and biological information on sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). Gulf-wide monitoring of sea turtles and the implementation of standardized monitoring protocols would provide important context for project-level monitoring at individual sites where restoration is implemented and would assist with comparisons across multiple projects.

¹ *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/

This Project will identify and prioritize scientifically and statistically appropriate data collection strategies to collect needed vital rate data to assess abundance and demographic data in the GOM, to allow a more comprehensive evaluation of the status and trends of sea turtle populations as part of restoration.

This Project's tasks will be guided by a project steering committee, which has already been established, and NOAA project managers. The steering committee is composed of six subject matter experts, from NOAA, Department of Interior (DOI), and private entities. The Project tasks are described below and will involve convening additional subject matter experts (5-10 people) to form a working group or small working groups to solicit input on the topic. The steering committee and working group(s) are expected to participate in multiple teleconferences and at least one in-person workshop (in-water data collection workshop), if deemed safe given the current COVID-19 Pandemic. NFWF and NOAA will approve changes to the anticipated input solicitation process, and may approve more than one in-person workshop, or may approve other meeting options (i.e. small group teleconferences, one-on-one discussions, etc), based on travel restrictions and funding availability. Input will then be compiled into a Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Plan for In-Water Sea Turtle Data Collection.

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 NFWF's evaluation of the proposal and budget documentation.

The Contract Period of Performance is estimated for 1.5 years. The selected Contractor should have the willingness and ability to start immediately (within 2 weeks of offer) and travel within the Gulf of Mexico when appropriate and safe to do so.

SCOPE OF WORK

The selected contractor will work at the direction of the NFWF and NOAA project management team throughout the period of performance to coordinate the intersection between the project management team, the working group and key stakeholders, including scientists, managers and other potential data providers/users to develop the monitoring plan. Offerors should describe their knowledge and experience that qualify them to perform the tasks identified. The level of effort required will vary by year and within a given year. A 'not to exceed cost' will be negotiated upon award.

Task 1: Facilitate Steering Committee and Working Group(s)

The selected contractor will facilitate and schedule meetings for the established project steering committee as needed, based on project tasks. As mentioned above, the steering committee is composed of six subject matter experts, and is charged with providing direction, oversight, and technical input on the progression of the project and development of the comprehensive plan. The selected contractor will work with the steering committee and NOAA project managers to identify and solicit participation from additional subject matter experts to serve on working group(s).

The selected contractor will facilitate and schedule meetings for the project technical working group(s). This may be one large working group or several small working groups, depending on the project needs. Once established, the technical working group(s) will include appropriate technical experts, plus the steering committee members, and will cover topics necessary for the development of the comprehensive plan. The

contractor will work with the steering committee to determine topics for discussion and input with the larger group.

Task 2: Development for Criteria/Parameters for a Comprehensive In-water Monitoring Plan

The selected contractor will work with the project steering committee to finalize the parameters of the end product for this project, The Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Plan for In-Water Sea Turtle Data Collection (Comprehensive Plan). The contractor will work with the steering committee to discuss and suggest the most efficient, cost-effective, and safe methods for soliciting input and discussion from the working group(s). This could include a single in-person “In-Water Data Collection Workshop(s)”, but may also include small group teleconferences, one-on-one calls, a series of small in-person meetings. The contractor will guide the process for laying out the necessary components of the monitoring plan and an initial gap analysis that will identify where the most time and expertise will be required to achieve a viable strategy.

Task 2 Deliverable: Criteria and parameters for the Comprehensive Plan, informed by the steering committee and any working group(s) formed. This may serve as the outline for Task 4 and may require literature reviews or other background research to inform the outline and Comprehensive Plan.

Task 3: Preparations and Logistics for In-water Monitoring and Data Collection Workshop

The contractor will work with the steering committee to synthesize known information and identify viable solutions to gaps for discussion and prepare workshop materials for participants to review. This will include reviewing existing in-water research projects and protocols, work already completed by the steering committee and opportunities partnerships and coordination. It is anticipated that the contractor may need to coordinate/plan and facilitate planning meeting(s) prior to the in-water data collection workshop(s) (in-person if safe to do so) and/or virtual workshops, to make the workshop(s) as efficient as possible and result in the desired product. The goal of the workshop(s) will be to gather working group participants and discuss/develop the contents for the Comprehensive Plan. The Contractor will work with the steering committee to identify an appropriate venue, secure meeting logistics and oversee the travel needs of participants, working with NFWF for reimbursement where needed. Alternatively, this may be a virtual workshop.

Task 3 Deliverable: Successful preparation of in-person and/or virtual workshops/meetings. The contractor will prepare and distribute meeting materials with enough time for advance review by participants. The contractor will work with NFWF, the steering committee and NOAA project managers to identify location and timing.

Task 4: Execution of the In-Water Data Monitoring and Collection Workshop(s)

The contractor will be responsible for most of the planning and facilitation for the in-person and/or virtual workshops, as described above. The workshop(s) will be targeted for calendar year 2021, but timing is flexible based on participant availability and any applicable domestic travel restrictions due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. The contractor will facilitate communication with steering committee and working group participants throughout the project duration.

Task 4 Deliverable: Successful completion of in person and/or virtual workshops/meetings. The contractor will synthesize the notes from all meetings to be incorporated into and guide the Comprehensive Plan.

Task 5: Development of the Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Plan for In-Water Sea Turtle Data Collection

(Comprehensive Plan) and Outreach Materials:

The contractor will draft the Comprehensive Plan for In-Water Sea Turtle Data Collection after input is collected during the workshop(s). The contractor will work with the steering committee to determine the appropriate format for the Comprehensive Plan. The contractor will circulate the draft Comprehensive Plan for review, compile edits, complete re-writes, and finalize the Comprehensive Plan. Once the Final Comprehensive Plan has been finalized and approved by the project steering committee, the contractor will work with the project steering committee to develop an outreach plan for circulating the document to sea turtle researchers and other stakeholders in the Gulf. This may include development of outreach documents.

Task 5 Deliverable: The contractor will incorporate feedback from all meetings of workgroup(s) and the steering committee into the final Comprehensive Plan that will be reviewed and approved as described above. The final document should be provided in Word and PDF formats and must be 508 compliant and web accessible to be shared via Trustee Website. The contractor may also be asked to produce a short outreach document in plain language describing the Comprehensive Plan to the public (i.e. 1-2 page summary or fact sheet).

Approximate Project Timeline:

Throughout Project Duration: Task 1

Months 1-6: Tasks 2 and 3

Months 6-12: Tasks 3 and 4

Months 12-18: Task 5

QUALIFICATIONS SOUGHT

The successful offeror should possess the following desired qualifications:

Significant years of experience in marine science, ecology, environmental studies or related field and Bachelor's Degree in associated discipline.

Experience in working with aquatic resource scientists/managers; preference for experience with sea turtles and Gulf of Mexico representatives of these communities.

Knowledge of in-water data collection methods and protocols for sea turtles or other marine species; in-water monitoring fieldwork experience preferred.

Working knowledge of U.S. marine environmental policy frameworks, and especially those relevant to sea turtle protection; preference for working knowledge of Gulf of Mexico marine environmental protection issues and key stakeholders.

Experience building consensus and managing conflict among diverse partners.

Experience with group facilitation, workplan development and project logistics management.

Excellent written and oral communication skills.

Ability to work independently in a rapidly changing environment.

Excellent organizational skills and attention to detail.

Computer proficiency, including databases, spreadsheets, and word processing.

Proficiency in English.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Offerors' proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Each item listed below should be addressed in the proposal narrative (see Submission Requirements).

- 1. Aquatic Conservation.** The Offeror should detail experience working with communities listed in the tasks above that intersect with the field of aquatic resource conservation, particularly where they apply to those in the Gulf of Mexico. Specifically, the Offeror shall indicate which relevant communities in the region they have worked with directly and in what capacity. Please also describe any previous experience working with sea turtle managers, marine scientists, relevant industries, and other interested stakeholders in the Gulf. Weight: 25 points
- 2. Technical, administrative, and logistical support.** As appropriate to the tasks identified, the Offeror should describe experience providing technical and/or administrative support to coordinating similar communities toward the development of similar products, including meeting facilitation. The Offeror should clearly explain in what capacity they have conducted prior work in the relevant tasks and provide examples of the types of services provided (e.g., meeting facilitation and technical papers etc.). Weight: 25 points
- 3. Communications experience.** Detail any relevant experience engaging scientists, developing planning documents, generating written materials, and/or coordinating or supporting working group. Weight: 25 points
- 4. Budget.** The offer must contain a budget that represents the estimated all-inclusive costs associated with completing the tasks this RFP. In the proposal narrative, please include a total cost estimate along with a brief budget narrative to explain anticipated project time and costs. In addition, complete the separate Excel budget template ([Budget Template](#)) as described in the Submission Requirements. Weight: 25 points

ELIGIBLE OFFERORS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, and local, state and Indian tribal governments.

By submitting a proposal 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 Proposal, or in subsequent correspondence (if the issue becomes known after the submission of the Proposal) 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.

By submitting a proposal 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 Contract 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 instructions can be found here:

https://www.fws.gov/northeast/refuges/agreements/Documents/SAM_Exclusions_how_do_i_search_exclusions.pdf

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in three distinctly labeled and separate documents: 1) Technical Proposal, 2) Budget, and 3) Evidence of Financial Stability. Interested parties should submit proposals electronically to NFWF (Margette.Bourne@nfwf.org) using the requirements below:

1. Technical Proposal

- Format: Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF with a font size no smaller than 11 pt.
- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, DUNS number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Narrative: Concise (5-page limit) description of the work plan and a summary of the applicant's expertise and experience. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered.
- Biographies: Resumes and/or Vitae of key staff and their role in the proposed work area.

- References: List two clients who have received services from the applicant that is similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.
2. **Budget:** The budget proposal must be submitted using the NFWF budget template.
 3. **Evidence of Financial Stability:** The applicant shall provide with the RFP response, proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements, credit ratings, a line of credit, or other financial arrangements sufficient to demonstrate the applicant’s capability to meet the requirements of this RFP.

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 NFWF 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.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

March 26, 2021	<p>Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF.</p> <p>Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Margette.Bourne@nfwf.org. NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all offerors have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be received by NFWF no later than 5:00 PM on March 26, 2021.</p>
March 30, 2021	<p>NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website at provide website.</p>
April 7, 2021	<p>Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals.</p> <p>Proposals must be received electronically as an email attachment to Margette.Bourne@nfwf.org by April 7, 2021.</p> <p>Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.</p>
April 28, 2021	<p>Contract award to selected Offeror</p>
July 30, 2022	<p>Deliverables Due</p>