



Request for Proposals

Independent Contractor – Data Specialist for the Communications Networks and Mapping Tools to Reduce Bycatch Project

Release Date: 2 August 2023 | Proposal Deadline: 22 August 2023

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified independent Contractor to provide spatial data analysis and visualization support to the Communications Networks and Mapping Tools to Reduce Bycatch project (Hotspots Project). The Hotspots Project is supported through a partnership between NFWF and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The project aims to engage fishermen and fisheries in evaluating the feasibility of and developing plans for voluntary bycatch reduction efforts through communication and mapping of fisheries bycatch in and around the Gulf of Mexico. Further information on the project can be found on NFWF's webpage:

<https://www.nfwf.org/programs/bycatch-hotspots-initiative>.

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 contract level will be based on NFWF's evaluation of the proposal and budget documentation submitted by the Offeror.

The Contract Period of Performance is estimated to be 12 months (1 year). Based on project need and a review of performance, NFWF may extend the period of performance for an additional 12 months or more. The selected Offeror should be based in the Gulf of Mexico or have the ability to travel regularly to the Gulf of Mexico as circumstances allow. Travel within the Gulf is also expected. The Offeror should have the willingness and ability to start in approximately September 2023.

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 spill¹.

The Communications Networks and Mapping Tools to Reduce Bycatch – Phase 1 Project (Project) is one of 18 projects included in the *Deepwater Horizon* Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group Restoration Plan 2, released in December 2019², to partially compensate for injuries to fish, sea turtles, marine mammals, and mesophotic and deep benthic communities.

The overall goal of the Project is to reduce bycatch and mortality of injured species by the identification of bycatch hotspots and development of tools and analyses to help commercial fishermen, recreational for-

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/

² *Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group Final Restoration Plan 2/Environmental Assessment: Fish, Sea Turtles, Marine Mammals, and Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities*. Available online: <https://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/2019/12/226-million-projects-approved-second-open-ocean-restoration-plan>

hire fishermen, and private anglers avoid these hotspots during fishing. The current objective of the Project is to determine the feasibility of and develop implementation plans for voluntary systems to reduce bycatch mortality of fish species injured by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill – with particular focus on fisheries, fishing communities, or fishing fleets (referred to through the rest of the document simply as “fisheries”) that take place in and around the Gulf of Mexico. This will involve engaging an array of priority fisheries to develop implementation plans for systems and approaches to create near-real time or predictive maps of bycatch hotspots in those fisheries. These plans would not be implemented in this project, but future implementation may be possible. In an implemented system, these maps of bycatch hotspots would be coupled with communication tools that gather catch and bycatch information from fishermen and provide information to fishermen on the high bycatch risk in those areas. These systems may take advantage of emerging or existing advanced technologies and tools.

The Data Specialist will assist the project by identifying, inventorying, and obtaining (where possible) available data sets related to select Gulf of Mexico fisheries; identifying critical data gaps; developing draft mapping products based on real world data; and conceptualizing the data flows needed for network implementation. These elements will support an ongoing effort through this project to engage fishermen and develop implementation plans for future networks. These implementation plans will be developed through conversations with a variety of fisheries stakeholders to understand data elements, incentives, and guidelines or organizational structure needed to drive voluntary participation and realize bycatch benefits. Data Specialist deliverables, such as spatial visualizations and data flow diagrams, will be used in those conversations to help fishermen better understand hotspot communication network requirements and benefits, as well as possible tools and products supporting or arising from these networks. Deliverables from this role may be incorporated into implementation plans.

SCOPE OF WORK

The following tasks constitute the scope of work for this Request for Quotations. NFWF seeks a qualified contractor who can carry out these tasks. The contractor should anticipate regular (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly) calls with NFWF throughout the project to discuss progress, obtain information from NFWF staff, overcome challenges, and develop a strategy for future efforts. Please provide time and cost quotes for each task using the [Contractor Budget Template](#) provided. It is estimated that the level of effort will entail an average of approximately 10 to 15 hours per week, but this may differ based on the proposed approach. A not to exceed cost will be negotiated upon award with the selected Contractor.

Tasks:

Task 1: Gather and catalogue fishery and environmental data from public sources necessary to inform draft hotspot maps.

- Identify, incorporate, and where necessary request and gain access to data sets necessary to create realistic spatial data products that allow the association of fisheries catch and bycatch to various biotic and abiotic environmental factors. The Project is working with multiple fisheries (anticipate approximately five groups) and anticipates that given the unique characteristics of these fisheries, data needs may differ across the five groups. The contractor should also identify data gaps that, if addressed, could improve the function of these networks.
- **Deliverable:** Inventory of publicly available data that may benefit or will be needed for hotspot mapping and communication networks across various fisheries and at various complexities.

- **Timeline:** Work on this task will commence at contract kickoff and be concentrated at the start of the effort.

Task 2: Develop and share draft or example bycatch hotspot maps for project fisheries to demonstrate the possible products for stakeholders.

- Develop and present draft bycatch hotspot maps relevant to up to five participating fisheries. This would include developing visualizations of data that can help fishermen across these five fisheries understand how final products could inform their fishing decision making. These products would make use of data gathered in Task 1. This task would involve developing real world examples to communicate the idea of what an operational system could produce, but this task would not develop operational systems. These drafts could be based on static data and use dummy variables where necessary. Draft products will be presented to fisheries stakeholder groups at meetings. NFWF anticipates that the Data Specialist can present and receive feedback on these drafts remotely.
 - o The process of presenting will also include receiving feedback from fishery stakeholders, and either incorporating that feedback into revised/iterative products, or documenting how it would be incorporated into an operational network/product to help inform timely decision making to avoid bycatch.
- **Deliverable:** Example Hotspots Analysis products, such as maps, that help a variety of audiences including fishermen and managers understand how hotspot tools could function and inform fishing decisions. Unique products may need to be developed for up to five fisheries, using publicly available data.
- **Timeline:** Work on this task will coincide with stakeholder meetings and likely to be necessary at some level throughout the period of performance.

Task 3: Develop conceptual diagrams of hotspot mapping and communication network systems.

- Develop conceptual diagrams of data flows, needs, and outputs for these networks that include timely environmental data and information on catch and bycatch provided by voluntary fishery participants. These diagrams would include an assessment of what technology is most feasible for fishermen in the various participating fisheries to both send timely information on catch/bycatch and receive near real time hotspot mapping products.
- **Deliverable:** Visualizations or conceptual diagrams of data flows that demonstrate to fishermen and other stakeholders how operational hotspot mapping and communication network systems could work, including entities and data flows.
- **Timeline:** Work on this task will be concurrent with Task 2.

Overall deliverable: For elements which require coding, contractors should expect to deliver reproduceable code at the completion of the contract.

REQUIRED EXPERTISE AND PROPOSED STAFF

- Required expertise of the Contractor or their team includes demonstrated advanced skills in spatial data analysis (e.g., ArcGIS, R); in data visualization (e.g., RShiny, D3); and in working with large data sets.

- Ability to effectively communicate technical information to a wide range of audiences using both excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to work independently in a rapidly changing environment.
- Preferred expertise includes data discovery, systems analysis, and social science research methods, including survey techniques.
- Prior experience working with fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico including the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species fishery is preferred, but not required.

CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Offerors should organize their Proposal Narrative based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** The Scope of Work must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved. This section should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and program stakeholders and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach for conducting the above-listed tasks should clearly describe the proposed methods necessary to conduct the project. The section must demonstrate that those methods are robust and appropriate for conducting the project and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty associated with carrying out the work. Weight: 20%
3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** This section should clearly describe which tasks each member of the team will conduct and how their training and experience provide the requisite experience to do so successfully. Weight: 25%
4. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience in fisheries or environmental data analysis and data visualization. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered. If subcontractors are to be used, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well. Describe how that past performance is applicable to this evaluation. Weight: 20%
5. **Budget.** The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. You must use the attached Contractor Budget Template. You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed, but should not make any other changes. If applicable, please include the proposed budget for equipment purchase in the proposal separate from the Contractor Budget Template. Weight: 25%



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 (Gray.Redding@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, UEI number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Narrative: Concise (8-page limit) description of the work plan and a summary of the applicant's expertise and experience, organized by the Criteria for Competitive Applications.
- 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 **Hourly Rate Tab** of the following NFWF [budget template](#).

3. **Evidence of Financial Stability:** The applicant shall provide 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 solicitation.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

A panel of NFWF staff and partners will review the proposals. Offerors may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Only one award will be made for this project. If multiple institutions are involved, they should be handled through subcontracts.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

August 8, 2023

Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Gray Redding (Gray.Redding@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 sent to NFWF **no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Time Zone on August 8, 2023.**

August 11, 2023

NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website at <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/bycatch-hotspots-initiative>.

August 22, 2023

Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to Gray Redding (Gray.Redding@nfwf.org) by **5:00 PM Eastern Time Zone, August 22, 2023.**



Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.

September

Tentative Contract award to selected Offeror

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. Small and minority businesses, and women's business enterprises are strongly encouraged to apply.

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.sam.gov/SAM/>