

Request for Proposals

Program Review of the National Marine Fisheries
Northeast Fisheries Science Center Fisheries Sampling Branch



Actual issue date: July 28, 2014

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: September 8, 2014

SECTION 1: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) TIMELINE

Program Review of the National Marine Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center Fisheries Sampling Branch

July 28, 2014	Request for Proposal (RFP) issued and distributed.
August 11, 2014	Deadline for written questions regarding this RFP. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please email questions to contracting@psmfc.org
August 18, 2014	Responses to written questions available on PSMFC RFP page. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses to all questions will be provided to all participating parties.
September 8, 2014	Proposal submission deadline. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only e-mailed proposals will be accepted. Submit proposals to: contracting@psmfc.org• Faxed and hard copy proposals will not be accepted.
September 8-16, 2014	Proposal Review.
September 16, 2014	Project Finalists Selected.

Program Review of the National Marine Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center Fisheries Sampling Branch

Terms of Reference

Background

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB) collects, maintains, and distributes data for scientific and management purposes in the Northwest Atlantic. FSB manages three separate but related observer programs: the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP), the At Sea Monitoring (ASM) Program, and the Industry Funded Scallop (IFS) Program. Although each program is tailored to meet specific monitoring objectives, all programs operate within and are governed by the same laws, and are subject to the same standards in regards to data quality and confidentiality, safety, and harassment. In 2012, FSB observers deployed on 840 vessels from 125 ports in 12 states.

Table 1. FSB observed sea days, groundfish years (GFY) 2010-2012 (groundfish year begins May 1)

Program	GFY 2010	GFY 2011	GFY 2012
NEFOP	6,038	3,621	4,164
IFS	2,467	3,179	3,072
ASM	6,401	6,916	4,844

History and Structure

NMFS is required to collect scientific, management, regulatory compliance, and economic data for fisheries by placing observers aboard U.S. domestic fishing vessels. These data are needed for the management of fisheries occurring in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the high seas beyond the EEZ. Observers are the only independent data source for some types of at-sea monitoring such as bycatch composition and mortality, and protected species interactions.

These data are the foundation of scientific advice, which provides information to management to support decision-making. Observer programs provide unique opportunities to collect scientific data on gear performance, assist in the monitoring of new or experimental fisheries, and provide economic information on revenue and costs.

Starting in 1989, the domestic fisheries observer program was created to monitor foreign fleets fishing within US waters. In the 1990's, under the name of the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) observers spent most of their effort monitoring incidental takes of marine mammals and sea turtles. In 2001, the focus shifted to documentation of bycatch and discards of critical species for management plans and stock assessments. Since then, sea days and coverage

rates have increased to monitor new fisheries, areas, and specialized gears. The program has since diversified to include cost-sharing observer programs with industry, and research and development to apply electronic (video) monitoring in the region.

Priorities for NEFOP are determined by national (endangered or protected species), local (Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Councils) and scientific (stock assessment) needs. NEFOP monitors multiple fisheries, such as the Northeast multispecies, Atlantic herring, Atlantic longfin squid, shrimp, lobster traps, etc. NEFOP observers collect economic information, detailed gear configuration, kept and discard catch weights, biological samples (lengths, age structures, sex), and sightings and interactions with protected species (photographs, measurements, and biological samples, when possible).

In May 2010, the At Sea Monitoring Program (ASM) was created with the implementation of groundfish sector management (Amendment 16 to the Northeast Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan). The new program is a vital component to monitoring sector Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) utilization.

On ASM trips, observers focus most of their effort on collecting accurate weights of managed groundfish species, especially discards, and less time on gear characteristics and biological sampling. Trips are limited to three gear types (gillnet, bottom trawl, and bottom longline), and are concentrated in the Northeast states (Maine to Connecticut).

All FSB observers are contractors working for an observer provider company. Currently four companies have contracts or approval to provide observers in the northeast, with a total of certified observers.

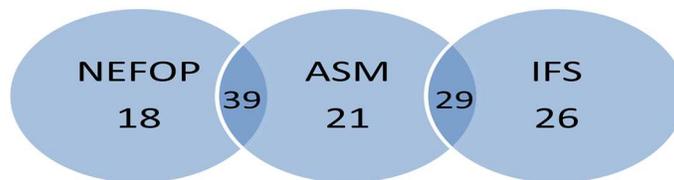


Figure 1. Number of observers by certification type, as of June 2013.

In addition to observers, FSB employs 16 full time federal staff (FTEs) and 43 contractors. Fifteen data editors (called debriefers in other regions) are each assigned a cadre of 7-15 observers and are responsible for the initial data quality review and processing. Each editor receives an average of 1-2 new trips per day. Three data entry staff transcribe all information from paper logs into a computer program. Three auditors conduct computer audits and tests on the entered data and make any necessary changes before loading the trips to the master database, where they are available to end users. More information about the program is available at:

<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/fsb/program.html>



Northeast Fisheries Observer Program 1989 - 2011

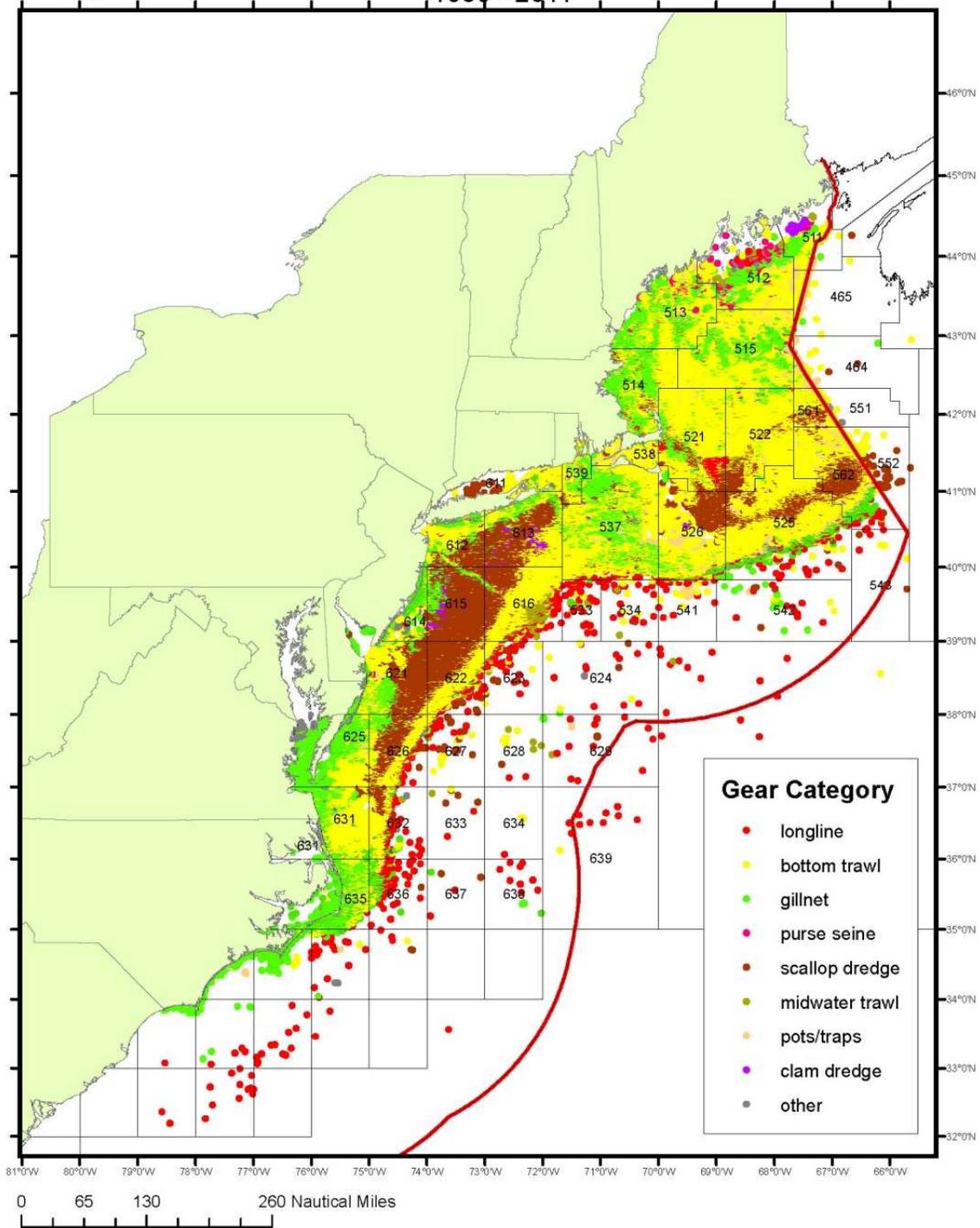


Figure 2. Locations of observed hauls, 1989-2011

Aim and Objectives of the Review

The aim of the review is to assess the progress, performance, achievements and lessons learned to date, and to recommend any changes in organizational structure and internal and external processes to improve future operational efficiency, quality and impact.

The overall purpose of this review is threefold:

- *Learning and improvement as a building block for future management of the program: It is intended that the outcomes of this review will provide useful and relevant information to the on-going work; explore why implemented actions and interventions have been successful, or not and to provide guidance on how to better implement new work;*
- *Accountability: The review is also an accountability instrument for the Center. Consequently, it will be used to assess whether or not the program has been, is, or will be, fulfilled and also determine the extent to which the program's resources have been used in a responsible and effective manner.*
- *Sustainability: The outcomes of the review should assist the Center in assessing the sustainability (or otherwise) of the activities, approaches, and structures initiated or supported by the program, and crucially, should also provide recommendations for the future.*

The specific objectives of the review are as follows:

- *Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of program, including assessing the organizational structure (within the Branch, Center, and Region), partnerships, risk management, and program implementation;*
- *Determine the extent to which the project and its associated actions are relevant to the existing and likely future needs of its stakeholders and the environment/s in which it is being implemented;*
- *Evaluate the outputs, and any outcomes of the program already delivered, and determine and assess their contribution to delivery of the overall program's aims and objectives;*
- *Identify key 'lessons learned' to date, particularly with regard to strategic processes and the mechanisms chosen to achieve the program's objectives to date, and;*
- *Make clear, specific and implementable recommendations to improve the program in the upcoming year, e.g., through organizational change or adjustments to internal and external processes; and provide guidance on the scope of future work.*

Scope of the review

Within this framework, specific issues (and questions) to be assessed will include, but not be limited to, the following:

Effectiveness

- i. Are the activities implemented in accordance with the program's mandates? If not, why?
- ii. What outputs have been achieved? To what extent do they contribute to the objectives?
- iii. How effective are the approaches and structures in delivering the desired outputs?
- iv. How can they be improved?
- v. Do the partner organizations work together effectively? Are the partnership structures and the geographical focus effective in achieving the desired outputs? How can the partnerships be improved?

Efficiency

- i. Are the available technical and financial resources adequate to fulfill the program's tasking?
- ii. Are the funds being spent in accordance with program's tasking and using the right procedures?
- iii. Have there been any unforeseen problems in terms of resources (technical and financial) allocation and utilization? How well were they dealt with?
- iv. Are the capacities of the partners adequate?
- v. What have been the roles of the partners and staff and are they appropriate?
- vi. Is there an effective process, built into the management structure for self-monitoring and assessment, reporting and strategic planning? How could it be made better?

Relevance

- i. Establish whether or not the design and approach of the program is relevant in addressing the identified needs.
- ii. To what extent is the project contributing to the strategic plans and Agency policies? How could relevance be improved in future?

Sustainability

- i. Is the approach used likely to ensure a continued benefit?
- ii. Are all key stakeholders sufficiently and effectively involved? Are their expectations met and are they satisfied with their level of participation?
- iii. Are alternative or additional measures needed and, if so, what is required to ensure continued sustainability and positive impact?

Impact

- i. Is the project bringing about desired changes in fisheries management and resource conservation?
- ii. Have there been any unintended positive or negative impacts arising from particular outcomes/results?
- iii. What could have been the likely situation (of the marine environment/fisheries and its management) without the program?

Description of data collected and data stewardship

- i. Describe data collection series.
- ii. Summary description of the data
- iii. Anticipated temporal coverage of the data

- iv. Anticipated geographic coverage of the data
- v. What data types of data are being created or captured? (e.g., photographs, video, paper records, physical samples, etc.)
- vi. How are data captured/created?
- vii. What volume of data is and will be anticipated to be collected?
- viii. What quality control procedures are employed?
- ix. What is the overall lifecycle of the data from collection or acquisition to making it available to stakeholders?
- x. How the data are made available to the public and other stakeholders? What is the expected date of first availability?
- xi. For data not to be made available to the public, explain why and under what authority distribution may be restricted.
- xii. Describe user access conditions or restrictions, such as submission of non-disclosure statements, special authorization, or acceptance of a licensing agreement.
- xiii. Describe data access protocols used to enable data sharing, such as the use of open-standard, interoperable, non-proprietary web services.

(This component of the scope of the review primarily involves the organization of existing information and is secondary to the other components which provide recommendations on program structure, performance and resources.)

Methodology

The consultant should propose a brief methodology to be used to carry out the review in their application. The methodology should address the preliminary issues and questions outlined within the objectives and scope, specifying the specific review issues, questions, methods of data collection and analysis that will be undertaken. It should encompass a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. It should also allow for wide consultation with all interested partners and stakeholders. Although consultants must propose and justify their own methodology, it is suggested that the methodology should include, but not be limited to the following: A desktop review of all relevant documentation, including (but not limited to):

- a. The program documentation, contracts, related agreements, and regulations
- b. Work plans and budgets
- c. Progress, technical and financial reports
- ii. Face-to-face interviews and discussions with all key stakeholders involved in the program to ensure that the review is carried out in a participatory manner. A list of key partners and stakeholders would be identified at an early stage and a consultation process developed. All stakeholders consulted should be in a position to present their views in confidence to the reviewer and to identify issues, opportunities, constraints and options for the future
- iii. Electronic interviews through teleconference or written comments, e.g. email, where partners cannot be reached for face to face interviews

FSB will assist with the organization of meetings and discussions, and inform the relevant stakeholders of the review process and their role in it, well in advance.

Reporting outputs

The Consultant will prepare and submit the following reports to PSMFC:

- i. An inception report detailing the proposed methodology and responsibilities of each team member, to be submitted prior to the onset of the assessment process.
- ii. A findings report, which should address the objectives and scope and include the following:
 - a. An assessment of the performance of the program, based on the program documentation, contracts, agreements, and regulations
 - b. Identification of the main lessons learned
 - c. Recommendations to improve operational efficiency, quality and impact through changes to e.g., organizational structure or internal or external processes and
 - d. Identification of critical benchmark baselines and annual milestones for the next two years
- iii. Recommendations and guidance on the future scope of work. Future activities may include, e.g.,
 - a. Further development of cost-sharing observer programs with industry
 - b. Implementation of electronic monitoring

Timing and Schedule

The consultant should develop and submit a detailed schedule for the review work, including the total number of days required and the distribution of days between the different tasks. It is suggested that the tasks be broken down as follows, but consultants may consider other breakdowns:

- Task 1: Review of background documentation and preparation of detailed methodology
- Task 2: Discussion and agreement on proposed methodology with Center and program partners
- Task 3: Assessment of project progress and performance – including field visits and interviews with project partners and key stakeholders
- Task 4: Analysis of findings and production of draft report
- Task 5: Debriefing - presentation and discussion of findings to Center and project partners
- Task 6: Finalization/revisions of the report and submission

Evaluation Factors

The proposed award will be a fixed price contract. The award may be made for any one, or more, of the tasks and additional task awards may be made as funding becomes available.

The proposal must be prepared in two parts: A technical proposal and a price proposal. Contractors shall submit one electronic copy of the technical and price proposal that specifically

addresses the requirements of this SOW to RFP2014-NEFSCReview@psmfc.org by 3:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on September 2, 2014.

This is a best value requirement with combined non-price factors being significantly more important than price. PSMFC reserves the right to make an award without discussions based solely upon initial proposals. Therefore, contractors should ensure that their initial proposal constitutes their best offer in terms of both price and the technical solution being proposed. Award will be made to the contractor that offers the best value to the PSMFC. The criteria stated below will be used in the evaluation of non-price factors (technical approach, experience and past performance). Factors are listed in descending order of importance.

1. Technical Approach (40%)
2. Experience (20%)
3. Past Performance (20%)
4. Cost (20%)

Provide the following information in the technical proposal:

Technical Approach: Describe the technical approach towards fulfilling SOW requirements and the appropriate personnel levels and skill mixes as required under this SOW.

Experience: Provide a list of names, **resumes**, education, background, work experience and proposed duties of the proposed key personnel.

Past Performance: PSMFC may use past performance information obtained from any available reliable source. However, the contractor shall provide a list of the last 3 contracts or subcontracts completed during the past three years that were the same or similar in nature to the proposed work herein. Contracts listed may include those entered into by the Federal Government, agencies of state and local governments and commercial customers. Include the following information for each contract and subcontract:

- a. Name of contracting entity
- b. Contract/order number
- c. Contract type
- d. Total contract value
- e. Brief description of work
- f. Contracting officer, telephone and fax number
- g. The federal or other program manager, telephone and fax number

--Provide information on problems encountered during each contract performance and describe corrective actions taken to resolve those problems.

--Describe any quality awards or certifications that indicate the offeror possesses a high quality process for work performed.

Provide the following information in the Price Proposal: Pricing details shall be itemized by task and by individual and role. Detail shall be provided showing loaded hourly rates, number of

hours anticipated for the task, and task cost for each individual expected to participate in the task. Subtotals for tasks shall be provided along with proposal total for all tasks. The template in Appendix A below shall be used to provide the pricing proposals. Please provide the rate by individual and role. Also, provide a separate line item for reimbursable travel.

Contact

For any clarification on the assignment, please contact PSMFC or Michael Arredondo at (contracting@psmfc.org, 503-595-3100).

Appendix A. Project Personnel Hourly Rates Template. Position titles are examples, and can be customized as needed.

Labor Category	Rate	Task 1		Task 2		Task 3		Task 4		Task 5		Task 6		Total
		Hours	Cost	Cost										
Consultant I (Name)														
Consultant II (Name)														
Consultant III (Name)														
Admin. Support (Name)														
Other (Describe) (Name)														
Subtotal														
Travel														
Total														