

**REQUEST FOR  
PROPOSALS**

**COOK INLET CHINOOK SALMON DISASTER RESEARCH**



**Issue Date:**

**October 1, 2015**

**Deadline for Pre-Proposal Submission:**

**October 30, 2015**

## PROPOSED REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) SCHEDULE

### COOK INLET CHINOOK SALMON DISASTER RESEARCH

1 October 2015	Request for Pre-proposals issued  <a href="http://www.psmfc.org/procurements/blog">http://www.psmfc.org/procurements/blog</a>
16 October 2015	Deadline to submit written questions  Written questions should be directed to:  Michael Arredondo 205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100 Portland, OR 97202 Email: <a href="mailto:marredondo@psmfc.org">marredondo@psmfc.org</a> Phone: (503) 595 – 3100 Fax: (503) 595 – 3444
21 October 2015	Answers to written questions posted on PSMFC website:  <a href="http://www.psmfc.org/procurements/blog">http://www.psmfc.org/procurements/blog</a>
30 October 2015	Deadline for pre-proposals  One (1) electronic copy due by 4:00 PM Pacific to:  Michael Arredondo 205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100 Portland, OR 97202 Email: <a href="mailto:marredondo@psmfc.org">marredondo@psmfc.org</a> Fax: (503) 595 – 3444
2 – 13 November 2015	Pre-proposals reviewed. Invitation for full proposals issued by PSMFC.
24 December 2015	Full proposals due from those invited to submit
28 Dec – 15 Jan 2015	Review of full proposals
<i>Tentative Schedule:</i>	
15 January 2016	Select Contractors

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

### A. Objective

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) will be issuing roughly \$2 million in grants to qualified research projects in the Cook Inlet that address research themes related to the Alaska Chinook Salmon Fishery Disaster that was declared by the Secretary of Commerce on September 31, 2012.

This fishery disaster is based on the very low Chinook salmon returns in 2010, 2011 and 2012 which resulted in a Chinook salmon harvest that was 90 percent below the recent 5-year average. Exact causes for recent poor Chinook salmon returns are unknown, but may involve a variety of factors outside the control of fishery managers to mitigate including unfavorable ocean conditions, freshwater environmental factors, disease, or other likely factors on which data are limited or nonexistent.

The following six research themes are designed to better understand the cause and effect relationship in the decline of Chinook salmon returns in the Cook Inlet.

### B. Research Project Themes

**Theme 1 – Predators and Mortality:** Are predators of juvenile Chinook salmon and/or a decline in forage fish an important cause of juvenile Chinook salmon mortality and population declines?

**Description:** Little is known about the predators of and predation mortality on juvenile Chinook salmon and forage fish throughout Alaska. Consultations with management agencies and those with local and traditional knowledge, it has become that predators are likely an important cause of Chinook salmon mortality and population declines. Further, changes in habitat and climate patterns may be favoring predatory species, potentially allowing them to increase their range and abundance, and therefore their effect on Chinook salmon. Yet, little is known about key predators, where and when they may be important, or how much mortality predation may be causing. This research aims to determine the key predators as well as where and when predation is occurring.

**THEME 2 - Drivers of Freshwater Mortality:** Have changes in the suitability or productivity of freshwater habitat used for spawning, rearing and migration contributed to declines in Chinook salmon stocks?

**Description:** This theme examines the way in which productivity and population dynamics of Chinook salmon to forcing factors that control growth and survival during the freshwater component of their life cycle. For most salmon populations the freshwater stages sustain over half of the total egg-to-adult mortality. Adult, embryonic, and juvenile stages are all vulnerable to changes in freshwater environmental conditions. For example, incubating embryos can be affected by several variables including winter temperatures, oxygen regimes, and flow-related gravel scouring. Juvenile salmon, prior to ocean entry, may be limited by food resources that

growth rates and associated survival during smolting, and by mortality losses to freshwater predators. The central question underlying this research hypothesis is whether any specific variable(s) in the freshwater environment could have contributed to observed trends in Chinook salmon.

**THEME 3 - Drivers of Marine Mortality:** Have changing ocean conditions (physical and biological) increased mortality of Chinook salmon and contributed to the decline of stocks?

**Description:** This theme examines the way in which productivity and population dynamics of Chinook salmon populations are linked to environmental conditions that control growth and survival during the marine (including estuarine) component of their life cycle. During their marine life phase, changes in the physical environment (e.g., temperature) could affect salmon directly via physiological processes, or indirectly through changes in the food web. For example, increased upwelling can lead to higher primary and secondary production, leading to increased food availability for juvenile salmon. Changes in the biological environment, such as food web structure (i.e., prey, competitors, predators), can also affect feeding rates and ultimately survival. Additional research is needed to improve our understanding of the role of environmental forcing on salmon population dynamics and, in turn, to develop the capacity to distinguish between freshwater and marine drivers of those dynamics.

**THEME 4 - Escapement Quality:** Has selective fishing or other environmental factors altered the sizes, sex ratio, and composition of life history types in ways that have contributed to recent declines of Chinook salmon?

**Description:** This theme focuses on the role of genetic selection by fisheries or other environmental factors to change the genetic component that determines age, size, growth, and time to maturity (phenotypic characters). Phenotypic characters are determined both by genetics and the environment. For example, genetics control the potential for growth and the environment provides food that controls the expression of that potential. The genetic changes hypothesized could affect the recruitment of subsequent generations of salmon.

**Theme 5 — Biological drivers of production:** Have biological factors over time made changes in the Chinook salmon population structure resulting in recent poor returns?

**Description:** This study would examine measures of body condition in freshwater and in marine waters and relate these measures at various life history stages to environmental and biological variables.

Archived scale samples from several decades of returning Chinook salmon are a vital source of information on past growth in both freshwater and the ocean. These historical patterns provide

the context to determine if recent poor returns show unusually poor growth, and what life stages are impacted. Many of these archived scales have not been examined, so digitizing and analyzing growth rings on these scales would be a major component of this study.

**THEME 6 - Density-Dependent Effects:** Has the long-term variation and recent declines in Chinook salmon stocks been caused by strong density effects on population dynamics?

**Description:** High spawner abundances of salmon in some streams can cause declines in the recruitment of the next generation via strong density-dependent effects - a biological phenomenon referred to as “overcompensation.” At high spawner densities competition for critical resources (e.g., spawning habitat, food resources for overabundant juveniles) may become so intense as to substantially reduce survival to levels below what is needed for cohort replacement, thereby leading to temporary population declines. At the other extreme, stock productivity may decrease as abundance declines to low levels as a result of compensatory mechanisms (such as reduced probability of fertilization or impaired group dynamics leading to increased predation). This theme encourages research evaluating the evidence for strong density-dependent effects in Chinook populations, including overcompensation and depensation, and assessing the contributions of these feedbacks to observed population dynamics.

In addition, research proposals requesting support to examine available data and test for potential shifts in the phenology or ocean distribution patterns of Cook Inlet Chinook salmon stocks would be welcomed.

### **C. Criteria Used to Select Projects for Full Proposals**

The purpose of establishing criteria is to help focus research efforts on the most important hypotheses, themes and questions concerning the variability of Chinook salmon returns. In addition, the criteria should promote the use of historic data where possible, encourage the formation of collaborative opportunities among agencies and organizations and maximize the use of limited funding. The criteria listed below are not mutually exclusive but must be used in combination with each other. The criteria are as follows:

1. Program Goal – Projects must directly help achieve the goal of better understanding the trends and causes in Chinook salmon abundance through the assembly of existing information and gaining new information through a collaborative and inclusive process.
2. Knowledge Gaps – Projects must fill clear gaps in knowledge that are unaddressed by other research and management programs and must complement but not duplicate past work by others not provide substitute funding.
3. Time Efficient – Projects must produce results within a reasonably short period of time.

## **II. Eligible Applicants**

Eligible applicants are individuals (U.S. citizens), institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, and state, local and Indian

tribal governments. Federal agencies or instrumentalities are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice.

### **III. Application and Submission Information**

#### **A. Content and Form of Application**

Format requirements for both pre-proposals and full proposals: All application materials should be submitted in Adobe PDF or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. All pages must be single- (pre-proposal) or double-(full proposal) spaced, printed or typed in at least 12-point font, and printable on 8.5-inch x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins.

#### **Pre-proposal Format** - (Pre-Proposals Due by October 30, 2015)

The pre-proposal process is intended to provide an indication to potential applicants of the technical merit and the relevancy of the proposed project before preparing a full proposal. The intent is to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not have a high probability for being funded. When drafting a pre-proposal, applicants should convey the impact and applicability of their proposed research to the research themes listed in Section I.B. Late or incomplete pre-proposals, as well as those that deviate from content or format requirements, will not be reviewed by PSMFC, and any associated full proposal applications cannot be submitted.

Each pre-proposal should not exceed **three (3) pages**, single-spaced, using the format described above and should provide:

- a. Title of project;
- b. Name, address, phone number and email of all investigators and partners while clearly identifying the project lead investigator;
- c. Project performance period;
- d. Total amount of funding requested; (**should be between \$20,000 and \$400,000**)
- e. Study Location, general geographic area in which any field work would be conducted;
- f. Abstract that contains a summary of the project in language understandable to audiences unfamiliar with your subject area. The abstract should be suitable for reports to Congress, the state legislature and the general public. The abstract should also contain the following:
  - 1) The research theme this project addresses and why the project is needed and how it is relevant to the Alaska Chinook Salmon Disaster;
  - 2) Project hypotheses and objectives;
  - 3) Overview of research methods;
  - 4) Anticipated impacts/outcomes and any measurable benefits
- g. Identification of required permits (i.e. ESA, MMPA) and permit numbers, if applicable.

## **Full Proposal Format**

Full proposals will only be required for those proposals that have been selected by the Scientific Review Panel.

Proposal format must be in at least a 12 point font and double-spaced. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limit. Data management plans and/or access agreements as well as budgets and justifications, project summary, and previous, current and pending support sections do not count towards the 15-page limit. Appendices may be included but must not exceed a total of 15 pages in length. Appendices may include information such as resumes and/or letters of endorsement. Additional informational material will be disregarded.

Proposals must include the following information in the format outlined below.

a. Project summary (1-page limit):

- (1) Organization title.
- (2) Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
- (3) Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
- (4) Research project theme(s) that will be addressed (see section I. C.).
- (5) Project title.
- (6) Project objectives for the project period.
- (7) Summary of work to be performed within the project period.
- (8) Budget Information

- Total funds requested from PSMFC;
- Cost sharing to be provided to this project, if any. Specify whether contributions are cash or in kind;
- Total project cost.

b. Project description (15 page limit): Each project must be completely and accurately described. The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include: specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance; relation to longer-term goals of the PI's project; and relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway.

Each project must be described as follows:

- (1) Identification of problem(s): Describe the specific problem(s) or area(s) of interest to be addressed (see section I.C. above). Specify how the problem(s) or area(s) of interest directly relates to a Program Priority(ies) in section I.C.
- (2) Project objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why", and; attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.

- (3) Project narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during each budget period of the project. This description must include the specific methodologies, by project job activity, proposed for accomplishing the proposal's objective(s).
- (4) Permitting: The proposal must describe any Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, or other permit requirements related to the proposed research. The proposal also must describe whether the investigators have the necessary permits in hand, or what steps the investigators have taken to obtain the necessary permits. All proposals must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required. If no permits are requested, this section must indicate "no permits are required."
- (5) Benefits or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities. Specifically identify management applicability of the work being proposed.
- (6) Methods: Provide a concise overview of proposed methods, including your approach to achieving your objectives. Clearly identify the specific set of procedures needed to accomplish each objective. As appropriate, describe the statistical or conceptual model that is the basis for your work; including the experimental design, assumptions required, sample size and other relevant information. This section should contain enough detail to allow a reviewer to understand how the study will be conducted, including how data will be collected and analyzed.
- (7) Need for financial assistance: Demonstrate the need for assistance. Explain why other funding sources cannot fund all the proposed work. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.
- (8) Coordination and Collaboration with Other Efforts: List any programs (Federal, state, local government, non-profit, including Sea Grant, state Coastal Zone Management Programs, etc.) this project would affect and describe the relationship between the project and those plans or activities. Describe any coordination with other agency programs or on-going research efforts. Describe any other proposals or outside activities that are essential to the success of this proposal.
- (9) Project management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Include resumes of principal investigators. List all persons directly employed by the applicant who will be involved with the project. If a consultant and/or subcontractor is selected prior to application submission, include the name and qualifications of the consultant and/or subcontractor and the process used for selection. Describe who will monitor project performance.
- (12) Milestones/Project Timeline: Specify when each project objective will be completed. Reviewers of the project will use this information along with progress reports to assess whether PIs are meeting objectives and are eligible for continued funding.
- (13) Results/Deliverables: Describe the project results and products to be provided at the conclusion of the study as well as their estimated completion date. All funded projects must provide PSMFC will semi-annual progress reports as well as a final report due within 60 days of project completion.

(14) Performance Ability and Administrative Expertise: [Briefly summarize the investigator(s) and/or organization's experience in performing work similar to that proposed here. Past reports or professional journal articles by the investigator(s) relevant to this proposal should be cited, and unpublished work should be briefly described as it relates to the investigator's or organization's ability to accomplish the objectives. Describe the field capabilities needed to carry out the study when particular equipment or technologies are essential components to conducting a study (e.g., cultural and community knowledge, sonar equipment, shop facility for weir fabrication, drift gillnet boats). Describe the organizational ability to carry out the administrative aspects of the project. Other evidence of performance ability may be attached as an appendix to the proposal. Investigator's performance ability and administrative expertise will be evaluated on the following:

- a. History of investigator's performance on past projects.
- b. Individual qualifications of each investigator (including field capabilities as applicable) and their role in the project.
- c. Technical and administrative expertise of the applicant organization to complete the work.
- d. Summary of experience.
- e. Relevant past reports and articles.

(15) Project Budget: You must include in the proposal a detailed narrative for each category providing an explanation and/or process for how the funds will be used and/or allocated. Describe and justify the budget for each organization or agency requesting funding in this proposal using the mandatory budget categories listed below.

- **Personnel (including Fringe Benefits):** Include the salary detail for all employees assigned to this project. Explain the duties for each individual identified by name and position. State the time commitments such as hours and percent of time for each position. List the total charges for each person. Provide detail on all fringe benefits in correlation to the employee's hourly wage and the number of hours to be worked in association with the proposed project. Identify what types of fringe benefits are being covered. Describe the total charges for each person listed along with an explanation of how the charges were calculated.
- **Travel:** These costs include lodging, airfare, per diem, ground transportation and other directly-related expenses incurred while traveling for the purpose of the proposed project. Include each traveler's name, dates of travel, purpose of travel, destination, and itemized costs to include lodging, airfare, per diem, ground transportation, etc. Identify why the requested travel is directly relevant to the successful completion of the project. If there are any actual trip details that remain unknown, please explain what the basis for the proposed travel charges.
- **Contractual:** Include all expenditures associated with contractually-related activities that are directly associated with the proposed project. List each contract as a separate item. Describe the applicability to the project for each contract to be acquired.
- **Supplies:** Include a description of all equipment that individually costs under \$5,000 and miscellaneous supplies and materials that are required for the purpose of the

proposed project. Itemize supplies by type of material or nature of expense. Identify how the proposed supplies are necessary for the successful completion of the project.

- **Equipment:** Include items that individually cost more than \$5,000. For any items of equipment whose costs exceed \$5,000, a description of the item and associated costs is required. List each item of equipment being requested. For each item of equipment, please identify the number of units, cost per unit and total cost specified. Explain why each item of equipment is necessary for the successful completion of the project.
- **Indirect Costs:** These are costs incurred by the investigating organization as a result of administering the proposed project but not directly associated with project implementation. Indirect costs generally include space rental, utilities, postage, data processing, training, safety management, affirmative action programs, administrative support, and supervisory oversight. **NOTE:** All proposals must include copy of the approved negotiated indirect cost rate document or similar verifying your indirect rate as part of your proposal package. Our intent is that institutions undertaking research apply funds to expenses directly related to the project, and have the ability to complete the project with low indirect cost rates.

## B. Instructions, Conditions and Notices to Proposers

1. Questions regarding this RFP shall be submitted in writing no later than October 16, 2015 to:

Michael Arredondo  
205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100  
Portland, OR 97202  
Email: [marredondo@psmfc.org](mailto:marredondo@psmfc.org)  
Phone: (503) 595 - 3100  
Fax: (503) 595 – 3444

The answers to the written questions will be posted on PSMFC's website by October 21, 2015.

2. Amendments to the Solicitation

If this solicitation is amended, all terms and conditions that are not amended remain unchanged. Proposers shall acknowledge receipt of any amendment to this solicitation in Proposer's cover letter.

3. Submission, Modification Revision and Withdrawal of Proposals

- a. The deadline for pre-proposals is October 30, 2015. Pre-proposals by electronic copy must be submitted to:

Attn: Michael Arredondo  
205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100  
Portland, OR 97202

Email: [marredondo@psmfc.org](mailto:marredondo@psmfc.org)

Phone: (503) 595 – 3100

Fax: (503) 595 – 3444

- b. Pre-proposals, proposals and modifications may be submitted via electronic copy in PDF or MS Word format.
- c. PSMFC reserves the right to consult with and to consider information from its own sources, including information from state and federal agencies regarding the proposer's prior performance or the status of outstanding investigations or warrants involving the proposer.
- d. Proposers are responsible for submitting pre-proposals, and any modification or revisions, so as to reach PSMFC by 4:00 p.m., Pacific Time, on October 30, 2015.
- e. Late proposals
  - i. Any proposal, modification, or revision at the PSMFC office designated in the solicitation after the exact time specified for receipt to offers is "late" and will not be considered unless it is received before award is made, the PSMFC Fiscal Manager determines that accepting the late offer would not unduly delay the acquisition; and
  - ii. There is acceptable evidence to establish that it was received at the PSMFC installation designation for receipt of offers and was under the PSMFC's control prior to the time set for receipt to offers; or
  - iii. It is the only proposal received.
  - iv. However, a late modification of an otherwise successful proposal that makes its terms more favorable to the PSMFC, will be considered at any time it is received and may be accepted.
  - v. Acceptable evidence to establish time of receipt at the PSMFC installation includes the time/date stamp of that installation on the proposal wrapper, other documentary evidence of receipt maintained by the installation, or oral testimony or statements of PSMFC personnel.
- f. If an emergency or unanticipated event interrupts normal PSMFC processes so that proposals cannot be received at the office designated for receipt of proposals by the exact time specified in the solicitation, and urgent PSMFC requirements preclude amendment of the solicitation, the time specified for receipt of proposals will be deemed to be extended to the same time of day specified in the solicitation on the first work day on which normal PSMFC processes resume.
- g. Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice received at any time before award. Proposals may be withdrawn in person by an offer or an authorized representative, if the identity of the person requesting withdrawal is established and the person signs a receipt for the proposal before award.

- h. Proposers shall submit proposals in response to this solicitation in English and in U.S. dollars.
- i. Proposers may submit modifications to their proposals at any time before the solicitation closing date and time, and may submit modifications in response to an amendment, or to correct a mistake at any time before award.
- j. Proposers may submit revised proposals only if requested or allowed by PSMFC.
- k. Proposals may be withdrawn at any time before award. Withdrawals are effective upon receipt of notice by the Fiscal Manager.
- l. Each Proposal must state that it is a firm offer which may be accepted within a period of ninety (90) days. Although the contract is expected to be awarded prior to that time, the ninety day period is requested in order to allow for unforeseeable delays.
- m. Proposer shall submit the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with the authority to bind the firm, as well as to answer questions or provide clarification concerning the firm's proposal.
- n. PSMFC is not liable for any costs incurred by vendors/contractors in developing or submitting their response to this RFP.

### **C. PROPOSAL EVALUATION**

1. All proposals received in accordance with these RFP instructions will be evaluated to determine if they are complete and meet the requirements specified in this RFP. Awards will be made to the proposals that are deemed by the Scientific Review Committee to be the most advantageous to the Chinook salmon populations in the Cook Inlet.
2. All proposals received in accordance with these RFP instructions will be reviewed, analyzed, evaluated and scored in accordance with the criteria described below. If needed, additional information may be requested from one or more proposers.
3. Request for additional information. During the evaluation period, PSMFC may request additional information in order to fairly evaluate a proposer's offer. If such information is required, the proposer will be notified in writing (or by email) and will be permitted a reasonable period of time to respond.
4. Evaluation Criteria. By use of numerical and narrative scoring techniques, proposals will be evaluated by PSMFC against the factors specified below. The relative weights of the criteria –based on a 100 point scale – are shown in parentheses. The evaluation criteria are:
  - a. Qualifications, experience, references, and ability to address research program priorities (30 points);
  - b. Work Plan/Technical Approach (40 points);

- c. Cost/Project Budget (30 points)

#### **D. Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest exists when financial interests or other opportunities for tangible personal or professional benefit could influence or appear to influence the professional judgment of a member of the Scientific Review Committee. Improper influence could be used to not only advance one's own research program, but also to unfairly promote a family member's, colleague's or former student's program. Thus, care must be exercised to avoid a conflict of interest during the proposal review process and the discussion of past, current or proposed research. A conflict of interest also exists when circumstances simply have the appearance of compromising the professional judgment of a member of the Scientific Review Committee. It is the policy of PSMFC that conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest shall be avoided wherever possible and disclosed and minimized in situations where interests cannot be reasonably separated. Whenever a conflict of interest arises during discussions of the Scientific Review Committee, the member in question shall disclose the possible conflict and excuse themselves from the discussion.

#### **E. Grant Award**

1. All pre-proposals will be evaluated and those selected to submit a full proposal will be contacted by PSMFC by November 13, 2015.
2. All qualified full proposals will be evaluated and awards will be made to those proposed projects whose combination of cost and technical offers is deemed to best address the research themes of this RFP. It is expected that the final awards to selected projects will begin on January 15, 2016.
3. PSMFC reserves the right to make an award for project at a cost that is less than what was proposed.
4. PSMFC expressly reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and make no award under this RFP if such action is in the best interest of the PSMFC.