



NROC
Northeast Regional
Ocean Council

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Request for Proposals:

**CHARACTERIZATION OF SPATIAL PATTERNS OF COMMERCIAL FISHING
ACTIVITY IN NEW ENGLAND, PHASE II**

RFP Issued: October 30, 2013

Proposals Due: November 26, 2013

Northeast Regional Ocean Council Request for Proposals: CHARACTERIZATION OF SPATIAL PATTERNS OF COMMERCIAL FISHING ACTIVITY IN NEW ENGLAND, PHASE II

Part 1: Scope of Work

1. **Statement of Purpose:** This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks contractor assistance to develop products characterizing spatial patterns of commercial fishing activity in marine waters of New England. For purposes of this RFP, the term “commercial fishing” includes the charter/head boat portion of the fishery. This RFP is issued in support of the regional ocean planning effort that is underway in New England; NROC is supporting the Northeast Regional Planning Body through development of projects such as through this work. The purpose of the work that will be conducted pursuant to this RFP is specifically to help engage the fishing industry, fisheries scientists, and fisheries managers to complete the tasks below.

2. **Background:** Regional ocean planning in New England has been underway formally since 2012. The formal entity charged with developing a regional ocean plan, the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB), first convened in November 2012 in Portland, Maine. In its subsequent public meetings and dialogue, the RPB has completed initial tasks including:
 - a. **Development of draft goals and actions** which were the subject of a series of public meetings during a comment period in May-July 2013;
 - b. **Identified principles for regional ocean planning in New England**, including statements of purpose regarding the need to conduct a transparent, open process that is inclusive of stakeholders; and
 - c. **Begun preparation of a work plan** that includes necessary tasks to meet the region’s objectives for ocean planning, including identification of stakeholder participation and engagement activities.

The work of the RPB is being directly supported by grants obtained for regional ocean planning by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC). NROC, established by New England’s Governors in 2005, is a state-federal partnership formed to implement solutions to New England’s most pressing ocean and coastal issues that require a regional response. NROC member states include Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of the Interior (U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have been full members of NROC since its inception. Individuals representing the New England states and federal agencies are in many cases members of both NROC and the RPB. The RPB also includes

federally-designated Tribal representatives in New England, as well as a representative of the New England Fishery Management Council.

In general, the focus of regional ocean planning in New England is on estuarine and marine waters from Long Island Sound north around the waters south of Massachusetts and Rhode Island through marine waters offshore New Hampshire and Maine (in the the Gulf of Maine). Thus, stakeholders already participating in regional ocean planning are from each of the New England states (as well as New York) and represent the wide variety of people who use, recreate on, or are concerned with the ocean in New England. This includes various industries (shipping, energy, fishing, boating, aquaculture), recreational interests, environmental advocates, academia and governmental scientists, and others. Stakeholders have been participating in regional ocean planning in several different ways: through participation at formal RPB meetings, as part of specific projects that have been undertaken (e.g., the 2012 Northeast Recreational Boating Survey), and through targeted efforts to discuss ocean planning issues (e.g., workshops held in late 2012 with the maritime commerce, energy, and aquaculture industries). For more information on the RPB and other activities underway in support of regional ocean planning, please see on-line information available at www.northeastoceancouncil.org.

A specific project was undertaken in fall 2012 through summer 2013 to engage the commercial fishing industry and produce initial map products, primarily relying on federally-available data from the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Vessel Trip Reports (VTR). The final report from this initial phase is available at www.northeastoceancouncil.org. One of the results of that initial work is a series of recommendations for further work, in part leading to this RFP.

A related undertaking has been the development of an on-line ocean atlas, the Northeast Ocean Data Portal (www.northeastoceandata.com). This web site hosts spatial data products developed in support of regional ocean planning, as well as providing links to other sources of data. A team of data and GIS experts is supporting the development of the Data Portal and its various data products.

- 3. Objectives:** This RFP will directly support regional ocean planning in New England through its deliverables and engagement with the commercial fishing industry. For purposes of this RFP, the term “commercial fishing industry” includes the charter and party boat segment of the fishery. There are two main objectives of this RFP:
 - a. Work with ocean planning staff and the Northeast Ocean Data Portal Team to develop map products, primarily from VMS data but also potentially products from other sources (VTR and others related to specific fisheries, as described below), building upon work already completed. As described further below, the role of the contractor in this effort will be to focus on the engagement of the commercial fishing industry, scientists, and managers in New England waters (generally, Gulf of Maine, Long Island and Block Island Sounds, south of Cape Cod and Islands). The end goal is to develop products that, following review and incorporation of input from the

fishing community, will be suitable for the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and for use in subsequent ocean planning activities. This RFP includes two specific tasks that relate to this objective (Tasks 1-2 below).

- b. Developing an understanding of ongoing scientific research regarding changes in environmental conditions and their effects on fisheries resources in New England. (Task 3 below)

As described in the task descriptions below, the primary intention of this RFP is to assist in engaging the commercial fishing industry, scientists, and managers. There are likely efficiencies to be gained in conducting multi-purpose meetings to complete the tasks below. Respondents to this RFP are encouraged to describe how they would achieve these efficiencies.

Note that there are other aspects of regional ocean planning activity in New England that are/will be focused on other human uses, such as boating, recreational fishing, shipping, and others, as well as natural resources and ecosystem issues.

Much of the data processing, development, cartography and other GIS-focused services and technical skills necessary to incorporate revised products into the Northeast Ocean Data Portal will be provided by the Northeast Ocean Data Portal Team. Responses to this RFP should not anticipate having to acquire “raw” data (e.g., VMS) or provide a significant amount of GIS staff in their response. Familiarity with New England fisheries is critically important for this work, however. The ability to understand different fisheries and associated data, as well as the ability to understand and contribute to cartography/visualization of fisheries-related data to help guide the development of draft products, will be important.

Recognizing geographic differences in fisheries across New England, NROC encourages proposals to discuss how such differences will be addressed and propose methods to ensure that the appropriate industry engagement occurs. Collaboration of entities to ensure appropriate/adequate coverage across the region is thus encouraged. There are opportunities to engage the fishing industry that vary from state to state (e.g., specific forums, organizations, and regularly scheduled meetings) and that occur regionally. Additionally, in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, there are existing, related state-wide efforts which are either underway or that have been employed during recent ocean planning activities.

All products developed as part of this project will be developed through a transparent process that is scientifically-based and incorporates industry, scientific, and management input. Respondents should thus describe how they would meet these principles. NROC anticipates that a significant portion of the budget for this project will be for engaging with fishery industry, scientists, and managers. A combination of approaches may be necessary to achieve project objectives due to geography, the different fisheries involved (including the charter/head boat component), timing, and other considerations. Respondents should describe their approach to addressing such issues.

Further information on the tasks intended to meet these objectives is provided below.

Task 1: Review updated map products (primarily derived from VMS data, but possibly involving products from VTR or other data sources) with the fishing industry, scientists, and managers. As described above, a first phase of this work resulted in VMS-derived map products. These maps relied on VMS data available through calendar year 2010, and the National Marine Fisheries Service is providing an update of VMS data to provide information for 2011, 2012, and through July 2013. Thus, this first task will include working with the Data Portal Team to update existing VMS maps with more recent data. The report of the first year of this mapping effort available on-line describes the maps which were produced from VMS data. The intention is to update those maps with more recent data.

A second aspect of this task will be to work with ocean planning staff, the data portal team, and other advisors from the fishing industry to develop and implement a methodology to differentiate and identify spatially types of fishing vessel activity (fishing, transit/steaming, etc.) using VMS data. The need to do so was identified by many in the fishing industry during the previous year of work, and is identified as a priority need in the resulting report of that project. Note that this aspect of work is dependent on receiving appropriate VMS data from NMFS. As described above, the Data Portal Team will provide much of the technical/data needs for this task. Therefore, the expectation is that there will be contractor involvement in developing the methodology, including working with advisors from the fishing community, and then reviewing and discussing draft products with the fishing industry.

A third aspect of this task will be to work with ocean planning staff, the data portal team, and other advisors to investigate the utility of products derived from other data sources for characterizing aspects of commercial fishing in New England. For example, there are VTR-derived products that may be useful, and there may be opportunities to look at products from other data sources as well; see the report of the previous mapping project on-line.

The largest portion of this task will be to meet with representatives of the fishing industry, fisheries managers, and scientists to review and discuss draft products such as those described above. Respondents to this RFP are encouraged to review the results of the previous mapping effort in the report available on-line. As discussed in that report, the anticipation is that a combination of presenting draft maps at existing meetings, and convening separate meetings as necessary, to maximize participation of and engagement with the fishing industry, fisheries managers, and scientists. Various types of meetings occurred in the first phase of mapping. The anticipation is that a similar range of types of engagement will be necessary in this project such as meetings of sectors, fisheries organizations, NEFMC, state-level advisory panels, one-on-one meetings at/near docks, etc. Finally, an aspect of this work will be to help develop caveats that need to be considered with any of the map products, including those described above; such caveats also need to be discussed with people engaged as part of this task.

Respondents to this RFP should describe their familiarity with VMS and other data sets described above and/or the products already derived from them. Respondents should also describe their familiarity with the fishing industry and fisheries management in New England and, in part based on this experience, propose specific ways to maximize participation in this project.

Task 2: Address certain fisheries not included in Task 1. Various fisheries in New England are not included in the VMS system. Pelagic species and the lobster fishery are two examples, and as discussed in the report for the first phase of commercial fisheries mapping work, these are two priority gaps in existing information for spatial planning purposes. There are examples of map products for these fisheries that have been developed for separate purposes (in the case of lobster) and/or may be in need of further attention to more fully characterize the fishery (in the case of pelagic species—see the example in the previous report related to bluefin tuna). The intent of this task is to specifically focus on pelagic species and the lobster fishery to develop additional/refined products for use in spatial planning.

For both lobster and pelagic species, the first step will be a review of existing data products and projects that have attempted to characterize the fisheries spatially in some respect. The purpose of this review is to ensure that any previous or ongoing efforts are considered and merits and concerns/drawbacks for spatial planning are understood. From this review, suggestions for developing spatial products for New England will be proposed and discussed with fishery managers, scientists, and fishing industry representatives. The purpose of that step will be to finalize a methodology to develop a spatial characterization of the lobster fishery, and then to implement that methodology. Draft spatial products will then be reviewed with representatives of the lobster industry, managers, and scientists prior to finalizing. While there may be overlap with some of the meetings that will be conducted in Task 1, there will likely be specific individuals/entities that will be desirable to target to successfully complete this task.

Respondents to this RFP should describe their approach to this task, recognizing its different starting point than with Task 1. A key aspect of this approach will be the specific means respondents propose to engage representatives of these fisheries in all aspects of this task (developing methodologies, reviewing draft products, etc.). To be successful at each stage of this task, engagement needs and specific approaches may evolve. Responses should describe their approach in detail, including identification of primary people or entities to engage.

Task 3: Identify research focused on changes in environmental conditions in New England marine waters. Engagement with many commercial fishermen has identified that significant changes in marine waters seem to have occurred in recent years. There have been several recent symposia, national and regional, that have entirely or in part focused on the issue of changing environmental conditions, such as those looking at potential implications of climate change. There are various scientific research and modeling efforts underway that relate to this topic.

With that background, this task will focus on identifying and synthesizing existing research underway on changes in marine fisheries resources and environmental conditions affecting fisheries' habitats (including any socio-economic research regarding the potential impacts of such changes on coastal communities). Examples of research that is underway include efforts by Northeast Fishery Science Center focused on certain fish stocks, the New England Aquarium, the Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment of 2007 by the Union of Concerned Scientists, activities of the Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine (RARGOM), several federal agency-led efforts (such as those under the Northeast Fisheries Science Center), and others. The purpose is to engage scientists who are studying related topics (changes to environmental conditions, changes in species distribution/abundance, etc.) and synthesize existing research. This synthesis will focus on identifying work that has been completed or is in progress; outcomes and conclusions of such research, or anticipated products for those efforts that are in progress; and include projects that are oriented toward quantitative- as well as qualitative-based investigations. The purpose of this synthesis is in large part to enhance understanding of ongoing research into this topic from a scientific standpoint for ocean planning purposes (e.g., to incorporate into the development of a baseline assessment of the region's ocean environment).

In responses to this RFP, respondents should provide an overview of the methodology that would be used to accomplish this task with the anticipation that this methodology would be finalized as this work proceeds (see deliverables section below).

4. **Project Funding.** The maximum budget for this project is \$175,000. NROC reserves the right to re-allocate this funding if a satisfactory candidate for this service is not determined or the services are no longer needed. NROC also reserves the right to conduct future competitive solicitations for projects that may arise from the work completed as part of this project.
5. **Deliverables:** Proposals should include discussion of how the proposed approaches will successfully complete the following deliverables:
 - Detailed work plan, including finalization of methodologies to achieve Task 3 above
 - Monthly progress reports
 - Outreach strategy to engage fishing industry, scientists, and managers for review of VMS-derived maps, products associated with the lobster and tuna fisheries, and other products described above in Tasks 1-2.
 - Summaries of meetings occurring pursuant to the outreach strategy
 - Synthesis of results of Task 3
 - Draft and final written project reports
6. **Project schedule:** NROC expects that work on this project will start immediately following completion of a contract. Generally, NROC would prefer a schedule that includes focused

engagement with appropriate stakeholders in the winter of 2013-2014 but extending through the fall of 2014. NROC anticipates that final deliverables described in this RFP would be due by December 2014. Respondents should propose and justify a schedule that they feel is appropriate.

Part 2: Proposal Preparation and Submittal

The following sections describe the procedures and content for submitting proposals.

- 1. Pre-submittal conference call.** NROC will host a pre-submission conference call to allow potential respondents to ask clarifying questions on November 20, 2013 at 1:00 pm. Instructions to participate in this conference call will be sent to all people who express their interest via email at least 24 hours before the conference call.
- 2. RFP clarification.** Questions and requests for clarifications regarding this solicitation should be sent to the email contact below. The deadline for submitting such an email is November 19, 2013. Responses will be posted to the NROC web-site on November 20, 2013 by 5:00 pm. Questions should be sent to:

Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org

John Weber, Ocean Planning Director
Northeast Regional Ocean Council

- 3. Submittal requirements.** For review purposes, NROC requires responses to this RFP to be delivered electronically, via email as an Adobe™ .pdf file, to Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org. Proposals must be received by email no later than 5:00 pm on November 26, 2013, and shall plainly identify the subject of the proposal and the name, phone, email, and address of the bidder.

It is the bidder's responsibility to ensure that NROC receives the proposals prior to the specified closing date. Proposals received after the specified closing date will not be considered.

- 4. Content requirements.** Proposals must be clear, succinct and shall not exceed 10 pages. Section dividers, cover letter, title page, and table of contents do not count in the overall page count of the proposal. Exclusions to the page limitation may include relevant work samples and/or resumes, as described below, provided in appendices. Each bidder is required to describe how they will provide the deliverables described above as part of their proposal. Information provided will be evaluated and scored; missing elements will adversely impact a proposal's overall score.

a. General requirements:

- i. Single-spaced pages when printed on 8.5" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) with font no smaller than 11 point.

- ii. The total number of pages must not exceed 10 pages (not including cover letter, table of contents, and appendices).
- iii. The proposal must be submitted as an Adobe™ .pdf document with all pages numbered and clearly identifying the name of the bidder.

b. Proposal organization and content:

- i. Cover letter. Provide a cover letter indicating your organization's commitment to implementing this initiative (e.g. senior management approval, etc.). Also, include appropriate point of contact information, including the person's name, title, address, phone number and email address.
- ii. Table of contents. Identify page numbers of main sections, including any appendices.
- iii. Executive summary. Summarize the proposal's approach to completing the tasks required by this RFP and highlight any competitive advantages or unique approaches of your proposal, cost-effectiveness measures, and particular skills offered by the project team.
- iv. Work plan. Include a concise, yet detailed work plan for completing the tasks described in this RFP and to ensure appropriate management of the scope, schedule, budget and overall quality of work. Include a time line showing implementation, starting from contract execution, including all major tasks and their sequence, inter-relationships and dependencies between tasks and key milestones and deliverables.
- v. Detailed budget. Provide an itemized budget to for the tasks described in this RFP. Include all costs related to personnel (identify estimated hours and rate), administrative overhead, travel, materials, equipment, and any other anticipated expenditures required to complete the work described in this RFP. In this budget description, describe leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services. Note that because of the requirements of the source of funding for this project, indirect costs encouraged to be limited to a maximum of 12.5% of allowable direct costs. For purposes of this RFP, indirect costs are defined as "overhead expenses incurred by an organization but not easily tracked to a specific project. They generally include administrative or other support functions such as executive oversight, institutional communication networks, accounting, grants management, legal support, insurance, utilities, technology, rent, and facility maintenance." For purposes of this RFP, direct costs include all of the expenses that are required for, and can be tracked directly to, this project, including but not limited to personnel, consultants/contractors, or other direct expenses such as travel, training, supplies, computers, and software. For this RFP, respondents should recognize that the budget for this proposal should be accompanied by a set of assumptions, since

the details of implementing certain tasks will be clarified during the course of the contract.

- vi. Team structure and qualifications. Please provide the following:
 - Project team organization chart, including a brief description of the role of each team member.
 - Summary of the experience, skill or unique attribute of each team member. Including a maximum two-page resume for each team member is allowable in a “resumes” appendix.
 - Summary of related, successful projects that illustrate the capabilities and qualifications of the project team. In addition, providing a maximum two-page description of up to two recently-completed projects is allowable in a “related experience” appendix. Include references that NROC may contact for these projects.

Proposals must identify any tasks which will be assigned to subcontractors and associated budget details include in part v above. The successful bidder will be prohibited from subcontracting, assigning, or transferring any listed responsibilities without prior review and consent of NROC.

Part 3: Evaluation of Proposals

This section summarizes the general process and criteria NROC intends to use to evaluate proposals.

1. **General review process.** The NROC Ocean Planning Director will collect and assemble all proposals received by the RFP deadline. An evaluation team comprised of RPB members (and/or their staff designees) and the NROC Ocean Planning Director will be convened to evaluate and score all proposals, using the criteria below. Upon completion of the scoring process, the evaluation team will recommend to the RPB co-leads and the NROC Executive Committee that the highest scoring bidder be awarded the project.
2. **Criteria.** NROC will use score all proposals according to the following criteria:
 - a. *Approach (30%).* Bidders will be evaluated on the detail, clarity, and soundness of their approach to this project, including strategies for overcoming any potential obstacles, creativity, efficiency, and cost effectiveness. Creativity in approach to accomplishing the tasks in this RFP is urged.
 - b. *Qualifications and experience of project team (30%).* NROC will evaluate a project team members’ combination of education, training, and record of achievement and experience related to the tasks described in this RFP. Specific attention will also be focused on an assessment of a project team’s direct experience with and knowledge of the fishing industry in New England.

- c. *Cost Effectiveness (20%)*. Bidders will be evaluated on the budget submitted with their responses to this RFP. Any leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services, will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
- d. *Project Management (20%)*. Bidders will be evaluated on their ability to complete the project within the schedule provided, track record of project management, and proposed project management strategies for this project.

Part 4. General Provisions

The following general provisions apply to this RFP and subsequent actions taken by NROC.

1. Response to this RFP does not commit NROC to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred during the preparation of the proposal.
2. NROC reserves the right to reject any or all of the proposals for completing this work. NROC also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP at any time.
3. NROC reserves the right to eliminate the need for the selected bidders to complete one or more tasks, pending the outcome of preceding related tasks or issues, and/or the availability of project partners to complete that task.
4. NROC reserves the right to modify the final scope of work and deliverables prior to finalizing a contractual agreement with the selected bidder(s).
5. Subsequent procurement, if any, will be in accordance with an executed contract. This RFP and any response may, at NROC's discretion, become part of the executed contract.
6. All entities participating in this RFP process will be notified of acceptance or rejection. NROC reserves the right not to disclose reasons for the rejection. NROC is not obligated to accept the proposal with the lowest cost.
7. No publicity or media release about this RFP, response to this RFP, discussion of any kind related to this RFP, or the award of any contract related to the bid document, may be released without NROC's prior approval.
8. All materials submitted by bidders become the property of NROC. NROC will retain copies of all proposals for historical records and documentation.
9. Each Bidder agrees to comply with all federal regulations including those pertaining to non-discrimination in hiring and employment practices.
10. NROC owns all rights to deliverables and, within the bounds of acceptable practice as determined by limitations placed upon data used in this project by data providers, intends that products resulting from this project will be made publically available.