



## **Request for Proposals**

### **Collaborative Strategies to Adapt Scup Gear Restricted Areas (GRA) to Changing Ocean Conditions**

**Proposal Submission Deadline:** April 12, 2024

**Term of Project:** approximately 1.5 years (June 1, 2024 – December 31, 2025)

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC or Council) seeks a contractor to build on previous Council commercial scup discard and Gear Restricted Areas (GRA) analyses,<sup>1</sup> utilizing available fisheries and environmental data to investigate potential modifications to the scup GRAs. Modifications could include consideration of alternative measures based on adaptive management strategies.

#### **Background**

In November 2000, the MAFMC implemented two scup GRAs (i.e., northern and southern GRA), to reduce juvenile scup discards in small mesh fisheries during certain times of the year when juvenile scup were present. The GRAs were initially implemented when the scup stock was under a rebuilding plan. Recent analyses<sup>1</sup> have shown that the GRAs contributed to the rebuilding of the scup stock and continue to have a positive effect on reducing juvenile scup discards. However, absolute discards have remained high, and changing ocean conditions, driven by climate change, may impact the temporal and spatial distribution of scup<sup>2</sup> and potentially the overall effectiveness of the GRAs. The GRAs are currently static area closures. The Southern GRA is in effect from January 1 - March 15 and the Northern GRA is in effect from November 1 - December 31 each year. Spatial patterns of more recently observed discards suggest there has been a shift in where/when discards occur. As such, modifications to the GRAs may be warranted, including consideration of alternative measures based on adaptive management strategies.

This project will be funded by Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds. This project will contribute to the advancement of climate-ready fishery management actions and address the IRA funding priority to develop and implement management changes or processes that address climate vulnerability or improve climate resiliency of fisheries.

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<sup>1</sup> Scup 2023 Draft Commercial Discards Report and Gear Restricted Area (GRA) Analysis can be found here: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/64f0e2ecaef2042337424b60/1693508333342/2-Scup2023\\_discard\\_report.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/64f0e2ecaef2042337424b60/1693508333342/2-Scup2023_discard_report.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Hare, J.A., W.E. Morrison, M.W. Nelson., M.M. Stachura, E.J. Teeter, R.B. Griffis, M.A. Alexander, J.D. Scott, L. Alade, R.J. Bell, A.S. Chute, K.L. Curti, T.H. Curtis, D. Kircheis, J.F. Kocik, S.M. Lucey, C.T. McCandless, L.M. Milke, D.E. Richardson, E. Robillard, H.J. Walsh, M. Conor McManus, K.E. Marancik, C.A. Griswold. (2016). A Vulnerability Assessment of Fish and Invertebrates to Climate Change on the Northeast U.S. Continental Shelf. PLOS ONE 11(2): e0146756. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0146756>.

## Scope of Work

The MAFMC seeks a contractor to build on previous Council commercial scup discard and GRA analyses<sup>3</sup> and utilize available fisheries and environmental data to investigate potential modifications to the scup GRAs. Modifications could include consideration of alternative measures based on adaptive management strategies.

The proposed project should:

1. Model and map bycatch/discard hotspots for scup over time using fisheries observer and logbook data. Test whether the spatial patterns and intensity of bycatch have changed significantly, and whether these changes may be linked to changes in scup distribution over time.
2. Use fishery independent survey data to inform hotspot, cluster, or alternative time/area closure analyses<sup>4</sup> to identify areas where a reduction in fishing effort could reduce impacts on juvenile scup.
3. Improve our understanding of the regulatory and economic factors driving scup discards and how the existing and/or potential changes to the scup GRAs or other adaptive management measures might impact discards and fleet behavior.
4. Identify potential biological and socio-economic tradeoffs between management strategies to reduce scup bycatch and impacts on fishermen.

In addition, it is expected that the contractor will develop meeting materials to support and facilitate at least two in-person workshops<sup>5</sup> with fishery stakeholders to get input on the mapping and hotspot analyses and reported discard trends and gather feedback on the current GRA locations, timing, etc. Workshop feedback should also be requested on the impacts the GRAs have had on industry as well as potential impacts of modifying the GRAs. Feedback should also be sought on drivers of scup discards and alternative methods for reducing them, including consideration of regulatory and market barriers to discard reduction.

Lastly, based on the modeling and data analysis, as well as the input received during the workshops, the contractor will be expected to develop a report with recommendations on a set of management alternatives that the Council could consider for implementation through a future management action.

The contractor will regularly meet with a Contract Oversight Team (minimum of 6 meetings during this project period to be held online) to ensure the scope of work proposed under this contract is addressed. The team will be composed of technical staff from the MAFMC, regional science and management partners, and other experts that have direct expertise and involvement in fisheries data analysis, fishery operations and management development. This team will provide any needed technical input and assist the contractor in identifying information needed and points of contact to support the contractor's completion of this project.

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<sup>3</sup> Scup 2023 Draft Commercial Discards Report and Gear Restricted Area (GRA) Analysis can be found here: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/64f0e2ecaef2042337424b60/1693508333342/2-Scup2023\\_discard\\_report.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/64f0e2ecaef2042337424b60/1693508333342/2-Scup2023_discard_report.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 Final Environmental Impact Statement. Appendix E – Synopsis of Closed Area Technical Team analysis of juvenile groundfish habitats and groundfish spawning areas. [https://d23h0vhs26o6d.cloudfront.net/Appendix\\_E\\_Synopsis\\_of\\_CATT\\_analysis\\_171011\\_091346.pdf](https://d23h0vhs26o6d.cloudfront.net/Appendix_E_Synopsis_of_CATT_analysis_171011_091346.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Workshop participation and venue expenses would be covered by the Council and does not need to be included in the proposed budget submitted. However, any travel cost required for the contractor to attend and facilitate the meeting should be included in the proposed budget.

## **Contractor Qualifications**

Applicants should have a background in marine, estuarine, environmental science, fisheries or natural resource management and or/policy, or other related fields. The applicant should have an extensive knowledge of fisheries data (e.g., Northeast Observer Program data, commercial vessel trip report data, logbooks, etc.) as well as exemplified expertise in modeling, mapping, and analytics. The applicant should have some knowledge of fisheries economics and experience working with the commercial fishing industry. Demonstrated facilitation skills is a plus.

## **How to Apply**

Applicants should submit a proposal to Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director, by email ([cmoore@mafmc.org](mailto:cmoore@mafmc.org)) by 11:59 pm on April 12, 2024. Proposals should not exceed 20 pages total (excluding curriculum vitae) and should include the following elements:

- *Executive Summary:* A summary of the proposed scope of work as well as a brief summary of the applicant's qualifications.
- *Proposed Scope of Work:* A detailed plan for addressing the scope of work described above. This should include a summary of potential analytical approaches, a project schedule, a brief summary of how the project will be managed, and a list of all personnel who may work on the project.
- *Qualifications of Applicant:* A summary of the qualifications of the applicant and other team members, if applicable. Curriculum vitae should be included for all individuals who will work on the project.
- *References:* All proposals must include a list of public and private clients for whom the firm has provided similar services to those set forth in this RFP.
- *Proposed Budget:* A detailed budget, including the basis for the charges (e.g. hourly rates, fixed fees).

## **Timeline**

February 26, 2024: Issuance of Request for Proposals

April 12, 2024: Deadline for proposal submission

May 15, 2024: Contractor notification

May 31, 2024: Contracts finalized

June 1, 2024: Project begins

December 31, 2025: Submission of final report

## **Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on prior experience, references, qualifications, and budget. The Council may request additional information as deemed necessary or negotiate modifications to an accepted proposal.

## **Requests for Further Information**

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**Disclaimer**

1. All costs associated with the preparation and presentation of the proposal will be borne by applicants.
2. Proposals and their accompanying documentation will not be returned.
3. Respondents must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and/or pending civil/criminal legal actions.
4. The Council reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, negotiate with all qualified applicants, cancel or modify this request for proposals in part or in its entirety, or change the application guidelines, when it is in its best interests.