



## New England Fishery Management Council

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# **COUNCIL SOLICITING CONTRACT WORK**

## **Scallop Survey Working Group**

### **21-02-09**

### **Project Description**

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) requires the services of an independent contractor to support and document the work of the Council's Scallop Survey Working Group (SSWG). This is a temporary contractor role, commencing on or about March 22, 2021 and expected to be completed by July 1, 2022. The contractor will work closely with the representative of the Council and support the work of the SSWG co-chairs.

### **Introduction**

The Scallop Survey Working Group (SSWG) is being established to: (1) facilitate collaboration around integrated approaches to conducting scallop surveys that support stock assessments and management; and (2) explore mechanisms for implementation. The SSWG will make recommendations about specific issues stemming from the Council's Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program Review (2019), the Scallop Survey Peer Review (2015), and the last research track assessment (SARC 65 - 2018). The group will also address the likely disruption offshore wind development will have on scallop surveys and monitoring operations.

The area of focus for the working group will be to develop recommendations addressing terms of reference (TORs). These recommendations will be made to the New England Fishery Management Council (Council) and shared with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). The group shall strive to address the TORs incrementally, and report to the Council as work is completed.

### **Background**

The Atlantic sea scallop fishery is one of the most valuable fisheries in the United States. A central component of scallop management has been reliance on scallop surveys to identify and monitor recruitment events and trends in the resource to support the area management strategy. Annual surveys are conducted by NOAA Fisheries and institutions receiving federal grants through the Atlantic Sea Scallop RSA Program. Surveys consistently rank as the Council's highest RSA program priority, with multiple institutions (typically 3-4) receiving RSA awards each year to conduct surveys. These surveys employ a range of technologies and methods to monitor the resource and frequently overlap with one another. Results are used to establish annual scallop management measures and harvest specifications for the following fishing year.

A recommendation of the Scallop Survey Review (2015) was to devise an optimal and integrated statistical survey design recognizing the value of different sampling methodologies and designs. The Council's RSA Program Review (2019) found that sea scallop surveys are used to support management of the sea scallop fishery, but they lack a rigorous scientific design that addresses

spatial coverage, sampling design, sampling technology, sampling frequency, sampling intensity, and models for data assimilation. The 2019 review made a series of recommendations for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of resource surveys for scallops. The review noted opportunities to issue multi-year grants (up to 5 years) with inter-annual flexibility to ensure adequate survey coverage. The review also recommended convening a group to consider ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of scallop surveys.

Recommendations from the last scallop research track assessment (SARC 65 – 2018) also called for improved coordination between various survey programs, including survey design, timing, and standardized data formatting. SARC 65 recommended collecting information needed for the management of the scallop fishery in the Gulf of Maine, as well as the development of a spatially explicit methodology for forecasting the abundance and distribution of sea scallops by incorporating spatial data from surveys, landings, and fleet effort.

In addition, offshore wind development planned for a sizeable portion of the Northeast U.S. Shelf Ecosystem, especially in New York Bight and Southern New England, will impact Atlantic scallop survey and monitoring operations by disrupting randomized station selection methodologies, and constrain vessel and survey gear operational requirements. Loss of survey areas could increase the uncertainty in estimates of abundance, distribution, environmental parameters, and biological rates and potentially disrupt the effective area-based management strategy. Wind energy development will also alter seafloor and oceanographic habitats, which may affect species abundance, distributions, and biological rates. These changes need to also be considered in current and future survey designs.

Through the TORs, the SSWG will address these topics.

### **Organizational Structure**

The SSWG is a working group of the Council and is tasked with addressing the terms of reference set for the group. It is composed of government and non-government experts with experience in Atlantic sea scallop surveys and related fields who shall provide recommendations in response to terms of reference. The SSWG shall report directly to the Council, and the SSWG's recommendations will be forwarded by the Council to the NEFSC. The NEFSC is committed to the serious consideration of all recommendations brought forth through this process. Subgroups, comprised of members of the working group, may be established to address specific TORs at the discretion of the co-chairs, subject to available resources.

### **Statement of Work – Services Required**

The Council seeks a contractor to support and document the work of the SSWG. The contractor will be required to complete the following tasks:

1. Working with a representative of the Council and the SSWG co-chairs, develop and finalize a detailed set of terms of reference (TORs) for the SSWG to review at its initial working group meeting. This will require gathering input from work group members in advance of the first SSWG meeting.
2. Support the execution of 4-6 full-day SSWG meetings over a 12–15-month period. As part of this task, the contractor will:

- a. Develop detailed agendas for each SSWG meeting, including a meeting plan and objectives, and meeting materials.
  - b. Provide experienced facilitators to support the SSWG co-chairs with execution of the SSWG meetings. SSWG meetings are expected to have roughly 15 participating working group members, plus public attendees (30 total).
  - c. Prepare a detailed written meeting summary promptly at the conclusion of each meeting, including key discussion points and recommendations. The summary will be reviewed by the working group and approved by the co-chairs.
3. With the finalized TORs approved by the Council's Executive Director, create a work plan to guide and assist the SSWG to address the TORs, with deadlines to ensure that work is completed in a timely manner. This work plan should account for Council meetings, as well as the work of the Scallop Committee and Plan Development Team and availability of working group members.
  - a. Track work plan progress addressing the TORs and provide written monthly updates on the status of work to the SSWG and Council staff.
4. Under the direction of the co-chairs, prepare a final written report summarizing the recommendations of the SSWG in response to each TOR, incorporating feedback from the SSWG.

Necessary office space, software, and equipment will be provided by the contractor. Approved travel expenses will be reimbursed by the Council and need not be included in the contractor's proposal.

The Council expects completion of this work by July 1, 2022.

#### **Desired Experience and Demonstrated Skills**

1. General understanding of fishery management programs at the state and national levels.
2. Familiarity with the use of scientific information in the fishery management process.
3. Ability to research and compile fisheries management policies and scientific research with minimal supervision.
4. Strong writing and speaking skills. Demonstrated ability to summarize complex policies, procedures, and recommendations in clear, easily read documents, and through concise verbal discussions.
5. Demonstrated experience supporting and facilitating both in-person and webinar-based meetings for approximately 30 participants.
6. Demonstrated ability to manage the logistical details for meetings with up to 30 attendees.
7. Demonstrated ability to summarize conflicting information in an objective manner.
8. Candidates employed by advocacy organizations or by organizations that are parties in federal fishery lawsuits will not be considered.
9. The successful candidate will not have a conflict of interest, defined as any financial or non-financial interest that conflicts with the actions or judgments of an individual because it could:
  - a. Impair the individual's objectivity;
  - b. Create an unfair competitive advantage for any person or organization; or
  - c. Create the appearance of either item listed above.

### **Application Submission Instructions**

Interested professionals are encouraged to submit a letter of interest, current resume or CV for all staff that will work on this contract, examples of similar work completed for other organizations or publications, and a proposed budget for this work. In addition, applicants should describe the approach that would be used to meet the requirements of this project, including deliverables. Travel expenses need not be included in the budget as approved travel will be reimbursed by the Council following the Council's travel authorization process.

Proposals must include a detailed breakdown of anticipated staff hours, hourly rates, and costs in the following categories and tasks:

- I. Development of an initial set of draft TORs in collaboration with Council Staff and SSWG co-chairs in preparation for the initial working group meeting.
- II. Supporting 4-6 working group meetings (agenda setting and meeting plans, written meeting summary, etc).
- III. Creating a work plan for the SSWG to address the TORs, and providing monthly updates on the progress of the working group.
- IV. Completion of a final written report documenting the recommendations of the SSWG.

Letters of interest and supporting materials should be received **no later than 8:00 a.m. on March 1, 2021**, and addressed to Executive Director Thomas Nies, NEFMC, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950, or by e-mail at [tnies@nefmc.org](mailto:tnies@nefmc.org). Questions concerning this proposal should be directed to the same address.

This work will be funded under New England Fishery Management Council Award #FNA20NMF4410001. Compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (P.L. 109-479 as amended) and the Council's standard contract terms and conditions will be expected. The Council's standard terms and conditions are available upon request.

NEFMC takes affirmative action toward to ensuring equal opportunities; the Council encourages women-owned businesses, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities to submit letters of interest and other requested materials for consideration under this announcement.

#### **Disclaimer**

1. All costs associated with the preparation and presentation of the proposal will be borne by consultants submitting letters of interest.
2. Materials submitted will not be returned.
3. Respondents must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and will be expected to comply with all federal grant contracting requirements.
4. The Council reserves the right to accept or reject any or all letters of interest received; negotiate with all qualified potential candidates; cancel or modify the RFP in part or in its entirety; and/or change the application guidelines, when it is in its best interests.