



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

March 1, 2000

To whom it may concern:

The attached Request for Information (RFI) is to call your attention to an opportunity to submit research ideas in the form of concept papers. These research ideas will be considered for implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service in consultation with the fishing industry and the fisheries science research community.

Concept papers must be postmarked by April 10, 2000 and will be reviewed by the New England Fisheries Management Council's Research Steering Committee. Based upon the review, a) the proposer may be asked to develop and submit a full proposal, b) the proposer may be asked to team with co-researchers to develop a full proposal, or c) a decision may be made not to act upon the concept at the current time.

While this opportunity is open to traditional research scientists and institutions, emphasis is also being placed on soliciting and encouraging ideas from members of the fishing industry. This is in recognition of the unique perspective that fishermen and other industry members have on fishery issues through their observations from working in the fisheries.

The ultimate objectives of this Cooperative Research initiative are to improve the data upon which fishery management decisions are made as well as improving communications between fishermen, scientists and fisheries managers.

If you have further questions regarding this opportunity please feel free to contact Nick Anderson at 978-281-9383 or by email at nick.anderson@noaa.gov. Additional contact information as well as a mailing address is contained in the RFI.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia A. Kurkul".

Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator



3/01/00

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF COOPERATIVE RESEARCH

SUMMARY

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is seeking ideas for research projects involving cooperation between members of the fishing industry and scientists. To encourage research ideas from fishermen as well as from scientists, NMFS is soliciting concept papers that state succinctly the objectives and benefits of projects and identify what resources are available to the applicant and what other resources are needed. Projects must be related to conservation efforts or management measures affecting the northeast multi-species fishery as defined by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC).

Based on the ideas in the concept papers, NMFS may request some proposers to develop a full proposal, or it may issue a Request for Proposals if a number of similar projects are proposed. Alternatively, NMFS may contract the proposers to convene a team to develop the ideas further. A request to develop a full proposal or to convene a team does not imply that the full proposal will be accepted by NMFS. If a full proposal is eventually accepted, it will be awarded a contract to complete the research.

Concept papers for projects that make use of fishermen's vessels which are currently available through the disaster assistance program are welcome. A list of vessels will be made available upon request.

Concept papers must be postmarked no later than Monday, April 10, 2000.

BACKGROUND

In the interest of promoting understanding and exchanging information between the fishing industry, marine scientists and regulators, Congress has appropriated \$4,000,000 to support cooperative research projects, management, and enforcement, including enhanced stock assessments and discard mortality monitoring. With regard to the portion of the funds to be used for cooperative research, Congress instructed NMFS to collaborate with the New England Fisheries Management Council and affected stakeholders to design and prioritize cooperative research programs. NMFS anticipates that between 4 and 20 cooperative research projects will be funded through this program.

A Research Steering Committee (RSC) has been established by the New England Fishery Management Council. The RSC has met monthly since October 1999 and has developed broad priorities for cooperative research. This Request For Information (RFI) solicits ideas for projects based on the recommendations of the RSC. The funding priorities developed by the RSC have been listed under the section entitled Suggested Research Areas. The basis upon which the

concept papers requested in this RFI will be judged reflect criteria developed by the RSC.

Geographic Scope: Research projects will be limited to those that take place in waters within the range of the northeast multispecies fishery. This is a fishery for a complex of groundfish, including cod, pollock, halibut, whiting, ocean pout, redfish, and various species of hakes and flounders.

Potential Environmental Effects of the Project: If possible, concept papers shall identify potential conflicts with any fishery management, essential fish habitat, marine mammals, or endangered species regulations. Note that projects contravening such regulations will not be allowed to proceed until they have received an exemption from those regulations in accordance with the usual NMFS procedures for issuing exempted fishery permits. (NMFS will provide advice in completing the application for such a permit, if required, but the primary responsibility for obtaining exemptions from any regulations would be the contractor's.)

Relationship to Disaster Assistance Program: This program is separate from the disaster assistance program, although funds from this program may be used to cover costs of research using vessels available through the disaster assistance program. Fishermen may participate in this cooperative research program, even if they are not participating in the disaster assistance program. Further questions on the relationship between these programs can be directed to the NMFS point of contact indicated on the last page of this document.

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The RSC has developed four broad categories of research in which cooperation between fishermen and scientists would be particularly beneficial. Within these categories, the RSC has identified several key areas that it considers of high priority. NMFS particularly welcomes concept papers that address research needs in these areas, although it will accept for consideration any ideas relating to issues affecting groundfish management and conservation. Priority areas marked with an asterisk (*) are higher priority.

The following are the priority areas identified by the RSC:

I. Resource dynamics

- Improve stock assessments through the use of sentinel fisheries*
- Improve stock assessments through the use of industry-conducted fishery resource surveys*
- Improve stock identification and delineation, especially for Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank cod*
- Investigate the effects of mobile gear on newly settled or near-zero year classess of managed species*
- Obtain better fine-scale information on resource status in inshore areas*
- Ask fishermen how to improve the quality of fisheries data.*

II. Fishery Management Practices

- Monitor discards, including regulatory discards*
- Develop effective and efficient methods to reduce impacts of unwanted bycatch *
- Improve mesh size selectivity and escapement information*
- Improve fishery stock assessments through the use of study fleets*
- Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of area closures as a management tool to protect and rebuild stocks
- Evaluate the use of Marine Protected Areas
- Develop methods to collect and/or integrate ecosystems information into fisheries management decision-making.

III. Habitat

- Measure effects of gear on fish habitat and determine how to reduce negative impacts*
- Map habitat and integrate information with fisheries landings data.*

IV. Socio-economics

- Develop databases to better evaluate the economic and social impacts of management programs*
- Improve the exchange of information between fishermen and scientists*
- Develop an understanding of fishermen's views of the future of fishing.

Project Requirements: The objective of these projects is to encourage cooperative research between fisheries managers, scientists, and industry members. Specific activities may vary with each project, but all projects will require the following elements:

- A. Ensure that scientists and fishermen are involved in both the planning and the execution of the project.
- B. conduct or oversee the execution of the research project.
- C. provide administrative or other necessary support for the program and personnel, including ensuring communication with NMFS,
- D. ensure that adequate insurance is provided
- E. provide interim reports and a final report in accordance with a schedule negotiated with NMFS.

CONCEPT SUBMISSIONS

Concept papers must be postmarked by April 10, 2000. Submit papers to: Nick Anderson, Office of Cooperative Programs Coordination, NMFS/NER, and One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930.

Concept papers will be reviewed by the RSC using the criteria listed below. Based on this review, NMFS may decide to: a) invite the proposer to develop and submit a full proposal, b) recommend appropriate teaming arrangements, c) if multiple papers involving the same

concept are submitted then NMFS may develop an RFP and request fully developed proposals from all interested parties, or d) reject the concept. A request for a full proposal does not mean that the proposer will receive a contract. The intention is that approximately 50% of the concept papers that are asked to submit full proposals will be issued contracts.

Concept Paper Format: A concept paper shall be no more than four (4) pages in length, not counting resumes and other supporting documentation. It shall state clearly the general concept of the project that is envisaged and how the project would improve the conservation or management of groundfish stocks. A concept paper may include a discussion of how the project would meet the evaluation criteria. A concept paper shall identify individuals or groups that might be involved in the research as well as the resources available and the additional resources needed to do the job. Such resource needs could include a lack of contacts within the fishing or academic communities, equipment and the possible use of disaster assistance vessels if desired.

An estimate of the funds needed to execute the project shall be included. These estimates are non-binding. The paper must include information about how to contact the proposer.

Concept papers shall follow the following format:

1. Project Summary
2. Project goals and objectives
3. Value of project to fishery conservation and management
4. Statement of work
 - i. Project design
 - ii. Vessel and equipment needs
 - iii. Personnel
 - a. personnel resources already available (identify persons involved in the development of the proposal)
 - b. personnel resources needed and why (state skills and expertise needed for which individuals have not yet been identified)
 - c. industry participation
5. Expected products
6. Estimated budget to conduct the project
7. Contact information
8. Supporting documentation: Resumes, cooperative research agreements, contracts, etc.

CONCEPT PAPER CRITERIA

Concept papers will be reviewed based on the following criteria.

I. Research Value:

- Does it improve data available for management?
- Does it address an immediate management need?

Does it contribute to a long-term strategy to rebuild and sustain stocks?

II. Collaborative Value

Does the project promote collaboration between fishermen and scientists?

Does it involve a high degree of pro-active participation by fishermen?

Does it provide compensation to fishermen?

Does it address fishermen's interests or concerns?

QUALIFICATIONS

Any U.S. citizen may submit concept papers. Note that NMFS expects that the primary operations center of anyone receiving a contract under the cooperative research program will be located in the New England region.

Questions or comments regarding proposed projects described in this notice should be directed to Nick Anderson, who can be reached at the following address/numbers: Nick Anderson, Office of Cooperative Programs Coordination, National Marine Fisheries Service/NER, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, (978) 281-9383; FAX number (978) 281-9371. E-mail inquiries may be made to: nick.anderson@noaa.gov.