



Request for Proposals

Evaluation of Low-Profile Gillnets to Mitigate Sturgeon Bycatch in the Commercial Spiny Dogfish Fishery

Summary: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) seeks a highly qualified contractor to evaluate the use of low-profile gillnets to mitigate sturgeon bycatch in the commercial spiny dogfish fishery.

Proposal Submission Deadline: April 15, 2024

Term of Contract: May 2024-December 2025

Background

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) are jointly developing a framework action to reduce bycatch of Atlantic sturgeon (an endangered species) in the monkfish and spiny dogfish gillnet fisheries. This action was initiated in response to Endangered Species Act requirements, and the recommendations made by the Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch Working Group, as described in the [Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large Mesh Gillnet Fisheries](#). One of the recommendations made by the working group was that the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils take action to reduce sturgeon bycatch in federal large mesh gillnet fisheries by 2024.

At present, studies have shown that a reduction in sturgeon bycatch in monkfish gillnet gear can be achieved through the use of a modified low-profile gillnet. The Action Plan emphasized the need for continued industry engagement and collaboration with scientific experts to further develop and perfect net designs that optimize catchability of target species while retaining reduced bycatch of Atlantic sturgeon. Currently, low-profile gillnets to reduce sturgeon bycatch have not been tested in the spiny dogfish fishery. In September/October 2023, the MAFMC and NEFMC adopted a research priority to explore use of low-profile gillnet gear in the spiny dogfish fishery and in the Southern New England region for monkfish as a potential future management tool. This request for proposals focuses on the spiny dogfish aspect of the above research priority.

Scope of Work

The contractor, supported by Council staff, will conduct an evaluation of low-profile gillnet gear in the Mid-Atlantic spiny dogfish fishery and its effectiveness in the reduction of sturgeon bycatch. This evaluation would inform the use of this gear as a potential tool for sturgeon bycatch reduction. The contractor will conduct field testing of low-profile gear and an analysis of results with the following project requirements:

- Develop a low-profile gillnet configuration appropriate for the spiny dogfish fishery
- Conduct a side-by-side comparison of experimental gillnet gear with the current industry standard on commercial vessels in the Mid-Atlantic region;
- Meet and engage with industry members to ensure appropriate timing and location of fieldwork;

- Evaluate effectiveness of low-profile gear at reducing sturgeon bycatch;
- Evaluate effectiveness of low-profile gear at retaining all potential target species with a focus on spiny dogfish;
- Provide interim progress reports to Council staff as each fieldwork season is completed and a final report to the Council in early 2026; and
- Provide insight into the potential costs and ability to implement low-profile nets more widely in the spiny dogfish fishery.

Contractor Qualifications

Applicants should have experience with field data collection and analysis related to gear comparison studies and demonstrated documentation of methods, results, and conclusions. Experience working with commercial fishermen and familiarity with low-profile gillnet configurations is also required.

How to Apply

Applicants should submit a proposal to Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director, by email (cmoore@mafmc.org) by 11:59 pm on Monday, April 15, 2024. Proposals should include the following elements:

- *Executive Summary*: A summary of the proposed scope of work as well as 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 analysis 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.
- *Proposed Budget*: A detailed budget, including the basis for the charges (e.g. hourly rates, fixed fees).
- *References*: Names, full addresses, and phone numbers for three clients for whom the applicant has provided similar services to those requested.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on methodology, 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.