

River Herring Conservation Plan Request for Proposals

October 2014

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is issuing this RFP to address research needs and further conservation actions identified through river herring conservation plan development.

B. Background on Conservation Plan and Purpose

On August 12, 2013, NOAA Fisheries announced that listing river herring under the Endangered Species Act as either threatened or endangered was not warranted. NOAA Fisheries also announced the agency would provide funding to the ASMFC in order to work with partners to implement a coordinated coastwide effort to proactively conserve river herring and address data gaps. The primary objective of this initiative is to develop and implement a dynamic conservation plan to help restore river herring throughout its Atlantic coastal range. This will include identifying important conservation efforts, addressing critical data gaps, and monitoring and evaluating progress in achieving the goals. This effort will coordinate and build upon the many previous and ongoing efforts to further river herring conservation. A Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG) was convened to develop information that will be used by NOAA Fisheries and ASMFC in the development of this plan. The plan is intended to increase public awareness about river herring, stimulate cooperative research efforts on higher priority actions, and foster efforts to conserve the species.

This RFP, developed in collaboration with NOAA Fisheries, is intended to address critical data gaps and further needed conservation actions identified through the early stages of river herring conservation plan development. Priorities were developed based on individual expert opinion received through the River Herring TEWG and its subgroups, public comment/input provided at the TEWG meetings, and factoring in specific NOAA Fisheries' river herring management and science needs. This includes NOAA Fisheries' need to further conservation efforts and address data gaps and uncertainties to help better inform a potential future Endangered Species Act status review for river herring.

C. Program Priorities

The ASMFC intends to fund projects in the following priority areas. Tier 1 includes those areas where proposals are most sought (and are not listed in any priority order), but

proposals from Tier 2 will also be considered (which are listed in priority order and intended to better inform less understood potential threats).

Tier 1

- The following information is needed to establish performance standards for fish passage effectiveness and restoration needs¹ :
 - Improve understanding of historic and current distribution of alewife and blueback herring spawning habitat, and the spawning behavior of blueback herring;
 - Assess river herring production capacity and drivers of production in various habitats; and
 - Calculate and/or improve life stage-specific estimates of natural and human mortality rates for river herring.
- Riverine mortality at hydrodams (i.e., predator mortality due to upriver migration delays and downstream turbine and other dam-related mortality).
- Further information on the impacts of fisheries on river herring and/or reducing impacts through activities such as:
 - Comparing and contrasting catch data collected at sea to data collected dockside;
 - Evaluating the suitability of electronic monitoring and reporting for collecting data on river herring;
 - Supporting existing state portside sampling programs;
 - Supplementing river herring bycatch avoidance programs; and
 - Gear modification.
- Information on the marine phase of alewife and blueback herring specific to:
 - Migrations at sea (e.g., determination of river origin of individual catch in coastal/ocean independent surveys, tagging);
 - Determination of river origin of incidental catch in non- targeted ocean fisheries; and
 - Marine survival.

Tier 2

- Further information on contaminant effects in freshwater systems.
- Information on trophic interactions such as those between river herring and other fish species (e.g., Atlantic herring, Atlantic mackerel) and predator/prey impacts.

¹ This information will also improve other modeling efforts.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces approximately \$260,000 may be available in award amounts to be determined by the proposals. It is expected that these funds will provide support for approximately 1 - 5 projects at approximately \$50,000 to \$250,000 per project.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and ASMFC. Publication of this notice does not oblige ASMFC to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. If applicants incur any costs prior to an award being made, they do so at their own risk of not being reimbursed.

B. Project/Award Period

Proposals should be submitted for one year of funding support where possible, but multi-year projects will also be considered.

III. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include any U.S. citizen, institutions of high education, non-profits, commercial organizations, as well as state, local and Indian tribal governments. International involvement is allowable through collaboration with an U.S. entity above.

Non Eligible Applicants

You are not eligible to submit an application under this program if you are an employee of any Federal agency; a Regional Fishery Management Council (Council); or an employee of a Council. However, Council members who are not Federal employees can submit a proposal.

Federal agencies and their personnel are not permitted to receive funding under this competition; however federal scientists can serve as uncompensated partners or co-Principal Investigators on proposals. Should you wish to partner with a NMFS employee, who will act as a partner in the proposed research project, a written agreement of this participation must be provided, detailing their involvement, signed by the employee's supervisor. NMFS involvement could include planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing proposed project activities and frequent contact with the Applicant to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Submit Application Package

Marin Hawk
ASMFC
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Or

mhawk@asmfc.org

B. Content and Form of Application

Application Format:

All application materials should be composed in PDF or a common word processing format, and when printed out should meet all format requirements. Proposal format must be in at least a 12 point font and double spaced. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 10 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 10-page limit. Data management plans and/or access agreements as well as budgets and justifications, project summary, and previous, current and pending support sections do not count towards the 10-page limit. Appendices may be included but must not exceed a total of 10 pages in length. Appendices may include information such as curriculum, resumes, and/or letters of endorsement. Additional informational material will be disregarded.

Proposals must include the following information in the format outlined below.

a. Project summary (1-page limit):

- 1) Organization title.
- 2) Principal Investigator(s) (PI).
- 3) Address, telephone number, and email address of Principal Investigator(s).
- 4) Area of interest for which you are applying.
- 5) Project title.
- 6) Project objectives for the project period.
- 7) Geographic Location: The location where the project will be administered and where the scope of project will be conducted.
- 8) Summary of work to be performed within the project period.
- 9) Budget Information/Request

10) Requested award period: Provide the total time period of the proposed project. The award period typically will be limited to one-year projects.

b. Project description (10 page limit): Each project must be completely and accurately described. The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include: specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work and the expected significance; relation to longer-term goals of the PI's project; and relation to other work planned, anticipated, or underway through Federal or other assistance.

Each project must be described as follows:

- (1) Identification of problem(s): Describe the specific problem(s) or area(s) of interest to be addressed. Specify how the problem(s) or area(s) of interest directly relates to a Program Priority(ies).
- (2) Project objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why", and; attainable within the time, money and human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment oriented and identify specific performance measures.
- (3) Project narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished during the study period. This description must include the specific methodologies, by project job activity, to include the seasonality and location in which the activity will occur, being as specific as possible.

Investigators submitting proposals in response to this announcement are strongly encouraged to develop inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary research teams in the form of single, integrated proposals or as individual proposals that are clearly linked together. The project narrative must include a milestone table that summarizes the procedures/objectives that are to be attained in each project month covered. Table format should follow sequential month rather than calendar month (i.e. Project period Month 1, Month 2... versus October, November...).

- (4) Permitting: List any federal, state, or local permits, authorizations of waivers that would be required to complete the proposed activity (e.g., permits issued pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, or other permit requirements related to the proposed research. The proposal also must describe whether the investigators have the necessary permits in hand, or what steps the investigators have taken to obtain the necessary permits (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending, permit granted, etc.). Provide the date the permit, authorization, or waiver was obtained or will be

obtained. Provide copies of the permit, authorization, or waiver as appropriate. Projects will only be considered if they can demonstrate no adverse effects to protected resources. All proposals must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required, and if there are any adverse effects to protected resources. If no permits are requested, this section must indicate "no permits are required"

- (5) Benefits or results expected: Identify and document the results or benefits to be derived from the proposed activities.
- (6) Data Sharing and outreach plan: ASMFC must have access to data developed through the project. Environmental data and information collected and/or created under this award must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal costs, in a timely manner except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security requirements. Your proposal must include a data sharing plan to make available to the public all environmental and other data created during the course of the project. If the proposed activities will not generate any environmental data, please include the statement "this project will not generate any environmental data." The data sharing plan does not count towards the 10 page project description limitation.
- (7) Total project costs and budget narrative: Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description, including cost-share contributions and donations. A suggested format is provided at the end of this document. A budget narrative should be included which explains and justifies the expenditures in each category. Provide cost projections and details on Partner/in-kind contribution (e.g., staff time, facilities, IT support, overhead, etc.).

Overhead rates may not exceed 20% of total costs unless mandated by law or policy. Applicants may not be able to control overhead/indirect amounts charged. However, where there is flexibility, the lowest amount of overhead should be charged. When this is accomplished indicate on the 'cost summary' sheet the difference between the overhead that could have been charged and the actual amount charged, if different. If overhead is charged to the Program, it cannot also be listed as in-kind.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Full proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements and must be received by 5 p.m. eastern time on Monday, November 13, 2014. Failure to follow these requirements will result in proposals being returned without review. Facsimile will be not be accepted.

D. Funding Restrictions

Indirect costs should be limited to no more than 20% to allow more funds to be directed to river herring conservation.

E. Other Submission Requirements

Permits and Approvals

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impacts on the environment. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further analysis, covered under an existing programmatic analysis, or whether additional analysis is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If project is selected for funding, additional information regarding possible environmental impact of your project may be requested. Additionally, projects will only be considered if they can demonstrate no adverse effects to protected resources

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposal to the program goals (35 points)
2. Technical merit (e.g., complies with existing state/federal standardized sampling protocols) (25 points)
3. Project costs (15 points)
4. Coordination demonstrated (e.g., elimination of duplicity, partnerships) and meets overlapping river herring needs (10 points)
5. Overall qualifications of applicants (10 points)
6. Outreach and education (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Full Proposal Review and Selection

1. Initial Evaluation of Applications

Once a full application has been received by ASMFC, an initial review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete or non-responsive will be eliminated from further review.

2. Technical Review

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will undergo a technical merit review. Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three independent reviewers. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score proposals (1-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers.

3. Review Panel

Following completion of the technical review, ASMFC will convene a review panel with NOAA Fisheries staff to review the scored proposals and make the selection based on the factors set out in Section C.

C. Selection Factors

The ASMFC will, in consultation with NOAA Fisheries staff, review the ranking of the proposals. Awards shall be made in rank order unless it is justified that a proposal be selected out of rank order based upon any of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds by
 - a. Geographic area
 - b. Type of institutions
 - c. Type of partners
 - d. Research areas
 - e. Project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies or others
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I.B. and IV.B.
5. Applicant's prior award performance in conducting a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. This consideration may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.
6. Environmental consideration

D. Proposal Deadline, Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Proposals will be submitted to ASMFC by Monday, November 13, 2014. Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during the 120-days following the date given in this announcement that the proposals are due to the ASMFC. Funding should begin during spring 2015 for most approved projects.

VI. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports.

1. Financial Reports must be submitted to the ASMFC.
2. Performance Progress Reports must be submitted to the ASMFC.
3. Publications and videos should acknowledge sponsorship as ASMFC and NOAA Fisheries.

VII. Contacts

For further information about the Program, please contact Marin Hawk (mhawk@asmfc.org) and Diane Borggaard (diane.borggaard@noaa.gov).

TEMPLATE FOR PROPOSALS

Example budget table template. Budget narrative should provide further detail on these costs.

Description	Calculation	Cost
Personnel (a)		
Supervisor	Ex: 500 hrs x \$20/hr	\$10,000
Biologist		
Technician		
Fringe (b)		
Supervisor	Ex: 15% of salary	\$1500
Biologist		
Technician		
Travel (c)		
Mileage for sampling trips	Ex: Estimate 2000 miles x \$0.33/mile	\$660
Travel for meeting		
Equipment (d)		
Boat	Ex: \$7000, based on current market research	\$7000
Supplies (e)		
Safety supplies		\$1200
Sampling supplies		\$1000
Laptop computers	2 laptops @\$1500 each	\$3000
Software		\$500
Contractual (f)		
Data Entry Contract	Ex: 1000 hrs x \$20/hr	\$20,000
Other (h)		
Printing and binding		
Postage		
Telecommunications charges		
Internet Access charges		
Totals		
Total Direct Charges (i)		
Indirect Charges (j)		
Total (sum of Direct and Indirect) (k)		