



4107 West Spruce St Suite 200
Tampa, Florida 33607 USA
Phone: 813.348.1630 • Toll free: 888.833.1844 • Fax: 813.348.1711
www.gulfcouncil.org

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Development of Regulatory Streamlining Procedures - Management Flexibility Measures

Proposal Submission Deadline: July 10, 2026

Term of Contract: 14-16 months

Maximum Funding Available for Work: \$150,000

The Gulf Council (Council) seeks a highly qualified contractor with biological expertise and experience in the development of fishery management plans and amendments. The contractor will work closely with Council staff and its partner agencies to develop the processes and supporting documents to implement the following regulatory streamlining measures: (1) Expand flexibility in the framework procedures that are used to make modifications to existing management measures, and (2) Develop framework procedures to allow a more automated process for updating catch advice and other routine management changes for a suite of pilot species. The Council anticipates the contractor will be hired by Summer 2026 and work should be completed by Fall 2027.

Background:

The Council aims to streamline regulatory processes to build the capacity to respond more rapidly to new scientific information as Gulf fisheries continue to face challenges from changing fishery conditions. The Council recently conducted a [regulatory process review](#) to evaluate approaches used by other regional fishery management councils and identify applicable opportunities for improving efficiency and throughput in Gulf fisheries management. A central focus of the recommendations that emerged from this review was the need to implement routine, non-controversial measures more quickly. Presently, even minor adjustments to management advice often require extended timelines to implement, resulting in management decisions and regulatory changes that are based on outdated scientific information. The Council has identified two initial opportunities to increase efficiency in implementing routine management measures: (1) Expanding flexibility in the framework procedures that are used to make modifications to existing management measures, and (2) Developing new framework procedures to allow a more automated process for updating catch advice and other routine management measures for a suite of pilot species. These management flexibility measures aim to improve the timeliness of routine management advice and allow the Council and staff increased capacity for work on more complex actions.

The Council currently has three types of regulatory mechanisms for addressing fishery management issues: development of fishery management plans or amendments to those plans for major changes, interim or emergency rules to temporarily address emerging issues, and framework actions for predetermined procedures that allow for changes to specific management measures and parameters. Changes to management measures can typically be made more quickly by a framework action than through a plan amendment. The two streamlining opportunities described above aim to expand the use of framework actions to promote efficiency. First, the Council seeks to evaluate the current framework procedures¹ that specify the management measures that can be adjusted without a plan amendment, to better define the framework procedures where necessary, and explore options to expand the framework procedures to increase management flexibility for multiple fishery management plans. The Council is interested in evaluating the framework procedures in their entirety but anticipates that the efficiency gains will largely be focused on the ‘abbreviated’ framework procedures, which define regulatory changes that may be categorized as routine or insignificant. Presently, the abbreviated framework procedures are quite narrow in scope. This effort aims to allow for increased use of abbreviated documentation processes for routine management adjustments and facilitate a cooperative understanding of when management actions can qualify for a categorical exclusion from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the most streamlined form of environmental review for actions that do not have significant effects.

Second, the Council seeks to consider developing an automated process for routine management actions for a suite of reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic species without sector allocations. Ideally, this automation would be developed as a ‘closed’ framework process, which defines pre-analyzed and pre-approved adjustments within a certain threshold (e.g., changes to catch limits within a percentage of the current ACL) and designates authority to the NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator to implement the changes directly via notice in the Federal Register. The main objective of this effort is to allow for rapid uptake of updated scientific information, reduce the burden on the Council and staff for developing documents for routine and minor changes, and pilot the automation process for expanded use in the future. Both streamlining actions will require the contractor to work closely with Council staff and the NMFS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) through the Interdisciplinary Plan Team (IPT) process to develop the supporting documents to implement these regulatory efficiency measures while still balancing the timing and availability of scientific information and the transparency of the Council process.

Statement of Work – Services Expected from Contractor:

The contractor will be responsible for the work products outlined below and is encouraged to contribute additional products and suggestions in the proposal to perform this work. The contractor will be responsible for meeting regularly (virtually) with Council staff to ensure the scope of work is appropriately addressed:

- Serving as a biologist and co-lead alongside Council staff on the development of two prospective amendments to fishery management plans to (1) expand flexibility in framework procedures and (2) automate catch advice.

¹ Framework procedures were most recently modified in [Amendment 49](#) to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico.

- Participating in the development of amendments to fishery management plans by writing the following document sections and using available data to support the evaluation of the effects of proposed management alternatives:
 - Introduction (including background, purpose and need, and history of management)
 - Management actions and alternatives
 - Affected environment (description of the fishery, physical, biological/ecological, and administrative environments), as needed (typically written by Southeast Regional Office staff)
 - Environmental consequences (effects on the physical and biological environment)
 - Additional sections, if required
 - Fishery impact statement
 - Cumulative effects analysis
 - Bycatch practicability analysis
- Working closely as part of an IPT throughout the document development process, which typically consists of biologists, economists, and anthropologists representing both Council staff and SERO, along with NOAA General Counsel to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, NEPA, and other applicable laws.
- Identifying and analyzing actions with a range of alternatives by which regulatory actions that are currently implemented using an abbreviated framework process may be expanded while still remaining routine and insignificant (e.g., consider changing allowable size limit adjustments from 10% of the prior size limit to 20%).
- Development of approaches to automate routine catch advice adjustments for a suite of reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic species with stock annual catch limits (i.e., no sector allocation) and frequently updated abundance indices or stock assessments, including identifying data needs and conducting analyses.
 - Potential species to consider: lane snapper, gray snapper, vermilion snapper, Spanish mackerel
 - Identifying triggers for management response in the form of data, information, or other management criteria
 - Working closely with Council staff and the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center to determine the timing and availability of various indices or scientific updates to inform this effort.
- Preparing and presenting updates on approaches and progress to the Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee, in collaboration with Council staff.

Anticipated Timeframe with Deliverables

Development of supporting documents for (1) expanding flexibility in framework procedures and (2) automating catch advice are outlined in parallel below; efforts may be staggered if deemed necessary by the IPT or Council.

- July – September 2026 | Data acquisition, preliminary development of approaches and draft management alternatives

- October 2026 | Discuss preliminary automated catch adjustment approaches, prospective management triggers and species, and timing of data availability with Scientific and Statistical Committee
- October 2026 | Present proposed management alternatives to Council
- April 2027 | Draft Options Paper (draft introduction and management alternatives sections)
- August 2027 | Public Hearing Draft (draft introduction, management alternatives, affected environment, and environmental consequences sections)
- October 2027 | Final Action (introduction, management alternatives, affected environment, and environmental consequences sections; fishery impact statement, cumulative effects and bycatch practicability analysis sections as needed)

Contractor Skills and Desired Experience:

1. Strong knowledge of the U.S. Federal fisheries management system, including a thorough understanding of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the National Standard 1 Guidelines (specifically, 50 CFR: Sections 600.305 – 600.320), the National Environmental Policy Act, other Applicable Laws.
2. Demonstrated experience developing amendments to fishery management plans, including analysis of the effects of management actions on the physical and biological environment.
3. General understanding of commercial and recreational fisheries in the Gulf of America.
4. Ability to work independently to review, assess, and synthesize materials to meet deadlines.
5. Strong written and verbal skills. Demonstrated ability to organize, synthesize, and compartmentalize information into clear categories of information.
6. The successful candidate will not have a conflict of interest, defined as any financial or other interest which conflicts with actions or judgments and could impair objectivity and/or create a competitive advantage for individuals or relevant organizations.

Applicants should submit the requested information to the Gulf Council by email by 11:59 pm on July 10, 2026. Requests for additional information can also be accepted at this email address: regulatory.contractor@gulfcouncil.org

How to Apply: Your complete application package should include: 1) cover letter that highlights your knowledge, skills, and abilities to fill this role, 2) resume/ curriculum vitae, 3) a proposal with the following items outlined below; and 4) contact information for two references or previous clients. Send to:

By regular mail:

Dr. Carrie Simmons
 Executive Director
 Gulf Council
 4107 West Spruce Street, Suite 200
 Tampa, Florida 33607 USA

By email: regulatory.contractor@gulfcouncil.org

Proposal Guidelines: Applicants should submit a proposal of no more than 15-pages. The page limit applies to the proposal only; cover letters, resumes/CVs, budget, and references do not count toward the page limit. Proposals should include the following elements:

Executive Summary: A summary of the proposed statement of work and timeline of deliverables, and brief summary of the applicant’s qualifications.

Proposed Scope of Work: A detailed plan for addressing the statement of work described above. This should include a summary of potential work products, a brief summary of how the project will be managed, and a list of all personnel who are expected to work on the project.

Qualifications of Applicant: A brief summary of the qualifications of the applicant and other team members. Curriculum vitae should be included for all individuals who will work on the project.

Milestone Chart: Proposed timeline of accomplishments and deliverables, with consideration for the anticipated timeframe described above. All work must be completed prior to the October 25-28, 2027, Council meeting (location TBD) in preparation for final action on the amendment(s). Final edits must be completed by December 1, 2027.

Proposed Budget: A detailed budget, including the basis for charges (e.g., hourly rates, fixed fees) and a breakdown of expenses by category (e.g., salary, supplies, subcontracts). Please note that the Council has budgeted separately for contractor travel, if necessary, and does not need to be included in the proposed budget.

References: Names, full addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses for two references for whom the applicant has provided similar services to those requested or are familiar with the applicant’s work and the quality of the applicant’s work products.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Next Steps: Proposals will be evaluated based on proposed process approach and budget to complete work products, and demonstration of the skills and experience described in the ‘Contractor Skills and Desired Experience’ section above. Applicants can also list other relevant experience. The Gulf Council may request additional information as deemed necessary or negotiate modifications to an accepted proposal. After a consultant is selected for funding, a formal contract will be provided to the consultant.

Disclaimer

1. This project is being funded by federal funding authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act through NOAA Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council NOAA award number NA24NMF441C0003.
2. Proposals and their accompanying documentation will not be returned but retained as part of the Gulf Council’s administrative documents.
3. All applicants included in the proposal must disclose any conflicts of interest and/or pending civil/criminal/fishery legal actions. Applicants that appear on the Sam.gov debarment and suspension list will be disqualified.

4. The Gulf 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 the best interest of the Gulf Council.
5. A non-disclosure agreement may be required for the selected contractor to access confidential NOAA Fisheries data.