



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

Reducing the Scope of Management – Evaluating Species in Gulf Fishery Management Plans

Proposal Submission Deadline: August 10, 2026

Term of Contract: 10-12 months

Maximum Funding Available for Work: \$125,000

The Gulf Council (Council) seeks a highly qualified contractor to conduct a thorough evaluation of the species currently managed under Gulf Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) to assess their need for conservation and management and identify whether each species should: (1) remain in FMPs under full federal management measures, (2) be removed from FMPs and no longer be subject to federal management measures, or (3) be designated as ecosystem component species where full federal management measures are not necessary. The Council anticipates the contractor will be hired by Summer 2026 and work should be completed by Summer 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. Additionally, the Council has developed a work plan to reduce regulatory burdens on domestic fishing in response to Executive Order 14276 on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness. Both efforts recognize the need to narrow the scope of management so that resources currently used to manage low priority species may be redirected toward high priority species and complex management actions. The two avenues identified for reducing the scope of management, removal of low priority species from FMPs and consideration of ecosystem component species designation within FMPs, aim to promote regulatory efficiency and allow for better alignment of management needs with the shifting availability of resources.

Any removal of species from Gulf FMPs must be done in compliance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), which requires that regional fishery management councils develop FMPs for stocks in need of conservation and management ([16 USC § 1852\(h\)\(1\)](#)). Not every fishery requires federal management. Any stocks that are predominately caught in federal waters and are overfished or subject to overfishing, or likely to become overfished or subject to overfishing, are considered to require

conservation and management. Beyond such stocks, councils may determine whether additional stocks require conservation and management, or conversely consider the removal of stocks no longer in need of conservation and management, based on ten non-exhaustive factors listed in the Magnuson-Stevens Act National Guidelines ([50 CFR § 600.305\(c\)\(1\)](#)):

- (i) The stock is an important component of the marine environment.
- (ii) The stock is caught by the fishery.
- (iii) Whether an FMP can improve or maintain the condition of the stock.
- (iv) The stock is a target of a fishery.
- (v) The stock is important to commercial, recreational, or subsistence users.
- (vi) The fishery is important to the Nation or to the regional economy.
- (vii) The need to resolve competing interests and conflicts among user groups and whether an FMP can further that resolution.
- (viii) The economic condition of a fishery and whether an FMP can produce more efficient utilization.
- (ix) The needs of a developing fishery, and whether an FMP can foster orderly growth.
- (x) The extent to which the fishery is already adequately managed by states, by state/Federal programs, or by Federal regulations pursuant to other FMPs or international commissions, or by industry self-regulation, consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law.

Species that are no longer in need of conservation and management but are ecologically important may be designated as ecosystem component species within an FMP rather than removed entirely. Councils have the discretion to designate any stock that is not in need of conservation and management as an ecosystem component species ([50 CFR § 600.305\(c\)\(5\)](#)). Ecosystem component species remain in FMPs for the purposes of collecting and monitoring data on non-target species, protecting ecosystem function, and prevent bycatch and waste, but do not require annual catch limits, other reference points, or accountability measures ([50 CFR § 600.310\(d\)\(1\)](#)), thus reducing workloads.

The Council seeks to evaluate the 40 species in the current Gulf FMPs to identify species that are no longer in need of conservation and management and can potentially be removed from FMPs or designated as ecosystem component species based on the criteria described above. Outcomes and recommendations that emerge from this work will be provided to the Council to determine next steps in developing a future amendment to consider removing species from FMPs or designating ecosystem component species as appropriate.

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:

- Develop and execute a process for evaluating the Council’s need for conservation and management for each species in the Gulf FMPs based on the ten factors and other criteria listed in the Magnuson-Stevens Act National Guidelines, including identifying data needs and conducting analyses. Other relevant considerations and approaches outside of the ten

factors should be proposed and analyzed as appropriate. Innovative approaches are encouraged for evaluating species with no formal stock assessments or limited data sources.

- For species identified as no longer in need of conservation and management, develop and execute a process for evaluating whether ecosystem component species designation is warranted, including the benefits and drawbacks to this designation by the Council.
- Develop recommendations for species that may be considered for removal from FMPs or designated as ecosystem component species, with consideration for the weighting of factors as described in the National Standard Guidelines ([50 CFR § 600.305\(c\)\(4\)](#)). Recommendations should outline any risks for discontinuing federal management measures for the proposed species.
- Prepare and present updates on approaches and progress to the Council and its Scientific and Statistical Committee and Advisory Panel(s).

Anticipated Timeframe with Deliverables

- August 2026 – January 2027 | Data acquisition, preliminary development of approaches for evaluating the need for conservation and management for species in Gulf FMPs and developing criteria for designating ecosystem component species, including approaches for evaluating species with limited data sources and no formal stock assessment.
- February 2027 | Discuss proposed approaches and data to inform species evaluations with the Scientific and Statistical Committee.
- April 2027 | Draft evaluation and approaches presented to the appropriate Advisory Panel(s), which are comprised of recreational and commercial fishermen, industry representatives, and others with knowledge about a specific fishery.
- June 2027 | Present draft final report and recommendations to the Council
- August 2027 | Final report due

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 Guidelines (specifically, 50 CFR: Sections 600.305 – 600.320).
2. General understanding of commercial and recreational fisheries in the Gulf of America.
3. Demonstrated experience reviewing and analyzing fisheries data.
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 August 10, 2026. Requests for additional information can also be accepted at this email address: RFP.specieevaluation@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: RFP.specieevaluation@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, and the draft final report submitted prior to the June 14-17, 2027, Council meeting (location TBD). Final edits must be completed by August 31, 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.