SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Request for Proposals
Communities Project Phase III: Modeling Effects of Changing Ecosystems on South Atlantic Fisheries and Fishing Communities

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) is requesting proposals for the next phase of its Communities Project. Phase III will use ecosystem modeling tools to study how ecosystem changes may affect fisheries and fishing communities in the South Atlantic region. In tandem with Phase I and Phase II that are identifying and engaging fishing communities, this phase will focus on developing practical tools to guide community relevant management decisions and assess risks and tradeoffs.

Proposal Submission Deadline: May 22, 2026

Background

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Communities Project is a multi-phase initiative designed to enhance the Council's understanding of how ecosystem change affects fishing communities throughout the South Atlantic region and to improve the integration of community considerations into fisheries management decisions. This project has been developed in response to increasing environmental change, uncertainty in fisheries management, and the need to better understand community vulnerability and resilience in the context of Council actions.

Phase I is focused on the place-based identification and characterization of fishing communities, including their interactions with managed species and their vulnerabilities to ecosystem change such as sea level rise, storm impacts, and shifts in species distribution and productivity. Phase II builds on this foundation by integrating community information into stakeholder outreach and communication efforts to strengthen the incorporation of community perspectives into Council deliberations. Together, these phases will generate community data and insights intended to inform the third and final phase of the Communities Project. Additional information on Phase I and II can be found here: Communities Project Phase I and II RFPs.

Phase III will apply the information and analyses developed in Phases I and II within the Ecopath with Ecosim and Ecospace (EwE) ecosystem modeling framework to better understand how ecosystem change may affect fisheries and fishing communities. This phase responds to the need to use descriptive community analyses to develop tools that support evaluation of ecosystem risk, tradeoffs, and management alternatives. By linking ecosystem dynamics to community relevant management outcomes, Phase III supports SAFMC's efforts to advance ecosystem approaches to fisheries management and meet mandates such as National Standard 8 of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery

Conservation and Management Act, which emphasizes sustained community access to fishery resources and minimization of adverse economic impacts.

Phase III will also explore potential ecosystem indicators that reflect linkages between ecosystem factors and management outcomes. These indicators will be derived from EwE scenario outputs so the Council can compare alternative future conditions and management approaches in a consistent way. EwE outputs can include social and economic impacts on factors such as fishery revenue, employment (jobs), and net economic benefit, allowing evaluation of tradeoffs across different scenarios. This information can help the Council better assess risk, understand potential community level consequences of management actions, and evaluate trade-offs among alternatives under changing environmental conditions.

Project Scope

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council seeks proposals from qualified contractors to advance research using the South Atlantic Region EwE (SAR EwE) modeling framework to investigate how ecosystem change may affect fisheries and fishing communities in the South Atlantic region. This project will integrate information and analyses being developed as part of Phase I and Phase II of the Communities Project to inform the design and evaluation of ecosystem change scenarios and the development of ecosystem indicators derived from model outputs.

The contractor will update and apply the SAR EwE ecosystem model to simulate plausible ecosystem-change scenarios, with emphasis on spatial distribution shifts, regime changes, multispecies interactions, and productivity dynamics in key fisheries. Model outputs will be used to evaluate impacts on fishery management outcomes, including socioeconomic effects on fishing communities, and to develop quantitative ecosystem indicators for risk and tradeoff analysis in Council decisions.

The scope of work shall include:

- Use the SAR EwE model to set up and run a suite of plausible ecosystem change scenarios. For each scenario, describe how changes in the environment and species interactions move through the food web and what that could mean for key fishery outputs and related social and economic implications for fishing communities.
- Integrating Phase I and Phase II community data, indicators, and insights to inform SAR EwE model configuration, scenario development, and hypothesis testing, as appropriate.
- Identifying potential ecosystem indicators that reflect linkages between ecosystem change and management outcomes, including indicators relevant to community vulnerability, exposure, and adaptive capacity.
- Exploring how community relevant ecosystem indicators could support Council ecosystem risk assessment, evaluation of multispecies tradeoffs, and management decision-making processes.

Ideally, the findings from this work will inform scenario planning, risk evaluation, and adaptive management approaches that seek to enhance the resilience of both fisheries and the fishing communities that depend on them. To ensure that project development is robust and reflective of diverse expertise, contractors will be expected to collaborate with appropriate Council advisory bodies throughout the process, integrating their input to advance the application of ecosystem models and improve the relevance of outcomes for management decisions. The contractor will work with SAFMC staff and a Project Oversight Team to ensure that the scope, analyses, and deliverables remain aligned with Council priorities and are communicated in a manner suitable for use by the Council and its advisory bodies.

Timeline

The SAFMC external grant process will be used to develop contract details once a proposal is selected; however, the project timeline is expected to begin in June 2026 and to be completed by September 2027. The timeline will include regular check-in meetings with the Council's Project Oversight Team, and a review by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. The final report will be submitted in July 2027 and presented to the full Council in September 2027.

Deliverables

- SAR EwE model with project specific configurations to explore South Atlantic climate scenarios related to spatial distribution shifts, regime changes, fishery productivity, reference points, and ecosystem indicators.
- Presentation of reconfigured SAR EwE model, methods, and ecosystem indicators to the SAFMC Scientific and Statistical Committee for review.
- Final report describing ecosystem change scenarios, indicator development, implications for fishing communities, and relevance to ecosystem risk assessment and Council management decision-making.
- Presentation of a final report to SAFMC.

Applicant Qualifications:

The successful candidate should have:

- Extensive experience with the Ecopath with Ecosim and Ecospace (EwE) framework, including model reconfiguration, climate scenario testing, and the ability to work with large datasets and spatial-temporal data. The applicant should also be skilled in using geospatial analysis and mapping.
- Experience in the development, evaluation, and interpretation of ecosystem indicators intended to inform fisheries management decision-making processes. Including experience translating complex ecosystem model outputs into indicators or metrics that are transparent, clearly documented, and relevant to management bodies and their advisors.

- An understanding of fisheries, marine habitats, and the ecological dynamics of species managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. This includes knowledge of species distributions, habitat preferences, and the impacts of environmental drivers on marine ecosystems.
- Strong communication skills to present findings, write reports, and participate in discussions with the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and other relevant groups.
- Experience in managing research projects, including planning, coordinating, and executing project tasks. The applicant should be able to meet deadlines, manage resources, and ensure the successful completion of the project.
- Experience working with environmental, landings, social, and economic data available in the South Atlantic region.

How to Apply:

Applicants should submit completed proposals to Chip.Collier@safmc.net or mailed to Chip Collier, Deputy Director for Science, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Dr, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC, 29405. Please include the project title in the subject line by 11:59 pm on Friday, May 22, 2026.

Proposals are not to exceed 10 pages and should include the following elements:

- Executive Summary: A summary of the proposed scope of work as well as summary of the applicant's qualifications (not to exceed 1 page).
- Description of Work: A detailed plan for addressing the scope of work and deliverables described above. This should include proposed analytical approaches, a project schedule, project management, and dissemination of results.
- Proposed Budget: A detailed budget for each year of the project, not to exceed a total of $170,000 for the full project term. The budget must include the basis for the charges (e.g., hourly rates, fixed fees) and a breakdown of expenses by category: Salary, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Sub-Contract, and Indirect.
- Qualifications of Applicant: A summary of the qualifications of the applicant, and other team members, if applicable.
- Outside of the 10-page limit, please include up to a two-page CV for each PI and Collaborator.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated based on relevance to the request for proposal, technical merit of the project, qualifications of applicants, budget, and outreach and communication of results. The Council may request additional information as deemed necessary or negotiate modifications to an accepted proposal.

Requests for Further Information:

Any questions regarding the RFP, please contact:

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Independent Contractor in support of the
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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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.