



# SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair  
John Carmichael, Executive Director

October 15, 2024

## **Request for Proposals** **South Atlantic Fishery Management Council** **Evaluating Climate-Driven Distribution and Habitat Changes in South Atlantic Fisheries**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC or Council) seeks proposals to update species distributions, fishery distributions, and Essential Fish Habitat designations for species managed under the Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plans.

**Proposal Submission Deadline:** November 15, 2024

### **Background**

Climate change presents a myriad of challenges to the stability and productivity of marine ecosystems, including continued changes to the range and distribution of many fish species, their associated fisheries, and essential habitats. In recognition of these challenges the U.S. East Coast Regional Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) undertook the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning<sup>1</sup> effort to begin to consider how to collectively address climate change in fisheries. The outcome of this coast-wide cooperative effort identified and prioritized a menu of potential actions that fall under three primary themes: Cross-Jurisdictional Governance; Managing Under Increased Uncertainty; and Data Sources and Partnerships. This project will address actions under both the Cross-Jurisdictional Governance and the Data Sources and Partnerships themes; and will develop recommendations and tools that will be used by the Council along with its management partners to implement climate-ready fisheries management.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) the Regional Fishery Management Councils are responsible for fisheries and their associated habitats within specified geographic areas. In cases where fisheries cross jurisdictional boundaries responsibility may be designated by the Secretary of Commerce. These instances of cross-boundary jurisdiction have been handled on an individual species basis. However, anticipating the potential for changes in the distribution of fisheries due to climate change, the NMFS recently provided guidance on specific, but not exclusive, criteria that may indicate the need to review Council authority for a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mafmc.org/climate-change-scenario-planning>

fishery<sup>2</sup>. In reaction to this new criterion and the East Coast Climate Scenario Planning effort, the U.S. East Coast Regional Councils prioritized the need to evaluate and monitor climate driven distributional changes in their fisheries using these NMFS-described indicators, and to identify and describe other indicators of significant change in existing and emerging fisheries.

The ability to identify and monitor climate driven indicators like those described by NMFS is dependent on the availability and integration of appropriate fisheries data sources. However, the fisheries data collection effort and methods used along the U.S. East Coast vary between regions, complicating evaluation of spatial distribution and habitat associations for climate driven change. This is particularly true where jurisdiction extends beyond Council boundaries (e.g., dolphin are managed by the SAFMC throughout the US Atlantic coast), but sampling methods do not. This is often a particular challenge between the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic Council boundaries because of existing cross boundary fisheries and regional sampling method differences. Thus, integrating the various data sources is necessary to describe and monitor changes in species range and distribution, and in the fisheries that catch them.

Developing an effective method of integrating the available data sources to produce accurate and informative spatial models is necessary to update and monitor fishery management units and essential fish habitats. Additionally, a climate vulnerability assessment has identified some species managed under the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) to have high or very high overall climate vulnerability.<sup>3</sup> Updating species distribution, fishery changes, and essential fish habitat will be important for successful management of these species as climate impacts their distribution.

### **Project Scope and Deliverables**

The Council seeks proposals for work to update spatial distributions and habitat associations for species and fisheries managed under the [Snapper Grouper](#), [Dolphin and Wahoo](#), and [Coastal Migratory Pelagic](#) Fishery Management Plans. Many of these species are not well represented in any single fisheries data set, so it will be necessary to identify, gather, and analyze relevant data sources that may be integrated to inform updates. The contract recipient will work with the SAFMC Habitat and Ecosystem Scientist, other Council staff, NMFS staff, and other data providers to gather and review existing information. This will be used to update spatial distributions for individual species and associated fisheries, and to update habitat associations. Recommendations for changes to essential fish habitat designations will be included in a final report to the Council.

### **Deliverables are as follows:**

1. Update spatial distributions of species, fisheries and habitat associations. Identify, analyze and integrate available data sources to update spatial distributions for existing or emerging

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2024-09/PD-01-101-12-clean-KD.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Burton, Michael L., et al. "A Climate vulnerability assessment for fish and invertebrates in the United States South Atlantic large marine ecosystem." (2023). <https://doi.org/10.25923/f90h-1z90>

fisheries and habitat associations for species managed under the Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plans.

2. Compare current Essential Fish Habitat descriptions with updated spatial distributions and develop recommendations for changes to existing descriptions and spatial representations to bring them in line with updated information.

## **Project 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 January 2025 and to be completed by March 2027. The SAFMC Habitat and Ecosystem Scientist will support data identification and gathering efforts and provide regional expertise during the project. Check-in meetings will occur quarterly with the Council's Climate Project Coordinator. A draft report will be presented to the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee for review in October 2026 with the final report presented to the full Council in March 2027.

## **Applicant Qualifications**

The contractor should have proven experience developing fisheries spatial distribution models, including integration of environmental data. The contractor should have experience analyzing commercial and recreational fisheries data and be familiar with species included in the Council's Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Dolphin Wahoo, and Snapper Grouper FMPs. Preferred experience includes developing species and fishery spatial distribution models or developing models to describe essential fish habitat.

## **How to Apply**

Applicants should submit completed proposals through email to [Chip.Collier@safmc.net](mailto:Chip.Collier@safmc.net) or by mail 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, November 15, 2024.

## **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 annual budget, not to exceed \$325,000, including the basis for the charges (e.g., hourly rates, fixed fees). The budget should include a breakdown of expenses by category: Salary, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Equipment, Sub-Contract, and Indirect.
- Qualifications of Applicant: A summary of the qualifications of the applicant, and other team members, if applicable.

## **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:

Lara Klibansky  
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Independent Contractor in support of the  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
[LaraJKlibansky@gmail.com](mailto:LaraJKlibansky@gmail.com)  
252-324-9954

## **Disclaimer:**

1. All costs associated with the preparation and presentation of the proposal will be borne by the applicant(s).
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.