



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Louisiana and Texas Oyster Habitat Status and Trends Analysis

Deadline for proposal submission: **June 9, 2023**

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) is a partnership of the five Gulf States, federal agencies, academic organizations, businesses, and other non-profits in the region. Our goal is to significantly increase regional collaboration to enhance the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. For more information about the Gulf of Mexico Alliance visit <https://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/>.

BACKGROUND

GOMA's Habitat Resources Priority Issue Team works to improve habitat conservation and restoration for priority Gulf habitats including seagrasses, oyster reefs, salt marshes, mangroves, and benthic habitats. Actions are focused on priority habitat assessment, living shorelines, and regional sediment management. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), funding is available to the Habitat Resources Team to implement a project that will assess status and trends for oyster habitats in Louisiana and Texas.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is available to assess status and trends for oyster habitats in Louisiana and Texas. Therefore, all terms and conditions of the resulting sub-recipient agreement will be subject to Federal regulations concerning the receipt and use of Federal funds.

PROJECT SUMMARY AND SCOPE OF WORK

Oyster habitats provide important services including habitat provision, water filtration, sediment stabilization, erosion reduction, and fishery production. To effectively manage oyster habitat resources, managers must understand how and why these habitats have changed over time. Information on spatial and temporal trends in oyster habitat health can be used to inform management strategies such as restoration siting, conservation actions, and fisheries management.

GOMA seeks proposals to develop an oyster habitat status and trends analysis for Louisiana and Texas; work in these states will serve as an initial pilot for a Gulfwide oyster habitat status and trends analysis. Work will focus

on identification and analysis of available datasets and a gap analysis to prioritize data needs for future efforts, similar to other regional priority habitat status and trends analyses (e.g. seagrass and saltmarsh). Specifically, analysis should include trends in changes of horizontal extent, habitat health or characteristics, and any other information about changes in habitat extent or quality from available data sets (such as fisheries-independent and -dependent data from the state resource management agencies). The status and trends analysis should include a historical analysis of any available data, regardless of year. If time allows, evaluation of historic non-map documents (such as reports, delineation of aerial imagery, etc.) should be conducted to inform the historic or baseline status of the reefs in each state.

The awardee is expected to coordinate closely with GOMA's Habitat Team throughout the duration of the project through quarterly status meetings, task-related conference calls, and other meetings as required. In addition, the awardee should collaborate with Louisiana and Texas state agency partners and additional stakeholders to identify needs, available datasets, and data gaps/challenges. The Gulf of Mexico Alliance's Habitat Resources Team is hosting a session at the All Hands Meeting in Austin, Texas, from June 26-29, 2023 focused on lessons learned from previous status and trends analyses of priority habitats. Because the session will provide information relevant to the development of a Gulfwide oyster habitat status and trends analysis, the awardee is expected to either attend the session in person (preferred) or coordinate with the Habitat Resources Team for information on results.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- 1) Semi-annual progress reports
- 2) A final report that includes:
 - i. detailed description of data used in the analyses, methodology, and results
 - ii. discussion of potential drivers of changes in status and trends
 - iii. summary of data challenges and gaps
 - iv. recommendations for future data needs and analysis techniques
 - v. appendix cataloging all datasets used in the assessment that includes source information, point of contact, and links to publicly available web-hosted data layers
- 3) One workshop (in-person or virtual) to present project results and lessons learned that are unique to assessing oyster habitat trends

Proposals should provide for the delivery of a draft final report to the GOMA Project Management Team, review and return of comments by the project team, and revision by the awardee of the draft based on received comments before delivery of a final report to GOMA. All relevant project-derived material (data, metadata, reports, products, etc.) must be provided to GOMA at the completion of the project. Project leads are encouraged to consult with GOMA to determine appropriate data discovery, access, dissemination, and archival measures.

AWARD DETAILS

Award agreements and payments will come directly from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. Available funding for the project selected from this RFP is approximately \$100,000, so project proposals should not exceed that value. Minimum award value is \$70,000; proposals for less than this amount will not be considered.

Although project costs cannot include already-incurred costs, projects may include funding for continuation or expansion of existing projects. Cost sharing or matching is not required.

Project duration can be no more than 16 months. Anticipated start date is August 1, 2023.

ELIGIBILITY

Any state or municipal agency, academic/research institution, tribe, business, or non-governmental organization is eligible to submit a proposal and be considered for funding under this RFP. Applicants of winning proposals will be required to attend at least one GOMA meeting (2024 Gulf of Mexico Conference), provide regular project updates, and submit semi-annual progress reports.

Applicants must be U.S. organizations or corporations with a valid tax ID number and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Applicants will be required to certify that they have the institutional, managerial, and financial capability to ensure proper planning, management, and completion of the project described in the scope; will establish safeguards to prohibit employees from using their positions for a purpose that constitutes or presents the appearance of personal or organizational conflict of interest, or personal gain; will initiate and complete the work within the applicable time frame after receipt of approval from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance; and will comply with all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations and policies governing this project.

PROPOSAL CONTENT AND FORMAT

Proposals should be submitted in PDF format via email to Christina Mohrman, GOMA Program Manager, at christina.mohrman@gomxa.org by **June 9, 2023**. Proposals must be submitted using the GOMA Proposal Form that requires three main sections as described below:

(1) Title Page (GOMA fillable PDF form)

(2) Project Description and Budget (GOMA fillable PDF form; 5 pages maximum)

GOMA's Proposal Form requires that the Project Description and Budget be no longer than 5 pages and should contain the following elements:

Project Description:

In a clear and concise manner, describe what will be accomplished during the project:

- project goals and objectives, methods or approach, and team members
- primary activities that will be accomplished with this project and the schedule for implementation included as a milestone chart
- outreach/engagement – stakeholders or users of the results of the project and describe the steps that will be taken to transfer the results of the project to the appropriate audience
- data and information sharing – if applicable, describe how all relevant project-derived material (data, metadata, reports, products, etc.) will be publicly available by the completion of the project.

Budget:

- Project Cost Details: Salary, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Equipment, Contractual, Indirect
- Travel must include funds to attend the 2024 Gulf of Mexico Conference, February 19-22, 2024, in Tampa, Florida. (\$2,500 is recommended)
- Justification should be provided for each applicable cost category

(3) Attachments (as appropriate)

Background information or other relevant information can be provided as an attachment. A Letter of Commitment is required for project team members from organizations other than that of the applicant's. Letters of commitment and support should be attached as PDFs to proposals. Attachments are not included in 5-page limit for the Project Description and Budget but attachments should not be used as a means to extend the proposal length.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project proposals will be evaluated by members of the GOMA staff and Habitat Resources Team based on the following criteria:

1. Rationale (10 points) – Project addresses objectives identified in the GOMA Action Plan IV; clearly states the need for the project and the high primacy in accomplishing project goals.
2. Proposal Merit (10 points) – Project assesses whether the goals and objectives are clear and the methodology is appropriate for the proposed project. Likelihood that the proposed project will attain the stated objectives and GOMA priority issue action it proposes to address.
3. Impacts and Application of Results (10 points) – Project evaluates the overall impact and anticipated outcomes of the completed project. Identifies opportunities for leveraging or complimentary projects (if any).
4. Applicant Qualifications (10 points) – Principal Investigator and applicant team is well qualified to perform the proposed work and demonstrates intent to be active on GOMA Team(s) throughout the life of the project. Project lead and other project team members are experienced and have proper expertise to perform the project.
5. Outreach and Engagement and/or Data Sharing (5 points) – Applicant addressed the Outreach and Engagement and Data Sharing requirements satisfactorily.
6. Proposal Specifications (5 points) – Proposal is limited to 5 pages and contains all information required by the RFP. Budget costs are reasonable and justifiable.

SUBMITTAL, SELECTION, AND NOTIFICATION

Proposals must be submitted by email to Christina Mohrman, GOMA Program Manager, at christina.mohrman@gomxa.org by June 9, 2023.

Proposals will be evaluated by members of the GOMA staff and Habitat Resources Team. The evaluation committee will be composed of subject matter experts (who will remain anonymous). The Team will submit their recommendation to the GOMA Alliance Management Team who makes the final selection regarding funding of the project. The GOMA Alliance Management Team reserves the right to make selections based on the evaluation criteria and their own deliberations.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance anticipates notifying applicants of their award status in early July and the project start date should be planned for August 1, 2023.

QUESTIONS

For questions about this RFP, please contact Christina Mohrman, GOMA Program Manager, at christina.mohrman@gomxa.org. No questions will be allowed after the submission deadline.