

Maximized Retention Dockside Monitoring Service Providers

Request for proposals

Statement of Purpose

The Gulf of Maine Research Institute is soliciting Proposals for a service vendor(s) to develop and test innovative approaches to dockside monitoring for the Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring (MREM) program.

Project Duration: September 1, 2022 – May 30, 2023

- Project design elements may require an exempted fishing permit (EFP) and if so, the project start date is contingent on NOAA's approval of the EFP. GMRI has applied for the EFP and anticipate its approval before September 1.
- Proposals could cover a shorter period if less time is needed to meet objectives.

Initial proposals are due: August 10, 2022

Summary

The Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), has secured grant funding to explore the development of a third-party, industry-led dockside monitoring (DSM) as part of the Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring (MREM) program approved for the Northeast Multispecies ("groundfish") fleet. This RFP seeks the services of DSM service provider(s) to develop and test innovations in dockside monitoring to create efficiencies in a variety of offload situations. The project is in collaboration with NOAA to implement a dockside monitoring component that will work in tandem with the electronic monitoring component to provide a complete monitoring program of kept and discarded allocated groundfish. The work is funded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

Background

The Maximized Retention EM model is one of two electronic monitoring models approved by NOAA Fisheries through Amendment 23 to the Northeast Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan and is expected to be available to sector vessels to use to meet monitoring requirements during the 2022 fishing year. The MREM model was proposed as a cost-effective monitoring tool for the groundfish fleet and includes both electronic monitoring, to confirm compliance with program requirements at-sea, and dockside monitoring component to account for catch at the dock.

Project partners, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and The Nature Conservancy, are working with NOAA Fisheries to develop an independent, dockside monitoring program to support the Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring (MREM) model, with the objective of transitioning the MREM DSM component from a NOAA-led to third-party model.

In the MREM model, dealer reports are the report of record for catch accounting purposes. Because a core requirement of the MREM model is the retention of sublegal groundfish, the dealer report also documents sublegal groundfish catch, creating a complete record of landed catch on MREM trips. The DSM component verifies the landed catch on sector groundfish trips, and collects data for NOAA science on a subset of catch. The three core requirements of the dockside monitoring program are to verify dealer weigh outs, check the fish hold and collect sampling data. A fully operational third-party DSM program will be designed to meet NOAA's data requirements efficiently and economically and will include elements to accommodate a variety of fishing and offload strategies, including multiple-dealer offloads, remote offloads, trucking catch, and non-groundfish offloads.

The intended outcomes for the Dockside Monitoring Innovation Program are 1) Identify, document and test innovations, including alternative program designs, technological innovations, and alternative data collection approaches to meet NOAA DSM requirements; 2) Document the efficiencies, including time and cost of the innovations; 3) Support the development of DSM standards that can accommodate a variety of offload strategies. The project partners may select more than one provider to test multiple approaches to DSM.

Program Description

The NOAA-designed DSM program has three core priorities including collecting sampling data on a subset of catch, verifying dealer weight outs, and conducting a check of the fish hold after the vessel has offloaded all catch.

The current Dockside Monitoring Program protocols, as outlined by FY2022 draft Sector Operations Guidance as of April 14, 2022 are as follows:

1. The vessel operator must notify the DSM program of its intention to sail before beginning a sector MREM trip. The notification schedule (e.g., upon sailing or in advance) and method (i.e., text, VMS) will depend on the nature of the vessel's activity (e.g., day boat vs trip boat vessels) and will be described in the vessel's VMP.
2. The vessel operator or dealer must provide an offload time to the DSM program in advance of landing. The advance notice of landing and offload schedule will be dependent on the nature of the vessel's activity (e.g., day boat vs trip boat vessels) and will be defined in the vessel's VMP. The standard advance notice is as follows:
 - a. 4 hours for day boat vessels.
 - b. 48 hours for trip boat vessels.
3. For trip boat vessels, the vessel operator or dealer will provide the DSM program with a hail weight for the total catch of allocated groundfish 24 hours before offload.
4. The vessel operator, crew, and dealer must offload all allocated groundfish in the presence of the DSM. The vessel operator and crew may not begin offloading unless a DSM is present or they have received a waiver from the DSM program.
5. In the event that a DSM is not available to observe an offload, the vessel operator may request a waiver by contacting the DSM coordinator. Waivers may be granted at the NEFSC's discretion.
6. All fish below the minimum size must be offloaded before other fish that meet the minimum size and must be provided to the dockside monitor at the sampling station.
7. The vessel operator and crew must retain all allocated groundfish categorized as LUMF and sort it separately from any sublegal catch to facilitate data collection by a dockside monitor.
8. The vessel operator and crew or dealer personnel must separate sublegal allocated groundfish catch by species. The vessel operator and crew may NOT combine sublegal and terminal legal-sized market category catch for any species.
9. The vessel operator must allow the DSM access to the fish hold immediately following the offload to confirm all allocated groundfish were offloaded. A vessel representative must observe/accompany the DSM during the hold inspection. The vessel representative must provide support for the DSM to safely embark and disembark the vessel (e.g., ladders/steps/assistance, etc.).
10. The primary dealer is required to retain all sublegal allocated groundfish catch to be weighed and sampled by the DSM.
11. Dealers are required to clearly mark all containers containing sublegal catch to facilitate tracking and are required to provide settlement documents to the DSM program for any allocated groundfish forwarded to secondary dealers.
12. Dealers must report landings of all fish, including those below the minimum size.

13. Dealers are required to provide DSMs with access to facilities equivalent to what is provided to the dealer's staff, including a safe sampling station, with shelter from weather, for DSMs to conduct their duties and process catch; access to bathrooms; and access to facilities for washing equipment with fresh water.
14. Dealers must provide settlement documents to the DSM program for any allocated groundfish forwarded to secondary dealers.

This guidance should be used for reference but is subject to change during an operational program given new guidance in Amendment 23.

Maximized Retention Fleet Effort

We estimate that 8-10 vessels and 4-7 dealers will participate in an operational Maximized Retention Electronic Monitoring program, with the possibility of additional vessels and their associated dealers joining the Maximized Retention EM program throughout the 2022 fishing year. We estimate that vessels will land at several ports including Portland ME, Gloucester MA, Boston MA, and New Bedford MA. Additionally, the location and number of ports may change and could include remote ports where there are no primary dealers.

We anticipated that 150 – 200 MREM offloads may occur during the 2022 fishing year. However, the number of offloads depends on multiple factors including the number of vessels that participate in an operational Maximized Retention Model and fishing effort. We anticipate that many vessels participating in an operational MREM program will land high volumes of catch, upwards of >25,000 pounds per trip.

Scope of Work

The DSM pilot project will run in tandem with the NOAA-led DSM program through the 2022 fishing year. GMRI will work with vendor(s) and NOAA to coordinate training, conditional approval and a schedule for testing innovations during offloads. We expect that providers will either independently test innovations during a pre-determined subset of offloads to meet minimum DSM requirements, or will coordinate with the NOAA's DSM team to test innovations (e.g., electronic technology) that partially replace DSM requirements. Therefore, we welcome but do not expect service provider to cover full offload, or collect data for the full fishing year. This proposal is intended to explore innovations on an as-needed basis.

Project Partners seek a contractor who can develop, test, and document innovations that address one or more of the following components of DSM:

- 1) Independently record dealer weights, through such approaches as:
 - a. Testing the installation of cameras at dealers or onboard vessels to monitor offloads when dockside monitors are not present
 - b. Testing other electronic means or strategies to verify dealer weigh outs
 - c. Verify weights only the sublegal portion of the catch
 - d. Verify weights only a subset of offloads
- 2) Meet NOAA's sampling requirements (e.g., lengths frequencies), with a focus on the undersized groundfish market categories.
 - a. Test alternatives to the offloading requirement, that all fish below the minimum size must be offloaded before other fish that meet the minimum size and must be provided to the dockside monitor at the sampling station.
 - b. Working with NOAA's DSM and data teams, to test and document the costs of subsampling protocols, that prioritize species and/or vary by catch volume
 - c. Collect only a subset of samples while ensure NOAA data needs can be met
- 3) Identify alternative strategies to verify that all catch was offloaded from the vessel to the primary dealer, including:

- a. The use of electronic technologies to perform a hold check
- b. Coordinating with the dealer to perform the hold check
- c. The use of electronic technologies during remote offloads, where a primary dealer is not present, or where catch is offloaded to multiple dealers
- d. Coordinating DSM timing to correspond with when the hold inspection is needed
- 4) Ensure that monitors are available, and on time, for MREM offloads.
 - a. Test alternatives to trip-level notifications for deploying monitors
 - b. Test strategies to streamline vessel and provider communications
 - c. Work with program partners and vessels to develop alternative efficient communication strategies, including the use of pre-existing technologies like VMS.
- 5) Document the staffing, resources, and costs to meet NOAA's DSM requirements using innovations.
- 6) Document recommendations and solutions for reducing costs and streamlining DSM, while meeting catch accounting and NOAA science objectives.

In addition, contractors will be expected to participate in DSM program development for the duration of their project, including:

- 1) Participate in regular check-ins with the project team and NOAA fisheries to support program development and to refine DSM protocols.
- 2) Allow project partners GMRI and TNC access to data collected, as well as results of data analysis.
- 3) Meet minimum DSM data collection requirements, or a subset of requirements, and submit DSM data to NOAA's DSM project lead within NOAA's timeline guidance following each offload monitored.
- 4) Securely store all DSM data required to be collected following NOAA's data retention guidelines. Dockside monitoring data will be treated as observer data and remain the property of the vessel.
- 5) Document the innovation tested, costs and duration spent performing tasks for each MREM offload.
- 6) Document areas where further efficiencies could improve the MREM dockside monitoring program.
- 7) Provide quarterly reports on the amount of time, resources, and costs of innovations tested during MREM offloads.
- 8) Submit an itemized cost report for DSM program delivery on May 30, 2023, at the completion of the project.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience working in the Northeast Multispecies fishery ('groundfish') and groundfish sectors.
- Familiarity with providing at-sea monitoring, observer coverage, dockside monitoring, or electronic monitoring services for groundfish sectors.
- Familiarity working with NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center service provider data structures and portals.
- Experience synthesizing large amounts of information into a report with clear and actionable recommendations.
- Willingness to frequently check in with, provide regular updates to and take direction from the project partners.

Deliverables

A final report will be delivered by a date negotiated with the selected consultant. Quarterly reports and regular meetings will also be negotiated with the selected consultant.

Proposal Format

All costs of preparation and presentation associated with the RFP are the responsibility of the bidder. Prospective firms warrant by virtue of submission of proposals that all prices, terms, and conditions stated shall be honored for thirty (30) days after the proposal deadline.

All proposals must contain the following information to be considered:

- The bidding vendor's name, office address, address of the office providing the services under the contract, and telephone number for each.
- Indication of personnel who will be assigned to the contract including their qualifications, certifications, and affiliations.
- A description of the Vendor's understanding of the work to be performed.
- Suggested modifications to the proposed scope of work outlined above, and clearly state if the proposed work will fully replace NOAA DSM or a portion of DSM tasks
- Cost estimates for the DSM Program are broken out into separate categories which must include at a minimum: cost of travel, dockside monitoring, data collection and storage costs, dealer outreach, and cost of program development time. Cost should be presented on a per offload level. Final contracts will be drafted on time and materials.
- *A statement of the insurance coverage carried by the bidding Provider.*

Timelines

- Proposal Due Date: Proposals will be delivered to GMRI via electronic mail to Hannah MacDonald at hmacdonald@gmri.org no later than 23:59 EST on August 10, 2022
- Contract award decisions will be made by August 19, 2022
- Service providers should make their timeline clear in their proposal and plan to follow that accordingly.
- Project Duration: September 1, 2022 – May 30, 2023
- Vendor questions regarding the RFP should be submitted to Liz Moore at Emoore@gmri.org and Hannah MacDonald at hmacdonald@gmri.org or 207-228-1680 as needed while preparing the proposal.
- Answers may be shared by e-mail with all vendors in a way that protects confidentiality.

Criteria for Selection

GMRI has \$100,000 in funding to distribute to selected providers. Proposals will be reviewed by GMRI and TNC project staff. The award of the contract will be based upon the highest score using these proposal evaluation criteria:

- a. Technical merit and feasibility of innovation proposed – 25 points
- b. Cost-effectiveness of proposed work – 25 points
- c. Ability to provide data to NOAA fisheries and meet timelines – 25 points
- d. Ability to meet desired program timelines and deadlines – 25 points

Procurement activities will be conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner with fair treatment given to all Vendors. GMRI reserves the right to reject any and all offers for any reason whatsoever, to waive technicalities, and to pursue purchasing in a manner that is in the best interest of the organization. Successful and unsuccessful bidders will be notified by email. GMRI shall not be obligated to detail any of the results of the evaluation.

In submitting a bid, Vendor certifies that neither it, nor its principals, if any, is presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from participation in this project by any Federal department or agency.

Disclaimer

The scope of work may change based on the final MREM program design as well as the conditions of the Northeast Groundfish fishery. By providing estimates of participating vessels and fishing activity GMRI is not guaranteeing that amount of work. Any payment to the selected Provider will be based on services provided (time and materials) and not a guaranteed fixed amount.