



## **Request for Proposals**

### **Review of Essential Fish Habitat for Reef-Associated Crustaceans**

**August 25, 2017**

#### **Background Information**

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established in 1976 by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act (MSA) to prevent overfishing, minimize bycatch and protect fish stocks and habitat. Management plans adopted by the WPRFMC are implemented by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Regional fishery management councils are directed to describe and identify EFH for each federally managed species based on the best available scientific information, minimize to the extent practicable adverse effects on such habitat caused by fishing and non-fishing activities, and identify other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of such habitat (section 305(b)(1)(A) of the MSA). Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) is defined in the MSA as “all waters and substrates necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity.”

WPRFMC manages five fishery ecosystem plans (FEPs) in the Western Pacific/Pacific Islands Region: the Pelagic FEP, Hawaii Archipelago FEP, Marianas FEP, America Samoa FEP, and the Pacific Remote Island Area FEP. These FEPs address five Management Unit Species groups (MUS): Pelagic MUS, Bottomfish and Seamount Groundfish MUS, Crustacean MUS; Precious Coral MUS, and Coral Reef Ecosystem MUS. The FEPs also describe and identify EFH for these MUS, evaluate the potential adverse effects of fishing and non-fishing federal actions on EFH, and identify actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH.

In order to develop the original definitions of EFH and habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC) in each FEP, the WPRFMC used the best available scientific information to describe EFH and provided information on the biological requirements for each life history stage (egg, larvae, juvenile, adult) of all species managed under the five FEPs. This information was obtained through an iterative process consisting of a series of public meetings of the WPRFMC, Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), plan teams and fishing industry advisory panels. In addition, the WPRFMC worked in close cooperation with scientists in the NMFS Southwest Fisheries Service Center, the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (formerly the Honolulu Laboratory), the Southwest Regional Office and the Pacific Islands Regional Office (formerly

the Pacific Island Areas Office). WPRFMC and NMFS periodically review the EFH definitions using the best available scientific information and amend EFH definitions if warranted. EFH definitions are required to be reviewed on five year review cycle (50 CFR § 600.816(a)(10)).

The five year EFH review process takes place in three phases: drafting, review, and final presentation and management application. EFH reviewers update the descriptive or summary information in the FEPs, which includes species descriptions, research and information needs, and organization of available EFH data sources into the EFH Level of Information tables for each managed species. If the review of information on distribution, abundance, reproduction, growth, survival, and productivity by habitat type (levels of EFH information) shows that an analysis may be worthwhile, the information are analyzed to inform the value of the habitat to the fishery. This analysis is used to distinguish all habitats used by a species from essential habitat.

The EFH review schedule identifies crustaceans for review in 2017-2018. The WPRFMC consolidates biological information on its managed species into the species descriptions located in the appendices of the FEPs. Species descriptions of coral reef associated crustacean MUS in the fishery (spiny and slipper lobsters, Kona crab) have not been updated since they were published as an appendix to the Crustaceans Fishery Management Plan in 1999. Additionally, the level of EFH information available has not been reviewed since 1999, nor has an analysis of the information to differentiate essential habitat from non-essential habitat been performed.

### **Scope of Work**

The goal of this project is to update the EFH and HAPC information in the 4 Western Pacific Region archipelagic FEPs on reef-associated crustaceans; and to conduct a review of the best available scientific information to determine if the EFH definitions for crustacean management unit species (i.e., spiny lobster, slipper lobster, Kona crab) found within the reef associated ecosystem should be refined for any of the management areas of the Western Pacific Region. Specifically, EFH information to be updated includes species descriptions, level of information tables, research and information needs including identification of data gaps that preclude the ability of the WPRFMC to refine EFH; and if appropriate, an analysis of the available EFH information. Currently designated boundaries of HAPCs for coral reef associated crustaceans MUS would be reviewed, and changes or new candidate areas would be proposed.

New information on coral reef associated crustaceans MUS EFH and HAPCs derived from the five year review would be subjected to the formal WPRFMC process, beginning with presentation to the WPRFMC's Archipelagic Plan Team (APT). The WPRFMC would consider information in the review and provide justification for its decisions through a potential formal amendment process, not the EFH review process. The contractor would finalize EFH review products after receiving input from the WPRFMC's APT, SSC, and the WPRFMC. Information

in the EFH review products would be disseminated through the WPRFMC process at each of these meetings, and furthered through a potential amendment process.

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Update species descriptions. These summaries shall describe the habitat requirements for each life history stage (i.e., egg, larvae, juvenile and adult) in text and tables consistent with the regulatory guidelines set forth in the January 17, 2002 Final Rule for EFH and in a format that satisfies the requirements of the Council's EFH mandate.
2. Update the EFH Level of Information table from the best available sources of published and unpublished data. This may include files of government agencies, universities, and other sources of quality data.
3. Perform an analysis on highest level of EFH information available to distinguish essential habitat from all available habitat. This analysis will include an intersection of habitat data with statistical fishing areas, and habitat staff of the WPRFMC, PIFSC and PIRO will provide input as available data are identified.
4. Identify candidate HAPCs, based on criteria outlined in the January 17, 2002 Final Rule for EFH. Part of the candidate HAPC development process would include interviews with PIFSC stock assessment scientists, state of Hawaii biologists, and both historically active and currently active Kona crab and/or lobster fishermen to collect anecdotal information on ecologically important areas and assist in the identification of candidate HAPC areas.
5. Produce EFH/HAPC GIS files.
6. Identify research and information needs for refining EFH and HAPC.
7. Provide a presentation or present the results to the Council and its advisory bodies (Plan Team, Scientific and Statistical Committee, Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee, Advisory Panels).

### **Project Deliverables and Schedule**

The project will result in several deliverables: a report in two parts, literature review (species descriptions, level of information tables, research and information needs) and analysis describing approaches for refinement of EFH and HAPC; and accompanying GIS shapefiles for approaches. Quarterly progress reports on the status of species profiles, current drafts of these documents, scope of work for the remainder of the contract, and any problems encountered or anticipated related to SOW are also required. This is a one year project, and contracting and funding is contingent upon availability of funds.

### **Milestones**

The major milestones for this project and associated timelines are presented below:

- October 2017 – The Council will contract services and start the data acquisition and literature review process. Stakeholder meetings may take place in concert with the October Council meeting.
- January 2018 – The draft reports (literature review) will be due to the Council for review. The contractor will consult with PIFSC, PIRO, and Council habitat staff on the development of the analysis and draft EFH and HAPC options.
- February/March – The contractor will address comments on the draft reports, develop the analysis, and provide a presentation for late April plan team meeting.
- April – the contractor will provide the draft analysis and present to the Plan Team.
- April/June – The contractor will present to the SSC and Council, or provide presentation and post-Plan Team updated reports to Council habitat staff.
- June /September – The contractor will address comments on the report and analysis received during the June Council meeting cycle and finalize the report, analysis, and GIS files with metadata.

All proposals shall be submitted by Monday, September 25, 2017. Proposals should be sent by email to Rebecca Walker (Rebecca.Walker@wpcouncil.org) or by fax (808 522-8226) or by mail: Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Ste. 1400, Honolulu, HI 96818. Proposals must contain the following three items: 1) qualifications, 2) project narrative, and 3) budget. Ideally, the contractor will have experience studying/analyzing crustacean biology or stocks in the Western Pacific Region and familiarity with fisheries data collection programs.