Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Request for Proposals – Atlantic Menhaden Aerial Survey Design

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the design of an aerial survey to estimate Atlantic menhaden biomass. This RFP contains information on required proposal content, participants' eligibility, selection process, and timeline.

Objectives

A) Generate annual estimates of menhaden biomass in Chesapeake Bay to better inform fishery management options for the Bay reduction harvest cap.

B) Generate annual estimates of menhaden biomass along the Atlantic coast in order to inform menhaden stock assessment and multispecies models used in determining stock status.

Proposals should describe how the work will address A) estimating biomass to serve as the basis for a Bay reduction harvest cap, B) data needs for menhaden stock assessment and multispecies models, or A and B. Note multiple years of biomass estimates would be needed in order to be of value for both objectives.

Background

There have been ecosystem concerns raised about the impact of the Atlantic menhaden (menhaden) reduction fishery on menhaden abundance in Chesapeake Bay for more than a decade. In response to these concerns, an upper limit on the catch of menhaden from Chesapeake Bay (i.e., Bay cap) for reduction purposes was established by the Commission and was recently updated. The rationale for the Bay cap has come under question, and additional information on menhaden biomass trends in Chesapeake Bay would be valuable for establishing a scientific basis for the Bay cap.

Aerial surveys have been used to estimate biomass for other widely distributed forage species. An aerial survey has previously been considered for estimating coastwide menhaden abundance because menhaden schools are often visible near the surface. Furthermore, spotter pilots are used to assist in directing commercial purse seine activities. One of the appeals of an aerial survey is that large areas can be surveyed relatively quickly, such that most of Chesapeake Bay or other portions of the coast could be surveyed during a single day.

Funding Availability

The successful project could occur in two phases: 1) a study design phase where aerial survey experts work with the Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee (TC) to design surveys targeting menhaden, and 2) implementation of the surveys following the design recommendations of experts.

Funding in the range of $30,000-$50,000 is available for Phase 1. Activities to complete Phase 1 can be in the form of workshops or other means of collaboration among PIs, the Menhaden TC, and other experts, and a final report detailing new survey design elements. Pilot testing of survey methods is eligible though not required for Phase 1. The design phase should be completed in 2019, in order to support potential full implementation of a survey in 2020.

Phase 2 should include details regarding survey implementation, including hiring pilots for aerial surveys and ship time and equipment for coupled surveys to ground-truth aerial visual estimates. Phase 2 should also include a description of permitting and federal requirements (e.g. NEPA).

Project descriptions must discuss a work plan to develop the survey sampling design, proposed gear, and data collection, entry, storage, and management (e.g., format, QA/QC protocols). The priority objective is to generate biomass estimates. Collection of menhaden size and age data would be of additional value. Final details on gear and sampling protocol will be determined by the Principal Investigator(s) in consultation with the Menhaden TC once a proposal is accepted.

Note the Commission has secured funding for the study design phase only (Phase 1). Principal Investigators should anticipate seeking alternative funding for full survey implementation (Phase 2). Including a Funding Transition Plan in proposals is recommended to describe how PIs will pursue and secure funds for survey implementation. The Commission reserves the right to select a proposal for funding, or to select no proposals at this time.

Review Process

Proposals will be evaluated for validity, breadth, and clarity, and the selection of final applicants will be based in part upon the following criteria:

- demonstrated experience in conducting fishery-independent surveys
- qualifications of key personnel involved
- documented commitment and description of suitable pilots, planes, and vessels
- project descriptions (sampling design, gear, data management)
- cost evaluation (budget categories with detailed justifications of expenses)
- long-term commitment of PI institutions to conduct the aerial survey

The Menhaden TC and Commission staff will review Phase 1 proposals and submit recommendations to Commission leadership. Leadership will then select which proposal to fund. During the selection process, Commission staff may contact the Principal Investigator(s) of submitted proposals to request clarification or resolve deficiencies at the behest of committee members. The final decision will be made as promptly as possible.

RFP Schedule

December 17, 2018	Request for proposals issued and distributed
January 18, 2019	Deadline for receipt of proposals
February 1, 2019	Proposal funding decision and notification to PIs

Submission of proposals is encouraged from university, state agency, and industry organizations. Collaborations between two or more organizations are welcome. Proposals must be submitted via email by 5 PM on **Friday, January 18, 2019**, to Pat Campfield at pcampfield@asmfc.org. Questions regarding the application requirements and other aspects of the RFP can also be directed to Pat at 703.842.0726.