



Northeast Regional Ocean Council

Request for Proposals:

Review of marine habitat classification, characterization, and modeling activities in the Northeast U.S.

RFP Issued: July 31, 2012

Proposals Due: August 29, 2012

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Part 1: Scope of Work

- 1. Statement of Purpose:** The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) is seeking proposals for contractor assistance to review marine habitat classification, characterization, and modeling activities in the Northeast U.S. This project will result in an overview and comparison of existing marine habitat efforts in New England being conducted by state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academia. Products from this project will include a written report which will support NROC ocean planning-related efforts and will help inform a marine habitat classification and modeling workshop that NROC will convene, likely in early 2013.
- 2. Background:** NROC, established by New England's Governors in 2005, is a state-federal partnership to implement solutions to New England's most pressing ocean and coastal issues that require a regional response. NROC member states include Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Interior (U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have been full members of NROC since its inception.

In recent years, NROC has focused on ocean planning. NROC has led the New England region's implementation of important parts of the National Ocean Policy and has developed a work plan and framework for regional ocean planning (see the NROC web site <http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/nroc/default.aspx>). To help achieve its goals, NROC has brought on additional capacity through hiring of staff and in-kind support from member agencies.

This particular project is an important component of the NROC work plan and is intended to advance understanding and management of ocean habitats in New England. There are currently several federal, regional, state, and smaller-scale marine habitat classification and modeling efforts underway in New England. NROC recognizes that management and policy drivers for these various efforts may differ. At the same time, there are also common elements (particularly in terms of science and data needs) that likely are synergistic and would benefit from a collaborative, coordinated effort.

Recognizing these facts, NROC successfully obtained funding in support of this work. As stated in the NROC proposal, “NROC’s goals are to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the various characterization and classification efforts underway...and a regional Action Plan to identify synergies and opportunities to unify mapping, characterization, and classification approaches in terms of methodologies, structure, data requirements, and coordination and leveraging data acquisition... A multi-state workshop will bring coastal and marine managers, scientists, and policy experts together to discuss the findings of the assessment (within the context of policy and management needs) and identify specific means to enhance synergies between these approaches. This workshop will build on the dialogue and other workshops in the Northeast in recent years on this issue (e.g., the Gulf of Maine Mapping Initiative <http://www.gulfofmaine.org/gommi/>) and will be convened by NROC and the Northeast Sea Grant Consortium. The results of this workshop will then inform additional scientific investigation, data development and analysis, and other needs to pursue the goal of a more uniform approach in the New England region.”

To achieve these goals, the first step is to increase and broaden understanding of the efforts underway. NROC is aware of at least seven major efforts underway that involve some form of marine habitat classification/modeling in a portion of New England marine waters:

- The New England Fishery Management Council’s Swept Area Seabed Impact (SASI) model
- The Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Classification System (CMECS), being developed nationally
- The Nature Conservancy’s Northwest Atlantic Marine Ecosystem Regional Assessment
- MA CZM seafloor characterization in partnership with USGS and others
- The Rhode Island Ocean Special Area Management Plan mapping and classification
- Seafloor mapping beginning in Long Island Sound
- Mapping of Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

Other related efforts include mapping and classification work through the Wood’s Hole Oceanographic Institute, UMass-Dartmouth, and the University of New Hampshire. Many of these projects have particularly focused on seafloor (benthic) habitat, though some also include water column habitats.

Mapping and classifying marine habitats is clearly a priority ocean management issue in New England and has been for years, as evidenced by all of this activity. While there have been attempts over the last decade or so to coordinate some of this work such as through the Gulf of Maine Mapping Initiative and a review of methodologies led by MA CZM, NROC recognizes a need to enhance this coordination as funding becomes more difficult and recognizing overlapping management and policy needs.

- 3. Objective:** This Request for Proposals (RFP) will directly support NROC’s work plan through its deliverables and via engagement with scientific experts in marine habitat classification and

modeling. The primary objective of this project is to provide a written overview and comparison of marine habitat classification, characterization and modeling efforts in New England.

For purposes of this RFP, the general area of interest is in estuarine and marine areas including state and federal waters in New England (the Gulf of Maine, Long Island and Block Island Sounds, and waters south of Rhode Island and Massachusetts). While there are other efforts underway that focus on fresh water systems, and that are looking at issues related to the land-sea interface, this project focuses on estuarine-marine systems (i.e., such as those listed above).

NROC recognizes that several of the existing efforts underway have very specific management and policy objectives that form the foundation for decisions made during a development of the specific classification/characterization/modeling effort. The products developed through this project will clearly describe those management and policy objectives as appropriate. However, NROC does not intend to second-guess those objectives from a management or policy basis. Therefore, for the portion of this project that is a comparison of existing efforts, NROC's focus is on their scientific underpinning and data requirements.

The results of this work will inform a workshop that NROC will convene, likely in early 2013. The purpose of the workshop will be to convene people engaged in marine habitat efforts from the scientific and management community to review the results of this work, to identify areas of common interest and need, and to develop specific steps to increase and enhance coordination among efforts.

To assist with this project and to help develop the agenda for the workshop, NROC will be convening a working group, comprised of scientists in the region and state and federal managers. It is expected that the successful applicant for this RFP will engage with this working group through NROC.

Finally, the NROC States received a separate grant to conduct work related to this project, specifically to focus on States' needs and policy goals for marine habitat classification and modeling. The NROC States will be identifying their goals and particular needs for such work simultaneously with the project that is the subject of this RFP. NROC anticipates that there will be a moderate level of coordination between the successful applicant for this RFP and this other State-specific work.

Further information on the tasks intended to meet this objective is provided below.

Task 1. Inventory and describe existing efforts

This task will result in an inventory and description of existing marine habitat classification and modeling efforts underway in New England, building on work done through GOMMI and other efforts described previously. At a minimum, NROC expects that this inventory will include the seven

efforts listed above; a first part of this task will be to identify any other appropriate efforts to include. At a minimum, the descriptions of existing efforts should include the following components:

- a. Project purpose, management and/or policy goal
- b. Responsible entity and any partners
- c. Budget, if available
- d. Intended scope and scale (geography, focus on particular habitat types if any, time period for final deliverables or ongoing, etc.)
- e. Description of data sets used, including any required protocols or standard procedures for collection (instruments used and their capabilities/limitations, ship track spacing, other) or initial processing of these data
- f. Overview of hierarchy/approach from a scientific standpoint, including basic assumptions incorporated into effort. NROC recognizes that this component is likely to be complex and will work with the successful applicant to further refine this portion of the task. Potential aspects of this component include the approach to using physical parameters (e.g., surficial sediment type and size, water depth, measures of seafloor roughness and/or complexity such as rugosity, water column characteristics, and others) to describe biological/ecological “habitat” and the assumptions made in doing so.
- g. Results in terms of maps, descriptions, or other outputs (and their subsequent use in management decision-making) and potential “transferability” to other geographies, if applicable.

NROC anticipates that this inventory and description will rely on existing documentation, drawing upon descriptions in the literature or from contacts with project leads, and will be objective in nature. This inventory and descriptions are intended for a technical audience familiar with marine habitat classification and modeling. Responses to this RFP are encouraged to identify any additional components (in addition to a-g above) for this inventory. The successful applicant for this RFP will be responsible for identifying other components for the descriptions, subject to NROC approval, as necessary to meet the objectives of this work.

The results of this task will form the first portion of the written report for the project.

Task 2. Develop and apply methods for comparing marine habitat classification and models.

In addition to providing basic information regarding individual efforts underway in New England, the inventory and descriptions in Task 1 will enable comparison of these efforts. This comparison will focus on the mechanics, data requirements (including processing steps), and hierarchical/organizational aspects of these existing efforts—components d, e,f, and g listed in Task 1 above. The intent of this comparison will be to identify similarities in these models/classification systems based upon these or other appropriate metrics. NROC anticipates that the identification of such similarities will help form discussion topics for the NROC workshop described previously.

Responses to this RFP should propose and provide a rationale for the specific methods suggested for this task.

The results of this task will form the second portion of the written report for the project.

Task 3. Coordinate with NROC and NROC's working group. Present results at the NROC workshop. Coordination with NROC members on completion of Tasks 1 and 2 will be an important part of this project. NROC anticipates that the selected contractor will work with a single NROC point of contact for day-to-day business, and that there will be oversight from NROC members throughout the project through periodic updates and/or conference calls. Additionally, the selected contractor will be expected to join periodic meetings (conference calls) with the working group described above. Finally, the selected contractor will present the results of their work at the NROC workshop likely to be held in early 2013, as described previously.

Responses to this RFP should ensure appropriate time is allocated to this task.

4. **Project Funding.** The maximum budget for this project is \$50,000.
5. **Deliverables:** Proposals should include a detailed workplan including a description of proposed approaches and methods to be used to complete the following deliverables:
 - Draft inventory and approach to project descriptions, per Task 1 (subject to NROC review and approval)
 - Methodology for comparison of projects, per Task 2 (subject to NROC review and approval)
 - Draft report incorporating results of Task 1 and 2 for NROC review
 - Final report incorporating NROC comments
 - Presentation at NROC workshop

NROC anticipates that the first deliverable for this project will be a revised detailed workplan incorporating NROC comments.

6. **Project schedule:** NROC expects that work on this project will start immediately following execution of a contract. NROC prefers a schedule that results in delivery of a final report in January-February 2013.

Part 2: Proposal Preparation and Submittal

The following sections describe the procedures and content for submitting proposals.

1. **Pre-submittal conference call.** NROC will host a pre-submission conference call to allow potential respondents to ask clarifying questions on August 14, 2012. Instructions to participate in this

conference call will be sent to all people who express their interest via email at least 24 hours before the conference call.

- 2. RFP clarification.** Questions and requests for clarifications regarding this solicitation should be sent to the email contact below. The deadline for submitting such an email is August 14, 2012. Responses will be posted to the NROC web-site on August 15, 2012. Questions should be sent to:

Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org

John Weber, Ocean Planning Director
Northeast Regional Ocean Council

- 3. Submittal requirements.** For review purposes, NROC requires responses to this RFP to be delivered electronically, via email as an Adobe™ .pdf file, to Proposal@northeastoceancouncil.org. Proposals must be received by email no later than 5:00 pm on August 29, 2012, and shall plainly identify the subject of the proposal and the name, phone, email, and address of the bidder.

It is the bidder's responsibility to ensure that NROC receives the proposals prior to the specified closing date. Proposals received after the specified closing date will not be considered.

- 4. Content requirements.** Proposals must be clear, succinct and shall not exceed 10 pages. Section dividers, cover letter, title page, and table of contents do not count in the overall page count of the proposal. Exclusions to the page limitation may include relevant work samples and/or resumes, as described below, provided in appendices. Each bidder is required to describe how they will provide the deliverables described above as part of their proposal. Information provided will be evaluated and scored by NROC and, missing elements will adversely impact a proposal's overall score.

a. General requirements:

- i.* Single-spaced pages when printed on 8.5" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left and right) with font no smaller than 11 point.
- ii.* The total number of pages must not exceed 10 pages (not including appendices).
- iii.* The proposal must be submitted as an Adobe™ .pdf document with all pages numbered and clearly identifying the name of the bidder.

b. Proposal organization and content:

- i.* Cover letter. Provide a cover letter indicating your organization's commitment to implementing this initiative (e.g. senior management approval, etc.). Also, include appropriate point of contact information, including the person's name, title, address, phone number and email address.
- ii.* Table of contents. Identify page numbers of main sections, including any appendices.

- iii. Executive summary. Summarize the proposal's approach to completing the deliverables required by this RFP and highlight any competitive advantages or unique approaches of your proposal, cost-effectiveness measures, and particular skills offered by the project team.
- iv. Work plan. Include a concise, yet detailed work plan for completing the deliverables described in this RFP and to ensure appropriate management of the scope, schedule, budget and overall quality of work. Include a time line, starting from contract execution, including all major tasks and their sequence, inter-relationships and dependencies between tasks and key milestones and deliverables.
- v. Detailed budget. Provide an itemized budget to produce the deliverables described in this RFP. Include all costs related to personnel (identify estimated hours and rate), administrative overhead, travel, materials, equipment, and any other anticipated expenditures required to complete the work described in this RFP. In this budget description, describe leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services. Note that because of the requirements of the source of funding for this project, indirect costs are limited to a maximum of 12.5% of allowable direct costs. For purposes of this RFP, indirect costs are defined as "overhead expenses incurred by an organization but not easily tracked to a specific project. They generally include administrative or other support functions such as executive oversight, institutional communication networks, accounting, grants management, legal support, insurance, utilities, technology, rent, and facility maintenance." For purposes of this RFP, direct costs include all of the expenses that are required for, and can be tracked directly to, this project, including but not limited to personnel, consultants/contractors, or other direct expenses such as travel, training, supplies, computers, and software.

The total budget is not to exceed \$50,000.

- vi. Team structure and qualifications. Please provide the following:
 - Project team organization chart, including a brief description of the role of each team member.
 - Summary of the experience, skill or unique attribute of each team member. Description of the team's understanding of the technical aspects of this RFP will be very helpful in this summary. In addition, including a maximum two-page resume for each team member is allowable in a "resumes" appendix.
 - Summary of related, successful projects that illustrate the capabilities and qualifications of the project team. In addition, providing a maximum two-page

description of up to two recently-completed projects is allowable in a “related experience” appendix. Include references that NROC may contact for these projects.

Proposals must identify any tasks which will be assigned to subcontractors and associated budget details included in part v above. The successful bidder will be prohibited from subcontracting, assigning, or transferring any listed responsibilities without prior review and consent of NROC.

Part 3: Evaluation of Proposals

This section summarizes the general process and criteria NROC intends to use to evaluate proposals.

1. **General review process.** The NROC Ocean Planning Director will collect and assemble all proposals received by the RFP deadline. An evaluation team comprised of NROC members and the NROC Ocean Planning Director will be convened to evaluate and score all proposals, using the criteria below. Upon completion of the scoring process, the evaluation team will recommend to the NROC Executive Committee that the highest scoring bidder be awarded the project.
2. **Criteria.** NROC will use score all proposals according to the following criteria:
 - a. *Approach (30%).* Bidders will be evaluated on the detail, clarity, and soundness of their approach to this project, including strategies for overcoming any potential obstacles, creativity, and cost effectiveness. Strategies for maximizing expert stakeholder involvement will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
 - b. *Qualifications and experience of project team (30%).* NROC will evaluate a project team members’ combination of education, training, and record of achievement and experience related to the tasks described in this RFP. Specific attention will also be focused on an assessment of a project team’s direct experience with potential subject matter and with experts in pertinent fields.
 - c. *Cost Effectiveness (20%).* Bidders will be evaluated on the budget submitted with their responses to this RFP. Any leveraging of existing work, funding, or other in-kind services, will be a significant portion of this evaluation.
 - d. *Project Management (20%).* Bidders will be evaluated on their ability to complete the project within the schedule provided, track record of project management, and proposed project management strategies for this project.

Part 4. General Provisions

The following general provisions apply to this RFP and subsequent actions taken by NROC.

1. Response to this RFP does not commit NROC to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred during the preparation of the proposal.

2. NROC reserves the right to reject any or all of the proposals for completing this work. NROC also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP at any time.
3. NROC reserves the right to eliminate the need for the selected bidders to complete one or more tasks, pending the outcome of preceding related tasks or issues, and/or the availability of project partners to complete that task.
4. NROC reserves the right to modify the final scope of work and deliverables prior to finalizing a contractual agreement with the selected bidder(s).
5. Subsequent procurement, if any, will be in accordance with an executed contract. This RFP and any response may, at NROC's discretion, become part of the executed contract.
6. All entities participating in this RFP process will be notified of acceptance or rejection. NROC reserves the right not to disclose reasons for the rejection. NROC is not obligated to accept the proposal with the lowest cost.
7. No publicity or media release about this RFP, response to this RFP, discussion of any kind related to this RFP, or the award of any contract related to the bid document, may be released without NROC's prior approval.
8. All materials submitted by bidders become the property of NROC. NROC will retain copies of all proposals for historical records and documentation.
9. Each Bidder agrees to comply with all federal regulations including those pertaining to non-discrimination in hiring and employment practices.
10. NROC owns all rights to deliverables and, within the bounds of acceptable practice as determined by limitations placed upon data used in this project by data providers, intends that products resulting from this project will be made publically available.