

## **Terms of Reference for Programmatic Review & Evaluation of the Northeast Research Set-Aside Programs**

### **Introduction/Objective**

The Research Set-Aside programs (RSA) are part of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Cooperative Research Program (CRP). Four RSA programs have been established by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils, and are unique to the Northeast Region. Funding for research is provided by the sale of the Set-Aside allocations in quota-managed or Day-at-Sea (DAS) managed fisheries, which are awarded through a competitive grant process. No Federal funds are provided.

RSA programs support research opportunities among commercial and recreational fishery participants, universities, fishery managers, and other non-government marine research organizations. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) scientists and staff may become substantially involved after the conclusion of the competitive process, through cooperative agreements. RSA programs have been operational for up to 8 years in the Northeast, and may benefit marine fisheries research programs throughout the United States. A thorough programmatic evaluation is required to inform the development of future, and improve upon current, RSA programs. This document provides terms of reference for a Programmatic Review (PR) of the 4 current RSA programs in the Northeast Region of NMFS (Scallop, Herring, Monkfish, and Mid-Atlantic-multi species).

### **Terms of Reference**

1. RSA Program Objectives: The panel should evaluate the objectives or goals for each RSA program. Are RSA programs achieving their original objectives? Are the objectives similar or dissimilar between RSAs? If they differ, is this reflected in the specific types of research projects that have been awarded? Within RSAs, have there been shifts in the types of projects funded over time? Are there lessons learned relative to the types of projects that have been awarded, in terms of rates of success at providing data that influences management?
2. RSA Implementation – Policy Issues, questions, implications: The panel should consider policy issues relative to implementing RSAs. What were the policy issues and questions that lead NOAA to implement grant procedures versus other acquisition methods? Are there other public resource – industry – government partnerships that utilize resource access to support management and research (development foundations, marketing boards)?
3. Economic Performance – The panel should review and evaluate the financial aspects of RSA programs relative to costs and benefits. Cost should be analyzed relative to the costs to industry, i.e., shifting quota from general fishery to research and compensation harvesters, and costs associated with administrative aspects presented above. Specific questions to address are: is the conversion of quotas or DAS into funds used to cover research costs an efficient way to fund fishery research? What are the levels of risk or benefit to RSA participants, researchers, compensation harvesters, and the general fishery? What are important factors driving the economic benefits of RSA programs, i.e., market factors, fluctuations in the price of resource, trip costs, access to resource, etc.?

The goal of this programmatic review is to provide guidance on improving RSA programs and best practices needed in developing new RSA programs. The panel should evaluate the original intent of regional fishery councils and commissions, and articulate specific strengths and challenges to RSA programs.