

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Executive Summary

Summary: The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), in collaboration with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is soliciting grant proposals for the development of a device for the purpose of marking fixed fishing gear, in order to provide a better scientific understanding about the nature of large whale entanglements.

Dates: Proposals must be received electronically by 5 p.m. EST March 31, 2008.

Description: In 1997, the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan was implemented to reduce the risk of entanglement to large whales through a set of gear modification and other requirements that affect commercial fishing operations along the East Coast. Fisheries of particular concern are gillnet and trap/pot fisheries, as fixed gear has been identified as an entanglement risk to large whales, however it remains unclear specifically what factors (e.g. gear component, location, depth and method of gear-setting) increase entanglement risk. This grant opportunity seeks to support research and development of a gear-marking device to store such data. The information collected from marked gear involved in entanglement events would be used to help develop appropriate management measures to further reduce the risk of interaction between large whales and fixed gear fisheries.

Ideally, the technology being supported will:

- (1) Store data to identify the fisherman, type of fishery, area fished, and date of deployment as well as other data;
- (2) Be portable so that it could be used for more than one fishery or if the gear is sold;
- (3) Be durable enough to withstand the environmental conditions of the commercial fishery;
- (4) Require minimal time to deploy/attach and to maintain over the life of the gear and be safe for fishermen to use; and
- (5) Have accurate and dependable data retrieval.

Cost associated with purchase and replacement is an important factor as well. The ideal grant proposal will involve the development of potential prototypes, as well as consider the field testing and practical performance of the device according to the above criteria.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Background

The bycatch of right, humpback, and fin whales in commercial fixed gear fisheries is known to cause serious injury and mortality to these protected species. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), in consultation with the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT), implemented the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) in 1997 to reduce the risks of entanglement to large whales through a set of gear modification and other requirements that affect commercial fishing operations along the East Coast. Affected fisheries include gillnet and lobster trap/pot fisheries, as well as more recently other trap/pot fisheries (e.g. Jonah crab, hagfish, red crab). The ALWTRP also requires marking of gear by one 4" colored mark midway on the buoy line¹.

IFAW and NMFS believe that a fuller scientific understanding about the nature of entanglements, specifically the gear components (e.g., buoy line, groundline) and other factors involved, would help to (1) monitor the ALWTRP and (2) develop further management measures to reduce the risk of large whale entanglements due to incidental interactions with fixed gear fisheries.

NMFS and others have researched alternative marking scheme/systems including those listed below, but none has been deemed satisfactory in meeting the needs of both the fishery and the management data-collection requirements.

- Stainless steel or nylon type bands used around the line (e.g. aluminum crimp-on bird bands). Problems have included the bands becoming caught in hauler, as well as the bands coming off the line at the hauling block, becoming airborne, and snagging fishermen's gloves and clothing while they are handling line. These problems pose safety hazards. The bands also wear out the line when being hauled, which destroys the integrity of the line.
- Radio frequency tags. Problems have included the tag casings being structurally compromised from the pressure exerted on the line while passing over the block and through the hauler.

¹ Diagrams of currently approved gear marking methods can be found at:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/plan/weak%20link%20techniques%20aug%202006.vs2.pdf>

See pages 23-24 of the "Issues and Options for Modifying the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Scoping Document" (http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/hotnews/whales/ALWTRP_scoping.pdf) for a list of options received on gear marking from the ALWTRT.

See pages 3A-19 through 3A-21 of Chapter 3 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/hotnews/whales/ALWTRP_DEIS_CHAPTER-3.pdf) for a summary of the public comments on gear marking related to recent revisions to the ALWTRP.

See pages 62-66 of "1.0 Response to Comments on DEIS and Proposed Rule" of Volume II of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/hotnews/whalesfr/Volume%20II/CHAPTER%201.0%20Response%20to%20Comments%20on%20the%20DEIS%20and%20Proposed%20Rule.pdf>) for NMFS' rationale on the final gear marking scheme under the ALWTRP which considered implementation and technology available.

- Tags made out of tape products that can be marked with permanent marker. Currently under investigation by NMFS.

II. Program Objective

NMFS has sought assistance from IFAW in searching for more promising gear marking techniques to share with the ALWTRT. Information obtained from improved gear marking techniques will help to improve North Atlantic whale management strategies aimed at further reducing risks from human factors and in facilitating the recovery of threatened populations.

Specifically, development of a technological device to hold data for gear marking of line in a wet environment would provide additional information about the nature of the gear involved in an entanglement. Ideally, the device will store data to help identify data surrounding the entanglement event such as whether the rope is groundline or vertical, the fisherman (e.g. owner's name, contact information, hail port), type of fishery, the area fished, and date of deployment as well as other data. The marking data should be easily changeable and the device should be portable for use in more than one fishery. The device could refer back or link to a database that contains most of the information. Data retrieval should be accurate and dependable.

The device must be durable to withstand the harsh environmental conditions of the commercial fishery. For example, underwater pressures may reach 600 psi in some depths; line may be subject to loads from 1000-5000 lbs.; while under load, hauling equipment subjects the rope to sharp radius turns; and typical hauling equipment functions as a result of the rope wedging itself into a "V"-shaped groove in a rotating disk (see <http://www.hydroslave.com/products.html> for an example of hauling equipment). The ideal device must also require minimal time and be straightforward to deploy/attach and maintain over the life of the gear. The device needs to be safe to use and technologically feasible to implement. Additionally, the device must be able to be attached to a wide variety of rope types and sizes (e.g. lines typically range between 5/16" and 3/4" diameter) used in fixed gear fisheries. Costs associated with purchase and maintenance/replacement is an important factor in practical application of the device.

III. Award Information

A. Funding Availability: This solicitation announces that a maximum of \$70,000 may be available for distribution in FY 2008, in award amounts to be determined by the proposals submitted and available funds. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and IFAW. There is no set minimum amount for any award, and there is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant.

B. Project/Award Period: Selected project(s) must be conducted during the period of June 2008 to July 2009. Multi-year projects will not be considered.

IV. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants are individuals, institutions of higher education, nongovernmental organizations, commercial organizations, international organizations, foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and state, local and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or employees of Federal agencies are not eligible to apply. Individuals employed by IFAW are not eligible to apply.

V. Application and Submission Information

A. Content and Form of Application Submission

1. Applications

a. Applications must include a cover sheet and full application.

b. Applications must be in a 12-point font and may not exceed 10 pages, including tables, budget, and other pictorial presentations. Appendices may include information such as curriculum vitae, resumes, and/or letters of endorsement, and will not count toward the original 10 page limit; however, appendices may not exceed 10 pages.

2. Cover Sheet: The cover sheet should include the project title, full name, institution or affiliation as well as contact information to include mailing address, phone and fax numbers, and email address of the Principal and co-investigators.

3. Project Description: Each project must be completely and accurately described. The main body of the proposal should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and should include:

a. Project objectives: Objectives should be simple and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when," but should avoid the "how and why"; and attainable within the time, financial and human resources available.

b. Project narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical action plan of activities that are to be accomplished. This description should include detailed descriptions of activities, collaborators, milestones, and expected products resulting from a successfully completed project. This section should also discuss the relationship of this work to other work planned, anticipated or underway, if applicable.

c. Success measurement: How will the project be evaluated for success? Applicant should identify specific, measurable performance indicators. The grant recipient will be required to provide an evaluation of project accomplishments and progress toward project objectives and performance measures in the final report.

d. **Total Project Costs and Budget Narrative:** Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Description and include additional contributions and other sources of funding. Each application must include clear and concise budget information in table format, with explanatory narrative if necessary.

e. **Supporting Documentation:** Provide any required documents or additional information necessary or useful to the description of the project, including graphs, maps or other visual aids.

4. **Appendices (not to exceed 10 pages):** Provide any additional documentation including curricula vitae or resumes of the Principals and Co-investigators and/or letters of endorsement.

B. **Submission Dates and Times:** Applications must be received by 5p.m. EST March 31, 2008.

C. **Submission Requirements:** Submit electronically to: Kate Natrass, Whales Program Officer, IFAW Headquarters, Phone: 508 744 2095, at knatrass@ifaw.org.

VI. Application Review Information

A. **Evaluation Criteria:** The proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. **Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals:** Applications will be evaluated on clear identification of project goals and objectives and the potential to reach the project's goal of supporting the development of an effective, reliable device for gear marking. (Score = 0-40)

2. **Technical/Scientific Merit:** This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, and if the methods are appropriate. Applications will be scored based on their clear identification of performance evaluation methods and the suitability of those methods for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. (Score = 0-30)

3. **Overall Qualification of Applications:** This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. The management of the project will be evaluated based on documentation of previous related experience and qualifications of the project's Primary investigator, co-investigator(s) and other personnel. (Score = 0-15)

4. **Project Costs:** This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame, and falls within the budget range of this program. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. (Score = 0-15)

B. Review and Selection Process: IFAW, in consultation with NMFS, will make the final decision regarding which applications will be funded based upon the numerical ranking of the applications and the evaluations from the technical review. The technical review will involve at least 3 individual reviewers per application.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates: Review of proposals will occur during the month following the final application deadline with initial award announcements by May 15, 2008. Funding should begin on June 1 for most approved projects. Projects should not be expected to begin prior to June 2008, unless otherwise directed.

VII. Award Notification and Reporting Requirement

A. Award Notices: Official notification of funding, signed by an IFAW Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin, and will be sent no later than May 31, 2008.

B. Reporting: Recipients will be required to submit interim and final financial and performance (technical) reports. Final reports are to be submitted electronically and will be made available to the public, specifically with NMFS staff and the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) members. Interim reports are due by December 31, 2008. Final reports are due no more than 90 days after the award expiration, or by October 30, 2009. The format of the final report may vary, but should contain:

1. A brief summary of the completion report (200-word or less abstract);
2. A description of the issue/problem that was addressed;
3. A detailed description of methods of testing, data collection and/or analyses;
4. A discussion of results and any relevant conclusions presented in a format that is understandable to a non-technical audience. This should include benefits and/or contributions to management decision-making;
5. A complete list of entities, firms, or organizations that actually performed the work, and a detailed description of how the work was accomplished

Organization Contacts

For more information about IFAW, please visit the IFAW website at: <http://www.ifaw.org> or contact:

Kate Natrass, IFAW Whale Program Officer
IFAW-Headquarters
290 Summer Street
Yarmouth Port, MA 02675-1734
knatrass@ifaw.org

Phone: 508 744 2095

Fax: 508 744 2089

For more information about gear, please visit the ALWTRP website at:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/>

or contact :

Glenn Salvador, NMFS Gear Team

NMFS Northeast Regional Office

Glenn.Salvador@noaa.gov

Phone : 757 414 0128