

of this document. Applicants must submit one signed original and two signed copies of the completed application (including supporting information). Prior to selection, NOAA will convene a panel to review proposals submitted in response to this RFP.

The Council, in consultation with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission), will incorporate the level of research set-aside (amounts or percentages) for each of the set-aside species for the 2004 fishing year into the Council's recommendations for annual quota specifications. NMFS will consider the recommended level of set-aside as part of the associated rulemaking process. It is anticipated that most proposals will request that vessels conducting research be exempt from certain regulations for the relevant fishery. The impacts of such an exemption must be analyzed. To streamline the process for the review and approval of exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications, the Council will prepare, as appropriate, an analysis

of the impacts associated with the anticipated exemptions during the annual quota specification process. This process is intended to satisfy the analytical and public notice provisions of the EFP regulations at 50 CFR 600.745. However, certain conditions may require the applicant to provide additional analysis associated with such exemptions (see section N of this notice).

The actual level of research set-aside quota available to applicants for the 2004 fishing year will depend on the TAL level specified by the Council at its quota-setting meetings in June and August 2003, and on the percentage (0 to 3 percent) of the TAL recommended by the Council and approved by NMFS as the level of research set-aside available for 2004. To help researchers develop proposals for the 2004 fishing year, the table below provides some guidance on the general magnitude of research set-asides and estimated values that a researcher might expect to be available for fishing year 2004. The table is based on TAL levels for these

fisheries for the 2003 fishing year, and assumes that NMFS would approve the maximum set-aside level of 3 percent of the TAL, if requested. The table is intended only as a guide, to be used when developing research proposals for the 2004 fishing year; it does not necessarily reflect the actual RSA quota that will be allocated for fishing year 2004. Based on Council recommendation, NMFS could choose to adopt less than 3 percent of TAL as a set-aside, or could decide not to adopt any set-aside for a given fishery. The estimated values of the set-aside allocations will vary depending on market considerations prevailing at the time the research trips are conducted. In October 2002, the Council voted to set the research set-aside for tilefish at zero until after a stock assessment is complete. However, tilefish RSA projects could be considered upon completion of a stock assessment and/or through utilizing of RSA quota from other species.

TABLE 1. EXAMPLE OF 3-PERCENT RESEARCH SET-ASIDE, USING 2003 SPECIFICATIONS.

Allocation Species	Pounds (000 lb)	Kilograms (000 kg)	Estimated Value (\$000)
Summer Flounder	699	317	1,005,
Scup	480	218	403
Black Sea Bass	204	93	318
<i>Loligo</i> Squid	1,125	510	743
<i>Illex</i> Squid	1,587	720	349
Atlantic Mackerel	11,571	5,249	926
Butterfish	390	177	129
Bluefish	1,191	540	358
Tilefish	0	0	0

B. Authority

Issuing grants is consistent with sections 303(b)(11), 402(e), and 404(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1853(b)(11), 16 U.S.C. 1881a(e), and 16 U.S.C. 1881c(c), respectively.

C. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)

11.454, Unallied Management Projects

D. Funding Instrument and Project Period

In consultation with NMFS, the NOAA Grants Office will award a grant to successful applicants through the NOAA grant award process. The RSA harvest timeframe must fall within January 1 through December 31, 2004. There may be times when compensation (in terms of the timing in harvest of the RSA) is not concurrent with the timing of the research. In general, under such

situations, no more than 50 percent of the requested RSA should be harvested prior to the conduct of research activities. Proposals requesting RSA harvest prior to or after that timeframe will not be considered.

E. Funding Availability

No Federal funds are provided for research under this notification. The Federal Government may issue an EFP or Letter of Acknowledgment (LOA), as applicable, which may provide special fishing privileges in response to research proposals selected under this program. The Federal Government shall not be liable for any costs incurred in the conduct of the project. Any funds generated from the landings authorized under a RSA grant shall be used to cover the cost of the research, including vessel costs, and to compensate vessel owners for expenses incurred. Therefore, the owner of each fishing vessel selected to

land a species in excess of a trip limit or seasonal quota must use the proceeds of the sale of the excess catch to compensate the researcher for costs associated with the research activities and use of the vessel.

Any additional funds above the cost of the research activities (or excess program income) shall be retained by the vessel owner as compensation for the use of his/her vessel.

F. Scope of Research

Projects funded under a RSA must enhance understanding of the fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which management decisions are made. Research, as well as additional voyages to obtain fish for compensation, may be conducted, as specified in the EFP or LOA, as applicable, in or outside of a closed area, within the timeframe of a commercial quota closure, and onboard