

## REQUEST FOR STATEMENTS OF INTEREST

### Passive Acoustic Monitoring for Marine Mammals at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Kittery, ME Project to be Initiated in 2025

Responses to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential investigators for a project to be funded by the Department of the Navy (DoN) which provides professional and technical support for its Environmental Program in support of the military mission. The authority for this Cooperative Agreement is 16 USC §670(c)(1). Substantial involvement is expected between the Navy and nonfederal partner when carrying out the activities specified in the scope of work and may include activities such as the Navy's involvement in the development of study methodology, data gathering and analysis; review of work plans, reports and all deliverables; obtaining approvals and permits from other Federal Agencies; and providing staff time to oversee and participate in the project.

This proposed project contributes to the objectives of the CESU network by providing usable knowledge to support informed decision making; creating and maintaining effective partnerships among the federal agencies and partners to share resources and expertise; encouraging professional development of current and future federal scientists, resource managers, and environmental leaders; and managing federal resources effectively.

#### **Background:**

The purpose of this solicitation is twofold. First, the Navy would like to apply enhanced passive acoustic monitoring capabilities to detect and characterize vocalizations of marine mammals that may occur in the Piscataqua River surrounding Seavey Island. High frequency cetaceans and pinnipeds will be specifically targeted to determine species presence/absence and identify any patterns of occurrence as well as to provide an estimate of frequency, abundance, and density. Those species that may be more cryptic, such as harbor porpoise [*Phocoena phocoena*], are of particular interest. The project will install, at a minimum, two, full-spectrum, autonomous passive acoustic monitoring (APAM) stations with the capability to capture marine mammal vocalizations in the Piscataqua River and Back Channel. The units shall be installed for one year, with data checked and downloaded monthly, or as appropriate. At the end of a full year of deployment, the units shall be removed from the water, unless the Cooperator is notified by the Navy that additional funding has been received to continue the study for additional survey years, as described below in the Period of Performance section. These efforts are further defined below and in the Request for Statements of Interest.

Secondly, the Navy would like to gain a better understanding of pinniped usage, abundance, and frequency of the nearby haul-out area known as Hick's Rocks. Hick's Rocks is a rocky feature consisting of a series of rock outcroppings interspersed with sandy areas and is located approximately 1,300 feet east of PNS and approximately 230 feet offshore of Kittery Point, Maine. Depending on tidal state the feature has an area up to approximately 17,000 square yards (SY). While it is known anecdotally that Hick's Rocks is used as a haul-out site for pinnipeds year round there have been no official surveys recording species composition, frequency, and abundance. In addition to the PAM survey, this project will conduct weekly surveys of Hick's Rocks during low tide for a period of one year. All efforts shall be made to coordinate both field

survey efforts to maximize efficiency. This effort is further defined below and in the Request for Statements of Interest.

### **Description of Anticipated Work:**

#### **Task 1: Autonomous Passive Acoustic Monitoring – Acquisition and IT Coordination**

- a. The cooperator shall provide a minimum of two autonomous monitoring units for passively detecting marine mammals and acquire all associated software and/or licensing, as well as all necessary hardware and mooring equipment.
- b. The cooperator shall modify the configuration, if necessary, to create an APAM unit (custom platform) capable of being attached to a fixed anchor and suspended mid-depth in the water. Any new fixed anchors shall be sighted so as to avoid impacts to sensitive resources (e.g. eelgrass beds) and navigation channels.
- c. The cooperator shall supply all necessary labor, support, and liaison with PNS EV and security during the validation and information assurance data collection phase to obtain authority to operate (ATO) for the APAM.
- d. The cooperator shall provide one year of support to maintain the APAM system (to be extended dependent upon funding availability, as noted above in the Period of Performance section).

#### **Task 2: APAM Testing and Location**

- a. The cooperator shall provide calibration testing of the units seasonally to determine the maximum detection distances for the system.
- b. The cooperator shall test the system for approximately one week before deployment to ensure it is accurately calibrated and recording.
- c. The cooperator shall install the APAM units in the Piscataqua River, taking into account environmental conditions such as tide, currents, and seasonal conditions as well as anthropogenic factors such as noise, boat traffic, and fishing considerations when selecting and discussing sites for installation with the COR/IR.

#### **Task 3: APAM Installation and Monthly Equipment Checks / Data Download**

- a. The cooperator shall install, at a minimum, two fixed anchor positions at locations within the Piscataqua River, proximal to the installation on Seavey Island. Locations should be selected based on system performance requirements and limitations to optimize detection of marine mammal vocalizations. Potential locations include the Sound Basin mooring field, MWR pier areas, the back channel mooring field on the northwest side of the island, Bridge 1 or 2, adjacent to Berth 13 area (outside of the floating security barrier), or Four Tree Island (Figure 1). The target species for the survey is harbor porpoise; however, any other marine mammal species detected vocalizing should be included in the analysis and associated reporting. The cooperator shall ensure that site selections are coordinated with the COR and IR and in conjunction with installation security prior to deployment. Further coordination with agencies such as USCG or USACE may depend on the mooring location selected (i.e., using a current mooring area vs establishing a new one) and shall be determined in conjunction with the installation EV office once the CESU is awarded.

- b. The cooperator shall install the APAM units and perform necessary testing to ensure the communication of the system is working as expected based on the testing completed in Task 2, above.
- c. The cooperator and COR/IR will work together to ensure all notifications and approvals (i.e. USACE, Coast Guard, etc.) for installation of equipment in the Piscataqua River are complete prior to system deployment. Coordination with any Federal Agency shall be completed through the installation EV office unless designated otherwise.
- d. Equipment shall be labeled with Property of U.S. Government, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. If found, please contact Erika Fuery at 207-438-2828.
- e. Equipment will be checked monthly to ensure it is in proper working order and data will be downloaded during these monthly checks for processing and reporting.

#### **Task 4: One Year Pinniped Haul-Out Survey**

- a. The Cooperator shall provide all equipment and materials, as well as staff trained/experienced in marine mammal identification in order to survey, identify, and quantify the composition, frequency, and abundance of pinniped usage of the Hick's Rocks haul-out site.
- b. The Cooperator and COR/IR will work together to ensure any permits or approvals from NOAA Fisheries are obtained prior to start of the survey period, if required.
- c. The Cooperator shall conduct weekly surveys at Hick's Rocks, for a period of one year (12 months). Surveys shall be conducted in a manner consistent with NOAA Fisheries marine life viewing guidelines and shall not result in harassment of, or unauthorized take of, any marine mammal.
- d. To the extent practicable and to maximize the available habitat at Hick's Rocks, surveys shall be conducted within one hour of peak low tide. The following data shall be collected, at a minimum:
  - i. Date and time of day;
  - ii. Weather parameters, including air temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, percent cloud cover, visibility;
  - iii. Water conditions such as sea state, tidal state (feet above/below mean sea level), and water temperature,
  - iv. Pinniped data, including species present, number of each species present, species breakdown by cohort (adults/juveniles), sex, behaviors, etc.
  - v. River activity information such as level of nearby boat traffic or anthropogenic noise.

#### **Task 5: Work Plan, Reporting and GIS Deliverables**

Prior to the initiation of the tasks described herein, a draft and final work plan will be submitted to the COR and IR for review and comment. The work plan will describe: the PAM systems proposed for use, propose primary and alternate installation locations, detail the testing, installation, maintenance, and data collection processes, and the weekly pinniped survey protocols.

All passive acoustic data shall be collected from the PAM systems and processed/analyzed monthly for soundscape metrics, species identification, frequency, and abundance to maintain data quality and completeness. At the end of the full year of data collection, the cooperator shall remove all equipment from the River (unless the next Option Year is

awarded, in which case equipment will be serviced as needed and either relocated to another survey location or placed back in the existing location for the next survey year).

The Cooperator shall compile information from the monthly PAM download and four weeks of pinniped surveys into brief monthly summary reports, NTE ten pages. A comprehensive report shall be prepared and provided to the COR and IR at the end of the full year of PAM deployment (and annually if options are awarded), inclusive of the full year of pinniped survey data and results. This comprehensive report shall consist of both draft and final summary reports. The draft and final reports shall include maps, habitat descriptions, methodologies, results, any management or conservation recommendations, as well as recommendations for improvement to the surveys. All reports (monthly and annual) will be provided in electronic format, with copies submitted to both the COR and IR.

Additionally, the Cooperator shall provide a monthly project status report, NTE two pages, which can be attached to the monthly project summary reports as an appendix. The monthly status reports shall include a table summarizing funds spent per month, per fiscal year, with a total for the fiscal year and an overall total for all fiscal years. An example funding table is below.

Month	FY24	FY25
Jan	\$	\$
Feb	\$	\$
Mar	\$	\$
Apr	\$	\$
May	\$	\$
Jun	\$	\$
Jul	\$	\$
Aug	\$	\$
Sep	\$	\$
Oct	\$	\$
Nov	\$	\$
Dec	\$	\$



**Figure 1: Potential Mooring Locations**

All spatial data and relevant mapping information shall be provided in a Geographical Information System (GIS) format and displayed on report maps where appropriate. Draft GIS data will be submitted to the Navy and will conform to the standards outlined in Navy Specification attached at the end of this Scope, with necessary revisions based on feedback from the Navy GIS analyst before the final GIS deliverable is accepted.

### **OPTIONAL TASKS**

Dependent upon availability of funding, the project may be extended for up to four additional years (for a total project span of five years). Should funding become available, the APAM systems would not be removed from the water, instead remaining in the River, and will continue to be maintained monthly as described in Task 3 above. All requirements above relating to data collection, processing, and reporting detailed in Tasks 3 and 4 shall apply to all four option years of monitoring. At the end of the last year of work, all equipment shall be removed from the water.

Base Award: 2025-2026

Option Year 1: 2026-2027

Option Year 2: 2027-2028

Option Year 3: 2028-2029

Option Year 4: 2029-2030

### **Substantial Government Participation**

- The Navy will coordinate base and restricted area access for Cooperating partner and delivery vendors.
- The Navy will substantially assist the Cooperators with study design and procedures, study site selection trials, equipment set up and testing, participation in monthly and weekly surveys (to the extent practicable), coordination with regulatory agencies, and in preparing and reviewing reports.
- The Navy and Cooperator will jointly prepare documentation for necessary permits and approvals for the survey described herein. Navy participation is required in development of permitting documentation to ensure documents comply with security requirements and restrictions on release of information that may be considered CUI.
- The Navy will provide available survey data and existing reports relevant to the work requested in this CESU.

### **Cooperator Responsibilities**

- The Cooperator will provide equipment to conduct surveys as noted in the SOW, including but not limited to, the APAM systems, software, and mooring apparatuses; survey boat; cameras; and other miscellaneous field supplies.
- The Cooperator will coordinate with the Navy on site selection, field survey efforts, and preparing documentation for any necessary permits.
- The Cooperator will utilize software to analyze data and coordinate the results with the Navy for review and concurrence. The Cooperator and Navy will jointly prepare reports based on survey results.

### **Period of Performance:**

The period of performance for the base award covered by this Agreement is for one year, beginning the date this Agreement is awarded. The period of performance for each option year shall be 12 months from award of each option.

**Materials Requested for Statement of Interest/Qualifications:**

Please provide the following via e-mail attachment to Elizabeth Eliason-Carey  
Elizabeth.s.eliason-carey.civ@us.navy.mil  
(Maximum length: 6 pages, single sided, single-spaced 12 pt. font).

1. Name, CESU affiliation and contact information
2. Statement of credentials/qualifications of key personnel
3. Project proposal to include timelines, roles and responsibilities of personnel, specific tasks to be conducted, and deliverables. Please be as specific as possible.
4. Cost estimate of the proposed work for base year and each option year to include breakdowns of labor hours and rates, breakdown of materials and travel, and any backup documentation.
5. Narrative of safety practices/procedures.

**We are intending to use fiscal year 2025 funds for the base award. Option year tasks are dependent upon funding in the years that they are planned. However, option year tasks may be awarded earlier, later, or not all depending upon funding in a certain year.**

**A detailed study proposal and cost estimate are requested at this time. The proposal should include both base tasks and option year tasks.**

**Review of Statements Received:** Proposals will be evaluated based on the four factors listed below and include the credentials of key personnel, scientific approach, and reasonableness of the cost and safety plan. Evaluation factors are co-equal to each other.

**Factor 1 - Credentials of Key Personnel**

**Project Manager. This individual must have:**

- a minimum of an accredited Master's degree in Wildlife Biology or related science disciplines; and
- experience within the last three years with oversight responsibility of management activities associated with surveying for all species covered in this Statement of Interest.
- experience working on naval facilities.

**Technical Staff. Technical Staff must have:**

- a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Biology or related science;
- two years' experience in a responsible position conducting surveys for species in this Statement of Interest.
- meet security background check requirements to access secured facilities.

**The Cooperator shall include a brief Statement of Qualifications (including):**

- a. Biographical Sketch,
- b. Relevant past projects and clients with brief descriptions of these projects,

- c. Staff, faculty or students available to work on this project and their areas of expertise,
- d. Any brief description of capabilities to successfully complete the project you may wish to add (e.g. equipment, laboratory facilities, field facilities, etc.).

**Factor 2 – Scientific Approach**

The Cooperator shall develop a proposal to conduct surveys as described above. The Cooperator shall discuss their proposed approach and techniques to accomplish the objectives. Cooperator's proposals will be evaluated by a team of technical and contracting personnel from NAVFAC ATLANTIC. Proposals will be evaluated based on their soundness of the overall approach to accomplish the anticipated work's stated objectives.

**Factor 3 – Reasonableness of Cost**

The Cooperator's proposals shall be analyzed to determine whether it is reasonable with respect to the overall cost or separately priced items, and for fair and reasonable pricing.

**Factor 4 – Technical Approach to Safety**

The Cooperator shall provide a narrative of describing how safety practices/procedures will be implemented to complete the proposed work. Proposals shall be analyzed to determine how the Cooperator will implement safety practices/procedures and determine the degree to which innovations are being proposed that may enhance safety on this procurement. The Government is seeking to determine that the Cooperator has demonstrated a commitment to safety and that the Cooperator plans to properly manage and implement safety procedures for itself.

**Period of Performance:**

The period of performance for the base award covered by this Agreement is for one year beginning the date this Agreement is awarded. The period of performance for each option year shall be 12 months from award of each option.

**Please send responses or direct questions to:**

Elizabeth Eliason-Carey, Contract Specialist  
NAVFAC Atlantic  
E-mail: Elizabeth.s.eliason-carey.civ@us.navy.mil

**Timeline for Review of Statements of Interest:** Timeline for Review of Statements of Interest: We request that Statements of Interest be submitted by 06 May 2025. This Request for Statements of Interest will remain open until that time.