



## Request for Proposals: Greater Amberjack (*Seriola dumerili*) Research in U.S. Waters in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regions



**Full Funding Opportunity Title:** Greater Amberjack (*Seriola dumerili*) Research to Determine Abundance Estimates by Habitat Type, Distribution, and Movement in U.S. Waters in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regions

**Announcement Type:** Notice of request for proposals (RFP)

**Release Date:** Jan. 8, 2021

**Funding Source:** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Sea Grant College Program and the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

**Funding Type:** Funding will be provided to the successful applicant(s) through a sub-award from the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium's (MASGC) fiscal host at The University of Southern Mississippi's Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

**Funding Opportunity Summary:** This notice advises the public of a funding opportunity to develop additional data sources, assessment approaches, and knowledge to improve agency and agency-independent estimates of the abundance of greater amberjack throughout the greater amberjack's range. The award period is expected to be from Aug. 1, 2021, through July 31, 2023. The sub-award is managed by MASGC for the National Sea Grant College Program and NMFS.

**Eligibility:** The principal investigator (PI) of a proposal must be located at a research university located within a coastal state extending from Virginia to Texas. Co-investigators (Co-PI) from research universities and other sectors including state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the fishing industry, may be in any U.S. region. Federal partners may also participate as uncompensated collaborators.

MASGC encourages applicants of all ages, races, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, cultures, religions, citizenship types, marital statuses, education levels, job classifications, veteran status types, income, and socioeconomic status types to apply for this competitive research opportunity.

**Funding Level:** There is \$9 million in federal funding available. An additional \$2.7 million (30%) in non-federal match is required. MASGC anticipates funding at least one proposal.

**Reporting:** Semi-annual progress reports will be required.

**Deadlines:** A Letter of Intent (LOI) is required to submit a full proposal and is due by 6 p.m. Central Time on Friday, Feb. 5, 2021. Full proposals are due by 6 p.m. Central Time on Friday, April 9, 2021. Submissions received after either deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding.

## Funding Priority

**Program goal:** Provide an agency-independent estimate of absolute abundance, distribution by habitat type and movement of age-1 and older greater amberjack in the U.S. waters of the SA and GoMEX regions.

Greater amberjack is an important recreational and commercial species in the GoMEX and SA regions. According to NMFS, the greater amberjack is not overfished and not undergoing overfishing in the SA. However, the GoMEX stock of greater amberjack has been in an overfished state and undergoing overfishing for an extended period of time despite implementing a rebuilding plan. Given this issue, evidence for regional and sub-regional differences in stock dynamics exists, and biological information on greater amberjack distribution and movement in U.S. waters of the SA and the GoMEX regions is lacking. Preference will be given to research projects that also address the auxiliary research priorities listed later in this document (page 7).

## Q&A Virtual Meetings

A ZOOM meeting will be held to discuss this funding opportunity on Jan. 15, 2021, from 1-2:30 p.m. Central Time. Register at:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYpcu2grj4vE9FmFWbLDB6JSakTqGXsR\\_jw](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYpcu2grj4vE9FmFWbLDB6JSakTqGXsR_jw).

A second ZOOM meeting will be held to discuss full proposal submissions on March 19, 2021, from 1-2:30 p.m. Central Time. Register at: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcld-CvqDkpEtQAQygK\\_-zedcZ8kTlfk34g](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcld-CvqDkpEtQAQygK_-zedcZ8kTlfk34g).

The meetings will be recorded and posted on the MASGC greater amberjack webpage:

<http://masgc.org/greater-amberjack>.

## Contacts for Additional Information

Type of Question	Contact Name	Contact Information
Research approach and priorities	LaDon Swann, Director, MASGC	<a href="mailto:ladon.swann@usm.edu">ladon.swann@usm.edu</a> 251-648-5877
Proposal submission	Loretta Leist, Research Coordinator, MASGC	<a href="mailto:loretta.leist@usm.edu">loretta.leist@usm.edu</a> 228-818-8835
Budget and fiscal matters	Devaney Cheramie, Fiscal Officer, MASGC	<a href="mailto:devaney.cheramie@usm.edu">devaney.cheramie@usm.edu</a> 228-818-8839

## Timeline

- RFP released on Jan. 8, 2021
- Informational Zoom meeting on Jan. 15, 2021
- Letter of Intent due on Feb. 5, 2021
- Informational Zoom meeting on March 19, 2021
- Proposals due on April 9, 2021
- Notification of funding decisions on June 30, 2021
- Project initiation on Aug. 1, 2021
- Project ends on July 31, 2023
- Project completion report due Sept. 30, 2023

## Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are provided to help applicants develop proposals that meet the program goal in this RFP. It is the responsibility of applicants to provide and justify detailed sampling designs and to conduct statistical designs (e.g. power simulations) and other evaluations that may be necessary to support their proposed designs.

Design guidance (listed below) for this funding request was developed based on design elements from previously funded reef fish abundance estimation research and the outputs of a visioning process aimed at identifying research priorities and design challenges specific to greater amberjack in the GoMEX and SA regions. The guidance provides appropriate methods for conducting absolute abundance estimates and characterizing distribution and movements of greater amberjack in both regions. It is recognized that greater amberjack may have extensive movements and schooling behaviors that will need to be addressed in the design of sampling protocols and interpretation of results. Additionally, life history information for greater amberjack is comparatively limited, which may present challenges for the project design. Applicants are encouraged to address these challenges in their proposals.

### General

1. Projects can be up to two years. Extensions may be granted, if necessary.
2. Investigators must include a statistical design in their proposal showing the expected coefficient of variation (CV) of the abundance estimates from their sampling plan (a CV < 0.3 is desired).
3. Relative abundance estimates must be converted to an estimate of absolute abundance by age class, region and, if applicable, for each state.
4. Samples should be collected throughout the spatial range and across the size range for age-length keys to be able to provide abundance at age, sexual maturity, and for genetic work to assess the connectivity between stocks.

### **Geographic Areas and Sampling Depths**

5. The eastern boundary of the study area is the Virginia-Maryland state line and the western boundary is the Texas-Mexico border. Sampling must account for the boundary between the SA and GoMEX stocks as defined by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fisheries Management Councils.
6. The RFP covers the GoMEX and SA regions, and individual proposals may address the research needs of both stocks. If a proposal addresses only one region, it must demonstrate a paired proposal for the other region. Proposals can utilize multiple geographic areas within these regions (e.g. Eastern/Western GoMEX and Northern/Southern SA). Applicants must propose such divisions based on current knowledge of greater amberjack stock structure and dynamics. A minimum of two additional strata per sub-region should be considered for the purposes of quantifying spatial differences in age structure, movement, and exploitation. A rationale must be provided for the proposed boundaries including consideration of the ability to detect differences between strata.
7. Sampling must be distributed sufficiently across the range of depths where greater amberjack are found to provide age-structured absolute abundance estimates for age-1 and older greater amberjack throughout their range.

### **Habitat Type**

8. Sampling of known artificial reefs, known natural reefs, and unknown/uncharacterized bottom habitat classifications must be included in submitted proposals. Depth or other stratifications within each of these could improve statistical performance of the chosen sampling methods.
  - a. Known artificial reefs including fishing reefs, oil and gas infrastructure, and Navy/Air Force towers.
  - b. Known natural reefs.
  - c. Unknown/uncharacterized bottom. This stratum should include all habitats that fall outside the domains of known artificial and natural reefs. It is recognized that the bottom in many of these areas is made up of unconsolidated sediments of various types and likely hold low densities of greater amberjack. However, these areas are vast in extent. Uncharacterized bottom will also contain uncharted artificial reefs, natural reefs, oil and gas infrastructure, and other structures.
9. Include a description of the procedures used to identify habitat type to be randomly sampled.
10. Proposals must use an appropriate statistical design (e.g. power analysis/simulations) to determine the percent of each habitat category necessary to sample and the expected precision (CV) of the overall estimate for GoMEX and SA regions separately by proposed sub-regions.
11. There are no known comprehensive habitat suitability maps (HSMs) for greater amberjack habitat in the GoMEX and SA regions. However, there is localized information about site-specific habitat associations that may be used to inform sampling.
12. Investigators should seek out any existing high-resolution habitat maps to leverage the funds available for this program. A component of the proposal can include the synthesis of

habitat maps from various sources. Include the sources of the locations of known natural and artificial reefs.

### **Working with Fishing Industries**

13. Investigators are highly encouraged to work directly with the commercial and recreational fishing industries. Engagement with fishermen should be included from the start of project and be an integral component of the proposal. It is possible to include funding in the budget to contract with commercial and for-hire fishermen to assist in identifying regional geographic areas and habitats where greater amberjack occur, which may assist with catching and tagging fish.
14. Proposals should include an engagement and communication strategy to ensure the fishing community, resource managers, and other stakeholders are regularly updated on the status of the project.

### **Sampling Methods**

15. It is not expected that a single sampling method will be capable of providing one absolute abundance measurement in each habitat type. Some sampling methods considered most likely to succeed are:
  - a. A depletion method coupled with a tagging component (e.g. mark-recapture) for artificial and natural reefs that have high densities of greater amberjack. A diverse and broadly distributed set of reefs of various types and sizes would need to be sampled to extrapolate to all known reefs.
  - b. A combination of acoustics and visual advanced technology surveys could be employed on larger reefs. If all known large reefs cannot be sampled, the sampled reefs need to be representative and well-distributed. Acoustics could provide total fish counts while visual surveys could provide species composition for larger natural reefs.
  - c. Because of the geographic size of the unknown/uncharacterized bottom category, this habitat type will need a sampling strategy different than the methods used for known artificial and known natural reefs. Sampling tools, such as acoustics and towed cameras, are acceptable tools to sample this stratum across the entire GoMEX and SA. Known reefs in this category should be randomly sampled and unknown reefs should be sampled.
16. For all methods, investigators will need to provide detailed steps for calibration and how to avoid and/or minimize sampling biases and the specific challenges posed by species identification of greater amberjack and their behavioral responses to sampling gear. The implications of seasonal movements of some greater amberjack stock components for abundance sampling must also be considered and associated data needs (e.g. movement estimates) incorporated into the overall proposed design.
17. Statistical methods, such as simulation analysis or power analysis, must be conducted and results included in the proposal to understand the sensitivity of the estimates to some of the obvious sources of bias associated with a mixed survey spatial allocation design and the specific relevant characteristics of greater amberjack biology. Investigators must clearly present all of the assumptions of the intended methods.

## 18. Tagging and depletion methods

- a. For known habitat, an effective strategy for obtaining a total abundance estimate for a single reef or close cluster of reefs is a mark-recapture tagging method. Sampling assumptions for the tagging and depletion methods must be clearly addressed. Tag survey analysis will need to account for known sources of bias (e.g. tag loss, release mortality, reporting rates), and this accounting should be based on measured rates for these factors. When possible, engage the fishing industry in tag recovery. A sample size to cost determination should be included.
- b. Tagging methods can also provide information on greater amberjack movements and exploitation rates. This information will be important in the interpretation and scaling-up of local abundance estimates. The potential for estimating movement parameters and exploitation rates should be considered in the design of tagging studies.
- c. Tagging and depletion methods will need to account for the challenges associated with a species like greater amberjack with more movement and possibly lower catch rates than other species, such as red snapper. Additional consideration should be given to:
  - i. Validation via acoustics (exploitation and movement), visual, double tagging, catchability, and discard mortality.
  - ii. Archival tags and high-dollar tags.
  - iii. Collection of tissue samples for genetic work to further assess and refine stock connectivity between GoMEX and SA stocks.
  - iv. Collection of otoliths and sex information from greater amberjack in each region to determine sex-specific size-at-age structure.
  - v. A description of the process to determine the number of greater amberjack required for genetic and age-and-growth analysis (e.g., use of power analysis).
  - vi. Maintenance of spatial and temporal consistency.

## 19. Advanced technology methods

- a. Cameras on remotely operated vehicles (ROV) are an option on natural reefs larger than 90 meters.
- b. Dual use of sonar and towed cameras is an option for sampling larger natural reefs.
- c. ROVs are an option for sampling artificial and natural reefs.
- d. Towed cameras are an option for unknown/uncharacterized bottom. A rapidly towed video technology, such as the Camera-Based Assessment Survey System (C-BASS), should be considered for this habitat type, but other acoustic and optical platforms may be feasible. Data processing and analysis time would be substantial for all technologies relying on camera and video imagery and should be accounted for in the budget.
- e. Camera deployment vehicles are known to repel or attract some species of fish, including greater amberjack, and to have a range of detection that is difficult to quantify depending on lighting and water clarity. To address these challenges, a specific calibration experiment is necessary to demonstrate calibration of camera observations into measurements of greater amberjack per unit bottom area.
- f. Integrated tracking approaches using acoustic tags and other advanced technology methods can provide information on greater amberjack movements that is likely to be important in the interpretation and up-scaling of location-specific abundance

information. Incorporation of such approaches is an option to supplement conventional tagging approaches for movement estimation.

20. Leveraging existing data sets and ongoing research efforts is strongly encouraged. To the extent possible, applicants should seek to leverage existing data sets (e.g. video footage already collected in other surveys) and ongoing research efforts to augment data collection and cost effectiveness.

### **Auxiliary Research Priorities**

21. Further research to inform reproductive biology, including but not limited to: sex specific size-at-age and female fecundity in relation to fish length-at-age and spawning season length by region and/or habitat.
22. Water sampling for eDNA analysis can be combined with other sampling approaches to provide independent relative estimates of greater amberjack abundance and corroborate species identification. Incorporation of this approach may be useful given the species identification and behavioral response issues associated with greater amberjack, and to test the efficacy of eDNA sampling as an approach for future monitoring of greater amberjack distribution and abundance.
23. Other components, such as discard mortality and depredation estimates or identification and size of spawning aggregations in time and space.

## **Letter of Intent Instructions**

A Letter of Intent (LOI) is required to be eligible to submit a full proposal to MASGC. The LOI must be submitted to Loretta Leist, MASGC Research Coordinator, at: [Loretta.leist@usm.edu](mailto:Loretta.leist@usm.edu). The LOI should include the project title, names, contact information, and work affiliation of all investigators, and a short description of the proposed approach. The narrative of the LOI must be no more than 3 pages. Investigators may participate in multiple LOIs, and additional Co-PIs can be added to the full proposal. There will be no review comments provided at the LOI phase. The LOIs will facilitate the process of identifying merit reviewers and technical panel members described later in this document. The deadline for LOIs is 6 p.m. Central Time, **Friday, Feb. 5, 2021**.

## **Full Proposal Submission Guidance**

Full proposals must be submitted to MASGC through eSeaGrant: <http://eseagrants.masgc.org>. User instructions for eSeaGrant, forms, and other information can be obtained at: <http://masgc.org/greater-amberjack/RFP>.

**The proposal submission deadline is 6 p.m. Central Time, Friday, April 9, 2021.** Applicants will receive a confirmation email after successfully submitting a proposal. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please contact Loretta Leist ([loretta.leist@usm.edu](mailto:loretta.leist@usm.edu) or 228-238-8835). Changes can be made to proposals until the closing date and time.

## Required Proposal Elements

Each of the following sections and sub-sections are required proposal elements. **Omission of any required element will result in the proposal being disqualified.** Required forms and additional proposal submission instructions are available through eSeaGrant (<https://eseagrants.masgc.org/>).

### Checklist of Proposal Elements:

1. 2021 Greater Amberjack Cover Form
2. 2021 Greater Amberjack Proposal Summary Form
3. Abstract Form (500 words maximum)
4. Proposal Narrative of **no more than 30 pages**
5. Project Schedule Form
6. Literature Cited
7. Two-page Curriculum Vitae for Each Investigator
8. Current and Pending Support for Each Investigator
9. Budget Workbook
10. Budget Justification Workbook
11. Letter of Financial Commitment
12. Letters of Support
13. (Optional) List of people who should not review the proposal

## Description of Proposal Elements

### **2021 Greater Amberjack Cover Form** (eSeaGrant MS Word template)

Download the Microsoft Word Cover Form from eSeaGrant. Upload one PDF file containing the contact information for all investigators. The form must be signed by the institutional authority of the principal investigator.

### **2021 Greater Amberjack Proposal Summary Form** (eSeaGrant)

Complete the proposal summary form through eSeaGrant. We suggest completing this form as the final step in writing the proposal to concisely summarize what is stated in the project narrative.

### **Abstract Form** (eSeaGrant)

Complete the abstract form through eSeaGrant. Maximum length is 500 words. The abstract describes the research and conveys the essential elements of the proposed work. The abstract should include the rationale, goals and objectives, methodology, and expected impacts and application of results. Some of the abstract information can be drawn from the 2021 Greater Amberjack Proposal Summary Form.

### **Proposal Narrative** (upload PDF to eSeaGrant)

Upload one PDF file to eSeaGrant containing the proposal narrative. The maximum narrative length is 30 pages. The narrative must be single-spaced on 8.5" x 11" paper, have 1-inch

margins and a 12-point or larger font. Tables and figures are included in the page limit. Paginate the narrative with page numbers bottom-right justified. Literature citations and support letters should not be included in this file. No appendices are permitted. Use the sub-section headings listed below for the narrative.

1. Rationale
2. Scientific and Professional Merit
  - a. Hypothesis(es)
  - b. Objectives
  - c. Approach
3. Project Management and Coordination
4. End-User Involvement
5. Expected Impacts and Application of Results
6. Data Management and Sharing Plan

### Rationale

The rationale should describe the magnitude of the problem and its relevance to the greater amberjack fishery. The rationale section should address the scientific rationale for the project and quantify from a practical standpoint why the issue is a high priority. Describe what makes the proposed project innovative. Explain how the proposed project relates to any prior, current, or pending support. Describe how this work will add to the body of knowledge in the research area.

### Scientific and Professional Merit

Describe in the overall project design and include enough detail to demonstrate the technical qualities of the proposed approach. This section must include sub-sections for hypotheses, objectives, and approach.

1. Hypotheses: Include all hypotheses related to the proposed work. These should be presented in bulleted format.
2. Objectives: The objectives should be a numbered list and should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound.
3. Approach: Provide specific details for developing and implementing the sampling scope and plan and a plan for data analysis. Include proposed methods, approaches, and techniques to meet the stated objectives. Proposals must describe major aspects of the project, such as controls, replication, sampling surveys, validation, assumptions, and other information needed to adequately understand the proposed approach. The approach must describe the reliability and validity of the sampling method(s) for estimating absolute abundance. Include information about facilities and equipment.

### Project Management and Coordination

A description of how the overall project will be managed and coordinated. Describe the overall management structure, roles of all personnel, and how the project will be coordinated with participating institutions.

### End-User Involvement

Successful application of the research results will depend on the inclusion of end-users, partners, and, in some cases, co-sponsors. This section must identify groups who will participate in the research and include a description of their roles in the project (e.g., matching funds, equipment, personnel, etc.). This section should also identify approaches to engage the recreational and commercial fishing sectors.

### Expected Impacts and Application of Results

The impacts and the application of the results are critical to the success of research. Under this section, describe how the proposed work will benefit the greater amberjack fishery. Focus on how the results of the project can be applied to improve estimates of the abundance of greater amberjack throughout the greater amberjack's range for use in greater amberjack policy decisions by resource managers, the fishing industry, and other stakeholders.

### Data Management and Sharing Plan

A data management plan to store, access, and archive raw and processed data will be required of all funded proposals. Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner except where limited by law, regulation, policy, or security requirements.

### **MASGC Project Schedule Form** (eSeaGrant MS Word template)

Download the Microsoft Excel template from eSeaGrant. Upload one PDF file with the completed project schedule form to eSeaGrant. Milestones are specific actions that will be undertaken to accomplish the objectives whereby progress toward the goals and/or outcomes is realized. Examples of milestones are data collection, analyzing samples, presentation of results, and publication of results. Mark with an "X" the appropriate year(s) and month(s) expected for individual milestones identified for the proposed work.

### **Literature Cited** (upload PDF to eSeaGrant)

Upload one PDF file to eSeaGrant containing complete citations for references used in the narrative. You may use your disciplinary citation format. The use of up-to-date citations is expected.

### **Curriculum Vitae for Each Investigator** (2-pages per investigator)

Upload one PDF file to eSeaGrant containing a two-page curriculum vitae (CV) for each investigator. Provide the full mailing address, phone number, and email for each person. The CV should also include the investigators' current and prior positions, educational backgrounds, recent publications, relevant committees or appointments, and other qualifications.

### **Current and Pending Support for Each Investigator** (upload PDF to eSeaGrant))

Upload one PDF file to eSeaGrant containing current and pending funding support for each investigator on the proposal. There is no form or preferred format for current and pending support, but investigators must list the title, sponsor, total budget, FTE devoted to the project,

and duration for each entry. Use a format from the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Agriculture, or similar. No page limit.

**MASGC Budget Workbook** (eSeaGrant MS Excel template)

Download the Microsoft (MS) Excel Budget template from eSeaGrant. Upload one completed MS Excel Budget Workbook with tabs labeled by year and sub-award recipient. Label each budget worksheet where indicated to appropriately describe the budget year and sub-award recipient. Complete one budget worksheet for each year of the project and one cumulative two-year budget worksheet. Sub-award recipients will need to complete a budget worksheet for each year. A 30% non-federal match is required. Non-federal match may be in the form of in-kind services or additional funds from a specified institution, agency, industry, or non-federal program. Funding from federal agencies cannot count toward the non-federal match requirement. Funding under this grant program may not be used for construction, routine program implementation, regulatory compliance or mitigation, land acquisition, or on-the-ground restoration. The completed budget workbook must be uploaded as an MS Excel file.

**MASGC Budget Justification Workbook** (eSea Grant MS Excel template)

Download the MS Excel Budget Justification template from eSeaGrant. Upload one completed MS Excel Budget Justification Workbook with tabs labeled by year and sub-award recipient. Label each budget justification form with the budget year and sub-award recipient. Complete one overall MASGC Budget Justification worksheet for each year. Sub-award recipients will only need to complete a budget justification worksheet for each year. The completed budget justification workbook must be uploaded as an MS Excel file.

Additional guidance for completing NOAA Sea Grant budgets and budget justifications is available at: <http://masgc.org/greater-amberjack/RFP>.

**Letter of Financial Commitment** (upload PDF to eSeaGrant)

Upload one PDF file to eSeaGrant containing a letter signed by the PI's institutional authority committing to the required non-federal match. Letters of commitment from Co-PIs and their host institutions are the responsibility of the PI's host institution. No page limit.

**Letters of Support** (upload PDF to eSeaGrant)

Upload one PDF file to eSeaGrant containing all letters of support. Proposals should include letters of support from potential end-user groups. The best examples of letters of support are those which include formal commitments from end-users of the proposed research. No page limit.

**List of people who should not review the proposal** (upload PDF to eSeaGrant)

Although not required, investigators may submit a list of people who should not review their proposal for justifiable reasons, including conflict of interests.

## Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated using merit reviews from national fisheries experts, followed by a merit review by a technical review panel (TRP). The TRP includes fisheries scientists from universities and fisheries agencies around the U.S. and federal employees who have the necessary technical expertise.

At least three merit reviews will be obtained for each proposal prior to convening the TRP. At least two TRP members will also conduct a merit review of assigned proposals for a total of at least five merit reviews per proposal. All reviewers will use the standardized evaluation criteria described below. The TRP will be convened to discuss each proposal using the results from reviews. After the TRP discusses the merits of each proposal, the proposal will be placed into a “fundable” or “not fundable” category. The funding opportunity will be closed and re-issued in the event no fundable proposal is identified.

### Proposal Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated by merit reviewers and the TRP based on the following criteria:

1. **Rationale (10%)** – Evaluates how well the proposed project addresses the program goal of this proposal request.
2. **Scientific and Professional Merit (50%)** – This section will be evaluated to determine the degree to which approaches are science-based, meet their stated objectives, and meet the overall program objective. All components of the narrative, budget, and budget justification will be evaluated under this criterion.
3. **Expected Benefits (20%)** – Evaluates the overall impacts of the completed project and how the additional data sources, assessment approaches, and new knowledge generated will be used to improve estimates of the abundance of greater amberjack throughout the greater amberjack’s range for use in greater amberjack policy decisions by resource managers, the fishing industry, and other stakeholders.
4. **End-users, Participants, and Co-Sponsors (10%)** – Assesses the degree of engagement with the fishing industry and other stakeholders in the implementation of the project.
5. **Investigator Qualifications (10%)** – The degree to which the applicant and identified collaborators possess the necessary education, training, and/or experience to execute the proposed project. This assessment will be primarily based on the investigators’ CVs. This criterion will also assess the stage of career development and record of productivity with previous funding.

## **Project Selection Criteria**

The MASGC director, in consultation with the steering committee, has final discretion to recommend proposal(s) for funding based on the reviews, panel recommendations, administrative review, diversity, availability of funding, and the program goal, needs, and priorities. Information (e.g. reviews, scores, and funding requests) about the proposal(s) recommended for funding will be included in a letter of intent to fund selected proposal(s) submitted by the MASGC director to the MASGC Federal Program Officer. Proposal PIs will be notified once the project(s) are approved.

## **Post-Project Selection Requirements**

Applicant(s) selected for funding will be required to submit additional materials prior to project initiation. These include:

1. Applicant response to any significant review comments.
2. Consent Form – Intellectual Property.
3. Form CD-512 or CD-511 (Certification Regarding Lobbying).
4. Standard Form 424B (Assurances – Non-Construction Programs).
5. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire. This form is part of Sea Grant’s National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluation process. Copies of all required permits must be provided to MASGC prior to project initiation.

These forms can be found at: <http://masgc.org/greater-amberjack/RFP>.

## **About the Sea Grant Programs in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Regions**

The Sea Grant programs in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions represent eight of the 34 Sea Grant Programs around the United States. Sea Grant is a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) sponsored partnership with institutions of higher learning engaged in research, communications, education, extension service, and legal advisory activities to enhance the value and sustainability of the nation’s ocean and coastal resources for the benefit of the public.

MASGC’s mission is to provide integrated university- and college-based research, communications, education, extension, and legal programs (education and engagement) to coastal communities that lead to the responsible use of ocean and coastal resources through informed personal, policy, and management decisions in Alabama, Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico, and the nation (<http://www.masgc.org>).