



NORTH CAROLINA SEA GRANT

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Bycatch Reduction of Marine Mammals in Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Research Funding Opportunity – 2008

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service), in partnership with North Carolina Sea Grant, is providing competitive funding for research in support of the Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan (BDTRP). The research will focus on innovative and practical proposals that seek to reduce serious injury and mortality (bycatch) incidental to commercial fisheries of coastal bottlenose dolphins under the BDTRP. This represents a cooperative research opportunity with the commercial fishing industry, scientists, and other interested parties.

Bycatch of bottlenose dolphins occurs in coastal gillnet, seine, and crab pot fisheries targeting various species in the mid-Atlantic region — primarily in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia. We are interested in receiving research proposals involving these fisheries. This competitive funding opportunity will be open to investigators primarily in the mid-Atlantic region, but we also will accept proposals from other East Coast investigators capable of conducting research in areas where such bycatch exists.

This research program will fund projects with a strong likelihood of reducing potential bycatch of coastal bottlenose dolphins. Final awards are contingent upon the availability of funds.

Projects must comply with applicable federal regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

All proposals will be reviewed for scientific, technical and analytical merit, and the ability to address one or more of the following specific priorities under the take reduction process.

The Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Team's (BDTRT) research recommendations from 2001 and 2002, recent meeting summaries and resulting recommendations, and the final rule to implement the BDTRP can be accessed at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/interactions/trt/bdtrp.htm>

For the BDTRP, research **priorities** include, but are not limited to, investigating:

Gillnets

- The ratio of the net height (gillnet depth from top to bottom line) versus the water depth for the Spanish and King Mackerel fisheries. (2007 BDTRT Consensus Recommendation priority).
- A pilot research study to examine whether pingers can be used to deter dolphins from gillnets without increasing dolphin depredation rates. (2007 BDTRT Consensus Recommendation priority).

- The effects of different string designs (i.e., shallower net depth, hung in different parts of the water column, etc.) to determine if the amount of webbing can be reduced without affecting catch for different species, especially in small mesh gillnets in coastal waters (2002 BDTRT Consensus Recommendation priority).
- The behavior of anchored gillnet gear and potential for bottlenose dolphin entanglement:
 - a) when net panels are laced together; and
 - b) when they are not laced together, leaving gaps between nets (2002 BDTRT Consensus Recommendation priority).

Beach-Based Gear

- The effects of using monofilament versus multifilament webbing in the beach seine fishery.
- The use of beach-based gear, particularly small mesh nets, and the potential for interactions with and bycatch of bottlenose dolphins within the first 300 feet of the beach/water interface.

Pound Nets

- The use of modified leaders in the Virginia Pound Net Fishery at reducing bottlenose dolphin interactions, while maintaining catch efficiency. (2007 BDTRT Consensus Recommendation priority).
- The effects of reducing slack in the webbing of pound nets that interact with bottlenose dolphins (2002 BDTRT Consensus Recommendation priority).

Crab Traps/Pots

- Accurate estimates of the frequency of bottlenose dolphin interactions with crab pots in estuaries, bays, and sounds (2002 BDTRT Consensus Recommendation priority).
- Bottlenose dolphin behavior around crab pots.

The primary target audiences for the research results are the scientists and managers responsible for reducing the bycatch of protected marine mammals, the conservation community interested in the protection of marine mammals, and the commercial fishing industry with whom they collaborate. Results and final reports of funded research projects will be shared with NOAA Fisheries Service and the **BDTRT**. It is also expected that the principal investigators will present their results at BDTRT meetings, national and/or international conferences, and submit their findings to peer-reviewed scientific journals. Final reports will be available online on the North Carolina Sea Grant website: <http://www.ncseagrant.org/>.

Eligibility

Any U.S. citizen is eligible to receive assistance. Applicants must have all necessary local, state, and federal permits to conduct their research. Persons not engaged in commercial fishing are highly encouraged to collaborate with persons in the fishing industry for proposal development, design and submission as well as execution of the study.

Application Process

Applications must be completed in the format of the official application which is available at: <http://www.ncseagrant.org/>. Proposals should be limited to three pages, excluding budget and references, in font sizes 12 points or larger. Supplemental materials (diagrams, photos, etc.) are

acceptable if they enhance the project explanation. Individual awards may not exceed \$50,000. Final awards are contingent upon the availability of funds. Projects may have a duration of up to two years.

November 9, 2007 is the deadline to apply. Complete hand-delivered, mailed or e-mailed applications must be **received** by **5 p.m. November 9, 2007**. E-mail proposals (including supplemental material) to srebach@ncsu.edu. Faxed proposals will not be considered. Mail or deliver signed hard copy applications to **Steve Rebach, North Carolina Sea Grant, NC State University, Box 8605, 1575 Varsity Drive – Module 1, Flex Lab Building, Raleigh, NC 27695-8605**.

Notification of Proposal Award

Notification letters of funding decisions will be sent by late February 2008.

Review Procedures

Anonymous peer reviews will be conducted for all applications. All proposals will be reviewed for scientific and technical merit and the ability to address one or more of the specific priority areas. Project quality will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Addresses one or more priorities from the research priorities list and is relevant to the fisheries included in the BDTRP.
- Demonstrates familiarity and experience with the problem addressed.
- Includes innovative ideas, approach and/or potential findings.
- Contributes to the reduction of bycatch of bottlenose dolphins.
- Provides a reasonable, itemized budget.

Based on reviews, proposals will be ranked and recommended to a panel consisting of scientists from North Carolina Sea Grant and NOAA Fisheries Service, who will make the final selection, including the level of funding for each project.

For questions or more information contact:

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