

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SOUTHERN MARYLAND BLUE CATFISH FEASIBILITY STUDY

REQUEST BY:

SOUTHERN MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (SMADC)
A DIVISION OF THE TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL FOR SOUTHERN MARYLAND (TCCSMD)

15045 BURNT STORE ROAD
HUGHESVILLE, MD 20637

August 2023



SMADC is a division of the
TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL
for SOUTHERN MARYLAND



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About Us

SMADC's purpose is to support farms, farmers, and the future of agriculture in Southern Maryland and beyond. Our mission is to cultivate a dynamic food system that is profitable for farmers and producers, empowering for communities, and environmentally sound.

We believe in developing infrastructure that supports regional food systems where all members of the community can thrive. Our approach is rooted in a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship that creates economic opportunities for farmers and strengthens the health of our communities. We are dedicated to cultivating a food system that is delicious and empowering, one that recognizes the power of agriculture to bring people together and to nourish both body and soul.

SMADC Contact Manager for this Proposal:

Shelby Watson-Hampton

SMADC Director

#240-304-8535

swatsonhampton@smadc.com

Southern Maryland Project Partners:

Calvert County Economic Development Department

Charles County Economic Development Department

St. Mary's County Economic Development Department

ABOUT
THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND BLUE CATFISH
FEASIBILITY STUDY

A study to determine if Blue Catfish harvest is a sustainable and competitive sector for small businesses and job creation in the Southern Maryland Counties of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's regionally, or in cooperation with other areas of Maryland.



BACKGROUND

Maryland watermen have the means and ability to harvest blue catfish, however the large and quickly multiplying invasive species is populating the Bay and its tributaries so rapidly that there is a severe lack of infrastructure available for processing the fish and getting them to viable markets for both commercial and retail sale.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture’s seafood marketing program currently undertakes efforts to raise public awareness and promote the consumption of this invasive species. The State also has a statewide purchasing program intended to create a steady market for blue catfish demand.

A Feasibility Study should identify the Southern Maryland Tri-County Region’s potential and impact in contributing to the economic growth and positive environmental impacts surrounding the further harvesting and marketing of Blue Catfish.

Specific data and strategies surrounding Blue Catfish fisheries and untapped market potential in Southern Maryland would better position the Region in playing a role in the Statewide efforts, while potentially establishing a foundation for driving greater private and public investment in the Southern Maryland seafood and fishery industries.

It is recommended that the writer of this Study communicate with existing partners and stakeholders within the local seafood and fisheries industries that are involved in research, marketing, and supply chain management, as well as engaging with industry-relevant associations and boards.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

The purpose of this study and plan is to assess the viability of the Blue Catfish sector as a sustainable and competitive industry in the region, with the potential to contribute significantly to job creation, economic development, sustainable livelihoods, and food security throughout the Region and State.

Grant funding not to exceed \$75,000 has been made available to pay for this Feasibility Study.

Our objectives for this project are as follows:

Feasibility Study:

- a) Assess the use of Blue Catfish for human consumption, in the pet food industry, in fertilizer, in vitamins and in any other applicable manner.
- b) The Study should further:
 - a. Evaluate the competitiveness of Blue Catfish vis-à-vis other marketable fin fish.
 - b. Evaluate potential job creation.
 - c. Evaluate the Value Chain from water to sales, highlighting gap challenges and needs assessment.
 - d. Assess whether transporting the catch from Southern Maryland to another site for processing, or whether on site processing in Southern Maryland is possible and sustainable.

Project Requirements:

RFP awardee must include the following in their study:

1. Research and review of current efforts being undertaken by other entities to address the issue of Blue Catfish harvest, processing, and sale, both in Maryland, and in the neighboring states of Virginia, and Delaware.

2. Review of where in Southern Maryland would be an ideal location for processing solutions or should processing solutions be found outside the Southern Maryland area and harvests transported efficiently to the remote locations.

3. Awardee must contact the grant administrator periodically for progress updates. Meetings will be held virtually and will not last more than one hour.

4. Awardee should engage with industry representatives to receive feedback, suggestions, and concerns. Meetings must be held in a hybrid format with both in-person/call in capabilities to provide the most access to stakeholders and will need to be one hour at minimum.

Recommended Stakeholder meetings would be held for the following groups:

- Watermen
- Supply Chain Providers
- Applicable Gov/Non-Profit/Commodity groups
- One general meeting for all to attend.

List of Stakeholders

The list of stakeholders who should be contacted for their expertise should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- The Maryland Watermen's Assoc.
- Calvert County Watermen's Assoc.
- St. Mary's County Watermen's Assoc.
- Charles County Watermen's Assoc.
- Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources
- Maryland Dept. of Agriculture
- Maryland Commerce Dept.
- Tilghman Island Seafood
- Caroline County Public Schools (CCPS) Shore Gourmet
- Coastal Conservation Association
- Salisbury University
- USDA
- FDA
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Bay Program Invasive Catfish Workgroup
- NOAA Fisheries
- MD Food Bank
- MD Fish Plants & Distributers
 - Mister Fish Inc.
 - Congressional Seafood Co.

- Rock Hall Seafood Processing Plant
- Nick Hargrove - the only USDA-certified inspector of blue catfish on the Eastern Shore - Tilghman, MD.
- JJ McDonnell Company
- Wittman Wharf Seafood
- Potomac River Fisheries Commission
- Patuxent Riverkeepers Association

Proposal Submission Requirements:

Proposals must include the following information.

1. Cover Letter
2. Name of Firm
3. Employer Identification Number or Social Security Number
4. Point of Contact (name, title, phone number, mailing address, and email address)
5. Business must be in good standing with the State of Maryland and listed in the Statewide Business Express Portal for the State of Maryland (<https://businessexpress.maryland.gov/manage/maintain-good-standing-status>)
6. Overview of your organization's experience in conducting feasibility studies and developing business plans for the fishing or aquaculture industry.
7. Qualifications of business, including prior experience in similar services for non-profits and local governments, as well as any relevant accolades.
8. Proposed methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques, to be used in conducting the feasibility study.
9. Team composition, highlighting the expertise and qualifications of the individuals who will be involved in the project.
10. Timeline for the completion of the feasibility study and business plan.
11. Cost estimate, broken down by deliverables and associated expenses.
12. Samples of bidder's work similar to items listed in the Scope of Services.

13. Three (3) references within the past 3 years who can attest to the provider's knowledge and experience relating to the criteria detailed above, with contact information.

Evaluation criteria

Proposals shall be evaluated for suitability, utilizing a point system according to following scale:

1. Expertise and Experience: Bidder has successfully provided similar services and has the qualifications to undertake this RFP (0-25 Points)
2. Prior work demonstrates a proven track record for excellence (0-25 Points)
3. Provider's business philosophy and approach and description of how bidder will provide services to SMADC (0-25 Points)
4. Pricing (0-25 Points)

SMADC reserves the right to request additional information from applicants to clarify information submitted in the proposal.

The scoring may result in the selected proposal not necessarily being the lowest cost.

SMADC reserves the right to award a contract by individual items, in the aggregate, or in any combination.

Direct any questions to the SMADC Contact Manager for this Proposal:

Shelby Watson-Hampton

SMADC Director

#240-304-8535

swatsonhampton@smadc.com

Contract Period

Upon acceptance of the proposal SMADC will prepare a contract agreement to be executed by both parties. The agreement shall be for 12 months. (September 2023 - September 2024).

Proposal Due Date and Time

Proposals must be submitted electronically by 4:00 p.m. EST on September 18th to Shelby Watson-Hampton at swatsonhampton@smadc.com

2023 Timeline

August 15 - RFP Issued

September 18 - Proposals Due

September 22 – Selected Vendor Notified

September 25 - Agreement Start Date

October – December - Brief Monthly Reports Due on the 25th of each month.

2024 Timeline

Jan – August - Brief Monthly Reports Due on the 25th of each month.

September 1st - Final Feasibility Report Due

September 1 – September 15 - Time for any clarifying questions or amendments

September 15th - Contract end.