RFP# 2026.01 **January 7, 2026**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSED CHARTER [Crab Pot Vessels Only]

CPS3 Competitive Vessel Selection for Winter-Spring BBRKC Charter Project – (March 2026) BSFRF/ABSC/NOAA/ADFG Collaboration

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Summary:

BSFRF is seeking to charter two vessels to complete a third, seasonal, high-priority, Bering Sea crab research project focused on Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC). The research will be conducted on board two Bering Sea crab vessels using commercial king crab pots to complete sampling over the primary BBRKC grounds to improve the understanding of seasonal crab distribution. The research is part of ongoing collaborative crab research between BSFRF, NOAA, and ADFG.

Open Period:

January 7, 2026, through January 21, 2026 (23:59 pm Pacific Standard Time)

Expected Charter Start Date:

March 12-13, 2026

Charter Term:

22-25 days, charter begins on departure day and ends on return day, total term may change

Location:

Expected departure and return location is Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Sampling grounds will be located in the Bristol Bay core RKC area. Transit to and from Dutch Harbor to another port before or after the charter is not covered.

Charter Details:

Charters will be based on a daily rate. BSFRF will pay a daily rate plus expenses for fuel used during the project, gear loss, gear modifications, and bait. Food costs for the crew and science party, and crew labor, are to be covered by the boat (included in daily rate). Any additional insurance costs that may be required for the science party will be covered by the boat. Boats must be eligible to receive Federal funds to participate and cannot be on any Federal do-not-pay lists.

Vessel Selection Methods:

The BSFRF will accept charter proposals during the open period noted above, and **we will announce the selected vessels as soon as possible and no later than Wednesday, January 28, 2026**. BSFRF will complete a competitive boat scoring summary based on performance, safety, and cost elements for each interested boat to execute an impartial selection of chosen crab vessels. In evaluating proposals, BSFRF will prioritize vessel safety and operational performance; cost will be considered but will not be the sole or primary determining factor. Vessel selection will also include a vessel scoring element from our cooperative research partners. Each interested vessel is required to accurately answer the ten required summary questions (see last page of this RFP) to inform the selection**.** In addition, all interested vessels will need to meet the general criteria listed below to be considered for the charter. A number of alternate vessels will be chosen.

RFP Question-and-Answer Meetings:

There will be one scheduled meeting with interested parties to answer questions, hosted by BSFRF via Zoom. The meeting will be Friday January 16, 2026 @ 11 am PST – the Zoom meeting link is HERE. An additional meeting may also be scheduled.

Statement of Work

The planned research is the third Collaborative Pot Sampling (CPS3) project, using Bering Sea crab vessels as research platforms for fieldwork to address prioritized BBRKC research gaps in winter-spring crab distribution. CPS1 and CPS2 were completed in 2023 and 2024, respectively. The CPS3 project intends to charter two (2) Bering Sea crab vessels for approximately 25 days each. The full research scope of CPS3 includes a third vessel (catcher-trawler), as referred to below, but it **is not** part of this RFP.

Project Goals

This research aims to collect new, ongoing BBRKC distribution information to provide a more complete understanding of seasonal red king crab distribution to inform BBRKC bycatch measures. Currently, there are two general areas (spatial closures) that restrict trawl access across core areas of the distribution:

1) The Nearshore Bristol Bay Trawl Closure Area (NSBBTCA), which is defined as all waters east of 162° W longitude, and
2) The Bristol Bay Red King Crab Savings Area (RKCSA), which is defined as a rectangle spanning 56° 00' to 57° 00' N latitude and 162° 00' to 164° 00' West longitude (Figure 1).

The information collected from CPS3 will be used to directly evaluate these areas (and others) for their efficacy at protecting the BBRKC stock by reducing overlap of trawl effort and current crab distribution.

Project Objectives

CPS3 BBRKC seasonal distribution research has two primary objectives that include:

1) Generating estimates of winter/spring BBRKC spatial distribution for different size/maturity/sex/shell condition categories using two sampling gears, and
2) Collecting physical data (e.g., bottom temperature) that will allow variability in BBRKC distribution and reproductive status within and between years to be analyzed.

There are a number of secondary objectives of this project, which may include additional deck sampling time, including groundfish stomach sampling (to document the presence/absence of RKC as prey items), counts of predatory groundfish (Pacific Cod, Sculpins, Pacific Halibut) for relative overlap with BBRKC, tissue samples from both fish and crab, injury types and rates from captured crab, and a detailed assessment of shell condition for crab. All of the activity associated with both primary and secondary objectives of the CPS3 project will be covered by permits held onboard the vessels by BSFRF. There will be no commercial catch retention of any crabs or fish during this research. Live tanks will be used onboard for catch processing. A small number of live and/or dead scientific samples (crabs or crab tissue) may be transported back to NOAA/ADFG Kodiak laboratories as part of secondary research objectives of this project and will be authorized under the State of Alaska sampling permits obtained by BSFRF for this project.

Vessel Plans – for each chartered crab vessel (dates are approximate)

- March 10-12: vessel loads, stages gear, crew, and science party in Dutch Harbor
- March 12-13: vessel completes testing of equipment and departs for Bristol Bay sampling grounds
- March 13-14: vessel in transit to sampling grounds – likely NE Bristol Bay
- March 14-April 3: vessel sampling across the specified survey area
- April 4-5: vessel in transit to Dutch Harbor to end survey
- April 5-6: vessel unloads, demobilizes, charter ends

Field Methods

Complete CPS3 survey operations will be conducted from three chartered vessels: 2 crabbers, and one trawler. The vessels will transit from Dutch Harbor to sampling grounds (Figure 2) in outer Bristol Bay waters to deploy king crab pots for the capture, enumeration, and release of Bristol Bay red king crab, and for the trawler to deploy a Nephrops trawl (BSFRF modified Nephrops survey trawl) for similar sampling of crab. The vessels will have a captain and a full crew on board to conduct and oversee all vessel and fishing operations. Each vessel will carry a scientific party of additional personnel (three for crabbers and five for the trawler) who will conduct the scientific operations. Each vessel will have typical pot gear and/or trawl gear and rigging onboard to use for sampling. A scientific sampling work area will be staged on deck.

This research focuses on collecting data on crab distribution during the non-summer period across a core area of BBRKC grounds, collecting additional environmental and groundfish data to build on the information learned from CPS1 and CPS2. The sampling design is intended to cover most of the grounds that reflect red king crab catches in the NMFS summer survey, higher density crab areas known from directed fishing, and includes the Red King Crab Savings Area (RKCSA). Some additional stations along the Alaska Peninsula that fall inshore of standard NMFS survey areas are also planned. Primary CPS3 efforts will focus on sampling the same areas covered by CPS1 and CPS2 to begin the project, and will involve all boats to complete that work. Inclement weather and sea ice may limit sampling plans, and contingency planning is included in the overall design.

CPS3 will be composed of two semi-independent surveys conducted simultaneously:

1) a pot survey whose design will be effectively identical to that of CPS1 and CPS2, and;
2) a trawl survey using the BSFRF Nephrops trawl methods that is conceptually similar to the NMFS EBS summer trawl survey, but employs a smaller net that exhibits higher efficiency in capturing crabs, especially sublegal and immature crabs (used during CPS2).

All three charters will be focused on a gridded survey area, which will be conducted across the core distribution of BBRKC. The pot survey area consists of 175 stations (10 nm by 10 nm). Pots will be placed along north-to-south transects running through the center of each station, with pots spaced 2 nm apart along each transect (Figure 2). The pot survey will be conducted with small mesh pots – that is, commercial red king crab pots that have been modified in two ways: 1) red king crab doors replaced by snow crab doors, and 2) escape rings closed. The intent of these modifications is to estimate a broader size distribution of red king crab in Bristol Bay, including sublegal/juvenile crabs. Targeted pot soak time is 30 hours (± 4 hours) before being hauled. Bait type and amount will be standardized per pot. BSFRF will coordinate to ensure pots used for the survey are the same (type, size, configuration, etc.) for both crab charters.

During the same period as the gridded pot survey, there will be Nephrops trawl sampling across the core distribution of Bristol Bay red king crab. The trawl sampling area generally overlaps the pot sampling grid and consists of 135 stations along transects that are run north-to-south between the pot transects (Figure 2). Some coordination between the trawl and pot sampling is expected during CPS3.

Science parties onboard the pot and trawl charters are expected to include crab researchers from BSFRF, NMFS, and ADF&G. Red king crab observations will be recorded using typical procedures employed on NMFS trawl surveys (direct input from digital calipers to tablets via Bluetooth connection), with the exception that, when subsampling is necessary, subsampling will be conducted by count (rather than by weight). Any crabs not measured will be counted/recorded to determine the subsampling fraction, if required. For red king crab, the following data will be taken for each crab sampled: sex, carapace length, shell condition, diseases, and egg condition/clutch fullness (females only). **All other crab and groundfish species will only be counted.**
Every few days, data will be sent back to NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center Kodiak Laboratory, where they will be checked for errors and inconsistencies, and a map of the survey progress and CPUE will be maintained.

In addition to crab catches, CPS3 surveys will record groundfish catches (total count), along with a variety of oceanographic and other environmental data including weather conditions, sea surface temperature, bottom temperature, depth, freezing spray conditions, and other information. Charter vessels using both sampling gears (pot and trawl) will deploy or use a variety of instruments for the recording of this information, including: hydrostatic depth sensors, acoustic trawl sensors, accelerometers, temperature sensors, conductivity-temperature-depth sensors (CTDs), and underwater cameras. Cameras will be deployed opportunistically during the pot and trawl surveys.

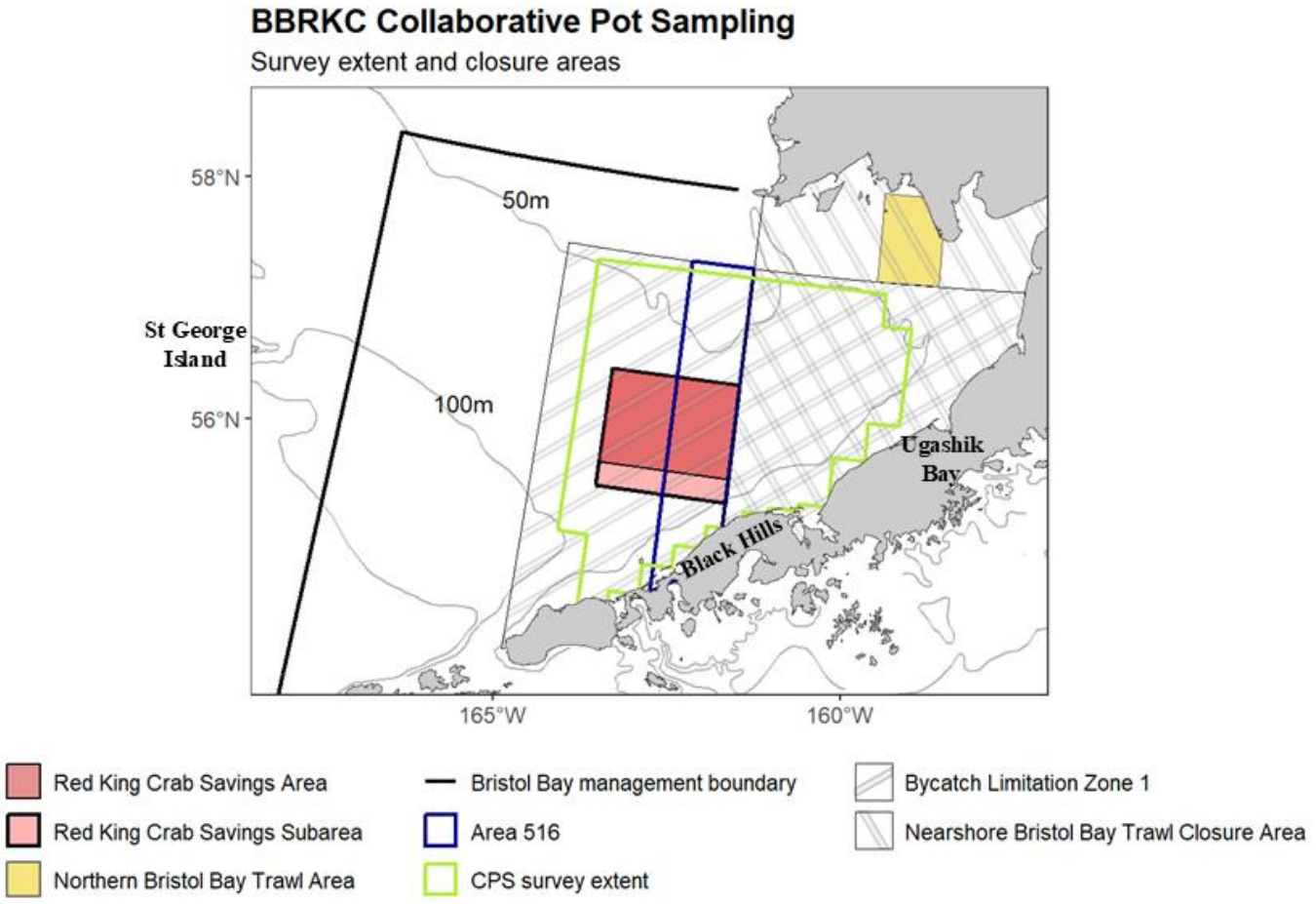

Figure 1. CPS3 survey footprint relative to trawl closure and management areas in Bristol Bay, Alaska. The large area outlined in black is the extent of the Bristol Bay red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschaticus*) management unit; the area outlined in green indicates the intended coverage of the 2026 Bristol Bay Collaborative Pot Sampling (CPS3) survey.

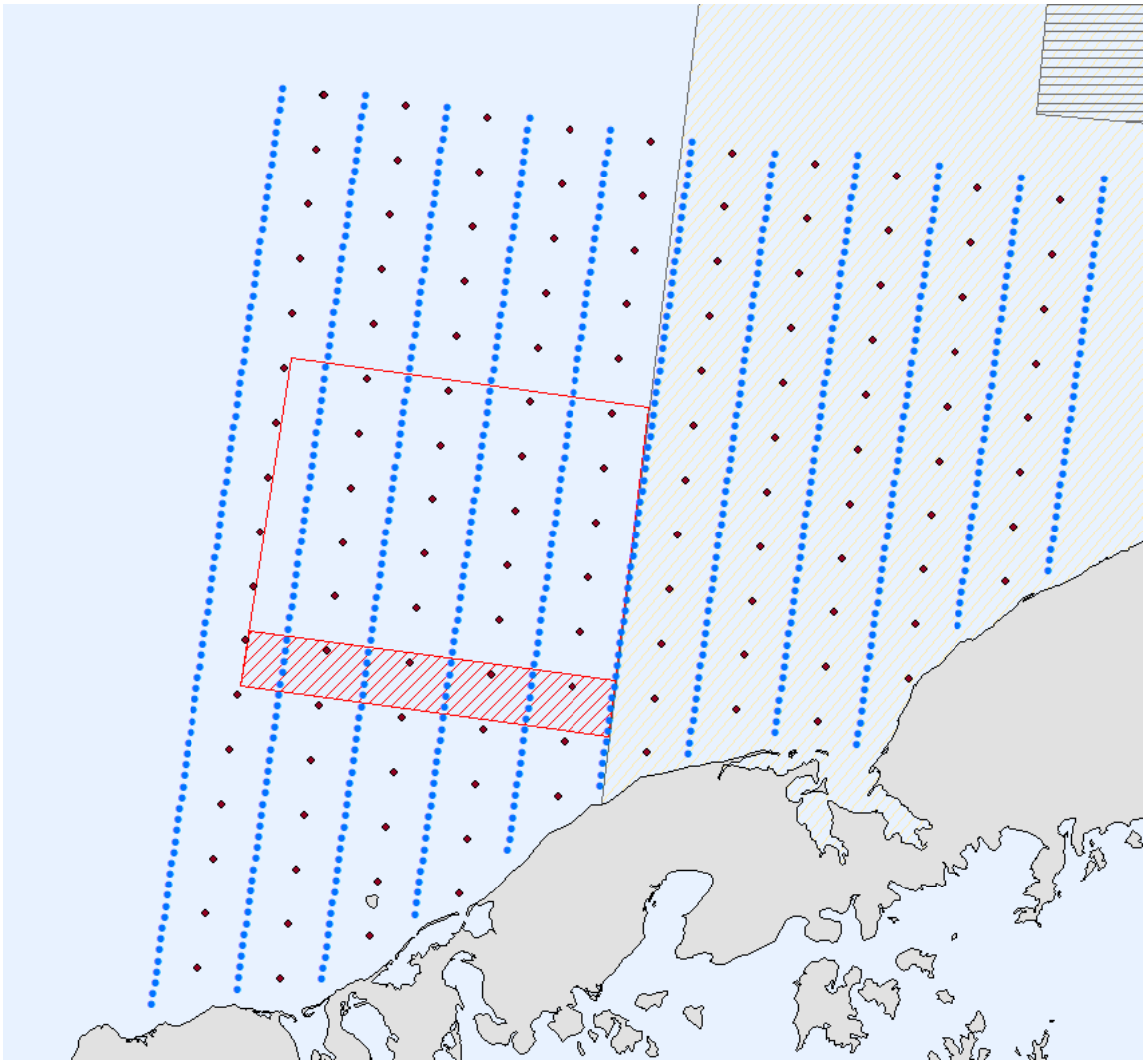

Figure 2. Sampling locations for the CPS3 survey. The pot-survey component is composed of 694 stations placed along 11 north-south transects spaced 15 nmi apart, with stations spaced at 2 nmi along each transect. The trawl-survey component is composed of transects spaced 15 nmi apart; within each transect stations are spaced 10-nmi apart, covering 131 stations. Trawl transects are nested within the pot transects and placed the maximum possible distance from the pot transects (i.e., 7.5 nmi from the pot transects).

How to Apply: (Email – must be received by 23:59 PST, Wednesday January 21, 2026)

Interested parties should carefully review all of the detailed criteria on the following pages. There are several general requirements, in addition to safety, vessel specifications, lodging and provisions, vessel crew requirements, and vessel operations. BSFRF may have most or all of this information for vessels that have applied to be part of a charter in the past, but all interested boats must certify that they meet the requirements and should have any required details ready to share upon request.

There are four elements of information required for all applicants:

1) Information for **identification of the boat, owners, captain, and crew.**
2) Answers to the **10 Required Vessel Summary Questions** that BSFRF will use to inform performance, safety, and cost elements of the competitive selection process (see last page).
3) Certification that **you meet all the requirements** articulated in the RFP.
4) A **proposed daily charter rate** for the interested vessel (not including fuel, gear, bait).

Interested parties should submit an email to Scott Goodman (sgoodman@nrccorp.com) and Madison Shipley (mshipley@nrccorp.com), addressed to Scott and/or Madi; the email must be received by 23:59 PST 1/21/26.

Details for the Email to send to BSFRF:

Subject Line should be "**CPS3 Charter – Interested Party"**

Email body needs to include the following details

1) **Vessel Name, Owners, Name of Captain for charter, and appropriate contact information to correspond back to the interested party (name, email, phone).**
2) **Clearly identified Yes or No answers to the 10 Required Vessel Summary Questions (see last page).**
3) **Certification that you meet all the requirements articulated in the RFP.**
4) **A proposed daily charter rate for the interested vessel to complete the charter (excluding fuel, gear, and bait).**

IMPORTANT NOTICE:
This project is intended to occur with charters administered by BSFRF while using Federally-sourced funds. We will notify all interested parties as soon as possible to confirm charter options. The timing of payment by BSFRF to charterers may be impacted by delays in Federal funding. BSFRF reserves the right to modify or cancel this RFP. BSFRF is required to conduct procurements in a manner that avoids real or perceived conflicts of interest, consistent with applicable federal regulations. This procurement is funded with federal funds and is subject to the requirements of 2 CFR Part 200. The selected contractor will be required to comply with all applicable federal regulations and contract provisions, including but not limited to termination for cause and convenience, access to records, equal employment opportunity, and suspension and debarment requirements. Required federal contract clauses will be incorporated into the final charter agreement.

Please direct any questions you may have about this charter to Scott Goodman (sgoodman@nrccorp.com, 425-232-5986) or Jamie Goen (Jamie@alaskacrabbers.org, 206-417-3990). This request to interested parties is open for the crab charters (2) only.

CPS3 Pot Vessel Requirements

General

- Current/capable crab vessel with recent activity (registered and active in 3 of last 5 open seasons for BBRKC, snow, or bairdi), capable of carrying and fishing 100 typical BBRKC pots, deck tables, and tanks. A wave wall is preferred. The vessel should have adequate space for up to three (3) deck tanks (blue fish totes) with seawater flow-through for all 3 totes. The science party will require deck space for at least one 4'x8' deck table.

- Experienced captain and crew – must provide documentation showing captain and crew experience (number of crew variable but needs to be adequate for safely completing project; captain plus 4 crew is ideal).

- A vessel crewmember will perform cooking duties (specified cook or rotation).

- A vessel crewmember will be on look-out during night watches (rotation).

- Rafts, PFDs, and other vessel safety provisions must meet requirements for the number of people onboard.

- Vessel fishing equipment: two power blocks (one as a spare) to pull crab gear, motor-operated bait chopper, catch sorting table (hydraulic articulating highly preferred), sufficient bait bags to fish up to 100 pots simultaneously, fish tote with continuous supply of seawater for temporary live crab holding.

- Captain must agree to interact with and defer to the field party chief (lead scientist) onboard for following the sampling plan during the term of the charter.

- The vessel must be equipped with consistent communications during the charter, including satellite-based communication (phone and WiFi) and side-band and VHF radio transmitters/receivers to allow the science parties to communicate with each other and NOAA/ADFG/BSFRF project parties onshore (data transfer onshore is a required capability), and to receive daily weather forecasts for the area of operation.

- Vessel owners and captains will be required to agree to weather/ice contingency plans (to be determined), which will include adjusted sampling plans and potentially some adjustment to the charter term if sampling days are lost.

- Additional terms and details of charter logistics and requirements will be included in the charter contract and addenda (cruise orders, sampling plans, etc.).

Safety

1. USCG certification and sticker are current, and the vessel must agree to the project safety plan and a courtesy USCG inspection prior to beginning charter (within 3 months of the charter).

2. The vessel will be subject to inspection by BSFRF and NOAA/ADFG project partners. Representatives of BSFRF and partners may inspect the vessel prior to the issuance of the charter contract. Vessel owner should be prepared to provide the vessel's most recent marine survey, vessel's stability report or letter, most recent hull audio-gauge test, and a list of any major repairs and modifications since last marine survey and last stability report/letter.

3. Rafts, PFDs, and other vessel safety provisions must meet requirements for the number of people onboard.

4. Vessel must carry a dedicated damage control kit stored in an accessible location. See USCG resource: Damage Control. Link address is: http://www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/DCO%20Documents/5p/CG-5PC/CG-CVC/CVC3/training/dmgcontrol/CG-3PCV-3_DC_Kit_List.pdf

5. First aid / trauma medical kits and AED should be available, up to date, and stocked appropriately.

Vessel Specifications

6. Length of not less than one hundred-ten (110) feet is a qualifying requirement. Length will be determined by measuring the length overall from the foremost part of the hull to the aftermost part of the hull, excluding bowsprits, rudders, accessory brackets, and similar fittings and attachments. Vessels between 100 feet and 110 feet must be sponsoned to be considered for the charter. Fuel capacity must be high enough to complete the charter without refueling.

7. Vessel main engine(s) must be diesel powered and a minimum total of 900 horsepower, and minimum cruising speed in calm seas (without pots on deck or crab in holding tanks) must be at least 10 knots.

8. Typical Bering Sea commercial crab fishing equipment should be ready and made available upon request: two power blocks (one as a spare) to pull crab gear, motor operated bait chopper, catch sorting table (hydraulic articulating highly preferred), sufficient bait bags to fish up to 100 pots simultaneously, fish tote(s) with continuous supply of seawater for temporary live crab holding.

9. The vessel must be equipped with consistent communications during the charter, including satellite-based communication (phone and WiFi) and sideband and VHF radio transmitters/receivers to allow the science parties to communicate with each other and with NOAA/ADFG/BSFRF project parties onshore; data transfer to onshore is also a required capability. Bandwidth capability that can accommodate frequent use of What'sApp for texts is required.

10. The vessel must have the ability to receive daily weather forecasts for the area of operation.

Lodging and Provisions

11. Bunk and accommodation space for the normal crew plus three (3) scientists [science party]. Female science party members may need separate accommodations if available.

12. Workspaces, berthing, and galley spaces shall be adequately ventilated and free from tobacco smoke, excessive engine noise, and hydrocarbon or other noxious fumes.

13. Adequate freshwater storage for the total expected charter days for the total number of people aboard to allow drinking, cooking, cleaning, and showers for each person every 3 or 4 days. Adequate bottled drinking water for the fishing and science crew.

14. Adequate food for a trip of a maximum of 30 days for the total number of people aboard. This includes a diversity of healthy entrees, sides, fruits, vegetables, desserts, and snacks for reasonable consumption. Vessel may be required to accommodate vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, food allergies, or other dietary needs or restrictions.

Vessel crew

15. Experienced captain and crew – must provide documentation showing captain and crew experience (number of crew variable but needs to be adequate for safely completing project). Captain plus 4 crew members is ideal, and the charter may require 4 crew plus Captain. The vessel captain must have at least 5 years of fishing experience in the Bering Sea acting as captain, of which a minimum of 3 years are crab pot fishing. One of the crew must be an engineer with 5 years' experience aboard fishing vessels and must be fully knowledgeable of the charter vessel and equipment. Deck crew must have a minimum of 1 year of pot-fishing experience. Captain and crew members must have participated in the capacity in which they will serve during the charter in at least one fishery within the last 3 years. At least 1 vessel crew member must have CPR/first aid training, and at least 1 vessel crew be a certified drill instructor.

16. A vessel crewmember is expected to perform cooking duties: 3 meals per day, plus snacks.

17. A look-out must be posted while the vessel is underway or at anchor (including at night) consistent with USCG regulations.

18. The vessel crew will set and retrieve all fishing gear; the scientific crew will handle sampling of catches when pots are brought aboard the vessel.

Vessel Operations

19. Captains must agree to interact with and defer to the lead scientist onboard for following the sampling plan during the term of the charter, unless the captain deems such actions to compromise the safety of the vessel and/or crew.

20. Project plans include some contingencies, and charter vessels will be expected to allow everyone onboard 8 hours of sleep/day, and to complete as many of the planned objectives as possible.

21. Vessel owners and captains will be required to agree to weather/ice contingency plans (to be determined during the days immediately prior to charter)

22. The vessel contractor shall provide evidence of insurance with a carrier or carriers satisfactory to BSFRF covering injury to persons and/or property suffered by the science crew, as a result of operations under this contract. The vessel owner will provide proof that the vessel's Certificate(s) of Insurance coverage(s) warrant(s) or include(s) both the transit to/from and in the Bering Sea waters in which the intended project is to occur during the time of the charter.

    BSFRF (Board of Directors) will have sole discretion to cancel the contract for reasons such as failure of essential vessel equipment, lack of cooperation and/or insubordination by the vessel captain or crew, safety concerns, BSFRF's loss of federal funding, etc.

23. BSFRF will have the right to require the replacement of any vessel crewmember. Verbal, emotional, or physical abuse will not be tolerated between people on board.

24. There shall be no alcohol, marijuana, recreational drugs, or controlled substances aboard the vessel during the charter period, nor people onboard the vessel charter under the influence of any of these listed substances while under charter (at dock or at sea).

25. Either underway, at anchor, or dockside, the captain's orders will be final in matters regarding navigation and the general operation of the vessel, the operation of the vessel equipment and fishing gear, and the general activities and safety of the vessel crew and science crew.

26. The vessel captain will obey all USCG, State, and other applicable regulations, rules, and statutes pertaining to the safe and legal operation of the vessel. A watchman at the helm is required at all times.

27. The vessel captain will comply with all directives given by the science crew leader regarding research activities, provided that those directives do not directly or indirectly endanger the vessel, the captain, or crew or the science crew.

28. The captain must provide a safety orientation briefing to all vessel and science crew prior to departure from Dutch Harbor. Both the vessel crew and science crew must have general instructions regarding the following: the location and operation of lifesaving and emergency equipment, instructions for making a distress call, what to do in the event of a person overboard, what to do in the event of a fire, what to do in the event of flooding, what to do if an 'abandon ship' order is issued, what alarms sound like and signal. A station bill should be posted during the charter that includes all members of the science and vessel crew.

29. It is strongly encouraged that the captain assigns science crew members to explicit station bill duties where they are likely to enhance emergency response times and outcomes.

Required Vessel Summary Questions for Prospective CPS3 Charters

(these can be copied and pasted into the email with the actual Yes or No for each question included)

In addition to the mandatory requirements listed above, vessels will be competitively ranked based on their response to the additional optional criteria below.

Please respond Yes or No to all of the following additional scoring criteria:

1. Y / N Vessel active in each of the last 3 years
2. Y / N More than 3 bunks for science party
3. Y / N Dedicated cabin for female science party
4. Y / N Able to carry more than 150 pots
5. Y / N Vessel burns less than 800 gallons/day running
6. Y / N Vessel maintains efficient speed of 10 knots
7. Y / N Captain has over 10 years' experience fishing BS crab
8. Y / N Vessel owner agrees to cover any required additional insurance costs which may be required as part of the charter
9. Y / N Vessel owner agrees to cover any gear lease or use costs, apart from replacement of lost gear
10. Y / N Vessel agrees to 2 days of no-cost time at dock as part of gear staging, mobilizing, and de-mobilizing

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