

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSED CHARTER [Crab Pot Vessels Only]****OPS1 Competitive Vessel Selection for Opilio Pot Sampling Project – (August 2026)  
BSFRF/ADF&G/NMFS Collaboration**

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**Summary:**

BSFRF is seeking to charter two vessels to complete a first, seasonal, high-priority, Bering Sea crab research project focused on Bering Sea snow crab (BSS). The research will be conducted onboard two Bering Sea crab vessels using commercial opilio crab pots to complete sampling over the primary opilio grounds to improve the understanding of seasonal crab distribution. The research is part of ongoing collaborative crab research between BSFRF, NOAA, and ADF&G.

**Open Period:**

Wednesday, May 27, 2026, through Tuesday, June 9, 2026 (23:59 PST)

**Expected Charter Start Date:**

August 1-5, 2026 [some flexibility on start date, vessels should specify their earliest available start date]

**Charter Term:**

25-28 days, charter begins on departure day and ends on return day, total term may change

**Location:**

Expected departure and return is from Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Sampling grounds are located in designated core Bering Sea snow crab grounds between the Pribilof Islands and St. Matthew Islands. Transit to and from Dutch Harbor to another port, either 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 crew and science party, and labor for crew are to be covered by the boat (included in daily rate). Any additional insurance costs for the science party that may be required 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 and **we will announce the selected vessels as soon as possible and no later than Friday, June 12, 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 interested 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 Tuesday June 2, 2026 @ 4 pm PST** – the Zoom meeting link is [HERE](#). An additional meeting may also be scheduled.

## Statement of Work

The Opilio Pot Sampling 1 (OPS1) marks the first year of a multi-year, large-scale survey project funded through Federal Disaster Relief. It builds on the 2024 Opilio Pilot Project (OPP) and will use Bering Sea crab vessels as research platforms for fieldwork addressing prioritized Bering Sea snow crab research. The OPS1 project intends to charter two (2) Bering Sea crab vessels for approximately 25-28 days. A third vessel (catcher-trawler) is part of the broader OPS1 program but is not covered by this RFP.

### Project Goals

The aim of OPS1 is to conduct the first year of a planned multi-year collaborative research study using commercial crab vessels as research platforms to collect updated and expanded information on opilio, providing a more comprehensive understanding of Bering Sea snow crab stock dynamics following the 2019/2020 stock collapse. We intend to conduct multi-gear survey sampling of Bering Sea snow crab, using both pots and trawls during the OPS1 research, in a manner similar to the ongoing, focused Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC) research (CPS1 in 2023 and CPS2 in 2024). Key questions are focused on snow crab distribution, depth preferences, and catch rates across historic fishing grounds, particularly as they relate to temperature gradients compared with the marine heat wave conditions in the EBS around 2018–2019. Catches will also be compared to standardized NOAA survey gear and to catches from the modernized survey gear as it is field tested and phased in.

### Project Objectives

The objectives for the OPS1 research expand on the pilot study and are applied on a larger scale, with the potential to address a broader range of objectives. Expanded project objectives will address the following primary and secondary concerns:

#### Primary

- Validate and calibrate snow crab catch rates within the existing NMFS summer survey grid by comparing pot and trawl CPUEs at index stations on the slope, northern EBS grid boundary, and core snow crab grounds.
- Establish deepwater index stations at the limits of standard survey coverage (trawling) to test whether crabs are migrating to depths where standard gear is less effective, where pot sampling could provide insights into areas difficult to trawl.
- Increase sampling density of pot and Nephrops trawl sampling adjacent to standard NMFS survey stations to characterize within-NMFS-survey variance in CPUE.
- Collect higher-resolution data on male morphometric maturity across the survey area
- Deploy temperature sensors on pot and trawl gear to record water column and bottom temperatures throughout fishing operations
- Opportunistic documentation and collection of *Chionoecetes* hybrids, including high-resolution photographs for identification guides and specimen retention for lab studies.

#### Secondary

Additional opportunistic work may include underwater video monitoring, artificial bait comparisons (replicating CPS2 methods), collection of crabs for lab work with cooperative research partners, collection and/or

documentation of predator diets, and potential deployment of satellite tags on crabs, subject to time and conditions.

Vessel Plans – for each chartered crab vessel (dates below are approximate and may change)

- August 1-2: vessel loads, stages gear, crew, and science party in Dutch Harbor
- August 2-3: vessel completes testing of equipment and departs for Bering Sea sampling grounds
- August 3-5: vessel in transit to sampling grounds – [coordinating survey start area]
- August 5-25: vessel sampling across specified survey areas
- August 26-27: vessel in transit to Dutch Harbor to end survey
- August 28-29: vessel unloads, demobilization, charter ends

## Field Methods

Complete OPS1 survey operations will be conducted from three chartered vessels; 2 crabbers, and one trawler. The crab vessels will transit from Dutch Harbor to the sampling grounds on the central Bering Sea shelf to deploy snow crab pots for the capture, enumeration, and release of crab. The vessels will have a captain and full crew onboard to conduct and oversee all vessel and fishing operations. Each vessel will carry a scientific party of additional people (typically three for crabbers and five for the trawler) who will conduct the scientific operations of the project. It is anticipated that the science parties on each vessel may include representatives from NOAA, ADF&G, and BSFRF. Each vessel will have typical pot gear and/or trawl gear and rigging onboard to use for sampling. There will be a scientific sampling work area staged on deck.

OPS1 surveys will be conducted over an area covering approximately 61 NMFS Bering Sea survey stations (Figure 1 through 3). The 61 stations are composed of three sub-areas: a primary shelf area (50 stations), a northwest survey deep-water, boundary area (6 stations), and a northern boundary area (5 stations). OPS1 fishing gears include modified commercial crab pots (traps) baited with chopped herring (*Clupea pallasii*) in bait bags and Pacific cod (*Gadus macrocephalus*) rigged as “hanging bait,” soaked for a target of 30-36 hours prior to retrieval; and a Bigouden Nephrops trawl (a modified version referred to as the BSFRF Nephrops Trawl). Pots will be fished on specified transects (14 nm apart) along which pots are expected to be spaced 2 nm (3.7 km) apart. The total number of stations for pot sampling is estimated at 870 but some modifications of actual sampling may be required. Trawl transects will likely be spaced between pot transects, with trawl sampling conducted every 10 nm (18.5 km) or closer, depending on actual pot sampling stations and the extent of survey coverage. Oceanographic conditions will be monitored throughout the survey area using temperature-depth loggers affixed to pots and conductivity-temperature-depth (CTD) loggers affixed to the trawl sampling gear. Cameras may be deployed opportunistically at both pot and trawl stations.

All BSS crab captured at both pot and trawl stations are sampled for sex, size, shell condition, and the presence of any visible disease or parasites; additionally, chela height measurements from a subset of males, and females are examined for maturity status, clutch fullness, and egg condition – all according to NMFS Bering Sea summer survey shellfish data collection methods. Complete sampling of other commercially important crab species (i.e., blue king crab (*Paralithodes platypus*), golden king crab (*Lithodes aequispinus*), spiny king crab (*Paralithodes brevipes*), Tanner crab (*Chionoecetes bairdi*), hair crab (*Erimacrus eisenbeckii*), and Dungeness crab (*Metacarcinus magister*) will be conducted as well as quantification of non-crab bycatch, including fishes and invertebrates. Additional on-board experiments may be conducted as requested by collaborators (e.g., NOAA, ADF&G) and live

crab may be retained and transported to shore-based research facilities (e.g., NOAA-NMFS Kodiak Laboratory) to support experimental research. The OPS surveys do not include any retention of commercial catches.

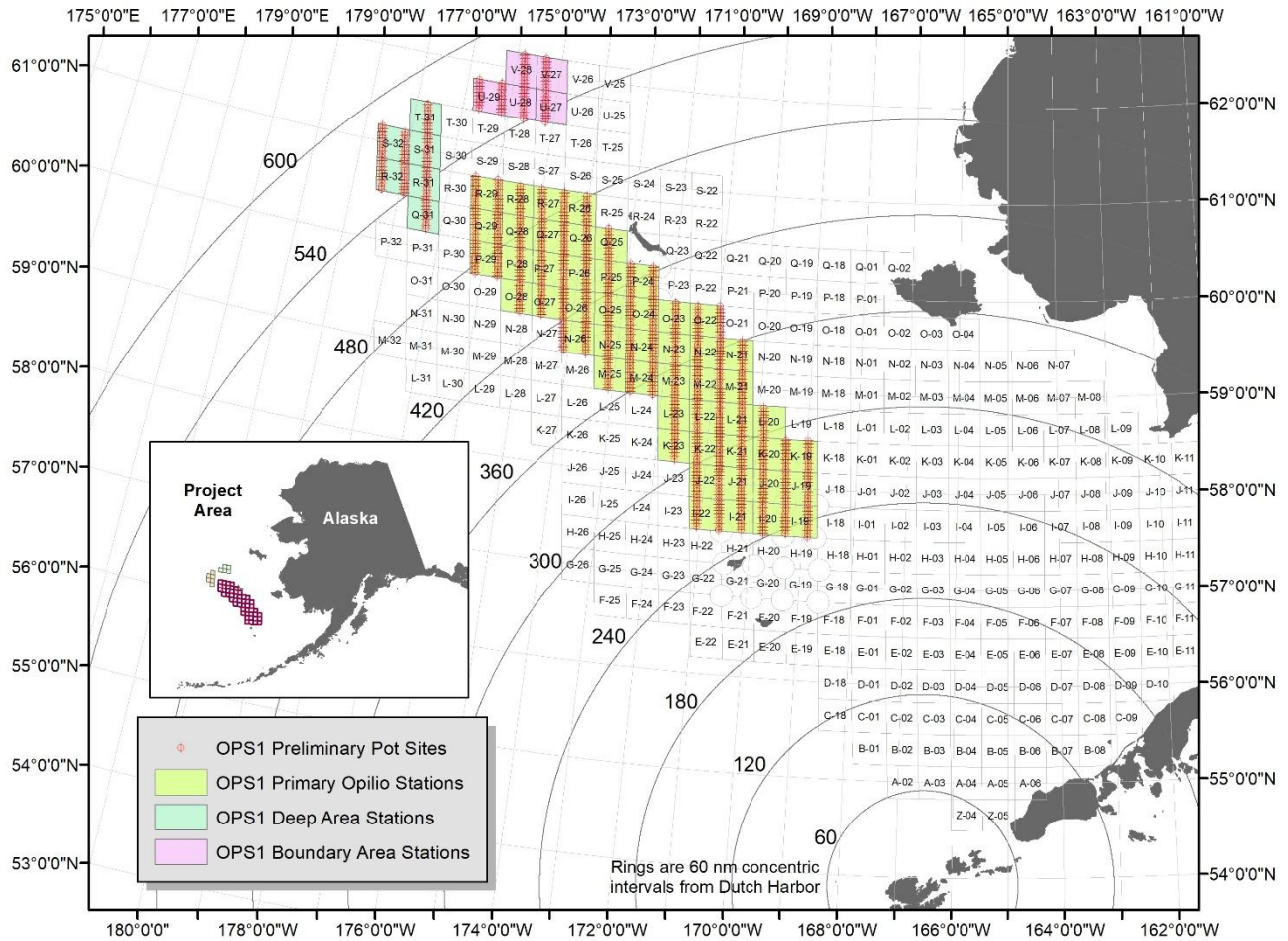


Figure 1. Overview of planned sampling areas for OPS1 showing NMFS stations and pot sampling sites. The project covers three planned areas; Primary Opilio Stations (50 NMFS stations, 727 pot sites), Deep Area stations (NW Area of 6 NMFS stations, 81 pot sites), and north Boundary Area stations (North Area of 5 NMFS stations, 62 pot sites). Pots are planned to be fished 2 nm apart within each transect (north to south) and all pot transects are planned for 14 nm apart. The density of planned stations is similar to (slightly higher than) BSFRF CPS1-2 sampling, and substantially denser than NMFS summer survey sampling (1 tow every 20 nm).

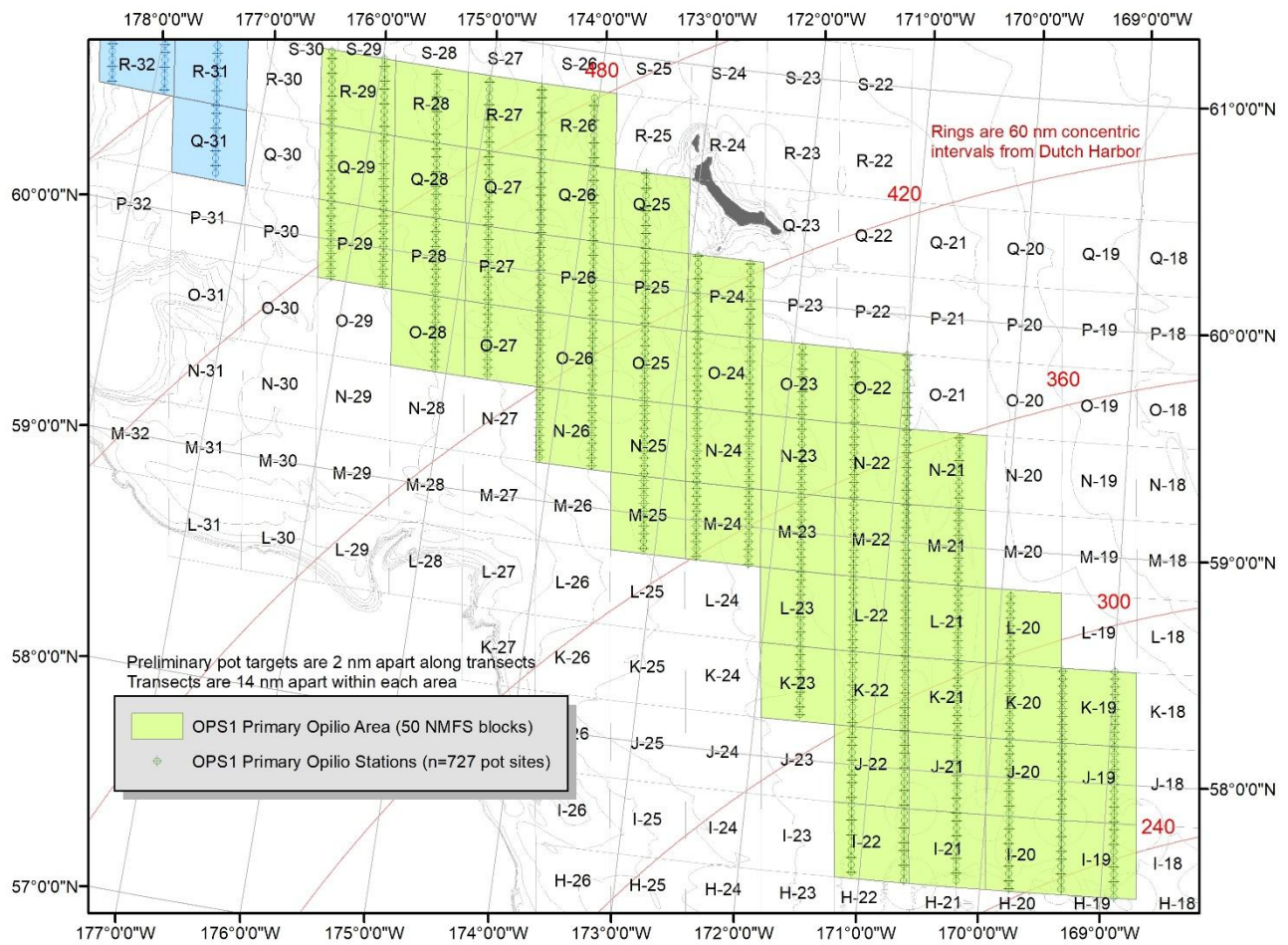


Figure 2. Planned sampling areas for OPS1 showing NMFS stations and pot sampling sites in the Primary Opilio Area (50 NMFS stations, 727 pot sites). Pots are shown as green crosshairs and are planned to be fished 2 nm apart within each transect (north to south) and all pot transects are planned for 14 nm apart.

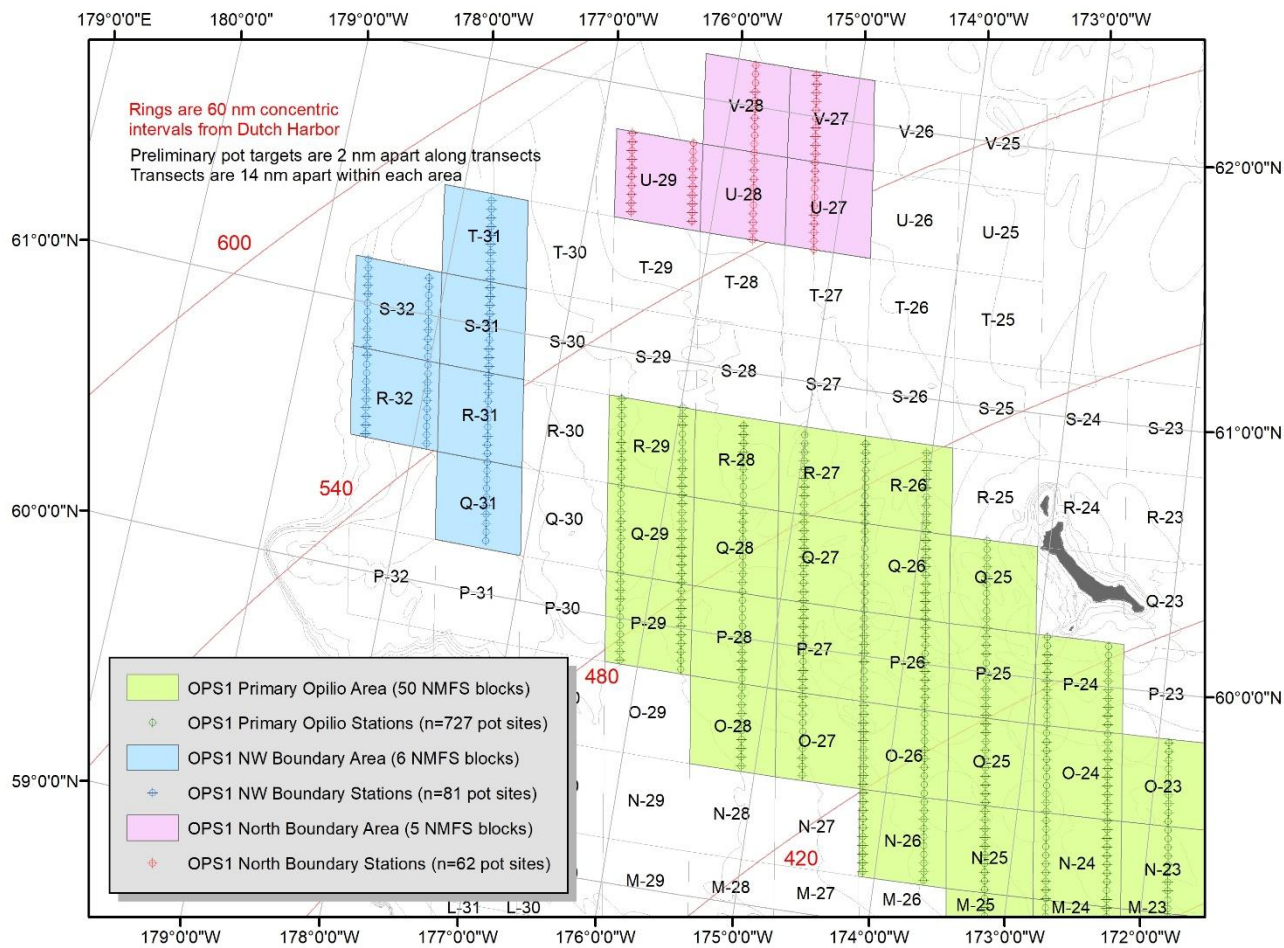


Figure 3. Planned sampling areas for OPS1 showing NMFS stations and pot sampling sites in the Deep Area stations (NW Area of 6 NMFS stations, 81 pot sites), and North Boundary stations (North Area of 5 NMFS stations, 62 pot sites). Pots are shown as blue (NW Boundary Area) crosshairs and red (North Boundary Area) crosshairs and are planned to be fished 2 nm apart within each transect (north to south) and all pot transects are planned for 14 nm apart.

## How to Apply: (Email – must be received by 23:59 PST, Tuesday, 6/9/26)

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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) **and earliest start date available.**

**Interested parties should submit an email** to Scott Goodman ([sgoodman@nrccorp.com](mailto:sgoodman@nrccorp.com)) and Madison Shipley ([mshipley@nrccorp.com](mailto:mshipley@nrccorp.com)), addressed to Scott and/or Madi, the email must be received by 23:59 PST 6/9/26.

Details for the Email to send to BSFRF:

Subject Line should be **“OPS1 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) and your earliest start date available.**

### 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](mailto:sgoodman@nrccorp.com), 425-232-5986) or Jamie Goen ([Jamie@alaskacrabbers.org](mailto:Jamie@alaskacrabbers.org), 206-417-3990). This request to interested parties is open for the crab charters (2) only.

# OPS1 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 opilio pots, deck tables, tanks, and wave wall 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. Science party will require deck space for at least one 4'x8' deck table that they may bring.
- 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 is expected to perform cooking duties (specified cook or rotation).
- A vessel crewmember is expected to be on look-out during night watches (rotation).
- Rafts, PFDs, immersion suits, and other vessel safety provisions must meet requirements for 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 lead scientist onboard for following 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 with NOAA/ADF&G/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 captain 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 addendums (cruise orders, sampling plans, etc.).

## Safety

1. USCG certification and sticker are current, and vessel must agree to 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/ADF&G project partners. Representatives of BSFRF and partners will/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 list of any major repairs and modifications since last marine survey and last stability report/letter.

3. Rafts, PFDs, immersion suits, and other vessel safety provisions must meet requirements for number of people onboard.
4. Vessel must carry a dedicated damage control kit stored in an accessible location. See USCG resource: [http://www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/DCO%20Documents/5p/CG-5PC/CG-CVC/CVC3/training/dmgcontrol/CG-3PCV-3 DC Kit List.pdf](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 sponsored 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 NOAA/ADF&G/BSFRF project parties onshore and data transfer onshore is required capability. Bandwidth capability that can accommodate frequent use of What's App for texts.
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 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, hydrocarbon fumes, and other noxious fumes.
13. Adequate fresh water storage for the total expected charter days for 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 fishing and science crew.
14. Adequate food for a trip of maximum 30 days for 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 crewmembers 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 crab pot fishing. One of the crew must be an engineer with 5 years' experience aboard fishing vessels and 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 must have CPR/first aid training, and at least 1 vessel crew must be a certified drill instructor.
16. A vessel crewmember is expected to perform cooking duties: 3 meals per day, plus snacks.
17. A lookout must be posted while the vessel is underway or at anchor (including at night) consistent with USCG regulations.
18. The vessel crew will be expected to set and retrieve all fishing gear; the scientific crew will handle sampling of catches when pots are brought aboard the vessel.

## **Vessel Operations**

19. Captain must agree to interact with and defer to the lead scientist onboard for following the sampling plan during the term of the charter, unless such actions are deemed by the captain to compromise safety of the vessel and/or crew.
20. Project plans include some contingencies and charter vessels would be expected to allow everyone onboard 8 hours of sleep/day, and to complete as much of planned objectives as possible
21. Vessel owners and captain will be required to agree to weather/ice contingency plans (to be determined in 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) warrants or includes 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.
23. 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.
24. BSFRF will have the right to require replacement of any vessel crewmember. Verbal, emotional, or physical abuse will not be tolerated between people on board.
25. There shall be no alcohol, marijuana, recreational drugs, or controlled substances aboard the vessel during the charter period or under the influence of any of these listed substances while under charter (at dock or at sea).

26. 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.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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 OPS1 Charters

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

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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 over 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 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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