

ALABAMA STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN (SEP)

Project #7: Alabama Gulf Seafood Marketing

Project Description/Summary

- a) This project will continue the ongoing Alabama Gulf Seafood Marketing Program. Created in March 2011 by Alabama Governor Robert Bentley with the signing of Executive Order 09, the Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission (ASMC) was established to increase business for Alabama's seafood industry. Alabama Seafood is defined as any seafood product sold by Alabama businesses and sourced from Gulf and local waters.

The ASMC is comprised of 15 voting members appointed by the Governor to represent the many and varied industries and entities related directly and indirectly to Alabama's seafood industry. It also includes the ex officio non-voting members from the Alabama Tourism Department, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Alabama Department of Public Health, and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. The ASMC also has non-voting members from the Baldwin County and Mobile County Legislative Delegations and a representative from the Alabama Governor's Office.

The ASMC is responsible for advising its Program Administrator, Chris Blankenship, on the marketing of Alabama seafood, and it is the responsibility of the Program Administrator to develop and implement a seafood marketing program. The ASMC is comprised of volunteer members that include fishermen, processors, charter boat operators, retailers, restaurant owners, consumers, and others directly and indirectly related to the Alabama seafood industry. Led by Chris Blankenship, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Commission provides advice, oversight, management, and encouragement to the marketing of Alabama seafood.

The Alabama Gulf Seafood Marketing Program has had a successful beginning in the short time it has been in existence. The mission of the ASMC is to build a marketing, public relations, and outreach campaign to help consumers feel confident about the safety of Alabama seafood and to discover the availability and positive attributes of this bounty. The ASMC, representing all components of the seafood distribution chain, along with the tourism, charter boat sector, and governmental entities, has been established to coordinate the efforts by providing cohesive vision and overarching strategies to showcase Alabama seafood. These strategies focus on expanding the value, pride, brand, and global market share of Alabama seafood.

Activities also include the comprehensive administration of this grant, including, but not limited to, project development and oversight, contracting, and sub-recipient monitoring.

- a. **Need:** Due to the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the seafood community in Alabama has experienced immense hardship. The economic impacts to the fishing industry are still being quantified, but it is widely recognized the demand for Gulf and Alabama seafood products came to a

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standstill. In addition to the direct financial impact on fisherman, numerous processors, distributors, and wholesale businesses throughout the Gulf Coast region were closed. In a precautionary move, thousands of square miles of waters were closed to the harvest of seafood due to the presence of oil. The continued negative portrayal in the media had an immense adverse impact on the seafood industry of Alabama, as well as on local seafood restaurants, charter boats, and coastal businesses. Protocols were put in place by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to reopen the closed fishing areas. This process began on July 22, 2010. Seafood samples were taken by NOAA and the State of Alabama in order to reopen our waters to harvest. All Alabama waters were reopened by September 2010. Once fishermen were allowed to move back to harvesting, the greatest challenge became marketing Gulf seafood as safe to eat. Due to the massive media coverage and daily stories about the oil and seafood, the local, regional, national, and international perception became that Gulf and Alabama seafood was not safe to eat. We continue to fight this perception. The commercial fisheries of Alabama provide significant jobs, income, and sales impact in the State. Over 10,000 jobs are directly related to the seafood industry in Alabama with a total economic impact before the spill of over \$445 million dollars annually. The economic impact of the seafood industry in Alabama was reduced over \$100 million since the spill.

Purpose: The purpose of this program is to continue to combat the negative media attention and to facilitate recovery of the seafood industry in Alabama. It is imperative that a well-funded, comprehensive seafood marketing and public program be implemented.

Objective: The primary objectives of the program are to:

- Increase sales and market share of Alabama seafood product and related businesses;
 - Become the go-to source for information on seafood in Alabama; and
 - Create a sustainable seafood marketing organization.
- b. The main operation for the Alabama Gulf Coast Seafood Marketing Program will take place in Mobile and Baldwin Counties. However, the marketing effort will be conducted statewide and regionally in the Southeastern United States.
- c. This project is expected to begin 7/1/2019 and end 6/30/2024 (5 years).
- d. The proposed project will be implemented by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
- b) This program intends to increase the volume of seafood sold from Alabama, enhance sales of seafood in restaurants, and encourage more people to fish and to book charter trips. The project expands and promotes all facets of the seafood

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industry in Alabama including fishermen, processors, charter boat operators, retailers, restaurant owners, consumers, and others directly and indirectly related to the Alabama seafood industry. A successful program will increase job opportunities and contribute to the economic recovery of the Gulf Coast.

Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

This activity is eligible for Spill Impact Component funding under Category #11 - Promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast region (primary).

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This project is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Goal 5: Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy - Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

This project complies with the following Comprehensive Plan objectives:

- Objective 6: Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education – Promote and enhance natural resource stewardship through environmental education efforts that include formal and informal educational opportunities professional development and training, communication, and actions for all ages.

Major Milestones

- a) Milestone 1: Establish baseline and complete development of marketing plan
- b) Milestone 2: Complete implementation of marketing plan
- c) Milestone 3: Monitor success of marketing program against baseline data

Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

The anticipated outcome of the Alabama Gulf Coast Seafood Marketing Program will be:

- The development of a marketing campaign to increase the consumption of Alabama Gulf seafood.

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Table 8. Proposed Projects Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics	Short-term outcome	Long-term outcome
Implementation of a seafood marketing program	Increase of 10% in sales Secure 10 million + reader impressions Increase website traffic by 15% Increase social media followers by 15% + Participate in 10 marketing events per year	Increased seafood sales Increased reader impressions Increased social media presence Increased website traffic Increase awareness of Alabama seafood	Self-sustaining Alabama Gulf Coast Seafood Marketing Program

Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) Submission of completed marketing plan to ADCNR for review
- b) Submission of quarterly and final reports (to include sales data/social media stats)

Best Available Science

A Best Available Science (BAS) review is required for programs and activities intended to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast. The primary focus of this project is to continue an existing marketing campaign to promote the consumption of Alabama Gulf seafood; therefore, BAS does not apply.

Budget/Funding

- a) Estimated cost of the project and amount to be requested from Spill Impact Component Funds: \$2,937,699 (5%-15% - Planning, 95%-85% - Implementation). While it is noted that funding available under a grant award cannot exceed the amount described in the SEP for this project, the percentages listed in this section are estimated and will be more clearly cultivated in the grant application.
- b) No other funding sources are anticipated at this time.

Partnerships/Collaboration (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.

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Leveraged Resources (if applicable) Not applicable at this time.

Funds Used As Non-Federal Match (if applicable) Not applicable at this time.

Other

Not applicable at this time.



Figure 7. Alabama Gulf Seafood marketing campaign logo.