

**STATE OF WASHINGTON**

## Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

## SOLE SOURCE POSTING

**1) A description of the purpose and scope of the contract and background:** The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) contemplates awarding a sole source contract to Rite Bros. Aviation, Inc. ( https://ritebros.com/ ) to continue work they have been performing for WDFW.

Since FFY2019-20, we have been iteratively building a customized IPM for CR chum salmon. To increase capacity and accelerate progress, we have established an ongoing partnership with Eric Buhle, a leading expert on IPMs, through a sub-contract with his employer. By partnering with Eric, we were able to easily and efficiently build upon an existing IPM framework and R package salmonIPM developed by NOAA and Biomark (Buhle et al. 2018). In the first year, we compiled nearly two decades of monitoring data for CR chum salmon, expanded the standard models included in salmonIPM to develop a customized model for these populations and data sets, and performed initial model fitting. Since then, our strategy has been to sequentially add important elements that make the model a more realistic description of the CR chum The Contractor will provide air charter services to WDFW in order to support aerial shellfish surveys as mutually agreed upon by the Contractor and the WDFW Project Manager.

The Contractor will provide these services with a Cessna 172 aircraft piloted by Contractor employee Jeff Well or employee pilot which meet pilot contract specifications. Any changes in aircraft must be approved by the WDFW Project Manager in advance of any flight.

Estimates of shellfish harvester effort produced from aerial surveys are a critical co-management responsibility of WDFW, as outlined and agreed in state/tribal bivalve, crab, and shrimp management plans. Consistency and accuracy in data collection is essential in fulfilling our obligations to co-managers. Approved vendors on the master contract list cannot fully meet our plane charter needs. Without access to Rite Bros. Aviation as a flight provider, WDFW will be in default of signed co-management agreements with the Treaty Tribes. The Contractor will provide air charter services to WDFW in order to support aerial shellfish surveys as mutually agreed upon by the Contractor and the WDFW Project Manager.

**2) The criteria or rationale justifying the sole source contract:**  Rite Bros. Aviation meets all the survey needs and requirements of the Puget Sound Shellfish Program and fills a critical gap in coverage that cannot be met by any other vendor on the master contract list. Rite Bros. Aviation has the proper equipment, training, experience, safety protocols, and availability to meet program needs.

* Rite Bros. Aviation has over 20 years of experience with these specific surveys, including a high level of familiarity with the flight routes and survey protocols, allowing for efficient and effective operations. Lead Pilot Jeff Well helped develop some of the survey routes over time and he functions as second surveyor supporting WDFW survey staff.
* Surveys are flown in fixed-wing, high-wing aircraft, which is necessary for unobstructed viewing below the aircraft. Aircraft must be of sufficient size to provide more room within the fuselage and increased stability during flight. The front seat position must be available for the biologist/surveyor to ensure optimal viewing to the sides and forward of the aircraft. Aircraft must be able to maintain an airspeed of 120 knots (minimum control speed of 65 knots) necessary for maneuvering shorelines of Puget Sound at speeds that allow for accurate counts of people and fishing buoys.
* Vendor must be located west of the Cascade Crest; aircraft having to cross mountain ranges to get to survey areas greatly increases risk that the mission will not be able to meet time-sensitive elements of the survey design.
* Pilot must be familiar with flying surveys in the Class C controlled airspace of Navy airports at Bangor, Whidbey Island, and Indian Island, and in proximity to commercial airspace under control of SeaTac Airport.
* Home port proximity is a factor when flights are available and when flights need to be re-scheduled due to last-minute weather delays, which are common. Continuous modifications to the flight schedule are made throughout the year as fishery seasons and weather cancellations dictate. Often, weather delays require scheduling flights with 24-hours’ notice.
* Vendors with planes based in Snohomish, King and Thurston Counties increase flight costs by charging for flight time to pick-up surveyors at their home airport in Port Townsend. Rite Bros. is based in Port Angeles, adding minimal charter fees for pick-up.
* Weather patterns in the Puget Sound basin, particularly marine fog that tends to clear from north to south, favors use of the Port Angeles and Port Townsend airports. Rite Bros. can often be cleared for takeoff while vendors operating at Paine Field, or in Olympia, may sit under a blanket of fog well into the afternoon. This is an especially important factor due to the nature of shrimp fishery surveys and bivalve effort surveys that are time sensitive in relation to tidal timing. Master contract list vendors are often unavailable to schedule make-up flights given the short time window we have for re-scheduling flights as we adapt to weather cancellations.
* Weekend sampling is a critical component of harvest estimation in all fishery types surveyed by air. Rite Bros. has greater charter availability during weekends and holidays when the vendors based in metropolitan areas are often booked with other commercial traffic. The other main vendor, Regal Air, uses the same planes for WDFW surveys as for student instruction. This is another element that makes it harder for Regal Air to accommodate last-minute scheduling changes.
* Rite Bros. Aviation has been the vendor providing 50-60% of annual shellfish survey flights over the past 9 years. Although many state-chartered flights may rely on the few vendors on the existing master contract, this is not representative of the Puget Sound Shellfish Program’s needs based in remote Port Townsend. The program has relied on Rite Bros. for a significant portion of its flights for over 20 years.
* Aircraft require regular maintenance per FAA regulations. Use of a single provider increases the risk that aircraft will not be available when needed due to routine maintenance. Rite Bros. Aviation has two aircraft that meet program specification; Regal Air has one.
* Shellfish Program fiscal resources cannot meet the anticipated increased costs of chartering solely with master contract list vendors who can meet program needs, and those vendors cannot supply enough aircraft to meet survey targets.

**3) The name of the prospective contractor:** Rite Bros. Aviation, Inc. (Port Angeles, WA)

**4) The projected contract value:** The maximum not to exceed for this project is $206,730 over the term of the contract. WDFW will be billed at an hourly rate of $275/hour plus $30/per flight for automatic flight following (AFF) services. WDFW will consider a rate adjustment to hourly rate should costs of operations increase (fuel costs, etc.) but will be limited to no more than 10% increase/annually.

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| **5) Options for extensions:** extensions will not be required. |

**6) A description of the process for providing vendor inquiries or responses to the posting agency, including timelines and requirements and a request for capability statements if a vendor believes they can provide the goods or services being procured under the sole source contract:** Offerors contemplating the above requirements are required to submit a capability statement detailing their ability to meet the state’s requirements by 5:00 p.m. PST on May 17, 2024. To submit capability statements or for questions, please contact: Theresa Walker, Deputy Contracts Officer, at Theresa.Walker@dfw.wa.gov.