

**Replacement Research Vessel for Gulf and Bering Sea**

**FY2025 Request: \$7,500,000**

**Reference No: 65217**

**AP/AL:** Appropriation

**Project Type:** Equipment / Commodities

**Category:** Natural Resources

**Location:** Statewide

**House District:** Statewide (HD 1 - 40)

**Impact House District:** Statewide (HD 1 - 40)

**Contact:** Sam Rabung

**Estimated Project Dates:** 07/01/2024 - 06/30/2029

**Contact Phone:** (907)465-4210

**Brief Summary and Statement of Need:**

This request is to purchase and outfit a replacement research vessel for conducting marine research and stock assessment projects. The Division of Commercial Fisheries (division) research vessel R/V Pandalus was deemed unseaworthy and disposed of in FY2024. The research and assessment work that was handled by the vessel has been interrupted by the lack of availability of other Department of Fish and Game (DF&G) vessels or other options.

<b>Funding:</b>	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030	Total
1004 Gen Fund	\$7,500,000						\$7,500,000
<b>Total:</b>	\$7,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$7,500,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

**Operating & Maintenance Costs:**

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Prior Funding History / Additional Information:**

**Project Description/Justification:**

During the past year, the division has conducted some surveys through charters. In many cases, the costs are prohibitive, sometimes more than double the cost of conducting a survey with a State-owned vessel. Charter vessels are also inconsistently available and not well configured for scientific research. This hampers year-to-year survey replication and causes fishery assessment data to become less reliable.

Sustainable management of Alaska’s fish resources requires reliable scientific information collected from marine surveys. Annual monitoring and stock assessment of salmon, black cod, rockfish, pollock, shrimp, scallops, king crab, blue crab, and tanner crab, as well as data on ecosystem changes, provides the scientific basis for sustainable harvests of these fisheries. These fisheries provide substantial economic opportunity and generate landing taxes that support local communities and the State general fund. Without these surveys, fishery management will be more conservative resulting in lost harvest opportunity for subsistence, recreational, and commercial fisheries.

A new vessel must be able to work in weather and at-sea conditions frequently encountered during routine surveys and assessments in the North Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Alaska, and the Bering Sea and be capable of a working range encompassing coastal and inland waters, from southern Southeast Alaska to Nome. The ideal research vessel will allow the division to continue critical surveys and develop new stock assessments. Examples of existing and future marine research surveys this vessel would conduct include:

- Port Moller sockeye salmon gillnet test fishery
- Norton Sound king crab trawl survey
- St. Lawrence Island blue crab pot survey
- Southern Bering Sea surface trawl juvenile salmon survey
- Shelikof Strait, North Mainland, Kachemak Bay, and Kayak Island scallop dredge surveys
- Kachemak Bay king and tanner crab trawl assessments
- Prince William Sound trawl survey for tanner crab and pollock
- Prince William Sound black cod pot survey
- Prince William Sound remotely operated vehicle groundfish survey
- Cook Inlet transect surveys for rockfish habitat mapping
- Cook Inlet Beluga Whale prey species composition and abundance trawl survey
- Aleutian Islands and Kodiak area marine mammal surveys

The total cost of purchasing and outfitting such a vessel is \$7,500,000. The vessel would need to be at least 85-95 feet in length, with a beam of 28-32 feet, have a fuel capacity of 15,000-20,000 gallons, and accommodations for at least eight crew members.