

The University of Southern Mississippi
Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase
SSP 26_022
RFQI # 3140004552

The University of Southern Mississippi anticipates purchasing the item(s) listed below as a sole source purchase. Anyone objecting to this purchase shall follow the procedures outlined below.

1. Description of the commodity that USM is seeking to procure:

USM is seeking to procure an integrated aquaculture handling system consisting of a Vaki 6” Smart Pump, Smart Grader (5-track), MACRO Counter (4-channel), PLC Display, PLC Scanner, and associated cabling. This system is designed to automate fish transfer, counting, and grading operations through a unified control platform (SmartFlow), enabling precise data collection and low-stress handling of cultured fish species.

2. What efforts were made by the Agency to determine that the proposed provider is the only entity that can provide the commodity needed?

The agency conducted market research including:

- Review of aquaculture equipment vendors offering fish pumps, graders, and counters
- Evaluation of competing technologies (e.g., infrared counters, standalone graders, non-integrated pump systems)
- Consultation of manufacturer documentation and industry sources

This review determined:

- Vaki is the sole manufacturer and U.S. distributor of the requested system
- No third-party vendors are authorized to sell or service Vaki equipment
- No competing vendor offers a fully integrated system combining pump, grading, and high-accuracy optical counting under a single software platform

A formal sole source letter from the manufacturer confirming exclusivity has been obtained.

3. What efforts were made to ensure the best possible price for the commodity was obtained?

Pricing was obtained directly from the exclusive U.S. distributor (Biomark/Vaki)

The quote was evaluated against:

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- Historical pricing for similar Vaki systems (if applicable)
- Industry expectations for specialized aquaculture equipment
- The inclusion of proprietary software, integration, and service support

Due to the sole source nature, no competitive quotes are available; however, the pricing is consistent with the specialized engineering, proprietary technology, and bundled services provided.

4. Why is the commodity the only one that can meet the needs to the Agency?

This system is the only available solution that:

- Provides >98% accurate fish counting across a wide size range using line-scanning imaging technology
- Integrates pumping, grading, and counting into a single automated system
- Enables centralized control via the proprietary SmartFlow platform
- Minimizes fish handling stress and mortality during operations
- Supports research-grade data collection required for IMTA and Red Drum culture

Alternative products lack either the required accuracy, integration, or compatibility, and would require multiple disconnected systems, increasing operational complexity and compromising research outcomes.

5. Why is the amount expended for the commodity reasonable?

The cost is considered reasonable because:

- The equipment is highly specialized and proprietary, with no competing manufacturers
- Pricing includes not only hardware but also:
 - Integrated software (SmartFlow)
 - System configuration and compatibility
 - Technical support, service, and training
- The system replaces the need for multiple standalone units, reducing long-term operational inefficiencies

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- The expected reduction in fish mortality and improved data accuracy provides significant value to the project

Additionally, the price reflects standard manufacturer pricing for similar systems and has been reviewed for consistency and appropriateness.

Advertisement Schedule	Date
1st scheduled	04/26/2026
2nd scheduled	05/03/2026

Any person or entity that objects and proposes that the commodity listed is not sole source and can be provided by another person or entity shall submit a written notice by May 14, 2026, 2:00 PM CST, to:

Millissa Weaver

103 McIlwain Dr. Ocean Springs, MS 39564

Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection 26-022"

The notice shall contain a detailed explanation of why the commodity is not a sole source procurement. Appropriate documentation shall also be submitted if applicable.

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If after a review of the submitted notice and documents, USM determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then USM will withdraw the sole source request publication from the procurement portal website and submit the procurement of the commodity to an advertised competitive bid or selection process.

If USM determines after review that there is only one (1) source for the required commodity, then USM will appeal to the Public Procurement Review Board. USM will have the burden of proving that the commodity is only provided by one (1) source.