

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
FISHERIES
INFORMATION NETWORK IN
THE SOUTHEAST REGION
(FIN)

JANUARY 1, 2002 - DECEMBER 31, 2002

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Number 112

INTRODUCTION

The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) is a state-federal cooperative program to collect, manage, and disseminate statistical data and information on the marine commercial and recreational fisheries of the Southeast Region.¹ The FIN consists of two components: Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN) and the Southeast Recreational Fisheries Information Network [RecFIN(SE)].

The need for a comprehensive and cooperative data collection program has never been greater because of the magnitude of the recreational fisheries and the differing roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved. Many southeastern stocks targeted by anglers are now depleted, due primarily to excessive harvest, habitat loss, and degradation. The information needs of today's management regimes require data, which are statistically sound, long-term in scope, timely, and comprehensive. A cooperative partnership between state and federal agencies is the most appropriate mechanism to accomplish these goals.

Efforts by state and federal agencies to develop a cooperative program for the collection and management of commercial and recreational fishery data in the Region began in the mid to late 1980s. In 1992, the National Marine Fisheries Service formally proposed a planning activity to establish the RecFIN(SE). Planning was conducted by a multi-agency Plan Development Team through October 1992 at which time the program partners approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that established clear intent to implement the RecFIN(SE). Upon signing the MOU, a RecFIN(SE) Committee was established.

In 1994, the NMFS initiated a formal process to develop a cooperative state-federal program to collect and manage commercial fishery statistics in the Region. Due to previous work and NMFS action, the Southeast Cooperative Statistics Committee (SCSC) developed an MOU and a draft framework plan for the ComFIN. During the development of the ComFIN MOU, the SCSC, in conjunction with the RecFIN(SE) Committee, decided to combine the MOU to incorporate the RecFIN(SE). The joint MOU creates the FIN, which is composed of both the ComFIN and RecFIN(SE). The MOU confirmed the intent of the signatory agencies to participate in implementing the ComFIN and RecFIN(SE).

The scope of the FIN includes the Region's commercial and recreational fisheries for marine, estuarine, and anadromous species, including shellfish. Constituencies served by the program are state and federal agencies responsible for management of fisheries in the Region. Direct benefits will also accrue to federal fishery management councils, the interstate marine fisheries commissions, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries Program. Benefits that accrue to management of fisheries will benefit not only commercial and recreational fishermen and the associated fishing industries, but the resources, the states, and the nation.

The mission of the FIN is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial, anadromous and recreational fishery data and information for the conservation and management

¹ The Southeast Region (the Region) includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

of fishery resources in the Region and to support the development of a national program. The four goals of the FIN include planning, managing, and evaluating commercial and recreational fishery data collection activities; to implement a marine commercial and recreational fishery data collection program; to establish and maintain a commercial and recreational fishery data management system; and to support the establishment of a national program.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

The organizational structure consists of the FIN Committee, two geographic subcommittees (Caribbean and Gulf), standing and ad hoc subcommittees, technical work groups, and administrative support (Figure 1).

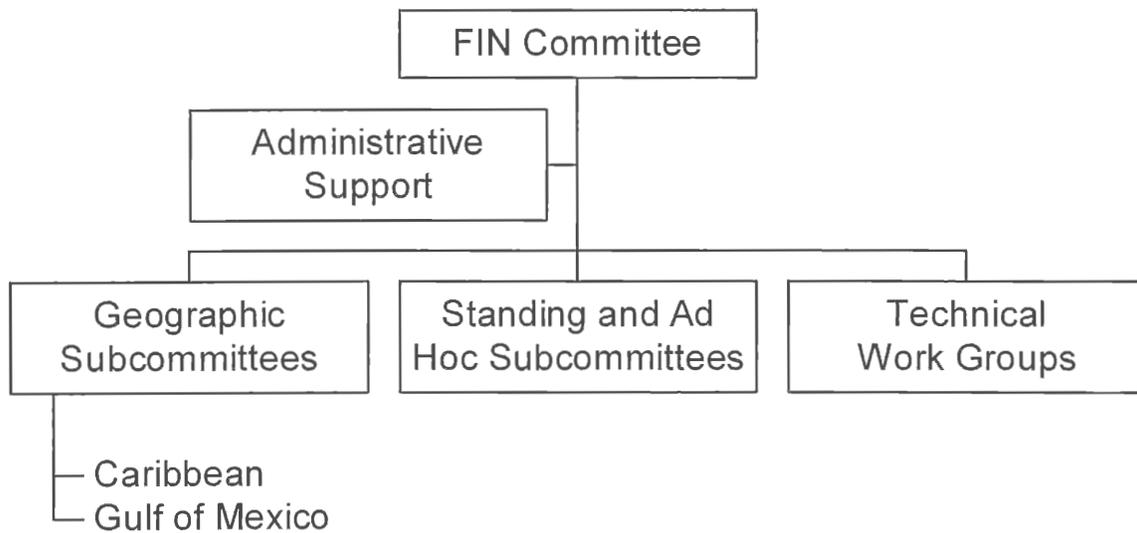


Figure 1. Organizational structure of the FIN.

The FIN Committee consists of the signatories to the MOU or their designees, and is responsible for planning, managing, and evaluating the program. Agencies represented by signatories to the MOU are the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Caribbean Fishery Management Council, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

As of October 1998, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, North Carolina Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission no longer actively participated on the FIN Committee. Although there is no representation of the South Atlantic on FIN, the South Atlantic continues to participate at the

work group level and there is continued participation by staff member from both programs to ensure compatibility and comparability.

The FIN Committee is divided into two standing subcommittees representing the major geographical areas of the Region: Caribbean, Gulf, and South Atlantic. These subcommittees are responsible for making recommendations to the Committee on the needs of these areas. Standing and ad hoc subcommittees are established as needed by the FIN Committee to address administrative issues and technical work groups are established as needed by the Committee to carry out tasks on specific technical issues. Coordination and administrative support of the FIN is accomplished through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The FIN is a comprehensive program comprised of coordinated data collection activities, an integrated data management and retrieval system, and procedures for information dissemination. Activities during 2002 were associated with addressing issues and problems regarding data collection and management and developing strategies for dealing with these topics. In addition to committee activities, FIN was involved in various operational activities concerning the collection and management of marine commercial and recreational fisheries data. These activities were conducted by the various state and federal agencies involved in FIN. Each type of activity is discussed below. Future activities of the FIN Committee are outlined in Table 1.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

FIN Committee

The major FIN meeting was held in June 2002. The major issues discussed during these meetings included:

- Identification and continuation of tasks to be addressed in 2002 and instruction to Administrative Subcommittee and the Data Collection, Biological/Environmental, Social/Economic, Data Collection Plan, Registration Tracking and ad hoc work groups to either begin or continue work on these tasks;
- Development of the 2003 FIN Operations Plan which presented the year's activities in data collection, data management, and information dissemination;
- Discussion of data management issues;
- Review of activities and accomplishments of 2002;
- Continued evaluation of adequacy of current marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs for FIN and development of recommendations regarding these programs;

- Review findings of and receive recommendations from technical work groups for activities to be carried out during 2003;
- Preparation and submission of a proposal for financial assistance to support activities of the FIN; and
- Continued internal evaluation of the program.

The FIN Committee members are listed in Table 2. The approved 2002 FIN Operations Plan is included in Appendix A and minutes for the FIN Committee meeting are included in Appendix B. The FIN goals and objectives are included in Appendix C.

Subcommittees and Work Groups

The FIN subcommittees and work groups met during the year to provide recommendations to the Committee to formulate administrative policies, address specific technical issues for accomplishing many of the FIN goals and objectives, and examine other issues as decided by the Committee. Subcommittee and work group members are listed in Table 3. Their activities included:

- The FIN/ACCSP Registration Tracking Work Group met in March 2002 to continue the development of the registration-tracking module, which will provide a unique identifier for vessels, fishermen, and dealers involved in commercial fisheries that is trackable through geographic location and time.
- The FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee met in March 2002 to consider adding a question to the recreational field-intercept survey concerning use of artificial reefs while fishing.
- Representatives from the Gulf States, GSMFC and NMFS met in March, June and October 2002 to review the performance of the MRFSS intercept survey and review and evaluate January - December (2002) catch and effort data.
- The FIN Social/Economic Work Group met in May 2002 to develop several social/economic data collection projects for funding consideration in 2003.
- The For-Hire Work Group met in June 2002 to review and finalize the economic add-on survey materials such as the trip survey questionnaire, annual survey questionnaire, notification letter, optional form for captains, data sheet for samplers, brochure/FAQ sheet as well as discuss the status of data entry program.
- The FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group met in July 2002 (via conference call) to review the 2002 otolith and length data collection and processing activities and develop sampling targets of priority species for 2003.

- Representative from the Gulf States, GSMFC and NMFS met in July 2002 for an otolith processor training workshop. The group discussed various issues including QA/QC standards for otolith processing, development of processor standards, and training protocols. In addition, the group conducted otolith processing for the priority species and reviewed and compared the results.
- The FIN Artificial Reef Work Group met in August 2002 (via conference call) to address the issue of adding a question regarding using artificial reefs while fishing. The group developed the actual wording of the questions and discussed the logistics of adding the question to the intercept survey.
- The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee met in August 2002 to discuss the finalization of activities for funding for the 2003 FIN cooperative agreement.
- The ComFIN Data Collection Work Group met in September 2002 to begin the development of the discards module for FIN and review of Puerto Rico's commercial data collection activities.
- The Caribbean commercial port samplers met in October 2002 to address a variety of commercial issues. The main topics of discussion were the status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN), presentation of Caribbean commercial data collected under TIP, discussion of Gulf of Mexico port samplers data collection methods, comparison of Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean sampling techniques and a round table discussions.
- The FIN For-Hire Work Group met again in October 2002 to review of ACCSP For-Hire Pilot Survey results, determination of the best methodology for sampling head boats in the Gulf of Mexico, and other pertinent topics.
- The Gulf of Mexico commercial port samplers met in November 2002 to address a variety of commercial issues. The main topics of discussion were a demonstration of TIP data entry program, status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN), discussion of bycatch data collection methods, discussion of otolith processing, and review of state and Federal data collection methods. In addition, there was a fish ID and sampling allocation workshop.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Coordination and Administration of RecFIN(SE) and ComFIN Activities - This task provides for the coordination, planning, and administration of FIN activities throughout the year as well as provides recreational and commercial information to the FIN participants and other interested personnel. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year.

- Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data - This task provided for the conduct of the MRFSS survey in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida for shore, for-hire, and private modes, an activity under the RecFIN(SE). This task provided for coordination of the survey, a field-intercept survey of shore, for-hire and private boat anglers to estimate angler catch using the existing MRFSS methodology, and entry of the data. These data were combined with the NMFS effort estimate telephone survey. In addition, the states conducted supplemental sampling of the intercept portion for the MRFSS for charter boats in Texas (using their methodology), Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (east and west coast). The states also conducted weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (east and west coast) charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort that will be compared with the MRFSS estimates. In 2000, NMFS adopted this method as the official methodology for estimation of charter boat effort. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year.
- Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida - This task provided for the sampling of catches, collection of catch reports from head boat personnel, and gathering effort data on head boats which operate primarily in the Exclusive Economic Zone from ports along the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year.
- Menhaden Data Collection Activities - This task provided for sampling of gulf menhaden catches from menhaden purse-seine vessels that operate in Louisiana. The samples were processed for size and age composition for use in coast-wide stock assessments. In turn, gulf menhaden stock assessments are incorporated into the Fisheries Management Plan for the species, and are also utilized by the Gulf Coast states, the GSMFC, the menhaden industry, and the NMFS. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year.
- Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System - This task provided for further implementation of a fishery information system for the FIN based on the ACCSP model. This task provided funding for a Data Base Manager who will, in conjunction with the ACCSP, work on developing more data modules for the FIN and ACCSP data management systems. This is a continuation of development of the FIN data management system. In addition, the Data Base Manager will be responsible for transferring Florida, Alabama, Mississippi (oyster only) and Louisiana trip ticket data as well as recreational and biological data into the FIN data management system on an agreed upon schedule. It is the next step for implementing a regional system for FIN.
- Trip Ticket Program Development, Implementation and Operation- This task provided for the initiation and development of a commercial trip ticket system for Texas and Mississippi, an activity under the ComFIN. This task provided for development of components for a commercial trip ticket system to census the commercial fisheries landings in Texas and Mississippi using the data elements and standards developed by the ComFIN. It will ultimately be combined with other commercial fisheries data collected from around the Gulf of Mexico. Full operation of Louisiana, Alabama and Florida trip

ticket programs continue. GSMFC enter into a contract with Southwest Computer Bureau (SCBI) to provide installation and maintenance of electronic trip ticket programs for Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. In Mississippi, the state is currently implementing a trip ticket program. Unfortunately, Mississippi was still unable to get legislation passed that would make it easier to collect data from dealers, but is continuing to implement a program for oyster, bait shrimp and finfish. Texas is still evaluating the feasibility of implementing trip ticket program in their state.

- Biological Sampling of Commercial and Recreational Catches - This task provided for the collection of biological data from the recreational and commercial fisheries. These data are essential to accurately assessing the status of commercial and recreational species such as red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder, and greater amberjack. For the commercial aspects, port sampling will be collecting this information based on established guidelines. For the recreational side, samplers will go to sites and collect the necessary biological data using a modified MRFSS method. This task provides funding for collection, processing and analysis of these data. The GSMFC provided coordination as well as tracking of the collection and analysis portions of this activity. This is a new activity.
- Night Fishing Pilot Survey for Shore Mode in Mississippi - This task provided for the conduct of a pilot survey for developing a night sampling site register on the Mississippi coast for shore mode as well as conducting an intercept survey for night fishing activities. This information is potentially needed in order to improve estimates of recreational fishing catch and effort . The shore fishing mode was the primary target mode for the development of the nighttime site register and intercept survey. The GSMFC/NMFS produced expanded estimates of catch and effort by wave using the existing MRFSS methodology. These estimates will be compared with daytime catch estimates to determine if significant differences exist between day and night fishing activities.

Coordination and Administrative Support

Working closely with the Committee in all aspects of program coordination, administration, and operation was a major function of FIN coordination and administrative support. Other important coordination and administrative activities included but were not limited to providing coordination and logistical support, including communications and organization of meetings for the Committee, subcommittees, and work groups; serving as liaison between the Committee, other program participants, and other interested organizations; preparing annual operations plans under the direction of the Committee; preparing and/or supervising and coordinating preparation of selected documents, including written records of all meetings; and distributing approved FIN information and data in accordance with accepted policies and procedures.

Information Dissemination

Committee members and staff provided program information in 2001 via a variety of different methods such as distribution of program documents, presentation to various groups interested in the FIN, and via the Internet:

- FIN Committee. 2002. *2003 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 107 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 25 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2002. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2001 - December 31, 2001*. No. 105 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 16 pp + appendices.
- FIN articles in the GSMFC newsletters.
- Variety of informal discussions occurred throughout the year during ASMFC, GSMFC, NMFS, and other participating agencies meetings and workshops.
- NPS personnel periodically provided information concerning the FIN (meeting notices, available documents, etc.) to the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program computer Bulletin Board System.
- The FIN has developed a data management system that provides access to commercial and recreational data for the Gulf States. There are two levels of access: confidential and non-confidential and users can request access via the FIN DMS web site (www.gsmfc.org/data.html)
- NMFS provides a user-friendly data management system (DMS) for the MRFSS that is accessible via the web (www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/recreational/data.html)
- GSMFC has developed a home page that provides programmatic and operational information regarding FIN.

If you are interested in any of the documents, they are available upon request from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission office.

TABLE 1.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR FIN 2001 - 2005

[Goals and Objectives are in Appendix C]

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Planning, Management, and Evaluation					
FIN Committee					
Maintenance of FIN Committee	X	X	X	X	X
Framework Plan					
Review of Framework Plan					X
Operations Plans					
Development of annual operations plans	X	X	X	X	X
Support establishment of MRF surveys in PR & VI	X	X	X	X	X
Identify funding needs for MRF programs	X	X	X	X	X
Information dissemination					
Implement outreach strategy	X	X			
Develop outreach materials and list of users	X	X			
Use Internet communications	X	X	X	X	X
Program Review					
Conduct program review					X
Data Collection					
Data components					
Review of components of fisheries					X
Needed data elements					
Collection of metadata	X	X	X	X	X
Develop rec and comm catch/effort modules	X	X	X		
Develop permitting module	X	X			
Develop social/economic data module	X	X			
Develop biological sampling module	X				
Develop fishery module	X	X			
Develop discard and protected species interactions module	X	X	X		
Standard data collection protocols					
Develop data collection procedures manual	X	X	X		
Determine precision levels for priority species	X				
Evaluate methods for achieving desired precision levels	X				
Quality control/assurance					
Develop commercial and recreational QA/QC standards	X	X	X		
Review of commercial and recreational QA/QC standards					X
Recommendations regarding duplicative collection and management	X				
Coordination of data collection					
Development of data collection plan	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate current fishery independent data activities	X				
Make recommendations to appropriate fishery -independent programs		X			
Establish/modify recreational licenses to meet criteria	X	X	X		
Conduct comparison survey of license frame and MRFSS				X	
Implement the appropriate license frame methodology					X
Determine methods for collecting recreational data for private access points			X	X	
Determine methods for collecting recreational catch data for night fishing	X	X	X		
Develop method for collecting recreational data on fishing tournaments	X	X	X		
Develop methods for collecting recreational data on non hook-&-line fisheries				X	X
Evaluate potential improvements to intercept site selection process	X				
Determine the extent of non-consumptive activities					X

Data Collection (continued)	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Innovative collection technology					
Evaluate innovative data collection technologies	X	X	X	X	X
Data Management					
Data management system					
Review location and responsibility of DMS					X
Hardware/software capabilities					
Review hardware/software capabilities					X
Provide finalized recreational data in electronic form		X	X	X	X
Data maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Standard data management protocols					
Develop review process for finalization of MRFSS data		X			
Integration of data bases					
Identify recreational databases for integration in DMS	X	X	X	X	X
Innovative data management technology					
Evaluate innovative data management technologies	X	X	X	X	X
Data confidentiality					
Protect confidentiality	X	X	X	X	X
Development of National Program					
Long-term planning					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
Coordination with other programs					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
Consistency and comparability					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X

TABLE 2.

FIN COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2002

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TABLE 3.

FIN SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR 2002

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APPENDIX A
2002 Operations Plan

**2002 Operations Plan for the
Fisheries Information Network in the
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002

I. INTRODUCTION

The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) establishes a state-federal cooperative program to collect, manage, and disseminate statistical data and information on the commercial and recreational fisheries of the Southeast Region. There are two separate programs under the FIN: the Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN) and the Southeast Recreational Fisheries Information Network [RecFIN(SE)].

The FIN is a cooperative state-federal marine commercial and recreational fisheries data collection program. It is intended to coordinate present and future marine commercial and recreational fisheries data collection and data management activities through cooperative planning, innovative uses of statistical theory and design, and consolidation of appropriate data into a useful data base system. This operations plan implements the FIN Framework Plan for 2002. All tasks will be completed dependent upon availability of funds.

II. MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of the FIN is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial and recreational fisheries statistical data and information for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Southeast Region and to support the development and operation of a national program.

The goals of the FIN are:

- planning, management, and evaluation of data collection and management activities;
- implementation of data collection activities;
- establishment and maintenance of a data management system; and
- support for establishment of a national program.

III. OPERATIONS

A. Operational Activities

The tasks below cover all 2002 objectives (see Section D). A 'C' denotes a commercial activity; a 'R' denotes a recreational activity; and a 'F' denotes a commercial/recreational activity.

Task A1: Development, Implementation and Operation of Trip Ticket Programs (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Develop and implement a trip ticket program for the Southeast Region.

Team Members: Gulf states and Data Collection Work Group

Approach: The states of Texas and Mississippi, will continue the full implementation of trip tickets programs in their states. This task will provide for development of components for a commercial trip ticket system to census the commercial fisheries landings in Texas and Mississippi using the data elements and standards developed by the ComFIN. Mississippi is currently collecting trip-level data for oyster landings. They are attempting to pass legislation that would allow for the expansion of collection of trip-level data for all commercial species. Texas is currently evaluating the feasibility of implementing trip tickets in their state. For Louisiana and Alabama, funding will be provided for the majority of operation of their trip ticket programs. In addition, Louisiana will continue to implement a system for dealers to electronically capture and transfer trip ticket data to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Ultimately, all states will have operating trip tickets program and all commercial landings will be captured via these systems. Accomplished by meeting, telephone, mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.

Resources: Operational and implementation costs, telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Gulf-wide trip ticket program

Schedule: Implementation of trip tickets in 1999 and will continue during 2002.

Task A2: Collection of Recreational Fisheries Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Collection of recreational fisheries data in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: Gulf states, GSMFC, NMFS

Approach: The states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida will continue to conduct the MRFSS survey for shore, for-hire, and private modes. This task will provide for coordination of the survey, a field-intercept survey of shore, for-hire and private boat

anglers to estimate angler catch using the existing MRFSS methodology, and entry of the data. It will be combined with the NMFS effort estimate telephone survey. The NMFS will produce expanded estimates of catch and effort by wave using the existing MRFSS methodology. In addition, the states will conduct supplemental sampling of the intercept portion for the MRFSS for charter boats in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Where possible, the Committee will work with the ACCSP to ensure comparability and compatibility between the two programs.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Collection of recreational fisheries data for the Gulf of Mexico.
Schedule: This is an on-going task.

Task A3: Implementation of Methods to Monitor the For-Hire Fisheries (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Identify evaluate, and test methodologies to survey charter and head boat fisheries.

Team Members: Gulf states, GSMFC, and NMFS

Approach: For charter boats, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida have implemented the Charter Boat Telephone Survey which collects effort data from charter boat captains. In addition, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida will be collecting social and economic data from the charter boat operators in order to assess the value of the charter boat industry. Later in the year, Texas will also be evaluating the results of the Charter Boat Telephone Survey. Regarding head boats, the FIN will coordinate with the ACCSP and await the outcome of the South Carolina pilot survey which is comparing the MRFSS RDD, captain telephone survey, and mandatory logbook methodologies.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: For-hire survey methodology

Schedule: FIN staff will attend For-Hire Subcommittee meetings to keep informed about the South Carolina Study.

Task A4: Continue the Collection of Menhaden Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (C)

Objective: Continue the support of menhaden sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: Gulf states, GSMFC, and NMFS

Approach: The purpose of this task is to sample gulf menhaden catches from menhaden purse-seine vessels which operate at the ports of Empire, Morgan City, Abbeville, and Cameron, Louisiana. Samples will be processed for size and age composition for use in coast-wide stock assessments. In turn, gulf menhaden stock

assessments are incorporated into the Fisheries Management Plan for the species, and are also utilized by the Gulf coast states, the GSMFC, the menhaden industry, and the NMFS.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Collection of necessary menhaden data

Schedule: This task is an on-going activity.

Task A5: Continue the Collection of Head Boat Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Continue the support of head boat sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: Gulf states, GSMFC, and NMFS

Approach: The purpose of this task is to sample catches, collect catch reports from head boat personnel, and gather effort data on head boats which operate primarily in the Exclusive Economic Zone from ports along the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. This task will be conducted in accordance with existing NMFS head boat methodology.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Collection of necessary head boat data

Schedule: This task is an on-going activity.

Task A6: Collection of Biological (otoliths and lengths) Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Implement the collection of recreational and commercial sampling of biological data in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: Gulf states, GSMFC, and NMFS

Approach: The purpose of this task is to conduct interviews of recreational and commercial fishermen using the modified MRFSS and Trip Interview Program protocols. Samplers will collect length frequencies, identifications of species, trip and gear characteristics, weights of catches, hard parts (otoliths) and make comparisons of interview data to trip ticket data for quality assurance purposes.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Collection of necessary biological data

Schedule: This task is an on-going activity.

Task A7: Determination of Catch Rates and Species Composition from Night Fishing (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Determine catch rates and species composition from night fishing.

Team Members: Mississippi, GSMFC, and NMFS

Approach: This is a continuation of the pilot survey started in 2001. The pilot consists of developing a night sampling site register on the Mississippi coast for shore mode as well as conducting an intercept

survey for night fishing activities. This information is potentially needed in order to improve estimates of recreational fishing catch and effort . It provides for the nighttime identification and classification of sites as well as a field intercept survey of shore anglers (1X) to estimate angler catch at night using the existing MRFSS methodology. The shore mode fishing mode will be the primary target mode for the development of the nighttime site register and intercept survey. The NMFS will produce expanded estimates of catch and effort by wave using the existing MRFSS methodology. These estimates will be compared with daytime catch estimates to determine if significant differences existing between day and night fishing activities.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.
Product: Determination of differences (if any) between day and night fishing activities.
Schedule: The collection of data for this task will be completed by December 2002. Analysis of these data will be conducted in late 2002 and early 2003.

Task A8: Design, Implementation and Maintenance of Data Management System (Goal 3, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: To design, implement, and maintain a marine commercial and recreational fisheries data management system to accommodate fishery management/research and other needs (e.g., trade and tourism).

Team Members: FIN and ACCSP program partners.

Approach: The FIN will continue to develop the Data Management System (DMS). Development of the registration tracking system will be address by the FIN Information Manager. This system will be used by both FIN and ACCSP. In addition, the FIN IT manager will continue to establish routine delivery of Louisiana, Mississippi (oyster data only), Alabama, and Florida trip ticket data into the FIN DMS. FIN will continue to work in conjunction with the ACCSP to ensure compatibility and comparability between the programs.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: FIN data management system

Schedule: Further development registration tracking system and delivery of data will continue in 2002.

Task A9: Standards/Protocols/Documentation for Data Management (Goal 3, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Develop standard protocols and documentation for data formats, input, editing, quality control, storage, access, transfer, dissemination, and application.

Team Members: FIN/ACCSP program partners/FIN Data Management Work Group

Approach: The FIN and ACCSP are currently developing data management systems for their respective coasts. As part of the development, standard protocols and documentation for data formats, input, editing, quality control, storage, access, transfer, dissemination, and application are being developed. The FIN Data Management Work Group and ACCSP Computer Technical Committee will continue to develop of this information and there will be coordination between the programs to insure comparability and compatibility.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.

Product: Standard protocols and documentation for the FIN data management system.

Schedule: The FIN Data Management Work Group and ACCSP Computer Technical Committee will meet in 2002 to discuss these issues.

B. Committee Activities

The tasks below cover all 2002 objectives (see Section D). A 'C' denotes a commercial activity; an 'R' denotes a recreational activity; and an 'F' denotes a commercial/recreational activity.

Task B1: Development of a Program Design Document (Goal 1, Objective 1) (F)

Objective: Develop a program design document for FIN

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: Using the information developed from the Committee and various work groups, the Committee has drafted a plan which will be used by the program partners to implement FIN. The draft document was presented to the Committee in 1998. The Committee will continue working on refining the document as the various components of the program are developed. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Program design document

Schedule: A draft of the revised program design document will be reviewed by the FIN Committee at the 2002 meeting.

Task B2: Annual Operations Plan, 2003 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Develop 2003 Annual Operations Plan including identification of available resources that implements the Framework Plan.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: Through meetings and mail, the Committee will develop and complete an Annual Operations Plan for 2003.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: 2003 Annual Operations Plan.
Schedule: Annual Operations Plan will be drafted by spring 2002 and addressed by the Committee at the 2002 meeting.

Task B3: Development of Funding Initiatives to Establish Marine Recreational Fisheries (MRF) Surveys (Goal 1, Objective 3) (R)

Objective: Support the establishment of long-term, comprehensive MRF surveys in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.
Team Members: Biological/Environmental Work Group/NMFS/GSMFC
Approach: The Work Group has been working on this issue for several years. In 2000, the MRFSS was re-established in the U.S. Caribbean, although there were severe problems with attracting and retaining reliable intercept interviewers in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Sampling in Puerto Rico was conducted in 2001 however, sampling was dropped in the U.S. Virgin Islands during 2001. Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, NMFS and GSMFC personnel are exploring ways to ensure long-term collection of recreational data in the Caribbean.
Resources: Travel, copy and mailing expenses and staff time.
Product: Develop a long-term MRF surveys for the Caribbean.
Schedule: The Work Group will continue monitoring this task in 2002.

Task B4: Information Dissemination (Goal 1, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Distribute program information to cooperators and interested parties.
Team Members: FIN Committee and staff
Approach: The Committee will distribute program information to cooperators and interested parties. Each committee member is responsible for maintaining a list of information distributed and providing that list to the staff. In addition, the MRFSS staff has developed a home page where users are able to access the MRFSS data for their use. The user is able to specify the area, species, gear, etc. that he/she is interested in obtaining. Also, the GSMFC has developed a home page which includes information concerning the FIN.
Resources: Copy and mailing expenses and staff time.
Product: Development and distribution of a fact sheet concerning FIN and a report which compiles a record of information distributed and presentations given by the Committee and staff. This information is included in the FIN Annual Report.
Schedule: This task will be an ongoing activity.

Task B5: Implementation of Outreach Program (Goal 1, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Further development and implementation an outreach program for FIN

Team Members: FIN Outreach Work Group/FIN Committee

Approach: The Work Group has developed a strategy for outreach. A request for proposals (RFP) was developed that solicits proposals from various groups for the development of a strategy for disseminating information about the FIN to the variety of commercial and recreational groups as well as the general public. The FIN Committee asked the Work Group to further refine the RFP and work with the ACCSP in developing an outreach strategy.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: FIN outreach program

Schedule: The Work Group met in 2001 and will meet in 2002 to further develop the RFP.

Task B6: Development of the Discards, Releases, and Protected Species Interactions Modules (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Develop the discards, releases, and protected species interactions modules of the FIN.

Team Members: ComFIN Data Collection Work Group

Approach: Using information developed by the ACCSP and other pertinent information, the Work Group will design a data collection module for the compilation of discards and protected species interactions for all commercial fisheries in the Southeast Region. The program will outline the data elements that need to be collected for compilation of discards and protected species interactions. As an initial step, the FIN Committee began compiling information about the magnitude of discards in the Region. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Discard, Releases, and Protected Species Interactions collection program

Schedule: The Work Group addressed this issue in 1998 and will continue working on it during 2002.

Task B7: Development of the Social/Economic Module (Goal 2, Objective 2) (F)

Objective: Develop the social/economic module for the ComFIN.

Team Members: Social/Economic Work Group

Approach: Working in conjunction with the ACCSP, the Work Group will design a data collection module for the compilation of social/economic information for all commercial fisheries in the

Southeast Region. The program will outline the data elements required for each fishery component that need to be collected for compilation of social/economic data. The ACCSP is currently conducting a pilot survey for commercial harvesters in Georgia. In addition, the NMFS is conducting various pilot studies in the Southeast and Northeast Regions. The Social/Economic Work Group will be involved in the evaluation of these surveys. In addition, the Work Group has developed a pilot study in the Gulf of Mexico. The Committee agree to include members of the Work Group on the ACCSP committee for social and economic issues. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.
Product: Social/Economic data collection module and data collection surveys for collection of the data.
Schedule: The Work Group began addressing this issue during 1998 and will continue working on it during 2002.

Task B8: Development of Data Collection Procedures Document (Goal 2, Obj 2) (C)

Objective: Develop a document that outlines the procedures for the collection of data under the ComFIN.

Team Members: Data Collection Procedures Work Group/FIN Committee
Approach: The Work Group developed a draft document, which describes the various techniques and methods for collection of marine commercial data. The Work Group utilized existing procedures for the Trip Interview Program and other related information. The Work Group, in conjunction with the Committee, will continue to develop this document as the program evolves.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.
Product: Procedures document
Schedule: The Work Group started addressing this issue in 1998 and will present a draft of the document to the FIN Committee at the 2002 meeting.

Task B9: Development of Metadata Database (Goal 2 , Objective 2) (F)

Objective: Compile metadata for inclusion into a metadata database for the Southeast Region.

Team Members: Biological/Environmental Work Group/FIN IT Manager
Approach: The Biological/Environmental Work Group has worked on this issue in the past and has developed criteria for creating a metadata database. The Committee discussed the issue of metadata and decided that the Work Group should continue looking at compilation of fishing regulations. The Work Group presented the

FIN Committee a recommended data structure for the database. Upon approval, inputting the fishing regulations information into the system can begin. Once the fishing regulations information in is the system, subsequent categories to be collected will be determined by the Committee.

Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, staff time.
Product: Development of metadata module
Schedule: The initial development of the data base structure began in 2000. Entry of data into the FIN DMS will begin in 2002. The compilation of these data will be an ongoing activity.

Task B10: Development of Registration Tracking System (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Development of a registration tracking system for FIN.
Team Members: Registration Tracking Work Group
Approach: In conjunction with the ACCSP, the Work Group will continue the development of the registration tracking system for both programs. This system will provide a unique identifier for fishermen, dealers, and vessel involved in commercial fisheries that is trackable through geographic location and time. Modification of the existing data base structure will be done in 2002. Accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.
Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.
Product: Registration tracking system for FIN and ACCSP
Schedule: The Work Group addressed this issue in 2000 and will meet in 2002 to continue development of this system.

Task B11: Commercial Quality Assurance and Quality Control (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Identify and determine standards for commercial catch/effort data collection, including statistical, training, and quality assurance and quality control standards.
Team Members: Data Collection Work Group
Approach: Determine standards for collection and management of commercial catch/effort data. Review and expand the quality assurance and quality control document developed by the Biological/Environmental Work Group. This expanded document will encompass all quality assurance and quality control standards for the FIN. This information will be part of the Data Collection Procedures Document being developed by the Committee. Where possible, the Committee will work with the ACCSP to ensure comparability and compatibility between the two programs. Accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.
Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.
Product: FIN quality assurance and quality control document

Schedule: The document will be revised as new and existing modules are addressed. A draft data collection procedures document will be presented to the FIN Committee at the 2002 meeting. Review of this information is an ongoing activity.

Task B12: Port Samplers Workshops (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Convene workshops of state and federal port samplers to discuss commercial data collection activities

Team Members: State and federal commercial port samplers and staff

Approach: In an effort to provide a forum for discussing various issues concerning commercial data collection activities, the FIN Committee decided to convene workshops of state and federal port agents. There will be several workshops: Texas/Louisiana/Mississippi/Alabama/Florida; and the Caribbean. These workshops will be attended by the state and federal port agents from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands, the FIN chairman, appropriate NMFS staff and other interested personnel. Some of the suggested topics for these meetings include species identification workshop, overview of ComFIN program, trip ticket information, sampling and sub-sampling techniques and other pertinent topics.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Provide a forum for field personnel to discuss problems and issues related to commercial data collection activities. List of recommendations regarding commercial data collection activities.

Schedule: The meeting will be scheduled for mid- and late-2002.

Task B13: Identification and Evaluation of Current Programs (Goal 2, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Identify and evaluate the adequacy of current and future programs for meeting FIN standards.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: Periodically evaluate surveys based on their adequacy for meeting FIN standards and make appropriate recommendations.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time

Product: Recommendations for commercial and recreational surveys.

Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B14: Combining Duplicative Data Collection and Management Activities (Goal 2, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Identify and combine duplicative data collection and management efforts.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The Biological/Environmental Work Group has identified redundancies in MRF data collection and management in the Southeast Region and provided recommendations to the FIN Committee concerning these activities. From this information, the Committee will develop strategies for reducing duplicative efforts in the Southeast Region.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Recommendations for reducing duplicative data collection and management efforts

Schedule: This is an ongoing task.

Task B15: Determination of Catch Rates and Species Composition from Night Fishing Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Determine catch rates and species composition from night fishing.

Team Members: Biological/Environmental Work Group

Approach: In 2001, a night fishing pilot study was conducted in Mississippi. The Work Group will meet in 2002 to begin evaluating the results of this study. Based on the evaluation, appropriate recommendations and implementation of appropriate methods will be implemented. Where possible, the Committee will work with the ACCSP to ensure comparability and compatibility between the two programs.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Detailed plan for the compilation of night fishing activities in the Southeast Region.

Schedule: The Work Group will meet in 2002 to address this task.

Task B16: Collection of Tournaments Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Collect appropriate information from fishing tournaments, and integrate with other marine recreational fisheries data.

Team Members: Biological/Environmental Work Group

Approach: A list that identifies all ongoing tournaments in the Southeast Region has been compiled and reviewed by the Committee. The Work Group met and discussed this issue. It had been decided that states provide updates to NSIL staff regarding fishing tournaments in their states. However, NSIL is no longer involved in tournament registration. The outcome of this activity is unclear at this time. Where possible, the Committee will work with the ACCSP to ensure comparability and compatibility between the two programs.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Recommendations regarding sampling methods for tournaments

Schedule: The Committee addressed this issue in 1998 and the Work Group will meet in 2002 to continue examining this issue.

Task B17: Coordination and Integration of Data Collection Efforts (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Encourage coordination, integration, and augmentation, as appropriate, of data collection efforts to meet the FIN requirements.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: Communicate results of evaluation and recommendations regarding marine commercial and recreational fisheries surveys to the appropriate personnel.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time

Product: Communication and presentation of recommendations to ongoing programs.

Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B18: Integration into the Stock Assessment Process (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Develop a plan, which outlines the needs for stock assessment for the upcoming year as well as tracking the collection of these data.

Team Members: FIN Committee/Data Collection Plan Work Group

Approach: The Committee has developed a data collection plan, which identifies the priority species (and associated data needed to be collected) for the state, interstate and federal entities as well as establishes sampling target levels for biological data. The plan provides guidance to the states. As trip ticket systems are implemented Gulf-wide, the data from these systems will allow for better allocation of samples. Accomplished by meetings, telephone and mail.

Resources: Meeting costs, mail costs, telephone costs, and staff time

Product: Data collection plan

Schedule: The group met in 2001 and will continue to do so into the future to develop this annual plan.

Task B19: Evaluation of Fishery-Independent Data Activities (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Evaluate current fishery-independent data activities

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The Committee has compiled a list of fishery-independent activities being conducted in the region. The Committee decided that a similar initiative to FIN should be undertaken for fishery-independent activities. Program such as SEAMAP and other fishery-independent surveys will be involved in the development of goals and objectives, program organization, etc.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Develop of coordinated state/Federal fishery-independent program,

Schedule: The FIN Committee discussed this issue at the 2001 meeting and will continue addressing it during 2002.

Task B20: Establish/modify recreational licenses (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Establish/modify recreational licenses to meet criteria for use as sampling frame

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The FIN has developed criteria that allow state marine recreational fishing licenses to be used as a regional sampling frame. Based on these criteria, each state needs to either adopt a recreational fishing license or modify existing licenses to meet the criteria. The Committee will periodically review the status of each states' licenses. Once a region has adopted a standardized license, implementation of license sampling frame can be accomplished.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time

Product: Recreational fishing licenses suitable for use as sampling directory

Schedule: The FIN Committee will periodically address this issue to determine the status of each states' licenses.

Task B21: Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies (Goal 2, Objective 6) (F)

Objective: To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection technologies

Team Members: FIN Committee and other appropriate personnel

Approach: The FIN program partners will report to the Committee any new technologies, which will aid in the collection of marine commercial and recreational fisheries data. GSMFC is exploring the possibility of using data loggers for the collection of recreational data.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time

Product: Progress reports concerning data collection technologies.

Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B22: Evaluation of Information Management Technologies (Goal 3, Objective 6) (F)

Objective: To evaluate and recommend innovative, cost-effective information management technologies.

Team Members: FIN Committee and industry personnel

Approach: Committee members will report any new technologies, which will aid in the management of marine commercial and recreational fisheries data.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, conference call costs, report costs, and staff time.

Product: Progress reports.

Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B23: Long-term National Program Planning (Goal 4, Objective 1) (F)

Objective: Provide for long-term national program planning
Team Members: FIN Committee
Approach: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ASMFC staff will attend Pacific RecFIN, PacFIN, ACCSP Operations Committee, and other pertinent meetings and coordinate activities as appropriate. Accomplished by mail and meetings.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: Record of coordination activities.
Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B24: Coordination, Consistency and Comparability with Other Cooperative Marine Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Programs (Goal 4, Objective 2 and Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Coordinate FIN with other regional cooperative marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs and encourages consistency and comparability among regional programs over time.
Team Members: FIN Committee/ FIN/ACCSP Compatibility Work Group
Approach: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ASMFC staff will coordinate activities with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, Pacific RecFIN, and PacFIN on the West Coast. The FIN/ACCSP Compatibility Work Group was created to examine the differences/similarities between the FIN and the ACCSP. It was decided that this group would meet on an annual basis to ensure comparability and compatibility between the two programs, and to distribute appropriate program results and recommendations to other cooperative fisheries programs. The topic of a joint meeting among FIN, ACCSP and Pacific has been discussed and staff will examine the possibility of conducting these types of meetings. Accomplished by mail and meetings.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: Ensure adequate information exchange, consistency and comparability between all regional fisheries programs and compilation of a record of information exchange.
Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity. The Work Group will meet in 2002.

C. Administrative Activities

Coordination and administrative support of FIN will be accomplished through The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. Major tasks involved in the coordination and administration of the various levels of FIN include but are not limited to the following:

- Work closely with the FIN Committee in all aspects of program coordination, administration, and operation;
- Implement plans and program directives approved by the FIN Committee;
- Provide coordination and logistical support, including communications and organization of meetings for the FIN Committee, subcommittees, and work groups;
- Develop and/or administer cooperative agreements, grants, and contracts;
- Serve as liaison between the FIN Committee, other program participants, and other interested organizations;
- Assist the FIN Committees in preparation or review of annual spending plans;
- Prepare annual operations plans under the direction of the FIN Committee;
- Prepare and/or supervise and coordinate preparation of selected documents, including written records of all meetings;
- Distribute approved FIN information and data in accordance with accepted policies and procedures as set forth by the FIN Committee;
- Assist in the identification of regional and geographic needs that can be satisfied through FIN activities;
- Conduct or participate in other activities as identified.

Time Table

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Planning, Management, and Evaluation					
FIN Committee					
Maintenance of FIN Committee	X	X	X	X	X
Framework Plan					
Review of Framework Plan					X
Operations Plans					
Development of annual operations plans	X	X	X	X	X
Support establishment of MRF surveys in PR & VI	X	X	X	X	X
Identify funding needs for MRF programs	X	X	X	X	X
Information dissemination					
Implement outreach strategy	X	X			
Develop outreach materials and list of users	X	X			
Use Internet communications	X	X	X	X	X
Program Review					
Conduct program review					X
Data Collection					
Data components					
Review of components of fisheries					X
Needed data elements					
Collection of metadata	X	X	X	X	X
Develop rec and comm catch/effort modules	X	X	X		
Develop permitting module	X	X			
Develop social/economic data module	X	X			
Develop biological sampling module	X				
Develop fishery module	X	X			
Develop discard and protected species interactions module	X	X	X		
Standard data collection protocols					
Develop data collection procedures manual	X	X	X		
Determine precision levels for priority species	X				
Evaluate methods for achieving desired precision levels	X				
Quality control/assurance					
Develop commercial and recreational QA/QC standards	X	X	X		
Review of commercial and recreational QA/QC standards					X
Recommendations regarding duplicative collection and management	X				
Coordination of data collection					
Development of data collection plan	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate current fishery independent data activities	X				
Make recommendations to appropriate fishery -independent programs		X			
Establish/modify recreational licenses to meet criteria	X	X	X		
Conduct comparison survey of license frame and MRFSS				X	
Implement the appropriate license frame methodology					X
Determine methods for collecting recreational data for private access points			X	X	
Determine methods for collecting recreational catch data for night fishing	X	X	X		
Develop method for collecting recreational data on fishing tournaments	X	X	X		
Develop methods for collecting recreational data on non hook-&-line fisheries				X	X
Evaluate potential improvements to intercept site selection process	X				
Determine the extent of non-consumptive activities					X

Data Collection (continued)	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Innovative collection technology					
Evaluate innovative data collection technologies	X	X	X	X	X
Data Management					
Data management system					
Review location and responsibility of DMS					X
Hardware/software capabilities					
Review hardware/software capabilities					X
Provide finalized recreational data in electronic form		X	X	X	X
Data maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Standard data management protocols					
Develop review process for finalization of MRFSS data		X			
Integration of databases					
Identify recreational databases for integration in DMS	X	X	X	X	X
Innovative data management technology					
Evaluate innovative data management technologies	X	X	X	X	X
Data confidentiality					
Protect confidentiality	X	X	X	X	X
Development of National Program					
Long-term planning					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
Coordination with other programs					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
Consistency and comparability					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX B

Minutes

PLEASE NOTE: Attachments to Minutes are not included in this document. They are available at the GSMFC office

FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)

MINUTES

June 4, 5, and 6, 2002

New Orleans, Louisiana

Chairman Kevin Anson called the meeting to order on June 4, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. The following members, staff and others were present:

Members

Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Stephen Holiman, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Christine Johnson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Ron Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Daniel Matos, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Joe O'Hop, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom Sminkey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Jason Vasques, USVIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Mike Sestak, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

John Hoey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Maury Osborn, ACCSP, Washington, DC
Cynthia Sarthou, GRN, New Orleans, LA

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as amended.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) meeting held on June 5, 6, and 7, 2001 in St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. were approved as amended.

Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)

M. Osborn reported that she has been in her new position at the ACCSP for about two months and the development of an implementation plan is a high priority. At a recent ACCSP Coordinating Council meeting, a strategic plan was adopted and will be available on their website soon. Osborn noted that she is also developing a schedule for grant monitoring in an effort to improve communication between ACCSP staff and the partners. The 2003 budget and operations plan are also being developed at this time.

Osborn noted that data is coming in from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center logbooks, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and North Carolina. There are ongoing projects to implement commercial trip ticket systems or to begin receiving data from South Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Osborn reported on several pilot studies being conducted in various Atlantic states and also noted that several partners have hired ACCSP coordinators.

Osborn reported that in 2002 the ACCSP has provided funding for observers for groundfish and also for biological sampling including horseshoe crabs. The Coordinating Council was asked to decide on the methodology for for-hire effort and agreed that the Vessel Directory Telephone Service will be the preferred methodology.

Osborn reported that the IT system staff is working on the commercial data feeds as well as the Rhode Island pilot study. The ACCSP website is also being overhauled as well as the biological module. The ACCSP staff is also working on a tracking system and D. Donaldson noted that GSMFC staff has developed a spreadsheet program for this purpose and would be willing to assist. Osborn reported that the partners will be giving her updates on the current status of the implementation plan in their states and a list of activities will be developed for each module for each partner in order to be in compliance. Osborn reported that a facilitated session will be held and will probably include some Operations Committee and Coordinating Council members and others in order to determine priorities based on the amount of funds available. A five-year implementation plan will be developed.

Review of List of Personnel with Access to Confidential Data

G. Davenport distributed an updated list of state personnel who had signed non-disclosure forms for the NMFS system and requested that Committee members review the list and add or delete names as necessary. Non-disclosure statements were also available for new personnel. D. Donaldson stated that M. Sestak of GSMFC should be contacted for FIN confidentiality forms.

Status of FIN Data Management System

M. Sestak provided handouts to Committee members listing record counts for the five Gulf States. Sestak discussed several issues with Committee members including being in compliance for the "rule of three", Florida data being pulled from the ACCSP system and the programs necessary to assure that the record counts match. Sestak also noted that totals differ in

the case of catch from Florida being sold in North Carolina and suggested that a solution could be to add the data source.

Sestak asked Committee members if there was any problem in adding commercial fisherman and dealer addresses to the informational layer of the confidential level. The Committee discussed confidential data, personnel with access to this data, the protocols involved, and the way the ACCSP handles the confidentiality issue and who has access to the system. It was noted that anyone with access to the FIN data management system must sign a non-disclosure statement, which protects confidentiality.

The Committee then discussed several issues relating to the FIN data management system as well as the NMFS system. M. Sestak was concerned that the states are supplying data to both the FIN system and NMFS. Another concern was the NMFS static dealer identification. In the future Alabama will input this identification number as the dealer number. Sestak also was concerned with NMFS zero filling and noted that both systems should be standardized. G. Davenport will check with J. Bennett regarding this issue. Sestak reported on several data management issues including the Sun server, biological sampling, recreational data, menhaden data, SEAMAP data, etc.

Discussion of Funding Strategies for the Caribbean

D. Donaldson noted that this issue was generated at the port samplers meeting held in the Caribbean last October. Donaldson explained that funds appropriated through the GulfFIN line item are available for the states on the Gulf of Mexico, but not for the Caribbean or federal partners. Donaldson also noted that since the Caribbean partners do not have representation, it is difficult to lobby Congress. Limited sampling has been implemented in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

R. Lukens suggested that Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands list what they would like to see implemented and the cost of implementation with the activities listed being directly related to the FIN program. This information could then be distributed to Congressional staffers. J. Hoey suggested that funds for the federal Fisheries Information System could potentially be used by the Caribbean, if available.

D. Donaldson will provide the Congressional briefing information for the Gulf of Mexico to the representatives from Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands.

Review and Status of Caribbean Data Confidentiality MOA

D. Donaldson reported that at the last meeting there was discussion on expanding the existing MOA on sharing confidential data. Some language has been added to the existing cooperative agreement and sub-grants with the Gulf States. Donaldson distributed copies of the proposed MOA for the GSMFC, the Caribbean, and NMFS so Committee members would have an opportunity to review this document.

Donaldson stated that the next step would be to have the various agencies sign the MOA. R. Lukens noted that the sub-contracts with the states will now be the vehicles used as legal documents for protection of confidential data, however the MOA expresses the intent to cooperate and share data. Where the Caribbean partners are concerned, the MOA will be the only documentation at this time that expresses an agreement to share and protect confidential data. Donaldson noted this would help in future funding strategies.

C. Lilyestrom moved to accept the Memorandum of Agreement as written. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Donaldson noted that he would send signature sheets to the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the NMFS Southeast Regional Office.

Presentation of Mississippi Night Fishing Pilot survey Preliminary Results

G. Bray of the GSMFC noted that very little is known about night fishing activities in the Gulf of Mexico. The MRFSS survey collects primarily daytime dockside information and the assumption has been that catch information would be similar for night fishing but there is no data to prove this. Beginning in 2001 the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) began doing night interviews in order to address this topic. One of the goals of this survey were to determine if catch and harvest rates were similar between day and night fishing, and also to produce expanded estimates of catch and harvest using night survey data.

From June to October 2000 the MDMR nightly sent samplers to shore sites to obtain pressure estimates. Approximately 12 sites were added that did not have day fishing activity but were used frequently at night. The GSMFC provided the MDMR with monthly sampling schedules. The MDMR used MRFSS sampling forms. Two samplers were sent out for each assignment for safety reasons.

Bray reported that the night survey observed 31 species and the day survey observed 15 species. The species selected for day and night fishing comparison were sheepshead, spotted seatrout, sand seatrout, southern kingfish, black drum, red drum, and southern flounder since most of these were important management species in Mississippi. Some of the conclusions reached were that more species were observed during night sampling; some differences in catch rates were observed between day and night fishing; overall differences in expanded estimates were not significant from a management standpoint; and research does not dismiss the importance of night fishing with respect for MRFSS estimates.

In closing, Bray noted that this applies only to Mississippi shore mode night fishing, but the research shows the importance of night fishing in calculating MRFSS estimates. The MDMR is continuing the night fishing survey through 2002. D. Donaldson suggested that the 2002 survey results be presented at the 2003 FIN meeting so this Committee can determine what action, if any, to take.

Presentation of MRFSS Artificial Reef Data

G. Bray stated that the MRFSS was established in 1979 to provide a database for estimating the impact of marine recreational fishing. This survey is comprised of two parts: the random digit dial telephone survey which collects effort information, and the dockside intercept survey which collects information on the number and size of fish caught. Between the years of 1984 and 1992 the dockside intercept survey asked the question, "Did you fish within 200 feet of an oil or gas platform or an artificial reef?" The three goals of the research were to determine the contribution of fishing trips adjacent to artificial structures to the total catch of selected reef fish, to compare catch rates of trips adjacent to artificial structures with trips that did not fish adjacent to artificial structures, and trends in number of fishing trips to artificial structures.

Bray reported that red snapper, gray triggerfish, and vermilion snapper were used for this research since these species provided the largest amount of data. Bray noted that from the intercept data from charter boat mode a large percentage of angler responses showed that they

did fish adjacent to artificial structures. The trends were similar in private boat mode, but they were not as high. Anglers fishing near artificial structures had higher catch and harvest rates for these species than anglers who did not. Bray reported that in the future he would like to see this question asked again on the dockside intercept survey and possibly on the random digit dial survey and the Gulf charter boat survey.

R. Lukens noted that the GSMFC Artificial Reef Subcommittee made a recommendation to the Data Management Subcommittee that the question on fishing near artificial reefs be added back into both the intercept survey and the telephone survey.

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee Report (Attachment A)

D. Donaldson reported that the motion by the Artificial Reef Subcommittee regarding adding the artificial reef question to the survey was forwarded to the FIN Geographic Subcommittee. The Geographic Subcommittee passed a motion to have this issue forwarded to the FIN Committee. After Committee discussion, **K. Cuevas moved to accept the Artificial Reef Subcommittee recommendation that the question on fishing near artificial reefs be added back into both the intercept survey and the random digit dialing survey. The motion was seconded and passed with Louisiana and National Marine Fisheries Service opposed, and Texas and Puerto Rico abstaining.** R. Lukens noted that this additional question would probably only need to be asked every five years. After lengthy Committee discussion on the frequency of adding the above question to the intercept survey and also some reservations regarding the utility of adding the question to the random digit dialing survey, **R. Lukens moved to delete random digit dialing from the previous motion. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** T. Sminkey suggested that a work group be formed to discuss details concerning the above question with MRFSS personnel. This work group will be comprised of T. Sminkey, G. Bray, R. Lukens, and K. Anson.

Presentation of Preliminary Results of Detailed Effort Pilot Survey

G. Davenport reported that NMFS had to modify their Gulf shrimp data entry program to be able to identify their interviews back to the Louisiana trip ticket system. It was necessary to modify the dealer codes to correspond with Louisiana dealer codes and a field was added for boat identification numbers. Another item that was added was a trip ticket field. Davenport distributed a list of the fields collected during interviews and noted that they are trying to interview up to 10% of all trips. Davenport reported that they are trying to intercept boats in the morning since many of them fish during the night. 210 interviews have been conducted since January and plans are to continue through the rest of the year.

Davenport noted that they are collecting boat identification number, departure date, unload date, area fished, depth fished, days fished, number of crew, species, information on TED's, landed pounds, price per pound, dealer interview, dealer codes, port of departure, size and number of gear, and time of day. Interviews will also be done in Florida and their trip ticket numbers will be entered as well for cross-referencing. Davenport noted that this survey would also be conducted in Alabama. This program should produce more detailed information including effort. The Committee discussed the issue of cooperation and Davenport noted that in most instances they have been fortunate due to the port agents' rapport with the fishermen. This survey is for offshore shrimp, however the Committee discussed the potential for detailed effort

in other species. Davenport noted that detailed effort is also collected in the TIP program as well as the reefish and pelagic logbook systems.

Discussion of FIN Water Body Codes

D. Donaldson noted that the water body codes used in the Gulf of Mexico include an area code and a sub area code. With the exception of Louisiana, the sub area codes are the NMFS codes. In Louisiana they use four digit codes based on hydrological units established by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Donaldson noted that in order to be consistent and provide greater detail it would be beneficial to discuss using the Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC) established by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Committee members were provided with a list of current codes and examples of corresponding HUC codes. R. Lukens noted that the FIN data management system is built to accept a four-digit code. Lukens suggested that for near-shore areas, the HUC codes could be used since they are standard nationwide. The Committee discussed the various problems associated with changing water body codes, including the FIN and ACCSP data management systems and it appears that this problem can be resolved. Lukens noted that an invasive species database is being developed using the USGS HUC codes and both systems would be compatible. The Committee discussed the issue of water body codes and considered having a member of the FIN Committee attend an ACCSP Standard Codes Committee meeting or arrange a conference call on the subject. R. Lukens will contact the USGS office responsible for developing the HUC. Committee members will check the codes in their state.

Review of Discards Questionnaire Results

D. Donaldson distributed a list of discards provided by the FIN partners and a letter from the Gulf Restoration Network (GRN) concerning bycatch-reporting requirements. Donaldson noted that at the last FIN meeting the Committee discussed moving forward in the development of the discards module. The first step in developing this module is identifying the absence and presence, as well as the magnitude of activity. From the results of the questionnaire, the FIN Committee will be able to prioritize which species to focus on and develop a data collection method for bycatch information. D. Donaldson also noted that the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council (GMFMC) has deferred to the FIN Committee to determine the best method to collect information on discards. Donaldson suggested that since the Data Collection Work Group has looked at discards in the past it might be appropriate to charge this Work Group with development of this module. It was noted that the ACCSP has a Discards Committee and they have developed this module, therefore the FIN Work Group should coordinate with them as well as the Councils and NMFS.

The Committee discussed the level of coverage and agreed that 100% would be difficult to accomplish. C. Sarthou of the GRN suggested that representatives of the environmental community from the Gulf and the Atlantic coasts be involved in a conference call with FIN and ACCSP representatives. M. Osborn noted that the ACCSP first prioritized fisheries and then selected the top eight for inclusion in the Request for Proposal (RFP), which will be sent out shortly.

Chairman Anson noted that the Data Collection Work Group is scheduled to meet later this year and the Committee agreed that the subject of discards would be on the agenda.

Discussion of Collection of Biological Samples for Methylmercury Analysis

The Committee was provided with information on a Gulf-wide survey to collect fish tissue for mercury analysis. R. Lukens reported to the Committee on the recent attention that methylmercury in marine fish has received. Lukens noted that this has been a problem in freshwater for a long time and has only recently become a problem in marine fish. Lukens reported that a series of recommendations have been made to the GSMFC for ways to work in a state/federal cooperative effort to increase and improve the amount of information available on mercury in marine fish. One of those recommendations is to coordinate a Gulf-wide data collection effort to collect marine fish tissues for mercury analysis. Lukens suggested that this effort would be well suited for the FIN biological sampling module if funding were available. This could be achieved by requesting small samples of tissue from recreational fishermen as well as samples from commercial fish houses. Lukens noted that since there are no existing resources for this effort he suggested that the FIN collect tissue from the fisheries, and the SEAMAP program to collect fishery independent samples, as well as various state programs. The Committee then discussed collecting, storing, and processing tissue samples. Lukens noted that there is a great deal of interest in methylmercury in marine fish in Congress, the oil and gas industry, and the Mineral Management Service and suggested that these groups could be possible sources of funding. He asked the Committee for input on the appropriateness of the FIN Committee to coordinate this activity if funding were available.

Lukens reported that the National Seafood Inspection Laboratory in Pascagoula is implementing a survey of the Gulf of Mexico to collect 2,500 samples. This survey would help to determine which areas and/or species to begin focusing on. Lukens explained that his proposal is for four years and the species being collected would rotate. This proposal includes all sampling and analysis at a cost of \$1.4 million annually.

After Committee discussion, **J. Shepard moved that if funding were made available the FIN Committee would be the appropriate body to coordinate the effort to collect fish tissues for methylmercury analysis. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

R. Lukens reported that one of the other recommendations was to conduct a recreational angler seafood consumption study. This would be a phone survey in which anglers would be asked whether they bring fish home for consumption. The anglers would be asked as part of the MRFSS survey if they would be willing to participate in a fish consumption survey and the list of names and phone numbers would be forwarded to the group conducting the consumption survey. **T. Sminkey moved to support the recommendation that the question, *would you be willing to participate in a fish consumption study*, be asked on the MRFSS intercept survey. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Discussion of Conducting the Large Pelagic Survey in the Gulf of Mexico

D. Donaldson provided Committee members with copies of a statement of work for the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS). This survey is conducted in the Atlantic as far south as North Carolina, but is not conducted in the Gulf of Mexico at this time. Donaldson explained that J. Dunnigan of NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Office addressed the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee in March 2002. Dunnigan discussed collecting information on large pelagics being caught in the Gulf of Mexico and requested assistance in determining if the agencies of the Gulf States would be interested in this activity. Donaldson explained that in the

past the LPS had some problems with methodology, however the current statement of work addresses these issues using a telephone survey as well as intercept work.

M. Osborn stated that personnel from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center have been working on a set of recommendations on monitoring large pelagics. One of the recommendations is that the scope of the LPS should be expanded to the South Atlantic as well as the Gulf of Mexico and should be conducted all year. Currently approximately one-half million is spent on the LPS, with full implementation costing another two million. Osborn noted that it is possible that the LPS could revert back to the MRFSS. J. Hoey of NMFS will provide Committee members with the recommendations on monitoring large pelagics when it becomes available. The Committee agreed that the states should be involved in this effort since it fits the FIN program and supplements activities presently being conducted.

Discussion of Data Collection Methods for Head Boats

D. Donaldson noted that action on head boats had been deferred awaiting the outcome of the ACCSP pilot study in South Carolina. This study examined random digit dialing, the Vessel Directory Telephone Survey (VDTS), and a mandatory logbook survey. A report on the results of this pilot study was distributed to Committee members. Donaldson noted that the Coordinating Council decided that the VDTS was the preferred method for collecting effort information from head boats and charter boats.

M. Osborn noted that the ACCSP has determined that the telephone survey is the way to collect information on effort, but it would then be up to the NMFS to implement. Osborn also noted that the contract for the intercept survey beginning in 2002 calls for observers on head boats and also sets a minimum sample size. The Committee discussed the problems associated with having observers on charter boats and head boats as well as self reported data. B. Dixon expressed concern regarding the decision by the Coordinating Council to use a new methodology since it went against the advice of the Technical and Operations Committees. J. O'Hop suggested that the FIN design a pilot study in order to benchmark the two methodologies. The Committee discussed this issue at length and **J. Shepard moved to have the Charter Boat Work Group examine the issue of head boat sampling and survey methodologies and come up with a recommendation for the FIN Committee. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** Since the Charter Boat Work Group is inactive at this time, **R. Lukens moved to establish a For-Hire Work Group to look at the problems associated with the for-hire survey. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** The For-Hire Work Group will include J. O'Hop, K. Anson, K. Cuevas, M. Kasprzak, P. Campbell, T. Sminkey, B. Dixon, and ACCSP liaison.

Discussion of Strategies for Modification of Recreational Fishing Licenses

The Committee was provided with information developed by RecFIN on recreational marine fishing licenses. D. Donaldson reported that the NMFS conducted a pilot study in Oregon and found that using recreational fishing licenses as a sampling frame provides better precision and estimates of effort for the private, rental, and shore mode. In order to use this methodology certain information must be collected from the license for use as a sampling frame and these criteria were also listed in the information provided to the Committee. Donaldson stated that most states do not collect telephone numbers at this time and noted that the GMFMC

is asking the states to begin collecting telephone numbers on their recreational fishing licenses as soon as possible.

Donaldson noted that in order for recreational licenses to be used as a sampling frame telephone numbers, computerization, and changing some exemptions was necessary. R. Lukens noted that the S/FFMC has agreed that this information needs to be collected, however in some instances this is a legislative issue or a funding issue. Lukens encouraged Committee members to bring this matter to the attention of their Directors.

Review and Approval of 2001 FIN Annual Report

Committee members reviewed the 2001 FIN Annual Report and **R. Lukens moved to approve the 2001 FIN Annual Report with the appropriate changes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Review and Discussion of FIN Program Design Document

The Committee reviewed and discussed the Program Design Document and **J. Shepard moved to approve the FIN Program Design Document with the modifications. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Subcommittee and Work Group Reports

Administrative Subcommittee – (Attachment B) D. Donaldson reported that one of the charges to this Subcommittee was the revision of the program review process. The Subcommittee decided that for the next review the number and types of review panelists would be specified, and a list of specific questions would be developed by the Subcommittee. Another charge to the Administrative Subcommittee was the development of a clearer charge to the FIN Outreach Work Group. The Subcommittee identified the outreach audience as legislators, stock assessment personnel, managers, and the general fishing public and the approach needed for each group. After reviewing the Subcommittee report, **J. Shepard moved to approve the Administrative Subcommittee Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Commercial Port Sampler Meetings - (Attachment C) D. Donaldson distributed a report summarizing meetings held for the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico port samplers. Some of the issues discussed at these meetings include sampling techniques, fish identification methods, the status of the ComFIN, data collection methods, and fishing regulations. The Gulf of Mexico meeting included both federal and state samplers from all the Gulf States and an otolith processing and removal workshop was conducted the following day. No recommendations were made at either meeting for action by this Committee. The next Caribbean port sampler meeting will be held in Miami, Florida so these samplers can see the methods used in the United States. The next Gulf of Mexico port sampler meeting will be held in the St. Petersburg/Tampa area sometime in November 2002. M. Osborn requested that she be notified of the details of the Gulf of Mexico port sampler meeting for 2002. **J. Shepard moved to accept the Commercial Port Sampler Meetings Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Plan Work Group - (Attachment D) D. Donaldson noted that the Data Collection Plan Work Group developed the data collection plan, which is used to establish targets for otolith and biological sampling activities. D. Donaldson reviewed the proposed meeting schedule for the Work Group. The Work Group will meet in July to review current activities and to develop a data collection plan. Once the plan has been approved by the FIN

Committee it will be presented to the S/FFMC with recommendations for activities to be included in the following year's cooperative agreement. Another section of the Work Group report deals with what has been collected compared to the targets.

The Committee discussed the meeting schedule, targets, and species and agreed that a Work Group meeting would not be necessary this year but a conference call will be held instead. J. Shepard also suggested that at the end of this year, members develop allocations for the following year. **J. Shepard moved to accept the Data Collection Plan Work Group Report with modifications. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Outreach Work Group - (Attachment E) The FIN Outreach Strategic Plan was distributed to Committee members. D. Donaldson reported that the Outreach Work Group utilized the ACCSP Outreach Plan and modified it to meet the needs of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean for outreach. The Committee was asked to review this plan and **J. Shepard moved to accept the FIN Outreach Strategic Plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Registration Tracking Work Group - (Attachment F) D. Donaldson stated that registration tracking establishes unique identifiers to enable tracking of fishermen, dealers, and vessels through time and space. The Work Group met in March and there was a presentation on the NMFS permitting system as well as several recommendations. One of the recommendations is for the NMFS to maintain a master database for the unique identifiers. Another recommendation is for all program partners to begin collecting all the identified minimum data elements as soon as possible. The Work Group also recommended that data feeds would be on the same schedule as catch and effort. The Work Group agreed that the ongoing testing of the NMFS system was a critical activity and the states should continue to provide NMFS with the necessary databases. J. Hoey updated the Committee on the status of the NMFS system and noted the importance of having birth dates. The Committee also reviewed the minimum data elements recommended by the Registration Tracking Work Group. After lengthy Committee discussion, **J. Shepard moved to accept the Registration Tracking Work Group Report and the recommendations as amended. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Social/Economic Work Group - (Attachment G) D. Donaldson reported that the Social/Economic Work Group met in May and the main purpose of the meeting was to develop data collection activities for the collection of social/economic data in the commercial fishery. The Work Group developed two possible activities for potential funding in 2003; the collection of socio/economic data for the Gulf of Mexico inshore shrimp fishery, and a cost and earnings data collection program for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. Donaldson explained that the inshore shrimp fishery project would compliment the off shore shrimp activity currently being conducted by Mike Travis of the NMFS Southeast Regional Office. The data collected by these two projects would give the total picture of the economics of the shrimp fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. Port samplers would be utilized to conduct personal interviews concerning trip expenses as well as social demographic information. S. Holiman noted that Mike Travis has completed 98% of the outreach portion of the offshore shrimp program and is currently developing the survey questionnaire.

Donaldson reported that on the reef fish project would be a one time study on annual and fixed costs and social demographic information. This would assist in providing detailed information for the future logbook add-on that is planned for 2004. Donaldson noted that the economists with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center are extremely busy with other activities

and will only be able to provide a limited amount of time in developing this program. After Committee discussion, **J. Shepard moved to approve the Social/Economic Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Operations Plan

Status of 2002 FIN Activities - The FIN Committee was provided with a list giving the status of data collection and management activities for 2002.

D. Donaldson discussed Task B9 - Development of Metadata Database and asked the Committee for guidance in determining the level of priority of entering data on fishing regulations. Donaldson noted that the GSMFC Law Summary would be used for entering the historical data. C. Lilyestrom will provide the data for Puerto Rico and J. Vasquez will provide data from the U.S. Virgin Islands. After Committee discussion it was agreed that the data would be entered beginning with the most current and working back.

The next item discussed was Task B16 - Collection of Tournament Data. Donaldson noted that B. Sutter's office at NMFS was responsible for registering all tournaments that land Highly Migratory Species (HMS) and the FIN program was prepared to work with that group. Donaldson asked the Committee for input on how to proceed with this project. K. Anson noted that B. Sutter identified the tournaments targeting HMS and C. Lilyestrom reported that his office has two part time employees who collect data on all tournaments held in Puerto Rico. Donaldson noted that the Biological/Environmental Work Group had been charged with collecting information on tournaments in the past and had developed a list of tournaments, however this list is three or four years old. The Committee discussed several alternatives including having the states collect tournament data possibly using a type of registration form. The Committee agreed to charge the Biological/Environmental Work Group with examining the feasibility of mandatory registration of state fishing tournaments. In addition Committee members will discuss this with their State Directors and the issue can be discussed at a future S/FFMC meeting.

R. Lukens asked about the status of Task B21 - Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies. D. Donaldson noted that the data loggers for MRFSS forms are being programmed at this time and after being tested in Mississippi a presentation will be given to the FIN Committee.

Review and Approval of 2003 Operations Plan - The Committee was provided with copies of the 2003 FIN Operations Plan. After reviewing the Operations Plan and making several changes and amendments, **P. Campbell moved to approve the 2003 FIN Operations Plan as amended. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

D. Donaldson noted that he would make the appropriate changes to the Operations Plan after the August 2002 S/FFMC meeting and e-mail it to the FIN Committee for review before printing and distribution.

Discussion of 2003 FIN Funding Priorities

A list of suggested items for funding consideration was distributed to Committee members. D. Donaldson noted that each year a prioritized list of activities is developed by the FIN Committee and is then forwarded to the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) for the final decision on which activities would be funded.

The Committee then reviewed the list of suggested activities for funding consideration in 2003. Donaldson explained that the first item, Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities, includes the cost of staff, as well as the FIN Committee, Subcommittee, and Work Group meetings, training, etc.

The next item is Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data, including the Vessel Directory Telephone Survey. This item includes the Economic Add-on for the Telephone Survey, which is funded from July to December 2002 but requires funding from January to June 2003. Donaldson noted that the states need to include the Economic Add-on from January to June in their budgets for 2003.

Donaldson then noted that Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana also includes paying for the electronic trip ticket contractor. All of the above mentioned issues are considered ongoing activities. Discussion followed concerning initiating a trip ticket program in Texas, however it appears that this will not occur in 2003 but possibly will in the future. The Committee discussed the possibility of conducting a test in Texas with one dealer using the electronic trip ticket system. D. Donaldson noted that this could be done by modifying the contract with Southwest Computer Bureau, Inc. (SCBI) and would not be costly. However, at this time Texas will not be initiating trip tickets.

Other ongoing activities include Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida with B. Dixon of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling being conducted by J. Smith of NMFS Beaufort Lab and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Development, Implementation, and Operation of the FIN Data Management System is also included under ongoing activities. It has been proposed that a ComFIN Survey Coordinator be hired since activity on the commercial side is increasing with trip ticket data in the FIN Data Management System. The ComFIN Coordinator would work with M. Sestak of Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC). This position would require a computer science background. The ComFIN Coordinator would be involved with data loading, Business Objects help, and maintenance of the FIN Data Management System website.

J. Shepard suggested that all the above ongoing activities should be ranked as High Priority. This includes Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling of amberjack, flounder, red snapper, and king mackerel. Shepard suggested adding several more species for biological sampling as an additional category and listing this as a lesser priority. The Committee then discussed two new activities on the list of proposed items for funding in 2003; Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries, and Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study.

G. Davenport noted that NMFS is planning on expanding its collection of detailed effort for shrimp to include Alabama and Florida in 2003. Davenport noted that when the new TIP program is implemented, it would have the capacity to cross reference the trip ticket program. Committee members discussed various methods of collecting detailed effort information including focusing on the states that have trip ticket programs, although this would not be Gulf wide. It appears that personnel would have to be hired or contracted to collect this information.

The Committee then discussed funding for continuation of the offshore portion of the Charter Boat Telephone Survey in Texas from September until December of 2002. P. Campbell will send an estimate for the cost of this project to D. Donaldson, but it does not appear that there will be funds available.

The Committee discussed these new activities and agreed that the Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study should be conducted on the inshore shrimp fishery in the Gulf since currently the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is developing a survey for the offshore shrimp fishery. It was agreed that the Social/Economic Work Group should hold a conference call as soon as possible in order to develop budget figures to present to the S/FFMC. GSMFC would administer the project either through the states or a contractor. Donaldson noted that each partner would have to develop a budget and statement of work before the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) meets in August.

J. Shepard moved to assign the following priorities: all current ongoing activities - high priority; Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study - medium; adding additional species for biological sampling - medium; and Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries - low. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

D. Donaldson requested that Committee members send him budgets for proposed 2003 activities as soon as possible.

The Committee discussed the cooperative nature of the FIN program including federal port agents in Florida and Louisiana working with trip tickets, as well as exchanging data on dealer identification and the reconciliation of vessel and permit lists. The Committee also discussed the ongoing development of modules with the FIN and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) to assure compatibility and comparability and to look toward the evolution of a national program.

ITEMS FOR FUNDING CONSIDERATION IN 2003

High Priority (The following 9 items are ongoing activities)

- Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities
- Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data
- Economic Add-on for Vessel Directory Telephone Survey
- Charter Boat Survey Offshore Texas
- Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida
- Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling
- Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System
- ComFIN Survey Coordinator
- Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi
- Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama
- Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana
- Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling

Medium Priority (New activities in priority order)

- Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study
- Biological Sampling for Additional Species

Low Priority (New activity)

- Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries

Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that the next FIN meeting would be held during the first week in June 2003 with Orlando, Florida being first choice and Key West, Florida second choice.

Other Business

J. Shepard discussed biological sampling quality assurance/quality control issues noting that there is no procedure in certifying personnel for processing and reading otoliths, nor is there any identification issued as there is with port agents. Shepard also noted that it might be beneficial if there were an annual workshop for otolith processors using the otolith manual. After Committee discussion it was agreed to implement the otolith manual as a training tool. G. Davenport stressed the importance of having contact between processors and assessment personnel as well as the issue of publishing. D. Donaldson noted that an otolith processors meeting is scheduled for next month and it could be utilized for training as well as to set up protocol, criteria, and standards for certification. This meeting will be held at the NMFS Panama City Laboratory. The Committee discussed at length a certification numbering system for processors and agreed that it would be discussed at the processors meeting next month. D. Donaldson and G. Davenport will contact G. Fitzhugh of the Panama City Lab to finalize an agenda and make arrangements for the processors meeting. It was agreed that two processors from each state would attend the meeting.

D. Donaldson distributed copies of an e-mail from Chris Rogers of NMFS regarding HMS charter/head boat vessels and permits. A meeting is being held in Washington, DC and this will be one of the subjects discussed. Donaldson and M. Osborn will attend this meeting since data collection activities will also be discussed.

Donaldson noted that C. Lilyestrom had requested a comprehensive review of Puerto Rico's commercial data collection programs. C. Lilyestrom stated that since the MRFSS started a couple of years ago there is now high quality recreational data, however their commercial data does not seem to be adequate in some aspects. He noted that with the expertise and experience available in other agencies and states there might be some way to optimize data collection in both catch and effort and biological sampling in Puerto Rico. The Committee discussed several alternatives and agreed that the FIN Data Collection Work Group would be the appropriate body to evaluate these data collection programs. **J. Shepard moved to have the ComFIN Data Collection Work Group meet in La Parguera, Puerto Rico in 2002 in order to assess data collection processes and make recommendations as to how they can be improved. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

J. Shepard requested that some time be allotted on the agenda for the next FIN meeting to discuss the future and direction of the FIN program. R. Lukens suggested inviting R. Porter from the PacFIN program for a different perspective.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

APPENDIX C

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To plan, manage and evaluate a coordinated State/Federal marine commercial and recreational fishery data collection program for the Region.

- Objective 1 To establish and maintain FIN Committee consisting of MOU signatories or their designees to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the program.
- Objective 2 To develop and periodically review a Framework Plan that outlines policies and protocol of the program
- Objective 3 To develop annual operation plans, including identification of available resources that implement the Framework Plan.
- Objective 4 To distribute program information to the cooperators and interested parties.
- Objective 5 To conduct a program review at least every five years of operation to evaluate the program's success in meeting needs in the Region.

Goal 2: To implement and maintain a coordinated State/Federal marine commercial and recreational fishery data collection program for the Region.

- Objective 1 To characterize and periodically review the commercial and recreational fisheries and identify the required data priorities for each.
- Objective 2 To identify and periodically review environmental, biological, social and economic data elements required for each fishery.
- Objective 3 To identify, determine, and periodically review standards for data collection, including statistical, training and quality assurance.
- Objective 4 To identify and evaluate the adequacy of current programs for meeting FIN requirements.
- Objective 5 To coordinate, integrate and augment, as appropriate, data collection efforts to meet FIN requirements.
- Objective 6 To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection methodologies and technologies.

Goal 3: To establish and maintain an integrated, marine commercial and recreational fishery data management system for the Region.

- Objective 1 To periodically review and make recommendations regarding the location and administrative responsibility for the FIN data management system.
- Objective 2 To periodically evaluate the hardware, software and communication capabilities of program partners and make recommendations for support and upgrades.
- Objective 3 To implement, maintain, and periodically review a marine commercial and recreational fishery data management system to accommodate fishery management/research and other needs.
- Objective 4 To develop, maintain, and periodically review standard protocols and documentation for data formats, inputs, editing, storage, access, transfer dissemination, and application.
- Objective 5 To identify and prioritize historical databases for integration into the marine commercial and recreational fisheries database.
- Objective 6 To evaluate and recommend innovative, cost-effective information management technologies.
- Objective 7 To protect the confidentiality of personal and business information, as required by state and/or federal law.

Goal 4: To support the development and operation of a national program to collect, manage and disseminate marine commercial fisheries information for use by states, territories, councils, interstate commissions and federal marine fishery management agencies.

- Objective 1 To provide for long-term national program planning.
- Objective 2 To coordinate FIN with other regional and national marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs.
- Objective 3 To encourage consistency and comparability among regional and national marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs over time.