

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

JANUARY 1, 2003 - DECEMBER 31, 2003

JUNE 2004

Number 123

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).

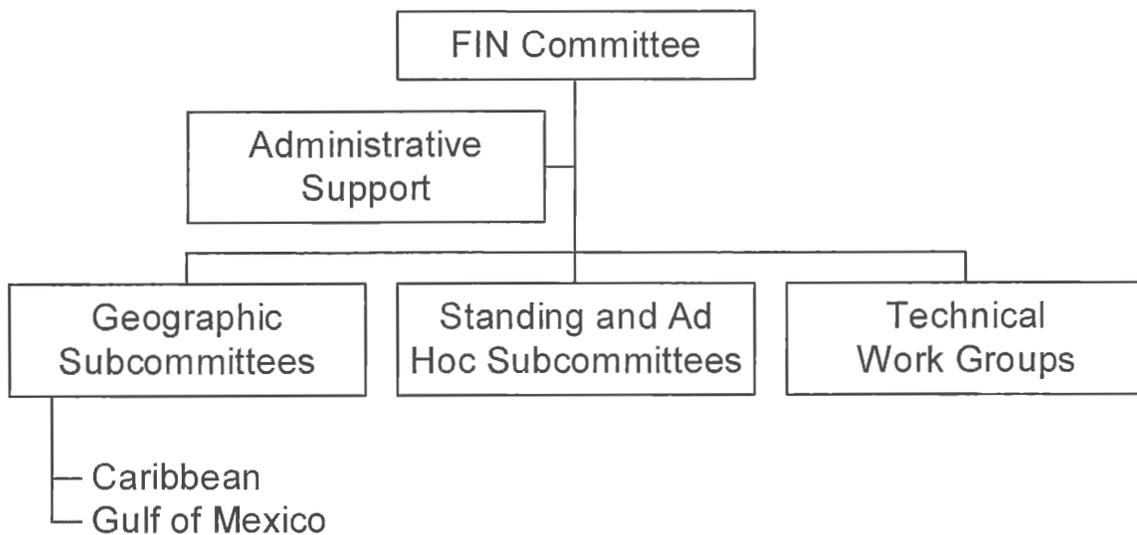


Figure 1. Organizational structure of the FIN.

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 2003. The major issues discussed during these meetings included:

- Identification and continuation of tasks to be addressed in 2003 and instruction to Administrative and Geographic Subcommittees 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 2004 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 2003;
- 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 2004;
- 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 2003 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:

- RecFIN(SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group met in February and December 2003 (via conference call) to examine the feasibility of registering all fishing tournaments (not just the ones that target highly migratory species), using hydrologic unit codes (HUCs) instead of the existing FIN water body codes, begin the development of sampling strategies for private access sites, discuss the next steps for night fishing sampling, update the group regarding fishing tournaments and continue the development of the non rod-and-reel fisheries sampling strategies;
- Gulf Of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee met in March and October 2003 to discuss various topics including a presentation of Mississippi night fishing survey results, discuss head boat sampling in the Gulf of Mexico, discuss trip ticket reporting issues regarding out-of-state dealers, status of registration tracking module, status of biological sampling activities, discuss of collection of birth date for registration tracking module, discuss the development of more detailed QA/QC for Data Quality Act, discuss the detailed effort data collection activities in Louisiana, adoption of the for-hire telephone survey as “official” method and fishing tournament discussions;
- The Otolith Processors Training Workshop was held in May 2003 to discuss a variety of issues including a presentation of University of Florida amberjack project, discussion of Red Snapper Otolith Ageing Techniques and associated problems, discussion of otolith processing issues and problems, conducting otolith reading activities for red snapper and greater amberjack, review and comparison of the reading exercise, status of otoliths processing and other pertinent issues;
- The FIN For-Hire Work Group met in June 2003 to review of vessel directory telephone survey (VDTS) methods and discuss of sampling methodology for field activities;

- FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group met in June 2003 to review of 2002 and 2003 otolith and length data collection and processing activities, to develop recommendations for necessary lengths and otoliths for FIN priority species and develop the 2004 FIN Data Collection Plan Document;
- 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 FIN Social/Economic Work Group met in September 2003 to develop a data collection plan for social/economic activities under FIN. This plan will help FIN develop social/economic data collection projects;
- The Caribbean commercial port samplers was held in October 2003 to discuss the status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN), status of yellowtail snapper stock assessment, status and review of data collection recommendations, round table discussions as well as a sampling trip to Vieques;
- The Gulf of Mexico commercial port samplers meeting was held in November 2003 to discuss the status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN), hear a presentation of survey for sampling methods, to discuss quota monitoring methods, presentation of fish maturation photos and other pertinent issues; and
- The FIN/ACCSP Registration Tracking Work Group met in December 2003 (via conference call) to discuss the effectiveness of the current registration tracking module. There has been some concern that the existing ACCSP and FIN systems would not create a unique identifier and the group was tasked with examining this issue and possibly developing alternative methods for establishing unique IDs;

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 TPWD 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 as well as social economic data. Beginning in July 2003, the states also began calling heat boat captains to obtain fishing effort from these vessels. 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 will provide funding for the FIN Data Base Manager and ComFIN Survey Coordinator who will, in conjunction with the ACCSP, work on developing more data modules for the FIN and ACCSP data management systems. Responsibilities include further development of data modules structures; routine loading of Louisiana, Mississippi (oyster only) Alabama, and Florida commercial catch effort data, Gulf biological data, Gulf recreational data; and maintenance of DMS. 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 continuation of an activity from the previous year

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 2003 via a variety of different methods such as distribution of program documents, presentation to various groups interested in the FIN, and via the Internet:

- Bray, G. 2003. *Mississippi's Shore Night Fishing Survey Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey January 2001- December 2002*. No. 113. Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 29 pp.
- FIN Committee. 2003. *2004 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 114 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 26 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2003. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2002 - December 31, 2002*. No. 112 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 18 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2003. *2004 FIN Data Collection Plan*. Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 74 pp.
- 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.
- 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

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Data Collection (continued)					
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 2003

Kevin Anson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Steven Atran
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council

Page Campbell
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Kerwin Cuevas
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Guy Davenport
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Chris Denson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Bob Dixon
National Marine Fisheries Service
Beaufort Laboratory

Doug Frugé
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Graciela Garcia-Moliner
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Steve Holiman
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office

Christine Johnson
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Barbara Kojis
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Craig Lilyestrom
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

Ron Lukens
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Daniel Matos
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

Joe O'Hop
Florida Marine Research Institute

Tom Schmidt
National Park Service

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Tom Sminkey
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

Vicki Swann
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

TABLE 3.

FIN SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR 2003

FIN Administrative Subcommittee

Kevin Anson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Ron Lukens
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Bob Dixon
National Marine Fisheries Service
Beaufort Laboratory

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Doug Frugé
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tom Sminkey
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

Lisa Kline
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

FIN/ACCSP Compatibility Work Group

Mark Alexander
Connecticut Department of Marine Fisheries

Dee Lupton
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

Page Campbell
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Bruce Joule
Maine Department of Marine Resources

Tom Sminkey
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

Lisa Kline
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

Ron Lukens
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group

Guy Davenport
National Marine Fisheries Service
Miami Laboratory

Aida Rosario
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

Jim Duffy
Alabama Division of Marine Resources

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Billy Fuls
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Toby Tobias
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Mike Murphy
Florida Marine Research Institute

James "Tut" Warren
Gulf Coast Research Laboratory

Behzad Mahmoudi
Florida Marine Research Institute

Bob Muller
Florida Marine Research Institute

FIN Data Management Work Group

Mike Cahall
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

Mike Sestak
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Page Campbell
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Guy Davenport
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Tom Sminkey
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

Joe O'Hop
Florida Marine Research Institute

FIN For-Hire Work Group

Kevin Anson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Page Campbell
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Kerwin Cuevas
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Bob Dixon
National Marine Fisheries Service
Beaufort Laboratory

Joe O'Hop
Florida Marine Research Institute

Michelle Kasprzak
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Tom Sminkey
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

FIN Outreach Work Group

Michael Bailey
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office

Quenton Dokken
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Graciela Garcia-Moliner
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Marcia Taylor
Sea Grant marine Advisory Service
University of Virgin Islands

Rick Wallace
Alabama Sea Grant Extension Service
Auburn University Marine Extension and
Research Center

FIN Registration Tracking Work Group

Mike Cahall
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

Page Campbell
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Carlos Farchette
Virgin Islands Division of Env Enforcement

Tom Hoopes
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

Christine Johnson
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Steve Koplín
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

Dee Lupton
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

Jeff Marston
New Hampshire Fish and Game

Ramón Martínez
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

Representative
National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Regional Office

Cheri Patterson
New Hampshire Fish and Game

John Poffenberger
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Representative
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office

Robert Sadler
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office

Mike Sestak
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Toby Tobias
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

FIN Social/Economic Work Group

Representative
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

Walter Keithly
Louisiana State University

Representative
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Tony Lamberte
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council

Brad Gentner
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

Cynthia Ruiz
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

Steve Holiman
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office

Manuel Valdez-Picinni
Puerto Rico Sea Grant Program

Jack Isaacs
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

ComFIN Data Collection Work Group

Page Campbell
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Dee Lupton
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

Guy Davenport
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Chris Denson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Geoff White
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Comm.

Barbara Kojis
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

RecFIN(SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group

Geoff White
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

Kerwin Cuevas
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Bob Dixon
National Marine Fisheries Service
Beaufort Laboratory

Barbara Kojis
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Tom Schmidt
Everglades National Park

Tom Sminkey
National Marine Fisheries Service
Headquarters Office

Bryan Stone
South Carolina Department of Natural
Resources

APPENDIX A
2003 Operations Plan

**2003 Operations Plan for the
Fisheries Information Network in the
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003

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 2003. 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:

- To plan, manage, and evaluate data collection and management activities;
- To implement data collection activities;
- To establish and maintain a data management system; and
- To support the establishment of a national program.

The goals and objectives of FIN are found in Appendix A.

III. OPERATIONS

A. Operational Activities

The tasks below cover all 2003 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 implementation of trip ticket 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 FIN. Mississippi is currently collecting trip-level data for oyster and bait shrimp 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, GSMFC will contract with Southwest Computer Bureau (SCBI) to implement and maintain electronic trip ticket reporting for Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. 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 began in 1999 and will continue during 2003 for Mississippi and Texas.

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: For-Hire Work Group, Gulf states, GSMFC, and NMFS

Approach: For charter boats, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida have implemented the Charter Boat Telephone Survey that collects effort data from charter boat captains. In addition, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida will continue to collect social and economic data from the charter boat operators in order to assess the value of the charter boat industry. Regarding head boats, the FIN (via the For-Hire Work Group) will meet to discuss the implementation of data collection methods for this fishery.

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

Product: For-hire survey methodology

Schedule: The For-Hire Work Group will meet in later 2002 and provide a report to the FIN Committee at their 2003 meeting.

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 that 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 biological sampling 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. The Data Collection Plan Work Group and FIN will determine the priority species for 2003.

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: 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, FIN Data Base Manager, and ComFIN Survey Coordinator

Approach: The FIN will continue to develop the Data Management System (DMS). Development of the registration tracking system will be address by the FIN Data Base Manager. This module will be used by both FIN and ACCSP. In addition, the FIN IT manager will continue to receive routine delivery of Louisiana, Mississippi (oyster and bait shrimp data only), Alabama, and Florida trip ticket data into the FIN DMS. The Data Base Manager will also maintain the historical data in the system and provide support of outside users of the system. In addition to the commercial data, regular loads of recreational data into the DMS will be accomplished. 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 routine delivery of data will continue in 2003.

Task A8: 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 2003 to discuss these issues.

B. Committee Activities (see Section E for Committee and Work Group membership)

The tasks below cover all 2003 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 that 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 was reviewed by the FIN Committee at the 2002 meeting and will be periodically reviewed in the future.

Task B2: Annual Operations Plan, 2004 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Develop 2004 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 2004.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: 2004 Annual Operations Plan.
Schedule: Annual Operations Plan will be drafted by spring 2003 and addressed by the Committee at the 2003 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- 2002, 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 and FIN will continue monitoring this task in 2003.

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 that 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. The group developed a draft strategy document that has been reviewed and approved by the FIN Committee. As outlined in the document, it is incumbent on the program partners to conduct outreach within their jurisdiction. The FIN staff will attend a variety of meetings to promote the program as well. FIN Committee will continue to work with the ACCSP in developing outreach activities.

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

Product: FIN outreach program
Schedule: The FIN Committee approved the strategy in June 2002. An update of outreach activities will be compiled each year and presented to FIN Committee at their annual meeting.

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: In 2002, information regarding absence/presence and magnitude of discards activities was compiled for the Southeast Region. Using this information and that developed by the ACCSP, 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. 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 2003.

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 has designed a data collection module for the compilation of social/economic information for all commercial fisheries in the Southeast Region. The program outlines the data elements required for each fishery component that need to be collected for compilation of social/economic data. The Work Group has developed a pilot study in the Gulf of Mexico and operational activities will be conduct in 2003. 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 2003.

Task B8: 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 Data Base 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 data base. 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 2003. The compilation of these data will be an ongoing activity.

Task B9: 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. The basic data elements have been approved. The next step is for program partners to modify their existing licensing systems to collect all the needed elements. 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 continue to meet as needed for the development of this system.

Task B10: 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/FIN Committee

Approach: Determine standards for collection and management of commercial catch/effort data. The FIN has developed draft documents that describe the various techniques and methods for collection of marine commercial data. The group utilized existing procedures for the Trip Interview Program and other related information. As modules are implemented, procedure documents will be developed to assist in the collection of the particular data. 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 documents for the various modules

Schedule: The documents will be developed as new and existing modules are addressed. A draft of these documents will be presented to the FIN Committee at the 2003 meeting. Review of this information is an ongoing activity.

Task B11: 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-2003.

Task B12: 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 B13: 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 B14: Determination of Methods for Collecting Recreational Data from Private Access Sites Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Determine most appropriate methods for collecting recreational data from private access sites.

Team Members: FIN/Biological/Environmental Work Group

Approach: The FIN Committee will charge the Biological/Environmental Work Group with determining the best method of collected data from private access sites. This issue has been raised in the past but no plan has been developed to address it. The first step is to determine the magnitude of the activity. 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: Determination of the best method of the collected the needed data.
Schedule: The Work Group will in 2003 to begin addressing this 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: GSMFC, NMFS and Mississippi staff
Approach: In 2001-2002, a night fishing pilot study was conducted in Mississippi. The personnel will meet in 2003 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 staff will meet in 2003 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. The responsible office in NMFS has changes and the Office of Sustainable Fisheries is now handling this activity. 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 2003 to continue examining this issue.

Task B17: Integration into the Stock Assessment Process (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Develop a plan that 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 that 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 2002 and will continue to do so into the future to review activities and develop this annual plan.

Task B18: 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 allows 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 B19: 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 B20: Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies (Goal 2, Obj 6) (F)

Objective: To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection technologies

Team Members: FIN Committee and other appropriate personnel

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: The GSFMC and Mississippi will be evaluating the latest version of data loggers for collection of recreational data. The results of this test will be presented to the FIN Committee at the 2003 meeting. This is an ongoing activity.

Task B21: 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 B22: 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 B23: 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 encourage consistency and comparability among regional programs over time.
Team Members:	FIN Committee
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 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.

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.

D. 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
Evaluate potential improvements to intercept site selection process	X				
Determine the extent of non-consumptive activities					X

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
Data Collection (continued)					
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

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 and 5, 2003

Orlando, Florida

Chairman Kevin Anson called the meeting to order on June 4, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

Members

Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Bob Dixon, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Stephen Holiman, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Christine Johnson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Ron Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe O'Hop, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Joseph Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX

Staff

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

Others

Shannon Bettridge, ACCSP, Washington, DC
Britt Bumguardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Mike Cahall, ACCSP, Washington, DC
Rita Curtis, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Tom Gleason, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Maury Osborn, ACCSP, Washington, DC
Claude Petersen, Southwest Computer Bureau, Gonzales, LA
John Reed, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Robert Sadler, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Carolyn Sranek, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) meeting held on June, 4 and 5, and 6, 2002 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as presented.

Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)

M. Osborn reported on the activities and progress of the ACCSP, noting that commercial catch and effort is the highest priority module. The ACCSP has three states in the southeast that have implemented ACCSP standards including trip level data, mandatory reporting, and routine data feeds to the ACCSP. Other states on the Atlantic coast are at varying stages of implementation of a trip ticket system and progress is being made.

Osborn reported that the Standard Atlantic Fishery Information System (SAFIS) was begun in 2002 with the state of Rhode Island. The SAFIS was developed to assist and support states on a long term basis, be cost effective and easily transportable. The SAFIS has web-based dealer reporting and trip level reporting. A coordinator assists dealers in startup and training, adding an average of two dealers per week. Osborn noted that SAFIS will probably not be implemented in the southeast since those states have their own systems and adequate resources. A meeting was held with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to discuss the use of SAFIS for dealer reporting and a decision is expected shortly.

Osborn reported that they are implementing the new Vessel Directory Telephone Survey which the Gulf has been using for Charter Boat methodology since 2000. Outreach efforts will be a joint MRFSS and ACCSP project beginning in July 2003 and head boats will begin carrying observers to collect catch/effort and bycatch data. Osborn noted that the ACCSP funded a 50% increase for recreational catch and effort sampling in the Northeast region.

Osborn stated that discussions will be held this year with NMFS on how to integrate highly migratory species monitoring. Pilot studies on commercial socio-economic data have been conducted for over three years, with Georgia currently analyzing the data. The Northeast Region is collecting socio-economic data through this year and analysis will be done in spring of 2004. The ACCSP has sent out an RFP for biological sampling priorities for FY 2004. A system is being developed to track how many samples have been collected for various species and this will be coordinated with the FIN program. Osborn then reported on the bycatch module noting that the ACCSP had funded \$300,000 for groundfish observers in the Northeast as well as implementation of observers in the for-hire sector. ACCSP staff are also participating in National Observer Program Advisory Team meetings.

In closing Osborn reported that the ACCSP annual budget for 2003 is \$3.5 million. A strategic plan was completed in 2002 and copies of this plan were distributed to Committee members.

Review of List of Personnel with Access to Confidential Data

G. Davenport of NMFS distributed copies of a list of personnel with access to confidential data and requested that Committee members review this list and notify him of any additions, deletions or corrections. Davenport also provided non-disclosure forms to Committee

members. D. Donaldson provided Committee members with a list of personnel and their access levels for the FIN Data Management System and asked Committee members for corrections.

Status of the FIN Data Management System

D. Donaldson reported that M. Sestak of GSMFC was called up for active duty in the Army this January. New modules will probably not be added until his return, however trip ticket data continue to be loaded into the Data Management System (DMS) as well as recreational catch estimates through 2002, and SEAMAP data. M. Kasprzak reported on a problem in Louisiana concerning unload date and trip date. Kasprzak noted that dealers can report multiple days of trips on trip tickets from oyster and crab fishermen. M. Cahall stated that issue can be corrected and he would coordinate with M. Sestak when he returns.

Data Confidentiality Issues

Status of Caribbean Data Confidentiality MOA - D. Donaldson noted that the Committee had discussed putting Caribbean data into the FIN DMS and providing access to that data. In order to do that, an MOA must be signed by all parties. The MOA has been signed by NMFS and the U.S.V.I. The Commissioners of the GSMFC will have an opportunity to sign at the October Commission meeting. After being signed by the GSMFC, it will be forwarded to Puerto Rico for signature. The Committee agreed that this schedule was suitable.

GSMFC Action Regarding Data Confidentiality - D. Donaldson reported that at a meeting of the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) it had been suggested that language regarding protection of confidential data be included in the FIN cooperative agreements with NMFS and the individual subgrants executed between the GSMFC and each state agency. A motion to that effect was passed at the Commission Business Meeting. The GSMFC adopted a policy regarding the protection of confidential data and will use this policy (instead of the MOA) to ensure the protection of the data.

Presentation of Mississippi Night Fishing Pilot Survey Preliminary Results

G. Bray of GSMFC gave a presentation of the preliminary results of the Mississippi Night Fishing Pilot Survey conducted in 2001 and 2002. Bray acknowledged the dedication of K. Cuevas and the staff of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) and T. Sminkey of NMFS.

Bray noted that very little data is available on night fishing activities in the Gulf of Mexico with almost all interviews for the MRFSS survey being conducted during the day. The goals of the pilot survey were to determine if catch and harvest rates of shore anglers fishing at night were different from daytime rates, and to produce expanded estimates of catch and harvest using night survey data and compare the differences. A night site register was developed to provide the MDMR with monthly sampling schedules and the same sampling forms as used in the MRFSS. Two samplers were sent out together for each assignment and they had to determine that the majority of fishing occurred during night hours. Completed forms were delivered to the GSMFC office for data entry and error checks.

Bray reviewed the results of the survey and noted the number of interviews obtained, the hours fished from shore, species observed, and the catch rate comparison in 2001 and 2002 for both day and night. Bray then explained the expanded estimates.

In closing, Bray reported on the conclusions of the Night Fishing Pilot Survey noting that the species observed during night sampling were similar to day sampling, some differences in catch rates were observed between day and night fishing, and overall differences in expanded estimates were not significant from a management standpoint.

The Mississippi Night Fishing Pilot Survey results will be available on the GSMFC website. K. Cuevas thanked the GSMFC and G. Bray for the opportunity to conduct this study. The Committee agreed on the addition of tables and an explanation on the differences in catch rates for day and night fishing to the report. **K. Cuevas moved to approve the Night Fishing Pilot Survey with additions. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

D. Donaldson stated that the Night Fishing Pilot Survey will be presented to the S-FFMC in October. Donaldson asked the Committee for input on whether the Night Fishing Survey is specific to Mississippi or if it pertains to the entire Gulf and should be continued. The Committee discussed this at length, and **R. Lukens moved that when the Biological/Environmental Work Group next convenes, they look at the issue of the Night Fishing Survey in the Gulf and make a recommendation on how to proceed and report back to the FIN Committee. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Presentation of Data Quality Act

Tom Gleason of NOAA Fisheries in Silver Spring gave a presentation on the Data Quality Act and noted that Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for FY 2001 is called the Data Quality Act. Section 515 directed the OMB to issue government wide guidelines to provide guidance to federal agencies for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information disseminated by federal agencies. The OMB directed each federal agency to develop guidelines. Gleason then reviewed the requirements including standards, pre-dissemination review, administrative mechanism and reporting to OMB. The two key concepts of the Data Quality Act are information and dissemination of information. Gleason noted that NOAA's Section 515 Guidelines are posted on the NOAA home page under Information Quality, and then he reviewed the seven categories of information and examples of objectivity standards.

Gleason then discussed the relevance of the Data Quality Act to the FIN Committee. Since the FIN Committee regularly provides data to NOAA and this data is used to develop information products, this data must be of known quality and consistent with NOAA's Information Quality Guidelines. Gleason stated that since the FIN Committee receives money from NOAA/NMFS for the collection of fisheries statistics, the FIN Committee is acting as an extension of NMFS, this would not be considered third party data and would have to meet the NOAA information quality standards. Gleason noted that since all FIN data is subject to QA/QC procedures, it is of high enough quality that it will meet NOAA information quality standards. Gleason also explained the process for correction of information.

Committee discussion followed Gleason's presentation noting that there could be a potential impact to the FIN and the ACCSP. Committee members discussed the possibility of posting methodologies and standard operating procedures on FIN, ACCSP, and partner websites. Gleason noted that a checklist has been developed for NMFS and he would make that available to anyone needing to go through documentation procedures. G. Davenport reported that Susan Molina of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Mike Justin of Regional Office are also available for assistance.

D. Donaldson asked Committee members if there was a need to develop further documentation on QA/QC procedures for commercial data collection activities. After lengthy Committee discussion, **R. Lukens moved to refer the issue of QA/QC to the Geographic Subcommittee and have them make a recommendation to the FIN Committee. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** T. Gleason will forward his checklist to D. Donaldson for distribution to Committee members.

Presentation of Preliminary Results of Detailed Effort Pilot Survey

G. Davenport of NOAA Fisheries in Miami reported on the results of the Detailed Effort Pilot Survey and gave examples of their work and what it is used for. This presentation pertains specifically to Louisiana since they are using the trip ticket system. Davenport included slides in his presentation and first showed the life cycle of shrimp in the upper Gulf of Mexico, noting that 79% of shrimp caught in the United States are from the Gulf of Mexico. Davenport then showed the gear utilized in both the inshore and offshore Louisiana shrimp fishery as well as the different type boats. Davenport discussed the NOAA Fisheries port agent field offices, the number of agents at each location, and the grid system for the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Davenport explained that there are two components involved with shrimp data collection. The landings information is the dealer portion and is basic information about the catch. The interview information which shows the details of the catch is recorded on trip tickets which the port agents record when conducting the interview.

Davenport discussed problems collecting interviews, noting that although it is mandated by federal law, it is based on cooperation from the industry. Several things affect industry cooperation including agent rapport, federal and state regulations and fees, permits, TEDS/BRDS, reporting requirements, shrimp prices, fuel prices, confusion over federal relief funds, and other federal and state agencies. Davenport emphasized the importance of more interviews, with a target rate of 10% of offshore trips.

D. Donaldson noted that this pilot survey was undertaken in order to test this methodology to see if it gives an accurate account of detailed effort, however Committee members agreed that a higher level of sampling would be required. It was noted that additional funds are not available for collection of detailed effort. The Committee discussed various ways to improve the number of interviews, including outreach, incentives, and utilizing TIP interviews. G. Davenport will continue to improve the percentage of interviews, and J. Shepard noted that he would be able to assist with interviews.

Discussion About Future of Data Collection and Management Activities

J. Shepard noted that there are two states that do not have trip tickets at this time and asked if it is possible that they will in the future. R. Lukens noted that the problem is part political and part lack of funds and suggested that the time to address the issue is when a new timeline is developed. D. Donaldson suggested setting up a facilitated session in 2004 in order to provide direction for FIN for the next five years and to outline issues and problems. This facilitated session would be held in conjunction with the 2004 FIN meeting. The Committee agreed to this suggestion.

Discussion of Strategies for Implementation of Registration Tracking Module

D. Donaldson provided the Committee with a matrix developed by the Registration Tracking Work Group for vessels, fishermen, and dealers. Donaldson noted that in order for the registration tracking module to work, the elements listed on the matrix need to be collected by state and federal agencies. Donaldson reported that at the last Data Management Subcommittee (Geographic Subcommittee) meeting the issue of birth date as a unique identifier was raised and there was concern expressed that getting the birth date would be a problem. Donaldson stressed the importance of developing strategies to implement the collection of data for the registration tracking module, noting how useful it would be in the distribution of funds for shrimp fishermen.

Since using birth date as a unique identifier may be problematic, the Committee discussed alternative numbering systems and various other issues relating to unique identifiers. D. Donaldson suggested that the agencies not currently collecting birth date explore the issue and the problems involved and have this subject on the agenda for the Geographic Subcommittee which is scheduled to meet in October. M. Osborn requested that the ACCSP be involved in the Geographic Subcommittee meeting. The Committee also agreed to provide any available vessel or dealer information.

Review and Approval of 2002 FIN Annual Report

The Committee was provided with copies of the 2002 FIN Annual Report. After reviewing the report, **S. Holiman moved to approve the 2002 FIN Annual Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** D. Donaldson stated that the Annual Report will be printed and distributed to Committee members and will be posted on the GSMFC website.

Subcommittee and Work Group Reports

Commercial Port Sampler Meetings - (Attachment A) D. Donaldson reported that two port sampler meetings are held annually, the Gulf of Mexico samplers and the Caribbean samplers. These meetings were implemented several years ago in order to have the samplers get together and discuss various issues of concern.

Donaldson reported that the Caribbean samplers met in Miami this year. They visited several dealers in the Miami area to see how samplers operated in the U.S. Several matters were discussed including stock assessments being conducted. Donaldson reported that the group of samplers developed several recommendations to improve the quality of the data and these were approved by this Committee via mail ballot since the Caribbean partners felt the need to move forward as quickly as possible. Donaldson noted that the U.S. Virgin Islands took exception to the way some of these recommendations were developed and they do not feel that this group was the appropriate one to make these recommendations. Donaldson also noted that Puerto Rico was appreciative of the recommendations which were intended to improve the quality of the data.

Donaldson reported that another recommendation by the Caribbean port samplers was the development of outreach meetings for fishermen. It was suggested that a letter be written to the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC) or Sea Grant in order to solicit their support.

R. Lukens moved to accept the Caribbean port samplers meeting report and to have staff write a letter to the CFMC. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

D. Donaldson reported that the Gulf of Mexico port samplers meeting included state and federal samplers from the five Gulf states, approximately 50 people. The FIN draft bycatch module was presented to the port samplers at the meeting. A recommendation was made that both state and federal port samplers begin looking at the possibility of collecting basic bycatch information using existing programs such as TIP. Committee discussion followed Donaldson's report and **P. Campbell moved to accept the Gulf of Mexico port samplers meeting report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee - (Attachment B) D. Donaldson stated that the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee is essentially the same as the GSMFC Data Management Subcommittee which meets twice a year. Donaldson reported that two issues were raised which the FIN Committee will discuss later in the meeting: social/economic data collection, and artificial reefs.

R. Lukens moved to accept the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Artificial Reef Work Group - (Attachment C) D. Donaldson reported that data had been collected on the MRFSS in the past on fishing at artificial reefs in the Gulf of Mexico. The Artificial Reef Subcommittee made a recommendation that this question be added back to the MRFSS since it has been 10 years since it has been collected and data collection began in January 2003. The report shows the amount of activity around oil and gas structures and artificial reefs broken down by state, and east and west coasts of Florida. This study will continue until December 2003 and G. Bray will give a presentation on the results at the next FIN Committee meeting. S. Atran requested that the results be forwarded to the GMFMC. G. Bray will give a presentation to the Council possibly at their May 2004 meeting. **K. Cuevas moved to accept the Artificial Reef Work Group report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Biological/Environmental Work Group - (Attachment D) D. Donaldson reported that initially the work group was going to work with the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) group on registering fishing tournaments. Since this didn't work out, the FIN Committee agreed to send this issue back to the Biological/Environmental Work Group. The work group developed a recommendation that the states explore the possibility of registering all tournaments within their jurisdiction except the ones registered by HMS. Before this can be done, all tournaments must be identified. The Committee discussed policy in each state, whether legislative action would be necessary, and what would be required to have all tournaments registered, as well as the value of tournament data. **R. Lukens moved to have state Committee representatives check on what would be required to implement registering tournaments and be prepared to give a report at the Geographic Subcommittee meeting in October. The Geographic Subcommittee can then make a recommendation to the FIN Committee. The motion was seconded and passed with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council voting No.**

D. Donaldson reported that the issue of water body codes versus hydrologic unit codes (HUC) was raised in order to make FIN more compatible with invasive species activities. Donaldson reported that the Biological/Environmental Work Group did not believe that there was a compelling reason to change the coding system and recommended that the FIN stay with existing water body codes. There are also compatibility issues between FIN and ACCSP which would necessitate going from a four digit code to an eight digit code and reloading all the data in both systems. After Committee discussion, **P. Campbell moved to accept the**

recommendation of the Biological/Environmental Work Group and the report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

D. Donaldson reported that the Biological/Environmental Work Group was asked to examine the issue of private access site sampling. The work group discussed various ways to accomplish this task and recommended that several questions be added to the Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey (RDD) regarding use of private access sites. These questions could be added at no cost. During Committee discussion, M. Osborn noted that similar questions had been asked on the MRFSS for quite some time and T. Sminkey suggested defining private access sites and rewording some questions. R. Lukens suggested that the existing data in the RDD database be examined to determine if these questions are sufficient or if modifications to the questions would be required. **K. Cuevas moved to review the existing data in the Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey and look into the possibility of refining the question in order to have less confusion on the part of the respondent. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Work Group - (Attachment E) D. Donaldson reported that two issues were raised by the work group: the bycatch module, and recommendations regarding Puerto Rico's data collection program. The recommendations for Puerto Rico were previously discussed in the section on Port Samplers meetings.

Donaldson noted since FIN has been focusing on commercial and recreational catch and effort, bycatch has not yet been addressed. Now that the catch and effort programs are underway, this would be an appropriate time to address bycatch. Donaldson noted that much of the bycatch work developed by the ACCSP is being utilized by FIN. Donaldson reported that the recommendation of the work group is for FIN to adopt the ACCSP at-sea observer program data elements and to utilize the TIP bycatch component to identify and prioritize fisheries for at-sea sampling.

The Committee discussed which fisheries currently have bycatch activities and questioned the usefulness of TIP bycatch data. M. Osborn explained how the ACCSP handles collection of bycatch data and noted that the at-sea observer program is the best method but also the most expensive. D. Donaldson noted that the FIN identified the absence or presence of bycatch for a particular species and a particular gear. The Committee also discussed bycatch monitoring activities in both the Atlantic and the Gulf. M. Osborn noted that a draft Report Card on bycatch is due in mid-June with an implementation plan due by August. After lengthy Committee discussion, R. Lukens made a recommendation to contact Phil Steele of NMFS and ask if FIN can be involved in the process and if so can we include state fisheries that are not under federal management. J. Shepard noted that the ACCSP has always taken the lead on bycatch and suggested that the FIN wait for their at-sea observer program.

J. O'Hop moved to adopt the ACCSP at-sea observer program as the method for collecting bycatch information in the Gulf of Mexico. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

P. Campbell moved to accept R. Lukens recommendation to contact P. Steele to see if FIN can be involved in the process. If so, can state fisheries that are not under federal management be included. The motion was seconded and passed with GMFMC abstaining.

D. Donaldson provided members of the Committee with copies of a letter from the Gulf Restoration Network concerning bycatch. The Committee directed staff to respond to this letter.

Data Collection Plan Work Group - (Attachment F) D. Donaldson reported that the Data

Collection Plan Work Group met the previous day and had a very productive meeting. They reviewed activities from 2002 and 2003 as well as targets for 2004. The work group agreed to stay with existing sampling targets until at least 2004. At that time a stock assessment for red snapper will be conducted. Donaldson reported that concerns about otolith processing were raised. R. Lukens stated that if otolith collection was going to be increased, then the capacity for processing otoliths also needed to be increased. Lukens noted that the issue of quality control was also raised at the work group meeting since a number of different labs would be processing otoliths from the same species. Lukens reported that the work group discussed increasing the capacity of existing labs or have a regional otolith processing facility that would handle the overflow from existing labs. J. O'Hop suggested another alternative may be to have certain labs concentrate on the species where they have expertise. Lukens reported that the work group also discussed the need to address species other than the five which have been selected.

For-Hire Work Group - (Attachment G) D. Donaldson reported that the For-Hire Work Group will meet tomorrow afternoon, June 5, 2003. One of the topics of discussion will be field collection activities. The work group will compare effort estimates using the NMFS logbook and the Charter Boat Telephone Survey. July 2003 had been targeted to begin making some phone calls however field sampling will not begin at this time due to limited funds.

Social/Economic Work Group - (Attachment H) The Committee was provided with a Statement of Work for social/economic work with inshore shrimp fisheries. D. Donaldson reported that this was submitted to the Coastal Oceans Program, however it did not get funded. Donaldson noted that the Social/Economic Work Group had been charged with developing a pilot study to collect commercial social/economic data. It has been difficult to get a proposal developed and the work group felt that this matter should be discussed by the FIN Committee. R. Lukens noted that the need for this information has been established in federal law and all agencies, however no money is available at this time for a social/economic study. Lukens stated that the FIN has brought a focus to this issue and money needs to be made available within the various agencies to allow researchers to do this work. S. Holiman noted the difficulty in developing a program when no funds are available. Rita Curtis of NMFS reported that the Southeast Region has developed a five year social science strategy and without that plan they would never have gotten funding. The Committee discussed several areas of difficulty in developing a social/economic plan, including the fact that FIN is dominated by fisheries biologists and most states do not have sociologists or economists on staff. Several suggestions were made including using the facilitated session at the next FIN meeting to address the social/economic situation or having a presentation by someone from the NMFS social/economic team address the FIN Committee. After discussing this issue, the Committee agreed to ask the S-FFMC for direction on the social/economic issue.

R. Curtis addressed the Committee and reported that her office is planning on doing a national employment survey of commercial fishermen and the for-hire sector. Their office is developing a vessel frame for federal fisheries and they are asking for assistance from the states in developing a frame for state registered commercial vessels in the Gulf of Mexico. Curtis noted that they hope to have the frame developed by the end of August. The states agreed to assist R. Curtis in developing a vessel frame.

Operations Plan

The FIN Committee was provided with a list detailing the status of activities for 2003. (Attachment I) This document showed that all activities in the 2003 Operations Plan had been addressed. The Committee reviewed the list and corrections were made.

The Committee reviewed the 2004 FIN Operations Plan and additional activities discussed at this meeting were added. Changes were made in work group and subcommittee listings as well. **P. Campbell moved to approve the 2004 FIN Operations Plan as amended. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Discussion of 2004 FIN Funding Priorities

Committee members were provided with guidelines on the funding decision process for FIN and a list of items for consideration in 2004. D. Donaldson noted that there are no new funds available for additional tasks and most of the items on the list are ongoing activities. Donaldson reported that the list was generated from activities conducted last year as well as discussions in work group meetings and the last FIN meeting. Donaldson noted that the prioritized list will be forwarded to the S/FFMC and they will make the final decision on which items will be in the Cooperative Agreement for 2004.

Donaldson asked Committee members for any items to be added to the list at this time. After Committee discussion, two items were added; trip ticket implementation for Texas, and economic data collection for inshore shrimp.

During the process of prioritizing items for funding in 2004, Donaldson asked if it would be possible for Texas to hire port samplers instead of using independent contractors. P. Campbell responded that it would not be possible in 2004. Donaldson also noted that two independent contractors for menhaden sampling would be included in the Louisiana budget.

The Committee then prioritized the list as follows:

High Priority

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)
Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (ongoing)
Charter Boat Survey Offshore Texas (ongoing)
Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida (ongoing)
Implementation of For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and Field Sampling (catch) (new)
Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)
Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Texas (new)
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana (ongoing)
Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling (ongoing)
Collection of Social/Economic Data of Inshore Shrimp Fishery (new)

Medium Priority

Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries
Pilot Study for Bycatch Data Collection

Low Priority

Biological Sampling for Additional Species

R. Lukens moved to accept the prioritized list of items for consideration in 2004. The motion was seconded and passed with the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council voting No.

D. Donaldson noted that this list will be forwarded to the S/FFMC with a description of each activity. For each item that is ranked High, Donaldson stated that he will need a statement of work and associated budget by July 11, 2003.

Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting

D. Donaldson noted that every three years the FIN meeting is held in the Caribbean, alternating between the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Since the last Caribbean meeting was held in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Committee agreed that the meeting will be held during the first week of June in eastern Puerto Rico. Donaldson also noted that a facilitated session will be held in conjunction with the FIN meeting.

Election of Vice-Chairman

Since J. Shepard is Vice-Chairman, he will become Chairman and P. Campbell was elected Vice-Chairman for a two year term.

Other Business

C. Denson noted that anyone fishing outside of Alabama, except for shrimp, can bring their catch in and sell it as long as they are permitted or licensed in the area they fished. The problem is that they are not in Alabama's license database and they are characterized as an unknown fisherman. It has been suggested that Alabama create a separate database for these fishermen, however it would be difficult to verify whether they were legal. Denson asked the Committee for a possible solution to this problem.

J. O'Hop stated that the Florida license database can be accessed through the internet or the GSMFC website. Bob Sadler of NMFS stated that he would also be able to help provide information. There was discussion on whether the individual states would provide this information or if it should be forwarded to the FIN database. Committee members agreed that until M. Sestak returns from active duty with the Army, C. Denson can contact each state for information on these fishermen.

C. Lilyestrom reported that for the past three years, Puerto Rico has been trying to get their fisheries regulations approved. Recently W. Hogarth and R. Crabtree of NMFS met with the Secretary and discussed the importance of compatible regulations. The implication for FIN is that Puerto Rico will be allowed to implement marine recreational fishing licenses.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 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.