

2007 Operations Plan
for the
Fisheries Information Network
in the Southeastern United States
FIN

by: FIN Committee

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Number 139

**2007 Operations Plan for the
Fisheries Information Network in the
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007

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 2007. 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 2007 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 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 state of Mississippi will continue the implementation of trip ticket programs in their state. This task will provide for development of components for a commercial trip ticket system to census the commercial fisheries landings in Mississippi using the data elements and standards developed by the ComFIN. Mississippi is currently collecting trip-level data for oyster, bait shrimp and finfish landings. They are attempting to pass legislation that would allow for the expansion of collection of trip-level data for all commercial species. For Texas, 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 Texas, 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 2007 for Mississippi. Operations of trip ticket will continue in 2007 for Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida.

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 and GSMFC 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 as well as in Texas (using TPWD methodologies). 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 For-Hire Telephone Survey that collects effort data from charter boat captains. Regarding head boats, the FIN For-Hire Work Group has met and developed data collection methods for this fishery. Effort data will be collected via the For-Hire Telephone Survey and catch data will be collected via at-sea sampling. Alabama and Florida will continue the at-sea sampling survey for head boats in their state. If additional funds are available, FIN will attempt to implement head boat sampling in Texas and Louisiana. There will be a period of time where duplicative data collection methods are being conducted for benchmarking purposes.

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

Product: For-hire survey methodology

Schedule: The at-sea methodology has been implemented in Alabama and Florida and additional funds are needed to implement the methods in Texas and Louisiana in 2007.

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 Logbook Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Continue the support of the head boat logbook program 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 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 Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Implement the collection of recreational and commercial sampling of biological data (otoliths and lengths) 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 GSMFC will provide coordination and tracking of targets and provide feedback to the states. The Data Collection Plan Work Group and FIN will determine the priority species for 2007.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.
Product: Collection of necessary biological data
Schedule: This task is an ongoing 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 and ComFIN Survey Coordinator. This module will be used by both FIN and ACCSP. In addition, staff will continue to receive routine delivery of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi (oyster, bait shrimp and finfish 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 (vessel data) and routine delivery of data will continue in 2007.

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 operating data management systems for their respective coasts. As part of the implementation and operation, standard protocols and documentation for data formats, input, editing, quality control, storage, access, transfer, dissemination, and application have been developed. The FIN Data

Management Work Group and ACCSP Computer Technical Committee will continue to develop 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 appropriate FIN and ACCSP groups will meet (if necessary) in 2007 to address any issues.

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

The tasks below cover all 2007 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: Annual Operations Plan, 2008 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Develop 2008 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 2008.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: 2008 Annual Operations Plan.
Schedule: Annual Operations Plan will be drafted by spring 2008 and addressed by the Committee at the 2008 meeting.

Task B2: 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 began in 2001 and is continuing to date, 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 2007.

Task B3: 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 B4: Implementation of Outreach Program (Goal 1, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: 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. The Work Group will meet to address several topics including: 1) explore ways to involve Sea Grant into the FIN outreach process; 2) establishing a system for notifying commercial dealers about the electronic reporting option for trip tickets; and 3) Develop a survey of dealers for input on the best methods to facilitate reporting.
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 in the FIN Annual Report. The Work Group will meet in 2007 to address

the identified issues.

Task B5: Implementation of the Bycatch Module (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Implement the bycatch module of the FIN.
Team Members: FIN Committee/ComFIN Data Collection Work Group/RecFIN(SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group
Approach: The FIN Committee designed and approved the bycatch module, however, additional funding is needed to implement the data collection activities. In order to implement, FIN tasked several work groups with developing a prioritized fisheries list. This list was presented to FIN in 2005 and approved. Funding needs to be secured to implement bycatch activities for the high priority fisheries. 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: Bycatch data collection program
Schedule: Funding needs to be secured to implement bycatch activities for the high priority fisheries.

Task B6: Implementation 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. Since the module has been developed, this module will provide guidance to interested agencies and organizations that wish to collect social/economic data. FIN will not actively develop social and economic data collection projects unless a critical need is identified. This task will be 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 for guidance on social/economic data collection.
Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B7: Development of Metadata Database (Goal 2, Objective 2) (F)

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

Team Members: FIN and ACCSP staff and FIS personnel

Approach: The Biological/Environmental Work Group has worked on this issue in the past and has developed criteria for creating a metadata database. ACCSP and FIN has submitted a proposal to the Fishery Information Service (FIS) to populate the InPort metadata application developed and hosted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with documentation of fisheries-dependent statistics data collection programs of their respective programs.

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. The proposal was submitted in 2005 and work began in 2006 and will continue in 2007. The compilation of these data will be an ongoing activity.

Task B8: Implementation of Registration Tracking System (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Implementation 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 implementation of this system. The states need to implement the strategy for modifying their licensing systems to collect the needed data. As a first step, FIN is focusing on compiling vessel information. Once those data have been collected, data on dealers and fishermen will be compiled.

Task B9: Trip-Level Commercial Data in the U.S. Virgin Islands (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Assess the need for trip-level commercial data in the U.S. Virgin Islands to meet management needs.

Team Members: Data Collection Work Group
Approach: The Data Collection Work Group needs to determine the types and detail of data that are needed for the management purposes in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also, the group needs to consider the existing collection activities as well as the level of difficulty (changes in regulations, legislative changes, cooperation with fishermen, etc.) for implement any new commercial data collection programs. This task will be accomplished by meetings, telephone and mail.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time
Product: Recommendations for commercial trip-level data in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
Schedule: The work group will meet in 2007 to address this task.

Task B10: 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 GSMFC and NMFS
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. For the Gulf of Mexico meeting, in addition to commercial issues, the group will also dedicate some time to discuss biological sampling issues. 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. A list of recommendations regarding commercial data collection activities.
Schedule: The meetings will be scheduled for mid to late fall 2007.

Task B11: Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Convene an annual workshop of state and federal otolith processors to discuss issues related to analyzing hard parts (otoliths, spines, etc.)
Team Members: State and federal processors and GSMFC and NMFS

Approach: In an effort to provide a forum to ensure quality control and quality assurance for otolith processing, the FIN Committee decided to convene workshops of state and federal processors. Processing personnel from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, GSMFC, NMFS and other interested personnel will attend the workshop.

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

Product: Provide a forum for processing personnel to discuss problems and issues related to analysis of age structures.

Schedule: The meeting will be scheduled for early to mid 2007. A topic the group needs to address is if the level of otolith processing for the FIN partners is adequate given the increased collections.

Task B12: Compilation of Species Conversion Factors (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Identify and compile the conversion factors used for the various species in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: Data Collection Work Group

Approach: The Data Collection Work Group needs to identify the various conversion factors that are used by the FIN partners for the various species landed in the Gulf of Mexico. These conversion factors are used to determine whole weight of a species if it is not landed intact (i.e. gutted, filleted, head off, etc.) The first step will be to compile all of the conversion factors for the various species and determine where there are similarities and differences. Ultimately, FIN will determine methods for validating these factors to ensure the accuracy of the data. This task will be accomplished by meetings, telephone and mail.

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

Product: List of conversion factors used by the FIN partners.

Schedule: The work group will meet in 2007 to address this task.

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

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

Team Members: FIN Committee

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

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

Product: Recommendations for commercial and recreational surveys.

Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

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

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

Team Members: FIN Committee

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

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

Product: Recommendations for reducing duplicative data collection and management efforts

Schedule: This is an ongoing task.

Task B15: Review of Recreational Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Periodically review the recreational catch and effort data collected under the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey methods

Team Members: Gulf States, GSMFC and NOAA Fisheries

Approach: The Gulf States GSMFC and NOAA Fisheries will meet about every 4 months to review the catch and effort data collected under the MRFSS methods. The group will examine the catch data looking for potential species misidentifications, outliers (overly large/small or light/heavy fish, etc.). For the effort data, the group looks at the historical data and compares it with the current wave data to determine if there are large decreases or increases. These reviews are conducted to ensure the best quality data are used in generating the recreational fishing estimates.

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

Product: Periodic review of recreational fisheries data.

Schedule: The group will meet in February/March, June/July, and October/November 2007 to review the recreational data collected during the year. Two topics the group needs to address are identification of geographic regions of interest for sampling and examination of methods for post-stratification.

Task B16: 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. The Work Group will also compile a list of biological data sets and prioritize these databases for inclusion into the FIN DMS. And the Work Group will develop a feedback mechanism to the SEDAR process regarding the adequacy of the level of biological sampling. This task will be accomplished by meetings, telephone and mail.

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

Product: Data collection plan

Schedule: The group will meet in 2007 to review activities, develop a biological sampling annual plan, prioritize the biological sampling data bases and develop a feedback mechanism for the SEDAR process

Task B17: 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 Biological/Environmental Work Group met to determine the best method of collected data from private access sites. The group recommended that the first step is to determine the magnitude of the activity. It was recommended that questions be added to the random digital dialing survey to compile information about private access fishing. Where possible, the Committee will work with the ACCSP to ensure comparability and compatibility between the two programs. This task will be accomplished by meetings, telephone and mail.

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

Product: Determination of the best method of the collected these data.

Schedule: The Work Group will meet in 2007 to continue addressing this task.

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 allow state marine recreational

fishing licenses to be used as a regional sampling frame. Based on these criteria, each state needs to either adopt a recreational fishing license or modify existing licenses to meet the criteria. The Committee will periodically review the status of each states' licenses. Beginning in January 2007, the Gulf States, GSMFC and NMFS will conduct a pilot survey utilizing recreational fishing licenses as a sampling frame for the collection of effort in the private boat and shore modes.

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. An update regarding the pilot survey will be presented to the FIN Committee at the 2007 meeting.

Task B19: Develop Methodologies for Sampling Highly Migratory Species (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Develop methods to accurately collect catch and effort data for highly migratory species (HMS) in the Gulf of Mexico

Team Members: FIN Committee/Biological/Environmental Work Group

Approach: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council asked the FIN to examine the best methods for collecting catch and effort data for HMS species, specifically yellowfin tuna. While there is currently a survey for collecting these types of data on the Atlantic coast, no such survey exists in the Gulf. This lack of data makes it very difficult to accurately assess this fishery. The Work Group developed draft protocols for sampling HMS in the Gulf. FIN asked the group to continue developing these protocols. In addition, FIN tasked the Work Group with implementing a pilot survey to characterize the private boat HMS fishery. This would allow the group to determine the best method for collection data from this sector.

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

Product: Sampling methods for HMS species in Gulf of Mexico and characterization of HMS private boat angler fishery.

Schedule: The Work Group will meet in 2007 to continue addressing this issue.

Task B20: Recreational Fishing Participation (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Explore methods to accurately estimate recreational fishing participation in the Gulf of Mexico

Team Members: FIN Committee/Biological/Environmental Work Group

Approach: The FIN Committee tasked the Work Group with exploring methods for determining recreational fishing participation, by state, in the

Gulf. This information is currently being estimated via the MRFSS and it was believed a separate survey could potentially provide more accurate data. Therefore, the Work Group will convene a meeting to explore this issue. The ASMFC has produced a report that could be a good source of data for this task.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time
Product: Recommendations regarding estimating recreational fishing participation. .
Schedule: The Work Group will meet in 2007 to address this issue.

Task B21: 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 B22: 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: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B23: 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 B24: 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 B25: Coordination, Consistency and Comparability with Other Cooperative Marine Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Programs (Goal 4, Objective 2 and Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Coordinate FIN with other regional cooperative marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs and encourages consistency and comparability among regional programs over time.
Team Members: FIN Committee
Approach: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ACCSP staff will coordinate activities with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission as well as attend the national NMFS Fisheries Information System (FIS) meetings. The FIN and ACCSP staffs periodically meet jointly to discuss the activities that each program is involved in and where the two programs can work together. This task will be 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>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</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 recreational licenses in PR & VI	X	X	X	X	X
Identify funding needs for MRF programs	X	X	X	X	X
Information dissemination					
Explore methods to involve Sea Grant in outreach process	X	X			
Establish system for notifying dealers about electronic reporting option		X			
Conduct survey of dealers for input on best methods to facilitate reporting		X			
Coordinate with ACCSP and NMFS to develop outreach/education materials	X	X	X	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					
Assess need for trip-level commercial data in USVI	X	X			
Determine appropriate level of sampling for otoliths and lengths	X				
Establish feedback mechanism for SEDAR process regarding biological sampling		X			
Evaluate need to develop eco-system data module					X
Standard data collection protocols					
Develop sampling protocols for stomach, tissue and gonads					X
Quality control/assurance					
Identify species conversion factors and compile	X	X			
Develop methods for validating factors			X		
Implement methods for validation of conversion factors				X	
Develop methods for validating recreational discards information				X	
Review of commercial and recreational QA/QC standards					X
Coordination of data collection					
Development of data collection plan	X	X	X	X	X
Establish metadata workgroup	X				
Collection of metadata	X	X	X	X	X
Full implementation of trip ticket systems for TX and MS	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate suitability of new data sources and integrate FIN data system			X		
Continue to develop protocol for private access and non-hook and line fisheries	X	X			
Implement for-hire telephone survey and at-sea sampling protocols for head boats	X	X			
Data Collection (continued)	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>

Identify species that should be targets for specific surveys				X		
Implement surveys for identified species				X		
Investigate methods for improving sampling coverage of inshore tidal areas				X		
Implement pilot survey for detailed effort module		X				
Implement detailed effort module Gulf-wide				X		
Explore development of more detailed area fished codes				X		
Identify various state structures of recreational fishing licenses	X					
Ensure Gulf States are collecting critical license frame data elements		X				
Continue recreational sampling in Puerto Rico	X			X	X	X
Implement recreational sampling in U.S. Virgin Islands		X		X	X	X
Determine live market activities in Gulf					X	
Implement pilot survey to collect data on live market activities					X	
Identify geographic regions of interest for recreational sampling		X				
Investigate feasibility of sampling these regions				X		
Implement FIN Social and Economic module	X	X		X	X	X
Prioritize species for additional biological sampling	X	X		X	X	X
Determine if increased otolith processing capacity is needed		X				
Evaluate bycatch module against current needs				X		
Implement the bycatch data collection module					X	
Increase recreational sampling levels Gulf-wide		X				
Optimize sampling allocations to improve precision for key species				X		
Innovative collection technology						
Discuss strategy for implementation of in-season quota monitoring					X	
Review opportunity to improve timeliness of data to support quota monitoring						X
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				
Fully implement registration-tracking module	X	X				
Explore methods for post-stratification of recreational data		X				
Implement appropriate post-stratification methods				X		
Evaluate variance estimation methods for recreational data					X	
Integration of databases						
Identify recreational databases for integration in DMS	X	X		X	X	X
Innovative data management technology						
Evaluate innovative data management technologies	X	X		X	X	X
Explore possibility of digital archiving of data forms	X					
Test electronic field data entry				X		
Integrate use of GIS for standardized reports				X		
Data Management (continued)	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>		<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
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

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APPENDIX A

FIN 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.