

# THE STATE OF THE GULF STATES

**GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION**  
**LARRY B. SIMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**2007 NOAA FISHERIES**  
**STATE MARINE DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**CORONADO ISLAND, CALIFORNIA**  
**APRIL 30-MAY 1, 2007**



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# **The State of the Gulf States**

**Report of Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission**

**2007 NOAA Fisheries  
State Marine Directors Meeting**

**April 30-May 1, 2007  
Coronado Island, California**



## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Fisheries Information Network (FIN)</b> .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Recreational Data Collection.....	1
Head Boat Sampling.....	1
Commercial Trip Ticket Programs .....	1
Biological Sampling .....	2
Fin Data Management System.....	2
<b>Interjurisdictional Fisheries (IJF) Program</b> .....	2
Oyster FMP .....	2
White Trout Profile .....	2
Crab Subcommittee .....	2
Otolith Work Group .....	3
Law Enforcement Committee.....	3
Gulf Menhaden.....	3
Literature Database.....	3
<b>Sportfish Restoration Administrative Program</b> .....	4
Artificial Reefs .....	4
Invasive Species Activities.....	4
Geographic Information System.....	4
<b>Atlantic Billfish Research Program</b> .....	5
<b>Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP)</b> .....	5
<b>Habitat Program</b> .....	5
<b>Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP)</b> .....	6
<b>Web Site Information</b> .....	7
<b>Future Challenges</b> .....	8
Recreation Data Collection Systems and Quality of Data.....	8
Public Outreach on Marine Issues.....	8
Freshwater Inflows .....	8
Invasive Species .....	8
Infrastructure Recovery and Mitigation Post-Disaster .....	8
State-Federal Partnerships in Management and Working Relationships .....	8
<b>Publications</b> .....	9



## **2007 NOAA Fisheries – State Marine Directors Meeting**

### **Report of Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director**

#### **Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission**

**April 30-May 1, 2007**

**Coronado Island, California**

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) was formed in 1949 through individual acts of the state legislatures of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida and the consent of the U.S. Congress. The purpose of the GSMFC is to provide a forum and administrative mechanism to address interjurisdictional fisheries issues and programs. The GSMFC is, however, much more than the sum of its individual state members.

In the past 15 years, the GSMFC has proven its relevance to fisheries governance by significant increases in the scope and number of programs we manage. Our quasi-governmental status provides us an opportunity to serve our member states and federal agency partners in ways that reduce both overall program costs and bureaucratic, administrative burden. The unique position of the interstate marine fisheries commissions afford us the opportunity to work closely with state legislatures, state agencies, federal agencies, the U.S. Congress, and the myriad of constituency groups to achieve consensus on issues that are complicated and often contentious.

#### **FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)**

##### *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. The program was established in the mid-1990s and began operational activities in 1997. Listed below is a description of these activities as well as some accomplishments.

##### *RECREATIONAL DATA COLLECTION*

Since 1997, the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida have conducted a field intercept survey of shore, for-hire and private boat anglers to estimate angler catch using the existing Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) methodology. The GSMFC has provided for the coordination of the survey and entry of the data. These data are combined with the NMFS effort estimate telephone survey to produce expanded estimates of catch and effort by wave using the existing MRFSS

methodology. In addition, the states have conducted increased sampling of the intercept portion for the MRFSS for charter boats in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida as well as increasing charter boat sampling in Texas by TPWD personnel. The states also have conducted the For-Hire Telephone Survey where weekly telephone calls are made to a 10% random sample of the Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. In 2006, the state collected over 53,000 interviews from recreational anglers and exceeded the quota for all modes by over 40% Gulf-wide.

##### *HEAD BOAT SAMPLING*

Regarding head boat sampling, personnel from Texas and Florida have compiled logbook data from head boats since 1998. The samplers examine catches and collect catch reports from head boat personnel, as well as gather effort data on head boats which operate primarily in the Exclusive Economic Zone from ports along the coasts of Texas and Florida utilizing the existing NMFS head boat logbook methodology. Beginning in 2004, Alabama and Florida personnel conducted the For-Hire Telephone Survey for effort data and collected catch and discard information via the At-Sea Sampling Survey where samplers ride 10% of the trips made by head boat operators. The field personnel sampled head boat anglers while actively fishing in order to collect biological and disposition data on discards and, when fishing is completed, conduct an intercept survey of these fishermen using the MRFSS protocols. These data were used to produce expanded estimates of catch and discards by wave for head boats. During 2006, Alabama samplers rode on 37 vessels, which resulted in over 900 interviews with head boat anglers. In Florida, samplers accompanied 305 trips which resulted in over 6,400 interviews.

##### *COMMERCIAL TRIP TICKET PROGRAMS*

Beginning in 1999, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama have been in the process of developing, implementing, and operating commercial trip ticket systems. Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida have fully implemented programs while Mississippi has implemented trip-level reporting for oysters and finfish and is working towards including their other fisheries.

One of the innovations from trip tickets is in the electronic report system, developed by Louisiana. This system allows for the electronic submission of data and is a more efficient and less time consuming process for the dealers, which has led to its success. Currently, there are over 500 dealers from Louisiana to Florida utilizing this system. Those dealers represent about 40% of the commercial landings (excluding menhaden) reported to those states. The breakdown (by state) of dealers reporting electronically is as follows: Louisiana -30%; Alabama -53%; and Florida -33%.

#### *BIOLOGICAL SAMPLING*

Starting in 2002, samplers from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas conducted interviews of recreational and commercial fishermen to collect biological data from their catches. The samplers identify the fish to the species level and collect length measurements, trip and gear characteristics, and hard parts (otoliths), and make comparisons of interview data to trip ticket data for quality assurance purposes. The FIN has identified 29 species that need additional biological data to accurately conduct stock assessments. Unfortunately, due to funding shortfalls, samplers are currently targeting red snapper, king mackerel, greater amberjack, gulf and southern flounder. In 2006, samplers collected almost 39,000 otoliths from over 75 species. These data will be used by stock assessment scientists to determine the status of the fisheries stocks and allow managers to make more informed management decisions. Beginning in 2007, FIN has implemented a new system for developing sampling targets that will allow samplers to increase the number of species they will be targeting.

#### *FIN DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM*

Although it is important to collect the necessary data, it is equally important to provide access to those data so they can be easily used in the management process. The FIN has developed and implemented a data management system, which has been on-line since July 2002. This system provides data to both confidential and non-confidential data users and contains a multitude of fishery-dependent data. There are currently almost 19 million records loaded in system and it includes:

- 1) Trip ticket data from Florida (1984-2006), Alabama (2002-2006), Mississippi (2002-2005 for oyster and finfish only) and Louisiana (1999-2006); In addition, historical data from NMFS (1985-2004) is available for those areas not covered by trip ticket systems;
- 2) Recreational catch estimates including Texas landings (1981-2005);
- 3) Biological data (2002-2006). To get access to the system, please visit our web site at <http://www.gsmfc.org/data.html>.

## **INTERJURISDICTIONAL FISHERIES (IJF) PROGRAM**

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) development and review program of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) continues to provide the Gulf States with quality information and recommendations for interstate management of fisheries. Additionally, this information is continually being used by the states in their respective programs. The GSMFC IJF Program staff continued to review previously developed FMPs and to monitor each state's progress in implementing management recommendations. Since the last National State Directors' Meeting, the IJF staff has completed the Striped Bass FMP Revision and the Sheepshead Profile. Those species currently under Profile/FMP development or revision and other activities in support of IJF fisheries are described below.

#### *OYSTER FMP*

The Oyster TTF is in the early stages of drafting for the revision to the Commission's 1991 Oyster FMP. Since it is such an extensive revision, it is like starting over with a brand new species. Considerable changes have occurred since completion of the original related to ISSC issues, genetics, and of course, disaster recovery. The TTF anticipated having a final draft sometime near the end of this year but funding issues within NOAA have delayed most of the Commission's programmatic activity.

#### *WHITE TROUT PROFILE*

The IJF staff was directed at the March 2007 meeting of the GSMFC to put together a TTF to begin development of a profile for white trout, *Cynoscion arenarius*, in the Gulf of Mexico. Again, due to NOAA funding issues, the identification of agency personnel to participate in the process has been put on hold. It is anticipated that the TTF will be notified sometime this summer and an introductory meeting will occur sometime in July or August at the latest.

#### *CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE*

The Crab Subcommittee continues to review and revise the Derelict Trap Guidelines document produced in 2003 with updates from the last couple years of derelict trap efforts. Prior to the 2005, the Subcommittee began removing these traps from the inshore and eventually offshore waters in the Gulf. The first official blue crab trap cleanup took place in Mississippi in 1999 and has expanded to all five Gulf States as of 2006. While Florida has privately organized cleanups in Tampa Bay and a few other areas, the other four states have state sanctioned cleanups which have removed a total of almost 42,000 traps to date. Progress made in the central Gulf to remove traps was set back somewhat

from the hurricanes of 2005. It was estimated that in Mississippi alone, 80% of the crab traps brought to shore prior to Hurricane Katrina were lost and are now derelict. At this time four of the five Gulf States have agency directed programs and Florida is restructuring their agency efforts to include blue crabs, but have had several locally sponsored cleanups.

#### *OTOLITH WORK GROUP*

The otolith manual, *A Practical Handbook for Determining the Ages of Gulf of Mexico Fishes*, continues to be distributed local, nationally, and internationally. The revision was initiated in early 2005, but derailed by the 2005 storms. In an effort to coordinate the FIN biological sampling activities in the Gulf, staff is working on the addition of red grouper, gag grouper, gray snapper, and vermilion snapper. Minor technique updates have been provided previously and will be added to the manual. The revision is intended to include the east coast through the participation of the ASMFC in the process. The Georgia DNR has provided materials for inclusion in the techniques portion of the manual making it officially hi-coastal.

#### *LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE*

The LEC continues to convene monthly conference calls to discuss regional management and subsequent enforcement activity including coordinated "high-contact" events, joint enforcement agreements (JEAs), and regional training opportunities. The conference calls allowed the opportunistic discussion of regional issues including Gulf communication protocols, impacts of imports on domestic fisheries, and the sale of recreationally-caught fish. The Committee met in 2006 and updated the Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Operations Plan for 2007-2008. The IJF Program Coordinator provides administrative support to all law enforcement activity.

#### *GULF MENHADEN*

The IJF Program continues to support the Gulf Menhaden Advisory Committee in its efforts to coordinate fishing activities and NOAA's data collection through the use of the Captain's Daily Fishing Reports or CDFRs for the Gulf of Mexico. The CDFRs have been made electronic and now are available to both NOAA and the industry to look at trends and harvest over from 1979 to 2006. This data represents the most complete dataset for any fishery in the Gulf, or perhaps in the US and includes individual sets by day, vessel, and plant since 1979. Each set includes time of day, total soak time, location, weather conditions, and estimated catch. This data is currently being used to look at the historic effects of the Gulf's

hypoxic zone on fishing activities using the location data from the CDFRs.

The most recent stock assessment, completed by Dr. Douglas Vaughan and others at the NMFS Beaufort Laboratory in North Carolina, includes data through 2004; the assessment indicates that the gulf menhaden stock is healthy and not over-fished. The assessment model currently used for the gulf menhaden fishery is similar to the one used for Atlantic menhaden. The model consists of forward projections and includes recommended biological reference points with targets and limits for fishing mortality and population fecundity. The NMFS stock assessment for gulf menhaden concludes that since 2001 fishing mortality has increased slightly, population fecundity has declined slightly, and concurrently the number of recruits has declined since 1998. Nevertheless, results indicate that the terminal benchmark values (for 2004) slightly exceed their targets, yet neither limit reference point is exceeded. Thus, the gulf menhaden stock is not overfished, nor is overfishing occurring. In other words, at current harvest levels and with no major expansions of the fishery anticipated in the near future, the gulf menhaden fishery is sustainable.

#### *LITERATURE DATABASE*

The IJF staff continues to house and enter GSMFC publications and programmatic reprints and support literature into the ProCite database bringing the total number of references in the GSMFC collection to over 18,000. The IJF bibliographic collection represents all the citations used in the last several FMPs and includes additional technical papers on spotted seatrout, flounder, menhaden, blue crab, striped bass, oysters, and sheepshead as well as numerous miscellaneous publications. The database is searchable from the GSMFC website and provides keywords and complete abstracts when available. All reprints are housed at the GSMFC office and copies are available upon request. This brings the total number of scanned reprints and Commission documents at well over 9,000. The IJF, Fishing Impacts, and Artificial Reef databases are searchable from the GSMFC website and provide keywords and complete abstracts when available. In addition, the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's (GCRL) Gunter Library reprint collection is available through the GSMFC website. That collection is no longer available through the GCRL Library website so the GSMFC agreed to host the database along with its own collections. GCRL continues to update and add to their collection even though they lost many reprints in Hurricane Katrina. Since the 2005 storms, a number of state and federal agency personnel from the coast have requested CDs and DVDs of reprints that they lost in their own reprint collections. The IJF staff is happy to

provide electronic copies of any and all the reprints housed in the GSMFC, as requested.

### **SPORTFISH RESTORATION ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAM**

The Sportfish Restoration Program continues to provide general coordination for the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee and to facilitate work between the GSMFC's TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Artificial Reef Subcommittee. This coordination provides the opportunity to address issues of national scope and importance, such as drafting the National Artificial Reef Plan and developing a partnership with the Department of the Navy and the Maritime Administration for the distribution of decommissioned ships for artificial reef development. The Program Coordinator continued to work in conjunction with the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force and the National Invasive Species Advisory Committee to determine appropriate actions and roles for the GSMFC and its member states in addressing invasive species issues. In addition, the GSMFC provides administration for and participates in the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species (Regional Panel). In February of 2007, Ron Lukens retired from the GSMFC with 20 years as Sportfish Coordinator and Assistant Director. David Rice was hired to replace Lukens as the Sportfish Coordinator and will take on the Aquatic Invasive Species Program and the artificial reef activities in the region.

#### *ARTIFICIAL REEFS*

The GSMFC continues to work toward developing a web-based data entry program through which the states will be able to enter their own data in the regional database. In addition, the GSMFC plans to develop a web-based query system that will allow individuals to run custom queries of the database. The Program Coordinator for Sportfish continues to manage the artificial reef literature database and to collect literature to enter into the database in the future. As a part of this activity, the Coordinator has been compiling journal articles and other reports that are not currently in the literature database. During 2007, it is anticipated that these articles and reports will be entered into the database.

#### *INVASIVE SPECIES ACTIVITIES*

The GSMFC has continued to update and manage the invasive species web site for the Regional Panel. A number of updates have been accomplished during this reporting period. The website address is <http://nis.gsmfc.org>. It can also be accessed by going to [www.gsmfc.org](http://www.gsmfc.org) and clicking on the Invasive Species

button. The Program Coordinator has been working on several issues associated with aquatic invasive species, including the development of a list of research priorities, continued management of the GSMFC invasive species database, and the development of annual work plans for the Regional Panel based on the five year strategic plan.

The Regional Panel worked with the U.S. Geologic Survey's Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Program of the Florida Integrated Science Center to develop a pathways analysis of existing nonindigenous species data. This document will assist the Regional Panel in setting pathways/species priorities for control and management. In addition, the Regional Panel, through its Education and Outreach Work Group received assistance from its representative from Mexico in translating selected education and outreach materials into Spanish. This will serve two purposes, including providing Mexican citizens with useful education and outreach materials in their native language and providing U.S. Spanish speaking communities with useful information in their native language. The Regional Panel is compiling state and federal agency lists of non-native species that may be banned or restricted from introduction into U.S. or state waters. This compilation of lists will provide the Regional Panel with information to work toward consistency in white, black, and restricted lists, at least at the state level. In addition, the Regional Panel hosted a training workshop on risk assessments for aquatic invasive species. That workshop was attended by 45 individuals representing state agencies, federal agencies, universities, and the private sector. Finally, the Research and Development Work Group has conducted work toward compiling data to enter into the newly developed Experts Database. This database will allow invasive species program managers to rapidly locate experts in taxonomy, control, technology, etc. in order to address identified invasions of non-native species. Also, the Information Management Subcommittee began work on a document to outline a process to rapidly submit occurrence and collection data to the NAS Database, managed by the U.S. Geological Survey in Gainesville, Florida. That process should be completed and submitted for consideration of adoption in early 2007.

#### *GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM*

Cross-cutting both of these topical areas, and other Commission programs, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission is in the process of establishing a regional geographic information system (GIS) for use by the Commission's programs and our partners in marine resource management. The ability to combine a variety of associated databases to graphically display

distribution and occurrence of species and habitat features moves us closer to the common interest of ecosystem management.

#### **ATLANTIC BILLFISH RESEARCH PROGRAM**

The GSMFC continued to administer the Atlantic Billfish Research Program, which provided funding to researchers to conduct important research projects to better understand billfish populations and provide information to assist in the national and international management of billfish resources. As of January of 2005, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission awarded 11 grants at a total of \$1.8 million and averaging about \$164,000.00 to address population, distribution, post-release survival, and stock identification issues, among others. The original duration for these grants was through December 2006, but due to Hurricane Katrina, some of the project periods were extended. NOAA Fisheries is the technical monitor of this project. The GSMFC and NOAA Fisheries are working on holding a symposium in conjunction with the March 2008 Annual Spring meeting. The purpose of the workshop is to provide an overview of the work that was conducted and present some of the preliminary findings from these projects.

#### **SOUTHEAST AREA MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (SEAMAP)**

The Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) has been working on improving access to the SEAMAP database. The SEAMAP database contains fishery independent data from the Gulf of Mexico from 1982 to the present. One of the ways SEAMAP is looking to improve access is through an Internet based mapping site that displays catch rate, environmental, and location information for all SEAMAP shrimp/groundfish surveys. The site allows users to query the SEAMAP data and produce maps depicting their query results. After 25 years of level funding, the SEAMAP budget increased significantly in 2007. SEAMAP has several new plankton and trawl surveys that will soon be starting that will help meet the growing need for fishery-independent data in the southeastern United States.

#### **HABITAT PROGRAM**

In the past few months, the Joint Habitat Program between the GSMFC and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has helped draft the National Fish Habitat Initiative's National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The Action Plan's basic elements are based in part on the highly successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan. It is a voluntary program designed

to encourage a variety of diverse partners and stakeholders to more effectively utilize existing and new resources to successfully execute conservation efforts to protect, restore, and enhance marine and freshwater fish habitats across North America. The Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP) has also been developing a Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan that will serve as a regional component of the National Fish Habitat Initiative. The Habitat Program has been involved in the development of the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan also.

As the marine aquaculture industry continues to develop in the United States, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is developing a generic amendment to provide for the regulation of offshore marine aquaculture. Site selection is a key factor in any aquaculture project, affecting both the economic viability and the sustainability of the project. While correct site selection is important for economic reasons, it is also important for environmental reasons. Water quality parameters cannot be controlled in offshore cage culture systems, therefore culture of any species must be established in geographical regions having adequate water quality and exchange. Variables to consider in site selection include water depth, water quality, currents, and sediment type. Aquaculture facilities should not be placed in environmental areas of concern.

The Commission's MARFIN sponsored bottom mapping project is nearing completion. The objective of this project is to create a digital spatial database of bottom habitats on the continental shelf and slope from the Texas/Mexico border to the southern tip of Florida. A data gathering contractor has been hired to compile existing data on bottom type in the Gulf of Mexico. The database is the largest, most detailed substrates mapping yet made for the Gulf of Mexico region. It holds over 185,315 described sites. This project will help focus protection of coral and hardbottom areas in the Gulf of Mexico and also allow for better EFH descriptions.

The Habitat Program has continued reviewing applications for liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities in the Gulf of Mexico. Use of an open loop system using seawater as the heat source for vaporizing the LNG back into gas has the potential to impact billions of fish eggs and larvae each year. The Commission and Council have both stated that an open loop system will have unacceptable impacts on marine fish populations, and that the Commission and Council support the use of closed loop systems for heating the LNG. Since 2002, eight deepwater port applications have been submitted to operate open loop LNG ports in the Gulf of Mexico.

Due to fishery and environmental concerns, four applicants have withdrawn their application for open loop systems. One applicant changed from an open to a closed loop system, one open loop system is in operation, one open loop application is still pending, while the other approved open loop system has been suspended indefinitely.

Hypoxia continues to be a problem in the northern Gulf of Mexico. In 2002, the hypoxic zone covered approximately 8,500 square miles off the coast of Louisiana and Texas. In 2006, the hypoxic zone measured 6,700 square miles. Hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico is caused primarily by excess nitrogen delivered from the Mississippi River Basin in combination with stratification of Gulf waters. Use of nitrogen fertilizers have tripled since the 1950s. Ninety percent of the nitrate load to the Gulf comes from nonpoint sources like stormwater runoff from agricultural and urban areas. The Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force was established in 1997 to help respond to Gulf of Mexico hypoxia. The Hypoxia Action Plan was developed in 2001. A major goal of the Action Plan is to reduce the size of the hypoxic zone to about 2,500 square miles by 2015. To meet this goal, nutrient loads entering the Mississippi River must be reduced. While calculating the direct impact of hypoxia to fisheries and fishermen has remained elusive, the impacts are real and solutions to the hypoxia problem need to be realized.

#### **EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)**

After several years of relatively quiet tropical seasons in our part of the coast, hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the northern Gulf in August and September 2005 and Hurricane Wilma went through south Florida in October 2005. The disasters affected everyone without regard for education, economic, or social status. Many programs were in place to help ameliorate the affects of the hurricanes on the coast's residents, but nothing was in place to deal with the fishery impacts. With the loss of docks, marinas, ice plants, water and fuel facilities, dealers, fishing vessels, and support industries, commercial and recreational fisheries were significantly reduced. Fishing effort was down as was harvest. Debris from hurricane damage has been found in coastal bays and marshes all the way out to offshore areas. This debris has caused problems with navigation and fishing activities by obstructing vessel traffic and damaging fishing gear. Along with the loss of fishing infrastructure, the natural resources along the coast suffered greatly also. In particular, marshes, other wetlands, and oyster resources were severely damaged.

The coastal states, their fishing communities, and their resources experienced immeasurable economic loss as a result of the reduction in all fishing activities following the storms.

In June 2006, Congress passed an emergency disaster relief funding package that included \$128 million for fisheries restoration in the Gulf of Mexico. The package included funding to support restoration of oyster grounds, restoration of shrimp and other fisheries grounds, and cooperative research to restore fisheries. The disaster funding package was intended to be distributed to the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The U.S. Congress appropriated the funding to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), who then determined that it would be most efficient to provide the funding to the GSMFC for administration. The funding for the GSMFC to administer the package is separate from the \$128 million.

The mechanism of transferring funding from NOAA Fisheries to the GSMFC is a cooperative agreement. During late June and early July 2006, the GSMFC and the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, in cooperation with NOAA Fisheries Headquarters and Southeast Region, discussed details regarding eligible and non-eligible activities under the cooperative agreement. The states developed proposals for activities to be conducted within their jurisdictions which were submitted to the GSMFC and incorporated into a regional cooperative agreement, submitted to NOAA Fisheries officially on July 11, 2006. The cooperative agreement spans five (5) years, beginning September 1, 2006 and running through August 31, 2011 with the distribution of funds to the states, determined by the U.S. Congress, as follows: Texas \$3.17 million, Louisiana \$52.9 million, Mississippi \$37.0 million, Alabama \$29.6 million, and Florida \$4.2 million with an additional \$1.0 million to NOAA and GSMFC to administer the agreement.

Each Gulf State provided statements of work wherein recovery efforts addressed such as oyster rehabilitation and recovery, other fishery species (shrimp, crab, other shellfish, and finfish) recovery, habitat restoration, and cooperative research. Because the program is still new, many of the states are still in the process of developing contracts and/or agreements for various projects as initially identified in their respective statements of work. Concurrently, specifications for equipment purchases, such as sidescan sonar and research vessels, and recovery related supplies such as cultch material were developed during the first quarter and have either already gone to bid or will go to bid in the next quarter.

The three northern Gulf States (Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana) began examining options for inter-agency agreements with non-profits or educational institutions for the purpose of entering sub-contracts to conduct stock enhancement, artificial reef placement, oyster relay projects, and debris removal. It is anticipated that significant efforts in cultch plants and re-seeding on both public and private reefs in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi will occur this spring and early summer in the Oyster Restoration and Rehabilitation portion of the program. Repair and/or replacement of newly placed artificial reefs under the Cooperative Research segment will move forward in the spring and summer months of 2008. Finally, cooperative research programs as well as catch and by-catch monitoring are expected to continue throughout the duration of the program.

of Mexico and near-coastal habitats. The longer-term goal of the website is to improve tracking of the effects of non-native species. The web site is designed to permit data and information to be shared between the GSMFC non-native species site, the U.S. Geologic Survey's Aquatic Species database, and other sites with which agreements have been made.

## WEB SITE INFORMATION

The GSMFC website, [www.gsmfc.org](http://www.gsmfc.org), has been on-line since May 22, 1997. The site contains an overview of the GSMFC, summary and detailed information on each of our programs, listings of publications produced by the Commission, some of which are downloadable, listings of upcoming meetings by program, federal and state links to boating and fishing regulations, links and information on toxic blooms, links to sites related to marine fisheries, a photo archive of past meetings and events, and a search area giving users the ability to search our web site, bibliography databases, port code database, species cross reference database, and even finding the weight of a fish based on it's length.

There are two sub-sites within the GSMFC web site – the gulf menhaden site ([www.gsmfc.org/menhaden](http://www.gsmfc.org/menhaden)) and the Non-Native Aquatic Species in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Regions site (<http://nis.gsmfc.org>).

The gulf menhaden site is dedicated to providing the most complete source for scientific information on the gulf menhaden population. The information included reflects the most current scientific data available on both the fish and the fishery. The GSMFC has worked hand-in-hand with NMFS, the five Gulf States (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas), and the menhaden industry for many years to monitor the gulf menhaden stocks and is confident in the assessments provided.

The Non-Native Aquatic Species in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Regions site provides a Gulf-wide inventory of biological data on non-native species, including fishes and invertebrates. It also addresses microorganisms with disease potential within the Gulf

## **FUTURE CHALLENGES**

### *RECREATION DATA COLLECTION SYSTEMS AND QUALITY OF DATA*

- Update and redesign of the system

### *PUBLIC OUTREACH ON MARINE ISSUES*

- Improve communications in all aspects of management
  - Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs)
- Include all stakeholders in processes

### *FRESHWATER INFLOWS*

- Sufficient freshwater inflows are necessary to maintain appropriate nutrient, salinity, and sediment budgets in estuaries.
- Sediment supplies, needed to maintain healthy and productive estuaries and offset sea level rise, have decreased due to upstream dams and reservoirs.
- Increasing demand for freshwater hundreds of miles from the coast is impacting coastal estuaries.
- Water managers need to recognize the need for environmental flows for estuaries.
- Large-scale freshwater diversions are needed to help restore and protect Louisiana's eroding coastal wetlands.

### *INVASIVE SPECIES*

- Tracking known problem species
- Identifying new species and assessing risks

### *INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY AND MITIGATION POST-DISASTER*

- Obtaining additional supplemental appropriations
  - to include infrastructure (harbors, marinas, cold storage, and fuel docks)
  - rebuilding of public facilities using hurricane resistant methods

### *STATE-FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS IN MANAGEMENT AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS*

- Data coordination and sharing
- Overlapping management and closing management gaps (EEZ and States)
- Cooperative agreements timeliness and processing
- Regional policy making and policy enforcement

**Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission**  
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First (1949-1950)	Thirty-second (1980-1981)
Second (1950-1951)	Thirty-third (1981-1982)
Third (1951-1952)	Thirty-fourth (1982-1983)
Fourth (1952-1953)	Thirty-fifth (1983-1984)
Fifth (1953-1954)	Thirty-sixth (1984-1985)
Sixth (1954-1955)	Thirty-seventh (1985-1986)
Seventh (1955-1956)	Thirty-eighth (1986-1987)
Eighth (1956-1957)	Thirty-ninth (1987-1988)
Ninth (1957-1958)	Fortieth (1988-1989)
Tenth (1958-1959)	Forty-first (1989-1990)
Eleventh (1959-1960)	Forty-second (1991)
Twelfth (1960-1961)	Forty-third (1992)
Thirteenth (1961-1962)	Forty-fourth (1993)
Fourteenth (1962-1963)	Forty-fifth (1994)
Fifteenth (1963-1964)	Forty-sixth (1995)
Sixteenth (1964-1965)	Forty-seventh (1996)
Seventeenth (1965-1966)	Forty-eighth (1997)
Issues 18 through 25 (1966-1967 through 1973-1974) were not published	Forty-ninth (1998)
Twenty-sixth (1974-1975)	Fiftieth (1999)
Issue 27 (1975-1976) was not published	Fifty-first (2000)
Twenty-eighth (1976-1977)	Fifty-second (2001)
Twenty-ninth (1977-1978)	Fifty-third (2002)
Thirtieth (1978-1979)	Fifty-fourth (2003)
Thirty-first (1979-1980)	Fifty-fifth (2004) <i>in prep</i>
	Fifty-sixth (2005) <i>in prep</i>

## **NEWSLETTER**

"**COMPACT NEWS**," a newsletter from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Staff, is edited by Nancy K. Marcellus and published quarterly (January, April, July, and October).

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