

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

JANUARY 1, 2007 - DECEMBER 31, 2007

JUNE 2008

Number 162

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

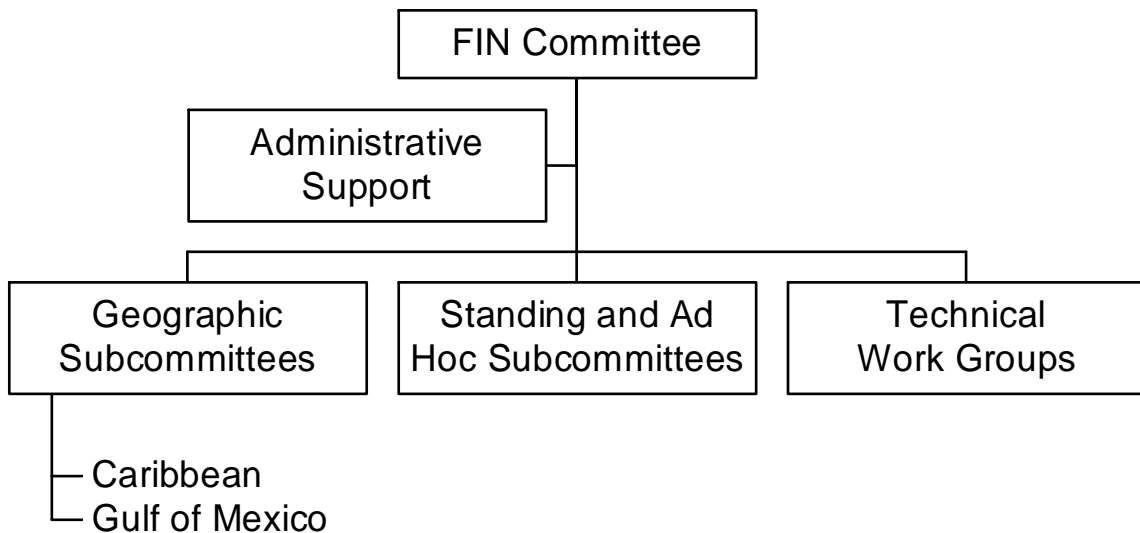
---

<sup>1</sup> 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 2006 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 2007. The major issues discussed during these meetings included:

- Identification and continuation of tasks to be addressed in 2007 and instruction to Administrative and Geographic Subcommittees and the Biological/Environmental, Data Collection, Data Collection Plan, Outreach and ad hoc work groups to either begin or continue work on these tasks;
- Development of the 2008 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 2007;
- 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 2008;
- 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 2007 FIN Operations Plan is included in Appendix A and minutes for the FIN Committee meeting are included in Appendix B. The FIN goals and objectives are included in Appendix C.

### **Subcommittees and Work Groups**

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

- The Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey data review meetings were held in February, June and October 2007 to discuss the RDD and Intercept Surveys for the East coast and Gulf Region, sampler performance activities, discussion of angler info brochures, review of wave report fish tables and estimate tables and review of Gulf States For-Hire Telephone Survey;
- The ComFIN Data Collection Work Group met (via conference call) in February and August 2007 to assess the need for trip-level commercial data to meet management needs in U.S. Virgin Islands and identify and compile conversion factors used for various species in the Southeast Region;
- The Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting in March and October 2007 to discuss species identification for quota monitoring, demonstration of InPort metadata tool and status of metadata data entry, discussion of opportunities to comment on recreational outreach materials, discussion of long-term collection of protected resources questions, discussion of coding issues regarding trip ticket data, discussion of FIN Outreach Work Group activities and various State/Federal Reports;
- A Head Boat Data Review Meeting was held in April 2007 to review the data from the Southeast Region Head Boat Survey and the FIN At-Sea and For-Hire Telephone surveys;
- The Gulf of Mexico commercial port samplers meeting was held in May 2007 to discuss an overview of state and federal commercial data collection activities; overview of port sampling in Northeast Region; presentations of electronic trip ticket program; NMFS IFQ red snapper System; 2006 tilefish otolith collection results; discussions of the stock

assessment process; NMFS trip ticket processing; monitoring of non-native species; a field trip to various fish houses in the Miami area as well as a FIN biological sampling training session;

- The Otolith Processors Training Workshop was held in May 2007 to conduct an otolith readings and comparison exercise for Black Drum, Red Drum, Spotted Seatrout, Gray Triggerfish, King Mackerel, Flounders, Sheepshead, Striped Mullet, Gray Snapper, Red Snapper and Vermilion Snapper as well as discuss the red snapper, flounder and king mackerel reference sets, developing reference sets for other species, discussion of allocating processing responsibility for new FIN species, status of Otolith Manual Revision, and processing status of otoliths collected in 2002 – 2005;
- The FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group met in May 2007 to review 2006 and 2007 otolith and length data collection activities, development of targets for biological sampling, recommendations for necessary lengths and otoliths for FIN priority species, discussion of adding new species, and discussion of inclusion of otoliths from fishery-independent sampling activities;
- The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee met in August 2007 to discuss the finalization of activities for funding for the 2008 FIN cooperative agreement;
- The FIN Outreach Work Group met (via conference call) in August 2007 to discuss establishing a system for notifying commercial dealers about electronic reporting options, developing a survey of commercial dealers for input on the best methods to facilitate reporting, improving outreach to constituents on FIN Data Management System and exploring ways to involve Sea Grant in the entire FIN outreach process;
- The Caribbean commercial port samplers meeting was held in October 2007 to discuss the status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network; demonstration of data entry programs; presentations of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Island whelk surveys, MARFIN project in the U.S, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico Fishing Regulations, U.S. Virgin Island biostatistical summaries, discussion of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Island sampling activities in 2008, fishing area maps used on the U.S. Virgin Island, update of U.S. Virgin Island catch reports and SEAMAP trap and line data bases as well as a sampling trip to several fishing sites in the U.S. Virgin Islands;
- GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries, FWRI staff and others met in November 2007 to consider methods to promote increased data consistency between reporting trip ticket information and the data collected by the Individual Fishing Quota system while reducing the overall industrial burden of data reporting; and
- In addition, the Program Manager also attended the various Fisheries Information System (FIS), Marine Recreational Informational Program (MRIP) and ACCSP meetings as a liaison from the FIN to ensure the comparability and compatibility among the programs.

## **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. And the states conduct an economic add-on survey to collect data regarding trip expenditures concerning recreational fishing. 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 Sampling Activities** – The port sampling portion of 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 and Florida. The at-sea portion of this task provided for the collection of catch and effort data for head boats operating in Alabama and east and west Florida. The effort data was collected via the Telephone For-Hire Survey where the states conducted weekly telephone calls to a 25% random sample of the Alabama and Florida head boat captains to obtain estimates of head boat fishing effort. The catch and bycatch data was collected via at-sea sampling, where the states will conduct an at-sea sampling survey of approximately 10% of the trips made by for-hire vessels, using the protocols established by FIN and tested by Alabama. The port sampling portion is a continuation of an activity from the previous year. The at-sea sampling is a continuation in Alabama and Florida.
- **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 and finfish 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 development and implementation 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 and Texas became fully implemented in September 2006. GSMFC enter into a contract with Southwest Computer Bureau (SCBI) to provide installation and maintenance of electronic trip ticket programs for Texas, 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.
- 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 2007 via a variety of different methods such as distribution of program documents, presentation to various groups interested in the FIN, and via the Internet:

- FIN Committee. 2007. *2008 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 150 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 24 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2007. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2006 - December 31, 2006*. No. 148 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 17 pp + appendices.
- 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](http://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](http://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 2006 - 2010**

[Goals and Objectives are in Appendix C]

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
<b>Planning, Management, and Evaluation</b>					
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 SeaGrant in outreach process	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
<b>Data Collection</b>					
Data components					
Review of components of fisheries					X
Needed data elements					
Assess need for trip-level commercial data in USVI	X				
Determine appropriate level of sampling for otoliths and lengths	X				
Establish feedback mechanism 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				
Develop methods for validating factors (2006)	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			
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			
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			

<b>Data Collection (continued)</b>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Implement detailed effort module Gulf-wide			X		
Explore development of more detailed area fished codes			X		
Identify various state structures for recreational fishing licenses	X				
Ensure Gulf States are collecting critical license frame data elements		X			
Continue recreational sampling in Puerto Rico	X				
Implement recreational sampling in U.S. Virgin Islands		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
<b>Data Management</b>					
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				
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 confidentiality					
Protect confidentiality	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Development of National Program</b>					
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 2007**

Kevin Anson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Steven Atran  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Ken Brennan  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Beaufort Laboratory

Page Campbell  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Kerwin Cuevas  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Guy Davenport  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Dave Donaldson  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Doug Frugé  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Graciela Garcia-Moliner  
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Michelle Kasprzak  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Craig Lilyestrom  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Daniel Matos  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Christine Murrell  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

John Reed  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Regional Office

Tom Schmidt  
National Park Service

Tom Sminkey  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Headquarters Office

Vicki Swann  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Toby Tobias  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

**TABLE 3.**

**FIN SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR 2007**

**FIN Administrative Subcommittee**

Kevin Anson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Dave Donaldson  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Ken Brennan  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Beaufort Laboratory

Doug Frugé  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Page Campbell  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Tom Sminkey  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Headquarters Office

**FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee**

Kevin Anson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Guy Davenport  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Steven Atran  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Page Campbell  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Michelle Kasprzak  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Kerwin Cuevas  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Vicki Swann  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

### **FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group**

Harry Blanchet  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Britt Bumgardner  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Kerwin Cuevas  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Guy Davenport  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Miami Laboratory

Behzad Mahmoudi  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

John Mareska  
Alabama Division of Marine Resources

Mike Murphy  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Bob Muller  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Aida Rosario  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Toby Tobias  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

### **FIN Data Management Work Group**

Mike Cahall  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries  
Commission

Page Campbell  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Guy Davenport  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Lauren Dolinger-Few  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Headquarters Office

Bob Harris  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Michelle Kasprzak  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

### **FIN For-Hire Work Group**

Kevin Anson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Ken Brennan  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Beaufort Laboratory

Page Campbell  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Kerwin Cuevas  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

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 Social/Economic Work Group**

Rita Curtis  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Headquarters Office

Assane Diagne  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Steve Holiman  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Regional Office

Walter Keithly  
Louisiana State University

David Lavergne  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Jeremy Leitz  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Larry Perruso  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Cynthia Ruiz  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Manuel Valdez-Picinni  
Puerto Rico Sea Grant Program

### **ComFIN Data Collection Work Group**

Steve Brown  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Page Campbell  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Guy Davenport  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Michelle Kasprzak  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Toby Tobias  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife



## **RecFIN(SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group**

Rob Andrews  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Headquarters Office

Ken Brennan  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Beaufort Laboratory

Kerwin Cuevas  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Jason Duet  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Craig Lilyestrom  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Beverly Sauls  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Toby Tobias  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

**APPENDIX A**  
**2007 Operations Plan**

**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>
<b>Planning, Management, and Evaluation</b>					
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
<b>Data Collection</b>					
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			

<b>Data Collection (continued)</b>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Implement for-hire telephone survey and at-sea sampling protocols for head boats	X	X			
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
<b>Data Management</b>					
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		

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
<b>Data Management (continued)</b>					
Integrate use of GIS for standardized reports			X		
Data confidentiality					
Protect confidentiality	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Development of National Program</b>					
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 19 and June 20, 2007**

**Key Largo, Florida**

Chairman Page Campbell called the meeting to order on June 19, 2007 at 9:00a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

**Members**

Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Ken Brennan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Richard Cody, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jason Duet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*proxy for M. Kasprzak*)  
Doug Fruge, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR  
Jim Long, NPS, Atlanta, GA (*proxy for T. Schmidt*)  
Christine Murrell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
John Reed, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Aida Rosario, PRDNER, Mayagez, PR (*proxy for D. Matos*)  
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX

**Staff**

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bob Harris, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Brad Gentner, Gentner Consulting Group, Silver Spring, MD  
Jay O'Leary, NMFS, Key Biscayne, FL  
Dave Van Voorhees, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD  
Geoff White, ACCSP, Washington, DC

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) meeting held on June 14 and 15, 2006 were approved as presented.

**Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program**

**G. White** reported on activities of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) over the past year. One of ACCSP's major efforts has been to get historical data into the data warehouse. Catch/effort data from 1980 to 2006 for North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida is complete, as well as 1994 to 2005 for



states from Maine to Virginia. All web queries for commercial, recreational, and the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) have been migrated to Discoverer. **White** reported that 100% of dealers in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Virginia are participating in SAFIS, and some dealers in Maine, Delaware, and Maryland. **White** reported that several staff positions that have been filled while some are still open.

**White** gave a brief explanation of the SAFIS program noting that it is a state-federal system for collecting real time commercial catch and effort data. SAFIS meets all ACCSP and federal requirements for data standards. Data entry is done online although there is a PC based version. **White** explained that the data is validated as it is entered and is automatically post-entry audited. **White** reported that the ACCSP data warehouse contains commercial catch and effort, recreational catch and effort, and biological data.

**White** stated that the ACCSP had undergone an external peer review in September 2006, and in May 2007 issued an RFP for FY08 funding. Priorities for 2007 – 2008 are catch/effort historical data, SAFIS deployment, biological data feeds, and outreach.

### **FIN Data Management System (DMS) Issues**

Review of list of personnel with access to confidential data - The FIN Committee reviewed the list of personnel with access to confidential data in the FIN DMS. G. Davenport also presented a list of those with access to NMFS confidential data. D. Donaldson requested that any deletions, additions, or corrections be reported to the appropriate personnel.

Status of the FIN data management system - **B. Harris** of GSMFC reported on the status of the FIN DMS noting that FIN has upgraded to the latest version of Oracle Discoverer. **Harris** noted that all the Gulf States and GSMFC have entered their data into InPort. Florida has their own metadata system and will not be using InPort, but **Harris** and **R. Cody** will work on developing a link. **Harris** reported that additional reports are being created for total landings by gear, by area, and by grade. **D. Donaldson** noted that in the past, monthly reports were sent out to the states to review for accuracy. In order for effective QA/QC these reports must be reviewed when they are sent out. If this is not possible, **Donaldson** requested that an e-mail be sent to D. Bellais with an explanation.

**Harris** reported that the recreational fishing license module is up and data is being loaded by wave for all Gulf states. NMFS has access to the data and they are publishing their findings. After vessel data is received from the states in the correct format, FIN will attempt to link the Coast Guard vessel data to the state vessel data. The FIN database is being converted to Oracle Cluster/Grid environment. By separating the software across several servers, the FIN system will still be running in the event one of the servers crashes. This should be available by fall of 2007.

Discussion of using regional databases for FIS – **D. Donaldson** stated that he had recently attended a FIS meeting and would like for the FIN Committee to discuss methods of using regional databases for FIS. The first issue would be to identify the data that FIS requires.

**D. VanVoorhees** noted that in the past there was no one place on either the Atlantic or Gulf coasts to go to for information. What is being attempted is “one stop shopping” on a regional level as well as a national level since everyone would benefit from having all data in one place. **Donaldson** noted that the data on the FIN system is also available in the SEFSC. Most users are comfortable using one site or the other, therefore it may be an outreach issue.

Lengthy Committee discussion ensued on how to get people to use FIN and ACCSP as the regional repositories. It was agreed to task the Outreach Work Group with developing a program to notify users about the availability of data in the FIN DMS.

### **Discussion of FIN Program Review Document**

**G. Bray** reported that in November 2006 the Program Review panel met and were provided with documents and a presentation on the FIN program in order to conduct an external review of the Program. As of today the final report has not been received from the contractor, ICF Consulting. **Bray** stated that D. Donaldson has made repeated phone calls to ICF which have not been returned. The FIN Committee was asked for input on how to proceed.

Committee members made several suggestions from sending a Certified letter, cancelling the contract by default, contacting the review panel for feedback, or hiring another contractor since ICF has not been paid and the funds are still available. The FIN Committee agreed to have staff send a letter to ICF Consulting, as well as the Review Panel members asking for feedback. **Donaldson** noted that the FIN Administrative Subcommittee has dealt

with this issue in the past and would be able to provide recommendations. **K. Anson** suggested that a timeline would be helpful.

During this discussion, the subject of whether a program review for the FIN program was necessary and worth the money. Some felt that a facilitated session every five years would be more productive. Since a review is only necessary periodically, the Committee agreed to discuss this issue at the 2008 FIN meeting.

#### **Status of Data Collection Activities in the Caribbean**

**A. Rosario** addressed the FIN Committee on commercial fisheries in Puerto Rico. **Rosario** noted that a new amendment for fisheries regulations had recently been approved changing the minimum size for snapper as well as a closed season for several snapper. The new fishing regulations also require that data collection be done differently. Now port agents go to fish houses to collect data on landings as well as biostatistical data which has improved the data collection.

**Rosario** gave a presentation which demonstrated that fishermen in Puerto Rico use traps, lines, nets, and diving as gear. Currently nets and lines are used more frequently than traps and diving. Diving gear is used primarily for spiny lobster and queen conch. **Rosario** reviewed statistics for the years 1990 to 2003 showing the pounds of fish landed for various species.

**C. Lilyestrom** of PRDNER works with recreational fishing and reported that data collection for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) has been going on since 2000. **Lilyestrom** noted that the PRDNER is implementing an automated recreational license system and the design has been completed.

#### **Overview and Status of National Fisheries Information System (FIS)**

**D. VanVoorhees** gave an overview of FIS noting that NMFS was tasked with creating an implementation plan for a nationwide fisheries information system (FIS) and a vessel registration system (VRS) as a result of the 1996 Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act. In 1998 NMFS provided a report to Congress on priorities for these systems. Some of the goals of FIS are to adapt data collection to meet current and future needs, establish regional and national standards for data collection, and to implement and maintain partnerships to support collaboration among stakeholders.

**Van Voorhees** noted that FIS users will be from various state and federal agencies, fisheries scientists, fisheries managers, fishing industry, and the general public. **Van Voorhees** reported on several activities of FIS that have already been implemented, including an improved national permit system, web-based metadata system using InPort, electronic reporting system, facilitated data reconciliation, and improved recreational fishery survey methods. **Van Voorhees** also reviewed funding for FIS activities.

#### **Presentation of FIS Trip Data Reconciliation Project**

**J. O'Leary** explained that trip data reconciliation began with the concept of taking data from fishermen through the FIN and the ACCSP databases and linking logbooks and dealer reports in order to compare and extract the most useful data. This system originally was designed by J. Poffenberger of NMFS for use in the Southeast.

**O'Leary** went on to describe the data flow, the structure of the system and finished with a live demonstration of the tool.

#### **Review and Discussion of SEDAR Recommendations Document**

The FIN Committee was provided with copies of the SEDAR document and reviewed sections 7 through 12. After thoroughly reviewing and discussing the SEDAR recommendations document, the Committee agreed to have staff draft a letter addressing issues in this document and make suggestions and recommendations. The group agreed that the letter should be very specific with as much detail as possible. The draft letter will be sent to the FIN Committee for comment and when approved will be sent to the appropriate SEDAR personnel.

#### **Discussion of Electronic Trip Tickets/Logbooks/Quota Monitoring Compatibility**

**D. Donaldson** reported that G. Davenport has been working with the quota monitoring group at NMFS Miami and the contractor to test the feasibility of utilizing the trip ticket system for quota monitoring purposes.

**G. Davenport** stated that there are three ways to report using the NMFS quota monitoring system. There is web-based reporting, faxing, or mailing. NMFS is trying to devise a way to utilize the electronic trip ticket reporting system. The problem is most states have a requirement to report within ten days of the end of the month, but the NMFS quota monitoring system requires reporting within two weeks. **Davenport** stated that there are

several major dealers that are not using electronic reporting. Hopefully this project will encourage them to report electronically. **Davenport** also noted that there are some problems with inconsistencies in log book and electronic trip ticket reporting but these issues should be able to be corrected.

Following Committee discussion **D. Donaldson** suggested that since FIN is trying to promote electronic reporting the FIN Outreach Work Group should be tasked with developing ways to encourage the use of electronic reporting.

#### **Discussion of Using Trip Ticket System for For-Hire Fisheries**

**S. Atran** of the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council (GMFMC) reported that the GMFMC in January passed a motion to develop an amendment for a trip ticket system for the recreational for-hire fishery in the EEZ. **Atran** stated that at this point the Council is gathering information on what is available and what systems the various states are using. **D. Donaldson** noted that a trip ticket system probably would not be a viable option for the for-hire fishery since there are no checks and balances unless for-hire captains were required to go to a particular dock with a checking system. **Atran** noted that logbooks could work if observers were on board.

**Donaldson** stated that one of the issues to be discussed later in this meeting is the Headboat Data Review meeting. As a result of that meeting FIN will re-examine methodologies for collecting catch and effort from the for-hire fishery. **Donaldson** suggested that discussion on the GMFMC motion be held at that time.

#### **Presentation of Recreational Social/Economic Data**

**R. Curtis** of NMFS requested that **B. Gentner** of Gentner Consulting Group in Silver Spring, Maryland give a presentation on the preliminary results from a recent national Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) social/economic add on. This survey targeted recreational fishermen using field sampling as well as follow-up with mail and telephone calls. **Gentner** made note that preliminary findings showed 22% of anglers were on overnight trips and 51% stated that fishing was the primary purpose of the trip. **Gentner** also discussed total trip expenditures by state, for-hire results, and a comparison using the year 2000 survey results and preliminary 2006 results. **Gentner** noted that wave 5 and wave 6 mail results are still coming in therefore the results will change slightly and he also stated that the response rate has been good.

**Gentner** reported that even though they used an address verifier service, as much as 20% of the addresses are bad. Some of these undeliverable addresses were probably due to hurricanes on the Gulf Coast causing people to relocate.

#### **Review and Approval of 2006 FIN Annual Report**

The FIN Committee was provided with a draft copy of the 2006 FIN Annual Report. **G. Bray** requested that the Committee review this document and send any corrections or edits to M. Travis, G. Bray, or D. Donaldson prior to July 9, 2007. **D. Donaldson made a motion to accept the 2006 FIN Annual Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### **Subcommittee and Work Group Reports**

Commercial Port Sampler Meetings (Attachment A) - A meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Commercial Port Samplers was held on May 2 and 3, 2007 in Miami, Florida.. A variety of issues were discussed. See details in Attachment A.

*J. Reed questioned if the GSMFC holds state specific permit databases since they may be necessary for electronic validation as more species become included in individual fishing quota programs.* The FIN Committee discussed this situation and agreed that state partners will check and D. Bellais of GSMFC will coordinate. **D. Donaldson** suggested that the GSMFC Geographic Subcommittee discuss this situation at their meeting in October 2007.

The next Gulf of Mexico port agents meeting will be held in summer/fall of 2008. Location at this time has not been determined.

**K. Cuevas moved to accept the Port Samplers Meeting Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Administrative Subcommittee (Attachment B) - A conference call of the FIN Administrative Subcommittee was held on August 31, 2006. **G. Bray** reported that the Subcommittee discussed the composition of the review panel as

well as possible dates and location for the review meeting. Details of this Conference Call can be found in Attachment B.

There are no action items or motions. **T. Sminkey moved to accept the Administrative Subcommittee Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee (TCC Data Management Subcommittee) (Attachment C) - The GOM Geographic Subcommittee met in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 23, 2006, and Biloxi, Mississippi on March 12, 2007. **D. Donaldson** reported that this report is informational and the issues discussed by the Subcommittee are discussed at work group meetings and/or the FIN Committee. Details of this meeting can be found in Attachment C. There are no action items or motions.

**K. Anson moved to accept the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee Report the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Headboat Data Review Meeting (Attachment D) – The Headboat Data Review Meeting was held on April 24, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to review data from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey and the FIN At-Sea and For-Hire Telephone surveys.

While reviewing the section of the report dealing with sampling intensity review and comparison, **K. Brennan** of NMFS disagreed with the statement, “.....this issue was not all that relevant....” The FIN Committee discussed this part of the Report. **D. Donaldson** explained that this issue was not relevant at the time and the Committee needs to address catch, effort, and discards data issues before focusing on sampling intensity since the differences in catch and effort may be because of sampling intensity. **Donaldson** stated that the Headboat Data Review Meeting Report accurately describes what was discussed, and indicates to the FIN Committee that there needs to be more work done in terms of comparing these two surveys. **Donaldson** also noted **that the work group recommended that FIN re-examine the feasibility of using a combination of both logbooks and at-sea sampling for the for-hire fishery to generate catch and effort estimates.** **T. Sminkey** noted that reviewing the two methodologies had been discussed at his office as part of the MRIP recreational redesign, and he would caution both groups not to go ahead with further projects, since there is likely to be additional federal monies available to support such work, and the group should involve members from both programs. This will be a key component of this redesigned task. **Donaldson** agreed and noted that the For-Hire Work Group will be addressing this issue as well. At-Sea Sampling gathers extremely useful discards information and the Miami Lab has made available an additional \$100,000 to implement At-Sea Sampling in Texas.

**T. Sminkey moved to accept the Headboat Data Review Meeting Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** Details of the meeting can be found in Attachment D.

In order to clarify the above discussion, **Donaldson made a motion that FIN be engaged in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) recreational redesign activities regarding development of sampling protocols for catch and effort for the for-hire fishery. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Attachment E) – The Otolith Processors Training Workshop was held in St. Petersburg, Florida in May 2007. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure consistency and comparability among the readers in various state and federal agencies. Because of the difficulty in reading otoliths it was recommended that FIN hold training sessions for grey snapper and grey triggerfish later this year if funds are available. Details of the meeting can be found in Attachment E.

**D. Donaldson made a motion to accept the Otolith Processors Training Workshop Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Biological/Environmental Work Group Report (Attachment F) – The Biological/Environmental Work Group met via Conference Call in May 2007 and reviewed the Highly Migratory Species Private Boat Characterization mail survey. **Donaldson** explained that the purpose of the mail survey is to determine the best methodology to collect HMS data in the Gulf of Mexico. The FIN Committee reviewed the mail survey, made suggestions for changes, and agreed to move forward to hire a contractor to conduct this mail survey. **J. Reed moved to secure a contractor to conduct the HMS mail survey. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

**T. Sminkey moved to accept the Biological/Environmental Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Work Group Report (Attachment G) – The Data Collection Work Group met via Conference Call in February 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the need for trip-level commercial data to meet management needs in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and to identify and compile conversion factors used for various species in the Southeast Region. D. Olsen of the USVI noted that they had implemented trip-level reporting for their commercial fisheries, therefore the group decided that no further work needs to be conducted on this topic.

**Bray** reported that as a result of the Conference Call staff will compile the various conversion factors that are used by each of the partners and once having been completed, the group will determine where similarities and differences are among the various factors

**V. Swann moved to accept the Data Collection Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Plan Work Group Report (Attachment H) – The Data Collection Plan Work Group met via Conference Call in April 2007. The Work Group noted that there was a lack of speciation of flounders in the commercial fishery therefore the states should continue to work with seafood dealers in order to identify flounders to the species level.

**The Work Group recommended that since 2007 was the first year for a new method for determining sampling targets, FIN should continue to use existing targets for priority species in 2008.**

The Work Group also discussed the issue of including biological data collected under fishery-independent activities. The Work Group decided that sampling protocols and other documentation for the various fishery-independent sampling activities should be compiled. **D. Donaldson** suggested tasking the Geographic Subcommittee with addressing this issue at their October 2007 meeting.

**K. Anson made a motion to accept the Data Collection Plan Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

**The meeting recessed at 5:15 p.m.**

**The meeting reconvened on June 20, 2007 at 8:30 a.m.**

### **Operations Plan**

**D. Donaldson** reported that FIN had been contacted by NMFS Headquarters regarding conducting economic work. This is a five year project for FIN to hire an economist to help coordinate some of the activities in the Statement of Work. Members of the FIN Committee were provided with a copy of the Statement of Work FIN will be involved since guidance will be needed in certain areas when developing protocols. **Donaldson** reported that this is separate money from NMFS Headquarters.

Status of 2007 Activities – The FIN Committee was provided with a list of data management activities currently being conducted under the FIN as well as tasks identified in the Operations Plan for 2007. **Bray** reviewed the list with the FIN Committee and noted that because of budget cuts certain meetings were not held as planned.

The Committee reviewed the 2008 FIN Operations Plan. The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee will meet in August to give final approval to the Plan.

**V. Swann moved to approve the 2008 FIN Operations Plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

FIN Committee members were asked to forward any comments or corrections to staff by July 9, 2007.

### **Discussion of 2008 FIN Priorities**

Committee members were provided with a list of items for funding consideration in 2008. **D. Donaldson** reported that the list was generated from activities conducted last year as well as discussions in work group meetings.

The final prioritized list will be forwarded to the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) in August 2007 and they will decide which items will be included in the 2008 FIN cooperative agreement. **Donaldson** noted that all items listed as High or Medium priority will require budgets and statements-of-work by July 12, 2007.

The Committee agreed to list as high priority all ongoing activities. The prioritized list of activities for 2008 is as follows:

**High Priority**

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)  
Expand electronic trip ticket contract to include compilation of data for quota monitoring (new)  
Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (including TX) (ongoing)  
Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)  
Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)  
Operation of FIN Data Management System (ongoing)  
Trip Ticket Program Full Implementation and Operations in Mississippi (ongoing/new)  
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama (ongoing)  
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana (ongoing)  
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Texas (ongoing)  
Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling (ongoing)  
For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-Sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Alabama and Florida (ongoing)  
Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana (new/ongoing)  
For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-Sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas (new)

**Medium Priority**

Pilot Study for Collection of Catch and Effort Data from For-Hire Fishery for Highly Migratory Species (new)

**Low Priority**

For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Louisiana (new)  
Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)

**Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting**

The next FIN Meeting will be held during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in June in the U.S. Virgin Islands or New Orleans, Louisiana.

**Election of Officers**

By rotation, K. Anson of Alabama was elected Chairman, and G. Davenport of NMFS was elected Vice-Chairman.

**Other Business**

The FIN Committee was asked to review the Committee listing and give any corrections, additions, or deletions on contact information to staff.

**There being no further business the FIN Committee 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.