

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

JANUARY 1, 2008 - DECEMBER 31, 2008

JUNE 2009

Number 171

## 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

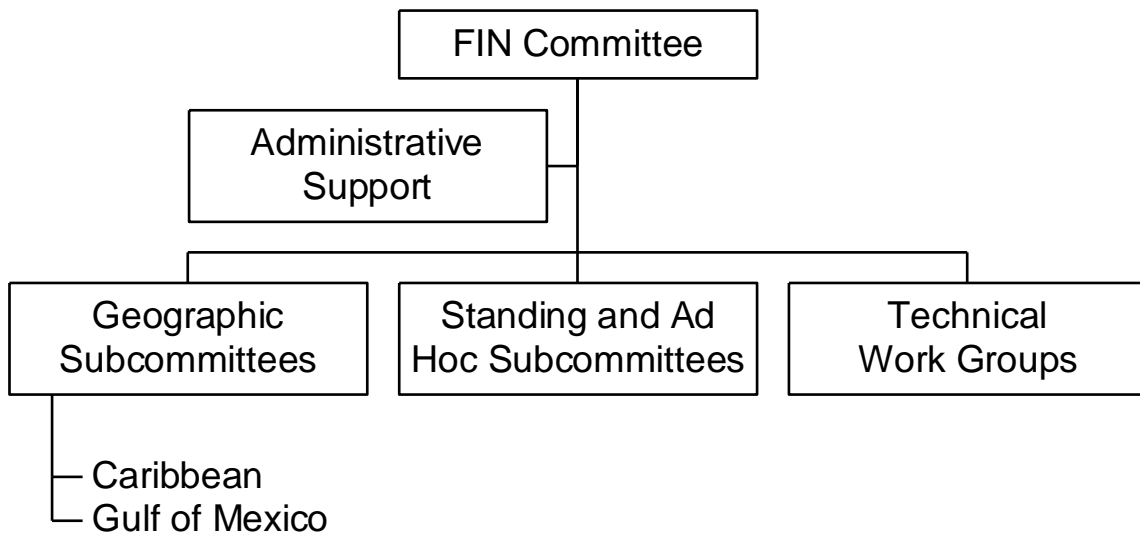
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<sup>1</sup> The Southeast Region (the Region) includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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 2008 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 2008. The major issues discussed during these meetings included:

- Identification and continuation of tasks to be addressed in 2008 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 2009 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 2008;
- 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 2009;

- 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 2008 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;
- Gulf States and GSMFC staff met in March 2008 to review the historical commercial data to ensure these data are accurate and free of errors. In the future, this quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) meeting will be conducted in conjunction with the GSMFC March meeting;
- Gulf States, NOAA Fisheries and GSMFC staff participated in a training workshop in March 2008 to examine the appropriate techniques and methods reading gray triggerfish spines and vermilion snapper otoliths;
- The Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting in March and October 2008 to discuss the status of biological sampling activities, the commercial QA/QC meeting, commercial fishermen, dealer and vessel information, status of license frame pilot survey, status of metadata data entry, trip ticket requirements to facilitate e-reporting, presentation of National Recreational Fishermen Registry; state participation in economics data collection activities, feasibility of using trip ticket systems for the for-hire fishery and various State/Federal Reports;
- The Otolith Processors Training Workshop was held in May 2008 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, king mackerel red drum/spotted seatrout/striped mullet, vermilion snapper, sheepshead, and

black drum reference sets, developing reference sets for other species, and status of Otolith Manual Revision;

- The FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group met in May 2008 to review otolith and length data collection activities for 2007 and 2008, development of targets for biological sampling, and recommendations for necessary lengths and otoliths collection for FIN priority species in 2009;
- The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee met in August 2008 to discuss the finalization of activities for funding for the 2009 FIN cooperative agreement;
- The Social/Economic Work Group met in September 2008 to discuss the inshore shrimp, fishing-related business and marine angler expenditures projects under the Commission's new economic program;
- The Gulf of Mexico commercial port samplers meeting was held in September 2008 to discuss the reproductive staging of fishes, golden tilefish sampling and ageing techniques, TIP issues, hurricane relief efforts for fishing industry, monitoring of non-native species, representative sampling philosophies, law enforcement issues, processed products reports, new data confidentiality provisions as well as a field trip to a fish house in the New Orleans area;
- The Caribbean commercial port samplers meeting was held in October 2008 to discuss reproductive biology of three important baitfishes in Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico's queen conch assessment, highlights of Puerto Rico landings 2007, U.S. Virgin Island commercial catch records, trip interview program sampling, and biostatistical summaries as well as sampling trips to several fishing sites in the Cabo Rojo/Puerto Real and Rincón/Aguadilla areas; and
- In addition, the Program Manager also attended the various Fisheries Information System (FIS), Marine Recreational Informational Program (MRIP), ACCSP, SEDAR data workshops and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meetings as a liaison for the FIN.

## **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. Table 4 shows the number of interviews the state samplers conducted for each mode as well as the amount over (or under) the base quota for each state and mode.

- 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. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year. Table 5 shows the number of interviews, fish measured and hard parts collected by port samplers from the head boat fishery. Please note that the number of samples collected in Texas is lower than historical levels because a new port agent was hired in May and Hurricane Ike hit the Galveston area (where there is a large number of head boats) in September.
- 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. In 2008, four menhaden factories were active in the northern Gulf of Mexico at Moss Point, MS, and Empire, Abbeville, and Cameron, LA. About 40 purse-seine vessels fished for gulf menhaden in 2008. Menhaden biostatistical samples are acquired from the top of the fish hold; individual specimens are measured for fork length, weighed to the nearest gram, and a patch of scales is taken for ageing; other data include date and location of catch and vessel name. Total purse-seine landings of gulf menhaden for reduction in 2008 were 425,442 metric tons. Table 6 shows the number of 10-fish samples collected by port during the 2008 fishing season. And Table 7 presents the age composition of the gulf menhaden biostatistical samples by port in 2008.
- Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System (DMS) - 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. Table 8 provides the record counts and years represented by the commercial, recreational and biological data in the FIN DMS. For the commercial data, the record count roughly represents the number of trips by state and for the biological data, the counts represents the total number of hard parts collected by state.

- 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. Table 9 illustrates the number of commercial seafood dealers who are reporting their landings using the electronic reporting option. It also shows the percentage of landings that captured electronically.
- 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. Table 10 and Table 11 present the number of otoliths (or spines for gray triggerfish) that were collected by state samplers for the FIN priority species for the commercial and recreational fisheries, respectively.

### **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 2008 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. 2008. *2009 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 164 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 25 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2008. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2007 - December 31, 2007*. No. 162 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 IN 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			
Implement detailed effort module Gulf-wide			X		
Explore development of more detailed area fished codes			X		

<b>Data Collection (continued)</b>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
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 2008**

Kevin Anson  
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**TABLE 3. FIN SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR 2008**

**FIN Administrative Subcommittee**

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**TABLE 4. NUMBER OF RECREATIONAL INTERVIEWS OBTAINED UNDER THE MRFSS PROTOCOL, BY STATE, BY WAVE**

STATE	WAVE	SH	CH	PR	Total	x of Base Quota		
						SH	CH	PR
FLORIDA - EAST	1	664	216	1,426	2,306	1.36	3.48	1.52
	2	688	273	1,605	2,566	1.26	3.64	1.29
	3	652	314	2,115	3,081	1.15	4.42	1.50
	4	760	182	1,762	2,704	1.34	3.03	1.30
	5	633	167	1,264	2,064	1.28	4.51	1.30
	6	657	167	1,607	2,431	1.50	3.34	1.71
	Total	4,054	1,319	9,779	15,152	1.31	3.72	1.43
FLORIDA - WEST	1	667	916	1,830	3,413	1.47	9.54	1.58
	2	792	1,481	2,171	4,444	1.29	9.31	1.30
	3	873	1,539	2,321	4,733	1.19	8.14	1.18
	4	929	793	2,469	4,191	1.58	5.79	1.26
	5	830	809	2,523	4,162	1.44	9.87	1.68
	6	1,171	711	2,055	3,937	2.18	8.89	1.60
	Total	5,262	6,249	13,369	24,880	1.50	8.41	1.40
ALABAMA	1	86	40	71	197	1.15	1.48	0.55
	2	179	104	160	443	1.86	2.89	1.02
	3	269	154	321	744	1.49	2.80	1.21
	4	198	132	289	619	1.66	2.69	1.18
	5	117	114	153	384	1.08	3.45	1.06
	6	60	35	142	237	0.85	1.35	0.98
	Total	909	579	1,136	2,624	1.40	2.56	1.05
LOUISIANA	1	114	79	611	804	1.36	2.39	1.87
	2	154	145	775	1,074	1.14	3.30	1.56
	3	241	191	1,280	1,712	1.66	2.81	1.58
	4	154	122	1,079	1,355	1.01	2.07	1.28
	5	154	99	826	1,079	1.48	2.15	1.60
	6	130	102	666	898	1.34	2.55	1.33
	Total	947	738	5,237	6,922	1.32	2.54	1.50
MISSISSIPPI	1	121	33	141	295	2.63	1.32	1.78
	2	111	63	163	337	1.95	2.33	1.24
	3	96	95	297	488	1.00	3.28	1.41
	4	113	75	238	426	1.35	2.42	1.27
	5	83	65	236	384	1.32	2.32	1.50
	6	73	19	192	284	1.49	0.76	1.71
	Total	597	350	1,267	2,214	1.51	2.12	1.44

**TABLE 5. NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS, FISH MEASURED AND HARD PARTS COLLECTED UNDER THE HEAD BOAT LOGBOOK PROTOCOL, BY STATE**

STATE	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	NUMBER OF FISH MEASURED	NUMBER OF HARD PARTS
AL/FL	291	9446	414
TX	19	384	111

\* New port agent hired in May and Hurricane Ike in Sept.

**TABLE 6. NUMBER OF 10-FISH GULF MENHADEN SAMPLES COLLECTED, BY PORT**

PORT	NUMBER OF SAMPLES
MOSS POINT, MS	94
EMPIRE, LA	142
ABBEVILLE, LA	212
CAMERON, LA	146

**TABLE 7. AGE COMPOSITION OF GULF MENHADEN BIOSTATISTICAL SAMPLES, BY PORT**

AGE	MOSS POINT, MS		EMPIRE, LA		ABBEVILLE, LA		CAMERON, LA		ALL	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
1	67	9	218	19	312	20	561	49	1158	25
2	656	85	786	69	1209	76	575	50	3226	69
3+	51	6	142	12	63	4	19	1	275	6
ALL	774		1146		1584		1155		4659	

**TABLE 8. RECORD COUNTS FOR COMMERCIAL, RECREATIONAL AND BIOLOGICAL SAMPLING ACTIVITIES IN THE FIN DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

STATE	COUNT	YEARS	LAST UPDATED
<b>COMMERCIAL LANDINGS</b>			
FLORIDA	15,990,208	1985 - 2008	26-FEB-09
ALABAMA	452,010	1985 - 2009	30-JAN-09
MISSISSIPPI	118,256	1985 - 2008	18-FEB-09
LOUISIANA	4,623,632	1985 - 2009	23-MAR-09
TEXAS	194,560	1985 - 2008	17-MAR-09
PUERTO RICO	1,662,378	1985 - 2007	2007
<b>RECREATIONAL CATCH ESTIMATES</b>			
FLORIDA		1981 - 2007	30-MAY-07
ALABAMA		1981 - 2007	30-MAY-07
MISSISSIPPI		1981 - 2007	30-MAY-07
LOUISIANA		1981 - 2007	30-MAY-07
TEXAS		1983 - 2006	30MAY07
PUERTO RICO		2000 - 2007	30-MAY-07
<b>RECREATIONAL EFFORT ESTIMATES</b>			
FLORIDA		1982 - 2007	10-JAN-08
ALABAMA		1982 - 2007	10-JAN-08
MISSISSIPPI		1982 - 2007	10-JAN-08
LOUISIANA		1982 - 2007	10-JAN-08
TEXAS		-	-
PUERTO RICO		-	-
<b>BIOLOGICAL DATA</b>			
FLORIDA	794	2003 - 2005	11-OCT-07
ALABAMA	23,812	2002 - 2007	15-MAY-08
MISSISSIPPI	3,604	2002 - 2007	04-NOV-08
LOUISIANA	50,557	2002 - 2007	10-DEC-08
TEXAS	23,260	2002 - 2007	07-OCT-08

**TABLE 9. NUMBER OF DEALERS UTILIZING THE ELECTRONIC REPORTING OPTION FOR TRIP TICKETS, BY STATE**

STATE	DEALERS	% OF LANDINGS
FLORIDA	223	53%
ALABAMA	28	30%
MISSISSIPPI	4	0%
LOUISIANA	80	62%
TEXAS	116	75%
TOTAL	451	55%

**TABLE 10. NUMBER OF HARD PARTS COLLECTED FROM THE COMMERCIAL FISHERY BY FIN PRIORITY SPECIES, BY STATE**

PRIMARY SPECIES	FL	AL	MS	LA	TX	TOT
BLACK DRUM	-	-	-	737	83	820
FLOUNDERS	104	65	264	183	257	873
GRAY SNAPPER	834	-	6	39	-	879
GRAY TRIGGERFISH	73	7	-	36	-	116
GREATER AMBERJACK	9	-	2	2	-	13
KING MACKEREL	23	4	-	97	-	124
RED SNAPPER	435	123	50	156	370	1,134
SHEEPSHEAD	0	41	186	742	-	969
STRIPED MULLET	1,205	432	26	725	-	2,388
VERMILION SNAPPER	173	49	-	80	77	379
TOTAL	2,856	721	534	2,797	787	7,695

**TABLE 11. NUMBER OF HARD PARTS COLLECTED FROM THE RECREATIONAL FISHERY BY FIN PRIORITY SPECIES, BY STATE**

<b>PRIMARY SPECIES</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>AL</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>TX</b>	<b>TOT</b>
BLACK DRUM	12	-	23	459	72	566
FLOUNDERS	86	49	153	701	110	1,099
GAG	446	-	-	-	-	446
GRAY SNAPPER	868	-	-	513	88	1,469
GRAY TRIGGERFISH	218	20	-	161	37	436
GREATER AMBERJACK	29	6	-	211	-	246
KING MACKEREL	167	14	-	39	304	524
RED DRUM	417	37	21	-	540	1,015
RED GROUPER	184	-	-	-	-	184
RED SNAPPER	385	215	2	614	212	1,428
SHEEPSHEAD	110	36	29	570	25	770
SPOTTED SEATROUT	619	127	58	-	914	1,718
VERMILION SNAPPER	542	57	-	50	454	1,103
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,083</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>3,318</b>	<b>2,756</b>	<b>11,004</b>

**APPENDIX A**  
**2008 Operations Plan**

**2008 Operations Plan for the  
Fisheries Information Network in the  
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008

**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 2008. 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 2008 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 Bluefin Data 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 2008 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: This task will provide for the conduct of the MRFSS survey in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida for shore, for-hire,

and private modes and for-hire field intercepts in Texas. This task will provide for coordination of the survey, an intercept survey of shore, for-hire and private boat anglers to estimate angler catch using the existing MRFSS methodology, and entry of the data. The states will also conduct weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. The NMFS and GSMFC will produce expanded estimates of catch and effort by wave using the existing MRFSS methodology. 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: 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 A4: 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 2008.

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 A5: 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 2008.

Task A6: 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 2008 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, 2009 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)  
Objective:      Develop 2009 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:      2009 Annual Operations Plan.  
Schedule:      Annual Operations Plan will be drafted by spring 2009 and addressed by the Committee at the 2009 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 2008.

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; 3) Develop a survey of dealers for input on the best methods to facilitate reporting; and 4) Raising awareness of the FIN DMS.

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 2008 to continue address the identified issues.

Task B5: 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 B6: 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. FIN has populated the metadata data base using the InPort tool. States will routinely update and/or add information to the system. This issue is a standing item on the Gulf Geographic Subcommittee of FIN.

Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, staff time.  
Product: Development of metadata module  
Schedule: The compilation of these data will be an ongoing activity.

Task B7: 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. This task will be 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 Gulf States continue to work through the various issues and problems associated with loading these data into the system. This issue is a standing item on the Gulf Geographic Subcommittee of FIN. Once those data have been collected, data on dealers and fishermen will be compiled.

Task B8: 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 2008.

Task B9: 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-2008.

Task B10: Develop Methods for Validating Species Conversion Factors (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Develop methods for validating 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 has compiled the various conversion factors that are used by the FIN partners for the species landed in the Gulf of Mexico. The next step will be to examine the factors and determine methods for validating these conversion 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 2008 to address this task.

Task B11: 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 B12: 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 B13: 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 2008 to review the recreational data collected during the year. Topics that need to be address include:

- Identification of geographic regions of interest for sampling;
- Examination of methods for post-stratification;
- Identify species that should be targeted by for specific surveys and implement these surveys;
- Investigate methods for improving sampling coverage of inshore tidal areas;

- Identify geographic regions of interest for recreational sampling;
- Increase recreational sampling levels Gulf-wide;
- Optimize sampling allocations to improve precision for key species;

Many of these issues are being addressed by the redesign of the recreational data collection activities. FIN should utilize these efforts to avoid duplication of effort.

Task B14: 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 2008 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 B15: 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. This issue is a major component of the recreational data collection redesign. The FIN should utilize these efforts to avoid duplication of effort. 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 2008 to continue addressing this task.

Task B16: 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. In 2007, the Gulf States, GSMFC and NMFS conducted 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: A presentation regarding the pilot survey will be given at the 2008 FIN Committee meeting. Based on the results, the FIN Committee will take the appropriate actions.

Task B17: 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. For the for-hire sector, implementing the existing Large Pelagic Survey (LPS) in the Gulf of Mexico will collect the needed data. For the private boat sector, FIN conducted a characterization survey to describe the sector. From the results of that survey, the Work Group will develop methods for collecting catch and effort data for the private boat sector. 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 2008 to continue addressing this task.

Task B18: 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 work in conjunction with the Marine Recreational Information (MRI) initiative 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 2008 to continue addressing this issue.

Task B19: Coordination and Integration of Data Collection Efforts (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

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

Team Members: FIN Committee

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

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

Product: Communication and presentation of recommendations to ongoing programs.

Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

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

Objective: To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection technologies

Team Members: FIN Committee and other appropriate personnel

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

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

Product: Communication and presentation of recommendations to ongoing programs.

Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B21: Evaluation of Information Management Technologies (Goal 3, Objective 6) (F)

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

Team Members: FIN Committee and industry personnel

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

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

Product: Progress reports.

Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B22: Long-term National Program Planning (Goal 4, Objective 1) (F)

Objective: Provide for long-term national program planning

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ASMFC staff will attend Pacific RecFIN, PacFIN, ACCSP Operations Committee, and other pertinent meetings and coordinate activities as appropriate. Accomplished by mail and meetings.

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

Product: Record of coordination activities.

Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

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

Objective: Coordinate FIN with other regional cooperative marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs and 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			
Implement for-hire telephone survey and at-sea sampling protocols for head boats	X	X			

<b>Data Collection (continued)</b>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Identify species that should be targets for specific surveys			X		
Implement surveys for identified species				X	
Investigate methods for improving sampling coverage of inshore tidal areas			X		
Implement pilot survey for detailed effort module		X			
Implement detailed effort module Gulf-wide			X		
Explore development of more detailed area fished codes			X		
Identify various state structures of recreational fishing licenses	X				
Ensure Gulf States are collecting critical license frame data elements		X			
Continue recreational sampling in Puerto Rico	X		X	X	X
Implement recreational sampling in U.S. Virgin Islands		X	X	X	X
Determine live market activities in Gulf				X	
Implement pilot survey to collect data on live market activities				X	
Identify geographic regions of interest for recreational sampling		X			
Investigate feasibility of sampling these regions			X		
Implement FIN Social and Economic module	X	X	X	X	X
Prioritize species for additional biological sampling	X	X	X	X	X
Determine if increased otolith processing capacity is needed		X			
Evaluate bycatch module against current needs			X		
Implement the bycatch data collection module				X	
Increase recreational sampling levels Gulf-wide		X			
Optimize sampling allocations to improve precision for key species	X				
<b>Innovative collection technology</b>					
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>					
<b>Data management system</b>					
Review location and responsibility of DMS					X
<b>Hardware/software capabilities</b>					
Review hardware/software capabilities					X
Provide finalized recreational data in electronic form		X	X	X	X
<b>Data maintenance</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Standard data management protocols</b>					
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	
<b>Integration of databases</b>					
Identify recreational databases for integration in DMS	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Innovative data management technology</b>					
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		



<b>Data Management (continued)</b>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
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 11 and 12, 2008  
St. Thomas, USVI**

Vice Chairman Guy Davenport called the meeting to order on June 11, 2008 at 9:00a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

**Members**

Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
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  
Shenell Gordon, USVI DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI, (*proxy for W. Tobias*)  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR  
Jim Long, NPS, Atlanta, GA (*proxy for T. Schmidt*)  
Daniel Matos-Caraballo, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR  
Christine Murrell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
John Reed, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX

**Staff**

Donna Bellais, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Alex Miller, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Terry Cody, Rockport, TX  
Ellen Lovelidge, ACCSP, Washington, DC  
Scott Steinback, NMFS, Woods Hole, MA  
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 19 and 20, 2007 were approved as presented.

### Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

**G. White** of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) gave an overview of activities for the past year. **White** reported on the data warehouse noting that commercial fisheries data is complete for 1980 to 2007 for North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida as well as 1994 to 2007 data for states from Maine to Virginia. The recreational (MRFSS) data (1981 through 2007) are also in the system. 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 Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Virginia are participating in the SAFIS, and some dealers in Delaware, and Maryland. **White** reported that the ACCSP is providing data to the Southeast Regional Office. **White** gave an update on the ACCSP staff noting that Mike Cahall was named Director in September 2007. Ellen Lovelidge was hired as program coordinator and Paul Philip has been hired as application developer. Two positions remain open; outreach coordinator and data coordinator. **White** explained that SAFIS is an integrated State-Federal system which is standardized and flexible producing improved data integrity. Benefits of SAFIS are real-time quota monitoring, improved compliance monitoring, reduced reporting to multiple agencies, and optional recording of dockside sales. **White** reported that routine updates from the states are being stored in the data warehouse. Biological data is being collected on lobster and Atlantic herring. **White** gave updates on ACCSP activities including SAFIS, FIS, MRIP, and metadata. The warehouse redesign includes registration tracking which matches SAFIS, and an additional data layer for catch/landings. **White** reported that when data is still in the reporting system of SAFIS the agreement between partners allows all agency personnel to see everything. FIN members discussed the issue of data confidentiality between the states. When one state partner wants information, they go to the state agency that collected the data. **R. Cody** noted that Florida has an agreement that allows some states access to confidential data. **Cody** will check on this confidential data agreement and forward to D. Donaldson. **G. White** will look into ACCSP data sharing agreements as well.

### FIN Data Management System (DMS) Issues

Review of list of personnel with access to confidential data - **G. Davenport** reported that he has developed a spreadsheet with the entire history of personnel with access to NMFS confidential data. He will forward this to FIN members and requested that members review this list and make the proper additions and deletions and return this spreadsheet to him with corrections. **D. Donaldson** distributed a list of personnel with access to the FIN Data Management System (DMS) and requested that members make corrections and return them to him or D. Bellais.

Status of the FIN DMS – **D. Bellais** reported on the status of the FIN DMS noting that several new reports have been created for quality assurance purposes. These include reports for landings by year, grade, gear, area, and market. These reports will be reviewed annually. **Bellais** requested that members contact her if they want any other reports generated. **Bellais** reported that data are continued to be loaded (by wave) into the Recreational Fishing License

module for Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. NMFS has access to these data and they are utilizing this information for the angler license directory pilot survey (ALDS) being conducted in the Gulf of Mexico. **Bellais** noted that the FIN database conversion to Oracle Cluster/GRID was put on hold due to electrical issues in the building, however they have been corrected and the conversion is now in progress and should be complete by late August 2008. Oracle Discoverer public access tracking continues to be a work in progress and the states continue to update and enter metadata into the InPort system. **G. Davenport** noted that D. Gloeckner is now handling TIP online and J. Bennett has Puerto Rico biological data that can be provided to FIN. **Bellais** then reported on loading biological data. Biological data entry forms have been deployed on the web for the states to test. **Bellais** reported on the forms server, marine recreational fishery catch and effort estimates, and menhaden data.

### **Review of FIN Program Review Report**

Committee members were provided with an Executive Summary of the FIN program review. **D. Donaldson** gave some history on the review, noting that a review is conducted every five years. Some members read this program review and have found that it is not very useful and suggested that the FIN Committee discuss whether a program review for the FIN program was necessary and worth the time and effort. **T. Sminkey** suggested that a review could be integrated into the FIN Annual Report. **D. Donaldson** noted that a facilitated session is held every five years and seems like a much more effective tool for providing feedback on the FIN program. It was noted that if FIN does not conduct a program review, the goals and objectives would need to be modified to reflect that change. After some discussion, **P. Campbell** moved to charge the Administrative Subcommittee with modifying the existing goals and objectives to reflect the decision of discontinuing the program review. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **Presentation of Angler Expenditure and Impact Estimates**

**S. Steinback** gave a presentation on angler expenditures and the economic impact of saltwater sportfishing in the Gulf States. **Steinback** gave a summary of data collection methods, expenditure and economic impact estimates by state, and the way these estimates were used. The Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) was used in Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and the license frame was utilized in Texas for data collection purposes. **Steinback** reviewed the response rates of deliverable mail surveys, as well as daily trip expenses and annual trip expenses by state and mode. Using 2006 expenditure estimates he listed the rank of the five Gulf States among all twenty-three U.S. coastal states. **Steinback** also listed economic impacts for expenditures, sales, income and employment by state and the percent of total economic activity attributable to marine recreational fishing in each state. In closing, **Steinback** explained how expenditure and impact estimates are used. These estimates are required for proposed state legislation for recreational fishing management actions, as well as for disaster preparedness and recovery. **Steinback** noted that all of this information will be compiled in a NOAA report which will be available in late summer 2008. Staff will provide copies of Steinback's presentation as well as the report to FIN members.

### **Discussion of State Involvement in GSMFC Economic Program**

**D. Donaldson** introduced Alex Miller, staff economist for GSMFC and noted that NOAA Fisheries had provided some funding to hire an economist and conduct activities. **Miller** explained that the FIN Social/Economic Work Group had suggested five areas for the economist to coordinate in the course of the next five years, including commercial and recreational fishing economic activities, public attitudes, knowledge and use of coastal and marine ecosystems, marine angler expenditure survey, economic survey of the inshore shrimp fleet, and an economic survey of fishing related businesses. **Miller** asked FIN members for input on conducting some of these surveys. **C. Murrell** and **M. Kasprzak** stated that they would be interested in being involved in the inshore shrimp fleet survey and the fishing related business survey. **R. Cody** noted that Florida has a staff economist who may be interested in working with the Social/Economic Work Group. **C. Lilyestrom** noted that if Puerto Rico were able to secure some funding, they would like to be included in the recreational expenditure survey as well. **Miller** will keep FIN partners informed as the economic program is developed.

### **Update on Marine Recreational Information Program**

**D. Donaldson** gave background information on the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) by explaining that the National Research Council (NRC) conducted a review of marine recreational fishery survey methods and made several recommendations. Since that time several meetings have been held and a variety of different work groups have developed projects. **Donaldson** reported that the Executive Steering Committee approved 16 research projects. These projects cover a wide range of topics from exploring new methods of estimating catch and effort, developing common data standards for all saltwater recreational data collection programs, finding new ways to count released catch, and conducting effort surveys using a list of anglers. **Donaldson** reported that these research projects will address issues related to survey design and analysis, data management and standards, for-hire, and highly migratory species. **Donaldson** noted that the MRIP website has much more detailed information on these projects. **Donaldson** reported that MRIP had sent out a news release about the 60 day comment period for the Gulf of Mexico License Frame Pilot Survey. **Donaldson** and **R. Cody** will participate in a conference call later today regarding this subject.

**T. Sminkey** reported that a panel of outside consultants has been tasked with reviewing the estimation procedures. In addition, the for-hire work group has secured two of three expert reviewers and is planning a meeting to determine the best method for collecting catch and effort from the for-hire fisheries. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for the last week in July at the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission office.

### **Update on Electronic Trip Ticket/IFQ Compatibility Issues**

**J. Reed** stated that one of the goals of this activity is a need for consistency in data collection. Theoretically the best consistency you can get is a single point of data collection. The concept was to leverage the already in place red snapper IFQ that the regional office had started back a couple of years ago and see if we could not integrate the collection of trip ticket data in the Gulf through that program. The ideal is that the electronic trip ticket program would collect data for a variety of species and pre-populate the trip ticket system with that data so the dealer would not double enter that data. Our goal eventually would be to also have a back office validation to ensure that the data had not been changed between the time it was entered,

transmitted and the time it was submitted to the states. **D. Donaldson** stated that that is the short term solution and then the long term goal would be to get the electronic trip ticket program certified and accredited. That would give the dealers some other options for entering that information. The ultimate goal is for dealers to only enter the information once, just for ease for them but also make sure there weren't different numbers being entered in the two programs. **M. Kasprzak** stated that there might be an issue with compliance of the trip ticket reporting system. The regulations say a trip ticket must be completed at the point of sale and the dealer has to maintain those records on site and if enforcement came and checked and they saw red snapper coming across the dock and it wasn't on the trip ticket that dealer would be cited at that point. **Donaldson** stated that the concept that had been discussed was that a dealer would fill out the trip ticket, he would get to red snapper it would prompt the dealer to go to the website, enter that information, and then the program would send that data back. Once he was done and exited the web site, it would send that data back to trip ticket program. **Reed** noted the ability of the dealer to move red snapper off of the dock, is based on that approval code. One of the parts of an IFQ that complicates it is that the IFQ has to be real time. It's the only way that NMFS can debit that fisherman's account and insure that he doesn't overfish his allocation. If the trip ticket is done at the dock, then that would be consistent. If a trip ticket is done away from the dock, in other words the fish has to be transported to a place first, that is not consistent and that is against the regulations. A solution to that is if a dealer wants to use the trip ticket program, he has to do it at the dock. **G. Davenport** asked if there was a plan for implementation and the time frame for that plan. **Reed** stated that he recommended that we do this during the grouper design so that we can get together in a much more collaborative way so that we all understand the needs. It would also be useful to have some dealers involved to get a better sense of their business practices. **Donaldson** stated that we should work on some of these issues with red snapper to identify any potential problems instead of waiting for grouper. It was noted that we can get a proof of concept approval for this activity. It was pointed out that we already have a proof of concept, at the meeting in Baton Rouge 2 years ago. However, it appears that not much progress has been made. At the Baton Rouge meeting, the idea was that there would be 2 stand alone systems. The web based system and the electronic trip ticket system and the dealer could fill out trip tickets however he wanted and then go to your system and enter red snapper or we could modify the trip ticket program to enter red snapper and get all the approval codes, etc. Apparently that is not without significant certification and accreditation and not possible at this point. **Reed** noted that that scenario is problematic since there is resistance in giving a contractor who NMFS does not have immediate control over the responsibility of collecting data that is under their regulations. **Donaldson** stated that it appears to be more of willingness on NMFS's part to do it. It was noted that it is very difficult to balance the resource needs in the regional office but they are hiring another programmer so maybe NMFS can be more responsive. It was noted that if NMFS had come to FIN when they were initially establishing the IFQ system, the trip ticket program could have been modified to meet their needs and we would not be in this situation. **Reed** pointed out that NMFS wouldn't have given up the responsibility of collecting data. **Kasprzak** noted that at this point, the states are giving up responsibility of collecting the red snapper data to NMFS. So NMFS is asking the states to trust their system. It needs to be a two-way street. **Davenport** stated that there is going to have to be a compromise and we need to work together. There was agreement among the members that FIN and NMFS staff needs to continue to work on this issue and provide another update to the FIN Committee at their next meeting.

### **Discussion of National Recreational Registry**

Status of Gulf of Mexico pilot survey - FIN members were provided with information on the angler license directory pilot survey (ALDS) being conducted in the Gulf of Mexico. **D. Donaldson** reported that this survey began in 2006 and continued through last year and is scheduled to end this year. This survey utilizes recreational fishing licenses as a sampling frame. **Donaldson** reported that the most important issue was missing information. When licenses were first collected from the states only about 30% of the licenses had phone numbers. This is still an issue but may be a matter of education for the vendors. There were also some data loading problems where states haven't been able to get an updated frame. The response rate was only about 30% but it is a difficult population to contact. **Donaldson** noted that there was a wide range of survey coverage, getting anywhere from 20% to over 90% of the intercepted anglers. This varies by state and fishing mode. **Donaldson** reported that cooperation was good, about 70 % of the anglers contacted have agreed to participate. Approximately 50% of respondents report their fishing activity compared to 10% for the coastal household telephone survey (CHTS) random digit dialing survey. Therefore, instead of having to call 100 people for a good sample size, now only 20 to 50 anglers have to be called for the same amount of information. **Donaldson** reported that because of issues with exemptions, etc. this is actually a dual frame survey using the ALDS and supplementing that with CHTS. This dual frame provides significant improvement in coverage of anglers. Some improvements have been implemented this year such as almost tripling the sample size, using a reverse telephone directory, advance letters are sent out to prepare the anglers, and providing a call-in number. Future improvements in 2008 will allow leaving messages on answering machines, and caller ID messages.

Discussion of MRIP licensing issues - **D. Bellais** reported that the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is in the process of establishing a national saltwater angler and for-hire vessel registry by January 2009. Bellais reported that she is a member of the Angler Registry Database Work Group (ARDWG) which was formed with E. Barth of Virginia as Chair. **Bellais** reported that California, Oregon, Texas, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Connecticut, and Alaska have been targeted for participation in the Program. Alabama, Florida, and Texas in the Gulf of Mexico have provided information on data sharing policies, geographic coverage of licenses, data quality and quality control processes, primary contact for data management related to registry process, preliminary assessment of registry category, and information on different types of recreational saltwater licenses. **Bellais** also noted that data will be submitted electronically either quarterly or annually, the timely submission of data will be the responsibility of the state, and data will be a delimited flat file. **Bellais** reported that this is still a work in progress.

### **Discussion of Multi-year Cooperative Agreement for FIN**

**D. Donaldson** noted that in 2007 the FIN Committee decided to do a three-year cooperative agreement since there is much more flexibility than in a one-year agreement. Since 2009 is the third year of this agreement, **Donaldson** asked the Committee if they were in favor of a five year grant beginning in 2010. It will entail a few more projections of budgets and statements of work but statements of work can be amended in the future if necessary. The Committee agreed to go ahead with five year cooperative agreements beginning in 2010.



### **Review and Approval of 2007 Annual Report**

FIN Committee members were provided with copies of the draft 2007 FIN Annual Report. **T. Sminkey** suggested having the Annual Report more results-oriented than activity-oriented. **D. Donaldson moved to task the Administrative Subcommittee with modifying the FIN Annual Report and developing more results-oriented information about the various activities in the Report. The 2008 Annual Report would reflect these changes.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. **G. Bray** requested that members of the Committee review the Report and provide comments, revisions, or corrections to staff by June 30, 2007. **K Cuevas moved to approve the 2007 Annual Report as amended.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

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

FIN members were provided with copies of all Subcommittee and Work Group Reports. The Reports are part of these minutes and are attached.

#### **Commercial Port Sampler Meeting** – (Attachment A)

**G. Bray** reported that the Caribbean Port Sampler meeting was held in St. Thomas, USVI in October 2007. There were no action items. This group will be meeting again in the fall of 2008, possibly in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. **M. Kasprzak moved to accept the Commercial Port Sampler Meeting Report.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### **Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee** – (Attachment B)

**G. Bray** reported that the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee met twice since the last FIN meeting, in the fall of 2007 and the spring of 2008. One issue that the Subcommittee wanted discussed at this FIN meeting was the possibility of sending all federal species to the NMFS Panama City lab for otolith processing. NMFS would process priority species as needed and shelve the rest for later processing. It was noted that the concern was that the more people involved in reading otoliths the higher potential for inconsistency among readers, but with QA/QC procedures in place it doesn't warrant a change in procedure. **The Committee discussed this issue and recommended continuing the current processing.** **Bray** reported that at the March 2008 meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee the issue of QA/QC of commercial data loaded into the FIN DMS was discussed. The recommendation was made that D. Bellais would produce a spreadsheet that details the landings from each state database and the FIN DMS. The group recommended that they would like to meet on an annual basis during the GSMFC fall meeting. **Bray** noted that this group will meet in the fall of 2008. **P. Campbell moved to accept the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee Report.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### **FIN Otolith Processors Training Workshop** – (Attachment C)

**G. Bray** noted the otolith processors met in May of 2008. There were several issues raised at that meeting and need to be addressed by the FIN Committee. It was suggested by the group that since there are more species being read and some species are difficult to read, they will be using smaller groups to read otoliths to ensure that everyone has equal opportunity to read them. It was also suggested in order to improve the training workshop, it is very

important to have the experts on particular species attend these meetings. **D. Donaldson** noted that this group will be meeting in May of next year and all the reference sets that were discussed at this year's meeting, will be distributed to the various agencies for reading and APEs will be calculated and discussed at next year's meeting. **V. Swann moved to accept the FIN Otolith Processors Training Workshop Report.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### ComFIN Data Collection Work Group – (Attachment D)

**G. Bray** reported that the Data Collection Work Group has had two conference calls this year. One of the issues that group addressed related to need for trip-level data in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The group determined that the USVI does collect trip-level data for commercial fisheries so they did not need to discuss this issue further. Also at the last FIN facilitated session the issue of conversion factors for commercial species was raised. The Work Group identified and compiled conversion factors that the states are using for the various species and determined that the conversion factors being used by the states are the same or very similar for all major saltwater species. **C. Murrell moved to accept the ComFIN Data Collection Work Group Report.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group – (Attachment E)

**G. Bray** reported that a conference call was held in May of this year to review otolith collections for 2007 and 2008, discuss the process of generating targets for biological sampling and determine the 2009 sampling target levels. The Work Group noted that federal collection of red snapper and vermilion snapper exceeded the targets for those species. Because of this, **G. Davenport** suggested that NMFS be responsible for all commercial red and vermilion snapper sampling to allow the states to concentrate on other species. **D. Donaldson** stated that this would allow the states to focus on some of the secondary species. It was noted that the states need to look at the various options and determine if this would be viable. Staff will develop several scenarios and provide it to the states for their consideration. Since this could affect the funding levels, a final decision will be made prior to submission of the draft statements of work and budgets for 2009. **Bray** reported that G. Fitzhugh and L. Lombardi mentioned that the collected numbers of otoliths for FIN did not match the numbers for NMFS. G. Davenport stated that the discrepancies had been identified and it has been resolved. **Bray noted that the Work Group recommended that FIN should continue to use the current targets for the 2009 sampling season. M. Kasprzak moved to accept the FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group Report.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### FIN Outreach Work Group – (Attachment F)

**G. Bray** reported that since this work group has not met in some time, the membership needs to be revisited by the FIN Committee. **T. Sminkey** stated that his agency should be able to provide a member to the Outreach Work Group this year. **R. Cody and M. Kasprzak** also stated that they will check with their agencies and let Bray know by the end of June. **Bray** reported that this group has met twice via conference call and have developed a fact sheet on electronic reporting for commercial dealers in the Gulf of Mexico. The Work Group made some modifications and improvements to this fact sheet and it was distributed to FIN members. **Bray** asked FIN members for one or two quotes from dealers who use electronic reporting and these would be included in the fact sheet. S. Atran was concerned that this fact sheet needed more

work to be useful. **P. Campbell moved to accept the fact sheet on electronic reporting for commercial dealers.** The motion was seconded and passed with the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council opposed. **Bray** reported that the Work Group has also developed a brochure detailing the FIN Data Management System in order to inform partners about the system. It was suggested that the states could add a link on their web pages directing people who would like to access the data to the FIN DMS. The states will contact Bray about that possibility. The FIN Committee reviewed this document and **C. Murrell moved to accept the brochure on the FIN Data Management System with edits and links.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. **M. Kasprzak moved to accept the FIN Outreach Work Group Report.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **Operations Plan**

### **Status of 2008 Activities**

The FIN Committee was provided with a list of activities currently being conducted. The Committee reviewed the various activities and noted that all activities were either completed or being addressed as outlined in the Operations Plan.

### **Review and approval of 2009 Operations Plan**

The FIN Committee reviewed the 2009 Operations Plan. It was noted the activities in the plan were developed from committee, subcommittee and work group activities. The FIN Committee needs to ensure that all proposed activities are necessary and will move the program forward. The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) will meet in August 2008 to give final approval to the Plan. FIN Committee members were asked to forward any comments or corrections to staff. **K. Cuevas moved to give tentative approval to the 2009 Operations Plan.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**The meeting recessed at 4:15 p.m.**

**The meeting reconvened at 8:30 a.m.**

## **Discussion of 2009 FIN Priorities**

Committee members were provided with a list of items for funding consideration in 2009. D. Donaldson reported that the list was generated from activities conducted last year as well as discussions in various subcommittee and work group meetings. The final prioritized list will be forwarded to the S/FFMC for their meeting in August 2008. At that time they will decide which items will be included in the 2009 FIN cooperative agreement. All items listed as high priority will require budgets and statements of work by July 18, 2008. FIN members discussed the collection of detailed effort for blue crab in Louisiana and agreed to expand to shrimp to further test methodology and at sea sampling. **The Committee agreed to list as high priority all ongoing activities.** The prioritized list of activities for 2009 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 and IFQs (new)

Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (ongoing)  
Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)  
Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)  
Operation of FIN Data Management System (ongoing)  
Full Implementation of Trip Ticket Program 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)  
At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida (new/ongoing)  
Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab and Shrimp in Louisiana (ongoing/new)

#### Low Priority

Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)

#### **Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting**

The Committee agreed to schedule the next FIN meeting for the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in June of 2009 in the Savannah, Georgia area.

#### **Other Business**

**Donaldson** asked Committee members for input on how to handle future meeting materials. After Committee discussion members agreed that in the future it would not be necessary to print paper copies of meeting materials. The materials will be sent to members in a zip file via e-mail. Members will be responsible for downloading material and bringing to FIN meetings.

**D. Donaldson** updated the FIN Committee on an MRIP conference call that he and R. Cody participated in with members of the Executive Steering Committee (G. Colvin and J. Boreman) regarding the National Saltwater License Registry. During the call, **Donaldson** expressed concern about the perceived lack of cooperation by NMFS. G. Colvin responded that they are still committed to working with the states and perhaps there had been some misunderstanding. It was suggested that the Commission and state members need to continue to voice their concerns and not allow NMFS to completely dictate the direction. At some point there will have to be final criteria developed that outlines which licensing systems are acceptable. It is still a work in progress. **Donaldson** noted that he was still concerned but feels that we can work within the system. **Donaldson** noted that there will be a 60-day public comment period and recommended that members go to the website to read the NOAA proposed rule to require saltwater angler registration. If there are comments or concerns, members need to provide them to NMFS by August 11, 2008. **Donaldson** stated that the rule is very similar to what was discussed by the registry work group in the past and there is not much detail in terms of standards or criteria. A system will be developed and in use by 2011. After Committee discussion, it was agreed to have a presentation on this subject at the next FIN meeting.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 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.