

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

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## 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 (NMFS) 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.

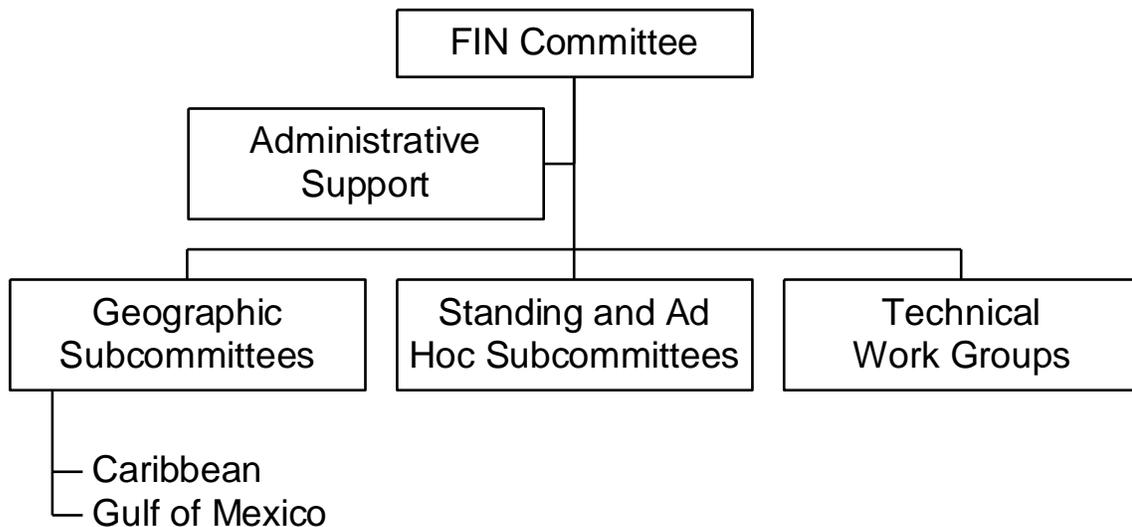
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<sup>1</sup> The Southeast Region (the Region) includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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 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, staff members from both FIN and the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) continue to coordinate, ensuring that there is compatibility and comparability between the two regions.

The FIN Committee is divided into two standing subcommittees representing the major geographical areas of the Region: Caribbean, and the 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 2012 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.

## **COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

### **FIN Committee**

The major FIN meeting was held in June 2012. The major issues discussed during the meeting included:

- Identification and continuation of tasks to be addressed in 2012 and instruction to Administrative and Geographic Subcommittees and the Commercial Technical, Data Collection Plan, Data Management, For-Hire, Outreach, Recreational Technical, Social/Economic and ad hoc work groups to either begin or continue work on these tasks;
- Development of the 2013 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 2012;

- 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 2013;
- Preparation and submission of a proposal for financial assistance to support activities of the FIN; and
- Continued internal evaluation of the program.

### **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. Their activities included:

- The Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey data review meetings were held in February, August and October 2012 to present the results of the RDD and intercept surveys for the East coast and Gulf Region, sampler performance issues, update on MRIP and Gulf logbook pilot study, update of national economic surveys, discussion of site register re-design, discussion of APAIS sampling topics, review of wave report fish tables and estimate tables and review of Gulf States For-Hire Telephone Survey;
- The Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee met in March and October 2012 to discuss status of biological sampling activities, discussion of national registry projects, demonstration of traceability program, update on MRIP Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook project, update on HMS electronic reporting activities, discussion of adding economic questions to For-Hire Telephone Survey, adding TRIP\_ID variable to biological data, discussion of Quality Management concept, update on MRIP activities, status of federal quota monitoring/electronic reporting activities, presentation of tip ticket inventory module, status of recreational choice experiment survey, status of metadata data entry and review of 2011 commercial data;
- The annual Otolith Processor Training Workshop was held in May 2012 to conduct otolith reading and review of FIN priority species, discuss the various reference sets, storage of otolith issues and standardized format for reporting APEs;
- The FIN Committee met in June 2012 for their annual meeting. The Committee met to address a variety of important issues including status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP); FIN Data Management System (DMS) issues; status of commercial vessel, dealer, and fishermen registries; presentation of results from fishing-related business projects; recreational economic add-on survey and status of for-hire add-

on questions as well as plans for conducting an inshore shrimp survey; status of federal quota monitoring/HMS/electronic reporting activities; discussion of biological and commercial data delivery issues into FIN DMS; an update on the Traceability Program; discussion of MRIP Gulf Logbook Pilot project; update on new MRIP Intercept Survey design; discussion of next round of states' national registry projects; and review and approval of the 2011 FIN Annual Report, various subcommittee and work group reports, status of 2012 activities, review and approval of the 2013 Operations Plan and discussion of 2013 FIN funding priorities;

- The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee met in August 2012 to determine the activities for inclusion in the 2013 FIN cooperative agreement;
- The FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group met (via conference call) in September 2012 to review 2011 and 2012 otolith and length data collection and processing activities and to develop recommendations for necessary lengths and otoliths for FIN priority species;
- The Commercial and Recreational Technical Work Groups met (via conference call) in December 2012 to review the FIN Detailed Effort Module;
- 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 FIN Activities - This task provided 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, Florida and Puerto Rico for shore, for-hire, and private modes, an activity under the RecFIN(SE). This task provides 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 Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (east and west coast). The states also conducted weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (east and west coast) charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. 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 dockside 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.
- **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 2011, four menhaden factories were active in the northern Gulf of Mexico at Moss Point, MS, and Empire, Abbeville, and Cameron, LA. A total of 36 purse-seine vessels fished for gulf menhaden in 2012. 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 2012 were approximately 578,000 metric tons. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year. Table 6 shows the number of 10-fish samples collected by port during the 2012 fishing season. And Table 7 presents the age composition of the gulf menhaden biostatistical samples by port in 2012.
- **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 Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi (oyster, crab, shrimp and finfish), 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.
- **Biological Sampling of Commercial and Recreational Catches** - This task provided funding for collection of biological data from the recreational and commercial fisheries. These data are essential to accurately assessing the status of commercial and recreational species. For the commercial aspects, port samplers collected this information based on established guidelines. For the recreational side, samplers went to sites and collected the

necessary biological data using a modified MRFSS method. This task provided funding for collection, processing and analysis of these data. The primary target species include black drum, gag, gray snapper, gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, king mackerel, red drum, red grouper, red snapper, sheepshead, flounders (gulf & southern), spotted seatrout, striped mullet and vermilion snapper. The secondary target species include Spanish mackerel, scamp, yellowtail snapper, cobia, black grouper, black sea bass, red porgy, snowy grouper, speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year. Table 9 and Table 10 present the number of age structures that were collected by state samplers for the FIN priority species for the commercial and recreational fisheries, respectively.

- Trip Ticket Program Development, Implementation and Operation – This task provided for the full operation of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida trip ticket program activity under the ComFIN. This task provided for collection of components for a commercial trip ticket system to census the commercial fisheries landings 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. In addition, it provided funding to contract for implementation and operation of electronic reporting for the trip ticket systems as well as reporting of data for the quota monitoring and IFQ programs. For 2012, there were 617 commercial dealers and processors in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas who were utilizing this program. This is a long-term data collection activity.

### **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 2012 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. 2012. *2013 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 211 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 25 pp + appendix.

- FIN Committee. 2012. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2011 - December 31, 2011*. No. 205 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 22 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.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/index.html](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/index.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 2011 – 2015** [Goals and Objectives are in Appendix C]

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</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
Information dissemination					
Evaluate and improve current industry outreach program through use of Commission Outreach Committee		X	X	X	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 internal program review	X	X	X	X	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	X		
Quality control/assurance					
Develop methods for validating recreational discards information	X	X	X	X	X
Develop methods for validating commercial discards information				X	X
Review of commercial and recreational QA/QC standards					X
Coordination of data collection					
Development of data collection plan	X	X	X	X	X
Expand collection of metadata	X	X	X	X	X
Full implementation of trip ticket systems for MS	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate suitability of new data sources and integrate FIN data system	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to develop protocol for private access	X	X	X	X	X
Explore feasibility of logbook program for for-hire		X			
Identify species that should be targets for specific surveys				X	
Implement surveys for identified species					X
Evaluate detailed effort module		X	X		
Implement detailed effort module pilot				X	X
Explore development of more detailed area fished codes		X			
Improve quality and completeness of state license databases	X	X			
Implement effort surveys using national registry			X	X	X
Continue recreational sampling in Puerto Rico	X	X	X	X	X
Implement recreational sampling in U.S. Virgin Islands			X	X	X
Explore feasibility of sampling on finer geographic areas		X	X		
Implement sampling on finer geographic levels				X	X
Implement FIN Social and Economic module	X	X	X	X	X
Prioritize species for additional biological sampling	X	X	X	X	X
Continue coordination of biological sampling	X	X	X	X	X
Collect soft tissue, etc samples, as time permits	X	X	X	X	X

<b>Data Collection (continued)</b>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Develop protocols for long-term storage of biological samples	X				
<b>Innovative collection technology</b>					
Discuss strategy for implementation of in-season quota monitoring			X	X	X
Review opportunity to improve timeliness of data to support commercial quota monitoring	X	X			
Recommend improvements to programs			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
<b>Data maintenance</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Standard data management protocols</b>					
Implement vessel registry tracking system	X	X	X		
Implement similar system for dealers and fishermen				X	X
<b>Integration of databases</b>					
Hire metadata coordinator	X				
Identify appropriate databases for integration in DMS	X	X	X	X	X
Improve timeliness and compatibility of TX recreational data		X	X		
<b>Innovative data management technology</b>					
Evaluate innovative data management technologies	X	X	X	X	X
Test electronic field data entry		X	X		
Protect data confidentiality	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Development of National Program</b>					
<b>Long-term planning</b>					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Coordination with other programs</b>					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Consistency and comparability</b>					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X

**TABLE 2. FIN COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2012**

Nicole Shaffer  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Ken Brennan  
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**TABLE 3. FIN SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR 2012**

**FIN Administrative Subcommittee**

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

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### **FIN Social/Economic Work Group**

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Southeast Fisheries Science Center

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

INTERVIEWS OBTAINED						x of Base Quota		
STATE	WAVE	SH	CH	PR	Total	SH	CH	PR
FLORIDA - EAST	1	664	113	1,527	2,304	1.51	2.22	1.54
	2	568	230	1,300	2,098	1.14	3.71	1.19
	3	528	191	1,635	2,354	1.02	3.08	1.12
	4	498	179	1,661	2,338	1.01	3.14	1.27
	5	429	116	1,057	1,602	0.93	2.70	1.09
	6	562	120	1,288	1,970	1.20	2.86	1.19
	Total	3,249	949	8,468	12,666	1.13	2.99	1.23
FLORIDA - WEST	1	868	804	1,939	3,611	1.89	9.57	1.47
	2	1,365	1,648	2,038	5,051	2.26	10.30	1.40
	3	902	1,476	2,663	5,041	1.23	7.77	1.27
	4	986	1,448	2,458	4,892	1.38	9.99	1.26
	5	971	1,237	1,852	4,060	2.01	14.90	1.55
	6	800	743	1,854	3,397	1.58	9.06	1.33
	Total	5,892	7,356	12,804	26,052	1.68	9.89	1.36
ALABAMA	1	103	73	159	335	1.27	2.81	1.11
	2	149	121	237	507	1.46	3.46	1.23
	3	155	114	340	609	1.07	2.48	1.17
	4	250	171	227	648	1.87	3.49	0.88
	5	131	89	259	479	1.07	2.70	1.25
	6	113	29	168	310	1.13	1.07	1.27
	Total	901	597	1,390	2,888	1.32	2.76	1.14
LOUISIANA	1	101	89	569	759	1.22	2.78	1.39
	2	133	143	611	887	1.06	3.25	1.28
	3	200	239	1,060	1,499	1.29	3.27	1.29
	4	149	257	924	1,330	1.19	4.15	1.31
	5	123	132	748	1,003	1.28	2.81	1.24
	6	205	89	898	1,192	1.83	2.41	1.60
	Total	911	949	4,810	6,670	1.31	3.22	1.34

**TABLE 4. Continued**

STATE	WAVE	SH	CH	PR	Total	x of Base Quota		
						SH	CH	PR
	2	82	55	176	313	1.19	2.04	1.25
	3	133	65	250	448	1.48	2.24	1.14
	4	137	60	207	404	1.93	2.07	1.21
	5	105	60	234	399	1.14	2.22	1.31
	6	72	22	203	297	1.44	0.88	1.36
	Total	612	268	1,183	2,063	1.42	1.65	1.23
PUERTO RICO	1	106	131	229	466	0.82	1.46	1.15
	2	163	39	124	326	1.25	0.43	0.62
	3	178	94	160	432	1.37	1.04	0.80
	4	169	60	143	372	1.30	0.67	0.72
	5	131	109	216	456	1.01	1.21	1.08
	6	157	117	157	431	1.21	1.30	0.79
	Total	904	550	1,029	2,483	1.16	1.02	0.86

	SH	CH	PR	Total
YEAR TOTALS	12,469	10,669	29,684	52,822

**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	290	10,315	995
TX	174	4,616	903
TOTAL	464	14,931	1,898

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

PORT	NUMBER OF SAMPLES
MOSS POINT, MS	316
EMPIRE, LA	164
ABBEVILLE, LA	247
CAMERON, LA	222

**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	%
0	-		5	<1	4	<1	-		9	<1
1	995	38	477	43	82	5	123	7	1,677	23
2	1,619	62	595	53	1,570	88	1,690	91	5,474	74
3+	18	1	37	3	135	7	37	2	227	3
ALL	2,632		1,114		1,791		1,850		7,387	

**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	20,485,400	1985 – 2013	14-MAY-13
ALABAMA	609,297	1985 – 2013	30-MAY-13
MISSISSIPPI	159,661	1985 – 2013	31-MAY-13
LOUISIANA	6,544,724	1985 – 2013	14-MAY-13
TEXAS	240,817	1985 – 2013	22-FEB-13
PUERTO RICO	1,911,186	1985 - 2013	2013
<b>RECREATIONAL CATCH ESTIMATES</b>			
FLORIDA		1981 - 2010	07-Nov-11
ALABAMA		1981 - 2010	07-Nov-11
MISSISSIPPI		1981 - 2010	07-Nov-11
LOUISIANA		1981 - 2010	07-Nov-11
TEXAS		-	-
PUERTO RICO		2000 - 2011	16-AUG-11
<b>RECREATIONAL EFFORT ESTIMATES</b>			
FLORIDA		1982 - 2010	07-Nov-11
ALABAMA		1982 - 2010	07-Nov-11
MISSISSIPPI		1982 - 2010	07-Nov-11
LOUISIANA		1982 - 2010	07-Nov-11
TEXAS		-	-
PUERTO RICO		2000 - 2010	07-Nov-11
<b>BIOLOGICAL DATA</b>			
FLORIDA	27,425	2003 - 2010	22-Feb-11
ALABAMA	36,027	2002 – 2012	29-MAR-13
MISSISSIPPI	7,921	2002 – 2012	08-MAY-13
LOUISIANA	102,383	2002 – 2013	09-MAY-13
TEXAS	40,623	2002 - 2012	29-MAR-13

<b>TABLE 8. CONTINUED</b>	
<b>CONFIDENTIAL AND NON-CONFIDENTIAL USERS</b>	
UNIQUE CONFIDENTIAL	31
CONFIDENTIAL HITS	3,189
NON-CONFIDENTIAL HITS	673

**TABLE 9. NUMBER OF AGE STRUCTURES COLLECTED FROM THE COMMERCIAL 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>
AMBERJACK, GREATER	-	-	-	3		3
DRUM, BLACK	-	-	-	659	83	742
DRUM, RED	-	-	-	-	-	-
FLOUNDER, GULF	74	-	-	-	-	74
FLOUNDER, SOUTHERN	122	230	89	30	227	698
FLOUNDER, ALL	196	230	89	30	227	772
GAG	-	-	-	-	-	-
GROUPEL, RED	-	-	-	-	-	-
MACKEREL, KING	-	8	-	35	-	43
MULLET, STRIPED	2,160	498	520	768	-	3,946
SHEEPSHEAD	-	14	-	462	-	476
SNAPPER, GRAY	505	-	-	58	-	563
SNAPPER, RED	2,084	25	50	51	253	2,463
SNAPPER, VERMILION	3,043	35	-	20	85	3,183
TRIGGERFISH, GRAY*	66	2	-	5	-	73
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,054</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>2,091</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>12,264</b>

\*dorsal spines collected

**TABLE 10. NUMBER OF AGE STRUCTURES 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>
AMBERJACK, GREATER	246	67	-	124	27	464
DRUM, BLACK	2	13	-	390	33	438
DRUM, RED	319	102	7	1,215	514	2,157
FLOUNDER, GULF	37	1	-	-	-	38
FLOUNDER, SOUTHERN	-	70	202	317	55	644
FLOUNDER, ALL	37	71	202	317	55	542
GAG	231	12	-	-	-	243
GROUPEL, RED	213	3	-	-	-	216
GROUPEL, YELLOWEDGE	-	-	-	-	-	-
MACKEREL, KING	246	177	7	13	232	675
MULLET, STRIPED	-	-	-	-	-	-
SEATROUT, SPOTTED	334	237	26	1,784	907	3,288
SHEEPSHEAD	72	316	-	333	37	758
SNAPPER, GRAY	75	10	1	572	58	716
SNAPPER, RED	1,441	480	31	659	142	2,753
SNAPPER, VERMILION	423	131	-	24	410	988
TRIGGERFISH, GRAY	-	88	-	32	17	137
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,639</b>	<b>1,707</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>5,463</b>	<b>2,432</b>	<b>13,515</b>

\*dorsal spines collected

**APPENDIX A**  
**2012 Operations Plan**

**2012 Operations Plan for the  
Fisheries Information Network in the  
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012

**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 2012. 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 2012 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:        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, Puerto Rico, GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries  
Approach:            This task will provide for the conduct of the MRFSS survey in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Puerto Rico for shore, for-hire, and private modes. 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 Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. The NOAA Fisheries 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 A2:        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 Programmer  
Approach:            The FIN will continue to develop the Data Management System (DMS) including the development of standard protocols and documentation for data formats, input, editing, quality control, storage, access, transfer, dissemination, and application. The FIN Data Base Manager and ComFIN Program 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 and biological 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 2012.

Task A3: Implementation and Operation of Trip Ticket Programs (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Implement and operate a trip ticket program for the Southeast Region.

Team Members: Gulf States and Data Collection Work Group

Approach: For Texas, Louisiana and Alabama, this task will provide funding for the operation of their trip ticket programs. The state of Mississippi will continue the implementation of trip tickets for all of their commercial fisheries. This task will provide for mandatory reporting of trip-level data for oyster, crab, finfish landings as well as some reporting of shrimp landings. 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 2011 for Mississippi. Operations of trip ticket will continue in 2012 for Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida.

Task A4: Support for State Programs to Improve the Quality and Completeness of Marine Recreational Fishing License/Registry Databases (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

**Objective:** Support the development of state registration and/or licensing programs that will meet the requirements for development and maintenance of a complete and regularly-updated National Registry of marine recreational fishing participants.

**Team Members:** Gulf States, GSMFC, and NOAA Fisheries

**Approach:** The GSMFC will solicit proposals from each of the eligible states in its region for financial assistance projects to improve the quality and completeness of the applicant's marine recreational fishing license or registry database. Proposals should address such issues as increase the proportion of records that have correct addresses, telephone numbers and dates of birth; develop/upgrade electronic licensing systems; implement data cleanup operations such as address validation and reverse directory lookup of missing telephone numbers; develop and implement new registries or lifetime licenses for exempted seniors; Develop measures to identify saltwater anglers in combination license data bases; develop and implement systems to update data for lifetime license holders; develop and utilize improved database designs for state license/registration data; and develop database management and data submission capability that will enable regular uploads of state data to the National Registry database.

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

**Product:** Improvement to state recreational fishing license databases for use in effort collection.

**Schedule:** Each partner will provide periodic updates about the projects at the June 2012 meeting.

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

The tasks below cover all 2012 objectives (see Section D). A 'C' denotes a commercial activity; an 'R' denotes a recreational activity; and an 'F' denotes a commercial/recreational activity.

Task B1: Development of Annual Operations Plan, 2013 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)

**Objective:** Develop 2013 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 2013.

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

**Product:** 2013 Annual Operations Plan.

**Schedule:** Annual Operations Plan will be drafted by spring 2013 and addressed by the Committee at the 2013 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: The Recreational Technical Work Group/NOAA Fisheries/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. In 2012, the GSMFC reinstated the coordination and administration of the recreational data collection activities in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, NOAA Fisheries 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 2012.

Task B3: Dissemination of Program Information (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 has been developed. Results-oriented tables were included in the FIN Annual Report in 2009 and will continue in 2012.

Schedule: This task will be an ongoing activity.

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

Objective: Implement 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 Commission recently developed an Outreach Subcommittee and FIN explore how to utilize this group for its outreach issues, as appropriate. The FIN staff will attend a variety of meetings to promote the program as well. FIN Committee will continue to work with the ACCSP in developing outreach activities.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.  
 Product: FIN outreach program  
 Schedule: The FIN Committee approved the strategy in June 2002. The Committee will periodically review outreach activities and institute the necessary actions.

Task B5: Assessment of Need for Trip-level Data in U.S. Virgin Islands Goal 2, Objective 2) (F)

Objective: Determine the need for trip-level commercial data in the U.S. Virgin Islands.  
 Team Members: FIN Committee  
 Approach: The Committee needs to get feedback from the U.S. Virgin Islands participants regarding this issue. It needs to be determined if this topic is important to the USVI staff and should be pursued. Once it has been determined, an appropriate committee/subcommittee/work group will be tasked to address it. This task will be accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.

Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.  
 Product: Determination of the need for trip-level data in USVI.  
 Schedule: The FIN Committee will address this issue at the June 2012 meeting.

Task B6: Evaluation of QA/QC Standards (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Review the existing FIN commercial and recreational quality assurances/quality control (QA/QC) standards.  
 Team Members: The Recreational Technical and Commercial Technical Work Groups  
 Approach: The work groups met in 2010 to review the existing FIN QA/QC standards and determine the adequacy of the standards and make

recommendations for improvements, where applicable. The FIN Committee approved the document and will add the appropriate sections, as necessary. This task will be accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.

Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.  
Product: Updated FIN QA/QC standards  
Schedule: The FIN Committee will periodically review the document to ensure the protocols and policies are still valid.

Task B7: 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 NOAA Fisheries  
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. The Gulf of Mexico workshop will be attended by the state and federal port agents from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, NOAA Fisheries and GSMFC staff as well as other interested personnel. 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, 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. Develop a list of recommendations regarding commercial data collection activities.  
Schedule: The 2012 meeting will be cancelled due to a lack of pertinent review topics but meetings will be scheduled in future years as needed.

Task B8: Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)

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 NOAA Fisheries  
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

and NOAA Fisheries, GSMFC staff as well as other interested persons 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-2012.

Task B9: Develop Methods for Validating Recreational Discards Data (Goal 2, Objective 3) (R)

Objective: Develop methods for validating the data regarding discarded recreational catch in the Gulf of Mexico.  
Team Members: The Recreational Technical Work Group  
Approach: The Recreational Technical Work Group will work in conjunction with MRIP regarding the recreational redesign activities to address this issue. Several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work. This task will be accomplished by meetings, telephone and mail.  
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time  
Product: Validation process to be used by the FIN partners.  
Schedule: The MRIP will provide periodical reports to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B10: 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 B11: 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 Recreational Technical 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 B12: Evaluation 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 2012 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 B13: 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/Recreational Technical Work Group

Approach: The Recreational Technical 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 will provide periodical reports to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

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 years 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. And the Committee has developed 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 2012 to review activities, develop a biological sampling annual plan, and provide recommendations to FIN regarding sampling targets.

Task B15: Feasibility of Logbooks for the For-hire Fishery (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Explore the feasibility of implementing a logbook program for the for-hire fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: Recreational Technical Work Group

Approach: In conjunction with Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), the Work Group needs to evaluate methods for collection of catch and effort data from the for-hire industry. A pilot program was conducted in the Gulf in 2011 and FIN partners will be involved in the evaluation of the pilot. This task will be

accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the MRIP, where applicable.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.  
Product: Effective methods for collecting data from the for-hire industry.  
Schedule: The work group and FIN staff will be involved in the evaluation of the MRIP logbook pilot. Preliminary results of the evaluation will be presented to the FIN Committee at the June 2012 meeting.

Task B16: Feasibility of Sampling on Finer Geographic Regions (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Explore the feasibility of recreational sampling on smaller geographic regions to take into account regional differences in fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: In conjunction with Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), the Committee needs to develop projects that examine the feasibility of sampling in smaller geographic regions, specifically for Louisiana and Florida. By sampling on a finer scale, data will reflect the bio-geographical variability within a large state, which will improve state-level precision and accuracy of estimates and provide granularity at the sub-regional level necessary to support data needs for state and federal stock assessment and fisheries management. This task will be accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the MRIP, where applicable.

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

Product: Improved recreational fishing estimates.

Schedule: The Gulf States and FIN staff will be involved in the development of a MRIP project to address this topic. A status of the project will be provided to the FIN Committee at the June 2012 meeting.

Task B17: Review Detailed Effort Module (Goal 2, Objective 5) (C)

Objective: Review the existing detailed effort module for the collection of effort for the commercial fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: Commercial Technical Work Group

Approach: Charge the Commercial Technical with evaluating the current commercial effort data collection methods and determining if modifications need to be made to take advantage of new technologies and methods. Issues to consider include gears/area fished combinations, finer area fished grids, etc. This task will be accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the MRIP, where applicable.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.  
Product: Updated commercial effort module.  
Schedule: The work group will meet in 2012 and present its recommendations to the FIN Committee at the June 2012 meeting.

Task B18: Collection of Soft Tissue and Other Biological Information (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Be responsive to requests for soft tissue and other biological information, as needed.

Team Members: FIN partners

Approach: Through FIN, partners needs to be aware of soft tissue and other biological information requests and collect the needed information as resources and time permits. This task will be accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail.

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

Product: Collection of needed biological data.

Schedule: As requests are made, staff will provide the pertinent information to FIN partners and they will attempt to collect the requested information based in available resources and time. This is an ongoing activity.

Task B19: Collection of Social/Economic Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Implement the collection of the social/economic data in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The GSMFC in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries has hired a term economist to work on various economic projects including coordination of Gulf of Mexico state and federal commercial and recreational fishing economic activities; development and implementation of information collection on public attitudes, knowledge and use patterns of coastal and marine ecosystems; development and implementation of a marine angler expenditure survey for the Gulf of Mexico; development and implementation of an economic survey of the Gulf of Mexico inshore shrimp fleet; and development and implementation of an economic survey of fishing-related businesses in the Gulf of Mexico. The implementation of this module should continue and issues to consider include securing long-term funding; increasing economic data collection and support trending over time; improving coordination among management entities and developing a uniform approach for assessing the impact of management decisions and fishery disasters. 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.

Schedule: The GSMFC economist will provide periodical updates about the data collection and analysis of the various economic tasks. This is an ongoing activity.

Task B20:      Compilation of Metadata (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective:              Compile metadata from the FIN partners for inclusion into a metadata database.

Team Members:        FIN and ACCSP staff and FIS personnel

Approach:              The Recreational Technical 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. The FIN has hired a part-time staff person to assist the states in compiling this information. The status of metadata compilation is a standing item on the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee.

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 and is routinely discussed by the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee. The subcommittee will provide a report to FIN at the June 2012 meeting.

Task B21:      Coordination and Integration of Data Collection Efforts (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

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

Team Members:        FIN Committee

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

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

Product:                Communication and presentation of recommendations to ongoing programs.

Schedule:              This is an ongoing activity.

Task B22:      Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies (Goal 2, Objective 6) (F)

Objective: Evaluate and recommend innovative data collection technologies  
Team Members: FIN Committee and other appropriate personnel.  
Approach: Communicate results of evaluation and recommendations regarding marine commercial and recreational fisheries surveys to the appropriate personnel.  
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time  
Product: Communication and presentation of recommendations to ongoing programs.  
Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B23: Exploration of Strategies for In-Season Quota Monitoring (Goal 2, Objective 6) (R)

Objective: Explore strategies for implementing in-season quota monitoring for the recreational fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.  
Team Members: Recreational Technical Work Group  
Approach: This issue was identified during the 2005 facilitated session as a topic that FIN needed to reexamine. In the past, FIN has recommended that in-season quota monitoring for recreational fisheries not be implemented; however, it appears the in-season quota monitoring may become a reality so FIN needs to address this subject. The FIN will work in conjunction with the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) to explore this issue.  
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time  
Product: Potential strategies for implementing in-season quota monitoring.  
Schedule: The MRIP will provide periodical reports to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B24: Improve Timeliness of Data to Support Quota Monitoring (Goal 2, Objective 6) (C)

Objective: Improve timeliness of commercial data to support quota monitoring for the commercial fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.  
Team Members: NMFS and FIN staff  
Approach: NMFS instituted a rule in 2011 that all federally-permitted dealers are required to report their commercial landings via electronic means. NMFS, Gulf States, FIN and ACCSP staff have been working on implementing this rule. This task will be accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.  
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time  
Product: Increased electronic reporting.  
Schedule: NMFS, Gulf States and FIN staff will continue to increase the number of commercial dealers who report via electronic means.

Task B25: Implementation of Registration Tracking System (Goal 3, Objective 4) (C)

Objective: Implement a registration tracking system for FIN.  
Team Members: Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee  
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. IA-Team developed a vessel registry tracking system and FIN will implement this system to begin collect information on vessels. A similar system needs to be developed for dealers and fishermen. This task will be accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.  
Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.  
Product: Vessel 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 of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee. Once those data have been collected, data on dealers and fishermen will be compiled.

Task B26: Improve Timeliness and Compatibility of TX Recreational Data (Goal 3, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Develop an approach to improve the timeliness and compatibility of TX recreational data.  
Team Members: FIN Recreational Technical Work Group  
Approach: In conjunction with the MRIP, the Work Group will explore ways to make the Texas recreational survey more timely and compatible with MRIP activities. This task will be accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.  
Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.  
Product: Compatible Gulf recreational data  
Schedule: The Work Group will convene a meeting(s) in early 2012 to begin addressing this issue. The recommendations from that meeting(s) will be presented to the FIN Committee at the June 2012 meeting.

Task B27: Evaluation of Information Management Technologies (Goal 3, Objective 6) (F)

Objective: 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 B28: Implementation of 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. This task will be 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 B29: 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 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>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</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
Information dissemination					
Evaluate and improve current industry outreach program through use of Commission Outreach Committee		X	X	X	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 internal program review	X	X	X	X	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	X		
Quality control/assurance					
Develop methods for validating recreational discards information	X	X	X	X	X
Develop methods for validating commercial discards information				X	X
Review of commercial and recreational QA/QC standards					X
Coordination of data collection					
Development of data collection plan	X	X	X	X	X
Expand collection of metadata	X	X	X	X	X
Full implementation of trip ticket systems for MS	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate suitability of new data sources and integrate					
FIN data system	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to develop protocol for private access	X	X	X	X	X
Explore feasibility of logbook program for for-hire		X			
Identify species that should be targets for specific surveys				X	
Implement surveys for identified species					X
Evaluate detailed effort module		X	X		
Implement detailed effort module pilot				X	X
Explore development of more detailed area fished codes		X			
Improve quality and completeness of state license databases	X	X			
Implement effort surveys using national registry			X	X	X
Continue recreational sampling in Puerto Rico	X	X	X	X	X
Implement recreational sampling in U.S. Virgin Islands			X	X	X
Explore feasibility of sampling on finer geographic areas		X	X		
Implement sampling on finer geographic levels				X	X
Implement FIN Social and Economic module	X	X	X	X	X
Prioritize species for additional biological sampling	X	X	X	X	X
Continue coordination of biological sampling	X	X	X	X	X
Collect soft tissue, etc samples, as time permits	X	X	X	X	X

<b>Data Collection (continued)</b>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Develop protocols for long-term storage of biological samples	X				
<b>Innovative collection technology</b>					
Discuss strategy for implementation of in-season quota monitoring			X	X	X
Review opportunity to improve timeliness of data to support commercial quota monitoring	X	X			
Recommend improvements to programs			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
<b>Data maintenance</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Standard data management protocols</b>					
Implement vessel registry tracking system	X	X	X		
Implement similar system for dealers and fishermen				X	X
<b>Integration of databases</b>					
Hire metadata coordinator	X				
Identify appropriate databases for integration in DMS	X	X	X	X	X
Improve timeliness and compatibility of TX recreational data		X	X		
<b>Innovative data management technology</b>					
Evaluate innovative data management technologies	X	X	X	X	X
Test electronic field data entry		X	X		
Protect data confidentiality	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Development of National Program</b>					
<b>Long-term planning</b>					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Coordination with other programs</b>					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Consistency and comparability</b>					
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X	X	X

## **E. Committee, Subcommittee, and Work Group Membership**

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **FIN Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1: To plan, manage and evaluate a coordinated State/Federal marine commercial and recreational fishery data collection program for the Region.**

Objective 1 To establish and maintain FIN Committee consisting of MOU signatories or their designees to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the program.

Objective 2 To develop and periodically review a Framework Plan that outlines policies and protocol of the program

Objective 3 To develop annual operation plans, including identification of available resources that implement the Framework Plan.

Objective 4 To distribute program information to the cooperators and interested parties.

Objective 5 To conduct an internal 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.