

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.

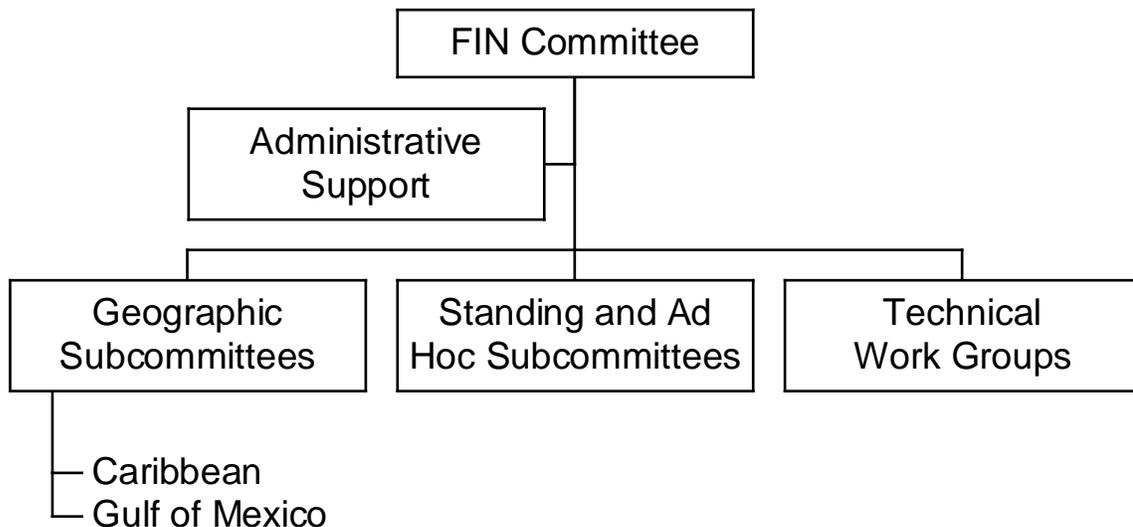
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<sup>1</sup> The Southeast Region (the Region) includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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 2013 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 2013. The issues discussed during the meeting included:

- Identification and continuation of tasks to be addressed in 2013 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 2014 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 2013;
- 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 2014;
- 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 to examine other issues as decided by the Committee. Their activities included:

- The Marine Recreational Information Program data review meetings were held in February, August and October 2013 to present the results of the RDD and intercept surveys for the East coast and Gulf Region, sampler performance issues, update on MRIP pilot studies, update of national economic surveys, discussion of APAIS sampling topics, review of wave report fish tables and landings estimate tables and review of the Gulf States For-Hire Telephone Survey;
- The Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee met in March and October 2013 to discuss status of biological sampling activities, discussion of national registry projects, demonstration of traceability program, status of metadata compilation, status of a SEFSC data peer review report, status of commercial unified trip ticket program development, discussion around updating the FIN data management system, and discussion of utilization of FIN carry-over funding;
- The FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group met (via conference call) in May 2013 to review 2012 otolith and length data collection and processing activities and to develop recommendations for necessary lengths and otoliths for FIN priority species;
- The annual Otolith Processor Training Workshop was held in May 2013 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 2013 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; process for adding questions to future MRIP surveys; a discussion of recent economic program activities; status of federal quota monitoring/HMS/electronic reporting activities; discussion of the new MRIP survey design; a discussion regarding trip level biological sampling data; discussion of MRIP Gulf Logbook Pilot project; update on FOSS; status of metadata compilation and approval of the 2012 FIN Annual Report, various subcommittee and work group reports, status of 2013 activities, review and approval of the 2014

Operations Plan and discussion of 2014 FIN funding priorities;

- The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee met in August 2013 to determine the activities for inclusion in the 2014 FIN cooperative agreement;
- 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 MRIP 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 MRIP 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 MRIP 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 but 2013 funding was provided through the Catch Shares program. 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 and Mississippi. 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. Funding in 2013 was provided by a combination of Louisiana and FIN Administrative funds. In 2013, four menhaden factories were active in the northern Gulf of Mexico at Moss Point, MS, and Empire, Abbeville, and Cameron, LA. A total of 37 purse-seine vessels fished for gulf menhaden in 2013. 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 2013 were approximately 490,503 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 2013 fishing season. And Table 7 presents the age composition of the gulf menhaden biostatistical samples by port in 2013.

- 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 MRIP 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. Funding in 2013 was provided through the Stock Assessment and Enhancement Program (SAE). 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 2013, there were 658 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. In 2013 FIN assisted in the administration of funds to support three additional research programs.

- Survey of Recreational Boat Fishers in the U.S. Virgin Islands – This task will determine if the U.S. Virgin Islands boat registration lists can be used to efficiently contact regional anglers and obtain information regarding the boat-based recreational fishery.
- Internet-based Angler Logs as a Source of Fishery-dependent Data – This task will provide guidelines for the establishment and upkeep of panel-based e-logs that are consistent with MRIP goals and augment rather than compete with MRIP data.
- Pilot Study of Queen Conch and Spiny Lobster Recreational Fishery in Puerto Rico – This task will collect information on the recreational harvest of queen conch and spiny lobster in Puerto Rico to address several issues including magnitude (total and by location) of the recreational fishery for these species; determination if conch and lobster are target species or retained/discarded when harvesting finfishes; characterization of the catch for undersized queen conch and spiny lobster; location and time of year when queen conch and spiny lobster are harvested; number of recreational anglers harvesting queen conch and spiny lobster; and types of methods used to harvest queen conch/lobster.

## Information Dissemination

Committee members and staff provided program information in 2013 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. 2013. *2014 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 218 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 25 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2013. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2012 - December 31, 2012*. No. 217 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 MRIP 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				
Innovative collection technology					
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>					
Data management system					
Review location and responsibility of DMS					X
Hardware/software capabilities					
Review hardware/software capabilities					X
Data maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Standard data management protocols					
Implement vessel registry tracking system	X	X	X		
Implement similar system for dealers and fishermen				X	X
Integration of databases					
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		
Innovative data management technology					
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>					
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 2013**

Nicole Shaffer  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Dave Donaldson  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

John Froeschke  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Graciela Garcia-Moliner  
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

David Gloeckner  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Craig Lilyestrom  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Daniel Matos-Caraballo  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Christine Murrell  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Roy Pemberton  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Tom Sinclair  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tom Sminkey  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

Andy Strelcheck  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Regional Office

Vicki Swann  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

**TABLE 3. FIN SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR 2013**

**FIN Administrative Subcommittee**

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Tom Sinclair  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Tom Sminkey  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

Dave Donaldson  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

**FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee**

Vince Cefalu  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

David Gloeckner  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Christine Murrell  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

John Froeschke  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Nicole Shaffer  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Vicki Swann  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

### **FIN Commercial Technical Work Group**

Steve Brown  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Larry Beerkircher  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Roy Pemberton  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

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

Jason Adriance  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

John Mareska  
Alabama Division of Marine Resources

Joe West  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Bob Muller  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Larry Beerkircher  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Mike Murphy  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Britt Bumgardner  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Aida Rosario  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Wes Devers  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Roy Pemberton  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Behzad Mahmoudi  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

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

Mike Cahall  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries  
Commission

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Lauren Dolinger-Few  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

Bill Richardson  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

David Gloeckner  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Bob Harris  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

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

Karon Aplin  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Erick Porche  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Tom Sminkey  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

### **FIN Outreach Work Group**

Graciela Garcia-Moliner  
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Charlene Ponce  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Quenton Dokken  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Marcia Taylor  
Sea Grant marine Advisory Service  
University of Virgin Islands

Ashley Wethey  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

### **FIN Recreational Technical Work Group**

Rob Andrews  
NOAA Fisheries

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Erick Porche  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

David Lavergne  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Jeremy Leitz  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Larry Perruso  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

**TABLE 4. NUMBER OF RECREATIONAL ASSIGNMENTES COMPLETED AND INTERVIEWS OBTAINED UNDER THE MRIP PROTOCOL, BY STATE, BY WAVE**

STATE	WAVE	Assignments				Interviews			
		SH	CH	PR	Total	SH	CH	PR	Total
FLORIDA - EAST	1	41	11	97	149	526	121	1,245	1,892
	2	18	39	70	127	227	49	445	721
	3	53	10	105	168	372	13	1,300	1,685
	4	45	50	94	189	529	166	848	1,543
	5	30	71	72	173	507	200	820	1,527
	6	27	66	66	159	206	181	431	818
	Total		214	247	504	965	2,367	730	5,089
FLORIDA - WEST	1	58	118	164	340	734	825	1,621	3,180
	2	58	93	193	344	840	167	1,247	2,254
	3	95	54	261	410	1,018	401	3,046	4,465
	4	83	83	218	384	964	482	1,881	3,327
	5	54	123	177	354	520	620	1,510	2,650
	6	52	118	172	342	441	399	1,102	1,942
	Total		400	589	1,185	2,174	4,517	2,894	10,407
ALABAMA	1	38	60	101	199	95	39	125	259
	2	12	25	37	74	112	37	113	262
	3	24	17	48	89	260	122	335	717
	4	29	17	46	92	138	68	201	407
	5	19	17	36	72	136	92	129	357
	6	18	12	33	63	91	19	28	138
	Total		140	148	301	589	832	377	931
LOUISIANA	1	44	76	125	245	133	117	559	809
	2	11	23	77	111	146	29	398	573
	3	29	14	96	139	191	54	1,299	1,544
	4	24	19	104	147	116	101	955	1,172
	5	16	18	87	121	88	62	773	923
	6	13	12	75	100	77	66	425	568
	Total		137	162	564	863	751	429	4,409

Assignments					Interviews				
STATE	WAVE	SH	CH	PR	Total	SH	CH	PR	Total
MISSISSIPPI	1	44	78	90	212	82	0	93	175
	2	10	22	31	63	141	12	121	274
	3	21	10	39	70	80	48	311	439
	4	21	14	39	74	119	47	274	440
	5	16	15	33	64	76	49	146	271
	6	15	14	30	59	53	6	40	99
	Total	127	153	262	542	551	162	985	1,698
PUERTO RICO	1	46	43	125	214	86	103	189	378
	2	27	27	86	140	60	69	59	188
	3	26	39	79	144	51	96	43	190
	4	11	17	30	58	50	16	62	128
	5	11	36	21	68	32	63	34	129
	6	18	30	46	94	31	67	14	112
	Total	139	192	387	718	310	414	401	1,125
YEAR TOTALS		SH	CH	PR		SH	CH	PR	Total
		1,157	1,491	3,203		9,328	5,006	22,222	36,556

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

<b>STATE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF FISH MEASURED</b>	<b>NUMBER OF HARD PARTS</b>
AL	71	3,520	661
LA/MS	64	993	541
NWFL	113	5,166	1,095
SWFL	186	2,768	70
TX	368	11,184	2,870
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>23,631</b>	<b>5,237</b>

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

PORT	NUMBER OF SAMPLES
MOSS POINT, MS	110
EMPIRE, LA	137
ABBEVILLE, LA	209
CAMERON, LA	208

**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	-		-		-		-		-	
1	475	50	283	25	97	5	353	21	1,208	21
2	470	49	847	73	1,757	89	1,344	78	4,418	76
3+	7	1	24	2	113	6	21	1	165	3
ALL	952		1,154		1,967		1,718		5,791	

**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	20,923,834	1985 – 2014	29-JAN-14
ALABAMA	631,951	1985 – 2014	17-APR-14
MISSISSIPPI	165,925	1985 – 2014	04-APR-14
LOUISIANA	7,007,850	1985 – 2014	04-APR-14
TEXAS	238,465	1985 – 2013	22-FEB-13
PUERTO RICO	1,946,160	1985 – 2014	2014
<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	14-NOV-13
MISSISSIPPI	8,758	2002 – 2013	21-NOV-13
LOUISIANA	102,383	2002 – 2013	09-MAY-13
TEXAS	43,768	2002 - 2013	17-APR-14

<b>TABLE 8. CONTINUED</b>	
<b>CONFIDENTIAL AND NON-CONFIDENTIAL USERS</b>	
UNIQUE CONFIDENTIAL	28
CONFIDENTIAL HITS	1,005
NON-CONFIDENTIAL HITS	1,183

**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	-	-	-	-	-	0
DRUM, BLACK	-	-	-	70	121	191
DRUM, RED	-	-	-	-	-	0
FLOUNDER, GULF	96	13	-	-	-	109
FLOUNDER, SOUTHERN	25	122	38	28	74	287
FLOUNDER, ALL	121	135	38	28	74	396
GAG	638	-	-	-	-	638
GROUPEL, RED	3,667	-	-	-	-	3,667
MACKEREL, KING	7	4	-	15	-	26
MULLET, STRIPED	2,063	409	331	158	-	2,961
SHEEPSHEAD	-	-	20	56	-	76
SNAPPER, GRAY	331	-	-	-	-	331
SNAPPER, RED	1,634	31	40	31	211	1,947
SNAPPER, VERMILION	848	34	-	3	59	944
TRIGGERFISH, GRAY*	25	-	-	-	-	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,334</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>11,202</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	154	27	-	49	15	245
DRUM, BLACK	10	9	1	89	126	235
DRUM, RED	384	47	7	406	515	1,359
FLOUNDER, GULF	162	3	-	-	-	165
FLOUNDER, SOUTHERN	4	21	11	139	76	251
FLOUNDER, ALL	168	24	11	139	76	418
GAG	249	12	-	-	-	261
GROUPEL, RED	254	3	-	-	-	257
GROUPEL, YELLOWEDGE	-	-	-	-	-	0
MACKEREL, KING	275	65	12	7	193	552
MULLET, STRIPED	-	-	-	-	-	0
SEATROUT, SPOTTED	226	64	92	509	1,142	2,033
SHEEPSHEAD	190	82	3	165	20	460
SNAPPER, GRAY	272	10	-	63	59	404
SNAPPER, RED	2,016	179	23	210	164	2,592
SNAPPER, VERMILION	1,149	145	-	13	213	1,520
TRIGGERFISH, GRAY	175	117	-	7	33	332
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,684</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>1,657</b>	<b>2,556</b>	<b>10,833</b>

\*dorsal spines collected

**APPENDIX A**  
**2013 Operations Plan**

**2013 Operations Plan for the  
Fisheries Information Network in the  
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013

**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 2013. 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 2013 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 MRIP 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 MRIP 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 MRIP 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 2013.

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, Mississippi and Alabama, this task will provide funding for the 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: Operations of trip ticket will continue in 2013 for Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, 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 2013 meeting.

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

The tasks below cover all 2013 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 2013.

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 MRIP staff has developed a home page where users are able to access the MRIP 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 2013.

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: Commercial Technical Work Group

Approach: The Work Group 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 Commercial Technical Work Group will address this issue (via conference call) in early 2013.

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-2013.

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 MRIP 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 2013 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 2013 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 2013 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), Florida and FIN staff have developed a project that examine the feasibility of sampling in smaller geographic regions. 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 project plan was submitted to MRIP and it was approved. Work on this project is scheduled to begin in January 2013. Status reports of the project will be provided to the Gulf Geographic Subcommittee at their March and October 2013 meetings.

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 2013 and present its recommendations to the FIN Committee at the June 2013 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 need 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 2013 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. IA-Team is developing 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: 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 B27: 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 B28: 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				
Innovative collection technology					
Discuss strategy for implementation of in-season quota monitoring			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>					
Data management system					
Review location and responsibility of DMS					X
Hardware/software capabilities					
Review hardware/software capabilities					X
Data maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Standard data management protocols					
Implement vessel registry tracking system	X	X	X		
Implement similar system for dealers and fishermen				X	X
Integration of databases					
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		
Innovative data management technology					
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>					
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

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

### **FIN Committee**

Nicole Shaffer  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Dave Donaldson  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

John Froeschke  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Graciela Garcia-Moliner  
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

David Gloeckner  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Craig Lilyestrom  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Daniel Matos-Caraballo  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Christine Murrell  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Roy Pemberton  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Tom Sinclair  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tom Sminkey  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

Andy Strelcheck  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Regional Office

Vicki Swann  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

### **FIN Administrative Subcommittee**

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Dave Donaldson  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Tom Sinclair  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tom Sminkey  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

### **FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee**

Vince Cefalu  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

John Froeschke  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

David Gloeckner  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Christine Murrell  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Nicole Shaffer  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Vicki Swann  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

### **FIN Commercial Technical Work Group**

Steve Brown  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Chris Denson  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Larry Beerkircher  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Roy Pemberton  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

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

Jason Adriance  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

John Mareska  
Alabama Division of Marine Resources

Joe West  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Bob Muller  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Larry Beerkircher  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Mike Murphy  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Britt Bumgardner  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Aida Rosario  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Wes Devers  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Roy Pemberton  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Behzad Mahmoudi  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

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

Mike Cahall  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries  
Commission

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Lauren Dolinger-Few  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

Bill Richardson  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

David Gloeckner  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Bob Harris  
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

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

Karon Aplin  
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Richard Cody  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Erick Porche  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Tom Sminkey  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

### **FIN Outreach Work Group**

Graciela Garcia-Moliner  
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Charlene Ponce  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Quenton Dokken  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Marcia Taylor  
Sea Grant marine Advisory Service  
University of Virgin Islands

Ashley Wethey  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

### **FIN Recreational Technical Work Group**

Rob Andrews  
NOAA Fisheries

Ken Brennan  
NOAA Fisheries  
Beaufort Laboratory

Erick Porche  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources

Michael Harden  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Craig Lilyestrom  
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and  
Environmental Resources

Beverly Sauls  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Roy Pemberton  
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

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

Rita Curtis  
NOAA Fisheries  
Headquarters Office

Assane Diagne  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
Council

Steve Holiman  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Regional Office

Walter Keithly  
Louisiana State University

David Lavergne  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries

Jeremy Leitz  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Larry Perruso  
NOAA Fisheries  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

**APPENDIX B**  
**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.