

2015 Operations Plan
for the
Fisheries Information Network
in the Southeastern United States
FIN

by: FIN Committee

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Number 232

**2015 Operations Plan for the
Fisheries Information Network in the
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015

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 2015. 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 2015 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: Operation of Trip Ticket Programs (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Operation of 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 ticket programs and all commercial landings will be captured via these systems. Accomplished by meetings, telephone, and 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 2015 for Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

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, 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: Work on a revised data management system and routine delivery of data will continue in 2015.

Task A3: Collection of Recreational Fisheries Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Collection of recreational fisheries data in the Gulf of Mexico.
Team Members: Gulf States, GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries
Approach: This task will provide for the conduct of the MRIP survey in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida 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 Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. NOAA Fisheries will produce expanded estimates using cleaned data provided via GSMFC 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 A4: Continue the Collection of Menhaden Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (C)

Objective: Continue the support of menhaden sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.
Team Members: Gulf States, GSMFC, and NOAA Fisheries
Approach: The purpose of this task is to sample gulf menhaden catches from menhaden purse-seine vessels that operate at the ports of Moss Point, Mississippi and Empire, Abbeville, and Cameron, Louisiana. Samples will be processed for size and age composition for use in

coast-wide stock assessments. In turn, gulf menhaden stock assessments are incorporated into the Fisheries Management Plan for the species, and are also utilized by the Gulf coast states, the GSMFC, the menhaden industry, and the NOAA Fisheries.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.
Product: Collection of necessary menhaden data
Schedule: This task is an on-going activity.

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

The tasks below cover all 2015 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: Review of Framework Plan (Goal 1, Objective 2) (F)

Objective: Review the Framework Plan that outlines the policies and protocols of the FIN Program.
Team Members: FIN Committee
Approach: Through meetings and mail, the Committee will review and if necessary edit the Framework Plan.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: Framework Plan.
Schedule: Framework Plan will be reviewed by the FIN Administrative Subcommittee in early 2015 with the findings presented to the FIN Committee in March 2015.

Task B2: Development of Annual Operations Plan, 2016 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Develop 2016 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 2016.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: 2016 Annual Operations Plan.
Schedule: Annual Operations Plan will be drafted by fall 2014 and addressed by the Committee at the March 2015 meeting.

Task B3: 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. Unfortunately GSMFC is no longer coordinating recreational data collection in 2015 due to difficulties in obtaining support staff from Puerto Rico DNER. GSMFC will continue to facilitate communication between all agencies to determine the best methods for recreational sampling in Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands.

Resources: Travel, copy and mailing expenses and staff time.

Product: Develop a long-term MRF surveys for the Caribbean.

Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B4: 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 2015.

Schedule: This task will be an ongoing activity.

Task B5: 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 is exploring 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 B6: 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 workshops, 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 2015 meeting will be cancelled due to a lack of pertinent review topics and funding, but meetings will be scheduled in future years as needed if funding is available.

Task B7: 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-2015 if the states and NOAA Fisheries continue to request attending this workshop.

Task B8: 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 B9: Develop Methods for Validating Commercial Discards Data (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Develop methods for validating the data regarding discarded commercial catch in the Gulf of Mexico.

Team Members: The Commercial Technical Work Group

Approach: The Commercial Technical Work Group will be tasked with developing validation methods for FIN commercial discard data.

The work group should be working in conjunction with NMFS on developing standardized methods. 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 Commercial Technical Work Group has yet to address this issue so the Work Group will be convened in late 2014 with the goal of providing a report to the FIN Committee in March 2015.

Task B10: Review of Commercial QA/QC Standards (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Review the existing FIN commercial quality assurances/quality control (QA/QC) standards.

Team Members: Commercial Technical Work Group

Approach: Work has begun on the Commercial side utilizing the Quality Management Concept in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries. The current development of a unified Gulf Trip Ticket program coupled with a planned redesign of the FIN Data Management System will aide in reviewing and editing the Commercial QA/QC standards also. 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 be updated by the Commercial Technical Work Group and keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B11: Development of Recreational Standards (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Review and modify the existing FIN recreational standards documentation.

Team Members: Recreational Technical Work Group

Approach: The current Recreational Standards document is outdated and in need of improvement. The ACCSP has developed a recreational standards document and FIN would likely utilize this document as a starting point. Work is already beginning on logbook electronic reporting in the for-hire sector and this standards document needs to include these types of data collection programs. This team should also be involved in the process of statistical review of state recreational data programs such as LA Creel and other red snapper pilot projects currently in process. 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 Recreational Technical Work Group will be convened in late 2014 with the goal of providing an update to the FIN Committee in March 2015.

Task B12: 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 B13: 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 B14: Evaluation of Recreational Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Periodically review the recreational catch and effort data collected under the Marine Recreational Information Program 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 and 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 2015 to review the recreational data collected during the year. Topics that need to be addressed 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 offshore trips;
- Identify geographic regions of interest for recreational sampling;
- Increase recreational sampling levels Gulf-wide; and
- Optimize sampling allocations to improve precision for key species.

Many of these issues are being addressed by NOAA Fisheries MRIP staff. FIN should utilize these efforts to avoid duplication of effort.

Task B15: Determination of Methods for Collecting Recreational Data from Private Access Sites Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Determine most appropriate methods for collecting recreational data from private access sites.

Team Members: FIN/Recreational Technical Work Group

Approach: This issue is a 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 data.

Schedule: The Recreational Technical Work Group and NOAA Fisheries will provide periodical reports to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B16: Integration into the Stock Assessment Process (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)

Objective: Develop a plan that outlines the needs for stock assessment for the upcoming 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 has expressed a desire to revisit the complete biological sampling targets to determine what changes might be necessary if funding is obtained for future sampling seasons.

Task B17: 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: The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is addressing this issue with the implantation of the revised Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS). 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: FIN will continue to work with MRIP and Florida staff to determine if accuracy obtained through APAIS survey work is sufficient for the smaller geographic regions in Florida. If additional states express a need for sampling on smaller geographic regions FIN will assist in the coordination with MRIP.

Task B18: Identify Target Species for Specific Surveys (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Determine which species would require specialized surveys to improve the quality of landings estimates.

Team Members: Recreational Technical Work Group/NOAA Fisheries MRIP staff

Approach: The Recreational Technical Work Group will work in conjunction with MRIP regarding the recreational survey designs to address this issue. Most states have already developed pilot programs to potentially improve data collection for red snapper. This task will be accomplished by meetings, telephone and mail.

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

Product: Improved recreational fishing estimates.

Schedule: The work group will be convened as needed.

Task B19: Review and Implement Detailed Effort Module (Goal 2, Objective 5) (C)

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

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The Commercial Technical Work Group and the FIN Committee are still working to determine the best method for detailed effort data collection. The FIN Detailed Effort Module has been approved as a suitable module if a survey is deemed appropriate. Determining if modifications need to be made to take advantage of new technologies and methods is ongoing. Issues to consider include gears/area fished combinations, finer area fished grids, etc. The development of unified Gulf Trip Ticket may be collecting detailed effort data too. This task will be accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail where applicable.

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

Product: Updated commercial effort module.

Schedule: The FIN Committee will continue to explore the implementation if funding is available.

Task B20: 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 on available resources and time. This is an ongoing activity.

Task B21: 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 had hired a term economist to work on various economic projects but funding ended in 2014. 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: GSMFC will continue to work to obtain funding with the goal of retaining a permanent economist. This is an ongoing activity.

Task B22: 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 March 2015 meeting.

Task B23: 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 B24: 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 B25: 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. Some work has been accomplished specific to red snapper data collection pilot programs in each Gulf State. The FIN will continue to 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 B26: 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 B27: 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 vessels 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 collecting information on vessels. IA-Team is developing a similar system 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 B28: Review Location and Responsibility of Data Management System (Goal 3, Objective 1) (F)

Objective: Review the physical location and responsibility of FIN Data Management System.
Team Members: FIN Committee.
Approach: Committee members will meet to discuss appropriateness of current Data Management System location and if current responsibilities are appropriate or need modifying.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, conference call costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: Report of committee findings.
Schedule: FIN Committee will meet and discuss during March 2015 meeting.

Task B29: 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 B30: 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 B31: 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>
Planning, Management, and Evaluation					
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
Data Collection					
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

Data Collection (continued)	<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
Data Management					
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
Development of National Program					
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

Ken Brennan
NOAA Fisheries
Beaufort Laboratory

Richard Cody
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Chris Denson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Gregg Bray
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

Matt Hill
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Craig Lilyestrom
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

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

Roy Pemberton
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Bill Richardson
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Nicole Shaffer
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Tom Sinclair
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tom Sminkey
NOAA Fisheries
Headquarters Office

Nicole Smith
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

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

Gregg Bray
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

Brittany Chudzik
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Richard Cody
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Chris Denson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Justin Esslinger
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

John Froeschke
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council

David Gloeckner
NOAA Fisheries
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Bill Richardson
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

Justin Esslinger
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Larry Beerkircher
NOAA Fisheries
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Harden
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Chris Denson
Alabama Marine Resources Division

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

Larry Beerkircher
NOAA Fisheries
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Bob Muller
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Britt Bumgardner
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Mike Murphy
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Wes Devers
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Aida Rosario
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

Behzad Mahmoudi
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Roy Pemberton
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Joe West
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

FIN Data Management Work Group

Mike Cahall
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission

David Gloeckner
NOAA Fisheries
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Richard Cody
Florida Fish and Wildlife Institute

Michael Harden
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Lauren Dolinger-Few
NOAA Fisheries
Headquarters Office

Donna Bellais
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Justin Esslinger
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Bill Richardson
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

FIN For-Hire Work Group

Karon Aplin
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Michael Harden
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Ken Brennan
NOAA Fisheries
Beaufort Laboratory

Erick Porche
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Richard Cody
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Tom Sminkey
NOAA Fisheries
Headquarters Office

Justin Esslinger
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

FIN Outreach Work Group

Quenton Dokken
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Graciela Garcia-Moliner
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Charlene Ponce
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council

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

Michael Harden
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
Fisheries

Craig Lilyestrom
Puerto Rico Department of Natural and
Environmental Resources

Roy Pemberton
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Erick Porche
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources

Beverly Sauls
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

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 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 protocols 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.