

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.¹ 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 the 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 the management of fisheries will benefit not only commercial and recreational fishermen and the associated fishing industries, but the resources, the states, and the nation.

The mission of the FIN is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial, anadromous and recreational fishery data and information for the conservation and management 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

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

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).

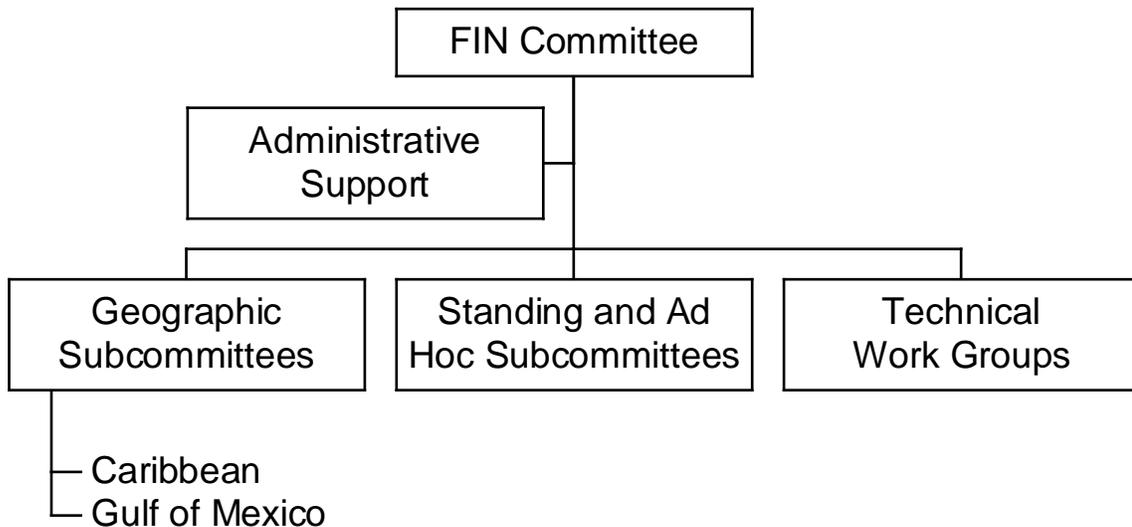


Figure 1. Organizational structure of the FIN.

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. 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 2015 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 March 2015. The issues discussed during the meeting included:

- Identification and continuation of tasks to be addressed in 2015 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 2016 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 2015;
- Continued evaluation of the 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 2016;

- 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 FIN Committee met in March 2015 for their annual meeting. The Committee met to address a variety of important issues including status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP); an update on Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) current activities; development of FIN recreational data standards; presentation on the development of unified trip ticket program; status report on biological sampling activities; discussion on the need for a FIN strategic planning session; discussion of new confidential data roll-up methods; discussion regarding new area codes for waters outside EEZ; FIN Data Management System (DMS) issues; a status report on metadata compilations; various subcommittee and work group reports, status of 2015 activities, review and approval of the 2016 Operations Plan and discussion of 2016 FIN funding priorities;
- The annual Otolith Processor Training Workshop was held in May 2015 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 July 2015 for a strategic planning session. The purpose was to identify priorities for research for the next 1-3 years. The group developed projects aimed at increasing the breadth and quality of data for stock assessment and management and strengthening awareness, partnership, and support for GulfFIN;
- The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee met in September 2015 to determine the activities for inclusion in the 2016 FIN cooperative agreement;
- The Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee met in October 2015 to receive a presentation on the progress of the new unified trip ticket program development, discussion of methods for evaluating and updating commercial conversion factors, presentation of potential new confidential data roll-up methods, an update from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), status of biological sampling activities, an update on metadata compilation; review of 2014 commercial landings data; and election of new officers;
- The Marine Recreational Information Program data review meetings was held December 2015 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, discussion of APAIS sampling topics, review of wave report fish tables and landings estimate tables and review of Gulf States For-Hire Telephone Survey;

- 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 Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida for shore, for-hire, and private modes. 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 Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (east and west coast). The states also conducted weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the 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. This task also provided for the conduct of the MRIP Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) in Louisiana for the purpose of benchmarking LA Creel survey results with MRIP APAIS results.
- **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, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. This is a continuation of an activity from the previous year but 2015 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. In 2015, three menhaden factories were active in the northern Gulf of Mexico at Moss Point, MS, and Empire, and Abbeville, LA. The Cameron, LA factory was closed in December 2013. A total of 33 purse-seine vessels fished for gulf menhaden in 2015. 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 2015 were approximately 535,688 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 2015 fishing season. And Table 7 presents the age composition of the gulf menhaden biostatistical samples by port in 2015.

- 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. 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 2015, there were 1,018 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 2015 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 2015 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. 2015. *2015 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 232 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 29 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2014. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2014 - December 31, 2014*. No. 248 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)
- 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)
- 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>
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	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
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

TABLE 2. FIN COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2015

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TABLE 3. FIN SUBCOMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR 2015

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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	30	143	173	277	916	1,193
	2	29	133	162	248	1,530	1,778
	3	33	183	216	422	2,649	3,071
	4	36	174	210	322	2,070	2,392
	5	30	139	169	250	1,085	1,335
	6	36	123	159	242	786	1,028
	Total		194	895	1,089	1,761	9,036
FLORIDA - WEST	1	51	282	333	316	1,779	2,095
	2	69	309	378	733	3,284	4,017
	3	75	441	516	750	5,191	5,941
	4	66	374	440	473	3,493	3,966
	5	53	311	364	388	2,706	3,094
	6	51	285	336	376	1,937	2,313
	Total		365	2,002	2,367	3,036	18,390
ALABAMA	1	18	52	70	35	20	55
	2	18	71	89	147	184	331
	3	21	95	116	312	587	899
	4	19	85	104	121	489	610
	5	20	77	97	157	325	482
	6	27	53	80	108	115	223
	Total		123	433	556	880	1,720

LOUISIANA							
	1	23	109	132	69	708	777
	2	20	99	119	62	1,002	1,064
	3	34	149	183	157	2,310	2,467
	4	20	117	137	73	1,609	1,682
	5	18	107	125	136	1,276	1,412
6	14	91	105	71	1,206	1,277	
	Total	129	672	801	568	8,111	8,679
MISSISSIPPI							
	1	15	51	66	38	58	96
	2	17	63	80	80	118	198
	3	16	71	87	59	469	528
	4	17	71	88	151	620	771
	5	16	48	64	100	253	353
6	18	52	70	41	107	148	
	Total	99	356	455	469	1,625	2,094

	SH	CH/PR	SH	CH/PR	Total
YEAR TOTALS	910	4,358	6,714	38,882	36,917

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

STATE	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	NUMBER OF FISH MEASURED	NUMBER OF HARD PARTS
AL	92	3,226	930
LA/MS	113	1,786	376
NWFL	83	2,917	859
SWFL	173	3,449	885
TX	421	11,294	1,317
TOTAL	882	22,672	4,367

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

PORT	NUMBER OF SAMPLES
MOSS POINT, MS	379
EMPIRE, LA	300
ABBEVILLE, LA	288

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

AGE	MOSS POINT, MS		EMPIRE, LA		ABBEVILLE, LA		ALL	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	2,254	67	1,622	74	707	28	4,583	56
2	929	27	456	21	1,450	56	2,835	35
3+	201	6	102	5	411	16	714	9
ALL	3,384		2,180		2,568		8,132	

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

STATE	COUNT	YEARS	LAST UPDATED
COMMERCIAL LANDINGS			
FLORIDA	21,968,849	1985 – 2015	08-FEB-16
ALABAMA	687,024	1985 – 2015	05-JAN-16
MISSISSIPPI	171,135	1985 – 2015	27-JAN-16
LOUISIANA	7,916,848	1985 – 2015	02-MAR-16
TEXAS	1,007,242	1985 – 2015	25-FEB-16
PUERTO RICO	2,131,114	1985 – 2016	2016
RECREATIONAL CATCH ESTIMATES			
FLORIDA	149,584	1981 - 2014	03-FEB-16
ALABAMA	18,875	1981 – 2014	03-FEB-16
MISSISSIPPI	12,923	1981 – 2014	03-FEB-16
LOUISIANA	20,133	1981 – 2013	03-FEB-16
TEXAS	0	-	-
PUERTO RICO	6,882	2000 – 2014	03-FEB-16
RECREATIONAL EFFORT ESTIMATES			
FLORIDA	10,420	1982 - 2014	03-FEB-16
ALABAMA	4,371	1982 – 2014	03-FEB-16
MISSISSIPPI	4,503	1982 – 2014	03-FEB-16
LOUISIANA	24,829	1982 – 2013	03-FEB-16
TEXAS	0	-	-
PUERTO RICO	1,222	2000 – 2014	03-FEB-16
BIOLOGICAL DATA			
FLORIDA	331,059	2002 – 2015	26-JAN-16
ALABAMA	39,598	2002 – 2015	18-FEB-16
MISSISSIPPI	9,396	2002 – 2014	12-FEB-15
LOUISIANA	141,662	2002 – 2015	02-FEB-16
TEXAS	43,748	2002 - 2013	14-JUL-14

TABLE 9. NUMBER OF AGE STRUCTURES COLLECTED FROM THE COMMERCIAL FISHERY BY FIN PRIORITY SPECIES, BY STATE

PRIMARY SPECIES	FL	AL	MS	LA	TX	TOT
AMBERJACK, GREATER	-	-	-	-	-	0
DRUM, BLACK	5	-	-	1,137	-	1,142
DRUM, RED	-	-	4	-	-	4
FLOUNDER, GULF	29	13	-	-	-	42
FLOUNDER, SOUTHERN	26	103	-	452	245	826
FLOUNDER, ALL	55	113	-	452	245	865
GAG	1,137	-	-	-	-	1,137
GROUPEL, RED	3,834	-	-	-	-	3,834
MACKEREL, KING	2	-	-	-	-	2
MULLET, STRIPED	1,991	346	-	800	-	3,137
SHEEPSHEAD	-	-	-	456	-	456
SNAPPER, GRAY	490	-	-	40	-	530
SNAPPER, RED	2,511	10	10	419	-	2,950
SNAPPER, VERMILION	701	10	-	31	30	772
TRIGGERFISH, GRAY*	123	-	-	-	-	123
TOTAL	11,333	482	14	3,335	275	15,439

*dorsal spines collected

TABLE 10. NUMBER OF AGE STRUCTURES COLLECTED FROM THE RECREATIONAL FISHERY BY FIN PRIORITY SPECIES, BY STATE

PRIMARY SPECIES	FL	AL	MS	LA	TX	TOT
AMBERJACK, GREATER	205	1	-	50	-	256
DRUM, BLACK	20	3	2	424	28	477
DRUM, RED	218	13	14	1,935	191	2,371
FLOUNDER, GULF	60	-	-	-	-	60
FLOUNDER, SOUTHERN	6	3	21	533	65	628
FLOUNDER, ALL	66	-	21	533	-	620
GAG	483	-	-	-	-	483
GROUPE, RED	337	-	-	-	-	337
GROUPE, YELLOWEDGE	11	-	-	-	-	11
MACKEREL, KING	693	10	-	-	6	709
MULLET, STRIPED	-	-	-	-	-	0
SEATROUT, SPOTTED	267	21	77	4,411	703	5,479
SHEEPSHEAD	229	6	33	290	5	563
SNAPPER, GRAY	474	1	3	131	-	609
SNAPPER, RED	3,508	-	270	928	18	4,724
SNAPPER, VERMILION	3,028	20	-	3	-	3,051
TRIGGERFISH, GRAY	8	2	2	2	-	14
TOTAL	9,550	80	422	8,708	916	19,676

*dorsal spines collected

APPENDIX A
2015 Operations Plan

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

by: FIN Committee

June 2014

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:

- X To plan, manage, and evaluate data collection and management activities;
- X To implement data collection activities;
- X To establish and maintain a data management system; and
- X 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 aid 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.
<u>Task B31:</u>	<u>Coordination, Consistency and Comparability with Other Cooperative Marine Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Programs (Goal 4, Objective 2 and Objective 3) (F)</u>
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

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APPENDIX A

FIN Goals and Objectives

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

- Objective 1 To establish and maintain FIN Committee consisting of MOU signatories or their designees to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the program.
- Objective 2 To develop and periodically review a Framework Plan that outlines policies and 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.