

**STRIPED BASS TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
SUMMARY
February 25-26, 2002
Pensacola, Florida**

Chairman Doug Frugé opened the meeting Monday, February 25, 2002, in the Aztec Room of the Clarion Suites Resort at 1:05 p.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Attending

Jim Barkuloo, USFWS Ret., Panama City, FL
Douglas J. Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
J.T. Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Rick Long, FGFF, Midway, FL, *proxy for Charles Mesing*
Howard E. Rogillio, LDWF, Lacombe, LA
Isaac Wirgin, NYUSM, Tuxedo, NY

Members Absent

Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Norman Boyd, TPWD, Port O'Connor, TX
Pete Cooper, Jr., Salt Water Sportsman, Buras, LA
J. Alan Huff, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Ron Garavelli, MDWFP, Jackson, MS
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Larry Nicholson, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Because a quorum was not present, the meeting was declared a work session. Approval of the minutes from the December 2001 meeting was deferred until the next meeting.

Sections on "Parasites and Diseases" Section 3.2.7, the "Juvenile Habitat" Section 4.8, and the preliminary draft for the "Fisheries Section" Section 6.0 were reviewed and edited. Also edited were revisions to "Adult Habitat" Section 4.9 and "Genetics" Section 3.2.3. Conceptual elements that needed adding were discussed. Considerable time was spent working through the boiler plate materials in the habitat section, description of habitats in general, and habitat impacts affecting the striped bass fishery.

Doug and Steve will draft a description of Mississippi's riverine habitats. This "boilerplate" will be e-mailed to each state representative to guide them in drafting similar, state-by-state descriptions for inclusion to the habitat section.

Ask Cynthia Moncreiff, USM/CMS/GCRL, to review the habitat section when revised.

The ACF Agreement needs to be added to Section 5.

Discussion of the results of the questionnaire was deferred until the next meeting. Unfortunately, only nine completed questionnaires were received. The questionnaire will be resent to all members. Two responses were difficult to interpret:

- ◀ A questionnaire was faxed to the Commission office on February 21. Only the "front" pages were received. The questionnaire was double-sided.
- ◀ In one questionnaire, the river goals matrix (the one titled "Goals for Striped Bass in Gulf of Mexico Rivers") was completed with numbers. The table should have had only one check mark or "X" in only one of the "goal type" columns per river.

Results of the questionnaire will be discussed at the next meeting which is tentatively scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, June 10-11, 2002, in New Orleans.

Task Force members will be asked to return hard-copy comments on the revised PDF file. Deadline for comments is mid-April.

Agenda item next meeting - development of genetics plan.

Doug to send genetics plans for white and pallid sturgeon to Ike Wirgin.

The closed Tuesday, February 26, 2002 at 5:15 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

Harriet Perry
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**DERELICT TRAP TASK FORCE
MINUTES
March 4-5, 2002
Biloxi, MS**

The first meeting of the Derelict Trap Task Force was called to order by Steve VanderKooy in the Board Room of the Palace Casino Hotel at 1:04 p.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Present

Bob Fairbank, Recreational Fisherman, Gulfport, MS
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Gary Graham, TAEX, Palacios, TX
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Leslie Hartman, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Robert Metz, Commercial Fisherman, Lakeshore, MS
Harriet Perry, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Larry E. Young, TPWD, Austin, TX

Members Absent

Mark LaSalle, MSU CREC, Biloxi, MS

Guests

Kirsten Larsen, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Programs Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Welcome, Introductions, Background, and Election of Chairman

S. VanderKooy asked each person to introduce themselves and give their affiliation. He explained that the Commission's Crab Subcommittee had recently completed a revision to the Gulf of Mexico Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan. Many recommendations within the plan related to habitat and social/economics issues. The subcommittee held a joint discussion with the Habitat Subcommittee to address the problem of derelict traps along the Gulf Coast.

Development of the Derelict Trap Task Force is the culmination of those discussions. The Commission anticipates that the Task Force will organize a regional program to resolve the problem. The task force is charged to defining the problem and its components (derelict and abandoned traps), review relevant state legislation, and develop general guidelines for a regional program.

S. VanderKooy requested that during the course of the meeting, the group should consider electing a chairman. Several members interjected they were ready to elect a chairman and did not need to wait. **Bob Fairbank nominated Harriet Perry as chairman. Tom Wagner seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

Texas Trap Cleanup

T. Wagner reported that Senator Buster Brown submitted Senate Bill 1410 in April 2001. Origination of the legislation is unknown. It mandates a closed season in the crab trap fishery and allows for a closure every year. It does not, however, mandate a yearly closure. That decision was left up to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. The TPWD was allowed to use volunteers to help pick up lost traps during certain periods of the closure. During the first seven days of the closed season, only game wardens were allowed to retrieve traps left in the water. After that time, traps were declared "litter" and could legally be removed by the general populous. All traps picked up as litter must be disposed of and cannot be reused.

Essential aspects of the program included volunteers, shallow-draft vessels (especially air boats), disposal facilities, data collection, and program review. Data elements collected included the number of traps, trap location, presence of an identifying tag, trap condition, presence of degradable panel, and presence of escape vents/rings. Also collected were the number of bycatch species found (live or dead) including blue crab, stone crab, and diamondback terrapins. Space was provided to write in other species, as well.

The TPWD declared that the data collected during the clean up was "unscientific" and was for internal department use only. The TPWD does not intend to publish this information. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission will address another closure during their meetings in April or June.

The GSMFC provided transportation for a group from the northcentral Gulf to travel and participate in the clean up. They included J. Rester, GSMFC; B. Richardson, MDMR, H. Perry and K. Larsen, USM/CMS/GCRL; and V. Guillory, LDWF. J. Rester offered his personal observations from the trip.

In the group J. Rester accompanied, traps on shore were not targeted. It was explained that these traps would not affect the fishery since they were on shore. Rester disagreed because one good storm could place traps back in the water. Law enforcement had been notified of one stretch of land where traps had been tossed. That area may have been targeted for pickup by the wardens. Most traps were pulled from shallow water. Some traps that were found were left in the water due to the heaviness – coated in algal growth, oyster colonization, etc. Most of the traps they found were over four years old; the oldest trap found had a 1993 tag. Bycatch was present in many of the traps. Although most of the organisms were using the traps as a refuge, the traps had plenty of holes in them and were easily escapable. He noted that recovery was not designed to deal with traps in deeper water. Visibility was good in Texas waters, but it is still undeterminable whether a trap is present below three foot of water.

Determination of Trap Definitions

The following terms were defined:

Derelict Trap - Any trap which is not actively fished, including abandoned or lost traps (able or unable to fish). A derelict trap is not necessarily an illegal trap – definitions of a “legal trap” vary by state.

Fishable Trap - Traps (with or without a buoy) that are able to capture and retain target species or other bycatch.

Abandoned Trap - Traps intentionally left in the water and not actively fished; typically not baited and allowed to foul.

Lost Trap - Traps that are inactive because the buoy has been displaced or removed.

Unfishable Trap - A trap (with or without a buoy) which is not capable of capturing and/or retaining the target species due to physical deformity, fouling, or deterioration.

Illegal Trap - A trap that does not comply with state statutes/ordinances including (but not limited to): area closures, seasonal closures, stolen gear, improperly marked gear, and gear requirements.

State Laws and Regulations Related to Trap Ownership and Possession

S. VanderKooy has been compiling state laws on crab trap ownership. In order to develop state cleanup programs, ownership rights must be forfeited at some point so that traps can be picked up in a legal manner. Changes in state regulations would require legislative action.

T. Floyd noted that a bill in Mississippi’s current legislative session addressed ownership, but the bill died in committee.

L. Hartman reported that Alabama is currently changing relevant legislation. Their commissioner is fully committed to removing derelict traps from the water. Meetings have just occurred with user group representatives to discuss the issue. They would like to see a closure from February (for the winter tides) through just prior to the opening of shrimp season. Alabama has passed a recent change in that they will no longer require floats to be color-coded to a particular fisherman. Instead, the state will issue inside trap tags. Their agency is also looking at legislative changes including a recreational crab license and effort management.

Disposal Information

S. VanderKooy investigated disposal sites and recycling programs for traps. In order to make recycling more appealing, recommendations should be made regarding the removal of extraneous equipment (floats, lines, oysters), and the task force will try to determine if crushing the traps help

in recycling. Increasing the willingness of recyclers to take traps is essential to any trap recovery program.

T. Wagner volunteered to follow up and determine what was done with the traps from their recent closure. He will attempt to determine why some recycling centers were willing to help (public relations/tax write offs?) and why others were not.

Discussion of the Overall Problem

The group agreed that educational outreach is one key to solve the problem. Information must be made available to the fishing community and general public. A tri-fold pamphlet should be developed for the general public and distributed through points of sale for licenses, at state agencies, and at marinas and fuel docks.

A second brochure for the commercial fishing community is also necessary. The group agreed to focus their efforts on the development of a double-sided, card stock handout (3.7" x 8.5") for the commercial fishing community.

The third item discussed was a scripted PowerPoint presentation which could be provided to all Sea Grant offices for public outreach.

G. Graham noted that Sea Grant has also been discussing the derelict trap program and may be a potential source of funding for educational materials. All agreed that Sea Grant would be an excellent venue to assist with printing costs. G. Graham also indicated there may be resources available to develop a video targeting other specific groups.

The following outline was developed for the fishing community handout:

Definition of Derelict Trap

Any trap which is not actively fished, including abandoned or lost traps (able or unable to fish). A derelict trap is not necessarily an illegal trap – definitions of a "legal trap" vary by state.

Scope of the Problem

- ◀ Percent losses for the Gulf of Mexico range from 20% - 100% annually.
- ◀ Approximately 250,000 traps are added to the water annually.
- ◀ This figure underestimates the number of traps in the water due to cumulative additions of traps over time.
- ◀ The life-expectancy of a lost or abandoned trap is variable but as long as six-eight years.
- ◀ Sources of loss include: storms, theft, etc.

Economic Impacts

- ◀ Crab Fishery
 - Trap replacement – $250,000 \text{ lost traps} \times \$17.00 \text{ per trap} = \$4.2 \text{ million total loss}$
 - Catch loss
- ◀ Other Fisheries

- Substantial shrimp loss (fouled trawls and loss from malfunctioning TEDs)
- Gear repair
- ◀ Recreational Boating Community
 - Damage to propellers and lower units

Biological Impacts

- ◀ Ghost Fishing
 - Crab mortality
 - Bycatch mortality
- ◀ Public Perception

Recommendations

- ◀ Support Derelict Trap Removal Programs
 - Trap sweeps
 - Address issues associated with derelict trap removal by others
- ◀ Crab Fishermen
 - Gear maintenance
 - Communication
 - Awareness
 - Proper disposal
- ◀ Other Fishing Groups
 - Awareness

Contact Point

- ◀ Leave a blank space for state agency stamp or sticker.

Wrap Up

The Derelict Trap Task Force noted accomplishments thus far:

1. White paper, executive summary, and power point presentation.
2. Mississippi's ongoing program and the newly-funded CIAP trap removal program (a USM/GCRL and MDMR cooperative effort).
3. Florida's newly-funded project to identify trap "hot spots."
4. Alabama's fly-over derelict trap counts.
5. Texas' closed season.
6. Development of educational materials:
 - a. Identify possible funding sources (Sea Grant).
 - b. Commercial fishery brochure development.
 - c. All water users tri-fold pamphlet.
 - d. PowerPoint presentation and script.
 - e. Possible video presentation.
7. Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama reviewing litter and trap statutes.
8. Louisiana's Crab Task Force has endorsed the derelict trap removal program concept.
9. Successful communication with commercial and recreational components.

Homework:

1. V. Guillory volunteered to update the PowerPoint presentation.
2. H. Perry volunteered to provide a mock-up of the fishing community handout at the March subcommittee meeting.
3. T. Wagner volunteered to investigate disposal options.
4. S. VanderKooy will immediately E-mail the definitions, outline, and accomplishments files to the group.
5. Each state will send T. Wagner data collection elements.
6. T. Wagner will investigate the video component through Texas' Graphic Arts Department.
7. H. Perry will develop a PowerPoint presentation on this meeting's activities and provide to T. Wagner for inclusion in his subcommittee report to the TCC in October.

S. VanderKooy had hoped to have one or two more meetings over the summer and a wrap-up in October 2002. Summer conflict may preclude two meetings, but a summer meeting was tentatively scheduled for July-August. A joint subcommittee/task force meeting will be held in October 2002 during the GSMFC annual meeting in Florida.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

3/6/02
SEAMAP Plankton
WG Mtg Summary
Paseaugoula, MS

Hi Everyone!

I just wanted to send out my thanks to all the attendees of the SEAMAP Plankton Workgroup meeting. I feel that we accomplished and learned a lot.

Hopefully, we won't wait another 10 years for our next meeting!

I also wanted to recap some of the discussions we had and the recommendations we made, or at least got close to making.

1. ~~Comparison~~ of sampling techniques indicated a difference in the way we timed neuston tows. The most recent (revised) version of the SEAMAP Field manual stated that; "Start time occurs when the gear is in the water, half submerged and is fishing properly. End time occurs when the net is out of the water". We have modified that wording to read, "Start time occurs when the gear is in the water and the net is fishing properly. End time occurs when the net is out of the water". The key thing to remember here is that neuston tow time begins when the neuston net is upright and fishing at the targeted depth, i.e., 0.5 m. We should all try to achieve correct fishing configuration as soon as possible so as to minimize water flow through the net prior to 'official' start of tow. We (NMFS) have historically had more problems doing this and we will work at fixing it!
2. As for the depth of a neuston tow. Please continue (or for some of you begin) to write 0.5 m on the field data sheets for beginning and end depths. Yes, you will still have to enter 1 m in the current DMS database system but the new Oracle based system will accept a decimal entry. The entire database will be revised later to reflect the 0.5 targeted neuston fishing depth.
3. Please begin keeping closer scrutiny of flowmeter performance during each cruise by using a Flowmeter Performance Tracking form. Use either the one we passed out at the meeting or develop your own. This has sure helped us (NMFS) reduce the number of flowmeter reading errors. Please send a copy of the form to us with your Ichthyoplankton Field data (station) sheets. This will help us out during final data verification and editing. You will find, however, as we did that using a flowmeter tracking form will help you find, correct and prevent most flowmeter errors.

4. Please begin noting on your Field data sheets (if you haven't already) the preservation protocol used for each bongo and neuston sample, i.e., what the initial and final preservatives were. We will begin using the convention 10 % formalin-> 95% ethanol for the standard SEAMAP preservation scenario. When we preserve samples for otolith work we will use the notation 95% ethanol-> 95% ethanol. The new SEAMAP database system has a field for this important information that will be entered as a two digit code. It will not be necessary to record the date and time of transfer to final preservative. We should all try to adhere to the SEAMAP protocol of sample transfer after 48 hours. Let me know if this is an unrealistic timeframe for you.
5. Please remember to mail copies of your Ichthyoplankton Field data sheets to us either at the end of each cruise or at the end of the field season. I don't think I emphasized this point at our meeting. I meant to!
6. I will share the information that Mark Benfield sends me regarding the inexpensive TDR (depth recorders), as well as any information on electronic archival of entire samples for future zooplankton work.
7. Other final points: please spell out the entire vessel name on sample labels; remember we no longer let the bongo net 'settle' at the maximum depth of tow. Begin haul back as soon as max depth has been reached; and some of you may still have a copy of an early 'edition' of the latest SEAMAP Field Manual which has an outdated email address for Alonzo Hamilton; the correct address is:
Alonzo.N.Hamilton@noaa.gov

Once again thanks for a wonderful meeting! Let us continue to remain in touch as questions or concerns come up.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**JOINT COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES
Monday, March 18, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

P. Horn called the meeting to order at 12:56 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Grey Cane III, CCA, Daphne, AL
Bob Zales, Panama City Boatmans Association, Panama City, FL
Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Bayou La Batre, AL
Bob Fairbanks, MS Power, Gulfport, MS
DeGraff Adams, CCA, Richmond, TX
Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS
Randy Gros, Marrero, LA

Others

Michael Bailey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Greg Boland, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
David Donaldson, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

P. Barber requested a few moments to remember Mr. Brian Perkins of Alabama who passed away this past Saturday. Mr. Perkins has worked for many years with the Alabama processors on issues such as HACCP. Brian had presented to the Panel on the HACCP issue in the past and will be missed.

B. Zales asked for a followup on the mailing list contacts asked for at a previous meeting. S. VanderKooy informed the group that while the charter boat survey list had been added to our mailing list, nothing has been sent out. A response card will be included in the mailing asking the recipients if they wish to receive future mailings.

R. Lukens indicated that he will give two presentations later in the week on invasive species and methylmercury activities and would be happy to present them to the panel for their information. The panel agreed and those items were added to the agenda.

B. Fairbank moved to accept the agenda as amended. R. Gros seconded, and it passed.

Approval of Minutes (October 29, 2001)

P. Barber moved to accept the minutes as written. R. Gros seconded, and it passed.

Introductions

P. Horn began the introductions of the panel and audience for the benefit of those attending and indicated that both groups had a quorum. Two new representatives, Mr. Degraaf Adams (Texas Recreational) and Mr. Grey Cane III (Alabama Recreational), were welcomed to the Panel.

FIN Data Program Update

D. Donaldson updated the group on the biological sampling in the five states. He highlighted the species being targeted and reported on the number of samples taken so far in 2002. In addition to conducting interviews using the modified MRFSS and TIP protocols, samplers are also collecting hard parts (otoliths) with the normal intercept information. The five states are collecting red snapper, king mackerel, southern flounder, Gulf flounder, and greater amberjack otoliths and lengths. The data are being sent to the FIN Data Management System, and to date, over 650 otoliths and 240 lengths have been collected.

D. Donaldson also updated the Panel on the status of the data management system and the current status of data availability. At this time, both commercial and recreational data are in the system. Florida data are available from 1984 to 2001, Alabama 2000, Mississippi oyster only for 2001, and Louisiana data for 2000 and 2001. Recreational data from 1981-2000 are available, and menhaden data from 1987-1990 and 1993-1999 are available. The biological data will be available after 2002, and SEAMAP data from 1982-2000 are currently on-line. The Data Management Subcommittee will be determining when and how to open the system to users soon.

Artificial Reef Materials Resolutions Public Hearings

R. Lukens followed up the Artificial Reef Materials Resolution and Tire Statement. The results from the public hearings were summarized in a presentation to the Panel. R. Lukens pointed out that while there were many people at a few of the meetings who spoke out against the Resolution and Tire Statement, most were opposed to the documents themselves, not the proposed language changes. Lukens pointed out that at the Mississippi and Louisiana meetings, most of the people who spoke were concerned that the Commission was there to support rather than restrict the use of tires and wanted a total ban on them, ballasted or not.

B. Zales moved that the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel recommend to the Commission that the proposed changes to the Position Statement on the Use of Automobile Tires as Artificial Reef Material and Resolution on the Use of Selected Materials of Opportunity as Artificial Reef Material be tabled until more information can be gathered. P. Horn seconded the motion for discussion.

R. Lukens offered a history on this issue for the sake of the new members of the Panel, and it was pointed out that the proposed language changes simply clarify the existing position of how tires should be used as materials of opportunity. R. Lukens reminded the Panel that the Commission's statement would in no way usurp state authority to continue to use tires if they so choose. It was also reiterated that not approving the proposed language changes would not rescind the position statement and resolution which had been in place since 1992 and 1997, respectively.

Concern was raised by B. Zales that all the current research had not been included before the decision to eliminate tires was made. R. Lukens indicated that the subcommittee had included all the pertinent literature, and in fact this was not new ground. Every marine agency in the United States, with the exception of Delaware and Alabama, have already eliminated the use of tires in artificial reefs entirely, primarily due to the risks associated with movement. These documents still allow for the use of tires provided they are individually ballasted, so that if they break loose from the reef unit, they will not move.

B. Fairbank pointed out that the vote actually lies at the Commission level. The Panel did not take a position at the last meeting and it does not seem that any new data has been produced suggesting the delay of the Commission's action; therefore, the item was called to question. **S. VanderKooy reread the motion and a vote was called. The motion failed in a vote of 6 to 1.**

NMFS Red Drum Sampling

S. VanderKooy provided some basic information on the proposed red drum sampling using commercial anglers and included the information in the folder as FYI (Attachment 1). Anyone interested should contact René Labadens at the Pascagoula NMFS office for more information.

IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy pointed out that the IJF program is continuing to work on the otolith manual which supports the hard-part collection being conducted by the FIN. The Crab FMP is at the printer, and the Menhaden FMP will be considered for approval by the full Commission later in the week. S. VanderKooy briefly introduced the menhaden website which is being drafted and discussed the progress on the Striped Bass FMP.

Methylmercury Update

R. Lukens gave a brief presentation updating the Panel on the methylmercury issue. The Commission became involved to help establish a regional perspective on the problem. At the Fall 2001 meeting of the Commission a resolution was passed to establish a steering committee on methylmercury, and provide some regional recommendations. A writing team was established and a 17 page report was drafted to include the background of the problem and provide a context for the recommendations.

The Panel voiced several concerns over wording which may be misleading. Specifically terms like "contaminated with mercury" and "elevated". It was pointed out by both the Panel and members of

the audience that these are fish which "may contain methylmercury" which is different than other forms of mercury which are unavailable in the environment.

R. Lukens thanked the Panel and reported that he will be giving the Commissioners the presentation and request their action on approving the report.

Derelict Trap Task Force

S. VanderKooy provided an overview presentation of the Texas Crab Trap Closure and the derelict trap recovery efforts. He also summarized the accomplishments of the derelict trap task force, which met in February to begin addressing guidelines for derelict trap programs and public education on the trap issue. Several terms were defined in an effort to begin identifying derelict traps, and three different educational tools are under development for both commercial fishermen and the general boating public (recreational anglers and other water users).

Election of Recreational Chair

Since Pat Murray withdrew from the Panel due to a change in his job requirements, election of a new recreational chair was necessary. **B. Fairbank moved to elect Grey Cane, III chair of the Recreational Advisory Panel. R. Gros seconded, and it passed unanimously.** Mr. Cane accepted the position.

Other Business

R. Lukens offered a PowerPoint presentation on his activities with invasive species. R. Lukens indicated that the Commission is represented on the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, the Gulf of Mexico Invasive Species Regional Panel under the Task Force, and the National Invasive Species Advisory Committee. These are national and regional organizations that are charged with addressing invasive species issues in the U.S. Lukens pointed out that the Commission is currently supporting amendments to the National Invasive Species Act which will authorize the establishment of regional invasive species programs to be administered and coordinated by the three interstate marine fisheries commissions and the Great Lakes Commission, for their respective coastlines. Finally, R. Lukens reported that the Commission may soon be providing administrative support for the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel, which is currently administered by the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program. He stressed that the shift in administrative responsibilities hinged upon sufficient funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the panel.

M. Bailey, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, announced that the NMFS has published its Artificial Reef Plan Revision and is requesting comments by May 23, 2002 either on-line or via phone. Copies of the revision can be acquired through the SERO in St. Petersburg, Florida.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

ATTACHMENT I

Red Drum Research Plan

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Red Drum Stock Assessment Panel has indicated that in the most recent assessment of Gulf of Mexico Red Drum the stock might not have recovered as projected due to a combination of factors including inadequate escapement from estuarine waters to the offshore adult population. There is considerable uncertainty in this result, however, due to limited information about the age structure of the offshore population. In the absence of an offshore fishery for this part of the red drum population, cooperative research making use of chartered recreational and commercial Hook and Line vessels may provide the basis for collecting adequate otolith samples for the age structure of the offshore adult population. Proposed sampling activity is scheduled for Mar- Apr 2002 through Nov-Dec 2002.

The SFD-Miami has been requested to conduct an otolith collection project targeting the offshore adult red drum stocks. The otoliths collected will be utilized to assist in the age determination of those adult stocks. Specifically, 20-30 otoliths are to be collected from as many different 'offshore schools' from the Florida Panhandle through the Northeast Coast of Texas for a total otolith sampling target of 800 otoliths.

A cooperative research grant, for FY2002, has been approved to conduct the work.

To establish if interest exists in the commercial hook and line fishery, NMFS port agents contacted the owners of reliable commercial hook and line vessels offering up to \$1500/fishing day. Five owners for a total of 11 commercial hook and line vessels were very receptive to the idea and interested in participating.

Sampling Plan:

Hook and line vessels will be contracted to conduct fishing operations in the off shore areas of the upper Gulf of Mexico at a rate of \$1000/fishing day. Additionally, a \$20/ fish incentive bonus, up to \$500 maximum per trip, shall be paid for every fish collected over an initial 25 fish have been caught and processed. A fishing day will be described as from the time a vessel leaves port to conduct fishing/sampling operations for a minimum of 8 hours . Should a vessel over night at sea, a fishing day will be a 24 hour period. Each vessel will be contracted for up to 5 fishing days with possible extensions which will be determined by the number of participating vessels. Fishing operations will be conducted with a NMFS representative on board..

Based on discussions with the Captain, time of year, and historically known areas of red drum capture, fishing operations will be directed to specific areas along the Northern Gulf of Mexico. Historical monthly landings of red drum for 1980-1987 showed catches obtainable virtually all months of the year with peaks in the winter, spring and early summer. With this information, the time of year to attempt sampling would be more a function of the weather and the ability to fish. Additionally, because the targeted commercial hook and line vessels also fish red snapper and the first 10 days of each month is the commercial season, sampling would be anticipated to occur from the mid to the end of each month.

Based on the number of contracts let, a random selection of the participants will be made to establish which vessel(s) will be activated and in what order. Should a vessel be either unavailable or unwilling to conduct the sampling/fishing at its proposed dates, and area to fish, then it can be dropped to the end of the standing list or dropped from the program all together at NMFS discretion.

Each selected vessel will be assigned a twenty day period to complete 5 fishing days.

Should more than one NMFS representative be available (we may have as many as 5 NMFS personnel available at any one time) we could potentially be sampling with 5 vessels at the same time, which makes areas to fish assignments critical. The major known areas fished a very general in nature within the NMFS grid system being grids 11.0-15.0.

Environmental conditions will be collected, such as water temperature, salinity, Oxygen content.

Vessel obligations:

- Must be in possession of a current USCG safety inspection certificate (must have all life saving and fire fighting equipment, pumps, navigation and fishing lights as required by USCG for this class of vessel).

- must have the capacity to provide over night accommodations for NMFS representative on board the vessel.

- Must be willing to fish any area offshore along the Northern Gulf of Mexico as determined by NMFS.

- Carry appropriate hull and P/I insurance at the participants discretion, (NMFS personnel would be covered by workman's comp).

- navigation equipment... GPS (preferred) or Loran, depth finder

- crew (fish captain and crew)

- stores

NMFS obligations:

1. Payments
2. Supply scientific equipment
3. Processing of samples
4. Stores for field sampler
5. Correspond with the contracted fishermen to schedule trips.

Scientific Collection Permits from Federal and corresponding State agencies will be applied for and must be in possession of the NMFS field representative during any period in which red drum are in

possession. No by-catch during fishing operations will be possessed. All by-catch are to be returned immediately to the water.

Fishing areas will be determined upon consultation of the commercial participants. Should a commercial participant catch 20-30 red drum at a single site the NMFS representative will instruct the commercial participant to move to another area in the pursuit of a separate school and then continue fishing.

All otoliths will be submitted to and processed under the direction of the NMFS Panama City Lab. Field data collection forms will include, based on the availability of sampling equipment, oxygen, salinity, temperature measurements along with pertinent information relating to the trip.

All fish retained will be donated to local food charities based on State rules and regulations.

APPROVED BY:

Joe O'Hop 14 Oct 2002
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Monday, March 18, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Joe O'Hop called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom Van Devender, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Staff

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant
Larry Simpson, Executive Director
Mike Sestak, FIN Data Base Manager
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst

Others

Robert Sadler, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Bobbi Walker, OBFA, Orange Beach, AL
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on October 29, 2001 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved with minor editorial changes.

State/Federal Reports

Florida

J. O'Hop reported that the Florida Marine Research Institute's (FMRI) Fisheries Dependent Monitoring group is assigned a variety of tasks. They have completed years of upgrades and data base conversion to an Oracle data base management system for the marine fisheries trip tickets a few months ago. The seemingly endless rounds of system and parallel testing resulted in a 6-month backlog in editing of trip tickets, which have been reduced to 4 months at present. It is expected to reduce this backlog to "normal" levels (no more than 45 days behind the data) by September 2002. It has been proposed to move FMRI from the computer system that currently houses the editing system and data (a SGI computer running Oracle 8.15 under a type of UNIX called IRIX) to an Intel-based system running Microsoft NT. The expected advantages of this migration to a new platform and operating system will be reduced annual maintenance costs, reduced number of operating systems for system personnel to support, greater compatibility with FMRI's and Fish and Wildlife Commission's (FWC) computer networks, greater software support potential from Oracle (which will not be developing its software for the SGI platform past version 8.17), and the ability to move to more current versions of Oracle in the future.

A project to compare some federal log book data to that collected on trip tickets is in its final stages, and should be finished by the end of the month. In addition, FMRI will be sending statements to commercial license holders regarding their reported commercial landings to get feedback on reported landings from fishermen.

Florida's eleven port samplers completed 1,388 trip interviews in 2001 compared to 1,282 trip interviews in the previous year. On these interviews, a total of 94,594 fish or invertebrates were measured by samplers during 2001.

The semiannual training workshops for port, head boat, and recreational survey samplers was held on January 23-24, 2001 concurrently with FMRI's Fisheries Independent Monitoring group. Some of the highlights of these sessions were presentations of research conducted at the field labs around the state, fish identification and testing, otolith removal techniques, and a presentation by the staff of Fish Biology's Age and Growth Lab on otolith processing and aging.

State and federal port samplers from Texas to Florida attended a training workshop during November 14-15, 2001 (sponsored and funded by NMFS and the Fisheries Information Network [FIN]). Activities on November 14 focused on discussions of port sampling activities and concerns. Port samplers gained additional experience with otolith removal from several species of fish (amberjacks, snappers, flounders, and mackerels), and the Age and Growth Lab staff gave a presentation on otolith processing on November 15.

The MRFSS samplers completed just over 47,000 dockside interviews during 2001, resulting in over 55,000 fish identifications and measurements. This is about a 6% increase over interviews and measurements compared with 2000. Measurements of length and weight from the MRFSS over the last three years in Florida by the samplers have enabled Florida to generate regressions for quality assurance purposes on the MRFSS data on over 100 species. Cold weather in the early months of

2001, red tide, an active hurricane season, and a large drop in charter boat activity after September 11th made sampling more challenging. Despite pouring more effort into achieving the 6X Florida Gulf Coast charter boat sampling target in Wave 1, 2001, only 4X was achieved in this mode during that period. This was the only sampling target that was not exceeded during 2001. In 2002, Florida missed the Gulf Coast charter boat sampling target again in Wave 1 despite increased field efforts, but by only three interviews. Sampling on Florida's East Coast has improved and Florida is exceeding the sampling targets by good margins. Part of this success is due to efforts made by field coordinators to improve the charter boat telephone frame and to increased cooperation at one of the major charter boat sites. The charter boat telephone directory has been improved through better information gathered by the field samplers, use of an updated NMFS federal permit file, and dropping old names with incomplete data from the directory list. There is quite a bit of turnover in the vessels and operators in the charter boat fleet, and it is believed that the names of vessels and operators that were deleted were not currently participating in charter boat fishing.

Last October, Florida hired a replacement for their West Coast headboat sampler. In February, the East Coast headboat sampler resigned and Florida has interviewed several candidates for that position, and a recommendation to hire the new sampler was made recently. Despite planning several at-sea trips, no at-sea sampling by the samplers occurred during the last 6 months. Weather was the primary factor.

Funds from the FIN program have enabled Florida to extend the employment of the otolith technician stationed at the NMFS Panama City Laboratory. She has helped to reduce a backlog of triggerfish spines that needed to be worked up. These funds have also enabled Florida to hire an otolith technician for the FMRI Age and Growth Lab. Otoliths taken by samplers were shipped during March of 2002 to the Panama City Lab, to the NMFS Beaufort Laboratory, and to FMRI's Age and Growth Lab for processing. FIN funding also supports special MRFSS biological sampling assignments which have increased the number of otoliths obtained by samplers. In addition to the MRFSS measurements, samplers are obtaining more measurements for individual specimens which will allow Florida to convert the standard "mid-line" or "center-line" MRFSS and TIP measurements to standard length and total length. Samplers, with the angler's cooperation, obtain tissue samples for mercury and/or DNA assays for selected fish. It is intended to compile the regressions that have been computed from these measurements in a FMRI Technical Report.

FMRI is on year 3 of this project in Tampa Bay, and continue to interview anglers to examine the prevalence of anglers targeting or catching red drum. Fin clips are taken from angler's fish for FMRI's Genetics Laboratory to determine whether any of the fish in the angler's creel (a 1-fish bag limit, with a slot size) were spawned in the hatchery. A legal-size hatchery-released red drum was caught during a Fisheries Independent sampling trip in December 2001, so Florida was expecting to see hatchery-released red drum in angler's catches this year. Additional information is being gathered from Tampa Bay anglers on their catches of snook and spotted seatrout as part of this sampling effort.

Alabama

K. Anson reported that Alabama is working on a limited entry program for the blue crab fishery. In recent history, the landing of blue crabs has dropped. The trip ticket data has given Alabama Marine

Resources Division (AMRD) a starting point to begin addressing this issue. There are meetings planned to interact with blue crab fishermen to develop a program that is agreeable to everyone involved. The trip ticket program is operating smoothly. For 2002, Alabama has received approximately 15,000 trip tickets. Alabama and NMFS personnel are currently comparing the Alabama trip ticket data with the NMFS Trip Interview Program (TIP) data. Once it has been determined that the two data sets are comparable, the landings data from TIP will not be collected and port samplers will be able to concentrate on other sampling activities. Alabama is involved in the electronic trip ticket reporting program. Starting in 2002, Alabama will be working with SBCI (through a contract with GSMFC) to get several Alabama commercial dealers on-line using this system. The system will make reporting the data much easier and provides some useful functions for the dealers. Alabama exceeded the MRFSS quota by 21% in 2001. However, the 2X target for charter mode was not reached in waves 1 and 6. To date, Alabama has identified 76 species, which translates to ~13,000 fish and 70% of those fish have been weighed. Alabama is also involved in the biological sampling activities being conducted in the Gulf and recently held some training sessions regarding extracting otoliths.

Mississippi

T. Van Devender stated that Mississippi's oyster season opened on October 1, 2001. There is a 30-sack limit and the average number of sacks harvested per boat is 25 sacks. To date, fishermen have landed approximately ~280,000 sacks. It appears that it will be a great season which is due, in part, to the limited number of reef closures. The shellfish sanitation section is in the process of mapping the state's lift stations into a GIS system. The shellfish section, in conjunction with NMFS, is also collecting water and oyster meat samples to test for *Vibrio*. Mississippi has 7 hydrological platforms in the Mississippi Sound. These platforms collect various environmental data which is accessible through the Mississippi DMR website. Personnel from Mississippi, GSMFC, and Texas were in Texas removing derelict crab traps from their waters. Mississippi is attempting to set up a similar program where a closed season for crabbing is established to allow for the removal of derelict traps. The Mississippi removal program has removed ~2,000 traps from Mississippi waters. Mississippi is collecting data on bait shrimp via the trip ticket program. The oyster fishermen are interested in using an electronic trip ticket reporting system for submission of their data. The MRFSS is operating smoothly. All sampling targets were reached for all modes. In addition, Mississippi is conducting a night fishing survey to get a handle on night time fishing activities. To date, ~30 species have been identified in this survey. Commercial data collection including otolith sampling is being conducted by Mississippi. Sanitation regulations (similar to HACCP) are coming into effect next month for the crab processors. The Mississippi artificial reef program continues to permit areas off Mississippi to enhance recreational fisheries. Mississippi is still involved in the research activities such as the IJF program (operating since 1973), sargassum project (looking at frontal boundaries of sargassum rafts), striped bass restoration and stocking program, and Gulf of Mexico estuarine inventory reassessment.

Louisiana

J. Shepard reported that the MRFSS activities are going very well. Louisiana was involved in some charter boat outreach meetings to talk to captains regarding the economic add-on to the telephone survey. The captains had several concerns such as confidentiality of the data and collection of

household income. The Louisiana trip ticket data from 2000-2001 and January 2002 have been sent to the FIN data management system (DMS). Louisiana is also providing NMFS with their trip ticket data for NMFS review. There are currently 47 dealers using the electronic trip ticket program. Louisiana is working on getting high volume shrimp dealers onto the system. Because of savings realized from the electronic trip ticket program, funding was available to provide the electronic trip ticket program to the other Gulf States. The contractor (SCBI) is developing an inventory feature for the electronic trip ticket program. Louisiana began biological sampling (otoliths and lengths) in February 2002. Due to weather, fishing activities have been fairly low so it has been difficult to obtain samples; however, as the weather warms up, more otoliths and lengths will be collected.

Texas

P. Campbell reported that Texas continues to conduct the pilot charter boat telephone survey. After some bumps at the beginning, the survey is operating fairly smoothly. Texas also is conducting biological sampling and has focused on obtaining red snapper otoliths. Texas has implemented a crab trap removal program. There are 25 sites (bay systems) throughout Texas and 60 organizations involved in the program. The state designated March 23rd as a state-wide clean-up date. All traps in the water were classified as "litter" and were subject to removal. Approximately 8,000 traps were removed from Texas waters. There were 21 species found in these derelict traps with the highest percentage being sheepshead and Gulf toadfish. Blue crab and stone crab were found in 70% of the derelict traps. Bob Cook has been named the new executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife. There was a red tide event in mid-December in the Corpus Christi area. Although there were no significant fish kills, Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays are still closed to shellfish harvest for a short period of time. Texas is forming a spotted seatrout working group. This is in response to the desire to establish a trophy trout fishery. The group will consist of 20-25 people from the various fishing interests and areas of Texas.

GMFMC

R. Leard reported that the Council has been curtailed due to the large amount of lawsuits being filed. These suits have prevented the Council and NMFS from implementing any actions. The lawsuits have been brought by the environmental organizations mainly for not making the documents NEPA compliant and commercial organizations for not adequately addressing the social and economic impacts of the proposed regulations. The red snapper rebuilding plan is still under review by the NMFS. Shrimp amendment 11 was submitted over a year ago and should be approved by October 2002. B. Hogarth has signed the proposed rules of the charter boat moratorium. Amendment 10 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) looks at additional bycatch requirements on the west coast of Florida. The Council intends to develop Amendment 13 to the Shrimp FMP to reestablish the status criteria for shrimp. Also, the Council plans to develop Amendment 21 to the Reef Fish FMP that will extend the moratorium on the two closed areas for reef fish. The Council has hired a contractor to develop an Environment Impact Statement (EIS) for the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) amendment. They plan to use SEAMAP data to stratify catches of various species to generate distribution maps. This will allow the Council to get a better distribution of species to identify EFH. The socio-economic panel will be developing bioeconomic modeling and will be used to develop a model for red grouper. The Council will be conducting stock assessments for Gulf-group king mackerel, red grouper, and yellowedge grouper for this year. A MARFIN grant is examining the

mackerel stocks and attempting to differentiate the percentage of Gulf king mackerel and Atlantic king mackerel that congregate in south Florida during the winter.

GSMFC

D. Donaldson stated that on the recreational side, operations are running smoothly and states are still exceeding quota on routine basis. Starting in May 2002, the states and GSMFC will be conducting the economic add-on to the charter boat telephone survey. Outreach meetings were held with captains and although there is some reluctance to the add-on, they seemed willing to provide the information. The GSMFC has hired an additional data entry clerk to assist in entry of the recreational data, Texas charter boat data, and other activities. On the commercial side, trip tickets are running smoothly as mentioned by the states. The GSMFC and states are working with a contractor for getting commercial dealers on-line with electronic reporting. The contractor will provide for installation and maintenance of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida dealers. The contractor will also provide hosting of trip ticket data. Biological sampling activities began in January 2002 and are continuing to date. The sampling is focusing on both commercial and recreational activities. The samplers are targeting red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder, and amberjack and so far, samplers have collected ~650 otoliths and ~240 lengths. Regarding the FIN Data Management System (DMS), they have commercial catch data (trip tickets) from all states except Texas. Trip ticket data from Florida (1984 to 2001), Alabama (2000), Mississippi (2001- oyster only), and Louisiana (2000 to 2001) has been loaded into the system. Menhaden data from 1987-1990 and 1993-1999 also resides in the system. In addition, recreational data from 1981-2000 and SEAMAP data have been loaded into the system. The Data Management Subcommittee needs to select a date for opening DMS to users and this issue will be discussed later this meeting.

D. Donaldson noted that NMFS-SER has requested names, addresses, and phone numbers of dealers to conduct follow-up outreach for an economic survey. D. Donaldson asked the states if there was a problem with providing these data to NMFS. The states discussed this issue and agreed to provide the data to NMFS.

NMFS

G. Davenport reported that NMFS is working on the data entry program for the Trip Interview Program (TIP). G. Davenport and J. Bennett have completed a thorough edit of the program. The enhancements will be completed by the end of this week and the program should be available by the end of March. NMFS is also considering developing a PC version of the program. NMFS has been working with Louisiana and GSMFC to get access to the Louisiana trip ticket data and although there have been some minor problems, NMFS has access to 2000 and 2001 data. NMFS has upgraded its port agents with DSL lines to use for on-line data entry. It proved to be the most economically viable method for providing Internet access. There are several species under a commercial quota. To date, approximately 650,000 pounds of red snapper have been harvested. The king mackerel net fishery was opened for one week in January. The five port agents who were employed by the GSMFC have now been hired by the NMFS. Alex Chester has been named the Deputy Director of the Miami Laboratory and Joe Powers is still the acting Regional Administrator. NMFS is in the process of developing a red drum offshore age structure study. They will be hiring commercial hook and line

fishermen to harvest 20-30 fish per school of adult red drum from as many schools in the Gulf of Mexico as possible. Sampling should begin next month and cover Texas through St. Petersburg, Florida.

Presentation of MRFSS Artificial Reef Data

G. Bray presented data analysis regarding the use of artificial reefs in fishing activities. He provided a brief overview of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). He noted that from 1984-1992 an additional question was added to the intercept portion of the MRFSS. This question asked if anglers fished within 200 feet of an oil/gas platform or an artificial reef. He stated that the goals of this research were to determine the contribution of fishing trips adjacent to artificial structures to the total catch of selected reef fish, compare catch rates of angler trips fishing adjacent to artificial structures with trips that did not fish adjacent to artificial structures, and trends in number of fishing trips to artificial structures. He then explained the data analysis methods used to answer the questions presented by the research and then presented the findings of the research. In summary, the data showed that anglers who fished around artificial structures had higher catch and harvest rates of red snapper than anglers who did not; a large percentage of charter trips were within 200 feet of artificial structures and a moderate number for private mode; and contribution of artificial structure trips to Total Catch and Total Harvest was substantial (>50%). He concluded by presenting some future activities to consider such as asking the same question again on the intercept survey but also concurrently on the RDD/Gulf Charter Telephone Survey. The larger sample sizes currently may allow for comparison between oil & gas structures and artificial reefs and it might be interesting to track the trend in artificial structure trips since 1984. G. Bray noted that this presentation will be given at the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee meeting next week and there is a possibility the Subcommittee will recommend to the FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee that these questions be added to the intercept and telephone survey. If that occurs, a mail ballot will be distributed to the group for their approval/disapproval of the recommendation.

Discussion of Mandatory Reporting Rules for Charter Boat Telephone Survey

R. Sadler made a presentation to the group regarding mandatory charter vessel/headboat reporting via Vessel Directory Telephone Survey (VDTS) and NMFS Headboat Survey. This idea is part of a 3-year charter vessel/headboat permit moratorium proposed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. It is based on input from a wide range of industry participants. He pointed out that mandatory reporting is a standard practice accepted in the following Southeast Federal fisheries: Highly Migratory Species (HMS); Gulf commercial reef fish; Gulf commercial fish trap; Gulf shrimp; Gulf red drum; South Atlantic commercial snapper-grouper; South Atlantic commercial wreckfish; South Atlantic commercial golden crab; South Atlantic commercial rock shrimp; Gulf and South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic; Gulf and South Atlantic coral/live rock. The current For-hire data collection activities include dockside intercept (MRFSS) of charter anglers to collect catch, harvest, and biological data; logbooks for headboat vessels to collect catch and effort data (a supplemental dockside sampling program collects biological data); and vessel directory telephone survey (VDTS) of charter operators to collect effort data. The VDTS consists of a weekly 10% random sample of charter vessels in a continuously-updated directory. Not all vessels in the directory are contacted to participate. Vessels have the opportunity to decline participation without sanction. These vessels remain in the directory

and are re-contacted, if selected, for a future draw. Additional non-participation by charter vessels results in removal from the active sampling frame (no longer selected for future data collection). These non-participants have an unknown impact on the assessment of charter vessel fishing effort. R. Sadler noted that some of the expected benefits of the mandatory reporting requirement are that data will be obtained from those charter vessels and headboats currently choosing not to participate but wanting to retain (renew) their Federal permits under the requirement; and the more complete data will help provide a more comprehensive fishery assessment. This will help lead to better management of the resource and the fishery. The NMFS will contact permitted charter vessels and headboats, Sea Grant, state agencies, and industry associations via news bulletins to advise of the amendment availability, proposed rule, and agency action on the requirement. If the requirement is approved, NMFS will work closely with GSMFC, state agencies, and industry contacts to ensure advance notification of requirement and need for submittal of accurate data. The VDTS questionnaire, and advance letters informing the charter vessel and headboat operators of their selection will be revised to provide advance notification. NMFS will then obtain non-reporting data from the GSMFC and NMFS Headboat (logbook) Survey. The NMFS Permits Office in St. Petersburg will advise the charter vessel owner or headboat owner of their non-reporting status and the jeopardy of their permit. The vessel owner will be provided an opportunity to change that status and avoid losing their permit. Vessel owners who continue to choose not to participate will not be allowed to renew their reef fish and/or mackerel charter permit at the time of the next renewal (the month of the owner's birth or the corporation's inception). Notification of non-compliance status will most likely occur prior to permit renewal. Permits that are not renewed will not be reissued during the 3-year moratorium.

The group discussed the implementation of this regulation. There is still concern regarding participation in the VDTS if the survey becomes mandatory. It was noted that there is no way to assess the impacts of mandatory reporting until the rule is in place. Once the regulation has been implemented, survey participants will need to monitor response rates and reporting errors to evaluate the impact of the rule. It was noted that to ensure an easy transition, it would be beneficial to begin the implementation of mandatory reporting at the start of a wave. R. Sadler requested that a letter be sent to J. Powers asking that the rule be implemented at the start of a wave.

Discussion of South Carolina For-Hire Pilot Survey

D. Donaldson stated that FIN will be discussing the sampling methods for headboats at their upcoming meeting. FIN has not taken any action prior to this time because they were waiting for the outcome of the ACCSP For-Hire Pilot Survey. The ACCSP has completed their pilot survey where a telephone survey was compared with a mandatory logbook survey. The results of the pilot showed that the telephone survey would be easier to implement than a logbook; however, both surveys provide accurate and precise data. There were advantages and disadvantages to both surveys and these issues need to be discussed by the FIN Committee at their upcoming meeting. D. Donaldson noted that he wanted to put this issue in front of the group to help facilitate some discussion at the FIN meeting. The group briefly discussed the benefits and drawbacks to each of the surveys and believed that this topic should generate a lot of discussion at the FIN meeting.

Discussion of Getting FIN Data Management System On-line

D. Donaldson stated that the GSMFC is getting regular data feeds to the FIN DMS. Since activities are becoming fairly routine in terms of loading data into the system, it seems appropriate to take the next step in the development of the DMS. That step is to open the system to more users (not just the authorized FIN Committee members). M. Sestak is working with the states to get the current trip ticket data into the system. However, the historical data need to be loaded as well. The group discussed what data need to be loaded for each state. For Texas, the NMFS data collected under CSP will be used since Texas currently does not have an operating trip ticket program. For Louisiana, the NMFS data will be used until 2002 since the Louisiana trip ticket data are now the official data. For Mississippi, the NMFS data will be used except for the oyster data that is collected via the trip ticket program. For Alabama, NMFS data will be used until 2002 since the Alabama trip ticket data are now the official data. For Florida, the Florida trip ticket data will be used as the official data. The group then discussed non-confidential data. One of the goals of the FIN DMS is to provide non-confidential fisheries data to interested people. In order to do that, FIN needs to make sure that confidential data is not accidentally released. The group discussed different methods for accomplishing this task and decided to aggregate the data to species/state/year. The level of aggregation should protect the confidentiality of the data. It was noted that this is just a starting point and datasets providing more detail may be available in the future. The last issue the group discussed was the time frame for "going live" with the DMS. After some discussion, the group decided that the FIN DMS will be available to outside users in June 2002. D. Donaldson noted that some sort of news release/mass mailing will be distributed to a wide variety of people to notify them about the availability of the data.

Discussion of Biological Sampling and Analysis Issues

D. Donaldson stated that since the states have begun biological sampling early this year, it would be useful to discuss any issues concerning this activity. He distributed an otolith analysis form that was designed by the Otolith Work Group (Attachment I). The Subcommittee reviewed it and made several modifications. The group believed YEAR CLASS should not be included in the database. J. Shepard stated that the stock assessment people would assign year class and it would not be appropriate for the otolith readers to determine this field. The form provides for two readers to enter their data regarding reading of the otolith. The group also believed that both readers' data should be included in the database. The form also provides for the readers' initials to be recorded. The group decided that a code should be developed to avoid confusion. The group also wanted to add an additional column that would indicate if an image of the otolith was available in the database. The group discussed the tracking of otolith processing. D. Donaldson pointed out that there is a tracking system for the collection of otoliths (similar to the MRFSS system) but no system has been developed for the analysis of the otoliths. After some discussion, the group decided that the submission of the otolith analysis form with the completed data would serve as the tracking processing. Once the form has been submitted, it would be easy to determine which otoliths had been processed.

Other Business

J. Shepard asked if any action has been developed regarding an universal commercial vessel frame.

D. Donaldson noted this issue is being addressed by the Registration Tracking Work Group. This group will be meeting next week to discuss this issue.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

ATTACHMENT I

FIN HARDPART PROCESSING								
UNIQUE IDENTIFIER				OTOLITH PROCESSING INFORMATION				
DATE COLLECTED	SAMPLER NUMBER	SPECIES CODE	TAG NUMBER	PROCESSOR INITIALS	DATE CUT	NUMBER RINGS	MARGIN CODE	YEAR CLASS
					06/06/02	3	2	1998
					06/06/02	2	2	1999
					06/06/02	2	3	1999
					06/06/02	2	—	1999
					06/06/02	2	2	1999
					06/06/02	3	3	1998
					06/06/02	—	—	2000
					06/06/02	3	3	1998
					06/06/02	2	3	1999
					06/06/02	4	3	1997
					06/06/02	—	—	1999
					06/06/02	3	4	1998
					06/06/02	3	3	1998
					06/06/02	2	4	1999

FIN HARDPART PROCESSING

UNIQUE IDENTIFIER

OTOLITH PROCESSING INFORMATION

DATE COLLECTED	SAMPLE R NUMBER	SPECIES CODE	TAG NUMBER	PROCESSOR INITIALS	DATE CUT	NUMBER RINGS	MARGIN CODE	YEAR CLASS

FIN HARDPART PROCESSING

UNIQUE IDENTIFIER				OTOLITH PROCESSING INFORMATION				
DATE COLLECTED	SAMPLER NUMBER	SPECIES CODE	TAG NUMBER	PROCESSOR INITIALS	DATE CUT	NUMBER RINGS	MARGIN CODE	YEAR CLASS
[REDACTED]								1974
[REDACTED]								1975
[REDACTED]								1976
[REDACTED]								1977
[REDACTED]								1978
[REDACTED]								1979
[REDACTED]								1980
[REDACTED]								1981
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[REDACTED]								2017
[REDACTED]								2018
[REDACTED]								2019
[REDACTED]								2020

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**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 19, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Joe Smith called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m., with the following in attendance:

Members

Rick Schillaci, *proxy to* Barney White, Omega Protein, Inc., Houston, TX
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Steve Heath, *proxy to* Vernon Minton, ADCNR/AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Joe Shepard, *proxy to* John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions and Membership Review

J. Smith welcomed everyone and started introductions.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes (10/30/2001)

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. **B. Wallace moved to accept the minutes, R. Schillaci seconded and the minutes were accepted as written.**

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries 2002 Forecast

V. Guillory reported on the Louisiana forecast using several environmental parameters from 2001 and juvenile abundance indices. Low water temperatures, high river discharge, and low rainfall and salinity in January through March 2001 suggest that conditions for recruitment should have been good last year. Likewise, abundances of juvenile menhaden were well above the long-term means from January to August all along the Louisiana coast and should provide a large number of age-1s into the fishery in 2002. Guillory predicts that the landings for 2002 should range from 431,000 - 487,000 metric tons (mt) and probably finish near the high end because of the good recruitment last year.

Final Review of 2001 Fishing Season

J. Smith provided a summary of the 2001 season. Landings last year were 521,000 mt which was down 10% from 2000 and 8% lower than the previous 5-year mean. 2001 marked the ninth year of the extended fishing season to November 1st and the landings in October were 55,000 mt which was slightly greater than the mean of 52,000 mt. Forty-one purse boats operated in the Gulf in 2001 with one "run" boat and two bait boats. Rainfall was good in 2001 and provided a high oil yield across the Gulf. The landings in Mississippi Sound were substantially higher in 2001 (42,000 mt) than the previous year which saw the proliferation of exotic jellyfish (17,000 mt). Age composition of the fishery in 2001 was dominated by age-2 fish (67%) and age-1s made one of the lowest contributions on record (25%).

Forecast for 2002 Gulf Menhaden Fishing Season

J. Smith indicated that the NMFS expects 40 purse boats to participate in 2002 with 2 "run" boats and one bait boat. NMFS estimates a nominal effort in 2002 of 385,000 vessel-ton-weeks and forecasts landings of 493,000 mt.

J. Smith also reported that Doug Vaughan is preparing to revise the gulf menhaden stock assessment next winter. The assessments are completed on a 5-year cycle and the last included data through 1997. The new assessment will include 1998-2002. D. Vaughan may attend the meeting in the fall with some preliminary data but probably will have a complete presentation next spring.

Status of CDFR Data Entry Initiative

S. VanderKooy updated the MAC on the status of the historical CDFR data entry effort by the Commission. The Commission enters the CDFRs as time and budgets permit. While the Commission stopped entering CDFRs at the end of September due to the IJF budget, they have officially started again March 1 with the 1986 CDFRs. VanderKooy anticipates entering the remaining CDFRs over the next year.

Status of FMP Revision

S. VanderKooy indicated that the FMP is expected to be approved by the full Commission during the business meeting on Thursday. No comments were received during the 30-day public comment period which ran from December 2001 to January 2002. The staff anticipates that the FMP will go to the printer once it is formatted and should be available for the fall meeting.

S. VanderKooy noted that since Doug Vaughan's stock assessments and the FMP revisions are presently out-of-sync, the next revision would be held an extra year to get back into the cycle with the assessment.

Gulf Menhaden Website

S. VanderKooy presented a draft of the gulf menhaden webpage. Several suggestions were made by the MAC. It has been available in the draft form for viewing with a user-name and password

only. The general focus of the webpage is to get the science out to the public in an attempt to counter negative and incorrect information which persists in the media. Several additional graphics were suggested along with a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page and additional links.

Other Business

It was suggested that a speaker be invited to the next meeting to present information on a multi-species approach to management similar to what they are looking at on the Atlantic. J. Smith suggested that Lance Garrison, NMFS, Miami could make a presentation to the MAC about the models he is using for the ASMFC. S. VanderKooy will get in touch with L. Garrison and also ask Behzad Mamoudi to present his perspective on multi-species models at the October meeting in Duck Key, Florida.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Monday, March 18, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY: 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Dale Shively called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked members and guests to introduce themselves. The following members and others were present:

Members

Frank Courtney, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Gil McRae, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Dale Shively, TPWD, Austin, TX
Bob Spain, TPWD, Austin, TX
Heather Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Jan Boyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mark LaSalle, MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Jeff Rester, Habitat/SEAMAP Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, FL
Greg Boland, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Mike Brim, USFWS, Panama City, FL

Adoption of Agenda

D. Frugé asked to discuss the habitat poster under other business. With no other changes, the agenda was adopted.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of October 29, 2001 were adopted as written.

Administrative Report

J. Rester stated that the Louisiana/Mississippi and Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panels of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) met in November and early December. Both Advisory Panels reviewed the Council's draft freshwater inflow policy that the Habitat Subcommittee completed in October. The Advisory Panels made several revisions to the policy that were forwarded to the Council for review at their December meeting. The Advisory Panels also discussed regional habitat related issues. Some of the more interesting presentations included

discussion of three similar habitat restoration projects in Galveston Bay. These projects created marsh elevation terraces that were later planted with smooth cordgrass. All three projects were successful at restoring habitat in areas of Galveston Bay that have experienced high levels of wetland loss in the past 75 years. J. Rester stated that the Habitat Protection Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in December to review the freshwater inflow policy. With minor changes, the Council adopted the freshwater inflow policy. J. Rester reported that he attended a Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee sponsored Ecosystem Approach to Fishery Management meeting in January. The goal of the meeting was to initiate a process that will eventually lead to implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. A committee is drafting technical guidance to move marine resource management towards an ecosystem approach. An ecosystem based management symposium will be held at the August American Fisheries Society meeting to gather additional input. J. Rester stated that McElroy's Seafood Restaurant in Biloxi is now using the habitat poster as a placemat. J. Rester stated that fishing impacts on habitat are still a concern. J. Rester stated that he will be attending a Marine Conservation Biology Institute meeting where they will review the bycatch and habitat damage associated with different fishing gears report they are preparing. The report will analyze impacts of commercial fishing gears used in the U.S. J. Rester reported that the American Fisheries Society, USGS, NOAA, and the Ecological Society of America are sponsoring a symposium on the effects of fishing activities on benthic habitats in November. The Ocean Studies Board of the National Research Council has finished their report on the effects of bottom trawling on seafloor habitats. J. Rester reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has hired MRAG Americas to complete the EFH EIS. A first draft should be available near the end of the year or early next year.

Habitat Placemat Discussion

J. Rester stated that he has two items to discuss under this agenda item. The first item was a usage agreement that specified what a restaurant could do with the habitat placemat image. J. Rester stated that he was seeking input on the agreement.

M. LaSalle stated that he was not a lawyer and recommended that J. Rester investigate having a lawyer read over the agreement and make recommendations. J. Boyd stated that Mississippi did have a lawyer who could read over the agreement.

J. Rester also stated that there was concern from the MDMR over how the placemat was distributed to McElroy's Seafood Restaurant. The MDMR official was concerned that the placemat contained the MDMR logo and was then sold. J. Rester explained that he contacted a local paper supply company that sold placemats to local seafood restaurants. The paper supply company stated that they would not charge their usual mark up on the habitat placemat to keep the total cost down, even though it would be more expensive to produce than the usual color placemats they sold. They would lower their fee and only recoup their costs associated with marketing and producing the final product. The paper supply company then sold the restaurant 100,000 placemats.

The Subcommittee next discussed the idea of expanding the placemat into seafood restaurants in other Gulf states. G. McRae stated that trying to contact individual restaurants about the availability of the image would not be very time efficient. J. Rester asked about the possibility of taking the image to a regional restaurant supply distributor or to a regional printer that sold placemats. He

asked if the Subcommittee members felt this would be an acceptable distribution method. Everyone felt it would, but thought that the TCC should discuss this proposal. **M. LaSalle moved to have the Subcommittee explore the possibility of having a regional restaurant supply distributor try to market and sell the placemat to seafood restaurants in the Gulf region. B. Spain seconded, and it passed unanimously.** J. Rester stated that another possible way to advertise the availability of the placemat would be at an upcoming seafood restaurant trade show in New Orleans in August.

Habitat Video Discussion

J. Rester stated that he distributed a draft video script to everyone at the beginning of February. He reported that he would like to review the script and gain Subcommittee input into the development of the video. J. Rester asked the Subcommittee if they felt it would be better to cover one topic with the video or try to cover many topics in the video. M. LaSalle responded that the video should try to cover as much as possible. G. McRae agreed that the video should cover the major habitat types located within the Gulf of Mexico. M. LaSalle stated that the Subcommittee might be able to produce both a 30-minute and 15-minute video. D. Shively stated that a video production company could take the script and rewrite it to suit the video's needs.

H. Finley asked about the target audience. D. Shively stated that we were still trying to decide who the target audience would be, but he imagined it would include school children as well as the general public.

J. Rester stated that he had not checked with public broadcasting stations concerning their submission guidelines. D. Shively stated that he would check with someone at his office concerning their guidelines.

M. Brim stated that the USFWS Coastal Program has produced several videos that were 30 minutes in length. Fifteen-minute videos were also produced that narrowed the scope of the video. He stated that both had their uses. The longer one covered the topics more in depth and was for audiences that would be more interested in the topic. The shorter video stressed the high points.

J. Rester asked if anyone knew of any funding sources. M. Brim stated that the USFWS Coastal Program would possibly be interested in helping fund the video. He stated that he would be interested in having a video that discussed the habitat types within the Gulf of Mexico. D. Frugé stated that this would be a good opportunity to partner with other organizations that would be interested in the video. He suggested talking to the Gulf of Mexico Program, the National Estuary Programs, the Nature Conservancy, and others.

D. Shively stated that it would be a good idea to talk to a video production expert about the video idea and seek their guidance. J. Rester agreed. He stated that he would talk to the video production expert at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and seek his advice. He also stated that he would like to talk to another expert to seek their advice and input. The Subcommittee agreed and directed J. Rester to seek input and report back at the next meeting.

Status of the Derelict Trap Issue

J. Rester reported that a Derelict Trap Task Force was formed after the last meeting. Representatives included the members of the Crab Subcommittee, a member from the Habitat Subcommittee, a commercial representative, a recreational representative, and a law enforcement representative. The task force met the first week in March and discussed the Texas closed season, education opportunities, and development of outreach materials. J. Rester also reported on his travels with members of the Crab Subcommittee to Texas during the closed season and their participation in the trap clean up. He stated that the event was very well organized and all of his experiences were positive. He reported that during the entire clean up approximately 8,000 were collected across the state. J. Rester reported that the Derelict Trap Task Force would meet again in the summer to develop additional guidelines for removal programs in other states.

Future Projects

D. Shively wanted Subcommittee input on the future role of the Subcommittee. He wanted to learn what types projects and issues the Subcommittee wanted to work on and felt were important. M. LaSalle stated that Mississippi just hosted a watershed forum. He reported that the Subcommittee might want to work on putting on a regional watershed round table. Adopt a stream and bay-monitoring programs could participate. S. Heath stated that the Subcommittee could host a habitat related showcase that would help educate the public about the programs that are working in the Gulf of Mexico on habitat related issues. This showcase would promote citizen involvement and participation in monitoring and restoration issues. C. Brown stated that the Subcommittee might want to develop a list of grants and funding sources that support habitat research or restoration. D. Shively stated that a habitat links page listing current habitat events would be helpful. G. McRae stated that he would like to see the Subcommittee more involved with other programs. He would like to support or help Gulf of Mexico Program projects. He stated that he would update the Subcommittee on current Gulf of Mexico Program Habitat Focus Team projects at the next meeting.

J. Rester asked if there were any issues where the states needed help. B. Spain stated that water planning and freshwater inflow are always concerns. M. Brim reported that EPA will issue general stormwater permits to municipalities at the end of the year. He stated that the quality of water returning to estuaries could become an issue. D. Frugé asked if the Subcommittee wanted to become involved in commenting on projects that could adversely affect habitat. G. McRae saw a Subcommittee role in helping with EFH related issues. J. Rester stated that he would like the Subcommittee to review the EFH EIS later this year.

D. Shively stated that he will send out an email to all Subcommittee members soliciting their input on future Subcommittee projects. He will then compile a list of possible projects for discussion at the next Subcommittee meeting. After this discussion, the Subcommittee will solicit input from the Technical Coordinating Committee.

Habitat Issues of Interest From Each State

B. Spain stated that water planning is an ongoing issue in Texas. He stated that the state water plan was recently finalized. D. Shively reported that the Texas shrimp management plan is being

updated. B. Spain also stated that the legislature is examining the regulation of four-wheel drive vehicles in dry streambeds.

H. Finley reported that the state and Corps of Engineers are beginning a feasibility study on more large-scale freshwater diversions from the Mississippi River to restore coastal wetlands. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources has requested a moratorium on issuing oyster leases. This is in an effort to reduce oyster lease conflicts associated with freshwater diversions.

J. Boyd stated that Mississippi is purchasing Deer Island. DMR is also working with the Stennis Space Center to create a nature trail near the Interstate 10 welcome center. M. LaSalle stated that the Coastal Resource Management Plan is running smoothly. He also stated that the coastal basin watershed forum met last week. M. LaSalle reported that the Mississippi Coastal Plain Land Trust is being developed to accept donations and acquisitions of land.

G. McRae reported that a mechanical seagrass planter will be used in Tampa Bay to restore seagrass. A mechanical sod mover is also being used. Prop scar research is taking place in Florida Bay. Different techniques will be used to restore prop-scarred areas. Florida will begin mapping benthic habitats using LIDAR. FMRI, the Suwannee River Water Management District, and the Gulf of Mexico Program used aerial photography to map seagrass in the big bend area. G. McRae stated that Florida is developing a statewide seagrass conservation plan that is modeled after the Texas' plan. Finally, G. McRae stated that March is seagrass awareness month in Florida.

D. Frugé reported that the USFWS may potentially identify critical habitat for gulf sturgeon in portions of selected rivers and associated estuarine and nearshore areas. He stated that in January the Panama City Field Office in Florida participated in a ceremony at a Destin, Florida resort hotel highlighting a demonstration project involving special neon lighting designed to reduce impacts on hatchling sea turtles. The patented lighting systems are longer lasting and more energy efficient than conventional neon lights. D. Frugé stated that the states of Alabama, Florida and Georgia have agreed in principal to a draft Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint rivers water allocation formula. Federal agencies are in the midst of sorting out expected impacts of the water formula on aquatic resources in the three states. M. Brim stated that USFWS is trying to restore seagrass habitat in West Bay, Florida. They are also working on restoring seagrass at the mouth of the Fenholloway River. C. Brown reported on user participation in the National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). He reported that 70% of all saltwater visits to NWR are in the southeast region.

Other Business

D. Frugé stated that the USFWS will donate \$12,000 to reprint the habitat poster. M. Brim stated that his program will transfer the money to D. Frugé who would then transfer it to the Commission for the reprinting. The Subcommittee thanked M. Brim and Brian Pridgeon of the USFWS Coastal Program for the donation. J. Rester stated that he will investigate having the poster printed at 18 x 24 inches instead of the current size which should allow for more posters to be printed. The Subcommittee agreed with this idea.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 19, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Jeff Mayne called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Bruce Buckson, FWC/DLE, Tallahassee, FL
Ben White, USCG GRFTC, New Orleans, LA (*Proxy for Dave Fiedler*)
Jeff Mayne, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Ron Dearmin, NOAA OLE, Carriere, MS (*Proxy for Dick Livingston*)
Terry Bakker, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
J.T. Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Karen Raine, NOAA GCEL/SE, St. Petersburg, FL
Larry Young, TPWD, Austin, TX

Members Absent

Tom Riley, USFWS, Miami, FL

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, FIN Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Walter Chataginer, Sr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Chairman*, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL

Membership Review/Introductions

J. Mayne reviewed changes to membership resultant from the last meeting. K. Raine, NOAA General Council, was added to the membership. T. Riley, USFWS, was also added to the membership but was not present. R. Dearmin, NOAA OLE, was recognized as proxy for Dick Livingston, and B. White, USCG, was recognized as proxy for D. Fiedler. Further, J. Mayne noted the recent retirement of J. Waller on February 28, 2002. J.T. Jenkins became Director of Enforcement for ADCNR/MRD effective March 9, 2002.

Adoption of Agenda

T. Bakker moved to approve the agenda as presented. J.T. Jenkins seconded the motion which passed by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

After reviewing the minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, October 30, 2001, in New Orleans, Louisiana, the committee approved the record by consensus.

FIN Update

D. Donaldson provided the committee with an update of FIN activities. The following data currently reside within the FIN Data Management System:

- Commercial Catch
 - Florida (1984-2001)
 - Alabama (2000)
 - Mississippi (2001) - oyster only
 - Louisiana (2000-2001)
- Menhaden (1987-1990 and 1993-1999)
- Recreational (1981-2000)
- SEAMAP (1982-2000)

June 2002 was selected as the date to open the system to all users. All users should contact their state FIN representative to follow the proper protocol to obtain an identifier and password to query the system. The states can also provide training on the system.

IJF Program Update

C. Yocom reported the Blue Crab FMP is at the printer, and delivery is expected within the week. J. Jenkins distributed Section 5 of the Striped Bass FMP to each state representative and asked them to correct their portion of the section. Jenkins elaborated that although the Commission staff could obtain individual state codes, they are not comfortable summarizing statutes. Enforcement has a greater understanding and would provide a more succinct interpretation.

L. Young reported that the first meeting of the Derelict Trap Task Force was held March 4-5, 2002, in Biloxi. The task force's mission is to define the problem and its components, review relevant state legislation, and develop general guidelines for a regional program. T. Wagner and several members of the crab subcommittee and one Commission staff member provided a review of the recent Texas Closure/Trap Cleanup. Trap definitions were developed, and state laws related to ownership and possession were reviewed. Disposal options are also being investigated. The group drafted an outline for a commercial handout that the group anticipates being distributed upon licensure. Accomplishments to date include:

- 1) White paper, executive summary, and power point presentation
- 2) Mississippi's ongoing program and newly-funded CIAP trap removal program (a USM/GCRL and MDMR cooperative effort)
- 3) Florida's newly-funded project to identify trap "hot spots"
- 4) Alabama's fly-over derelict trap counts
- 5) Texas' closed season

- 6) Development of educational materials:
 - 1) Identify possible funding sources (Sea Grant)
 - 2) Commercial fishery brochure development
 - 3) All water users tri-fold pamphlet
 - 4) PowerPoint presentation and script
 - 5) Possible video presentation
- 7) Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama reviewing litter and trap statutes
- 8) Louisiana's Crab Task Force has endorsed the derelict trap removal program concept
- 9) Successful communication with commercial and recreational components

Funding Initiatives

J. Mayne reported on the reauthorization of the Interjurisdictional Act, now the Fisheries Conservation Act of 2001. The Act passed the House and was referred to the Senate Commerce Committee. Letters have been sent in support of this legislation from the GSMFC, and the Governor of Louisiana sent a letter of support to the President of the United States. A response was received Friday which states the Administration supports the legislation and guarantees funding is available through 2003. The letter was vague regarding an increase in funding, but the Administration indicated its full support of the program and was well-aware of its importance to natural resources.

L. Simpson reported that he recently made a trip to Washington, D.C., to inform legislators and their aids of Gulf programmatic activities and needs. Testimony was also given before the Ocean Policy Commission several weeks ago in New Orleans. A section of testimony was dedicated to cooperative enforcement and enforcement needs. He also received a call from Senator Cochran's aid who inquired further about program and funding needs. Natural resource issues in the Gulf of Mexico are no less important than those of the Northwest, and the Gulf should receive its fair share.

High Contact Event

Weather was a problem for the majority of the states during the recent high contact event. Florida was the only clear state and reported doing as well as the previous event. All agreed to continue these events twice per year within the same general time frame.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - B. Buckson reported no major fishery-rule changes. Stone crab trap limitations will be in effect this fall. Like other enforcement divisions throughout the Gulf States, Florida is still active in homeland security. One major focus is enforcement of speed zones in manatee protection areas. An additional 25 positions were added to assist those efforts. The additional manpower will also assist in other fishery enforcement efforts. A class of 43 cadets will graduate on Friday, and another class will begin within a month. The goal is to have 50 cadets per class.

Florida commissioned a new vessel on February 15. The vessel was a seizure from a federal case along the Atlantic Coast dealing with illegal lobster harvest. Florida officers worked alongside the NMFS and USCG over several years on the case. The 38', single-engine vessel was acquired and will be put into service on the Gulf Coast in the Crystal River shrimper/crabber zone.

One recent case includes illegal shrimping in the Tortugas area. Another case is ongoing in court and stems from the 1995 ban on the use of gill nets and restrictions on all other entangling nets. The state is much closer to making fishermen fully aware of the rules and closing the loopholes.

An unusual encounter occurred that involved a 72' shrimp boat. The vessel was found heading west offshore along the reef line. Two officers pulled up and tried to get the attention of the persons onboard. After several attempts using siren, lights, and vocal calls, the officers pulled alongside and boarded the vessel. The cabin was unattended with the radio on. Upon closer inspection, two crew members were found below. Several citations were issued including no proper lookout.

Alabama - J.T. Jenkins reported that J. Waller retired as of the end of February. Another officer, Larry Gatti, will retire August 1. Two officers have transferred to the division, but the division is still undermanned. JEA hours will be exhausted at the end of April. All equipment has been received except for a tow vehicle. Many Alabama regulations are being revised. In the crab fishery, traps are going to be marked rather than color-coded. A federal case on grouper was made and sent to NOAA. Several TED cases have been made, and several small snapper classes were handled within the state. A Tory meter has been put into service. The tory meter determines if a fish has been previously frozen. Jimmy Hutto, an officer working out of Birmingham, was shot last weekend while serving a warrant. The bullet entered his abdomen just below his vest. Infection is a major concern, but his prognosis is good.

Mississippi - T. Bakker reported that the department is fully staffed for the first time in ten years. Four cadets recently completed 16 weeks of training. Officers then complete training at Glencoe and spend three months under the direction of the training officer. Boater education continues. JEA funds will be used to obtain a new 28' Silver Ships vessel. A law was recently passed that will allow removal of traps. A new flounder law went into effect March 1 which established a creel and size limit. A commercial allowable catch quota was also established.

Louisiana - J. Mayne reported that a class of 19 cadets graduated on March 8; however, several vacancies remain. The fiscal session of Louisiana's legislature will begin at the end of April. During the last session of the legislature The Seafood Industry Advisory Board was recognized statutorily. The board consists of members from regulatory agencies, agriculture, wildlife and fisheries, weights and standards, processors, and dock level representatives. The board meets once a month and is very effective.

Louisiana is having a problem with improperly labeled, imported catfish. Vietnamese catfish is being imported and marketed as U.S. product. Catfish farmers cannot compete with the price of the imports.

The JEA is 99% complete. Equipment purchases include 24' Justice Boston Whalers with twin 200s. Officers in the field are very pleased; the vessels have a good range and take rough water well. Several significant red snapper and one mackerel case were forwarded to NOAA GC.

Louisiana is instituting a litter awareness program. The law enforcement division trains 30,000 individuals in hunter education and 12,000 individuals in boater education. Litter awareness will be added to both curriculums. Youngsters, in particular, are made aware of litter problems and are

encouraged to sign a pledge not to litter. Wildlife and Fisheries issued approximately 50% of the litter citations issued in Louisiana.

Texas - L. Young reported that the TPWD has a new executive director, Robert Cooke, who comes to the position with 30 years experience in the department. A new interpretation of an existing law has come into play – Code 47.018 states that anyone importing aquatic products into the state must possess a Texas license. In the past, a license was not required when a contract carrier was used. Texas is in the process of educating out-of-state fish dealers from locations throughout the U.S. including locations as remote as Maine, Alaska, and Hawaii. The education process may be long; a warning phase is in effect for one year.

There is a new rule proposed for all border waters. The rule originated from need within Sabine Lake waters. Texas residents could fish within Sabine Lake, leave the state and fish inside the Louisiana side where limits are higher. If the rule passes, it will state that any fish landed in Texas must comply with Texas size and bag limits. The rule encompasses all state borders – Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Mexico.

For the first time in twenty years when state waters are closed to shrimping out to nine nautical miles, the federal waters will remain open. In the past, federal waters out to 200 miles were also closed. The last time this occurred there were over 100 cases made for shrimping in closed waters. It will take a tremendous effort by enforcement to watch the situation.

In the recent crab closure/cleanup, over 8,000 traps were picked up. The effort was a success with good volunteer participation. Weather was perfect, and the closure was smooth. Derelict traps are still a problem in deep water.

As in the other states, homeland defense has become a daily part of life. An intelligence division works with the department of public safety and forwards intelligence via E-mail to officers.

A new class with 38 cadets has just begun. Graduation will occur in August. A massive retirement is expected in August, 100 officers. Our forces will, however, be built back up to 500 rather than the 450 in the recent past.

The last item to report was a safety issue. While most Texas enforcement vessels are equipped with kill switches, not all are. A memo was sent stating that all vessels must have kill switches installed, and all officers must wear them. Two specific instances precipitated the memo. Last month, an officer by himself got into a chase with an illegal hoop netter. He was thrown from the boat, the kill switch cut the engine, he swam to shore, and was rescued. In the second incident, two patrol vessels were running side-by-side down the intercostal waterway with one warden in each boat. They split apart to go around a tug boat, one boat hit the wake, and the steering cable snapped. The officer did not have a kill switch, he was thrown out of the boat, the boat came around and hit him in the lower leg. His entire calve muscle was cut off and bones were shattered. Had it not been for the other warden, he would have bled to death. He was life-flighted to Houston and is recovering.

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement - R. Dearmin reported that the chief met with all the supervisors two weeks ago. Although it is hard to believe, it is March, and they still do not have

funds. Several NOAA OLE agents have been acting as flight marshals and border patrols were boosted after 9/11. The agency did not receive any additional funds for homeland defense. By the end of this month, however, all agents will be back to normal duty. The chief wants a boilerplate format for JEAs. It will help streamline the approval process. The southeast JEAs may not be affected as much as the other states, but there will be minor changes. The new director, Dick Livingston, is familiar with operations in the southeast since he has worked in the area before. The agency is understaffed and positions are being back-filled. Six new FTEs have been placed in the southeast – three in the gulf, two in North Carolina, and one in the Caribbean. All have been through criminal investigator's school. Although several cases from the states have gone to summary settlements, every case must be prepared as if it were going to court. A case manual is being developed to assist in case preparation.

NOAA General Counsel - K. Raine reported increased activity in the Florida Keys, 24 cases. A case out of Louisiana was for \$5,000 (fishing over the bag limit or without a permit) and \$60,000 (interference or impeding an investigation). A hearing was requested even though it was an aggravated case of noncompliance. Several cases were received from Alabama, and NOVAs were issued. A formal quarterly report will be distributed in early April.

USCG - B. White reported that Commander Dave Fielder has been reassigned as of April 3, and his replacement is not known at this time. He provided a summary of District 8's living marine resource efforts/results from January 1, 2002 through March 7, 2002 which include:

- 1) Total number of boardings: 298
- 2) U.S. commercial fishing vessel boardings: 113
- 3) Foreign fishing vessel boardings: 1
- 4) Magnuson Fishery Conservation & Management Act violations: 8
- 5) TED boardings: 75 (7 with TED violations)
- 6) BRD boardings: 29 (1 with BRD violations)
- 7) Commercial fishing vessel safety regulation violations: 42
- 8) Commercial fishing vessel safety regulation terminations: 1
- 9) Lancha sightings: 21
- 10) Non-U.S. master violations: 0
- 11) Undocumented aliens: 5

Significant cases include:

- a) January 13: USCGC Amberjack recovered a deceased green sea turtle from the water. There was damage to the underside and top notch. There were no vessels in the immediate area, and the turtle was brought back to Station South Padre Island.
- b) January 14: USCGC Resolute boarded F/V Capt Steven and found one net with broken TED. Master corrected TED on the spot. Master cited for improper navigational lights, improper day shapes, no look-out, and other safety violations.
- c) January 21: Station South Padre Island assisted Mexican F/V Ricardo II which was taking on water. The fishing vessel was located and escorted safely to mooring in Brownsville, Texas.
- d) January 26: Station Pascagoula assisted the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources board the F/V Miss Lorie and found 66 undersized red snapper (during a closed season), six bags of

- red drum fillets (with six to eight fillets per bag), nine bags of cobia steaks, and the fillets of one legal cobia and three undersized cobia. The MDMR seized all fish and issued citation to master.
- e) January 29: USCGC Sturgeon boarded F/V Princess Jasmine II and found three TEDs hanging with improper angles and two TEDs with improper spacing. Master corrected discrepancies on the spot and issued an EAR.
 - f) January 31: USCGC Sturgeon boarded F/V Bronco and found one red drum in the hold. The master had a recreational license and claimed to have caught the fish on a hand line. The master was issued an EAR and the red drum was abandoned to sea.
 - g) January 31: USCGC Sturgeon boarded the F/V Lazy Susan and found one TED with a broken frame and one TED with illegal construction. Master began replacing the TEDs and was issued an EAR.
 - h) February 4: USCG 2101 sighted and video taped the F/V Cookie Diana trawling 2.5 nautical miles inside a closed area. Station Port Aransas arrived on scene and advised the master that he was in a closed area. The fishing vessel was escorted to port where the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department met and cited the master for trawling in a restricted area.
 - i) February 13: USCG 2134 sighted and took digital pictures of the F/V Downeaster with bandit rigs and cut bait underway inside the Madison Swanson Gag Grouper Closure Area. The fishing vessel began to maneuver various courses and speeds upon CG 2134's repeated passes. These may have been to hide the stern and vessel name, or coincidental with fishing. No surface asset was available to respond.
 - j) February 20: USCGC Pelican boarded the F/V Santa Maria and found one net missing a BRD. The BRD was located on deck and installed on the spot. The master was issued an EAR for \$750.00.
 - k) February 20: USCGC Pelican boarded the F/V Miss Tracie and found one TED with undersized openings and hard wire tires to further decrease the size of the openings. There was a patent number and phone number welded to the TED. After pictures were taken of the unusual TED, the master cut the wire ties to increase opening size. The master was issued a fix-it, and the pictures of the TED will be sent to the NMFS and GRFTC.
 - l) February 21: USCGC Key Biscayne boarded the F/V Capt Quinta operating inside a state closure area after sunset without navigation lights. One net had no BRD, which is required in Texas state waters. The master replaced the BRD and was ordered by TPWD to return to the pier.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - No representative present. No report.

Joint Enforcement Agreements

J. Mayne reported that Chief Dale Jones, NOAA OLE, is working diligently to complete a boilerplate for JEAs. He encouraged all states to have their figures ready to expedite the process.

Enforceability Document

B. Buckson reported that all surveys have been received except from NOAA OLE. Upon receipt of their portion, discussion will follow. The main topic will be whether the group prefers the document for internal use or released to others for guidance.

Other Business

J.T. Jenkins reported progress in using NOAA Weather Radio for fisheries information broadcasts. He has contacted the Mobile station and is working toward local broadcasts. He will keep the group informed via conference calls.

J. T. Jenkins informed the group of an upcoming GSA Shellfish Conference scheduled for September 17-19, 2002. Law enforcement input is sought, and a patrol issues group may be formed. J. T. volunteered to invite Dr. Lewis Byrd, meeting contact, to participate in the next conference call so that more details can be relayed to the group.

J. Mayne reported that funds are being sought to fund production of an enforcement video.

B. Buckson reported that Florida is looking toward NorthStar technology for night surveillance.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

SEAMAP Subcommittee Meeting
MINUTES
Biloxi, MS
March 19, 2002

Call to Order

Chairman Jim Hanifen called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

Jim Hanifen, *Chair*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Mark Leiby, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Others:

Kim Williams, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Greg Boland, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Michael Brim, USFWS, Panama City, FL
Kirsten Larsen, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Pam Bond, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Tut Warren, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Connie Cowan, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Alonzo Hamilton, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Denice Drass, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Scott Nichols, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
David Hanisko, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
David Yeager, MBNEP, Mobile, AL
Joe O'Hop, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Mike Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff:

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

Under Other Business, B. Pellegrin will present the results of the Comparative Tow Survey, the Joint Meeting will be discussed, and Item No. 5 will be changed to Item No. 3. **T. Cody moved to adopt the agenda with these changes. J. Shultz seconded, and it passed unanimously.**

Fishery Independent Sampling in Mississippi

M. Buchanan gave a presentation on *Independent Fisheries Data Collection in Mississippi*. He reviewed the concept, history, sampling stations, gear, species, and data uses of the program. He said the focus on future programs will be on species with little data available. A complete copy of the presentation is available through the GSMFC office.

Approval of Minutes

R. Waller moved to approve the August 8, 2001 minutes as submitted. J. Shultz seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the Fall Plankton cruise took place from August 28 through December 5, 2001. Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and the National Marine Fisheries Service sampled 171 stations on the west Florida shelf and northern Gulf of Mexico.

The Fall Groundfish Cruise took place from October 10 through December 13, 2001. Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and the National Marine Fisheries Service sampled 334 trawl stations and 49 plankton stations during the survey. Data from the survey were used to produce the 4th annual red snapper real-time plots. The plots are available on the GSMFC web site.

The 1999 SEAMAP Marine Atlas was produced and distributed in February 2002.

The SEAMAP Plankton Work Group met this past week and J. Shultz will give a presentation on the meeting results.

Mark McDuff met with Mike Sestak (GSMFC Staff) to develop relationships between the SEAMAP database and Business Objects software. M. Sestak is in the process of creating a public view of the database to access over the internet.

A conference call was held in February between the coordinators of the three SEAMAP components to discuss fishery independent sampling. They will meet in Tampa in May 2002 to further discuss this issue and develop goals and objectives to discuss at the August meeting.

Summary of the Plankton Work Group Meeting

J. Shultz reported there were 19 attendees at the Plankton Work Group Meeting. She said they have not met in over 10 years to discuss protocols for plankton sampling. Each state representative gave

an overview of their programs then discussed methodologies and protocols of the SEAMAP Plankton sampling. The work group agreed to change and/or start using the following protocols:

- Comparison of sampling techniques indicated a difference in the way neuston tows are timed. The most recent version of the SEAMAP Field manual states that, "Start time occurs when the gear is in the water, half submerged and is fishing properly. End time occurs when the net is out of the water." The wording was modified to read: "Start time occurs when the gear is in the water and the net is fishing properly. End time occurs when the net is out of the water." J. Shultz stated that the key thing to remember is that neuston tow time begins when the neuston net is upright and fishing at the targeted depth, i.e., 0.5 m. She wanted everyone to please try to achieve correct fishing configuration as soon as possible so as to minimize water flow through the net prior to 'official' start of tow.
- As for the depth of a neuston tow, J. Shultz wanted everyone to please continue (or for some to begin) to write 0.5 m on the field data sheets for beginning and end depths. One meter will have to be entered in the current DMS database system, but the new Oracle based system will accept a decimal entry. The entire database will be revised later to reflect the 0.5 targeted neuston fishing depth.
- J. Shultz asked everyone to please begin keeping closer scrutiny of flowmeter performance during each cruise by using a Flowmeter Performance Tracking form. Use either the one that was distributed or develop your own. Using this form has helped NMFS reduce the number of flowmeter reading errors. Please send a copy of the form to NMFS with the Ichthyoplankton Field data (station) sheets. This will help during final data verification and editing and using a flowmeter tracking form will help find, correct and prevent most flowmeter errors.
- J. Shultz asked everyone to please begin noting on Field data sheets (if this has not been done already) the preservation protocol used for each bongo and neuston sample, i.e., what the initial and final preservatives were. J. Shultz asked everyone to begin using the convention 10 % formalin-> 95% ethanol for the standard SEAMAP preservation scenario. When samples are preserved for otolith work, use the notation 95% ethanol-> 95% ethanol. The new SEAMAP database system has a field for this important information that will be entered as a two digit code. It will not be necessary to record the date and time of transfer to final preservative. J. Shultz asked everyone to please try to adhere to the SEAMAP protocol of sample transfer after 48 hours. Let her know if this is an unrealistic time frame.
- J. Shultz asked everyone to please remember to mail copies of the Ichthyoplankton Field data sheets to NMFS either at the end of each cruise or at the end of the field season.
- J. Shultz stated she will distribute any information she receives from Mark Benfield regarding the inexpensive TDR (depth recorders), as well as any information on electronic archival of entire samples for future zooplankton work.

- J. Shultz asked everyone to please spell out the entire vessel name on sample labels; remember to not let the bongo net 'settle' at the maximum depth of tow. J. Shultz asked everyone to please begin haul back as soon as max depth has been reached. Please use the latest SEAMAP Field Manual. An updated copy can be obtained by contacting Alonzo.N.Hamilton@noaa.gov.

Council Request for SEAMAP Larval Fish Distribution Maps

J. Rester informed the Subcommittee that Wayne Swingle, Executive Director of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council requested the SEAMAP Subcommittee provide data and/or maps of larval fish distributions to be used for their essential fish habitat work. R. Leard stated they not only want the larval distributions, but life history stages of all species that the Council manages. The Subcommittee agreed that this would be an excellent opportunity to publicize the SEAMAP program and directed J. Rester to work with the Council and their contractors to provide the information they need. **M. Leiby moved to give all possible assistance to the Council in as timely a manner as possible. R. Waller seconded, and it passed unanimously.**

Mexican Participation in SEAMAP Sampling

T. Cody informed the Subcommittee that Mexico is interested in developing a program similar to SEAMAP and asked the Subcommittee if they would be interested in working with Mexican biologists on this. The Subcommittee agreed to invite the appropriate personnel from Mexico to the Joint SEAMAP Meeting to discuss this. This issue will be discussed at the Gulf and Joint meeting if there is Mexican participation. J. Rester will work with R. Leard, T. Cody and P. Choucair in contacting the appropriate people and inviting them to the meeting. J. Rester stressed the importance of finalizing this ASAP because additional hotel accommodations will have to be made.

New SEAMAP Data Entry System

M. Leiby informed the Subcommittee that they have made quite a few revisions to their data entry system and are proposing to assist NMFS Pascagoula by developing a system for everyone to use. He said the system is still DOS based, but they are trying to develop a program that would work online. He said they have developed a system to help eliminate some of the errors and lower the amount of man hours involved in entering the data, but there is still a backlog of problems. He asked how the other states feel about adopting a centralized or more standardized system for data entry. M. McDuff stated they will have to give all the information to their programmer to estimate the costs of developing a new system and then determine if it would be cost effective to change. After discussion, **R. Waller moved to investigate this further. T. Cody seconded, and it passed unanimously.** M. Leiby and M. McDuff will further report on this at the August meeting.

2002 Real Time Data

J. Rester reported that the GMFMC voted not to have the Texas Closure this year. If this is approved by NMFS this will be the first time in 22 years for not having the closure. R. Leard asked if the Subcommittee will want to distribute real time data if they do not have the closure. After discussion, the Subcommittee agreed to take no action. The real time data distributed is not used just for analyzing the Texas Closure, but is an annual data distribution function of SEAMAP.

Other Business

J. Rester informed the Subcommittee that the information for the SEAMAP Joint Annual Meeting in San Antonio was e-mailed a month ago and to please make reservations. He will follow up on inviting Mexican biologists to participate.

The Subcommittee agreed to continue distributing an end of season red snapper report.

B. Pellegrin presented results on the catch rate analysis between the NOAA Ships OREGON II and the GORDON GUNTER. He reviewed the analytical approach, models, procedures and surveys that were used for the analysis. The results of the analysis showed that there are no significant differences between the vessels. A complete copy of the presentation is available from the GSMFC.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 19, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Joe Smith, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m., with the following in attendance:

Members

Rick Schillaci, *proxy to* Barney White, Omega Protein, Inc., Houston, TX
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Steve Heath, *proxy to* Vernon Minton, AMRD, Gulfshores, AL
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Joe Shepard, *proxy to* John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions and Membership Review

J. Smith welcomed everyone and started introductions.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes (10/30/2001)

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. **B. Wallace moved to accept the minutes, R. Schillaci seconded and the minutes were accepted as written.**

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries 2002 Forecast

V. Guillory reported on the Louisiana forecast using several environmental parameters from 2001 and juvenile abundance indices. Low water temperatures, high river discharge, and low rainfall and salinity in January through March 2001 suggest that conditions for recruitment should have been good last year. Likewise, abundances of juvenile menhaden were well above the long-term means from January to August all along the Louisiana coast and should provide a large number of age-1s into the fishery in 2002. Guillory predicts that the landings for 2002 should range from 431,000 - 487,000 metric tons (mt) and probably finish near the high end because of the good recruitment last year.

Final Review of 2001 Fishing Season

J. Smith provided a summary of the 2001 season. Landings last year were 521,000 mt which was down 10% from 2000 and 8% lower than the previous 5-year mean. 2001 marked the ninth year of the extended fishing season to November 1st and the landings in October were 55,000 mt which was slightly greater than the mean of 52,000mt. Forty-one steamers operated in the Gulf in 2001 with one "run" boat and two bait boats. Rainfall was good in 2001 and provided a high oil yield across the Gulf. The landings in Mississippi Sound were substantially higher in 2001 (42,000 mt) than the previous year which saw the proliferation of exotic jellyfish (17,000 mt). Age composition of the fishery in 2001 was dominated by age-2 fish (67%) and age-1s made one of the lowest contributions on record (25%).

Forecast for 2002 Gulf Menhaden Fishing Season

J. Smith indicated that the NMFS expects 40 steamers to participate in 2002 with 2 "run" boats and one bait boat. NMFS estimates a nominal effort in 2002 of 385,000 vessel-ton-weeks and forecasts landings of 493,000 mt.

Smith also reported that Doug Vaughan is preparing to revise the gulf menhaden stock assessment next winter. The assessments are completed on a 5-year cycle and the last included data through 1997. The new assessment will include 1998-2002. Doug may attend the meeting in the fall with some preliminary data but probably will have a complete presentation next spring.

Status of CDFR Data Entry Initiative

S. VanderKooy updated the MAC on the status of the historical CDFR data entry effort by the Commission. The Commission enters the CDFRs as time and budgets permit. While the Commission stopped entering CDFRs at the end of September due to the IJF budget, they have officially started again March 1 with the 1986 CDFRs. VanderKooy anticipates entering the remaining CDFRs over the next year.

Status of FMP Revision

S. VanderKooy indicated that the FMP is expected to be approved by the full Commission during the business meeting on Thursday. No comments were received during the 30-day public comment period which ran from December 2001 to January 2002. The staff anticipates that the FMP will go to the printer once it is formatted and should be available for the fall meeting.

VanderKooy noted that since the Doug Vaughan's stock assessments and the FMP revisions are presently out-of-sync, the next revision would be held an extra year to get back into the cycle with the assessment.

Gulf Menhaden Website

S. VanderKooy presented a draft of the gulf menhaden webpage. Several suggestions were made

by the MAC. It has been available in the draft form for viewing with a user-name and password only. The general focus of the webpage is to get the science out the public in an attempt to counter negative and incorrect information which persists in the media. Several additional graphics were suggested along with a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page and additional links.

Other Business

It was suggested that a speaker be invited to the next meeting to present information on a multi-species approach to management similar to what they are looking at on the Atlantic. J. Smith suggested that Lance Garrison, NMFS, Miami could make a presentation to the MAC about the models he is using for the ASMFC. VanderKooy will get in touch with Garrison and also ask Behzad Mamoudi to present his perspective on multi-species models at the October meeting in Duck Key, Florida.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 19, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Tom Wagner called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Present

Harriet Perry, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Leslie Hartman, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Tom Wagner, *Chair*, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Staff

Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

John Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC Division of Marine Fisheries, Tallahassee, FL

Agenda

State reports were moved up to Item 4 because V. Guillory had a meeting conflict (menhaden met during the same time). The agenda was approved with this change.

Minutes

T. Wagner asked that "and crab fishermen" be added to the fourth sentence after "game wardens" under the *Texas Closure Update*. With this change, the minutes were approved by consensus.

State Reports

Florida - A. McMillen-Jackson reported blue crab landings were down again. In 2000, landings were the lowest since 1986. Landings through August are at 65% of the total year. Comparing that with previous years, landings will be even lower than the year before. There was a total of 4 million pounds through August. Stone crab landings through May are 1.5 million pounds. Pink shrimp landings are at 5 million pounds; whites are at 6,500 pounds; and browns are at 2 million pounds. The Florida blue crab stock assessment was published last year and is available on the FMRI website. Some of the highlights are: state-wide commercial landings fluctuated without a long-term trend from 1986 to 2000. Preliminary 2000 numbers indicate that total landings and landings per trip were the lowest since 1986. Fishing effort was estimated at 10 million traps pulled per year. A trip-ticket system is in place; however, Mike Murphy found that the data was not always

accurately reported. The number of licenses dropped since 1997, but there has been a license moratorium. Murphy assumed a maximum age of three years in Florida. He also ran an analysis using six years as the maximum age. Using the three year estimate, blue crabs did not appear to be overfished in Florida; although they may have been overfished on the Gulf Coast in 1994-1995 and 1998-1999. Using six years as the maximum age, blue crabs were overfished on both coasts. There were no significant changes on abundance estimates on either coast from 1989 to 2000. The new Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program grant began in Florida – a mail survey will be distributed to blue crab fishermen. A blue crab monitoring program has begun in Tampa Bay. Sex ratios and size/weight relationships are also being investigated.

Alabama - L. Hartman reported that 2000 landings for blue crab were off the chart, the highest reported since the late 1890s. Landings have since fallen and continue to be down. Alabama is revisiting their crab management scheme, and a derelict trap removal program as well as effort management are being discussed. On January 26, 2002, an aerial survey was made to count the number of derelict crab traps along Alabama's coastline. Two areas of great concern are just south of the Mobile Bay causeway and at the mouth of the Dog River. Some of the areas containing high concentrations of traps are permanently closed to shrimping (e.g., Heron Bay where 50 traps were counted).

Trip ticket data indicates that Alabama has 170 licensed crabbers, which has been steady over the past five years. Of those, an average of 40 crab fishermen report landings throughout the year. In January, the number reporting drops to 21. There is a spike in May, but that is when all areas are closed to shrimp fishing and may be the result of movement between the fisheries. Therefore, effort management would not be effective if crab licenses were limited to the current number. Word has spread to the fishermen that effort management is being considered, and public hearings will (in all likelihood) be held to gain insight and comments from the fishermen.

L. Hartman distributed summarized, monthly CPUE data from 1988 to 1997. Fishery-independent data has been collected since 1997, as well; however, only quarterly sampling was performed from October 1998 through October 2000. A number of sites have been sampled for over 20 years and are used as indicator sites of high productivity. CPUE from 1988 to 1997 does indicate a decline. Alabama tide calendars and activity books were distributed.

Mississippi - T. Floyd reported that much like Alabama, Mississippi landings have declined. Landings in 1999 and 2000 were phenomenal at almost one million pounds. Landings in 2000 are barely over 400,000 pounds. License sales are steady at 230 commercial crab fishermen. Recreational licenses are still being issued; however, there is a bill in the legislature to rescind licensing of recreational crab fishermen. Senate Bill 2553 passed the current Senate session and reads as follows:

“An Act to amend Section 49-15-84, Mississippi Code of 1972, to clarify regulation of crab traps and female crabs bearing eggs; to create code Section 49-15-84.1, Mississippi Code of 1972, to authorize the Commission on Marine Resources to establish a closed season on the use of crab traps; to authorize the Commission on Marine Resources to designate as abandoned those traps remaining in public waters during the closed season; to provide that abandoned crab traps are subject to immediate removal and disposal; to

repeal Section 49-15-85, Mississippi Code of 1972, which prohibits the taking and possession of egg bearing crabs; and for related purposes.”

There were concerns by the subcommittee that the bill does not adequately address ownership regulations. The bill does provide an avenue to remove and dispose of the traps, but does not address who will be allowed to do so. Although the bill seems to be patterned after Texas Senate Bill 1410, the Mississippi Bill does not contain language declaring abandoned traps as “litter,” which “may be disposed of by persons other than the owner.”

Two of five processing houses in Mississippi were closed due to sanitation violations. The Mississippi Crab Task Force is discussing trap tags, degradable panels, and non-floating line regulations. Following a suggestion from our commercial crabbing survey, notices will be posted at public boat launches that state the law and fines associated with stealing crab pots. This is one of the fishery’s major problems in Mississippi.

A few fly-overs were performed last summer; however, a reliable count was not possible. Flights were performed at 500 feet. Since 9/11, Mississippi has not been able to continue aerial surveys due to security reasons associated with Keesler Air Force Base. Aerial surveys would have been beneficial during the low, winter tides.

Louisiana - V. Guillory reported that Louisiana landed approximately 41 million pounds in 2001, a drop from 50 million pounds in 2000. The Louisiana Crab Task Force was officially recognized in statute by the legislature last year. Names of existing members were sent to the Governor’s office for approval on the new task force. It is a fiscal legislative year, and as such no fishery legislation can be introduced. Louisiana’s crab processing plants are having economic problems; several are trying to sell but have no potential buyers. If Louisiana does lose processing plants, more and more will be sent out of the state for processing, and an over supply of product may result in Louisiana since only prime crabs (5"-6") are shipped out to the East Coast for processing. This has the potential to negatively affect the fishermen.

Guillory distributed preliminary data from the trip ticket program. In 2000, 2,086 fishermen sold crabs from crab traps, but there were 3,700 license holders. In other words, quite a few fishermen had a gear license and did not use them. A license moratorium was held from 1996-1998, and many fishermen may have purchased a license just in case another moratorium followed. A number of fishermen caught and sold crabs using trot lines. Based on the data gathered prior to the trip ticket system, it was assumed that 99.9% of landings were harvested by traps. Guillory intends to look further at the data and provide reports by area at a future meeting. The trip ticket system allows them to look at the fishery in more detail than ever before. Changes in the fishery will be much easier to interpret on a yearly basis.

Texas - T. Wagner reported preliminary 2001 commercial landings improved over 2000 landings. However, 2000 was a record low year at 4 million pounds landed. In talking to fishermen along Texas’ mid-Coast, 2001 was an improved year. Several heavy rains occurred in August which may have helped. Also according to the fishermen, winter 2002 harvest was good. Another fisherman in Aransas Pass reported exceptional catches continuously for weeks at a time right up to the closure. If that was the case coast-wide, the fishermen may have been impacted by the seasonal closure. Yet,

several commercial fishermen supported the closure and participated in the trap clean up in Aransas Pass.

The second round of crab license buy-backs occurred in November. During the first round, seven licenses were purchased at an average cost of \$4,000 per license. During the second round, another seven licenses were purchased, so 14 licenses out of 259 total licenses have been purchased through the program.

The cost to buy back shrimp, crab, and finfish licenses is increasing. An increase occurred for the cost of a recreational, saltwater stamp from \$7.00 to \$10.00 for a maximum of five years. These funds are dedicated to the buy-back fund.

There is no proposed legislation specific to the crab fishery. Texas is having an across-the-board increase in commercial license fees which will include the dealers, wholesalers, and retail dealers. The commercial crab fisherman's license will likely increase, as well. This increase will also mean an increase to the buy-back fund.

Wagner updated the group on fishery-independent, bag seine data through 1999. The long-term trend, number caught per hectare, mean size, and recruitment are down. Trawl data shows an even sharper decline in catch rates. The average catch rate per hour through the 1990s averaged 20 crabs per hour, 1996-1998 averaged 14 per hour, and 1999 was down to six crabs per hour. Mean size from trawls has increased over the last three years through 1999.

Blue Crab FMP

C. Yocom reported that the plan is at the printer and expected within the week. The subcommittee agreed to send B. Pellegrin updated trawl data through 2001 and recommended he review the Florida stock assessment.

Texas Closure & Cleanup/Derelict Trap Task Force

T. Wagner reported on the Texas Closure and distributed a summary of the "Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Data." As reported during the Derelict Trap Task Force, the Texas Department of Wildlife & Fisheries declared that data collected during the clean up was "unscientific" in nature and would be for internal department use only. Art Morris, TPWD, will develop the summary report which is expected by late April.

Wagner will present a summary of gulf activities thus far concerning derelict trap programs. This will include accomplishments from the first Derelict Trap Task Force Meeting held March 4-5, 2002 in Biloxi. Those accomplishments are:

- 1) White paper, executive summary, and power point presentation
- 2) Mississippi's ongoing program and newly-funded CIAP trap removal program (a USM/GCRL and MDMR cooperative effort)
- 3) Florida's newly-funded project to identify trap "hot spots"
- 4) Alabama's fly-over derelict trap counts

- 5) Texas' closed season
- 6) Development of educational materials:
 - 1) Identify possible funding sources (Sea Grant)
 - 2) Commercial fishery brochure development
 - 3) All water users tri-fold pamphlet
 - 4) PowerPoint presentation and script
 - 5) Possible video presentation
- 7) Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama reviewing litter and trap statutes
- 8) Louisiana's Crab Task Force has endorsed the derelict trap removal program concept
- 9) Successful communication with commercial and recreational components

Subsequent to these activities, Commission staff was contacted by Ralph Rayburn of Sea Grant who indicated that \$150,000 has been slated for regional Gulf of Mexico fisheries education. He indicated that there should be around \$45,000 dedicated to derelict trap education inclusive of crab, lobster, and fish traps. An administrative proposal will be submitted to the national Sea Grant office by April 1, and funds could be directed to GSMFC efforts to develop the brochure, pamphlet, PowerPoint presentation, and possible video. These funds could possibly defray development and printing costs.

V. Guillory presented his first draft of the educational PowerPoint presentation for Sea Grant use. He asked for guidance and direction from the group and was advised to: add a positive introduction, remove legal jargon, remove hard core numbers and use general examples, and remove some of the Texas information. They reminded him to "know his audience." This presentation will be given to the general public, environmentalists, and other user groups. A general summary is also needed to highlight major points that will assist in the removal of derelict traps. H. Perry will provide him with a description of the CIAP program which may help. Guillory will update the draft and provide it to the task force in "note form" so that comments can be made directly adjacent to each slide.

Analysis of Fishery Independent Data

V. Guillory reviewed his presentation that was given at Nichols State University and distributed the resulting paper, *Assessment of the Louisiana Blue Crab Fishery and Resource: 1970-2000*. He reported that the status of the Louisiana blue crab fishery and resource was evaluated through the mid-1990s. The status was updated using data through November 2001. Long-term trends in commercial harvest and effort were characterized, as well as catch per effort and size in fishery independent seine and trawl data. Annual mortality rates and other factors that influence the blue crab stock and harvest were also reviewed. They found that no biological problems exist within the resource even though the fishery may be overcapitalized. Preservation and enhancement of essential estuarine habitats to maintain or increase carrying capacity and reduction of juvenile mortality was investigated.

Other Business

A. Jackson reported that the Atlantic States are taking a detailed look at the amounts of *Hematodinium* sp., a lethal pathogen, in crabs. H. Perry noted that Drs. Overstreet and Lotz (GCRL) are also investigating the problem in the Gulf of Mexico.

H. Perry referred the group to a letter from Dr. Wang, NMFS, in which she addressed their concerns over the reclassification of the crab trap fishery as it relates to trap rope/dolphin interaction. In the letter, Dr. Wang states that derelict trap programs will not make a large impact in lessening the potential for trap/dolphin interaction. Perry stated that on the contrary, these programs will have a significant impact since rope will be removed from the water. Further, it is unfair to assume that all rope marks are attributable to crab traps. The group agreed to invite Dr. Wang to the next Derelict Trap Task Force meeting. The meeting will be held in the Tampa/St. Petersburg area to facilitate her attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

ZSP

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

10/15/02

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 19, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Corky Perret called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Tom Van Devender, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Joseph Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Habitat/SEAMAP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Greg Boland, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Tut Warren, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Jim Franks, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Read Hendon, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Bruce Comyns, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Richard Waller, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Vernon Asper, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Edna Boone, MS Commission on Marine Resources
Mikel Guzia, MS Commission on Marine Resources
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Thomas Herrington, FDA/Gulf of Mexico Program, Stennis, MS
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Bill Richardson, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS

Traci Floyd, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kerwin Cuevas, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Bobbi Walker, Orange Beach Fishing Association, Orange Beach, AL

Adoption of Agenda

C. Perret requested that he have discretion in changing the order of items in the agenda. With that change, the agenda was adopted as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on October 30, 2001 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved with minor changes.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - V. Vail reported that the executive director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission was resigning at the end of April. FWC was reviewing applications for his replacement. V. Vail stated that the Florida legislature was now in session, but it was not a good year for resource bills. V. Vail reported that the NMFS grant paying for trap losses due to Hurricane Mitch has almost been completed. She stated that approximately 400 applicants had applied, and the distribution of the money had run smoothly. She also stated that a stone crab trap limitation appeals board to determine the number of traps a fisherman can use is winding down. Florida is trying to reduce the number of traps in the spiny lobster fishery by four percent through passive trap reduction. Florida is trying to deal with the growing problem of trap robbing. V. Vail stated that it is difficult to get an arrest and conviction for this crime unless it was actually witnessed by law enforcement officials. A lawsuit has been filed against FWC concerning mesh sizes in seines. The lawsuit contends that a Florida law limits the size of seines and not the mesh size of the seine. FWC contends that a net with a mesh size larger than two inches is a gill net, not a seine and is therefore, illegal. Finally, V. Vail stated that Florida is investigating a trap retrieval program.

Alabama - S. Heath stated that Jerry Waller has officially retired as the chief enforcement officer for Alabama. S. Heath reported that Alabama has been collecting otoliths as part of an ongoing otolith collection project. He stated that Alabama now has an imaging system for measuring the collected otoliths. S. Heath reported that the commercial fishery sector is cooperating fully with the collection program. Sampled species include red snapper, sheepshead, gag, amberjack and flounder. S. Heath reported that the trip ticket program is working well.

Mississippi - T. Van Devender reported that the Mississippi legislature is now in session. He stated that most of the resource related bills have died. A bill to increase license fees died. The MDMR

budget could also be cut. He stated that the oyster season opened on October 1, 2001 and has been going well. From October 1 through March 12, a total of 280,780 sacks of oysters have been landed. The MDMR shellfish sanitation section is in the process of identifying sewage lift stations and wastewater stations for use in a GIS database. The MDMR shellfish group is also collecting oyster samples to test for *Vibrio* viruses. Mississippi has installed seven hydrologic platforms throughout Mississippi Sound to measure salinity, temperature and tidal range. This information is available on the MDMR web site. The derelict crab trap program has removed over 2,000 abandoned traps from local waters. T. Van Devender stated that a bill is working its way through the legislature that would allow for a closed period in the crab fishery. He reported that live bait shrimp dealers now have their monthly reports added to the electronic trip ticket program used by oyster fishermen. Finally, T. Van Devender stated that artificial reef construction is continuing with 3 steel hulled vessels and 15 barge loads of concrete rubble offloaded at previously permitted reef sites south of the barrier islands.

Louisiana - J. Shepard reported that 151 items have been deployed as artificial reefs. Nine shell reefs are located in inshore waters. Work is under way to create a new limestone reef in Lake Pelto and seven platforms will soon be donated. Louisiana had its fourth largest shrimp catch last year with 76.6 million pounds landed. J. Shepard stated that the trip ticket program is running smoothly. He stated that data from the trip ticket program indicates that 50% of oyster landings are coming from public reefs. Trip ticket data for 2000 and 2001 have been transferred to the FIN database at GSMFC. J. Shepard reported that 47 seafood dealers are entering their trip ticket information electronically. The LDWF saw a savings from this since they do not have to enter the data into the system. During 2002, NMFS will not be collecting shrimp landings data. They will use the data from the trip ticket program as landings data. Louisiana has also been collecting otoliths in the otolith collection program since February.

Texas - The Texas state report was given along with the Crab Subcommittee report to cover the Texas closed crab season discussion.

NMFS - T. McIlwain reported that NOAA has a new undersecretary. T. McIlwain reported that Dick Shaffer would be retiring soon. T. McIlwain stated that Jack Dunnigan has been hired as the head of Sustainable Fisheries. T. McIlwain stated that the NMFS budget increased for fiscal year 2003 with most of the increase being used for salmon issues in the northwest. He stated that NMFS is now in the process of developing the fiscal year 2004 budget. T. McIlwain reported that NMFS sponsored a second shrimp virus workshop in November. The proceedings from the workshop will soon be published as a technical memorandum.

USFWS - C. Brown reported that the Senate confirmed Dr. Steve Williams as Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service on January 30. His priorities as Director will include repairing strained relationships that have developed between the FWS and consumptive resource users, and strengthening cooperative partnerships with states, private organizations and individuals in fish and wildlife conservation. Judge Craig Manson has also been confirmed as the Interior Department's Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. In the lawsuit involving critical habitat designation for the Gulf sturgeon, the FWS and NMFS, in further negotiation with the plaintiff, reached an agreement to propose a revised critical habitat determination by May 23, 2002, with a final decision by February 28, 2003. The previous determination had been that it was not prudent

to identify critical habitat for this threatened subspecies. The Services may potentially identify critical habitat in portions of selected rivers and associated estuarine and nearshore areas from among the 30 river systems within the species' historical range. C. Brown stated that the FWS Fisheries strategic planning process continues to move along. The FWS had requested recommendations from the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council regarding future directions for the Fisheries Program. The Positioning Paper will outline key elements to be included in a Fisheries Strategic Plan. Regional efforts that were begun last year to develop a joint venture with southeastern state fisheries agencies and other organizations are still being pursued. In January the Panama City Field Office in Florida participated in a ceremony at a Destin, Florida resort hotel highlighting a demonstration project there involving special neon lighting designed to reduce impacts on hatchling sea turtles. The patented lighting systems are longer lasting and more energy efficient than conventional neon lights. The states of Alabama, Florida and Georgia have agreed in principal to a draft Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint rivers water allocation formula. The deadline for agreement was extended until mid-March. Federal agencies are in the midst of sorting out expected impacts of the water formula on aquatic resources in the three states. Once the formula agreement is signed by the states, the federal commissioner will have 255 days to provide a concurrence decision. The deadline for a similar agreement regarding the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa allocation formula has been extended into 2003. The FWS is among a few Interior Department agencies that are still disconnected from the Internet by court order. Several other department agencies have gone back on line, including the National Park Service and US Geological Survey. A dead manatee was found on the shore of Biloxi Bay on February 17 near Mississippi Power's generating station. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources coordinated efforts to inspect, recover and dispose of the carcass. A marine mammal specialist from the Marine Life Oceanarium inspected the carcass and determined that the animal had died of natural causes. Together with a mortality that occurred in southeast Louisiana in December and another recent one in Mobile Bay, there have been three known manatee deaths in the northern Gulf this winter.

Pelagic *Sargassum* as EFH in the Northern Gulf of Mexico: Utilization by Important Fishery Species

R. Hendon discussed his research on *Sargassum* as habitat for juvenile fish in the Gulf of Mexico. The study's primary research goal was to describe the diversity and abundance of fish associated with *Sargassum* in the northern Gulf of Mexico, focusing primarily on important fishery species. He stated that *Sargassum* is commonly referred to as weed lines and is a pelagic brown algae found in the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. R. Hendon reported that the occurrence of *Sargassum* in the Gulf of Mexico is highly variable and dependent upon currents transporting the floating algae into the Gulf of Mexico. R. Hendon stated that in offshore waters, *Sargassum* provides refuge from predators for juvenile fish, an abundance of food for these young fish, spawning substrate for fish, physical structure around which spawning fish may aggregate, and an area of shade and visual reference. R. Hendon stated that their primary sampling gear was a 1 x 2 meter neuston net that was towed perpendicularly through the *Sargassum*. The researchers also used a 100-foot miniature purse seine. Over the two-year study period, the researchers collected over 8,700 fish representing 55 families and at least 90 species utilizing *Sargassum*.

Utilizing Side Scan Sonar as a Management Tool

K. Cuevas stated that the MDMR has used side scan sonar (SSS) in their Artificial Reef Program, Shellfish Program, and Derelict Vessel Program. K. Cuevas reported that SSS was used to update coordinates and orientation of past artificial reef deployments off Mississippi. SSS assessed the stability and durability of reef material. The Shellfish Program used SSS to obtain accurate coordinates of oyster reefs, to identify areas for shell planting, and to assess the damage from vessel groundings on reefs. K. Cuevas reported that the Derelict Vessel Program used SSS to obtain accurate coordinates of derelict vessels and associated debris and to ensure that obligations were fulfilled when contractors removed derelict vessels. K. Cuevas stated that the SSS system used in Mississippi cost between \$70-80 thousand for the initial SSS setup.

Methylmercury and Marine Fish Update

R. Lukens discussed the work that was accomplished on dealing with the methylmercury in marine fish issue since the last Commission meeting. R. Lukens stated that a steering committee of relevant agencies has been developed. He reported that the steering committee has developed recommendations for a Gulf-wide sampling program to test fish for mercury. A writing team was also organized. The steering committee contained members from each state's fisheries management agency and public health agency, as well as other federal agencies. The steering committee summarized the sources of mercury, the biological processes that make mercury available to the food chain, human health concerns, and recommendations for dealing with the problem. Their first recommendation was that a Gulf-wide survey needed to be developed to test for mercury in common commercial and recreational fish. The second recommendation was to determine the capacity of existing facilities to test the fish samples. The third recommendation was to establish consistent seafood consumption advisories and establish common advisory levels for mercury in fish tissue. The fourth recommendation was to develop an education and outreach strategy. The fifth recommendation was to develop a recreational fish consumption survey. The sixth recommendation was to establish a common, centralized database on mercury in marine fish tissue. The final recommendation was to encourage similar initiatives on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. R. Lukens reported that the report was a very cooperative effort, and he was very pleased with the effort everyone put forth in developing the report.

J. Shepard stated that he thought the Gulf-wide sampling effort would work well with the FIN sampling that is currently ongoing. He wanted to make sure that any effort to collect samples was statistically sound. R. Lukens agreed and stated that he had talked with D. Donaldson about the new effort and how FIN could play a role in tissue collection.

R. Lukens stated that he would be presenting the report to the full Commission for their approval on Thursday. The Commission would then decide how to proceed with the methylmercury issue.

Review of the Draft Commission Freshwater Inflow Policy

J. Rester stated that the Habitat Subcommittee drafted a freshwater inflow policy for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council last year. The Subcommittee felt that it was important that the Commission have a freshwater inflow policy also. J. Rester stated that he distributed the draft

policy to the TCC in early February. He stated that he would now like the TCC to review the policy and make any changes they felt were necessary.

C. Brown asked what the differences were between the Commission's draft policy and the final policy approved by the Council. J. Rester stated that references to essential fish habitat were omitted from the Commission policy. J. Shepard asked if the Fish and Wildlife Service or any of the states had a freshwater policy. J. Rester responded that he was not aware of any state or Fish and Wildlife Service policy concerning freshwater inflows. J. Shepard stated that he felt the policy was too broad. J. Roussel stated that he had some problems with the policy. He stated that water withdrawals, dams, and diversions were not the only actions that affected freshwater inflow into estuaries. J. Roussel also stated that he had problems with the word "restore". C. Perret stated that he had some suggested changes to improve the policy.

J. Roussel moved motion to defer action on the Commission's draft freshwater inflow policy until the October meeting. J. Shepard seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. J. Rester stated that he would distribute the draft policy to the TCC again for their comments.

Subcommittee Reports

Anadromous – D. Frugé stated that the Anadromous Subcommittee had not met since the March 2001 meeting, but the Striped Bass Technical Task Force (TTF) met to work on revising the striped bass FMP. The TTF has been drafting and editing several sections of the FMP. The next TTF meeting is scheduled for June. At this meeting the TTF will discuss the goals of the FMP since the current goal of "restoring and maintaining striped bass throughout the Gulf of Mexico region, and establishing self-sustaining populations of striped bass in at least ten coastal river systems" may not be attainable. The TTF will also develop goals and management recommendations.

Crab – T. Wagner stated that the Derelict Trap Task Force met in early March to discuss developing removal programs throughout the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that the task force has completed two publications that are available on the Commission web site. The task force would next like to develop educational material for commercial fishermen as well as materials for recreational boaters and fishermen. Sea Grant would possibly fund printing of the material. T. Wagner discussed what the states are currently doing to remove traps or start removal programs. He also gave a report on the recent Texas crab closed season. T. Wagner reported that the Crab Subcommittee also discussed the marine mammal reclassification of the blue crab fishery from a category 3 to a category 2 fishery. The Crab Subcommittee would like to invite the NMFS representative to the next meeting of the Derelict Trap Task Force to show how they are trying to reduce interactions between marine mammals and crab traps. H. Perry discussed her observations while helping Texas pick up crab traps during their closed season. She stated she would like to thank Arthur Morris of TPWD for arranging for observers from the Commission, MDMR, GCRL, and LDWF to help pick up traps in different bay systems. She stated that the clean up was well coordinated and went very smoothly. H. Perry reported that removal programs would be different in each state due to the geography of the state, scope of the problem, and the laws governing trap removal. H. Perry stated that education is the key to any successful program. T. Wagner reported that Texas is in the process of preparing a report on the closure for the Texas Commission.

SEAMAP - J. Hanifen reported that the Fall SEAMAP Plankton cruise took place from August 28, 2001 through December 5, 2001 sampling 171 stations on the west Florida shelf and northern Gulf of Mexico. The Fall Groundfish Cruise took place from October 10 - December 13, 2001 sampling 334 trawl stations and 49 plankton stations during the survey. Data from the survey were used to produce the 4th annual red snapper real-time plots which are available on the Commission web site. The SEAMAP Marine Atlas was produced and distributed in February. The SEAMAP Plankton Work Group met earlier this week to discuss plankton sampling by all Gulf of Mexico components. The Subcommittee discussed a Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council request to provide SEAMAP data and maps for federally managed species that SEAMAP encounters in their plankton and trawl surveys. The Subcommittee also discussed possible Mexican participation in SEAMAP sampling. A Mexican delegation will be invited to attend the joint SEAMAP meeting in August. Finally, SEAMAP will produce real time shrimp distribution data during the 2002 Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Cruise.

Data Management - J. O'Hop reported that the collection of fisheries dependent information from commercial dealers and fishermen, and recreational fishermen and charter boat captains is proceeding normally and very well. He stated that although not yet complete, most of 2001 commercial landings data for Louisiana through Florida are available from the FIN and the NMFS systems. Final MRFSS data for 2001 should be available by early April 2002. Head boat catch and effort estimates are expected on June 1, 2002. He stated that biological sampling, using funds from the FIN program by samplers from Texas through Florida, in 2002 is resulting in the collection of more otoliths for aging. Also, the processing of these samples is proceeding due to FIN funds that are supporting an otolith processor at the NMFS Panama City Laboratory and at FMRI in St. Petersburg. King mackerel, greater amberjack, red snapper, gulf and southern flounder are the major target species for which they have established sampling targets. Federal and state port agents received additional training in otolith removal and processing in St. Petersburg in November 2001. Funds from the FIN and NMFS supported this workshop. Charter boat outreach meetings are being held in several of the states in the Gulf to present some of the information and the benefits from the new charter boat survey methods, and to inform captains of the upcoming socioeconomic surveys later in 2002. Finally, J. O'Hop reported that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee would be making a recommendation to the Subcommittee to ask for the addition of questions regarding recreational fishing near artificial structures in the Gulf in the MRFSS telephone survey and field intercepts. The Subcommittee members will be reviewing that recommendation via e-mail.

Artificial Reef - R. Lukens stated that the Subcommittee has been working toward establishing a Gulf wide artificial reef database. The database would include a web based data entry program that would allow the state artificial reef program coordinators to enter their data directly into the system. The Subcommittee is currently revising the *Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials* that was published in 1997. The Subcommittee hopes to have the majority of the revised language complete by the end of the year. R. Lukens stated that the National Artificial Reef Plan is currently out for public comment. The Subcommittee will be reviewing it at their meeting next week that will be held jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Artificial Reef Committee.

Habitat - J. Rester reported that fishing impacts on habitat is still a concern. J. Rester reported he would be attending an upcoming Marine Conservation Biology Institute meeting where they will review the bycatch and habitat damage associated with different fishing gears report they are

preparing. The report will analyze impacts of commercial fishing gears used in the US. AFS, USGS, NOAA, and the Ecological Society of America are sponsoring a symposium on the effects of fishing activities on benthic habitats in November. The Ocean Studies Board of the National Research Council finished their report on the effects of bottom trawling on seafloor habitats and it has been posted on the Internet. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has hired MRAG Americas to complete the EFH EIS. A first draft should be out near the end of the year or early next year. The Subcommittee next discussed the habitat placemat. McElroy's Seafood Restaurant in Biloxi is now using the habitat poster as a placemat. The Subcommittee discussed the idea of expanding the placemat into seafood restaurants in the other Gulf states. After discussion, the Subcommittee passed a motion to explore the possibility of having a regional restaurant supply distributor try to market and sell the placemat to seafood restaurants in the Gulf region. C. Perret stated that he was not sure if the way the placemat was being distributed was legal. C. Perret stated that he had requested that this issue be discussed at the Commission meeting. J. Rester stated that the Subcommittee is also trying to develop a habitat video that discusses the different habitat types within the Gulf of Mexico and their ecological importance. A draft script has been developed. The Subcommittee will be refining the script and discussing costs with video production companies in order to write funding proposals in the future. The Subcommittee also discussed future Subcommittee projects. Finally, J. Rester reported that the USFWS would donate \$12,000 to reprint the habitat poster. J. Rester stated that the Subcommittee would like to thank Mike Brim and Brian Pridgeon of the FWS Florida Gulf Coast Coastal Program for the donation.

Other Business

C. Perret stated that he tried to schedule timely issues on for the TCC meeting. He requested that TCC members take a more active role in helping plan future meeting agendas.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Wednesday, March 20, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Facilitator Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Roy Crabtree, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Larry Simpson, *Executive Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Gregory Boland, Mineral Management Service, New Orleans, LA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Chris Dorsett, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Dan Dumont, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Jack Dunnigan, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Tom Herrington, FDA, Stennis Space Center, MS
Joe Jewel, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted with two additions. Methylmercury, and Fishing on National Wildlife Refuges will be discussed under Other Business.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 31, 2001 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as presented.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

J. Smith of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Beaufort Laboratory and Chairman of the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) reported on the Committee meeting. Smith reported on the NMFS 2002 menhaden landings forecast and reviewed the 2001 fishing season. Landings in 2001 were 521,000 metric tons, down 10% from 2000, and down 8% from the previous 5 year mean. 41 purse seine vessels operated in 2001 with one run boat and two bait boats. Logbook data showed 42,000 tons of menhaden caught in Mississippi Sound in 2001, compared to 17,000 tons in 2000 because of the presence of jellyfish. Age composition of Gulf menhaden in 2001 were dominated by age 2 fish. Smith reported that NMFS estimates nominal effort in 2002 and forecasts landings of 493,000 tons.

D. Vaughan of NMFS Beaufort Lab is preparing to do a Gulf menhaden stock assessment next winter. These assessments are done every 5 years, the last one included data through the 1997 fishing season. The new assessment will cover the period from 1998 through the 2002 season.

Smith reported that the NMFS and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) are continuing to cooperate on the Captains Daily Fishing Report (CDFR) data entry initiative. Two temporary data entry clerks have recently been hired and are presently working on 1986 data. Data from 1987 through 1990 have already been entered, and the data sets back to 1984 should be completed by the fall of 2002.

Smith noted that S. VanderKooy reported to the MAC on the revision of the menhaden fishery management plan (FMP) noting that the FMP is awaiting approval of the Commission. If approved, this FMP should be available for the Fall 2002 meeting.

Smith also reported that the menhaden website, through the GSMFC, is in draft form and password protected and is being reviewed before being made available to the public.

C. Perret moved to accept the Menhaden Advisory Committee report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Invasive Species Update

R. Lukens reported that he represents the GSMFC on several entities that deal with invasive species, one of which is the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel. This Panel was formed under the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force which was created as a result of the National Invasive Species Act. Lukens noted that at the October 2001 meeting of the GSMFC, draft legislative language was presented for the reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act and approval was granted to move forward. This legislative language establishes a regional program administered and coordinated by the interstate Commissions, including the Great Lakes Commission.

Lukens reported that the Gulf of Mexico Program has been providing administration for the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel. At a recent meeting a recommendation was made to the Gulf of Mexico Program that the Regional Panel be re-formed and be administered independently from the Gulf of Mexico Program umbrella. Lukens reported that a conference call of the GSMFC Executive

Committee took place in January 2002. A decision was made to direct staff to indicate that the GSMFC would be prepared to provide administrative support to the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel with the understanding that there would be adequate funding made available from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Lukens estimated that approximately \$50,000 to \$75,000 in funding would be required. Lukens reported that the Gulf of Mexico Program would make a formal decision on this matter in about two weeks. If approved, this administrative support would begin in January 2003.

Lukens gave the status of the legislation and noted that the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) has reviewed the language, is in favor of it, and is prepared to move forward in order to have this language submitted as an amendment during the re-authorization process of the National Invasive Species Act. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is supportive but at this point does not wish to become directly involved because of other work and resource constraints. The Great Lakes Commission is conceptually in agreement.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy reported that the menhaden FMP will be presented to the Commission for approval, and if approved will be sent to the printer and should be available shortly. Data entry of the menhaden CDFR's continues as time and funding permits. Completion of this project is anticipated in approximately 1½ years. The blue crab FMP is at the printer and should be available for distribution in about two weeks.

VanderKooy reported that the Derelict Trap Task Force has been formed and consists of the Crab Subcommittee, representatives from the recreational, commercial, and law enforcement sectors, and a member from Sea Grant. The Task Force recently held their initial meeting and will report to the Commission at the October meeting.

VanderKooy reported that progress is being made on the striped bass FMP revision. Several sections have been drafted and reviewed with some editing being completed. Work on this FMP will continue throughout this summer and fall.

VanderKooy noted that the Otolith Manual is in the final editing process. Since the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) is involved in biological sampling at this time, it was deemed appropriate to include additional species in the Otolith Manual in support of FIN activities. This Manual should be available for review by the October meeting.

The Committee discussed public outreach and education regarding the derelict crab trap issue and C. Perret noted that Mississippi Tidelands Funds might possibly be available for such an activity. VanderKooy noted that two pamphlets were being developed; one for commercial fishermen and one for recreational fishermen and boaters. After discussion on the content of these brochures, **the Committee directed that the Derelict Trap Task Force must submit all materials pertaining to the development of these educational brochures for review by the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee and the Commission before drafting these publications. Information should include the target audience, the mission, and the message being developed.** VanderKooy noted that the next Task Force meeting will be held in the Tampa area in the end of June.

C. Perret moved to accept the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FIN Data Program Update

D. Donaldson reported that biological sampling began in January 2002 in both commercial and recreational fisheries targeting red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder, and amberjack. In the first two months of 2002, 650 otoliths and 240 lengths have been collected Gulfwide.

Donaldson reported that the FIN data management system currently has approximately 13,000,000 records in the system. These include commercial trip ticket data from Florida covering the period from 1984 to 2001, Alabama for 2000, Mississippi oyster data for 2001, and Louisiana data from 2000 to 2001. Menhaden data is also in the system, as well as recreational data and SEAMAP data. The Data Management Subcommittee has targeted June 2002 to open the system to all users, both confidential and non-confidential. Press releases and newsletters will be utilized for notification of the availability of the system.

Donaldson reported that the FIN is working with a contractor to get dealers in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida online using electronic reporting. Installation and maintenance, as well as hosting of trip ticket data will be provided for those dealers. Potentially over 100 dealers in those four states will be online by the end of the year.

Donaldson reported that an economic add-on to the Charter Boat Telephone Survey is planned to begin in May 2002. Outreach meetings have been held with members of the charter boat industry and as a result of those meetings it appears that the issues of confidentiality and household income caused the most concern. Because of this response the question on household income has been removed from the questionnaire. Donaldson then distributed copies of the weekly economic add-on questions and the annual questions to Committee members. Committee members will contact Donaldson with comments and suggestions on the social/economic add-on to the Charter Boat Telephone Survey.

Donaldson provided Committee members with a list of the various recreational marine fishing licenses and how they meet the criteria for using licenses as a sampling frame. The purpose of using these licenses as a sampling frame is that it narrows the population being contacted and improves the precision of effort estimates. Donaldson reported that he met with Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) staff to discuss using recreational licenses as a sampling frame and it was determined that all state license applications needed to collect the same information. At this time Louisiana and Florida do not collect telephone numbers, and in Florida residents are not required to have a license when fishing from shore. Donaldson reported that fishing license information is currently being updated and will be on the agenda for the next FIN meeting.

National Marine Fisheries Service - Office of Sustainable Fisheries

J. Dunnigan of NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries addressed the Committee and explained that their office is responsible for regulatory planning for highly migratory species in the Atlantic and

Gulf of Mexico. This was a political decision that was made when the United States extended its jurisdiction to highly migratory species and fishery management planning responsibility was given to the NMFS.

Dunnigan explained that the highly migratory species are divided into categories such as billfish, swordfish, bluefin tuna, sharks, and big eye, albacore, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna. In managing these species NMFS has found that the available data sources are insufficient. At a recent meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) Dunnigan learned that recreational data for yellowfin tuna is a concern because in the future it is possible that quotas will be set based on past landings and U. S. fishermen will be restricted to quotas based on faulty data.

Dunnigan reported that NMFS presently has a survey for large pelagics (LPS), however beginning in 2003 he would like to have a better method of collecting data on catches and landings of these species. Dunnigan also stressed the importance of integrating all data programs. Dunnigan noted that there are resources available to collect this data and asked whether the states would be interested in assisting. The Committee discussed the current data on these species in the Gulf of Mexico, particularly yellowfin tuna, and agreed the data was faulty. It was agreed that this issue would be considered by members of the Committee and also will be discussed at the upcoming FIN meeting.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester reported that the Louisiana/Mississippi Habitat Protection Advisory Panel (AP) of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) met in November and the Texas AP met in December to review the draft freshwater inflow policy. This policy was completed by the GSMFC Habitat Subcommittee in October. Several revisions were made to the freshwater inflow policy and it was adopted by the GMFMC at their December meeting.

Rester reported that in January he attended a Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) sponsored fishery management meeting. The goal of the meeting was to initiate a process that will eventually lead to implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. A committee is drafting technical guidance to aid in this process. An ecosystem based management symposium will be held in August at the American Fisheries Society meeting to gather additional input. Rester reported that a local Biloxi seafood restaurant is currently using the habitat poster placemats. For restaurants that do not use placemats, copies of the poster as a coloring sheet are being distributed.

Rester noted that fishing impacts on habitat is still a concern and he will be attending a meeting sponsored by the Marine Conservation Biology Institute. A report is being prepared on bycatch and habitat damage associated with different fishing gears. This report will analyze impacts of commercial fishing gears used in United States. Rester also noted that the Ocean Studies Board of the National Research Council has finished a report of the effects of bottom trawling on sea floor habitats. It should be available shortly on the National Academy Press web site - www.nep.edu.

Rester reported that the GMFMC had contracted with MRAG Americas to complete the Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement. The first draft should be available at the end of this

year. Rester also reported that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be donating \$12,000 in grant money to go toward the reprinting of the habitat poster sometime this year.

Rester reported that he participated in the Texas derelict crab trap removal with representatives from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel

S. VanderKooy reported that the Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel (CRFAP) now has two new representatives, Degraaf Adams, a member of the recreational sector from Texas and Grey Cane of Alabama also on the recreational panel.

VanderKooy reported that D. Donaldson, the GSMFC Data Program Manager, updated the group on biological sampling in the Gulf, highlighting the species being targeted, and the number of samples taken. Donaldson also reported to the Panel on the FIN data management system and the current status of data availability. R. Lukens addressed the Advisory Panel on the Artificial Reef Materials Resolution. Public hearings on this issue were held and Lukens discussed this with members of the Panel. The Advisory Panel agreed that since this matter had been discussed in the past there was no need for any action to be taken by the Panel at this time. VanderKooy also reported that Lukens presented information on methylmercury and invasive species.

VanderKooy reported to the CRFAP on interjurisdictional fisheries program activities, highlighting status of the FMPs, development of the gulf menhaden webpage, and the otolith manual. VanderKooy also gave a report to the Advisory Panel on the Texas crab trap closure and derelict crab trap recovery and disposal.

VanderKooy reported that Grey Cane was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Recreational Panel and noted that the Florida seat on the Recreational Panel is vacant but should be filled by the October meeting.

Other Business

Fishing on National Wildlife Refuges

C. Brown of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) spoke to the Committee on fishing in National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). Brown stated that Pelican Island was the first NWR and Breton NWR on the Gulf coast was the second. Brown noted that both of these refuges were started to preserve birds, but now are very important to fisheries since they have essential fish habitat for red drum and spotted seatrout.

Brown stated that 70% of recreational saltwater fishing at National Wildlife Refuges takes place in the southeast region of the United States with a considerable amount of that percentage taking place in the Gulf states. Brown reported that the data for his report comes from the Refuge Management Information System.

The Committee discussed the information presented by Brown. R. Lukens noted that since the FIN program samples saltwater fishermen it would be beneficial to do an analysis of the sampling sites on National Wildlife Refuges.

Methylmercury

R. Lukens noted that the information on methylmercury in fish is a followup to a directive given to the staff by the Commissioners in October. This has been an issue for consideration for many years and Commissioner Smith of Alabama requested that the Commission look into the matter of methylmercury in fish in the Gulf region. As a result of this request, the Commission adopted a resolution to establish a steering committee to provide recommendations on the need for a Gulfwide sampling program to collect tissue for mercury analysis and the need for a collaborative effort to make state and federal advisory levels and public health advisory levels more compatible.

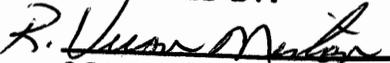
Lukens reported that the writing team was comprised of members from the NMFS National Seafood Inspection Laboratory, Nichols State University, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, Mississippi Sea Grant Advisory Service, and Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals.

Lukens distributed a written report which summarizes existing information on methylmercury. The purpose of the report was to form a framework to support a series of recommendations that the steering committee is making to the Commissioners. Lukens outlined the recommendations developed by the steering committee. These recommendations were discussed by the Committee, as well as sources for funding. L. Simpson noted that this information will be presented to the Commissioners later in the day.

Federal/State Fisheries Meeting

C. Perret noted that the NMFS is planning a meeting of federal and state fisheries directors in March 2003 on the west coast. Perret expressed a desire for the five state directors from the Gulf of Mexico to attempt to attend this meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.



COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES
Wednesday, March 20, 2002
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Vernon Minton called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m and invited the Commissioners and audience to introduce themselves. The Chairman requested that all cell phones be silenced. He took the opportunity to thank the State of Mississippi for providing gifts for registered participants such as calendars, pencils, recipe cards, etc. V. Minton distributed calendars and coloring books from the State of Alabama to the Commissioners for review. He pointed out that this type of outreach program in the various States was beneficial to the public in general and in particular to children. L. Simpson noted that a quorum was present and reviewed pertinent rules and regulations regarding meeting procedures.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

Commissioners

Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Riley Boykin Smith*)
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Bon Secour, AL
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Andrew Sansom*)
Walter J. Blessey, IV, GSMFC, Biloxi, MS
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for Glen H. Carpenter*)
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for James H. Jenkins*)
Frederic L. Miller, GSMFC, Shreveport, LA
Virginia Vail, FL FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Allan L. Egbert*)
Roy Crabtree, FL FWC, Tallahassee, FL
William Ward, GSMFC, Tampa, FL

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Executive Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Jack Dunnigan, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Chris Dorsett, GRN, New Orleans, LA
Fred Kopfler, USEPA/GMP, Stennis Space Center, MS

Jim Giattina, USEPA/GMP, Stennis Space Center, MS
Tom Herrington, USFDA/GMP, Stennis Space Center, MS
Ben Raines, *Mobile Register*, Mobile, AL
Bobbi Walker, Orange Beach Fishing Assn., Orange Beach, AL
Bob Zales II, Panama City Charter Boat Assn., Panama City, FL
David Walter, Reefmaker, Orange Beach, AL
Greg Boland, Minerals Management Service, New Orleans, LA
Dan Dumont, GMFMC, Mobile, AL
Richard Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
E. Spencer Garrett, National Seafood Inspection Lab, Pascagoula, MS
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Adoption of Agenda

V. Minton called for approval of the agenda as presented. L. Simpson requested the addition of a discussion regarding the habitat placemat during the TCC report. **C. Perret moved to approve the agenda as modified. M. Ray seconded. The agenda was approved without objections.**

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held October 31 and November 1, 2001, were reviewed. L. Simpson reviewed minor editorial changes that had been previously submitted in writing. These changes were for the NMFS Report and the Florida State Director's report. **The minutes were approved without objection.**

GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) - J. Mayne, Chairman of the LEC reported that the LEC met the morning of Wednesday, March 20, 2002. John T. Jenkins has replaced Major Jerry Wallace on the Committee. He reported that the 2001 Joint Enforcement Agreements are 50% complete. The Gulf States were the first agreements processed by NMFS and will be the first completed. These agreements provide federal dollars to increase enforcement programs in the various States.

J. Mayne stated that law enforcement entities are still dealing with changes that were the result of the 9/11 attacks. The LEC is currently addressing concerns from the oil and gas industry and the USCG regarding fishing activities near oil and gas platforms. It is important to address these concerns and put the oil and gas industry at ease regarding the safety of their people, without impacting the fishing industry, both commercial and recreational.

The committee continues to work on an Enforceability Document and are currently waiting on some survey results from NMFS. As the document is produced, the LEC will keep the Commissioners informed. J. Mayne reported that the LEC's Strategic Plan is on schedule with all goals, objectives, and tasks being accomplished.

W. Ward asked J. Mayne to give a breakdown of how much each State received under the Joint Enforcement agreements. He stated that Louisiana received \$2 million, Texas and Florida received

a little more than \$1 million, and Alabama and Mississippi received approximately \$500,000. These funds are spent in accordance with the individual operational plans of each State.

The LEC report was approved without objection.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report - C. Perret reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, March 19, 2002. The Committee received status reports from the various states, NMFS and FWS.

R. Hendon, from the USM/CMS Gulf Coast Research Laboratory updated the TCC on their research on pelagic *sargassum* as essential fish habitat in the Northern Gulf of Mexico. This is only the second study done and sampling being conducted indicates that *sargassum* is an extremely important habitat for pelagic larvae.

W. Ward asked where the sampling was being conducted. C. Perret stated that the majority of the sampling was being done from 100 to 200 miles southwest of the Mississippi Coast, but not too much further than the mouth of the Mississippi River. This is the second year of this project. W. Ward asked how many species were identified in the sampling. C. Perret reported that 55 families and 90 different species were identified.

K. Cuevas, MDMR reported to the TCC on utilizing side scan sonar as a management tool. The State of Mississippi is currently utilizing side scan sonar for bottom surveys, cultch plantings, artificial reef sitings, and removal of derelict vessels. A derelict vessel is any vessel that is located in or near a navigational channel which is a potential hazard. The vessel is removed and then the side scan is used to make sure that the bottom is clear of debris.

The TCC received reports from the Crab Subcommittee, SEAMAP Subcommittee, Data Management Subcommittee, Artificial Reef Subcommittee, and the Habitat Subcommittee. The Habitat Subcommittee reported that McElroy's Seafood Restaurant in Biloxi, MS is using the recently produced habitat poster as a placemat. C. Perret requested that J. Rester show the Commissioners the placemat. C. Perret pointed out that each of the Gulf State's and the Commission's logo is on the placemat. Although no one had a real problem with the placemat they wanted to be sure that the use of the State's logo was not improper. **J. Roussel moved to request the staff write a letter to the appropriate state official in each state requesting permission to use that state's logo on the placemat. V. Minton seconded. The motion passed without objection.**

C. Perret reported that the Crab Subcommittee had expressed concern about the lack of data supporting the reclassification of the blue crab fishery from a category 3 to a category 2 fishery. The Commissioners discussed this issue and agreed that there was not enough information regarding interactions between marine mammals and crab traps. **C. Perret moved that staff write a letter to the appropriate NMFS personnel regarding the Commission's concern. F. Miller seconded.** F. Miller asked how many incidents would be enough to make NMFS reclassify a fishery. S. VanderKooy was unsure how many documented interactions were necessary, but it indicated that it did not take much to change this category since it would take a very low threshold to impact dolphin numbers. He also stated that the Crab Subcommittee is currently working with the Derelict Trap Task Force to reduce interactions and that they are inviting NMFS representatives to their next

meeting to show them how these efforts are working. V. Minton requested that the Subcommittee's efforts be included in the letter to NMFS. **The motion passed without objection.**

V. Minton stated that S. VanderKooy and J. Rester had developed a brief presentation on the Texas Abandon Crab Trap Removal Program. Texas and Mississippi are currently undertaking derelict crab trap removal. With the Commissioner's approval, S. VanderKooy made the power point presentation. There was a great deal of discussion and interest in this ongoing program. Staff will continue to update the Commissioners on this issue.

The TCC report was approved without objection.

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report - L. Simpson stated that the S-FFMC met the morning of Wednesday, March 20, 2002. The Committee received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) and the Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel (CRFAP).

He reported V. Guillory has provided projections for the menhaden industry for many years. This has proved to be a very valuable tool for the fishery in Louisiana, which is a major producer. He reported that good recruitment in 2001, resulting from low water temperatures and low salinities, were good indications for juvenile menhaden abundance. During January through August 2001, juvenile menhaden were well above normal. Based on this, V. Guillory forecasts that Louisiana landings for 2002 will be 431,000 to 487,000 metric tons. J. Smith provided the S-FFMC with the NMFS 2002 menhaden landings forecast and reviewed the 2001 fishing season. NMFS forecasts Gulf-wide landings of 493,000 metric tons. L. Simpson reported that logbook data revealed that menhaden caught in the Mississippi Sound during the year 2000 may have been reduced due to the presence of jellyfish. He briefed the Commissioners on NMFS/Beaufort Laboratory Gulf menhaden stock assessments. No action was required by this committee.

L. Simpson reported that there was no action required by the CRFAP. P. Barber, a member of the CRFAP, had contacted C. Nelson regarding the death of Brian Perkins. Mr. Perkins worked for the Sea Grant Advisory Extension Service at the Auburn Marine Center, Mobile, Alabama for over 17 years.

He was a Seafood Technologist and was a great asset to the commercial industry. **F. Miller requested that the Commission staff write a letter of condolence to his family recognizing his service to the industry.**

The S-FFMC report was approved without objection.

Methylmercury Report

R. Lukens reported that in October 2001, the Commission held a special session to discuss the implications of methylmercury in marine fish. As a result of that session, the Commission adopted a resolution to further address the methylmercury issue. Basically, it called for the Commission to establish a Steering Committee in coordination with the Gulf of Mexico Program comprised of people who have experience with methylmercury or mercury in the environment, public health issues, and fisheries people. Once established, that committee would provide recommendations on

the need to develop a Gulf-wide sampling program to collect fish tissue for mercury analysis, and to look at the need for a collaborative effort to make state and federal mercury action levels and public health advisories more compatible. R. Lukens recognized all Steering Committee members and their affiliations. He was very complimentary of their efforts. The Steering Committee established a small writing team to put together their report. All work was done via email and conference calls.

R. Lukens distributed a complete report that summarizes the available information both pro and con in regards to several issues. The purpose of this report was not to resolve any issues. It was intended to convey recommendations of need.

The Steering Committee developed the following recommendations:

- The GSMFC, in conjunction with appropriate state and federal agencies should encourage and facilitate the development of a Gulf-wide survey to collect fish tissue for mercury analysis. The survey should collect tissues from species commonly consumed by public and recreational anglers and samples should represent a range of sizes and ages.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with appropriate state and federal agencies should encourage and facilitate the establishment of sufficient capacity for timely analysis of mercury tissue samples collected by the Gulf-wide survey.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with appropriate state and federal agencies should encourage and facilitate convening appropriate state and federal agency representatives to consider establishing consistent seafood consumption advisories and establishing standard action levels for mercury in fish tissue.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with appropriate state and federal agencies should encourage and facilitate the development of an education and outreach strategy to educate the general public about the risks of consuming seafood contaminated with mercury.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with appropriate state and federal agencies should encourage and facilitate the development of a fish consumption survey of recreational anglers.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with appropriate state and federal agencies should encourage and facilitate the establishment of a common, centralized database on mercury in marine fish.
- The GSMFC should encourage similar initiatives for the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

F. Miller asked R. Lukens if the Steering Committee had identified the cost involved in achieving these recommendations, and if so, where would the funds come from. R. Lukens stated that those issues had not been addressed. The Committee did not want to assume what the Commission wanted them to pursue, and felt that would be a next level activity.

J. Roussel stated that three things should be done before the Commission could make a decision. First, he would like to find out if there are any current funds available, within the agencies involved,

the individual States, and within the Federal government. He would like to see the recommendations prioritized. And last, he would like to see the actual cost involved identified, to accomplish each recommendation.

R. Lukens responded that before cost could be identified, a group would convene to assess the capability currently available. The group would have to consist of persons with expertise in the issues being addressed. They would have to look at the resources available, and in this way be able to provide the information necessary for the Commission to make a decision. This would involve the assembling of separate and specialized groups for each recommendation approved by the Commission.

C. Perret requested that when groups are assembled to make sure Minerals Management Service (MMS) is included in the next round of meetings. C. Brown requested that FWS also be included in the next round of meetings.

W. Ward asked if the Commission knew if any funds were available. L. Simpson stated that there was sufficient interest from some of the Gulf's elected officials, especially Senator Sessions and Senator Shelby, to begin trying to identify resources to resolve these issues. The Commission does not currently have funds available to accomplish these recommendations, it is not within the scope of the Commission's responsibility.

J. Dunnigan, NMFS congratulated the Commission for taking the lead on this very important issue. Even in the absence of funding, this report and recommendations provide the information and basis necessary to begin seeking funds either from Congress or other agencies. This is a big issue, not just for the Gulf. He encouraged the Commission to continue their efforts and to stay out in front of these issues in a very aggressive and timely fashion. He reported that NMFS has begun working on these issues, specifically the work of analyzing for mercury in fish tissues collected. They do have an estimate of the cost involved. They are prepared to devote resources to getting this analytical work accomplished. They are seeking additional funds, perhaps through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to help support this program.

F. Miller and M. Ray discussed the Commission's role in this effort and agree that the Commission should be a facilitator and perhaps a clearing house for information and funding if necessary. The Staff should remain involved at this level. C. Nelson thinks the Commission should remain involved and committed without causing a financial burden to the Commission. He suggested the Commission continue in a coordination and facilitation of getting scientific results.

S. Garrett, National Seafood Inspection Laboratory, NMFS, reviewed and brief the Commissioners on current, past and ongoing work being done at the laboratory. He stated that this can be a confusing issue, since there are professional and scientific differences. He described the activities conducted in the laboratory and stated that they do analyze for mercury, the difference is that they are a forensic regulatory lab. They analyze according to the official methods for methylmercury, which is a very complicated analysis. When only analyzing for total mercury, they are able to process numerous samples much faster. While there are differences of opinion, the point is, there is a perception, that may be true or untrue, that there is a problem. He stated that decisions and public policy should not be based on a perception or a few dozen samples taken by news media. He

reported that the laboratory is working with the EPA, as well as MMS. He would like to see the Commission continue to be involved and to actively pursue resolutions to the recommendations in their reports. J. Dunnigan stated that this may be a public health issue, and they (NMFS) intend on addressing this issue with good science.

W. Ward and C. Perret discussed specific problems with wording and areas that are unclear. They would like to have any future committee discussions include their concerns. L. Simpson suggested that their questions, or anyone else's questions, be submitted to the Commission staff so that they can address them.

F. Miller moved to table consideration of the report as presented, until such time as the Steering Committee, having added MMS and FWS to its membership, have an opportunity to investigate further the actual needs of the data to be collected, the cost of that and what the budgetary impact upon the Commission would be, and report at the next meeting. C. Perret seconded. F. Miller stated that this motion was not intended to not adopt this report, but to expand upon the report. He would like to see a more complete report submitted, so that persons more knowledgeable than the Commissioners could have the opportunity to review and advise them on future action. V. Minton also stated that this was not an attempt to slow the process down, merely get more information to address this very important issue. Any questions regarding this report should be submitted to R. Lukens so that he can take them to the Steering Committee for resolution. L. Simpson stated that the Commission staff will continue their efforts in addressing these issues, he does not see this action as slowing down Commission activity. **The motion passed without objection.**

Invasive Species Update

R. Lukens updated the Commissioners on his involvement in invasive species activities. He currently is a member of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel, the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF), and National Invasive Species Advisory Committee. The advisory committee advises the National Invasive Species Council. The council was established by an Executive Order from President Clinton, and reaffirmed by President Bush.

He reported that the Commission has developed some draft legislative language for inclusion in the reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act (NISA). It basically calls for the establishment of regional programs for controlling, management, and planning of invasive species activities. This would be administered and coordinated by the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions and the Great Lake Commission. He reviewed the status of these legislative efforts and advised the Commissioners of the next steps involved in this process, including securing funds.

He also reported that he had recently made a presentation at an International Invasive Species Conference. His paper dealt with issues in the Gulf region such as the Australian jellyfish invasion and shrimp viruses associated with the aquaculture industry and importation of frozen shrimp into the U.S.

R. Lukens gave a status report for the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel. During the last meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Management Committee (which is also the Regional Panel), there was a

discussion regarding the effectiveness of the Regional Panel as it currently exists under the Gulf of Mexico Program. That discussion led to the development of an Ad Hoc group to consider the issues of how the Regional Panel is structured and how it is administered. The Ad Hoc group met with the Invasive Species Focus Team in December 2001. As a result of these meetings, a recommendation emerged that stated that the Regional Panel should be a stand alone entity, not under the administrative structure of the Gulf of Mexico Program. In addition, it would be reformed, but maintain the core of the current membership which is appropriate to serve on the Regional Panel, and also draw from the Invasive Species Focus Team. There was concern regarding the level of administration of the Regional Panel and suggestions were to move administration from under the Gulf of Mexico Program to Commission for administrative lead of the Regional Panel. On January 7, 2002, the Commission's Executive Committee concurred with this proposal if adequate funding was made available. The Gulf of Mexico Management Committee is now considering these recommendations and proposals. It is anticipated that a decision will be made by April 15, 2002 and if approved, would go into effect January 1, 2003.

J. Giattina, EPA/GOMP stated that his office sent the recommendations to their Management Committee and indicated that he supported the recommendations. He was very proud of the work done by his organization over the last several years to bring national attention to this issue, but agreed with the Focus Team and the Ad Hoc Committee, there was no reason to have the Regional Panel work under the special advisory committee structures. He stated that he thought the proposal would be a more efficient way to have the Regional Panel operate. He anticipates that the GOMP will still be actively involved in the invasive species issues and in funding invasive species activities. If invited, he intends to serve on the Regional Panel. Her perceives a very close working relationship between the GOMP and Commission as they move forward on invasive species issues.

M. Ray asked, if successful in securing funds for this project, would the Commission need to hire additional personnel. R. Lukens stated that he did not foresee hiring additional staff. Funds would be used to cover travel involved in support of the Regional Panel.

USFWS Region 4 Office Report

C. Brown reported on behalf of USFWS Region 4. He reported that Dr. Steve Williams' nomination to be Director of the FWS was confirmed by the Senate on January 30. Judge Craig Manson has also been confirmed as the Interior Department's Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

In regards to the lawsuit involving critical habitat designation for the Gulf sturgeon, the FWS and NMFS, in further negotiation with the plaintiff, reached an agreement to propose a revised critical habitat determination by May 23, 2002, with a final decision by February 28, 2003. Comments on the proposal will be accepted after it is published in the federal register.

C. Brown updated the Commission on the FWS Fisheries strategic planning process. A major element of this process is a report by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council. The FWS requested recommendations regarding the future directions of this program and will incorporate the recommendations into a Positioning Paper. This paper should be complete by the end of May 2002.

Other topics discussed by C. Brown included a new neon lighting system that is being used to reduce impacts on hatchling sea turtles; on a draft Appalachian, Chattahoochee, and Flint Rivers water allocation formula; and, on the status of the FWS internet connection.

FY 2003 USFWS Budget

C. Brown referred to the DOI briefing book material and stated that this was a good overview of the many programs and projects included in the DOI budget. He referred to status reports that may be of interest to the Commissioners, specifically the National Wildlife Refuge System, which received a satisfactory assessment and the National Fish Hatchery System, which received an inadequate rating. He stated that it was difficult for the FWS to change its allocation process and that ultimately leads to the Southeast Region not getting an equitable share of the resources available.

C. Brown distributed charts to the Commissioners outlining funding and trends of the FWS. FY2003 budget request is \$1,284,901 million, a \$7 million dollar increase over FY2002. He discussed the various increases and decreases in activities. The Fisheries budget request for FY2003 is down by \$9.2 million, and the Refuge System and Migratory Birds budget is up by \$8.6 million. He pointed out that although funding resources are declining in the Fisheries program, they are increasing in the Refuge System which includes fisheries habitat. Law Enforcement is also showing a trend for increases and these activities support a lot of interjurisdictional fisheries efforts in the States.

He discussed the funding history of the Southeast Region. The Southeast Region continues to get a low percentage of the funding resources, compared to the national level. The Fishery Resource and Coordination Offices receive far less funding resources than the Hatchery Programs.

He provided the Commissioners with a package that gave an Overview of the FY2003 Budget Request. This package contained more detailed information as to what is going on in the FWS overall budget request.

He discussed the public use of the National Wildlife Refuges for sport fishing activities during FY2001. He felt that this information may be of interest to the Commissioners. He pointed out that many of these refuges, although originally intended to protect birds, also have essential fish habitat for red drum and spotted seatrout. He stated that if habitat was our greatest concern for a sustainable fisheries, then the importance of our National Wildlife Refuges should not be taken for granted. He pointed out that these wildlife refuges have 38.8 million visitors annually, and 16 percent of them fish on a national basis. Of that 16 percent, 4.7 million fish freshwater and 1.6 million fish saltwater. When looking at these figures on a regional level, there are 11 million visitors to the refuges and 25 percent of those visitors go there to fish. He discussed this activity on a state-by-state basis.

The meeting recessed at 5:10 pm.

R. Vernon Minton
 COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
 MINUTES
 Thursday, March 21, 2002
 Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman V. Minton reconvened the meeting at 8:33 a.m.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

Commissioners

Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Riley Boykin Smith*)
 Chris Nelson, GSMFC, Bon Secour, AL
 Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Andrew Sansom*)
 Billy Hewes, Mississippi Legislature, Gulfport, MS
 Walter J. Blessey, IV, GSMFC, Biloxi, MS
 Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for Glen H. Carpenter*)
 John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for James H. Jenkins*)
 Frederic L. Miller, GSMFC, Shreveport, LA
 Virginia Vail, FL FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Allan L. Egbert*)
 Roy Crabtree, FL FWC, Tallahassee, FL
 William Ward, GSMFC, Tampa, FL

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
 Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
 Ginny Herring, Executive Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
 Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
 Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
 Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
 Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
 Jason Keenum, Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

John H. Dunnigan, NOAA/NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
 Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
 Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
 Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
 Tom Herrington, USFDA/GMP, Stennis Space Center, MS
 Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
 Chris Dorsett, GRN, New Orleans, LA
 LaDon Swann, MS-AL Sea Grant Consortium, Ocean Springs, MS
 Bobbi Walker, Orange Beach Fishing Assn., Orange Beach, AL
 Bob Zales II, Panama City Charter Boat Assn., Panama City, FL
 David Walter, Reefmaker, Orange Beach, AL

NMFS Headquarters and Southeast Regional Office Reports (SERO)

J. Dunnigan, Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NOAA/NMFS reported that he has been on the job for 6 weeks now and was excited to be back with the federal government and looks forward to working with Bill Hogarth. He stated that Dr. Hogarth's leadership goals were impressive and he feels that under his (Dr. Hogarth's) guidance the agency will be making changes for more open and better involvement with its State partners.

He reported on major issues of interest to the States that are being addressed in the National office. He briefed the Commissioners on Regulatory Streamlining. This project is attempting to solve issues regarding the amount of time and sometimes the confusion that surrounds the promulgation of rules that come out of the Regional Councils. They are working on a decision review process that is not only timely but self explanatory.

The agency is working on the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevenson Act. J. Dunnigan indicated that most people in Washington do not think the Act will be reauthorized in 2002. NOAA/NMFS has no radical positions in regards to the Act, they will suggest several fix-the-process amendments.

Another project that Dr. Hogarth has initiated is a five-year review of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. A scientific review is being conducted this week to look at the over 40 FMPs under the Magnuson-Stevenson Act and compare them to the National Standards Guidelines to see if the FMPs are meeting these guidelines. If they are not, then they will decide what to do. This will take several months to complete this five-year review.

J. Dunnigan reported that there will be a stronger emphasis on State-Federal cooperation in the NMFS, than has existed in the past. This is one of Dr. Hogarth's basic leadership approaches. He recognizes that the States are in a better position to help NMFS do its job. As a result of the agency's reorganization, the State-Federal people are now back in the Sustainable Fisheries Office, which is where they can be most effective.

Aquaculture is a growing and major issue and he reported that the agency is committed to increasing the role of aquaculture within the programs of the NMFS. Dr. Hogarth has appointed an Interim National Coordinator for Aquaculture who will begin coordinating with the States on these important issues.

J. Dunnigan stated that bycatch is likely to become the issue of the decade. Two weeks ago the Secretary of Commerce received a petition from several environmental groups requesting that the agency take very strong steps, independent of the normal FMP process, to address and reduce bycatch across the board. Along with the petition, they produced a major report. He stated that the agency has to stay on top of this issue because NMFS is getting involved in many lawsuits on this issue.

In closing, J. Dunnigan reported that Richard H. Schaeffer would be retiring on April 3, 2002. He looks forward to working cooperatively with the States and the Commission. He expressed thanks for the support of the Commission, particularly from L. Simpson during the eleven years he served

as Executive Director for the Atlantic Commission. He stated that L. Simpson was a good friend and a wise colleague.

L. Simpson stated that he felt confident that J. Dunnigan was ready for the challenges ahead and advised him to focus on doing a few things well rather than a lot of things mediocre. V. Minton thanked J. Dunnigan for meeting with the Commissioners and he encouraged him to meet with the Gulf Council as well.

T. McIlwain reported on behalf of NMFS/SERO. In follow-up to some of what Mr. Dunnigan reported on, he stated the Regional Office is publishing a status report of all the Council activities every other week. It has been beneficial in following the Council documents that are being processed. Current activity in the region include efforts on developing SFA definitions of fishing and biological descriptions; addressing a Secretarial Amendment on the Council's grouper plan; and, the bycatch issue under Shrimp Amendment 11.

He reported that the NOAA had a new leader, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr. He has been confirmed and is setting the stage to have the agency move forward. He updated the Commissioners of the shrimp virus workshop held in November 2001. He is currently reviewing the draft proceedings of that workshop and they should be published shortly. He reported that he discussed the status of the Commission's cooperative agreements with L. Simpson and was happy to report that all agreements have been signed and funds are in place. He encouraged the Commissioners to attend Richard Schaefer's retirement party or to write letters to commemorate his retirement.

M. Bailey reported that on February 22, 2002 the NMFS published the notice of availability and request for comments on the National Artificial Reef Plan. Comments should be returned by May 23, 2002. He read from the acknowledgment section of the Plan. This section recognized efforts by the many agencies and persons involved in compiling this plan. The Commission and the staff (Ron Lukens and Nancy Marcellus) were recognized and sincere gratitude was expressed by NMFS.

USFWS Fisheries Strategic Plan

R. Lukens discussed the background information regarding the purpose and development of the FWS Fisheries Strategic Plan. This included discussion of the publication entitled "Saving a System in Peril." A lack of clarity in fisheries responsibilities, a shortage of funds and different expectations from various stakeholders have left the FWS's Fisheries Program in need of redefining its conservation needs in a manner that can be supported by the Office of Management and Budget, U. S. Congress and relevant constituents.

The FWS went to the Sport Fishing Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) and asked that they put together a large group of constituents to help provide recommendations to the FWS in regards to what should be in a strategic plan for the FWS Fisheries Program and to identify the problems and to recommend solutions. R. Lukens reported that he had been part of this group as well as Commissioner F. Miller, and he referred the Commissioners to a draft report to the SFBPC.

He briefed the Commissioners on the issues and recommendations by the group. The first issue that he discussed was the loss and degradation of fisheries and related habitat as a key factor in the decline in U. S. fisheries. The report recommended that the FWS and its Fisheries Program serve as a catalyst among states and other stakeholders to lead in the development of a National Aquatic Habitat Plan. A major issue addressed in the draft report was the feeling that the FWS had moved away from the concept of public use of our resources and more towards protecting the resources and keeping the public away from the resources. In recent years, a focus on refuges, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and imperiled species has reduced the FWS recognition of the importance of public use of natural resources and its role in maintaining the societal value of those resources. One recommendation was implementation of Recommendations #12 and #13 of "Saving a System in Peril". These recommendations state that FWS should recover 100% of costs to supply hatchery fish for recreational fishing programs; and, encourages cooperative arrangements and exchanges between FWS and its partners. The group also recommended that FWS increase opportunities for fishing on National Wildlife Refuges. He continued by identifying numerous issues and recommendations.

In conclusion, partnerships among the FWS, States, tribes, U. S. Congress, and the public will be key to restoring the prominence of the FWS Fisheries Program. Partners are eager to work with the FWS as it develops, communicates, implements and evaluates its new strategic plan.

C. Perret discussed the issue of FWS's habitat protection and restoration mission and stated that he agreed with the recommendation that aquatic resource conservation needs should have a higher priority in the FWS Lands Acquisition Priority System. He felt that it should have been recognized many years ago. C. Brown stated that although funding for Lands Acquisition in FY2003 was reduced it was still an ongoing program. Funds were increased for some land acquisitions for National Wildlife refuges. **C. Perret moved to have the Commission send a letter to the Secretary of Interior, and others as appropriate, supporting the recommendations in the "Draft Report of the Fisheries Program Strategic Plan Steering Committee to the SFBPC," and further stating that we are extremely supportive of recommendation 12, regarding the need to have a higher priority in the FWS Lands Acquisition Priority System for aquatic resource conservation needs. F. Miller seconded. The motion passed without opposition.**

FY 2003 NMFS Budget

L. Simpson reviewed the Federal budget in regards to fisheries. He pointed out that in FY2000, funding was extremely poor. FY2001 and 2002 showed some positive improvement, especially in the Southeast Region. He reported that he was pleased with the President's FY2003 budget because it demonstrates acceptance by the external Federal partners and support of some of the cooperative efforts with regards to data programs, red snapper, interjurisdictional fisheries, and law enforcement. He reported that he and others had the opportunity in February 2002 to present information to the Congressional delegates regarding funding needs in the region. He has since heard from senior appropriators in the Senate concerned about the Commission's needs, including data, SEAMAP, law enforcement and methylmercury. He feels the Commission's concerns are being addressed but has not heard of official House action to date. He will continue to keep the Commissioners updated.

Status of Artificial Reef Position Statement & Resolution

R. Lukens reviewed background information on this issue. In October 2000, the Commissioners directed the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee to review the above referenced documents to determine if they were relevant and if they needed revisions. This task was completed in February 2001 and submitted to the TCC for approval in March 2001 with minor revisions. The TCC made additional revisions to the document and elected to recommend adoption by the full Commission. The Commissioners postponed action at the March 2001 meeting until after an extended public comment period designed to gather broader input from the general public. After a 6 month public comment period, the TCC recommendations were again presented to the Commissioners on November 1, 2001, along with a summary of public comments received. The Commissioners again elected to postpone final action on the recommendations, asking staff to conduct public hearings on the issues. Hearings were scheduled and completed as follows: Biloxi, MS - 12/10/01; Houma, LA - 12/12/01; Tampa, FL - 1/16/02; Destin, FL - 1/17/02; and, Orange Beach, AL - 2/13/02.

The motion from the TCC to adopt the revised documents are still before the Commissioners. R. Lukens briefed the Commissioners on a summary of the public hearings and referred to the proposed revisions to the **Artificial Reef Position Statement and Resolution**. There was discussion regarding his presentation. F. Miller was in favor of taking action on the documents. C. Perret stated that he had been informed that B. Shipp may have information within the next 6 months that could possibly change the Commissioners' intention as far as action on these documents were concerned.

C. Perret made a substitute motion to defer action on the TCC recommendation for 6 months, allowing time to get new scientific information. V. Minton seconded.

F. Miller pointed out that States have regulatory control of artificial reef material. The Commission does not dictate what a State may or may not use in their artificial reef programs. The documents being discussed today, do not attempt to change this situation. The Commission merely makes recommendations.

C. Nelson supports a professional design and placement approach to artificial reefs, and does not support the use of materials of opportunity. C. Nelson and F. Miller stated that if a six month delay

was approved, and that no new information comes forward, that the position statement and resolution be revised to state that no tires would be used as artificial reef material.

F. Miller moved to amend C. Perret's substitute motion to state if no new information was available in 6 months, that the TCC recommendations to the documents be revised to state that tires should not be used as artificial reef material. The Commissioners voted by State: AL - no consensus; LA - no; MS - yes; FL - no consensus; TX - no. The motion failed.

C. Perret's substitute motion was voted on by each State with the understanding that no matter what, this motion was to be voted up or down at the next meeting of the Commissioners: AL - yes; LA - no; MS - yes; FL - no consensus; TX - no. The motion failed.

The Commissioners continued to discuss the TCC recommended revisions to both the position statement and the resolution. The discussion centered on the wording in the position statement regarding ballasted tires. C. Nelson suggested that in addition to the words "individually ballasted" we add "or properly." J. Roussel suggested replacing "or" with "and." W. Blessey and V. Minton suggested removing the word "individually" and replacing it with "properly."

W. Blessey made a substitute motion to the TCC recommendation to remove the word "individually" from the proposed revision. It would then read "...they should be ballasted so that if ...". F. Miller seconded. The Commissioners voted by State on the Position Statement only: AL - no; LA - yes; MS - yes; FL - yes; TX - no. The substitute motion passed.

The Commissioners approved the TCC revisions to the Resolution without objection.

Status of Commission's Cooperative Data Collection Programs

D. Donaldson briefly updated the Commissioners on the various components of the FIN program. On the recreational side, operations are running smoothly with all States exceeding quota. In May 2002 there will be an economic add-on. Staff continues holding outreach meetings with charterboat captains. Head boat sampling is being conducted in TX, LA and FL. The FIN Committee is currently looking at the most appropriate data collection method - telephone survey or logbook.

On the commercial side, trip tickets and menhaden sampling are running smoothly. He reported on a contract that is getting commercial dealers on-line with electronic reporting in LA, MS, AL and FL. They anticipate having 100 dealers on-line by the end of this year (2002).

Biological sampling began in January 2002, targeting both commercial and recreational activities. The target species are red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder, and amberjack. To date, 650 otoliths and about 240 lengths have been obtained.

SEAMAP is taking the lead on a coordinated effort for fishery-independent data.

D. Donaldson reported that the FIN Data Management System currently has approximately 13 million records in the system consisting of commercial and recreational catch. They have trip ticket data from all of the States except Texas. The data varies and includes menhaden data, recreational

data and SEAMAP data. The DMS is discussing opening the system to all users (both confidential and non confidential) in June 2002.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries (IJF) Program Update

S. VanderKooy updated the Commissioners on the IJF Program. The Crab FMP, which was approved October 2001, is due for delivery from the printers soon. The revision to the Striped Bass FMP is still a work in progress. Work continues on the Otolith Manual, and efforts to expand the scope of the manual are underway.

S. VanderKooy discussed the review process of the various IJF FMPs. He stated that he had provided the Commissioners with a copy of the Draft Menhaden FMP and an Acrobat file on CD. He explained that the CD format realized a significant financial savings (90% savings). He asked the Commissioners to let the staff know which format they preferred to receive for reviews of future IJF FMPs.

S. VanderKooy briefly reviewed the Gulf Menhaden Fishery Management Plan 2002 Revision. He covered major changes, results and annual landings to the 5th revision to this FMP. He reported that the gulf menhaden fishery is healthy and stable.

C. Perret moved to approve the Gulf Menhaden Fishery Management Plan 2002 Revision. C. Nelson seconded. The FMP was approved without objection.

Federal Legislation

L. Simpson referred the Commissioners to H. R. 1989, an Act to reauthorize various fishing conservation management programs. This Act includes IJF, it is an authorization only and is intended to extend the life of the IJF Act. Also included in this Act is Title II, Anadromous Fish Conservation Act, also extending the Act. H. R. 1989 has cleared the House and is awaiting action in the Senate.

L. Simpson reported that there may be some action on the Magnuson-Stevenson Act this year in regards to allowing IFQs. He reported that he was questioned by Congressman Gilchrist's office regarding allowing IFQs and provided information to his Subcommittee that deals with commerce and other fishery issues.

He reported that the Freedom to Fish Act has been introduced by Senators Peterson, Hutchinson and Breaux. This legislation will allow recreational access to Federal waters for fishing.

Habitat Program and Joint Council Program Update

J. Rester briefed the Commissioners on his activities over the last six months. He reported that he had the opportunity to be involved in the removal of derelict crab traps in Texas. He took the opportunity to thank the USFWS for providing funds to reprint the Habitat Poster. He reported that 20,000 posters have already been distributed.

Selection of the Charles H. Lyles Award Recipient

C. Nelson nominated Major Jerald K. Waller of the ADCNR, Marine Resource Enforcement Division. He stated that Major Waller had served as Chairman of the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee for approximately 20 years and has also been active in the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference. He has recently retired from the ADCNR and C. Nelson stated that he would be a worthy recipient of this prestigious award. **V. Minton seconded. There were no further nominations and Major Waller's nomination was approved by unanimous acclamation.**

Executive Committee Report

V. Minton reported that the Executive Committee met on Wednesday, March 20. The Committee made one recommendation. On behalf of the Executive Committee, **he recommended that the Commission approve a post retirement health plan.** This plan would be as follows:

- Employees of 10-24 years of service would be eligible for a post retirement health plan in the amount of ½ of the value of ½ the total hours of their sick leave upon leaving employment.
- Employees of 25 years of service or more would be provided by the Commission, health insurance coverage (for employee only) upon leaving employment.

The proposed post retirement health plan was approved without objections.

State Director's Reports

V. Minton requested that the State Directors submit their reports in writing. Mississippi gave a brief oral report, all other State Directors submitted their reports in writing and are included in these minutes.

Mississippi - C. Perret reported on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR). He reported that Senator Hewe's Bill to provide the MDMR and its Commission with the authority to close season on crabs to allow for the removal of derelict crab traps is making its way through the legislative session. To date, MDMR personnel have picked up 2,100 derelict traps.

The 2001 oyster season opened on October 1, with a 30 sack limit for both tongers and dredgers. To date, approximately 300,000 sacks have been harvested. The MDMR is planning a spring cultch plant utilizing money from the oyster severance that the fishermen pay per sack for harvesting the oysters. Approximately 6,000 yards of cultch will be planted.

MDMR Fisheries personnel have installed seven hydrologic monitoring platforms in the Mississippi Sound for the purpose of obtaining salinity, temperature and tidal range on a continuous basis.

Artificial reef construction continues with 3 steel-hull vessels and 15 barge loads of concrete rubble offloaded at permitted reef sites south of the Mississippi barrier islands. The MDMR and its Commission have implemented a flounder rule which sets a 15 fish recreational bag limit and a size

limit of 12 inches for both recreational and commercial fishermen and a 74,000 pound quota for commercial fishermen.

In conclusion, C. Perret reported that a dead manatee was found in back bay Biloxi. The cause of death could not be determined.

Florida - V. Vail submitted the following report on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

- Dr. Allan L. Egbert, Executive Director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, announced his retirement effective 30 April 2002. Commissioners initiated a search for his successor and anticipate reviewing applications in late March; interviews may be conducted in early April. [Note: Commissioners selected Mr. Ken Haddad, Director of the Commission's Florida Marine Research Institute, as their next Executive Director, effective April 30, 2002.]
- The federally funded FWC Fishery Disaster Relief Project is winding down; 976 fishermen met project eligibility criteria and received a claim application form; 429 claims totaling \$6,330,641, were filed; a total of \$4 million was paid; 22 of 36 fishermen who appealed the action taken on their claim application met the criteria for a hearing before a Board of Appeals comprised of three commercial lobster/stone crab fishermen; the Board found cause to recommend additional payments totaling \$126,315.99; and the Commission accepted the recommendations.
- Artificial Reef Program. The Commission recently adopted policies relating to the use of vessels as artificial reefs. These policies were developed in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Protection, which has permitting authority. The policies address Commission involvement in local government and non-profit organization requests for surplus military or merchant-type vessels from the U.S. Maritime Administration; Commission participation in Gulf and Atlantic States MFC efforts related to the possible future release of 358 surplus military vessels, the program's use of federally seized derelict vessels as artificial reefs, and support for developing consistent statewide criteria for preparation and placement of vessels as artificial reefs. The Commission is in the process of developing comprehensive state artificial reef policies; a reef advisory board will be established to assist in developing policy recommendations. The 2002 Legislature formally authorized the Commission to accept title, on behalf of the State, to vessels for use as artificial reefs and to establish, by rule, criteria implementing the transfer of vessel titles to the State. The Legislature also recognized state universities as eligible to receive state program grants for siting, development and evaluation of artificial reefs.
- The stone crab trap certificate program is on going; Commission issued tags will be required on stone crab traps for the first time in October 2002; approximately 1,370,556 trap tags have been ordered and will be available to the crabbers in June. Approximately 515 stone crabbers appealed their initial allocation of trap certificates; through March the Stone Crab Advisory and Appeals Board has heard 392 appeals and recommended 125,852 additional

trap certificates be allocated. The Board is scheduled to conclude hearing appeals in June. The highest number of stone crab trap certificates allocated to one individual was 13,993.

- Snook: the Commission approved a reduction in the bag limit for snook from two fish to one fish in state waters of the Gulf and all state waters south of the Dade/Monroe County line and extended the closed season in this area to include the month of May in order to reduce fishing mortality, which has been increasing as more anglers target snook in southwest Florida.
- Swordfish: the Commission approved a rule adopting the federal swordfish regulations [i.e., possession of a valid federal swordfish permit in order to sell swordfish in Florida and establishing a minimum size [47 inches lower jaw fork length or 33 pounds dressed weight or 29 inches dressed length] for swordfish harvested from state waters or possessed in Florida .
- Fisheries Management in Biscayne National Park: staff from the Commission and the Park have been discussing the possibility of working cooperatively to develop a plan for marine fisheries management in the park, the details of which would be defined in a Memorandum of Agreement.
- Spiny Lobster: Originally there was a 10% annual reduction in the number of tagged spiny lobster traps every fisher was authorized to use in this fishery. Last year the Commission decreased it to a 4% reduction in the total number of allowable traps, which could be achieved through a 25% reduction on trap tags at the time of sale. If a total of 4% was not achieved through passive reduction, the balance would be met by reducing everyone's tag account. During the last fishing year, passive reduction resulted in the loss of only one per cent of the traps; thus, the number of traps allocated to each fisher was reduced by 3%. For fishing year 2002/2003, 522,573 traps are authorized in the lobster fishery.

Alabama - V. Minton submitted the following report on behalf of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources/Marine Resources Division (ADCNR/MRD).

- Captain John Thomas "J.T." Jenkins has been promoted to Major and replaces Jerry Waller as Chief of the Marine Resources Division Enforcement Section.
- This year's roe mullet season has been marked by a reduction in overall fishing violations. The decrease in violations is attributable to the reduced demand for roe in Asia, which has significantly decreased the value of these fish.
- Biologists with the Division have begun participation in the otolith collection project. Cooperation from commercial and recreational fishermen has been very good. So far the most frequently encountered fish in the commercial fishery has been red snapper. In the recreational fishery, flounder, gag grouper, amberjack and sheepshead have been sampled. Sheepshead has been the most frequently sampled. Biologists have acquired and installed an excellent otolith imaging system to enhance their ability to determine the age of snapper from their otoliths.

- As a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks, conservation enforcement officers have begun training in counter-terrorism methods. Both CEO Captains attended Weapons of Mass Destruction and Counter-Terrorism classes sponsored by the Federal Region IV Response Team.
- The popular 2002 Alabama Marine Information Calendar was received and delivered to various discount stores, bait and seafood shops and local specialty stores as well as being available at all Marine Resources offices.
- The revised Alabama Marine Resources Activity Book was received. This activity book was designed to educate elementary school children throughout Mobile and Baldwin Counties about marine resources.
- On February 5, 2002, 249 Red Snapper fingerlings averaging 68g each, that were produced at CPMC in Gulf Shores, were delivered to Alma Bryant High School in Bayou La Batre. This is part of an ongoing cooperative project between the Alabama Marine Resources Division, Auburn and Alma Bryant High School. The snapper will be used in a feed/nutrition study for approximately six months and then will be returned to the Marine Resources Division for further studies.
- Biologists from MRD and Auburn University made two trips in January to collect red snapper for a brood feeding study. These fish will be fed special diets to determine if they can be conditioned to spawn naturally later in the spring.
- Work continues on the fishing pier and pond for an outreach program for school children to allow them to have a positive fishing experience at the Claude Petet Mariculture Center along with learning more about conservation.

Louisiana - J. Roussel, submitted the following report on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF):

- Shrimp landings for 2001 were the fourth highest since 1956. The past three years have been three of the top four years since 1956.
- Louisiana led the nation in oyster production with over 12.6 million pounds of meat in 2001.
- Oyster availability on the public grounds prior to the opening of the current season was the highest on record and landings in early 2002 appear to be on track to match 2001 totals.
- A new reporting system has been implemented to capture activities which take place on oyster leases. Lessees are required to report annually the amount of marketable and seed oysters taken, the amount of cultch planted and amount of seed oysters planted.
- Louisiana's Commission implemented a moratorium on new oyster lease acreage in response to the current status of a number of pending lawsuits.

- The Department, in cooperation with the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) and the oyster industry, has developed a tag for use by post harvest treatment processors who are approved by DHH, for use in identifying their product.
- The artificial reef program now includes 151 items deployed of which 98 are oil and gas platform components and 9 are shell/limestone low profile reefs. The most recent addition was a limestone reef which was created in cooperation with CCA which secured the funding for purchasing the materials. The department handled siting and permit issues. There are currently 7 additional potential donations of platform components under negotiation.
- The Committee on the Future of Coastal Louisiana, which was reported on at the last meeting, has delivered its recommendations to the Governor. The most basic recommendation was that a \$15 billion authorization be sought in the 2002-2004 Water Resources Development Act Reauthorization.
- The Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Structure was dedicated on March 26th and is now operational.
- The Department is working with the other state natural resource trustees and the federal natural resource trustees to develop regional plans to restore natural resources injured in oil spills. This will be the first program of this type in the nation.
- The Department has concentrated on encouraging the larger shrimp dealers to submit trip ticket information electronically and there are currently 47 dealers on the electronic reporting system. This has substantially reduced the need for data entry capability.

Texas - M. Ray submitted the following report on behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD):

Texas Shrimp Farm Update - There has been no viral disease found in Texas farm raised shrimp for the second year in a row. Production in 2001 was over 7.79 million pounds, a production record. In 2001, the inspection team examined 1,410 pond samples, which is a 27% increase over 2000 and reflects a growth of the Texas shrimp farming industry.

Artificial Reef Program - The Artificial Reef Program staff created 5 artificial reefs along the Texas coast since September 2001. The Program is working with El Paso Petroleum on the donation of 10 structures in the High Island General Permit Area to take place this summer. Also, the Program is drafting procedures with TXDOT on the potential donation of bridge structures. This program had a change of leadership in January. Jan Culbertson moved into a regional director's liaison position and Dale Shively was named interim artificial reef coordinator.

License Management Program - In February 2002, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded \$100,000 to help fund the department's voluntary commercial fishing license buyback program.

In Round 9 of the Shrimp License Management Program, 72 commercial bait shrimp and 70 bay shrimp licenses (for a total of 142 licenses) were bought back by TPWD at an average price of

\$6,255 per license, for a total of \$888,185. Round 9 was the second time monies generated from the \$3 surcharge on the recreational saltwater stamp, were used to retire commercial licenses. To date, TPWD has retired 696 commercial bay and bait shrimping licenses and has spent \$3,650,000.

The second round of crab buybacks ended in late 2001. TPWD retired 9 commercial crabbing licenses for an average of \$3,833/license for a total cost of \$34,500. To date TPWD has purchased 16 crabbing licenses for \$65,000.

The first round of finfish buybacks was completed in late 2001. Thirteen commercial finfish licenses were retired. TPWD paid an average of \$41.42 per license and spent \$53,850 on the program.

Oyster Lease Management Program - The oyster lease program went through some significant changes. The term of an oyster lease has been set at 15 years. At the end of the lease, the Department will make a determination whether the lease should be continued based on the need for depuration of polluted oysters and other considerations specified in the Oyster Fishery Management Plan. The current leaseholder will be offered a first right of refusal if the lease is renewed. All leases must be resurveyed by the leaseholders and the new survey information submitted to TPWD for approval before March 1, 2003. The annual lease fee per acre increased from \$3 per acre to \$6 per acre and a \$200 lease renewal fee was implemented that is due upon the renewal, sale or transfer of a lease. Failure to pay the outstanding amount plus late fees within 90 days will terminate the lease.

Commercial Outreach Program - The 4th edition of Coastal Fisheries newsletter, *Anchor Line*, was distributed to about 8,000 Texas commercial fishermen.

Enhancement - Over 32 million red drum and 3.8 million spotted seatrout fingerlings were stocked into Texas public waters during 2001.

Crab Trap Removal Program - TPWD staff organized volunteer cleanup efforts from 25 selected sites in every bay system along the Texas coast on February 23, 2002. Five-hundred-forty-three volunteers using 223 vessels picked up a total of 8,011 abandoned crab traps. Most traps were picked up in Galveston Bay where 3,163 traps were recovered. Nearly 60 organizations helped out the project with donations, including the Coastal Conservation Association who secured a \$14,000 grant from the NOAA Restoration Center and other groups that provided thousands of dollars to help pay cleanup expenses. Texas crabbers were involved with the legislation and development of the regulations from the onset and remain quite supportive of the program. Without question, the inaugural crab trap removal effort was a tremendous success.

Spotted Seatrout Management - TPWD is forming a spotted seatrout work group made up of diverse representation of coastal stakeholders in an effort to review and possibly fine-tune spotted seatrout management in Texas.

Red Tide - Red tide was detected in mid-December 2001 in Aransas Pass near Port Aransas and continues to persist in parts of Corpus Christi Bay and the upper Laguna Madre. No significant fish kills have occurred and the red tide is at such a low concentration in most areas that it is not noticeable. Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays remain closed to shellfish harvest until the Texas

Department of Health determines that it is safe.

Staffing Changes - In February, TPWD Commission confirmed Robert L. Cook as TPWD's new executive director. Cook started with TPWD in 1965 and has recently served as Chief Operating Officer and as Interim Executive Director since January 1.

Coastal Fisheries selected Lance Robinson as the new Regional Director for the Upper Coast. Robinson started with TPWD in 1991, first as a biologist at the Galveston Bay field station and since 1992 as the Ecosystem Leader for Galveston Bay.

Future Meetings

G. Herring reported that she has entered into contractual agreements for the following meetings:

October 14 - 17, 2002 - Hawk's Cay Resort, Duck Key, FL
March 17 - 20, 2003 - Marriott Grand Hotel, Point Clear AL

Publication List

L. Simpson stated the Publication List has been updated and is provided for informational purposes. Contact the office if you need copies of any publication.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.



GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

P.O. Box 726 Ocean Springs MS 39566-0726

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Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

POSITION STATEMENT ON THE USE OF TIRES AS ARTIFICIAL REEF MATERIAL

Historically, construction of artificial reefs in the marine and estuarine environment in the United States has been accomplished using materials of opportunity, ranging from refrigerators to scuttled ships. A material that has been used rather consistently over time is automobile tires. Use of tires as artificial reef material has been variously motivated by the need for low cost, readily available materials to waste disposal. Methods of using tires have varied, ranging from the use of single, unballasted tires to the construction of sophisticated units with tires embedded in concrete.

Since most artificial reef programs in the United States still rely upon the use of materials of opportunity for continued construction of artificial reefs, the issue of tire use recurs periodically. Some programs continue to be asked to use tires as materials for artificial reefs. Regardless of the underlying motivations for use of tires in artificial reef construction, the practice continues.

Recognizing that tires as artificial reef material in the Gulf of Mexico region are not generally accepted as an optimum material, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission establishes that if tires must be used as artificial reef material in the Gulf of Mexico region, including both state territorial and federal jurisdictions, they should be ballasted so that if a tire becomes separated from a modular unit, it will not be unstable in the environment. Specific standards for design and ballast may vary depending primarily on bottom sediments, bottom slope, and current velocities; however, artificial reef programs should adhere to the basic concept of using established engineering principles to determine appropriate design and ballast weight to assure stability under predictable storm and other events.

Vernon Minton, Chairman
March 21, 2002



Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

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RESOLUTION

ON THE USE OF SELECTED MATERIALS OF OPPORTUNITY

AS ARTIFICIAL REEF MATERIAL

WHEREAS the National Fishing Enhancement Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-623) established the need for and mandated the development of a National Artificial Reef Plan (National Plan), and

WHEREAS the National Marine Fisheries Service was required to draft the National Plan, and

WHEREAS the National Plan was completed and adopted in 1985 as NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS OF-6, and

WHEREAS the National Plan set forth criteria for application to the use of materials in development of artificial reefs, and

WHEREAS these criteria require that artificial reef materials be functional as long-term habitat for invertebrate and vertebrate living aquatic resources, compatible with the environment into which they are placed, durable enough to withstand the rigors of the natural environment and still retain their functional capability, stable enough to remain in place through natural storm events and man-made perturbations, and available for use by artificial reef programs, and

WHEREAS materials of opportunity, or man-made substances that are no longer useful for their primary purpose, have been used for decades in the United States as artificial reef material, and

WHEREAS materials of opportunity include, but are not limited to, concrete rubble, automobile and other vehicle bodies, vehicle tires, white goods (washing machines, clothes dryers, refrigerators, etc.), aircraft, railroad cars, steel-hulled vessels and barges, oil and gas structures, military battle hardware, among a host of others, and

WHEREAS many materials of opportunity meet the criteria set forth in the National Plan for artificial reef development, while others do not, and

WHEREAS the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission developed and published "Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials" (1997), and

WHEREAS that document provides a recitation of experiences with the use of selected materials of opportunity as artificial reef material, along with a listing of benefits, drawbacks, and recommendations regarding such use, and

WHEREAS some of the materials exhibit more drawbacks than benefits when used as artificial reef materials; therefore, they do not meet the criteria, set forth in the National Plan, for artificial reef development,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission recommends against the use of materials for artificial reef development that are likely to disassociate, have components that are unstable, and would leave those unstable components free to move about in the marine environment, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission recommends against the use of the following materials of opportunity for artificial reef development:

- passenger automobile bodies
- aircraft
- fiberglass boat hulls and molds
- white goods, such as washing machines, clothes dryers, refrigerators, and other appliances
- wooden vessels and other wooden materials

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be provided to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for application to consideration of permit requests for development or enhancement of artificial reefs in the Gulf of Mexico region.

Given this the 21st day of March in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Two.



Vernon Minton, Chairman



Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

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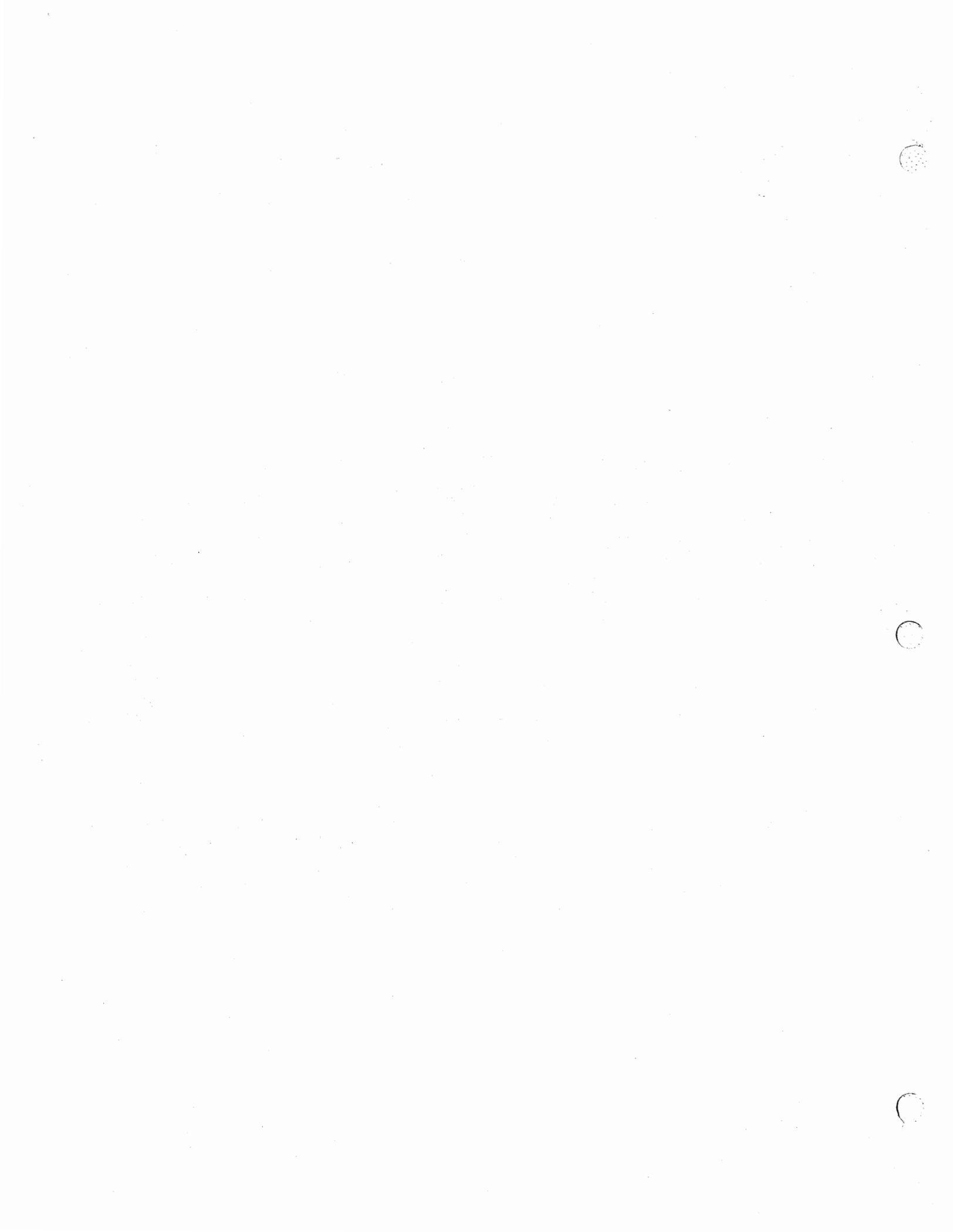
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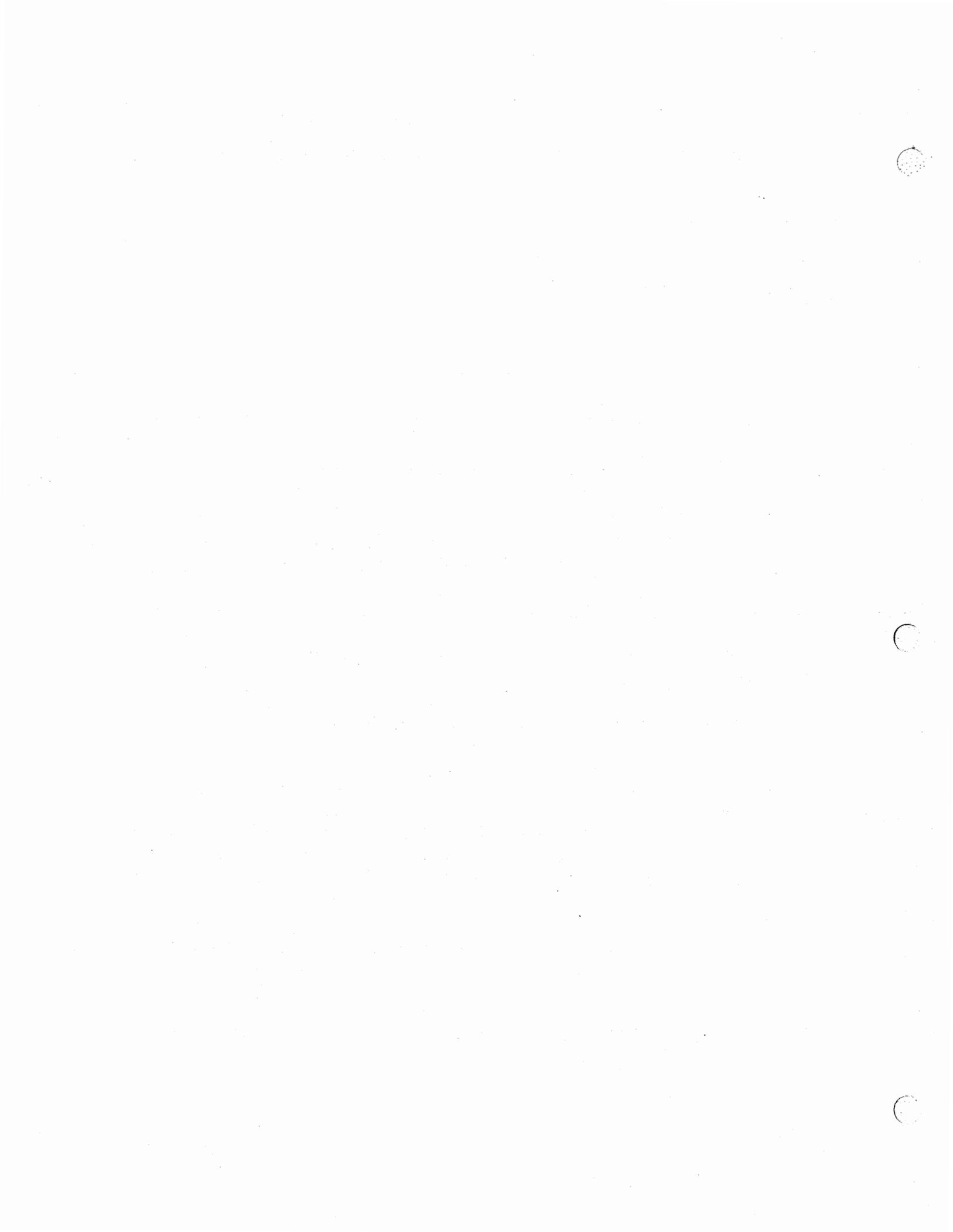
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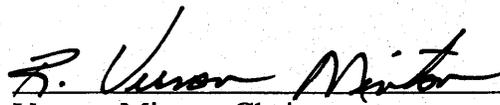
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be provided to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for application to consideration of permit requests for development or enhancement of artificial reefs in the Gulf of Mexico region.

Given this the 21st day of March in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Two.



Vernon Minton, Chairman





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Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

RESOLUTION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM ON THE OCCASION OF ITS CENTENNIAL

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission resolves as follows:

WHEREAS, the States along the Gulf of Mexico coasts, from Florida through Texas, work together in close partnership to promote and protect the valuable marine fishery resources that they share; and

WHEREAS, these States share public trust responsibilities for these resources not only with each other, but also with the Federal government; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuge System, under careful management by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, provide important habitat for our nation's fish and wildlife species, including the marine fishery resources of the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 40 national wildlife refuges located along the Gulf of Mexico that provide more than 800,000 acres of habitat for fish and wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, national wildlife refuges along the Gulf of Mexico provide essential habitat for coastal and marine fisheries that support a multi-billion dollar industry of commercial and recreational fisheries; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuges have made and are continuing to make substantial contributions to the management, restoration, recovery and sustainability of coastal fisheries resources; and

WHEREAS, our nation's second national wildlife refuge, Breton National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana, is located along the Gulf of Mexico, and eight of our nation's first 51 refuges established by President Theodore Roosevelt are located along the Gulf of Mexico; and

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WHEREAS, national wildlife refuges provide numerous opportunities for recreational anglers, with over one million visitor use-days for salt water fishing; and

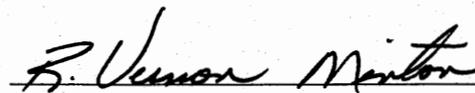
WHEREAS, the national wildlife refuge system will celebrate its centennial on March 14, 2003, marking 100 years since President Theodore Roosevelt established the first national wildlife refuge at Pelican Island, Florida.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission congratulates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System on 100 years of conservation success through carefully applied fishery and wildlife management principles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission commends the United States Congress on passage of the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000, and encourages increased funding and support of the national wildlife refuge system by the Congress to support management assistance for coastal fisheries, cooperative conservation programs for anadromous species, conservation and enhancement of valuable coastal fisheries habitat, and research to provide information for State and Federal agencies to secure the public trust in coastal fishery resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission recognizes the National Wildlife Refuge System's key role in the conservation and management of the valuable coastal fisheries resources of this Nation.

Given this the 16th day of October in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Two.



R. Vernon Minton, Chairman

**TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 26, 2002
Key West, Florida**

Chairman Rick Kasprzak called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. Introductions were made and the following members and guests were in attendance:

Members

Michael Bailey, DOC/NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Mike Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jan Culbertson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Les Dauterive, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Jon W. Dodrill, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
J. Dale Shively, TPWD, Austin, TX

Staff

Ronald R. Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy K. Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, Data Programmer/Analyst, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Dennis Bedford, California Department of Fish & Game, Los Alamitos, CA
Andy Bott, Reef Innovations, Inc., Marathon, FL
Don Brawley, Eternal Reefs, Inc., Decatur, GA
George Frankel, Eternal Reefs, Inc., Decatur, GA
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Tom Maher, Marine Habitats, Inc., Tallahassee, FL
Keith Mille, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Harry Rolfe, Reef Innovations, Inc., St. Cloud, FL
Steve Shelton, Reef Innovations, Inc.
Mike Zacchea, NYC Transit, Brooklyn, NY

Adoption of Agenda

In an effort to have more time to work on the agenda item "Materials Guidelines Revision" S. Heath made a motion that each state/federal representative provide some type of written report to be included with the minutes. J. Culbertson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

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J. Culbertson made a motion to adopt the agenda with that change. L. Dauterive seconded the motion, and the agenda was adopted.

Approval of Minutes

J. Culbertson asked a question about assignments made at the last meeting and whether those assignments were completed. L. Dauterive also commended staff for a job well done on the minutes since he was unable to attend the July meeting. **S. Heath made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held July 23-24, 2001 in New Orleans, Louisiana. J. Dodrill seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.**

Commission Public Hearings and Action

Lukens reported that in October 2000, the Commission directed the Artificial Reef Subcommittee to review the "Position Statement on the Use of Tires as Artificial Reef Material" and the "Resolution on the Use of Selected Materials of Opportunity as Artificial Reef Material" to determine if they were relevant and if they needed revisions. This task was completed in February 2001 and submitted to the GSMFC Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) for approval in March 2001 with minor revisions. The TCC made additional revisions to the document and elected to recommend adoption by the full Commission. The Commission postponed action at the March 2001 meeting until after an extended public comment period designed to gather broader input from the general public. After a six month public comment period, the TCC recommendations were again presented to the Commissioners on November 1, 2001, along with a summary of public comments received. The Commissioners again elected to postpone final action on the recommendations, asking staff to conduct public hearings on the issues. Hearings were scheduled and completed as follows: Biloxi, Mississippi - 12/10/01; Houma, Louisiana - 12/12/01; Tampa, Florida - 1/16/02; Destin, Florida - 1/17/02; and Orange Beach, Alabama - 2/13/02.

At the March 2002 Commission meeting held in Biloxi, Mississippi, Commissioners once again discussed this issue. Much of that discussion centered on the wording in the Position Statement regarding ballasted tires. A motion was made to remove the word "individually" from "individually ballasted" and both the Resolution and Position Statement were adopted as Commission policy.

Copies of the two documents are attached as a part of the official minutes.

Artificial Reef Data Analysis

Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst for the Commission, gave the Subcommittee a presentation entitled, "Using MRFSS data to assess catch rates of selected reef species around artificial structures in the Gulf of Mexico." Between the years of 1984 and 1992, National Marine

TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE

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Fisheries Service asked anglers interviewed in their dockside intercept survey, "Did you fish within 200 feet of an oil/gas platform or an artificial reef?" They analyzed data from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey for 1991 and 1992 for West Florida through Louisiana to determine the contribution of anglers fishing adjacent to oil/gas platforms or artificial reefs on the total catch of red snapper, gray triggerfish and vermilion snapper. For their analyses they combined oil/gas platforms and artificial reefs into a single category called artificial structures. They observed over 60% of the interviewed anglers from charter boats fished adjacent to artificial structures in Alabama and Louisiana. Lower percentages of charter boat anglers interviewed in Mississippi and West Florida had fished adjacent to artificial structures. Anglers fishing from private boats exhibited lower frequencies of fishing adjacent to artificial structures in all states. In 1992, 71% of the total catch of red snapper, 61% of the total catch of gray trigger fish and 46% of the total catch of vermilion snapper from charter boats was attributable to angler trips adjacent to artificial structures. Seventy four percent of the total catch of red snapper, 35% of the total catch of gray triggerfish and 43% of the total catch of vermilion snapper from private boats was attributable to angler trips adjacent to artificial structures. In 1991, 70% of the total catch of red snapper from both charter boats and private boats was attributable to angler trips adjacent to artificial structures. Angler catch rates of red snapper, gray triggerfish and vermilion snapper were significantly higher for trips adjacent to artificial structures than trips that did not fish adjacent to artificial structures. Asking this question again on the intercept survey as well as the random digit dialing phone survey (RDD) and Gulf Charter Boat Telephone Survey would hopefully provide more accurate estimates of the number of angler trips to oil/gas platforms and artificial reefs as well as provide a more robust analysis of the impact of these structures on catch rates and total catch due to the larger sample of angler interviews obtained currently.

The Subcommittee revisited the recommendation that was made to the TCC Data Management Subcommittee (DMS) to add an artificial reef question to the intercept survey. The DMS sent the recommendation back to the ARS until the previous data had been analyzed and the Subcommittee determined what its expectations were. After Bray's presentation the Subcommittee agreed that it would be worthwhile to ask the question again to compare the data.

A motion was made and passed to ask that the following question be added to the MRFSS survey:

"Around which of these did you spend the majority of your time fishing?"

- Standing Oil & Gas Platform
- Submerged Artificial Reef
- Neither

A second motion was made and passed to add the question to both the RDD and the intercept survey. A final motion was made and passed to ask that the question be added as a temporary one year add-on and then added again in 3-5 years.

TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

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The Subcommittee also agreed that NMFS/GSMFC handle the procedural part of when to add the question to the survey cycle so as not to coincide with the economic add-on.

Artificial Reef Database Program

Lukens reported that Mike Sestak, FIN Database Manager in the Commission office, is creating a web based artificial reef database program in Oracle. Once the initial data are online, each state program coordinator will be responsible for updating their records and adding new sites. The public will be able to access the data through Business Objects, but will have no access to raw data. The states will have to determine what level of information they want the general public to have. Confidentiality agreements may be needed between the states. When the program is complete, Lukens will arrange a detailed presentation and possibly some training.

State Reports

Texas and Puerto Rico provided the following state reports.

Texas - J. Culbertson/J. D. Shively

- Six rigs to reef donations have been placed in the High Island and Mustang Island blocks since last meeting in July 2001 by Unocal, Ocean Energy, Apache, Global Industries, and Kerr-McGee Corporation. Three were partially mechanically removed and two were removed by explosives and towed to an existing reef site. \$1,162,920 in donations were received by the end of December 2001.
- Two structures proposed for donation last year from Texaco in High Island and one structure from Ocean Energy in Mustang Island were delayed until this coming year.
- Ten rigs to reef donations in the High Island area are proposed to be donated to the Texas Program by El Paso this coming year. In addition Taylor Energy has also proposed to donate a structure in the Matagorda Island area.
- Four potential rigs to reef structures have been proposed for placement offshore of Galveston in shallow water by Blue Dolphin Energy Company. No decision has been made regarding this donation offer.
- The program purchased a MARAD steel buoy from Port Arthur storage facility and paid for it to be cleaned up and cut into four sections. All four structures were placed in the Basco's Reef, 23 miles offshore of Sabine Pass.

TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE

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- The 154 concrete power poles donated last year remain stored in Corpus Christi, were proposed to be placed offshore in the Matagorda area. However no contractors bid on the state contract, and placement has been delayed until other means are found for taking these structures offshore.
- Seventy-four natural quarry rocks continue to be stored in Sabine Pass until they can be taken offshore and placed at a near shore reef (Basco's Reef). A contract may be required to do this work, because potential donation of services by Offshore Marine Services have not been possible.
- Nine concrete mooring dolphins are proposed to be donated and transported offshore to a shallow water reef site by the Corps of Engineers sometime in the near future. The final plans for this donation have not been made.
- The Program hired Texas A&M University in Galveston and Dr. Andre' Landry and Dr. Tim Dellapenna to do a fisheries characterization and a side scan sonar survey and sediment characterization of Basco's Reef and SALT Reefs. One foot shell ridges were found along the western edge of SALT Reef before any material was placed in this reef site. The state has plans to preserve the natural shell ridges for potential juvenile red snapper habitat. Any material placed at SALT Reef will avoid this potential essential fish habitat.
- Work continued on the tunicate reef and the last sampling effort will be in spring 2002. Culbertson has been conducting a growth study on it since the tunicate took over. This animal has been found on more reef sites surrounding the Flower Gardens and in other parts of the Gulf of Mexico.
- Jimmy Dale Shively was transferred into the Artificial Reef Program as Coordinator in January 2002. Jan Culbertson will be working in the Coastal Fisheries Program as a Special Project Coordinator in the Upper Coast Regional Office in Dickinson, under Lance Robinson the new Upper Coast Regional Director. Both programs moved from Seabrook and Houston.

Puerto Rico - Craig Lilyestrom

Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources has an active program of artificial reef deployment and monitoring, financed with a combination of funds from the Sportfish Restoration Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Approximately 100 ReefBalls® have been deployed off the east coast of Puerto Rico, along with 100 concrete box culverts, all at a depth of between 70 and 90 feet. The objective of these deployments is enhancement of sport fisheries. Additional efforts have been made off the southern coast of Puerto Rico for marine habitat enhancement through transplant onto ReefBalls of live coral fragments recovered from reef rubble zones. Deployment of the artificial reef units has been complemented with long-term monitoring of fish and macrobenthic invertebrate populations at the permitted sites by means of visual census.

TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

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Although recent artificial reef deployments in Puerto Rico have consisted of designed structures made of concrete, interest is growing in deployment of vessels, specifically for the purpose of enhancing scuba diving opportunities. Two legislative resolutions have recently been introduced, to study the feasibility of sinking vessels in specific coastal areas.

Other Business

L. Dauterive distributed copies of the MMS position regarding mercury in the environment. Recently some issues concerning a potential for mercury, and specifically methylmercury, contamination of marine life/seafood associated with offshore platforms in the Gulf of Mexico have been raised. Information from MMS studies was used to support the conclusion that drilling activities and platform structures were responsible for elevated levels of mercury in commercial fish. Additionally, it was stated that the issue has been "largely overlooked by regulators." However, the MMS study referenced was misrepresented, resulting in misleading and incorrect conclusions.

The MMS recognizes that mercury (and specifically methylmercury) in the environment is a global issue and a global problem. However, for over 20 years, the MMS, along with the EPA, state governments, and industry have monitored discharges, and conducted laboratory analyses and numerous field studies to ensure that any mercury potentially associated with oil and gas operations was not harming the environment. The results support the conclusion that oil and gas platforms do not play any role in elevating levels of mercury in fish and other seafood.

For more information contact Barney Congdon at (504) 736-2595.

Michael Bailey noted that the *National Artificial Reef Plan* is currently out for public comment. Lukens thanked Bailey for his efforts in pushing this forward.

Mike Zacchea, NYC Transit, Brooklyn, New York provided the Subcommittee with a presentation entitled, "New York City Transit Artificial Reef Project - Division of Material Asset Recovery." Project goals are to retire 1,300 obsolete NYC Transit subway cars and to dispose of 60-80 cars a month to make room for the new fleet. He is currently working with the states of Delaware, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, New York, New Jersey, and Maryland.

Election of Chairman

Steve Heath will serve as Chairman of the Subcommittee and Jon Dodrill will serve as Vice-chairman.

TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE

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Materials Guidelines Revision

The Subcommittee conducted an extensive page by page review of the "Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials". This topic will be discussed again in the joint session tomorrow. All changes agreed upon in the joint session will be reflected in the next draft of the guidelines document.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm.





Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

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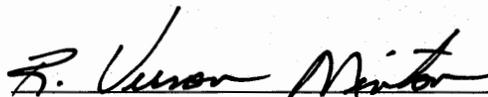
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Given this the 21st day of March in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Two.



Vernon Minton, Chairman



Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

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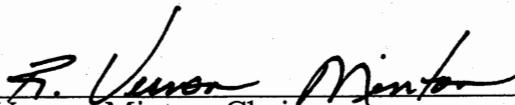
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POSITION STATEMENT ON THE USE OF TIRES AS ARTIFICIAL REEF MATERIAL

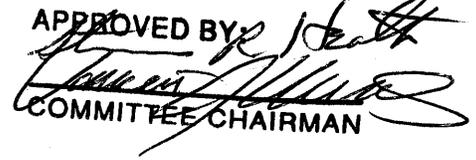
Historically, construction of artificial reefs in the marine and estuarine environment in the United States has been accomplished using materials of opportunity, ranging from refrigerators to scuttled ships. A material that has been used rather consistently over time is automobile tires. Use of tires as artificial reef material has been variously motivated by the need for low cost, readily available materials to waste disposal. Methods of using tires have varied, ranging from the use of single, unballasted tires to the construction of sophisticated units with tires embedded in concrete.

Since most artificial reef programs in the United States still rely upon the use of materials of opportunity for continued construction of artificial reefs, the issue of tire use recurs periodically. Some programs continue to be asked to use tires as materials for artificial reefs. Regardless of the underlying motivations for use of tires in artificial reef construction, the practice continues.

Recognizing that tires as artificial reef material in the Gulf of Mexico region are not generally accepted as an optimum material, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission establishes that if tires must be used as artificial reef material in the Gulf of Mexico region, including both state territorial and federal jurisdictions, they should be ballasted so that if a tire becomes separated from a modular unit, it will not be unstable in the environment. Specific standards for design and ballast may vary depending primarily on bottom sediments, bottom slope, and current velocities; however, artificial reef programs should adhere to the basic concept of using established engineering principles to determine appropriate design and ballast weight to assure stability under predictable storm and other events.



Vernon Minton, Chairman
March 21, 2002

APPROVED BY 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**JOINT ASMFC/GSMFC ARTIFICIAL REEF MEETING
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, March 27, 2002
Key West, Florida**

Chairmen Henry Ansley and Rick Kasprzak called the meeting to order at 8:35 am. Introductions were made and the following members and guests were in attendance:

Members

Henry Ansley, GDNR, Brunswick, GA
Michael Bailey, DOC/NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Dennis Bedford, CDFG, Los Alamitos, CA
Mike Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jan Culbertson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Les Dauterive, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Jon Dodrill, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Bill Figley, NJDFW, Port Republic, NJ
Jim Francesconi, NCDMF, Morehead City, NC
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Chris LaPorta, NYSDEC/Marine Resources, East Setauket, NY
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Vin Malkoski, MDMR, Pocasset, MA
Bob Martore, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Mike Meier, VMRC, Newport News, VA
J. Dale Shively, TPWD, Austin, TX
Jeff C. Tinsman, DDFW, Dover, DE

Staff

Ronald R. Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Carrie Selberg, Habitat Specialist, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Nancy K. Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, Data Programmer/Analyst, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Scott Bartkowski, Artificial Reefs, Inc., Gulf Breeze, FL
Andy Bott, Reef Innovations, Inc., Marathon, FL
Don Brawley, Eternal Reefs, Decatur, GA
Jeffrey C. Dey, Reef Makers, Inc., Moorestown, NJ

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Ginny Fay, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Pamela Fletcher, Broward County, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
George Frankel, Eternal Reefs, Decatur, GA
Tom Maher, Marine Habitats, Inc., Tallahassee, FL
Keith Mille, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Tim Mullans, Bay Bridge Ent., Chesapeake, VA
Harry Rolfe, Reef Innovations, Inc., St. Cloud, FL
Steve Shelton, Reef Innovations, Inc., North Port, FL
Frank Steimle, NMFS/NEFSC Sandy Hook Lab, Highlands, NJ
V. Frank Stone, CNO, Arlington, VA
Ken Trahan, NAVSEA, Washington, DC
Joe Weatherby, Artificial Reefs of the Keys, Key West, FL
Mike Zacchea, NYC Transit, Brooklyn, NY

Approval of Joint Meeting Minutes - February 22, 2001

Vin Malkoski made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held February 22, 2001 in Jacksonville, Florida. Steve Heath seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Adoption of Agenda

Craig Lilyestrom made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Vin Malkoski seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.

Subcommittee Reports

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission - Henry Ansley reported on activities of the Atlantic committee. He gave updates and changes as a result of new organizational structure which placed their committee under the Habitat Committee. The committee received a Special Management Zone update as well as a presentation from Mike Zacchea from New York Transit Authority in Brooklyn, New York, entitled "New York City Transit Artificial Reef Project - Division of Material Asset Recovery".

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Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission - Ron Lukens reported that the Gulf Subcommittee received presentations from Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, on artificial reef survey data analysis and a web based artificial reef database. The Subcommittee also received a presentation from Mike Zacchea from New York Transit in Brooklyn, New York, entitled "New York City Transit Artificial Reef Project - Division of Material Asset Recovery". The majority of the meeting was spent on an extensive review of the materials guidelines revision. Steve Heath was elected Chairman and Jon Dodrill was elected as Vice-chairman.

National Artificial Reef Plan Revision Update

Michael Bailey reported that the National Artificial Reef Plan was now available for public comment. May 23 was set as the deadline for comments. Lukens questioned if the comments received would be available to the Subcommittee. Bailey was unsure how that would be handled, but Ginny Fay advised that those comments would be shared.

A copy of the Plan is available in .pdf file format on the NMFS webpage.

Monitoring of Ships

Tom Maher reported on a project entitled "Monitoring Use Patterns Surrounding Sites for New Artificial Reefs." There are two goals for this project; the first is to test the hypothesis that introducing a new artificial reef in a natural reef environment will reduce usage on the surrounding natural reefs. The second is to assess whether methods of estimating total use can be extended to implement affordable yet reliable monitoring of use in the Sanctuary Preservation Areas and Ecological Reserves.

The first test case for this project is the ***U.S.S. Hoyt S. Vandenberg***, a vessel scheduled to be scuttled as an artificial reef in the Key West region of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). One year of pre-sinking and one year of post-sinking use information is being gathered through censuses of diver operator logbooks. Samples of on-site usage stratified by type of reef (artificial and natural), season (summer and winter), and type of day (weekday, weekend and holidays) are also collected. Types of users are identified by type of boat access (charter/party versus private/rental) and type of activity (SCUBA diving, snorkeling, glass-bottom boat viewing, fishing). Whether mooring buoys, anchoring or drifting are employed is noted. On-site samples are used to estimate the ratio of charter/party users to private/rental boat users. This ratio can then be used to extrapolate the dive operator

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logbook use estimates to population estimates. An Analysis of Variance method will be used to test for changes in use on surrounding natural reef pre-sinking versus post-sinking. In addition, weather data is being gathered and a weather model is being considered for estimating use. Simple extrapolation from sample days to non-sampled days will be supplemented with a weather model to predict true zero use days.

The second test case for this project is the *Spiegel Grove*, scheduled to be scuttled in the Key Largo region of the FKNMS as an artificial reef. This phase of the study has more limited pre-sinking data from on-site observations because of a late start to the project. However, historical dive logbook data will help in this regard. The methods outlined above for the *U.S.S. Hoyt S. Vandenberg* study will also be used for *Spiegel Grove* monitoring.

Both projects are underway with the gathering of pre-sinking data. Local dive businesses have been extremely cooperative thus far; therefore, they believe that they will have a thorough census of dive logbook data.

Ship Project

Joe Weatherby, President of Artificial Reefs of the Keys, located in Key West, Florida, gave a presentation entitled "Artificial Reefs of the Keys - The Vandenberg Project".

Artificial Reefs of the Keys is a non-profit group in Key West, Florida, working to bring the de-commissioned ex-*USAFS Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg* to Key West to become an artificial reef. At over 520 feet and 13,000 tons, the *Vandenberg* will be the largest ship ever intentionally sunk to create a reef. The vessel offers a unique opportunity to conduct leading-edge ocean engineering and coral reef ecological studies. Diver surveys demonstrate that the selected site is now barren of live coral growth. The complex vessel structure and topography will challenge and interest both beginning and experienced divers. Multiple dives are required to explore entire wreck.

Environmental benefits include diverting recreational user pressure away from the natural reefs, providing a living classroom to develop solutions to the decline in living coral reefs worldwide, and creating valuable habitat. Other benefits include encouraging eco-friendly tourism and providing a valuable resource for education and research.

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Artificial Reefs of the Keys is liaising with the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the Florida Keys Community College, and environmental, educational, diving, community service, military and business groups locally as well as nationwide.

For more information on the project visit their website at www.Bigshipwrecks.com.

Update on Spiegel Grove

Tim Mullans from Bay Bridge Enterprises in Chesapeake, Virginia, reported that they took over the *Spiegel Grove* project on January 2. It took 40 days before they had full access to the ship because of safety and environmental problems. There is more work than they had planned on, and their original 100 day schedule will take approximately 120 days. They expect to be completed in about 3 weeks. All fund raising for this project is being conducted through the Key Largo Chamber of Commerce.

Navy PCB Study

Frank Stone, of the Environment, Safety & Health Division, Chief of Naval Operations, from Washington, DC updated the committees with a presentation entitled "Inactive Navy Ships as Man-Made Reefs".

Inactive U.S. Navy vessels would make excellent man-made reefs in U.S. coastal waters if preliminary data suggesting they pose no threat from PCBs to man or the environment is confirmed. For the past 2-3 years they have been conducting both a human and ecological risk assessment. Both of the assessments are now going into final preparations, and the final summary of the project should be completed in January 2003. The final summary will be sent to EPA for their approval. It is hoped that the approval from EPA will be received during the Summer of 2003. Of course there are a lot of variables to this approval, and that date could be delayed.

Stone is optimistic about approval, but believes that ultimately this will be a political decision rather than a scientific decision.

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Socioeconomic Study of Reefs in Southeast Florida - Broward County

Pamela Fletcher, Broward County Biological Resources Division, Marine Resources Section, Fort Lauderdale, Florida spoke to the committees on a socioeconomic study of reefs in southeast Florida. This study used extensive survey research over the twelve-month period from June 2000 to May 2001 to measure the economic contribution and the use values of artificial and natural reefs to the economies and the reef users of southeast Florida.

This study was co-funded by the four southeast Florida counties (Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration. In all of southeast Florida, residents and visitors spent 28 million person-days using artificial and natural reefs during the 12-month period. Of this amount, residents and visitors spent about 9.4 million person-days using the reefs in Broward County, or about 34 percent of the regional total. A person-day is one person participating in an activity for a portion or all of a day.

Reef-related expenditures generated \$1 billion in income to Broward County over the 12-month period and created 36,000 jobs. Recreational fishers, divers and snorkelers who use Broward County's reefs are willing to pay \$126 million per year to maintain these reefs in their existing condition.

Natural reef users are willing to pay \$83.6 million per year to maintain the natural reefs in Broward County. Artificial reef users are willing to pay \$55.9 million per year to maintain the existing artificial reefs and \$15.7 million per year to add new artificial reefs to the Broward County system.

A majority of Broward County resident reef users would support "no take" zones on 25 percent of the natural reef system.

The final report is available in .pdf file format on their website: www.broward.org.

Materials Guidelines Revision

The joint committee conducted an extensive page by page review of the "Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials."

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Lukens indicated that he would review his notes upon return to the office and would email “reminders” for those with assignments.

All changes will be reflected in the final draft which Lukens hopes to have available by the end of the year.

Ansley commended Lukens on a job well done in compiling all the information in this document.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:15 pm.

GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
Spring State Directors' Meeting
Brownsville, Texas
April 21-25, 2002

Participants:

Virginia Vail, FFWCC
Steve Heath, ADCNR
Mike Ray, TPWD
John Roussel, LDWF
Corky Perret, MDMR
Larry Simpson, GSMFC
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC

Items for Discussion

- 1) Methylmercury
- 2) Species Priority List for FMP Development
- 3) Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Update
- 4) Federal Legislation
- 5) Turtle Project
- 6) Input for TCC agenda
- 7) Artificial Reefs
- 8) Law Enforcement
- 9) Derelict Trap Materials

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)
MINUTES**

**June 4, 5, and 6, 2002
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Chairman Kevin Anson called the meeting to order on June 4, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. The following members, staff and others were present:

Members

Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Stephen Holiman, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Christine Johnson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Ron Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Daniel Matos, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Joe O'Hop, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom Sminkey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Jason Vasques, USVIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Mike Sestak, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

John Hoey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Maury Osborn, ACCSP, Washington, DC
Cynthia Sarthou, GRN, New Orleans, LA

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as amended.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) meeting held on June 5, 6, and 7, 2001 in St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. were approved as amended.

Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)

M. Osborn reported that she has been in her new position at the ACCSP for about two months and the development of an implementation plan is a high priority. At a recent ACCSP Coordinating Council meeting, a strategic plan was adopted and will be available on their website soon. Osborn noted that she is also developing a schedule for grant monitoring in an effort to improve communication between ACCSP staff and the partners. The 2003 budget and operations plan are also being developed at this time.

Osborn noted that data is coming in from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center logbooks, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and North Carolina. There are ongoing projects to implement commercial trip ticket systems or to begin receiving data from South Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Osborn reported on several pilot studies being conducted in various Atlantic states and also noted that several partners have hired ACCSP coordinators.

Osborn reported that in 2002 the ACCSP has provided funding for observers for groundfish and also for biological sampling including horseshoe crabs. The Coordinating Council was asked to decide on the methodology for for-hire effort and agreed that the Vessel Directory Telephone Service will be the preferred methodology.

Osborn reported that the IT system staff is working on the commercial data feeds as well as the Rhode Island pilot study. The ACCSP website is also being overhauled as well as the biological module. The ACCSP staff is also working on a tracking system and D. Donaldson noted that GSMFC staff has developed a spreadsheet program for this purpose and would be willing to assist. Osborn reported that the partners will be giving her updates on the current status of the implementation plan in their states and a list of activities will be developed for each module for each partner in order to be in compliance. Osborn reported that a facilitated session will be held and will probably include some Operations Committee and Coordinating Council

members and others in order to determine priorities based on the amount of funds available. A five year implementation plan will be developed.

Review of List of Personnel with Access to Confidential Data

G. Davenport distributed an updated list of state personnel who had signed non-disclosure forms for the NMFS system and requested that Committee members review the list and add or delete names as necessary. Non-disclosure statements were also available for new personnel. D. Donaldson stated that M. Sestak of GSMFC should be contacted for FIN confidentiality forms.

Status of FIN Data Management System

M. Sestak provided handouts to Committee members listing record counts for the five Gulf states. Sestak discussed several issues with Committee members including being in compliance for the "rule of three", Florida data being pulled from the ACCSP system and the programs necessary to assure that the record counts match. Sestak also noted that totals differ in the case of catch from Florida being sold in North Carolina and suggested that a solution could be to add the data source.

Sestak asked Committee members if there was any problem in adding commercial fisherman and dealer addresses to the informational layer of the confidential level. The Committee discussed confidential data, personnel with access to this data, the protocols involved, and the way the ACCSP handles the confidentiality issue and who has access to the system. It was noted that anyone with access to the FIN data management system must sign a non-disclosure statement which protects confidentiality.

The Committee then discussed several issues relating to the FIN data management system as well as the NMFS system. M. Sestak was concerned that the states are supplying data to both the FIN system and NMFS. Another concern was the NMFS static dealer identification. In the future Alabama will input this identification number as the dealer number. Sestak also was concerned with NMFS zero filling and noted that both systems should be standardized. G. Davenport will check with J. Bennett regarding this issue. Sestak reported on several data

management issues including the Sun server, biological sampling, recreational data, menhaden data, SEAMAP data, etc.

Discussion of Funding Strategies for the Caribbean

D. Donaldson noted that this issue was generated at the port samplers meeting held in the Caribbean last October. Donaldson explained that funds appropriated through the GulfFIN line item are available for the states on the Gulf of Mexico, but not for the Caribbean or federal partners. Donaldson also noted that since the Caribbean partners do not have representation, it is difficult to lobby Congress. Limited sampling has been implemented in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

R. Lukens suggested that Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands list what they would like to see implemented and the cost of implementation with the activities listed being directly related to the FIN program. This information could then be distributed to Congressional staffers. J. Hoey suggested that funds for the federal Fisheries Information System could potentially be used by the Caribbean, if available.

D. Donaldson will provide the Congressional briefing information for the Gulf of Mexico to the representatives from Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands.

Review and Status of Caribbean Data Confidentiality MOA

D. Donaldson reported that at the last meeting there was discussion on expanding the existing MOA on sharing confidential data. Some language has been added to the existing cooperative agreement and sub-grants with the Gulf states. Donaldson distributed copies of the proposed MOA for the GSMFC, the Caribbean, and NMFS so Committee members would have an opportunity to review this document.

Donaldson stated that the next step would be to have the various agencies sign the MOA. R. Lukens noted that the sub-contracts with the states will now be the vehicles used as legal documents for protection of confidential data, however the MOA expresses the intent to cooperate and share data. Where the Caribbean partners are concerned, the MOA will be the only documentation at this time that expresses an agreement to share and protect confidential data. Donaldson noted this will help in future funding strategies.

C. Lilyestrom moved to accept the Memorandum of Agreement as written. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Donaldson noted that he will send signature sheets to the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the NMFS Southeast Regional Office.

Presentation of Mississippi Night Fishing Pilot survey Preliminary Results

G. Bray of the GSMFC noted that very little is known about night fishing activities in the Gulf of Mexico. The MRFSS survey collects primarily daytime dockside information and the assumption has been that catch information would be similar for night fishing but there is no data to prove this. Beginning in 2001 the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) began doing night interviews in order to address this topic. One of the goals of this survey were to determine if catch and harvest rates were similar between day and night fishing, and also to produce expanded estimates of catch and harvest using night survey data.

From June to October 2000 the MDMR nightly sent samplers to shore sites to obtain pressure estimates. Approximately 12 sites were added that did not have day fishing activity but were used frequently at night. The GSMFC provided the MDMR with monthly sampling schedules. The MDMR used MRFSS sampling forms. Two samplers were sent out for each assignment for safety reasons.

Bray reported that the night survey observed 31 species and the day survey observed 15 species. The species selected for day and night fishing comparison were sheepshead, spotted seatrout, sand seatrout, southern kingfish, black drum, red drum, and southern flounder since most of these were important management species in Mississippi. Some of the conclusions reached were that more species were observed during night sampling; some differences in catch rates were observed between day and night fishing; overall differences in expanded estimates were not significant from a management standpoint; and research does not dismiss the importance of night fishing with respect for MRFSS estimates.

In closing, Bray noted that this applies only to Mississippi shore mode night fishing, but the research shows the importance of night fishing in calculating MRFSS estimates. The MDMR is continuing the night fishing survey through 2002. D. Donaldson suggested that the 2002 survey results be presented at the 2003 FIN meeting so this Committee can determine what action, if any, to take.

Presentation of MRFSS Artificial Reef Data

G. Bray stated that the MRFSS was established in 1979 to provide a database for estimating the impact of marine recreational fishing. This survey is comprised of two parts: the random digit dial telephone survey which collects effort information, and the dockside intercept survey which collects information on the number and size of fish caught. Between the years of 1984 and 1992 the dockside intercept survey asked the question, "did you fish within 200 feet of an oil or gas platform or an artificial reef?" The three goals of the research were to determine the contribution of fishing trips adjacent to artificial structures to the total catch of selected reef fish, to compare catch rates of trips adjacent to artificial structures with trips that did not fish adjacent to artificial structures, and trends in number of fishing trips to artificial structures.

Bray reported that red snapper, gray triggerfish, and vermilion snapper were used for this research since these species provided the largest amount of data. Bray noted that from the intercept data from charter boat mode a large percentage of angler responses showed that they did fish adjacent to artificial structures. The trends were similar in private boat mode, but they were not as high. Anglers fishing near artificial structures had higher catch and harvest rates for these species than anglers who did not. Bray reported that in the future he would like to see this question asked again on the dockside intercept survey and possibly on the random digit dial survey and the Gulf charter boat survey.

R. Lukens noted that the GSMFC Artificial Reef Subcommittee made a recommendation to the Data Management Subcommittee that the question on fishing near artificial reefs be added back into both the intercept survey and the telephone survey.

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee Report (Attachment A)

D. Donaldson reported that the motion by the Artificial Reef Subcommittee regarding adding the artificial reef question to the survey was forwarded to the FIN Geographic Subcommittee. The Geographic Subcommittee passed a motion to have this issue forwarded to the FIN Committee. After Committee discussion, **K. Cuevas moved to accept the Artificial Reef Subcommittee recommendation that the question on fishing near artificial reefs be added back into both the intercept survey and the random digit dialing survey. The motion was seconded and passed with Louisiana and National Marine Fisheries Service**

opposed, and Texas and Puerto Rico abstaining. R. Lukens noted that this additional question would probably only need to be asked every five years. After lengthy Committee discussion on the frequency of adding the above question to the intercept survey and also some reservations regarding the utility of adding the question to the random digit dialing survey, **R. Lukens moved to delete random digit dialing from the previous motion. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** T. Sminkey suggested that a work group be formed to discuss details concerning the above question with MRFSS personnel. This work group will be comprised of T. Sminkey, G. Bray, R. Lukens, and K. Anson.

Presentation of Preliminary Results of Detailed Effort Pilot Survey

G. Davenport reported that NMFS had to modify their Gulf shrimp data entry program to be able to identify their interviews back to the Louisiana trip ticket system. It was necessary to modify the dealer codes to correspond with Louisiana dealer codes and a field was added for boat identification numbers. Another item that was added was a trip ticket field. Davenport distributed a list of the fields collected during interviews and noted that they are trying to interview up to 10% of all trips. Davenport reported that they are trying to intercept boats in the morning since many of them fish during the night. 210 interviews have been conducted since January and plans are to continue through the rest of the year.

Davenport noted that they are collecting boat identification number, departure date, unload date, area fished, depth fished, days fished, number of crew, species, information on TED's, landed pounds, price per pound, dealer interview, dealer codes, port of departure, size and number of gear, and time of day. Interviews will also be done in Florida and their trip ticket numbers will be entered as well for cross referencing. Davenport noted that this survey will also be conducted in Alabama. This program should produce more detailed information including effort. The Committee discussed the issue of cooperation and Davenport noted that in most instances they have been fortunate due to the port agents rapport with the fishermen. This survey is for offshore shrimp, however the Committee discussed the potential for detailed effort in other species. Davenport noted that detailed effort is also collected in the TIP program as well as the reefish and pelagic logbook systems.

Discussion of FIN Water Body Codes

D. Donaldson noted that the water body codes used in the Gulf of Mexico include an area code and a sub area code. With the exception of Louisiana, the sub area codes are the NMFS codes. In Louisiana they use four digit codes based on hydrological units established by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Donaldson noted that in order to be consistent and provide greater detail it would be beneficial to discuss using the Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC) established by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Committee members were provided with a list of current codes and examples of corresponding HUC codes. R. Lukens noted that the FIN data management system is built to accept a four digit code. Lukens suggested that for near-shore areas, the HUC codes could be used since they are standard nationwide. The Committee discussed the various problems associated with changing water body codes, including the FIN and ACCSP data management systems and it appears that this problem can be resolved. Lukens noted that an invasive species database is being developed using the USGS HUC codes and both systems would be compatible. The Committee discussed the issue of water body codes and considered having a member of the FIN Committee attend an ACCSP Standard Codes Committee meeting or arrange a conference call on the subject. R. Lukens will contact the USGS office responsible for developing the HUC. Committee members will check the codes in their state.

Review of Discards Questionnaire Results

D. Donaldson distributed a list of discards provided by the FIN partners and a letter from the Gulf Restoration Network (GRN) concerning bycatch reporting requirements. Donaldson noted that at the last FIN meeting the Committee discussed moving forward in the development of the discards module. The first step in developing this module is identifying the absence and presence, as well as the magnitude of activity. From the results of the questionnaire, the FIN Committee will be able to prioritize which species to focus on and develop a data collection method for bycatch information. D. Donaldson also noted that the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council (GMFMC) has deferred to the FIN Committee to determine the best method to collect information on discards. Donaldson suggested that since the Data Collection Work Group has looked at discards in the past it might be appropriate to charge this Work Group

with development of this module. It was noted that the ACCSP has a Discards Committee and they have developed this module, therefore the FIN Work Group should coordinate with them as well as the Councils and NMFS.

The Committee discussed the level of coverage and agreed that 100% would be difficult to accomplish. C. Sarthou of the GRN suggested that representatives of the environmental community from the Gulf and the Atlantic coasts be involved in a conference call with FIN and ACCSP representatives. M. Osborn noted that the ACCSP first prioritized fisheries and then selected the top eight for inclusion in the Request for Proposal (RFP) which will be sent out shortly.

Chairman Anson noted that the Data Collection Work Group is scheduled to meet later this year and the Committee agreed that the subject of discards would be on the agenda.

Discussion of Collection of Biological Samples for Methylmercury Analysis

The Committee was provided with information on a Gulf-wide survey to collect fish tissue for mercury analysis. R. Lukens reported to the Committee on the recent attention that methylmercury in marine fish has received. Lukens noted that this has been a problem in freshwater for a long time and has only recently become a problem in marine fish. Lukens reported that a series of recommendations have been made to the GSMFC for ways to work in a state/federal cooperative effort to increase and improve the amount of information available on mercury in marine fish. One of those recommendations is to coordinate a Gulf-wide data collection effort to collect marine fish tissues for mercury analysis. Lukens suggested that this effort would be well suited for the FIN biological sampling module if funding were available. This could be achieved by requesting small samples of tissue from recreational fishermen as well as samples from commercial fish houses. Lukens noted that since there are no existing resources for this effort he suggested that the FIN collect tissue from the fisheries, and the SEAMAP program to collect fishery independent samples, as well as various state programs. The Committee then discussed collecting, storing, and processing tissue samples. Lukens noted that there is a great deal of interest in methylmercury in marine fish in Congress, the oil and gas industry, and the Mineral Management Service and suggested that these groups could be

possible sources of funding. He asked the Committee for input on the appropriateness of the FIN Committee to coordinate this activity if funding were available.

Lukens reported that the National Seafood Inspection Laboratory in Pascagoula is implementing a survey of the Gulf of Mexico to collect 2,500 samples. This survey would help to determine which areas and/or species to begin focusing on. Lukens explained that his proposal is for four years and the species being collected would rotate. This proposal includes all sampling and analysis at a cost of \$1.4 million annually.

After Committee discussion, **J. Shepard moved that if funding were made available the FIN Committee would be the appropriate body to coordinate the effort to collect fish tissues for methylmercury analysis. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

R. Lukens reported that one of the other recommendations was to conduct a recreational angler seafood consumption study. This would be a phone survey in which anglers would be asked whether they bring fish home for consumption. The anglers would be asked as part of the MRFSS survey if they would be willing to participate in a fish consumption survey and the list of names and phone numbers would be forwarded to the group conducting the consumption survey. **T. Sminkey moved to support the recommendation that the question, *would you be willing to participate in a fish consumption study*, be asked on the MRFSS intercept survey. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Discussion of Conducting the Large Pelagic Survey in the Gulf of Mexico

D. Donaldson provided Committee members with copies of a statement of work for the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS). This survey is conducted in the Atlantic as far south as North Carolina, but is not conducted in the Gulf of Mexico at this time. Donaldson explained that J. Dunnigan of NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Office addressed the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee in March 2002. Dunnigan discussed collecting information on large pelagics being caught in the Gulf of Mexico and requested assistance in determining if the agencies of the Gulf states would be interested in this activity. Donaldson explained that in the past the LPS had some problems with methodology, however the current statement of work addresses these issues using a telephone survey as well as intercept work.

M. Osborn stated that personnel from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center have been working on a set of recommendations on monitoring large pelagics. One of the recommendations is that the scope of the LPS should be expanded to the South Atlantic as well as the Gulf of Mexico and should be conducted all year. Currently approximately one-half million is spent on the LPS, with full implementation costing another two million. Osborn noted that it is possible that the LPS could revert back to the MRFSS. J. Hoey of NMFS will provide Committee members with the recommendations on monitoring large pelagics when it becomes available. The Committee agreed that the states should be involved in this effort since it fits the FIN program and supplements activities presently being conducted.

Discussion of Data Collection Methods for Head Boats

D. Donaldson noted that action on head boats had been deferred awaiting the outcome of the ACCSP pilot study in South Carolina. This study examined random digit dialing, the Vessel Directory Telephone Survey (VDTS), and a mandatory logbook survey. A report on the results of this pilot study was distributed to Committee members. Donaldson noted that the Coordinating Council decided that the VDTS was the preferred method for collecting effort information from head boats and charter boats.

M. Osborn noted that the ACCSP has determined that the telephone survey is the way to collect information on effort, but it would then be up to the NMFS to implement. Osborn also noted that the contract for the intercept survey beginning in 2002 calls for observers on head boats and also sets a minimum sample size. The Committee discussed the problems associated with having observers on charter boats and head boats as well as self reported data. B. Dixon expressed concern regarding the decision by the Coordinating Council to use a new methodology since it went against the advice of the Technical and Operations Committees. J. O'Hop suggested that the FIN design a pilot study in order to benchmark the two methodologies. The Committee discussed this issue at length and **J. Shepard moved to have the Charter Boat Work Group examine the issue of head boat sampling and survey methodologies and come up with a recommendation for the FIN Committee. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** Since the Charter Boat Work Group is inactive at this time, **R. Lukens moved to establish a For-Hire Work Group to look at the problems associated with the for-hire survey. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** The For-Hire Work Group will

include J. O'Hop, K. Anson, K. Cuevas, M. Kasprzak, P. Campbell, T. Sminkey, B. Dixon, and ACCSP liaison.

Discussion of Strategies for Modification of Recreational Fishing Licenses

The Committee was provided with information developed by RecFIN on recreational marine fishing licenses. D. Donaldson reported that the NMFS conducted a pilot study in Oregon and found that using recreational fishing licenses as a sampling frame provides better precision and estimates of effort for the private, rental, and shore mode. In order to use this methodology certain information must be collected from the license for use as a sampling frame and these criteria were also listed in the information provided to the Committee. Donaldson stated that most states do not collect telephone numbers at this time and noted that the GMFMC is asking the states to begin collecting telephone numbers on their recreational fishing licenses as soon as possible.

Donaldson noted that in order for recreational licences to be used as a sampling frame telephone numbers, computerization, and changing some exemptions was necessary. R. Lukens noted that the S/FFMC has agreed that this information needs to be collected, however in some instances this is a legislative issue or a funding issue. Lukens encouraged Committee members to bring this matter to the attention of their Directors.

Review and Approval of 2001 FIN Annual Report

Committee members reviewed the 2001 FIN Annual Report and **R. Lukens moved to approve the 2001 FIN Annual Report with the appropriate changes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Review and Discussion of FIN Program Design Document

The Committee reviewed and discussed the Program Design Document and **J. Shepard moved to approve the FIN Program Design Document with the modifications. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Subcommittee and Work Group Reports

Administrative Subcommittee – (Attachment B) D. Donaldson reported that one of the charges to this Subcommittee was the revision of the program review process. The Subcommittee decided that for the next review the number and types of review panelists would be specified, and a list of specific questions would be developed by the Subcommittee. Another charge to the Administrative Subcommittee was the development of a clearer charge to the FIN Outreach Work Group. The Subcommittee identified the outreach audience as legislators, stock assessment personnel, managers, and the general fishing public and the approach needed for each group. After reviewing the Subcommittee report, **J. Shepard moved to approve the Administrative Subcommittee Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Commercial Port Sampler Meetings - (Attachment C) D. Donaldson distributed a report summarizing meetings held for the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico port samplers. Some of the issues discussed at these meetings include sampling techniques, fish identification methods, the status of the ComFIN, data collection methods, and fishing regulations. The Gulf of Mexico meeting included both federal and state samplers from all the Gulf states and an otolith processing and removal workshop was conducted the following day. No recommendations were made at either meeting for action by this Committee. The next Caribbean port sampler meeting will be held in Miami, Florida so these samplers can see the methods used in the United States. The next Gulf of Mexico port sampler meeting will be held in the St. Petersburg/Tampa area sometime in November 2002. M. Osborn requested that she be notified of the details of the Gulf of Mexico port sampler meeting for 2002. **J. Shepard moved to accept the Commercial Port Sampler Meetings Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Plan Work Group - (Attachment D) D. Donaldson noted that the Data Collection Plan Work Group developed the data collection plan which is used to establish targets for otolith and biological sampling activities. D. Donaldson reviewed the proposed meeting schedule for the Work Group. The Work Group will meet in July to review current activities and to develop a data collection plan. Once the plan has been approved by the FIN Committee it will be presented to the S/FFMC with recommendations for activities to be included in the following year's cooperative agreement. Another section of the Work Group report deals with what has been collected compared to the targets.

The Committee discussed the meeting schedule, targets, and species and agreed that a Work Group meeting would not be necessary this year but a conference call will be held instead. J. Shepard also suggested that at the end of this year, members develop allocations for the following year. **J. Shepard moved to accept the Data Collection Plan Work Group Report with modifications. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Outreach Work Group - (Attachment E) The FIN Outreach Strategic Plan was distributed to Committee members. D. Donaldson reported that the Outreach Work Group utilized the ACCSP Outreach Plan and modified it to meet the needs of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean for outreach. The Committee was asked to review this plan and **J. Shepard moved to accept the FIN Outreach Strategic Plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Registration Tracking Work Group - (Attachment F) D. Donaldson stated that registration tracking establishes unique identifiers to enable tracking of fishermen, dealers, and vessels through time and space. The Work Group met in March and there was a presentation on the NMFS permitting system as well as several recommendations. One of the recommendations is for the NMFS to maintain a master database for the unique identifiers. Another recommendation is for all program partners to begin collecting all the identified minimum data elements as soon as possible. The Work Group also recommended that data feeds would be on the same schedule as catch and effort. The Work Group agreed that the ongoing testing of the NMFS system was a critical activity and the states should continue to provide NMFS with the necessary databases. J. Hoey updated the Committee on the status of the NMFS system and noted the importance of having birth dates. The Committee also reviewed the minimum data elements recommended by the Registration Tracking Work Group. After lengthy Committee discussion, **J. Shepard moved to accept the Registration Tracking Work Group Report and the recommendations as amended. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Social/Economic Work Group - (Attachment G) D. Donaldson reported that the Social/Economic Work Group met in May and the main purpose of the meeting was to develop data collection activities for the collection of social/economic data in the commercial fishery. The Work Group developed two possible activities for potential funding in 2003; the collection of socio/economic data for the Gulf of Mexico inshore shrimp fishery, and a cost and earnings

data collection program for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. Donaldson explained that the inshore shrimp fishery project would compliment the off shore shrimp activity currently being conducted by Mike Travis of the NMFS Southeast Regional Office. The data collected by these two projects would give the total picture of the economics of the shrimp fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. Port samplers would be utilized to conduct personal interviews concerning trip expenses as well as social demographic information. S. Holiman noted that Mike Travis has completed 98% of the outreach portion of the offshore shrimp program and is currently developing the survey questionnaire.

Donaldson reported that on the reef fish project would be a one time study on annual and fixed costs and social demographic information. This would assist in providing detailed information for the future logbook add-on which is planned for 2004. Donaldson noted that the economists with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center are extremely busy with other activities and will only be able to provide a limited amount of time in developing this program. After Committee discussion, **J. Shepard moved to approve the Social/Economic Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Operations Plan

Status of 2002 FIN Activities - The FIN Committee was provided with a list giving the status of data collection and management activities for 2002.

D. Donaldson discussed Task B9 - Development of Metadata Database and asked the Committee for guidance in determining the level of priority of entering data on fishing regulations. Donaldson noted that the GSMFC Law Summary would be used for entering the historical data. C. Lilyestrom will provide the data for Puerto Rico and J. Vasquez will provide data from the U.S. Virgin Islands. After Committee discussion it was agreed that the data would be entered beginning with the most current and working back.

The next item discussed was Task B16 - Collection of Tournament Data. Donaldson noted that B. Sutter's office at NMFS was responsible for registering all tournaments that land Highly Migratory Species (HMS) and the FIN program was prepared to work with that group. Donaldson asked the Committee for input on how to proceed with this project. K. Anson noted that B. Sutter identified the tournaments targeting HMS and C. Lilyestrom reported that his

office has two part time employees who collect data on all tournaments held in Puerto Rico. Donaldson noted that the Biological/Environmental Work Group had been charged with collecting information on tournaments in the past and had developed a list of tournaments, however this list is three or four years old. The Committee discussed several alternatives including having the states collect tournament data possibly using a type of registration form. The Committee agreed to charge the Biological/Environmental Work Group with examining the feasibility of mandatory registration of state fishing tournaments. In addition Committee members will discuss this with their State Directors and the issue can be discussed at a future S/FFMC meeting.

R. Lukens asked about the status of Task B21 - Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies. D. Donaldson noted that the data loggers for MRFSS forms are being programmed at this time and after being tested in Mississippi a presentation will be given to the FIN Committee.

Review and Approval of 2003 Operations Plan - The Committee was provided with copies of the 2003 FIN Operations Plan. After reviewing the Operations Plan and making several changes and amendments, **P. Campbell moved to approve the 2003 FIN Operations Plan as amended. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

D. Donaldson noted that he would make the appropriate changes to the Operations Plan after the August 2002 S/FFMC meeting and e-mail it to the FIN Committee for review before printing and distribution.

Discussion of 2003 FIN Funding Priorities

A list of suggested items for funding consideration was distributed to Committee members. D. Donaldson noted that each year a prioritized list of activities is developed by the FIN Committee and is then forwarded to the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) for the final decision on which activities will be funded.

The Committee then reviewed the list of suggested activities for funding consideration in 2003. Donaldson explained that the first item, Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities, includes the cost of staff, as well as the FIN Committee, Subcommittee, and Work Group meetings, training, etc.

The next item is Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data, including the Vessel Directory Telephone Survey. This item includes the Economic Add-on for the Telephone Survey which is funded from July to December 2002 but requires funding from January to June 2003. Donaldson noted that the states need to include the Economic Add-on from January to June in their budgets for 2003.

Donaldson then noted that Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana also includes paying for the electronic trip ticket contractor. All of the above mentioned issues are considered ongoing activities. Discussion followed concerning initiating a trip ticket program in Texas, however it appears that this will not occur in 2003 but possibly will in the future. The Committee discussed the possibility of conducting a test in Texas with one dealer using the electronic trip ticket system. D. Donaldson noted that this could be done by modifying the contract with Southwest Computer Bureau, Inc. (SCBI) and would not be costly. However, at this time Texas will not be initiating trip tickets.

Other ongoing activities include Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida with B. Dixon of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling being conduct by J. Smith of NMFS Beaufort Lab and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Development, Implementation, and Operation of the FIN Data Management System is also included under ongoing activities. It has been proposed that a ComFIN Survey Coordinator be hired since activity on the commercial side is increasing with trip ticket data in the FIN Data Management System. The ComFIN Coordinator would work with M. Sestak of Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC). This position would require a computer science background. The ComFIN Coordinator would be involved with data loading, Business Objects help, and maintenance of the FIN Data Management System website.

J. Shepard suggested that all the above ongoing activities should be ranked as High Priority. This includes Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling of amberjack, flounder, red snapper, and king mackerel. Shepard suggested adding several more species for biological sampling as an additional category and listing this as a lesser priority. The Committee then discussed two new activities on the list of proposed items for funding in 2003; Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries, and Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study.

G. Davenport noted that NMFS is planning on expanding its collection of detailed effort for shrimp to include Alabama and Florida in 2003. Davenport noted that when the new TIP program is implemented, it will have the capacity to cross reference the trip ticket program. Committee members discussed various methods of collecting detailed effort information including focusing on the states that have trip ticket programs, although this would not be Gulfwide. It appears that personnel would have to be hired or contracted to collect this information.

The Committee then discussed funding for continuation of the offshore portion of the Charter Boat Telephone Survey in Texas from September until December of 2002. P. Campbell will send an estimate for the cost of this project to D. Donaldson, but it does not appear that there will be funds available.

The Committee discussed these new activities and agreed that the Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study should be conducted on the inshore shrimp fishery in the Gulf since currently the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is developing a survey for the offshore shrimp fishery. It was agreed that the Social/Economic Work Group should hold a conference call as soon as possible in order to develop budget figures to present to the S/FFMC. GSMFC would administer the project either through the states or a contractor. Donaldson noted that each partner will have to develop a budget and statement of work before the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) meets in August.

J. Shepard moved to assign the following priorities: all current ongoing activities - high priority; Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study - medium; adding additional species for biological sampling - medium; and Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries - low. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

D. Donaldson requested that Committee members send him budgets for proposed 2003 activities as soon as possible.

The Committee discussed the cooperative nature of the FIN program including federal port agents in Florida and Louisiana working with trip tickets, as well as exchanging data on dealer identification and the reconciliation of vessel and permit lists. The Committee also discussed the ongoing development of modules with the FIN and the Atlantic Coastal

Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) to assure compatibility and comparability and to look toward the evolution of a national program.

ITEMS FOR FUNDING CONSIDERATION IN 2003

High Priority (The following 9 items are ongoing activities)

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities

Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data

Economic Add-on for Vessel Directory Telephone Survey

Charter Boat Survey Offshore Texas

Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida

Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling

Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System

ComFIN Survey Coordinator

Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana

Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling

Medium Priority (New activities in priority order)

Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study

Biological Sampling for Additional Species

Low Priority (New activity)

Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries

Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that the next FIN meeting will be held during the first week in June 2003 with Orlando, Florida being first choice and Key West, Florida second choice.

Other Business

J. Shepard discussed biological sampling quality assurance/quality control issues noting that there is no procedure in certifying personnel for processing and reading otoliths, nor is there any identification issued as there is with port agents. Shepard also noted that it might be beneficial if there were an annual workshop for otolith processors using the otolith manual. After Committee discussion it was agreed to implement the otolith manual as a training tool. G. Davenport stressed the importance of having contact between processors and assessment personnel as well as the issue of publishing. D. Donaldson noted that an otolith processors meeting is scheduled for next month and it could be utilized for training as well as to set up protocol, criteria, and standards for certification. This meeting will be held at the NMFS Panama City Laboratory. The Committee discussed at length a certification numbering system for processors and agreed that it would be discussed at the processors meeting next month. D. Donaldson and G. Davenport will contact G. Fitzhugh of the Panama City Lab to finalize an agenda and make arrangements for the processors meeting. It was agreed that two processors from each state would attend the meeting.

D. Donaldson distributed copies of an e-mail from Chris Rogers of NMFS regarding HMS charter/head boat vessels and permits. A meeting is being held in Washington, DC and this will be one of the subjects discussed. Donaldson and M. Osborn will attend this meeting since data collection activities will also be discussed.

Donaldson noted that C. Lilyestrom had requested a comprehensive review of Puerto Rico's commercial data collection programs. C. Lilyestrom stated that since the MRFSS started a couple of years ago there is now high quality recreational data, however their commercial data does not seem to be adequate in some aspects. He noted that with the expertise and experience available in other agencies and states there might be some way to optimize data collection in both catch and effort and biological sampling in Puerto Rico. The Committee discussed several alternatives and agreed that the FIN Data Collection Work Group would be the appropriate body to evaluate these data collection programs. **J. Shepard moved to have the ComFIN Data Collection Work Group meet in La Parguera, Puerto Rico in 2002 in order to assess data collection processes and make recommendations as to how they can be improved. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

J. Shepard requested that some time be allotted on the agenda for the next FIN meeting to discuss the future and direction of the FIN program. R. Lukens suggested inviting R. Porter from the PacFIN program for a different perspective.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
TCC ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE

March 26, 2002

The TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee (ARS) revisited a recommendation that was made to the TCC Data Management Subcommittee (DMS) to add an artificial reef question to the intercept survey. The DMS sent the recommendation back to the ARS until the previous data had been analyzed and the Subcommittee determined what its expectations were. Gregg Bray from the GSMFC office analyzed the data and presented it to the ARS. After the presentation the ARS agreed that it would worthwhile to ask the question again to compare the data.

A motion was made and passed to ask that the following question be added to the MRFSS survey:

Around which of these did you spend the majority of your time fishing?

Standing Oil & Gas Platform

· Submerged Artificial Reef

· Neither

A second motion was made and passed to add the question to both the RDD and the intercept survey.

A final motion was made and passed to ask that the question be added as a temporary one year add-on and then may be added again in 3-5 years.

The Subcommittee also agreed that NMFS/GSMFC handle the procedural part of when to add the question to the survey cycle so as not to coincide with the economic add-on.

From: Donaldson, David
Sent: Monday, April 15, 2002 10:27 AM
To: Guy Davenport (E-mail); Joe O'Hop (E-mail); Steven Atran (E-mail); Kevin Anson (E-mail); Tom Van Devender (E-mail); Joey Shepard (E-mail); Page Campbell (E-mail); Lee Green (E-mail)
Cc: Lukens, Ron
Subject: FW: Motion

Hey everyone,

At the recent Data Management, there was a presentation regarding some data collected via the MRFSS about use of artificial reefs and oil and gas structures. It showed that these structures are used by many fishermen and can have a large impact on the catch of various species. Subsequently, the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee met and developed a recommendation to add a question to the MRFSS RDD and field intercept surveys (see e-mail below).

The TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee has asked the FIN Geographic Subcommittee (which is also the TCC Data Management Subcommittee) to consider supporting this motion and forwarding this issue to the FIN Committee for their consideration at their upcoming meeting. Please respond via e-mail **no later than April 29, 2002** regarding your support and opposition to the proposed motion from the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee. If the motion passes, it will be further discussed by the FIN Committee in June. Give me a call if you have any questions.

Dave

-----Original Message-----

From: Lukens, Ron
Sent: Friday, April 12, 2002 7:38 AM
To: Donaldson, David
Subject: Motion

Dave,

The following motion was passed by the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee at our meeting the last week of March. The motion is to recommend to the TCC Data Management Subcommittee, as the FIN Gulf Geographical Subcommittee, that the following question be asked during interviews with individuals during the RDD phone survey and anglers intercepted at their fishing location as a part of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey:

"Which of the following did you fish around during your fishing trip today:

- a. a standing oil or gas structure
- b. a submerged artificial reef
- c. neither

The Subcommittee recommends that the question be asked for one year only, with the understanding that the question should be asked periodically. The discussion of the motion resulted in the agreement that the Subcommittee or some other entity should make additional recommendations to ask the question in subsequent years.

This motion should be forwarded to the TCC Data Management Subcommittee via e-mail vote for their consideration. If the motion passes the e-mail vote, it should be prepared for introduction to the FIN Committee during the upcoming June meeting. Any questions, just let me know.

Thanks

Ron

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. and the following people were present:

Lisa Kline, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Ron Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Maury Osborn, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Doug Frugé, FWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of Meeting

R. Lukens stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss revising the program review process, developing a new time line for the FIN, and developing a clearer charge to the Outreach Work Group.

Discussion of Program Review Process

It appeared that there was some lack of understanding among the review panel regarding the recent FIN program review. The group seemed to focus on methodological issues instead of the success of FIN in meeting their stated goals and objectives. The Subcommittee discussed the process for presenting information to the review panel and believed that the process was fine but the types of people on the panel may not have been appropriate. The focus needs to be on end users (Council staff, stock assessment personnel, fishing industry people, etc.) of the data collected under FIN. After some discussion, the group decided that for the next review, the FIN specify the number and types of people to serve on the review panel and utilize AFS as an intermediary. The review should focus on end users and examine if the program is going in the right direction (i.e. providing the needed data, etc.). In preparation, the Subcommittee should develop a list of specific questions that need to be answered by the review team.

Development of New Time Line for FIN

R. Lukens noted that a new time line had been developed in the Operations Plan. The group reviewed the time line and believed it accurately described the planning aspects of the program. It was noted that an operational component of the time line needs to be developed to provide a complete picture of the activities. D. Donaldson stated that he would draft an operational component of the time line and distribute to the group for their review.

Developing Clearer Charge to FIN Outreach Work Group

R. Lukens stated that the FIN Committee asked the Subcommittee to develop a better charge to the Outreach Work Group and provide them with a clearer direction. The group discussed whom we are attempting to target with the outreach activities. It was determined that there are three distinctive audiences: (1) state and federal legislators; (2) end users such as stock assessment personnel, managers, scientists, etc. (3) general fishing public. There needs to be

different strategies for each of these groups. For the legislators, the message needs to be the accomplishments of the program and what is currently or will be developed to improve data collection. The focus needs to be on convincing legislators to continue funding the program to ensure better data is available for fishery management decisions. For the end users, the approach needs to let them know the system is available for their use and to ensure they do not develop duplicative systems or go through developing a system when the FIN DMS will meet their needs. And for the fishing public, the strategy should provide general program information, let the public know what FIN is all about and the importance of their cooperation in the success of good fishery management. The group discussed the work that was being conducted by the ACCSP. After some discussion, the group recommended that FIN coordinate with the ACCSP and develop outreach activities in a cooperative nature. This approach is also being used for the development of the registration tracking module and it makes sense to use it for outreach as well. D. Donaldson will coordinate with J. Moran and develop the outreach components for both programs in a joint manner.

There being no further business, the call was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Caribbean Port Sampler Meeting

Attachment C

Meeting Summary

October 3-4, 2001

St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. and the following people were present:

Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Willie Ventura, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Hector Riveria, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Toby Tobias, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Efrain Hatchette, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Hector Lopez Pelet, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Luis Riveria Padilla, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Wilfredo Torres Ruiz, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Daniel Matos, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Field Sampling

The first part of the day consisted of visits to various fishing sites to sample catches of reef fish and lobster. In addition, the group reviewed sampling techniques, fish identification methods, and other related sampling procedures. After field sampling, the group convened at the hotel to discuss various topics related sampling of commercial catches.

Status of ComFIN

D. Donaldson gave an overview of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN). He stated that FIN consists of two major components: ComFIN and RecFIN(SE). Each program has its own mission, goals, and objectives and address specific issues related to area of emphasis. The constituencies served by ComFIN include the state and federal agencies responsible for management of fisheries in the region, federal fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and the commercial and recreational fishermen and the associated fishing industries. The mission of ComFIN is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial and anadromous fishery data and information for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Region and to support the development of an inter-regional program. There are four goals of ComFIN. They are: plan, manage, and evaluate commercial fishery data collection activities; implement a marine commercial fishery data collection program; establish and maintain a commercial fishery data management system; and support the establishment of a national program. He presented a figure which explained the organization structure of ComFIN. He stated that the backbone of ComFIN is the trip ticket program. He discussed the various activities that FIN has recently undertaken which include the development of FIN data management system and prototype; modifying the data memorandum of agreement (MOA) to include Caribbean data; implementation and operation of trip ticket programs for Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas; recreational data collection in Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean; and biological sampling in Gulf of Mexico. He reviewed the data elements for ComFIN trip ticket program which included date, species and quantity landed, ex-vessel value or price, state landed,

dealer ID, primary gear and area fished, quantity of gear, days at sea, fishing time. The group discussed the status of the collection of trip-level data in the Caribbean. T. Tobias stated that the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) is currently collecting trip-level data from the commercial fishermen in the USVI. Although the catch is categorized in species groups, the information collected through TIP allows for distribution of catch within the species group. D. Matos stated that Puerto Rico is currently attempting to implement new fishing regulations that would require fishermen to report data on a trip level. He is hopeful that the new regulations will be implemented before the end of the year.

Discussion of Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers Data Collection Methods

G. Davenport discussed the mission of NOAA fisheries which is to protect and preserve the nation's living marine resources through scientific research, fisheries management, law enforcement and habitat conservation. He provided a brief history of the Trip Interview Program (TIP) which was started in 1985 to collect information from commercial fisheries throughout the southeast coastal states. He outlined the procedures for conducting an interview and highlighted the major fisheries in the Southeast which include shrimp/oyster trawls, hook and line vessels targeting king mackerel and grouper/snapper, longline vessels targeting swordfish, shark and deep and shallow water reef fish, gillnet vessels targeting king and Spanish mackerel, menhaden/bait fish and shark, and trap vessels targeting lobsters, blue, golden and stone crabs and fish. He provided a detailed description of each of these fisheries regarding target species, type of gear, areal coverage, etc. He then discussed the TIP sampling methods which included meeting the vessel at the dock; interviewing the captain for trip information; identifying species; measuring length and weight frequencies; determining sex of fish and collecting gonads; and extracting otoliths. He reviewed the steps for entry of the data and submitting the hard parts to the NMFS laboratory. He outlined the sampling tools uses by the port samplers. They included calipers, measuring boards, knives and tweezers for extracting otoliths. He then provided an overview of otolith extraction and analysis. Otoliths are bone structures found in all fish and help maintain balance in the fish. There are two types of otolith processing: using whole otolith and using sectioned otoliths. If an otolith is thin enough, it can be processed whole. The otolith is placed in a petri dish and submerged in clove oil. A fibro-optic light is used to count the annuli. When an otolith is too thick, it is sectioned and the section is read. The reading of otoliths is done using a microscope. Lastly, G. Davenport provided some results and summary regarding the TIP program.

Similarities and Differences of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands Fishing Regulations

D. Matos provided the group with a list of current regulations for Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico used various types of regulations. There are closed seasons for conch (July 1 - September 30), Land crab (July 15 - October 15) and red hind (December 1 - February 28). There are also gear limits in place. It is illegal to use poisons, explosives, drugs or chemicals in fishing activities. The fishing catch of the beach seine should be taken in the sea and it is also forbidden to take non-edible fish. There is a 3½ inch carapace length minimum size limit for spiny lobster. It is also prohibited to catch or disturb spiny lobsters with eggs. All fishermen practicing commercial fishing are required to have a license. In the near future, Puerto Rico will have new fishing regulations. These regulations will protect the fisheries resources through size limits for most species, reduce the ornamental fish exploitation, impose special permits (for lobster, conch,

ornamental fishes), and more closed seasons (for mutton and silk snapper). D. Matos mentioned that enforcement of fishery regulations is not very good. The system was not set up very well to allow officers to enforce fishery laws. There are many regulations dealing with hunting, fishing, environmental, etc. and the law enforcement officers are responsible for enforcing all of these regulations. Not many of the officers focus their attention on fishery regulations. Therefore, there is no real force behind the regulations. In addition, when an officer does write a citation, the judges are too lenient.

T. Tobias provided an overview of the current regulations for USVI. He stated that the requirements for obtaining a commercial fishing license in USVI are you have to be a resident of the islands for 1 year and pay the \$5 registration fee. There are various rules and regulations for the resources in the USVI such as size limits, landing and gear restrictions, closed seasons, and quotas. He mentioned that the National Park Service has recently expanded their no-take area around Buck Island in St. Croix. One of the FADs deployed by the USVI is now in this no-take area which could cause some problems. T. Tobias stated that there is currently a moratorium on the sale of commercial licenses. The enforcement of fishery regulations in the USVI is also not very good. The enforcement officers are understaffed and overworked and are used for a variety of other activities other than enforcement of fishing regulations. He noted that the fishing regulations have not be revised since the early 1970's. He then provided an overview of the various programs being conducted by the USVI. The discussions included review of the catch data forms, review of the commercial fishermen registration forms, discussion of USVI fishing and Caribbean Fishery Management Council conch surveys, and examination of the federal registration forms for fishing for tuna.

Discussion regarding Adaptation of Sampling Strategies for Use in the Caribbean

D. Donaldson stated that this topic was from the last meeting but the group was not able to address it at that time. However, during the field activities and discussions that took place early this meeting, this topic has been addressed. The group reviewed the various sampling techniques used by the Caribbean samplers. T. Tobias noted that USVI are open to suggestions regarding improvements to their data collection activities.

Discussion of Topics for Next Meeting

D. Donaldson asked the group for input regarding the next port samplers meeting. T. Tobias suggested that the group discuss strategies for securing additional funding for conducting data collection and management activities in the Caribbean. It was suggested that this topic should be discussed by the FIN Committee at their next meeting. D. Donaldson stated that this is a very appropriate issue for FIN to address and he'll make sure it is on the agenda for the next meeting. It was suggested that a subset of the Caribbean samplers travel to the NMFS-SEFSC to observe the sampling methods used in the Gulf. After some discussion, it was decided that the next meeting will be held in Miami, Florida. This will allow all Caribbean samplers to observe the sampling methods utilized by the Gulf. The meeting will be held during the first week of October 2002. One topic to be discussed at the next meeting was a presentation of the Caribbean data that has been collected under TIP. G. Davenport stated that personnel are currently analyzing these data and a presentation could be given at the next meeting. D. Donaldson stated that he would develop a draft agenda prior to the meeting and distribute it to everyone for their comment.

The meeting was recessed at 4:45 p.m.

October 4, 2001

The meeting reconvened at 9:30 a.m.

The group again visited several sites to work up catches of commercial fishermen. In addition, the group went out into the field to observe the various fish attraction devices (FADs) that USVI has deployed in the recent past. The group traveled by boat to two of these sites. The group was unable to observe the third site due to rough seas.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers Meeting

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, November 14, 2001

St. Petersburg, Florida

David Donaldson of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

Chuck Armstrong, GSMFC, Pascagoula, MS
Laura Baird, FFWCC, Melbourne, FL
Debbie Batiste, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Britt Bumguardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Rick Beaver, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
Josh Bennet, NMFS, Miami, FL
Jay Boulet, NMFS, Chalmette, LA
Beth Bourgeois, GSMFC, New Iberia, LA
Maggie Bourgeois, NMFS, Chalmette, LA
Pamela Brown Eyo, NMFS, Miami, FL
Steve Brown, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Lew Bullock, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Suzy Delaune, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Claudia Dennis, NMFS, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Kit Doncaster, NMFS, Brownsville, TX
Jason Duet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Wendy Dyer, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Noel Estes, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Debbie Fable, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Greg Fairclough, GSMFC, St. Petersburg, FL
Ted Flowers, NMFS, Mobile, AL

Michelle Gamby, NMFS, Tequesta, FL
Linda Guidry, NMFS, New Iberia, LA
Gary Haddle, FFWCC, Jacksonville, FL
Lisa Hallock, FFWCC, Port Charlotte, FL
Brett Hano, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Kathleen Hebert, NMFS, Houma, LA
Tom Herbert, NMFS, Fort Myers, FL
Kristine Johnston, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Rene Labadens, Jr., NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Laura Lambremont, FFWCC, Tequesta, FL
Jude LeDoux, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Albert Lefort, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Ed Little, NMFS, Key West, FL
Edie Lopez, NMFS, Brownsville, TX
Anthony MacWhinnie, FFWCC, Pensacola, FL
Terri Menzel, FFWCC, Navarre, FL
Joe O'Hop, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Michelle Padgett, GSMFC, Freeport, TX
Barry Roberts, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Keith Roberts, NMFS, Galveston, TX
Renee Roman, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Rousse, NMFS, Golden Meadow, LA
Jeff Sauer, FFWCC, Melbourne, FL
Charles Schaefer, NMFS, Tequesta, FL
Howard Shirley, NMFS, Miami, FL
Jan Simpson, NMFS, Marrero, LA
Roy Spears, NMFS, Aransas Pass, TX
Bryan Summerlin, FFWCC, Cedar Key, FL
Linda Trahan, NMFS, Port Arthur, TX
Michael Travis, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Bill Tucker, NMFS, Houma, LA
June Weeks, GSMFC, Panama City Beach, FL

Staff

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network

D. Donaldson gave a slide presentation on the Fisheries Information Network (FIN), focusing on the commercial side of the program. Donaldson explained that the constituency served by FIN are the state and federal agencies responsible for the management of fisheries, Fishery Management Councils, Marine Fisheries Commissions, as well as commercial and

recreational fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. The mission is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine information and to develop a national program. The main goals are planning, managing, and evaluating the fisheries to develop the program. In 1998 Congressional funding became available through a line item which allowed implementation of the program which includes the establishment of the data management system. The FIN Committee is comprised of the members of the ComFIN and RecFIN Committees, Geographic Subcommittees, and various subcommittees and work groups.

The backbone of the ComFIN is the trip ticket program. The trip ticket program provides information on who is involved in the fisheries, detailed effort information, biological information for stock assessments, social/economic data, and discards.

Donaldson noted that in January 2002 biological sampling would be focused on red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder, and greater amberjack. A detailed effort pilot study will begin in 2002 collecting data on area fished and gear combinations. This pilot study will be done in Louisiana and possibly Alabama. Work will begin as well on the collection of social/economic data for the charter boat fishery in 2002.

Discussion of Law Enforcement and Confidentiality Issues

G. Davenport reported that in the past a subpoena was required to secure confidential data, however this is no longer the case. If a law enforcement officer requests confidential data from a federal or state port sampler, they are required to turn it over. Davenport suggested that when this occurs, samplers should contact their supervisor immediately. The group discussed the problems associated with doing biological sampling and the potential for having this information reviewed by law enforcement officers, particularly the trust between fishermen and samplers. The group also discussed the confusion in identifying species for law enforcement purposes. D. Donaldson noted that the policy on confidential data under FIN states that it can be used to corroborate a charge but cannot be used to develop a charge.

Presentation on Collection of Social/Economic Data

M Travis of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) St. Petersburg office gave a presentation on the collection of social and economic data and distributed handouts to meeting participants. Travis reported that the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has been conducting social and economic pilot studies on the east coast. Travis reported that social and economic data is collected on the commercial and the for hire sector and includes captains, owners, crews, vessel operating expenses, etc. using telephone interviews. Travis noted that two pilot studies were developed by the ACCSP and are being conducted for three years. The primary objectives of the pilot studies were data collection, data entry, data storage, linking, survey instrument, and sampling method.

Travis reported that the first pilot study was implemented in the state of Georgia with blue crab fishermen. The other pilot survey was conducted from Maine to North Carolina and studied fishermen with summer flounder permits and followed the same fishermen throughout the survey. This is a voluntary program. The pilot study has three sections: trip cost, captain and crew, and fixed cost. There were approximately 1,100 vessels involved in the survey with an estimated 2,800 interviews. Travis noted that when this was submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) they required an 80% response rate. Since this rate was exceptionally high, a 60% response rate was agreed upon. After investigating several

alternatives, it was decided to use federal port agents for this pilot survey since they have continuous contact with and have developed a rapport with the fishermen.

Travis reported that the biggest issue for the pilot studies has been outreach to the industry and he stressed the importance of continuing to promote the survey. Travis then discussed the questions asked on the survey and the length of time required for each participant. During discussion following the presentation Travis again stressed the importance of outreach. The group discussed the port agents role and responsibilities in this type survey and the various problems associated with asking questions of a personal nature.

D. Donaldson noted that the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) had been tasked with developing a program for collection of social/economic data on commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. It had been suggested that port samplers assist in collecting this information, however additional port samplers would be hired by the states. The question of confidentiality was again raised and Travis noted that this issue has been addressed on the east coast and to date there have not been any problems. Donaldson noted that the ACCSP and FIN both have confidentiality policies. Travis reported that two projects are planned for Spring 2002. One is aimed at the Gulf shrimp fishermen and the other at Gulf reef fish and mackerel fishermen. Workshops will be conducted to get input from these fishermen on what would be the preferred data collection methods. Travis also noted that an annual report will be generated on the summer flounder survey and will be distributed to fishermen.

Trip Ticket Program Presentations

Louisiana - J. Duet of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) reported that the Louisiana trip ticket program began in January 1999. Approximately 250,000 trip tickets are scanned per year. There are four ticket types: oyster, weekly and daily shellfish tickets, and generic tickets. Tickets from dealers are due in the Baton Rouge office on the 10th of the month for the preceding month and are checked for inaccuracies. The tickets are then scanned and verified. Edits and checks are run on this data, then it is forwarded to the GSMFC data repository. Duet noted that electronic trip tickets are now available at no charge in both computer and web based versions. The PC version was developed with the input of dealers and at their request it contains additional bookkeeping features.

Mississippi - J. LeDoux of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) gave a presentation on the trip ticket program in Mississippi. LeDoux reported that Mississippi has trip tickets for oyster, live bait, and fisheries single trip and multi trip. Mississippi has recently changed to a scannable oyster trip ticket which can be used with licenses to expedite the data entry process. Oyster trip tickets are turned in each Monday for the previous week. LeDoux explained some problems encountered with the state legislature and also explained that the MDMR requested input from dealers during development of fisheries trip tickets. Live bait fishermen had been using written forms and now use scannable trip tickets.

Alabama - B. Roberts of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) reported that the Alabama trip ticket program is underway. Most dealers participating in the program have made an effort to comply, however there are some dealers who have not been as cooperative and in these cases the courts have backed the ADCNR. D. Donaldson noted that the GSMFC is working with ADCNR staff on getting the Alabama trip ticket data into the data management system.

Other Business

J. Bennet of NMFS gave the group an update on the new Trip Interview Program (TIP) data entry system. The new system is a web based application and it will reside on the NMFS equipment in Miami. The program is now in development and should be more flexible allowing agencies to use their own codes, FIN codes, ACCSP codes, or TIP codes. Federal Information Processing system codes will be used for state, county, and port codes. All FIN and ACCSP critical data elements have been included in the new program. There is also a new optional effort section which will collect more detailed effort than in the past. The agencies will be able to retrieve their own data in the same form as it was entered. Bennet noted that support from the contractor and from NOAA Fisheries will be available when the new system is operational, possibly by the end of 2001. Bennet also noted that online support for TIP is currently available at the NOAA website, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Sustainable Fisheries, Trip Interview Program.

D. Donaldson asked the meeting participants for input on the format of this meeting and also requested that they give consideration to agenda items for the next Port Samplers meeting. The group agreed that November was a good time to hold this meeting. One possibility discussed by the group was training for the upcoming social/economic survey. Any suggestions for agenda items or workshop ideas can be given to supervisors or to Donaldson.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Proposed Meeting Schedule

- Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee and FIN Committee meet in March and June, respectively, to review data collection and analysis progress for target species;
- Committees provide guidance to Data Collection Work Group regarding next year's activities;
- Data Collection Plan Work Group meets in July to review current year's activities and develop next year's data collection plan based on any needed changes; The draft plan will be presented to the FIN Committee (via e-mail) for their approval. Once the plan has been approved by FIN, it will be presented to the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee for their consideration.
- State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee meets in August to review FIN recommendation regarding activities to be included in next year's cooperative agreement and determines final activities to be conducted; and
- Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meets in October to review current year's collection and analysis activities.

Progress Report of Biological Sampling

Recreational Otolith Tracking, Jan-Apr 2002

----- ST=AL -----

ST	SP_CODE	MODE_FX	TOT_SETS	TOT_TARG	DIFF
AL	KING MACKEREL	Shore	0	0	0
AL	GULF FLOUNDER	Shore	2	0	-2
AL	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Shore	2	29	27
AL	GREATER AMBERJACK	Charter	8	3	-5
AL	RED SNAPPER	Charter	100	586	486
AL	KING MACKEREL	Charter	2	2	0
AL	GULF FLOUNDER	Charter	1	0	-1
AL	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Charter	2	1	-1
AL	GREATER AMBERJACK	Private	0	0	0
AL	RED SNAPPER	Private	25	769	744
AL	KING MACKEREL	Private	2	1	-1
AL	GULF FLOUNDER	Private	0	3	3
AL	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Private	0	26	26

----- ST=FL -----

ST	SP_CODE	MODE_FX	TOT_SETS	TOT_TARG	DIFF
FL	GREATER AMBERJACK	Shore	0	4	4
FL	KING MACKEREL	Shore	0	6	6
FL	GULF FLOUNDER	Shore	0	15	15
FL	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Shore	0	7	7
FL	GREATER AMBERJACK	Charter	0	77	77
FL	RED SNAPPER	Charter	0	1164	1164
FL	KING MACKEREL	Charter	0	332	332
FL	GULF FLOUNDER	Charter	0	2	2
FL	GREATER AMBERJACK	Head	0	1	1
FL	RED SNAPPER	Head	0	37	37
FL	KING MACKEREL	Head	0	6	6
FL	GULF FLOUNDER	Head	0	0	0
FL	GREATER AMBERJACK	Private	0	11	11
FL	RED SNAPPER	Private	0	120	120
FL	KING MACKEREL	Private	0	155	155
FL	GULF FLOUNDER	Private	0	104	104
FL	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Private	0	12	12

----- ST=LA -----

ST	SP_CODE	MODE_FX	TOT_SETS	TOT_TARG	DIFF
LA	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Shore	45	39	-6
LA	GREATER AMBERJACK	Charter	0	1	1
LA	RED SNAPPER	Charter	0	31	31
LA	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Charter	13	12	-1
LA	GREATER AMBERJACK	Head	7	0	-7
LA	RED SNAPPER	Head	10	17	7
LA	KING MACKEREL	Head	0	0	0
LA	GREATER AMBERJACK	Private	0	0	0
LA	RED SNAPPER	Private	0	279	279

LA	KING MACKEREL	Private	0	0	0
LA	GULF FLOUNDER	Private	0	1	1
LA	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Private	240	302	62

----- ST=MS -----

ST	SP_CODE	MODE_FX	TOT_SETS	TOT_TARG	DIFF
MS	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Shore	2	27	25
MS	RED SNAPPER	Charter	20	46	26
MS	KING MACKEREL	Charter	0	0	0
MS	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Charter	0	1	1
MS	RED SNAPPER	Private	16	57	41
MS	KING MACKEREL	Private	0	0	0
MS	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Private	3	46	43

----- ST=TX -----

ST	SP_CODE	MODE_FX	TOT_SETS	TOT_TARG	DIFF
TX	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Shore	46	27	-19
TX	GREATER AMBERJACK	Charter	11	0	-11
TX	RED SNAPPER	Charter	44	46	2
TX	KING MACKEREL	Charter	5	0	-5
TX	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Charter	0	1	1
TX	GREATER AMBERJACK	Head	0	1	1
TX	RED SNAPPER	Head	0	262	262
TX	KING MACKEREL	Head	0	2	2
TX	GREATER AMBERJACK	Private	0	0	0
TX	RED SNAPPER	Private	0	78	78
TX	KING MACKEREL	Private	0	0	0
TX	GULF FLOUNDER	Private	0	1	1
TX	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	Private	5	46	41

FIN Outreach Overview

This outreach strategic plan is not a static document. The ideas and approaches contained in this document will change as the FIN Outreach Work Group and staff members discover new and more effective approaches. The primary goals of this plan is to position the FIN as the premier resource for obtaining Gulf and Caribbean marine fisheries data and to gain the support and participation of commercial and recreational fishermen.

The FIN Committee and Outreach Work Group have been active in developing basic programmatic outreach materials and strategies, as well as assisting program partners with development of specific outreach plans.

The FIN's 12 program partner agencies, with the support of the staff, will work towards communicating messages necessary to successful implementation of their FIN-related projects. Those messages may include:

- The FIN is an objective, trustworthy, credible and neutral organization.
- The fisheries industry will have access to any non-confidential data housed in the FIN Data Management System.
- The FIN respects the privacy of its constituents, holding individual data in strictest confidence, and only making aggregated anonymous data widely available.
- The FIN is charged by Congress with collecting and disseminating fisheries data for the express purpose of improving fisheries management decisions on behalf of the Gulf of Mexico.
- The FIN will employ resourceful and accurate methods of data collection in order to deliver timely and pertinent information.
- The FIN is committed to improving its lines of communication among its oversight committees, Partners and constituencies in order to better identify expectations and effectively meet them through appropriate actions.
- The FIN will utilize state-of-the-art technology to store and deliver data.

The FIN staff will meet with appropriate staff members of the various agencies to help implement outreach plans specific to the FIN's standards; including implementation of trip ticket systems, for-hire and socio-economic data collection and other activities. The program partners will also act as resources for access to media and constituents. As the effectiveness of various outreach approaches is assessed, this document will be amended to reflect new ideas.

Target Audiences

The FIN's target audiences are ultimately the recreational and commercial fishermen of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean regions. The best way for fishermen to become familiar with the FIN is through a credible source they already know. Media, Partners and associations can be powerful outreach conduits for the FIN. These audiences will also come to rely on the FIN for Gulf and Caribbean marine fishery statistics for their own economic, research and/or lobbying efforts.

Commercial Fishermen, Dealers and Processors

One of the main groups that need to be targeted is the commercial fishermen. These individuals derive income from catching and selling living resources taken from inland or marine waters. Overall, this audience relies on fishing data trends and forecasts because of their obvious economic interests in successful yields.

Commercial fishermen are regulated by state and federal laws, such as those requiring species-specific fishing permits and careful reporting of fishing harvests. With this audience repeatedly conveying that they "don't trust the system," the ACCSP will have to address and demonstrate how it will operate differently than the more frequently mentioned central collection management agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

This target audience is more likely to feel skeptical of fishery data collection. Research findings suggest that this may be because they do not feel included in the process. They are not involved with analyzing the data, and they feel that they do not have access to the data once it is collected. Compounding their frustrations is their general consensus that agencies take too long to process the data, making it useless as a basis for making real-time management decisions. One of the FIN's overriding objectives is to prove to this audience that it is making the process more efficient, credible and attentive.

For-Hire Fishermen, Recreational Anglers and Fishing Clubs

The FIN recognizes the various needs of the groups who participate in recreational fisheries. Recreational and for-hire fishermen continually express more interest in fisheries statistics and management issues. These groups are likely to cooperate with data collection efforts, but need to understand their part in the process. The program partners' efforts to reach these various constituencies will have to be highly targeted. Specific needs of each group will be identified as the methodology for for-hire data collection is established. Clubs and retailers of recreational supplies may prove to be important audiences, as well as conduits for access to fishermen.

General Communication Tactics

All FIN outreach activities will be coordinated through state, management council and federal program partner agencies. The contacts at those agencies will be integral in helping the staff build relationships with key players in fishery communities and devising outreach plans appropriate for their respective jurisdictions. The following are general tactics that FIN will employ in spreading its messages throughout the region. Tactics specific to coastal regions and program partners are addressed later in this document.

Website and Collateral Design

The FIN will provide information regarding the program through printed and online media. For the FIN, it is essential to present a web-savvy image because it will ultimately promote its user-friendly online data-access capabilities. Printed, or collateral, material will also play an important role in outreach efforts. Media kits, joint mailings with program partners and promotional items will need to have a consistent design and message to establish the FIN as a brand.

As the program grows, the web site (<http://www.gsmfc.org/fin.html>) will grow as well and secure FIN's position as a data management authority. To simplify the process of gaining database access, an electronic application will be added to the login page. The simpler and more informative the website, the more user-friendly the FIN will appear to today's low-tech fishermen. To test the effectiveness of the website layout, a clickstream program should be employed to view where users are visiting and which information is of the most interest.

All avenues of print communication should be explored and evaluated based on program partners' needs for communication with their respective constituents. Promotional items, such as floatable key chains, ball caps and pencils are easy ways to establish short-term identity awareness. Longer-term educational tools must also be employed to accomplish the outreach goals for FIN. For media and general interest groups, the FIN will create a variety of materials, including FIN background information, state/regionally-specific fact sheets, news releases, list of ongoing projects and reprints of news articles. Routine mailings, particularly to commercial fishermen, can provide another vehicle for promotion of the FIN Data Management System.

Special Events and Tradeshows

The FIN should consider attending the variety of commercial fisheries trade shows held throughout the region. Attendance at these meetings will assist to elevate awareness of the FIN among those constituents. They should include Gulf Coast Boat & Sportsman's Show, Florida Sportsman Magazine's Fishing Show, Miami International Boat Show, Pensacola Boat Show, Florida State Boat & Sports Show, New Orleans Boat & Sportfishing Show, Mississippi Coast Boat, Sport & RV Show, Houston International Boat, Sport & Travel Show, and Shallow Water Fishing Exposition. FIN representatives will also attend smaller trade shows as funding resources permit.

Recreational fishing meetings and events will also be helpful in reaching constituents. Routine meetings of influential national, regional and local recreational fishing groups will provide a venue for making contacts and better learning the concerns that permeate those communities. Fishing tournaments will also provide exposure to constituents directly. Those can be treated like the commercial shows with regard to set-up, but the messages promoted would be specific to recreational fisheries.

The FIN Data Base Manager will provide the FIN representatives with a portable tool for demonstration of the FIN Data Management System and website for display at special events. This system will be a fully functional independent and flexible tool for showcasing the capabilities of the database. Without a reliable database demonstration, it would be awkward to explain database functionality.

Media Relations

Program partners are an excellent resource for publicity. In lieu of creating a printed FIN newsletter, contributing content to the online and hardcopy publications of program partners will be a more economical and meaningful method of outreach. The FIN can develop a press list with the editors from each program agency that produces a hardcopy or online newsletter.

The FIN should pay careful attention to news articles printed on fisheries issues. As it becomes appropriate, the FIN should contact reporters and editors to provide news and information on the FIN. Partner media lists will be an excellent resource for identifying those individuals.

Outreach to Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

The data available through the FIN will be beneficial to private-sector organizations. These may include non-profits involved in environmental issues, academia or for-profit entities. The FIN partners and staff will continually identify new user groups.

Partner-specific Outreach Infrastructure

Below is some partner-level outreach information and resources that the FIN can employ to accomplish the ACCSP's outreach goals.

Federal Partners

NOAA Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries public affairs and outreach are conducted at the national and regional levels. The NOAA Office of Public and Constituent Affairs has staff assigned to NOAA Fisheries Headquarters. This Office primarily handles media inquiries and press releases nationwide. In the Gulf and Caribbean areas, the NOAA Fisheries consists of the Southeast Region, encompassing Texas through Florida and Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. The Region has identified a public affairs contact. Programmatic staffs in Headquarters, the Regional Office, the Fishery Science Centers, and the three Laboratories along the Gulf and Caribbean Coasts conduct outreach primarily through project-specific information exchange with constituents and partners.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)

FWS is structured to operate regionally. There are offices of the FWS regions 2 and 4 all over the Gulf coast. The individuals who represent the agency on the FIN Committee and technical committees can provide the FIN direction necessary for work in conjunction with these offices.

Fishery Management Councils

The Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils will utilize data from the FIN to formulate fishery management plans and make management recommendations to NOAA Fisheries for federally managed waters. Each council has significant communication resources at their disposal. All have dedicated communications professionals on staff. They are also accustomed to reaching out to constituents at the fishery-level, with more fishery-specific access to constituents than any one state partner may have.

Gulf of Mexico

Florida

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) communicates with its fishermen through contacts at influential fishing organizations and through fishing publications. The FIN should work with the staff of FFWCC in Tallahassee and with the Florida Marine Research Institute in St. Petersburg to network with the key organizations and media. These relationships will open windows of opportunity to promote the FIN's online database to potential new users in Florida.

Alabama

The Alabama Marine Resources Division (AMRD) maintains relationships with individuals who are active in local fishing associations, both commercial and recreational. These individuals not only provide input on various topics which concern their respective organizations but also are instrumental in relaying information generated by AMRD back to members of their organizations. In addition, AMRD has the ability to disseminate information through its website, www.adcnr.state.al.us/mr, through publications like the popular Tide Calendar and contacts with outdoors writers from local newspapers. By utilizing these channels established by AMRD, FIN can promote its new online database directly with fishermen from diverse backgrounds who possess wide-ranging interests.

Mississippi

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) uses a variety of outreach tools, techniques and deliverables to effectively communicate fisheries information to the public in a timely manner. These include: active participation in numerous fisheries organizations; partnerships with government, educational, research and other entities; an extensive web site containing recreational and commercial fishing information, publications (e.g., brochures, news releases, videos and newsletter), special events, public hearings, surveys, media relations, educational talks, and hosting and presenting at fisheries conferences. The FIN should coordinate with the DMR's Fisheries staff and the DMR's Public Affairs Bureau to reach target user groups and media in Mississippi.

Louisiana

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries communicates with commercial and recreational fisherman through a variety of outreach techniques. Departmental personnel routinely speak to commercial and recreational organizations on regulatory and management issues as well as participating in educational programs with schools, public hearings and other media events. The Department disseminates weekly press releases on topics of interest to local television, radio and newspapers through the Public Information Section of LDWF. LDWF also maintains a web site, www.ldwf.state.us to provide user groups access to regulations and other online opportunities. The FIN should coordinate with LDWF Marine Fisheries and Public Information personnel to disseminate information through established channels as well as exploring new opportunities for public outreach.

Texas

The Texas Park and Wildlife Department (TPWD) uses several avenues for outreach. Information is provided to the public through news releases, video programs, television programs, interpretive programs and programs for smaller groups and school groups. Feedback is gathered and additional information is provided through the use of annual public hearings and scoping meetings as well as outreach meetings with user groups on specific issues. TPWD also utilizes advisory groups for specific commercial and recreational fisheries.

Caribbean

Puerto Rico

The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PRDNER) communicates with local recreational and commercial fishermen through a variety of means, including DNER web pages, contacts at and meetings with fishing organizations, as well as television and printed media. The FIN online database will be of great interest to fishing organizations and others who could benefit from access to fisheries data in Puerto Rico. DNER's Bureau of Fish and Wildlife will work with FIN to promote this electronic resource within the potential user base.

U.S. Virgin Islands

The U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) works with commercial and recreational fishermen through a Fishery Advisory Committee (FAC). The FAC discusses current needs and management practices and submits recommendations to the commissioner. The DFW also works through the commercial licensing process with the fishermen and reviews catch reports with the fishermen. This process allows the fishermen to understand how critical catch reporting is to managing the fishery. The DFW provides charter operators and recreational fishermen with optional catch logs. DFW staff attends and assist in the weigh-in for many fishing tournaments as well. Fishermen are also reached through key personnel during biostatistical surveys and by making public notices through the local media. An educational program maintained by the DFW reaches schools and the public through presentations and printed material. The FIN could use these channels to reach their audience and develop a working relationship with the public.

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC)

The GSMFC is comprised of the 5 Gulf of Mexico coastal states' marine resources management agencies. The GSMFC provides the FIN with coordination of activities and administrative support. The GSMFC is also the program partner that provides the FIN with the greatest access to fisheries managers and fishermen through their semi-annual meetings. These meetings bring the key players of every fishery to one place each quarter, providing the FIN an efficient platform for promoting the benefits of the Program.

Why Do Implementation Outreach?

Without a coordinated and consistent outreach plan for the FIN's mandatory standards, changes in policy and procedure will often be awkward and sometimes litigious for resource managers and constituents. If constituents are not properly informed by state authorities of changes in regulations, such as trip-level reporting, rumors and misconceptions will complicate implementation. There may also be law enforcement implications for constituents who do not comply with new regulations, either because they were uninformed or misinformed of the changes. To protect against unnecessary circumstances for otherwise cooperative constituents, effective communication of the FIN's standards implemented at the agency-level must be planned and administered.

Necessary Resources

Budget Resources

Prior to implementation of FIN-sponsored data collection activities, outreach needs to occur within the states where the activity will be conducted. Outreach plans need to be included in implementation budget proposals for the FIN or other possible funding sources. These budgets should include items such as mailing costs for letters and logbooks, travel to meetings with fishermen, means for fishermen to provide feedback, tradeshow fees and literature.

Human Resources

The ultimate target audiences of the FIN's outreach efforts are the Gulf and Caribbean coast's commercial and recreational fishermen and seafood dealers. While dealers and large seafood harvest companies can usually be identified through public directories, reaching independent fishermen effectively will require targeting groups of wider influence such as media, resource conservation associations and trade organizations. Those groups can be identified through numerous resources. The FIN staff has access to national media directories for identifying target media. Local chambers of commerce and telephone directories can provide contact information for recreational fishing clubs, tackle shops and trade organizations.

Fishermen who have benefitted from FIN-quality data collection should also be contacted for testimonials. For example, following hurricane Andrew, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries used trip-level reports to verify income of commercial fishermen who suffered financially from the effects of the storm. Those fishermen were given relief funds to keep them in business. Trip reports have also been used to raise size limits and to reopen fisheries that had been closed based on less-targeted stock assessment data. Some constituents should be willing, if not eager, to speak in favor of trip reporting after benefitting from such actions.

Communication Resources

Most FIN partners do routine mailings, such as license renewals. Coordinated efforts for sending important communications with these mailings can help to get the message out to constituents. Some jurisdictions will have statutory requirements for sending notices specifically for new regulations. Be sure to consult the proper legal and public affairs personnel in your jurisdiction to be sure regulations are met, and that the message is clear and complete for the recipient.

Contact the leaders of meetings that fishermen already attend, such as public fishery management meetings and routine meetings of trade organizations. Explain the new regulations and ask for some time at the next meeting to do a short presentation on the topic.

Share the Message

Timeline

Arrange a timeline for outreach. Understanding how much time you have to communicate your message will help you prioritize the media you target. For example, if you can only devote three days per month to outreach, you will not want to spend them talking to reporters for publications your constituents are not likely to read. Instead, spend your time presenting the issue at large association meetings, or with widely circulated trade publications. Upon evaluating your opportunities, be sure to register for the tradeshow you plan to attend well in advance.

Mailings

Send letters to constituents explaining the nature of the new regulation. The letters are important and should communicate that the program partner is sensitive to the increased burden to the industry. The FIN can include brochures that explain the program and its benefits to constituents throughout the region.

Press Release

Your agency's public affairs office can help you write a press release. When it is written, send it via the preferred manner for the publication (i.e. email, fax, U.S. Mail) to the reporter you would like to write about it. Call the reporter within two to three days to see if he or she would like to meet to talk about the issue. If there is no reporter you wish to cover the story, you can usually send a press release to the attention of the Assignment Editor. In smaller markets where commercial fishing is a major industry, you may also contact television reporters. A press release should always have a contact name and phone number at the bottom. Reporters always have deadlines, so the contact should be available to them at all times.

Special Events

Following the prioritized timeline, attend the meetings and tradeshow and that will most efficiently reach the largest number of constituents possible. Always arrange ahead of time to have an attractive table for your graphics and literature. Wear something that will allow attendees to easily identify your affiliation. These are particularly important at tradeshow where there is chaotic activity and no single message is easily noticed. In general, the more time you spend planning outreach, the less time you spend working on it.

Looking Forward

This outreach strategic plan addresses what will happen in the next three to five years, but beyond that, there is much to consider. Changes will occur to maintain the FIN's prominence in the commercial and recreational fishing communities it serves. As demographics and technology change, it will also be incumbent on the FIN to evaluate and alter its outreach methods to accommodate those.

Evaluation

Evaluation is key to determining whether tactics are successful in meeting the FIN's outreach goals. Some tools for measuring outreach effectiveness may include: Clickstream data for regular monitoring of website traffic, *applications received for database access*, a *media* clipping service to catalogue media interest. Contracted surveys of awareness levels may be appropriate in the first three years.

Changing Demographics

Younger fishermen are joining their parents on the water every day. Young commercial fishermen attending public hearings are hungry for information regarding the future of their industry. Finding better and more direct ways of reaching them with the FIN message will have a huge impact on the attitudes and perceptions the FIN will face in the future. Demographic information on their non-fishing interests and technical skills will also help the FIN with future strategic planning. Keeping the next generation in mind and looking to them for guidance, the FIN could rise above the negative attitudes fishermen often develop toward state and federal entities.

FIN/ACCSP Registration Tracking Work Group
Meeting Summary
March 26-27 20, 2002
Silver Spring, MD

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. and the following people were present:

Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Cheri Patterson, NHFG, Durham, NH
John Poffenberger, NMFS, Miami, FL
Christine Johnson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Hoey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Mark Holliday, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Tom Hoopes, MDMF, Gloucester, MA
Roland Tanner, NMFS, Gloucester, MA
Dee Lupton, NCMF, Morehead City, NC
Daniel Matos, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Robert Sadler, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Steve Koplin, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Amy Gautam, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Liz Pritchard, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Glen Taylor, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Susan Abbott Jamison, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Mike Cahall, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Mike Sestak, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Overview of Meeting Objectives

D. Donaldson stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to continue the development of the registration tracking module, which will provide a unique identifier for vessels, fishermen, and dealers involved in commercial fisheries that is trackable through geographic location and time.

Presentation of NMFS Licensing/Permitting System

J. Hoey presented information regarding the integration of regional registration systems to support national Fisheries Information System (FIS). These systems will support the increasing data needs for fisheries management in the United States. The design of these systems were outlined in the Vessel Registration System (VRS)/FIS Implementation Report which NMFS submitted to Congress. The system is designed to improve quantity, quality, and timeliness of data used for management. It also supports a web-based customer and public access for permit information, applications, permit renewals, electronic data submission and review. It is important to integrate the regional registration systems because it allows for the tracking of

vessels, people, and companies as they participate in different regional and seasonal fisheries. The standardization of these systems provides opportunities to enhance information technologies. It also supports the daily operations in fisheries by integrating the registration information with logbook and landings reports. This enhances the data quality assurance, processing efficiency and timeliness. J. Hoey noted that once integration is complete and people, vessels, and businesses are uniquely identified across federal fisheries there would be new opportunities for electronic reporting and data sharing. The NMFS is in the process of enhancing their various systems that should improve the management process. The enhancements include the NMFS Permit System improvements; conversion and enhancement of SERO Permit System (ST1); conversion of Legacy System data into Oracle; development of data entry screens for renewals and new permits which allows for the enhanced tracking of people, vessels, and companies. The SERO Permit Staff are the primary customers or clients. There is extensive verification and validation required for most permits and the specific permits requirements vary and are dynamic. Database design identified critical vessel, person, and business variables consistently used in other NMFS Permit Systems as well as in the FIS and Regional Cooperative Statistics Systems (ACCSP, FIN, PacFIN AkFIN). The system design is modular so that region or permit specific rules and requirements can be added through alternative screens. J. Hoey provided the group with a status of the SERO (ST1) conversion. The initial database design, system screens, and business routines have been developed, tested, and reviewed with client staff. The data conversions have been extensively tested and the data correction and recovery are ongoing. It was noted that a high proportion of records (>85%) are correctly converted, which account for tens of thousands of vessel and/or dealer-permit records. The system is deployed and ongoing training is underway. It is anticipated that debugging, refinements, and extensive data testing will continue through April. The old system (Legacy) is being maintained for data exploration and for troubleshooting permit upgrades limits. The plan is to sequentially build other permit system entries (portals) to the central tables for permits, vessels, people and businesses. The high-seas and NERO systems were given priority since these enhancements would provide for coordination between NMFS and ASMFC GSMFC.

J. Hoey then demonstrated to the group the system that has been designed for the Southeast Region Office (SERO). He outlined some of the short-term project tasks such as NMFS SERO transfer history recovery; planning for integration of the new system with other NMFS Atlantic & Gulf permit programs (NERO, High Seas, HMS, MMC); dealer permit reconciliation (which is underway); vessel permit reconciliation (which is funded through ACCSP); marine mammal certificates (which is planned for data feeds and query mode possible.); and the FIN and ACCSP activities (which is underway). He outlined the activities under the FIN and ACCSP projects. Regarding the dealer permit reconciliation (using 1999-2000 pilot data), NMFS needs continued FIN and ACCSP partner support to provide follow-up on questionable records and updated lists; compare available variables against FIN and ACCSP minimum data elements; establish regular standardized data feeds and provided feedback on front-end query module for dealers and vessels. Potentially, there are some funds to assist in some of these tasks. Regarding the vessel permit reconciliation, the NMFS is awaiting the SERO conversion of all active records before it can proceed. These records need to be cross-reference with Coast Guard documentation and other sources. The FIN and ACCSP partner need to provide continued support such as comparison of available variables against minimum data elements; establish regular standardized data feeds; and development of a front-end query module for dealers and vessels.

Discussion of Utilization of NMFS System for ACCSP and FIN Registration Tracking Modules

The group discussed the unique identifier, which allows for the tracking of vessels, fishermen and dealers. The unique identifier is the key to the system. The definition of the identifier needs to be clearly stated so partner understand the elements that are necessary to compile the identifier. The group clarified that for businesses and corporations, the unique identifier will be the Federal employee ID number. For vessels that are Coast Guard documented, the Coast Guard number will be used as the unique ID and for state-registered vessel, the Hull Identification Number (HIN) will be the ID. J. Hoey noted that in the pilot that NMFS is doing, the identifier for fishermen uniquely classified individual participants most of the time. The group discussed the need for a database that houses the unique identifiers. It is imperative that this database be maintained and routinely updated to ensure that each identifier is truly unique. The maintenance of the database needs to focus on a national scale since there is fishing activity on the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific coasts. After some discussion, the group agreed that NMFS should be responsible for maintaining a master database for all the unique IDs. The reason for this decision is that NMFS examines issues on a national scope. Both FIN and ACCSP are regional programs and would not be involved in maintaining IDs from outside their regions. Therefore, NMFS is the logical choice for providing this focus. The group then focused on reviewing the list of minimum data elements for vessels, fishermen and dealers. Although the list of data elements is identified as being necessary, there is a smaller list of elements that are critical. For vessels, these elements are the HIN, date of birth (or incorporation), state of registration, and vessel length. For fishermen and dealers, these elements are the name, date of birth (or incorporation) and Federal Tax ID number. The revised list of data elements is attached and represents the administrative record for this portion of the meeting.

Next Steps for Implementation of ACCSP and FIN Registration Tracking Modules

The group discussed the next steps for the implementation of the module. It was decided that program partners need to begin collecting all the identified data elements as soon as possible. Once all partners have modified their licensing system to collect the needed information, routine data feeds into the FIN and ACCSP Data Management Systems need to be established. It was agreed that the data feeds would be on the same schedule as the catch/effort data. The group then discussed the need for a similar activity for recreational fisheries. After some discussion, it was decided that there was not a need for this activity on the recreational side since it was not a priority in the Fishery Information System.

Since the collection of the minimum data elements by all program partners will take some time to implement, the FIN, ACCSP and NMFS need to continue with the pilot activities to continue to test the NMFS system. Due to timing issues, it will probably be 16-18 months before ACCSP to get full approval of the recommendations from this meeting. The FIN will be able to address the recommendations by June 2002. The NMFS stated that actions to approve these recommendations need to happen as soon as possible. D. Donaldson and M. Cahall stated that both FIN and ACCSP support the activities of NMFS regarding the development of the permitting system and program partners will continue to cooperate with NMFS in providing the needed data and other necessary information. It is important to institutionalize the loads of

vessel, dealer and fishermen data to NMFS so work can continue on the development of the system. The group agreed this was a critical activity and recommended that states continue provide NMFS with the needed databases.

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

March 27, 2002

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

Other Business

The group discussed the permitting questionnaire results for each of the program partners. It was pointed out that since there have been some modifications to the minimum data elements, the questionnaire needs to be updated by the program partners and discussed by the FIN and ACCSP. When updating the questionnaire, all sources of these data need to be explored. Some of these elements may not be collected by state licensing programs but could still be available through other sources (Coast Guard records, etc.). The updated questionnaire will be presented to FIN and ACCSP for their consideration and will be used to develop strategies to implementing the collection of all necessary data elements. The group then discussed the role of the work group. The group explored the various possibilities. After some discussion, the group believed the Work Group should monitor the data reviews from the program partners and review the information that has been provided to NMFS. In addition, the Work Group will continue to address issues and problems raised by the FIN and ACCSP. The group also discussed the possibility of holding another meeting later this year. The potential topics to be discussed included an update on the NMFS permitting system and troubleshooting for problems that have arisen during the project. As the proposed meeting time nears, staff will determine the need for another meeting.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

FIN Social/Economic Work Group

Attachment G

Meeting summary

May 9, 2002

Miami, Florida

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. and the following people were present:

Juan Agar, NMFS, Miami, FL

Rita Curtis, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Jack Isaacs, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Tony Lamberte, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Doug Haymans, GDNR, Brunswick, GA

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Meeting/Overview of FIN

D. Donaldson stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to develop several social/economic data collection projects for funding consideration in 2003. Since there were some new people around the table, he provided a brief overview of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN). The FIN consists of two major components: Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN) and Recreational Fisheries Information Network [RecFIN(SE)]. The FIN is a state/federal cooperative program to 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. D. Donaldson discussed the organizational structures for the program that outlined the different modules of data collection and management and outreach. For this meeting, the charge to this group is to develop a methodology for the collection of social/economic data for the commercial fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. This activity will be considered for funding in 2003.

The group then discussed the process and deadlines for these pilot studies. The process for funding these activities will be as follows: 1) May 2002 - Social/Economic Work Group develops pilot study(s); 2) June 2002 - FIN Committee reviews list of potential activities for funding and makes recommendations for which activities to include; 3) August 2002 - State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee will review FIN Committee's list and make a final decision about which activities to include in 2003 FIN cooperative agreement; and 4) September 2002 - 2003 FIN cooperative agreement is submitted to NMFS for funding.

Review of Current Social/Economic Activities

J. Agar provided an overview of on-going social/economic activities in the Southeast Region. He stated that the collection of timely socio-economic data is important because it helps establish socio-economic baselines, meets regulatory requirements, and develops models to investigate the consequences of management options. He reviewed some of the NMFS past and current survey efforts in the Southeast such as Gulf of Mexico and Florida Keys Reef-fish fishery (Waters *et al*), South Atlantic Snapper-grouper and Mackerel fishery (Waters and Maharaj), Gulf of Mexico Shrimp fishery (Travis), North Carolina/Louisiana King and Spanish

Mackerel fishery (Vondruska), and Caribbean Fish trap fishery (Waters and Agar). Some of the information collected includes demographics and fishing history, capital investment, current fishing practices, catches and revenues, and fixed and variable costs. While all of NMFS survey efforts collected valuable background and demographic information, most of the sampling efforts had a conceptual economic model in mind to help NMFS meet regulatory requirements. Before any data collection activity begins, researchers need to determine what data will be used to assess the fisheries. In addition, they need to identify potential models for data that will allow for the prioritization of relevant variables based on future use. Once the relevant variables have been identified, efforts should be made to keep the questions simple. He provides examples of some questions that work as well as those to avoid. There are a wide variety of sampling methodologies for socio-economic data collection such as mail and telephone surveys, personal interviews, and voluntary add-ons questionnaires in logbooks.

The choice of methods depends on the objectives of the study, sampling instrument, time, data availability and costs. The scope of study depends on management needs, timing and cost. To ensure the success of the survey, it is also better to start small and then expand the survey once activities have become accepted by the survey participants. J. Agar provided some lessons learned from NMFS experience in conducting socio-economic surveys. These lessons included that Office of Management and Budget (OMB) process took longer than expected, when possible work with the industry, pretest the survey instrument, start small and be flexible, and devote sufficient resources to data management.

D. Haymans provided a brief overview of the ACCSP. The ACCSP is a comparable program to the FIN. One of the main goals of the program is to develop a cooperative data collection and management program for the Atlantic coast. In addition, the program provides these data in a standardized format so fisheries managers and researchers can easily access and use the data in the management of the resources. The ACCSP has been conducting a Commercial Harvesters Pilot Study for the past several years. The data collection is being conducted in the Northeast Region commercial summer flounder fishery and blue crab fishery in Georgia. Since D. Haymans is working on the blue crab activities in Georgia, he focused his comments regarding this survey. He noted that the blue crab fishery in Georgia does not fit the model developed by ACCSP for large boat fisheries. Therefore, there were some modifications made to the survey methodology as the survey continued. Georgia utilized a sociologist to conduct the field interviews. The reason for using a sociologist is that a sociologist is better equipped to answer questions regarding the rationale for asking the various questions as well as providing background information about social/economic data. At the beginning of the survey, the data was collected exclusively by personal interviews. As the survey progressed, the data was collected via both personal interviews as well as telephone calls. As the fishermen become more familiar with the questions and develop a rapport with the interviewer, samplers can use a telephone survey to collect the data. Georgia personnel examined the first year of data and compared the personal interviews vs. the telephone data and found that there was no significant difference between the two collection methods.

Development of Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study in the Gulf of Mexico

D. Donaldson stated that based on the discussion regarding current activities, the group needs to develop some ideas about the types of commercial social/economic data needed in the Southeast Region. The group then discussed the development of a social/economic commercial

pilot study.

D. Donaldson noted that the first step in this process is to identify the fishery that FIN would like to focus their data collection activity. The group mentioned the red snapper and inshore shrimp fisheries. It was decided that personal interviews would be used to collect the information. After some discussion, the group decided on two possibilities for commercial social/economic surveys. The first possibility is cost and earnings survey of gulf reef fish permit holders. This would be conducted Gulf-wide and would be a precursor to the Gulf reef fish logbook economic add-on (scheduled for 2004). It would cover a Gulf-wide gap for economic data in the red snapper fishery. The other possibility is annual/fixed cost and socio-demographic survey of the inshore shrimp fishery. This survey would also be conducted Gulf-wide and complement the offshore shrimp fishery survey scheduled to be conducted by NMFS. By conducting the inshore survey, it will give a more complete picture of the shrimp fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. Summaries of each of the proposed projects are attached.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

PROPOSAL TO COLLECT SOCIOECONOMIC DATA FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO INSHORE SHRIMP FISHERY

Costs and returns data was last collected for the Gulf shrimp fishery in 1992. During this effort, data was obtained only for a portion of the offshore fleet based in Texas. Subsequent attempts to collect similar data have been plagued by their small scope and/or their limited duration. Current economic and social data is needed for the Gulf shrimp fishery as a whole in order to accurately assess the positive and/or negative impacts of federal rules and regulations. Such assessments are mandated under Executive Order 12866, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, Magnuson-Stevens/Sustainable Fisheries Acts (and the National Standards attached thereto), and the Endangered Species Act, among others. According to the Small Business Administration, fluctuations in short term profitability are important in determining whether or not small businesses are forced to exit an industry. According to various lawsuits involving the shrimp industry and NMFS, industry has severely criticized the accuracy of previous social and economic analyses related to particular Council actions. If accurate socioeconomic data is not available, then the social and economic assessments of management alternatives will be invalid, thereby potentially leading the Council to make poor management decisions. Thus, continuous data collection of cost and earnings data is needed to satisfy these various mandates and help ensure that good management decisions are made.

A mechanism is needed for collecting cost and revenue data on an ongoing basis so that fluctuations in profits (net revenue) can be measured. Trip revenue and costs can vary within a year depending on numerous factors that include fishery management regulations (such as trip limits, time/area closures, etc.), fluctuations in abundance (due to changes in various environmental factors), and market conditions (such as fuel prices). In order to generate a complete cost-earnings profile of a fishery, annual or fixed cost information should also be collected on a continuous basis.

In 2003, FIN will focus on activities to design and pretest cost-earnings questionnaires, design the outreach program and prepare materials, formulate the econometric models to conduct the analyses, design reports for fishermen, carry out an extensive outreach program to inform fishermen about these activities and obtain their cooperation and implement the data collection activities.

Specific Steps for Design, Outreach, and Implementation of Data Collection Program

Information on annual/fixed costs and socio-demographic data is needed and should be collected using port agents to collect such information from the sampled vessels via an annual, in-person interview. There are various reasons for using personal interview (versus some other method). One of the reasons is that fishermen require a fair amount of preparation time in order to generate information on annual/fixed costs. Such information is not easy to recall, and must usually be found in accounting or tax records. By conducting interviews, ample enough time can be provided for the fishermen to compile the necessary information. This data collection program would largely mirror the approach being used in the two ACCSP pilot studies that are collecting socioeconomic information on blue crab fishermen in Georgia and summer flounder

permit holders along the Atlantic seaboard.

Examples of fixed/annual cost data to be collected would include: repair and maintenance expenses (gear and boat related, including drydock), purchases of new/additional gear and capital (i.e. improvements in the gear, fishing technology, and the vessel), boat dockage/rent/utility expenses, insurance expenses (hull, P and I, medical), expenditures on fishing licenses and permits, loan payments on the boat, business taxes related to the boat, office expenses (accounting, legal costs, etc.), costs associated with vehicles related to the boat's operations, and any other vessel related expenditures (travel expenses, relocation expenses, etc.). Other potential data might include questions asking for the percentage of the boat's total revenue that comes from shrimping, the number of days per year the vessel is involved in shrimping activities, and the total number of days the boat is fished in a given year (including all commercial and for-hire activity). These latter three questions would help address the issue of fishermen's dependence on the shrimp fishery.

With respect to socio-demographic information, data to be collected would include questions regarding: level of fishing experience, age, education level, marital status, ethnicity/race, health status, language/fluency in English, religion, living arrangements (e.g. rent or own home), community affiliation, affiliation with fishing organizations, household income and size, and reliance on the shrimp fishery and commercial fishing in general. Such information should be collected not only for the owner and/or captain, but also the crew of the sampled vessels. This information is needed, not only for descriptive purposes, but also to discern whether certain groups or types of fishermen, their households, and thus the communities within which they reside will be differentially impacted by alternative management measures.

Another important aspect of this project is the design of appropriate summary data reports to be distributed to fishermen participating in the program. Fishermen have regularly indicated that: 1) they do not know what happens to the data they provide to NMFS and other agencies, 2) no follow-up is conducted after data is submitted, and 3) they never receive data on the fisheries for which they report on and in which they participate. Distributing these reports to industry participants is expected to improve cooperation with the program and allow for data verification.

The Gulf States, Commission and NMFS will all be involved in this project. The GSMFC will provide the coordination and administration of this project. This will include coordination of outreach meetings, training meetings and overall project coordination. The states will be involved in the collection of the data as well as entry of the data. The NMFS will participate in the development of the survey and outreach materials. This activity will be coordinated with a survey of offshore shrimp fishermen being conducted by the NMFS.

Project Tasks

The following tasks will be completed:

- Conduct outreach meetings with commercial fishermen in the Gulf inshore shrimp

fishery to provide input on data collection methods, questionnaires, and outreach approaches. Meetings should be held across the Gulf region in major ports for the shrimp fishery.

- Design and pretest the questionnaires for annual/fixed costs, and socio-demographic data.
- Review the proposed data collection methodology and questionnaires by an appropriate advisory committee(s).
- Provide training to samplers that will explain the need for the data, how to interpret the specific questions being asked, and how to handle the interview process.
- Design summary reports for participants in the program.
- Prepare and distribute the outreach materials and complete the outreach program.
- Implement data collection activities.
- Monitor and evaluate survey implementation.
- Summarize and review data.

DESIGN OF COST AND EARNINGS DATA COLLECTION PROGRAM FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO REEF FISH FISHERY

There are a number of federal mandates that require economic analyses, which depend on cost and returns information. In particular, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has changed the guidelines for determination of a significant rule under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA). According to SBA, fluctuations in short term profitability is important in determining whether or not small businesses are forced to exit an industry. Thus, continuous data collection of cost and earnings data is needed to satisfy these analytical requirements, and to avoid future lawsuits under RFA. Such data is also needed to satisfy requirements as per the national standards under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and E. O. 12866.

A mechanism is needed for collecting cost and revenue data on an ongoing basis so that fluctuations in profits (net revenue) can be measured. Trip revenue and costs can vary within a year depending on numerous factors that include fishery management regulations (such as trip limits, time/area closures, etc.), fluctuations in fish abundance, and market conditions. In order to generate a complete cost-earnings profile of a fishery, annual or fixed cost information should also be collected on a continuous basis.

In 2003, FIN will focus on activities to design and pretest cost-earnings questionnaire, design the outreach program and prepare materials, formulate the econometric models to conduct the analyses, design reports for fishermen, carry out an extensive outreach program to inform fishermen about these activities and obtain their cooperation and implement the data collection activities.

Specific Steps for Design, Outreach, and Implementation of Data Collection Program

There are a number of ways to collect continuous cost-earnings data. An economic add-on to the existing logbook program or in-person interviews may be a cost-effective means to collect cost-earnings data on an ongoing basis for the reef fish fishery. However, whether these approaches are advisable and the specific details of such a program will be determined from meetings with fishermen and input from the Advisory committee.

Information on annual/fixed costs and socio-demographic data is needed and should be collected using port agents to collect such information from the sampled vessels via an annual, in-person interview. There are various reasons for using personal interview (versus some other method). One of the reasons is that fishermen require a fair amount of preparation time in order to generate information on annual/fixed costs. Such information is not easy to recall, and must usually be found in accounting or tax records. By conducting interviews, ample enough time can be provided for the fishermen to compile the necessary information. This data collection program would largely mirror the approach being used in the two ACCSP pilot studies that are collecting socioeconomic information on blue crab fishermen in Georgia and summer flounder permit holders along the Atlantic seaboard.

An intense, high quality outreach program for fishermen is necessary prior to implementing any economic data collection program. Several meetings should be held with fishermen to discuss data collection methodologies, design the questionnaire, and design outreach materials and strategies.

Another important part of this project is the design of appropriate summary data reports to be distributed to fishermen participating in the program. Fishermen have regularly indicated that: 1) they do not know what happens to the data they provide to NMFS and other agencies, 2) no follow-up is conducted after data is submitted, and 3) they never receive data on the fisheries for which they report on and in which they participate. Distributing these reports is expected to improve compliance and allow for data verification.

Project Tasks

Available funds should be used for the following tasks:

- A meeting with economists to design this data collection program.
- Various meetings with commercial fishermen in the reef fish fishery to help design the questionnaires and outreach materials.
- Design and pretest the questionnaire for annual/fixed costs in this fishery.
- Design summary reports for participants in the program.
- Prepare and distribute the outreach materials and complete the outreach program.
- Implement data collection activities.
- Monitor and evaluate survey implementation.
- Summarize and review data.

Harriet Perry

**DERELICT TRAP TASK FORCE
MINUTES
June 10-11, 2002
Tampa, FL**

The Derelict Trap Task Force was called to order by Chair Harriet Perry at 1:30 p.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Present

Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Gary Graham, TAEX, Palacios, TX
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Harriet Perry, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Larry E. Young, TPWD, Austin, TX

Members Absent

Bob Fairbank, Recreational Rep, Gulfport, MS
Leslie Hartman, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Mark LaSalle, MSU CREC, Biloxi, MS
Robert Metz, Texas A&M Marine Advisory Service, Palacios, TX

Guests

Chris Debidisco, University of Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL
Art Morris, TPWD, Austin, TX
Don Sweat, Florida Sea Grant Advisory Service, Tampa, FL
Kathy Wang, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

S. VanderKooy welcomed the group and apologized for the confusion regarding this afternoon's session. The meeting will run this afternoon, all day tomorrow (Tuesday), and Wednesday morning, if necessary.

H. Perry had several announcements. The GSMFC Crab Subcommittee has been invited to participate in a special session on blue crabs during the National Shellfisheries Association Meeting, April 13-17, 2003, in New Orleans, Louisiana. In addition, The Crustacean Society will host another blue crab symposium during their early summer meeting in 2003. The subcommittee will act as a point of contact for the gulf.

H. Perry reported that since the group's organizational meeting, Ralph Rayburn (Texas Sea Grant) had contacted the Commission office regarding funds that are being made available to Sea Grant for

educational purposes. He indicated that the Commission may be the vehicle to achieve their regional goal for derelict trap education. H. Perry reported that she and S. VanderKooy subsequently attended a meeting with Sea Grant in Baton Rouge. It had been decided that the funds would remain within the advisory service and not be contracted with the Commission.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

Adoption of Minutes

T. Floyd moved to adopt the minutes of the meeting held March 4-5, 2002, in Biloxi, Mississippi, as written. T. Wagner seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Derelict Trap/Community-Based Restoration Program Proposal

In response to the request for proposals published via *The Federal Register* on February 12, 2002, the task force had agreed to submit for funds to assist and support local-state-federal cooperative programs for the public education on and recovery of derelict (lost or abandoned) traps in the Gulf of Mexico region. Each state would receive \$46,000 per year for three years to support derelict trap recovery programs.

It was later determined that Florida would not participate in the first year (2003) of the effort since their program is currently undergoing evaluation. The existing trap removal program in Florida is focused primarily on stone crab and spiny lobster fisheries. Expansion to include other fisheries may be feasible at a later date.

Louisiana would also not be able to expend the proposed amount but would need partial funding to begin program investigation and planning. Proposals were received from Texas and Mississippi. The group agreed to a revised budgetary breakdown for the first year: Florida (\$0); Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas (\$72,000 each); Louisiana (\$15,000); and administrative costs to GSMFC (\$20,000). Budgets should be revised and complete proposals resubmitted to GSMFC as soon as possible.

Alabama Trap Cleanup

H. Perry reported that a group from the task force will be participating in the Saturday, June 15 trap cleanup in Alabama. The group will meet at the Commission office in Ocean Springs and drive over to Bayou La Batre, where they will be met by M. Van Hoose (ADCNR), who will act as their guide during the clean up. Several shallow-water boats will be provided by the MDMR and GCRL. Supplies and refreshments are being provided by the agencies involved.

The Alabama program is a coordinated effort initiated by the Alabama Seafood Association, Coastal Conservation Association, and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program. The Marine Resources Division announced a seven-day closed season for the taking of crabs by the use of crab traps

(commercial or recreational) in areas that are opened to shrimping on the initial opening day of the 2002 shrimp season. A one-day closed season for the taking of crabs by the use of crab traps (commercial or recreational) within 100 yards of the Alabama shoreline on Saturday, June 15, 2002 was also established. Deep and shallow water traps will be targeted. The second phase of Alabama's clean up is being planned for the upcoming winter.

Recess & Reconvene

The group recessed at 5:45 p.m. H. Perry reconvened the meeting Tuesday, June 11, 2002 at 8:00 a.m. She introduced Kathy Wang from the NMFS Protected Species Group who is here to discuss the categorization of the blue crab fishery.

Marine Mammal/Crab Trap Discussion

H. Perry introduced Kathy Wang with the National Marine Fisheries Service in St. Petersburg, Florida. Perry asked if the NMFS intends to list [in the upcoming *Federal Register*] and propose that the crab fishery be changed from Category III to Category II.

While Wang noted that the final decision has not been made, she believes they will propose to move the fishery to Category II. She explained that Wayne McFee (NMFS, Charleston) was asked to review Gulf records, and he confirmed those listed as crab trap interactions. He found several other interactions that he believes to be trap interactions, but cannot be confirmed. Because of the potential biological removal (PBRs) levels and the bays being so small, the situation triggers movement from a Category III to II. Another difficulty is the lack of stranding observers in the Gulf. If there were more observers, they believe other interactions would be confirmed as crab trap interactions.

Dr. Wang noted that a Stranding Network Meeting will be held to discuss improvements to the program at the Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for August, and the group may want to attend.

H. Perry inquired whether their approach can be defended legally. Wang explained that population biologists have done a lot of work to lay out the management regime. Their research is sound and has been presented to the IWC. Ten-year modeling has been done to determine population projections. Keith Mullen (NMFS, Pascagoula) projected population estimates for the Gulf of Mexico.

The NMFS is trying to integrate with the states so that fishermen will not have additional paperwork and fees. That has not been fully accomplished for the Gulf of Mexico as yet, but once completed they will not have to submit the \$25 registration fee. Florida is already in the system because the Atlantic States have been integrated into their registration system. The integration acts as a public outreach tool so that the NMFS can educate the fishermen to avoid interactions with dolphins. It also authorizes and releases the fisherman from liability in the event of an accidental take of a dolphin.

The group concurred that they still have concerns whether one can definitively tie dolphin interactions to crab traps. With the derelict trap cleanups being conducted in the Gulf, interaction should decrease. Wang noted that McFee's report does note the positive impact from trap cleanups which should be strongly encouraged by the NMFS. However, dolphins will still go after bait in active traps.

H. Perry suggested that Wayne McFee and Keith Mullen be invited to discuss the crab fishery from Category III to Category II. The group concurred, and S. VanderKooy agreed to place the item on the S-FFMC agenda. Ms. Wang will provide background materials to both, and an official invitation will be forthcoming from the Commission.

Sea Grant

H. Perry introduced Don Sweat, Florida Sea Grant Advisory Service, who expressed concerns that the problem is being addressed in a widespread manner, and it may not be necessary. He has been approached by the Organized Fishermen of Florida which proposed that regional workshops be performed in Florida to determine the extent of the problem. If a problem is found, he would prefer it be corrected internally rather than through a regional panel. H. Perry clarified that this group was approached three years ago by the S-FFMC, specifically Florida's representative, to examine the problem. They were then approached by Sea Grant representatives to assist in the development of educational materials. The task force was under the impression that Sea Grant was here to explain how the groups would work together. G. Graham volunteered to investigate current progress and intentions within Sea Grant and report back to the task force.

PowerPoint Presentation

The task force edited the presentation, and G. Graham volunteered to work further on the project. A work session was tentatively scheduled with H. Perry at GCRL on Wednesday, July 24.

Derelict Trap Removal Program Outline

The task force drafted an outline for a gulf-wide removal program document (see Attachment 1). The group agreed to include source documents within the appendix including data forms; current program reports from Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama; the PowerPoint presentation under development; and the GSMFC document *Derelict Crab Traps and Trap Removal Programs*. T. Wagner volunteered to clean up and further develop the program document immediately. That document will be redistributed for task force review, and comments and appendices are due to the GSMFC office on Thursday, July 25.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Derelict Trap Task Force was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, August 22 and Friday, August 23, in a northcentral Gulf location.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned Tuesday, June 11 at 5:05 p.m.

Derelict Trap Removal Program

Outline

Planning Committee

- Program Coordinator
 - Staff organization
 - Donation solicitation
 - Media & public contact

Legislation

- Review ordinances & statutes
- Obtain authority to remove traps
- Public hearings (if necessary)
- Program approval
- Target information to both the recreational & commercial crab fishing communities
- Formulate removal to be the least-disruptive to the fishery
- Work with industry in setting up removal time
- Allow for intermittent closures
- Define traps as litter (under public safety codes)
 - Proof that a trap is not private property/declaration as litter prevents resale

Publicity

- Broad-release media bulletins
- Conservation group presentations & newsletters
- Volunteer solicitation
- Outdoor writers & local TV/radio spots
- Public service announcements
- Letters or postcards to all crab & finfish license holders
- Post notices/posters at dealers' businesses, boat ramps, fish houses

In-house Logistics

- Lead agency(s) to prepare staffing & boat plan.
- Game warden presence & assistance
- Communication staff coordinate with media just prior to event
- Trap counters
- Develop budgeting codes (personnel/mileage/vehicles) to track expenses

Data Collection

(Address complaints regarding data collection – subjectivity of the information.)

Data elements:

- Was trap lying on seagrass?
- Was trap on land or in water?
- Was i.d. present? (gear tag, # on buoy)
- Condition of trap – usable or non-usable?
- Was a degradable panel present?

- If present, was the degradable panel open?
- Were escape vents/rings present?
- Was bycatch present? (Blue crab, stone crab, diamondback terrapin, other species)

Pencils

Zip-lock bags

Waterproof cards

Logistics

Approval for temporary onshore disposal

Permission to use facilities as landing sites (county/city/private)

Aerial flyovers to locate traps (coordination with the menhaden fishery?)

Needed vessels – air boats, barges

Coordination with other state/government agencies (federal reserves/refuges)

- Guidelines to allow onshore movement, trespassing, etc.

Solicitation of volunteers

- Conservation groups
- Fishing clubs,
- USCG Auxiliary (helpful in the case of water emergencies-direct line to Coast Guard)
- EMTs (first aid standby)
- Commercial & recreational fishermen
- University Clubs (science, fisheries)
- Graduate students
- Marine Mammal Stranding Network
- Other State/Federal Agencies (USFWS, NMFS, GSMFC, DEQ)
- Private industry (Chevron, casinos, barge companies)
- Nature Conservancy
- SeaBees & other military volunteer groups
- Fishing guides
- Kayak clubs

Trap Disposal

Barges/larger vessels for on-the-water disposal

Buoy/rope separation (Fiskars)

Crushing apparatus (DOT steam roller, paving company, heavy equipment)

Dumpsters & associated hauling to disposal/recycling sites

Disposal facilities (landfills-public and private)

Waivers for dumping fees

Recycling facilities

Volunteers

Liability - release form discourages law suits

Supplies (gloves, hooks, tarps, first aid kits, refreshments)

Site Preparation

Program review

Safety review

Navigation directions

Map review (trap concentrations, location of barges/larger vessels for disposal)

Supply distribution

Dumpsters

Crushing equipment

Media invitations day of event

Invite dignitaries

On-land assistance (number of incoming traps)

Data collection

Trap counts

Site coordinators

Program Review & Reporting

draft

July 11, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Striped Bass TTF
FROM: Steve VanderKooy
SUBJECT: Meeting Summary

Once again we had a rather small showing for our task force meeting. For the second meeting in a row, we did not have a quorum. The lack of participation makes it very difficult to get work done, and we keep losing money on our room block due to the low turnout. Please let me know as early as possible if you will be unable to attend the next meeting (tentatively scheduled October 2-4). Doug and I have discussed the problem, and we will assume that those of you who have not participated in the past will not in the future.

The enclosed FMP draft on CD-Rom will serve as the meeting summary from New Orleans. Please make note of the new materials which is denoted by **yellow highlighting**. Notes to authors are in **bold**, and general reminders are in *italics*. Several new sections have been added – the river descriptions (Section 4.4), migration and movement (Section 3.2.4.1), and updated Louisiana and Alabama enforcement sections (Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.4). I continue to work on the socio-economics section and will wrap it up by the next meeting. I am also stream-lining the habitat section using current state information from the EFH document rather than the original FMP (Section 4.3). Also, the group agreed to move life history/habitat information (Sections 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9) back into the biology section, where appropriate.

As you will recall, Doug requested the TTF's assistance with state river descriptions. He will be reorganizing the reservoir section slightly but needs each state to send current literature (or at least the name of the reference) which have descriptions of state rivers and reservoirs on the main-stem rivers. Also enclosed are Doug's preliminary river goals based on the results of the matrix and survey. Please send your comments directly to Doug. These will begin the recommendations section.

Again, please let me know if you plan to attend the next meeting. The location has not been finalized, but it will probably be Pensacola Beach.

\cby

Enclosure

APPROVED BY 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

SEAMAP Subcommittee Meeting
MINUTES
San Antonio, Texas
August 7-8, 2002

Call to Order

Chairman Jim Hanifen called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

Jim Hanifen, *Chair*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Mark Leiby, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL

Others:

Mark McDuff, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Pam Fuller, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Jeff Jenner, NOAA, SSC, MS

Staff:

Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

J. Shultz moved to adopt the agenda as submitted. R. Waller seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

R. Waller moved to approve the March 19, 2002 minutes as submitted. J. Shultz seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the NMFS portion of the Reef Fish Survey took place from April 2 through May 31. Three hundred twenty-four sites were sampled using trap videos and fish traps. J. Rester reported that the Spring Plankton Survey took place from April 18 through May 31. One hundred sixty-seven stations were sampled from the west Florida shelf to the Louisiana/Texas border. This

was the twenty-first year for the survey. J. Rester stated that the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey took place from June 3 through July 17. This was the twenty-first year for this survey, also. Real-time shrimp data were produced from the survey. Catches of shrimp and finfish were reported weekly from the survey, and plots and catch rates were distributed to approximately two hundred interested individuals. The plots were also available on the Commission web site. He stated that the 2000 Environmental and Biological Atlas of the Gulf of Mexico was completed and distributed in CD-ROM format. A significant cost savings was realized even though two CD-ROMs were distributed. The CD-ROM cost \$3.03 to produce and shipping was \$1.58 per CD-ROM. The total production cost was \$607.86 plus \$316.00 shipping. He reported this was a significant savings over the printed version of the Atlas that was produced in the past. J. Rester stated that he participated in the Mississippi Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. He took photos and videoed SEAMAP operations for use in the CD-ROM version of the Atlas.

Summary of 2002 Distribution of Shrimp Real-Time Data

J. Rester reported the real-time data was distributed for seven weeks this summer to approximately 200 individuals and it was also available on the Commission web site. He said no comments were received on the real time data. He asked for suggestions on advertising that this data is available. It was suggested to contact the various fish organizations and ask them to let their people know this data is available. The Subcommittee also asked J. Rester to contact each of the states and ask if a sign can be put up where they sell shrimp licenses to contact the GSMFC office if anyone is interested in receiving the data. He should also ask the states to put links on their web pages to the real time data.

R. Waller reported Mississippi attempted to do the Spring Plankton survey but it did not go well. He said several fronts were not in the Gulf when they were sampling for bluefin tuna larvae so they only sampled six stations and were unable to obtain a lot of samples.

Status of FY2003 Budget

J. Shultz reported that it appears SEAMAP will be level funded at \$1.4 million. She said this is the Senate mark that they do not have the House mark yet but they believe they will also level fund SEAMAP.

Discussion on 2000 Atlas

J. Rester stated that as he reported previously, the SEAMAP 2000 Atlas was distributed in CD-ROM format. The mailing consisted of an executive summary, folder and the CD-ROM. He asked the Subcommittee if they were satisfied with this format and asked for suggestions to improve future atlases. The Subcommittee liked the new format and instructed J. Rester to continue this for the future atlases. It was suggested to put previous atlases on the next CD-ROM and the data from each Atlas. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided not to put the data on the Atlas but a statement saying the data is available through the GSMFC website.

Activities and Budget Needs for FY2003

Florida - M. Leiby reported Florida should be able to continue SEAMAP activities this coming year with level funding of \$121,340.

Alabama - S. Heath said Alabama should be able to continue SEAMAP activities this coming year with level funding, but he may request the additional \$20,000 that is available for next year. Level funding for Alabama is \$68,000.

Mississippi - R. Waller said Mississippi will also continue at level funding of \$118,495, but if the \$20,000 is available he would like to install an onboard computer system on the R/V TOMMY MUNRO. The Subcommittee will discuss this after all of the states report.

Louisiana - J. Hanifen reported Louisiana will continue SEAMAP activities at level funding of \$135,200 for 2003. He said the R/V PELICAN is getting a major overhaul and charter rates will increase.

Texas - P. Choucair said Texas will also continue at level funding at \$58,804.

GSMFC - J. Rester stated the GSMFC will continue at level funding which is \$90,564.

Each component reiterated the need for more funding to continue SEAMAP activities. Personnel and charter costs rise each year and it is getting harder to continue the surveys at level funding. J. Rester said there is an additional \$20,000 available that the Subcommittee agreed to rotate from year to year. Alabama is in line for it so the Subcommittee needs to decide what should be done with the funding. This will be discussed later on the agenda.

Coordinated Fishery Independent Data Collection

D. Donaldson said this item will be discussed at the joint meeting because it affects all three components. He said that in May the three SEAMAP component's coordinators and chairpersons met to discuss the coordination of fishery independent data collection and utilizing SEAMAP as the structure or lead for the program. The group developed goals and objectives for the program which will be discussed at the joint meeting.

Providing Access to the SEAMAP Database: Metadata and Gateways

Jeff Jenner, the Gulf of Mexico Liaison Officer of the National Coastal Data Development Center (NCDDC) at the Stennis Space Center gave a presentation to the Subcommittee on SEAMAP database activities. He said the office officially opened in April 2002. The mission of the NCDDC is to work closely with Federal, State, and local government agencies, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to provide for the archive of and access to long-term coastal databases. They do not plan to be an archive center to store data, although they will have the ability to store some data to provide access to it. He reviewed the organizational structure of the center and stated that they report to the National Oceanographic Data Center, but will probably be

independent once they grow to a certain level. The challenge of coastal data is the diversity compared to deep ocean data or geophysical data. Another challenge is the distribution of coastal data. He said it is not practical to believe they can get all the coastal data that are held by all organizations, but the center's goal is to use modern technology that is available to discover data and make it accessible. The approach the center will use to deal with the diversity and distribution of the data will be to use the information technology infrastructure, regional liaison officers and "partnership" projects. He said the SEAMAP database has been identified as the #1 priority data set for a fish habitat pilot project. They will hire a contractor to develop static and dynamic metadata and to write a plan for geospatially enabling the database. He then reviewed each step of the plan and the time line they plan to use in this process. A complete copy of J. Jenner's report is available through the GSMFC office.

Information About the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies

P. Choucair reported that unfortunately, the Mexican representative was unable to attend this meeting. He said the Harte Research Institute had agreed to pay his travel, but he had a conflict. He reminded the Subcommittee that Mexico is interested in SEAMAP protocols and data base. P. Choucair has talked with the Mexican representative and will keep the Subcommittee apprized of their progress.

P. Choucair then presented information on the Harte Research Institute (HRI). He stated Dr. Wes Tunnell is the Associate Director and the Director of the Center for Coastal Studies. He said Mr. Ed Harte started the institute in September 2000 with an endowment of \$46 million. That will provide for six chairs from the Gulf of Mexico, 12 graduate research assistant ships, and the operating budget. The institute wants to "make a difference" and contribute to Gulf of Mexico research. The Texas legislature provided \$15 million to build a building for the institute. They also have an annual \$300,000 special item funding for the Gulf of Mexico Environmental Lab. They have advisory council members from the United States, Mexico, and Cuba. Representatives from the HRI have met with researchers from around the Gulf to find out what type of research is being done, the available data, and to inquire about research needs.

The members developed an emerging mission statement which is "to create an institute that will provide an atmosphere for success in discovery, understanding, and conservation of the Gulf of Mexico." In addition to the mission statement, other elements being considered for addition to the HRI mission are: characterized by excellence and innovation; disseminate and communicate Gulf of Mexico knowledge to the scientific community, natural resource managers, and the general public; encourage long-term sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico; to play a leadership role in cooperation and collaboration with other Gulf partners; and actively participate in efforts leading to positive economic impact. Potential gulf-wide beneficial and achievable research projects will be to conduct Gulf of Mexico topographic highs projects (reefs and banks); document biodiversity of the Gulf of Mexico; develop a relational database for the Gulf of Mexico; create a Gulf of Mexico marine GIS; and help publish a book on the Gulf of Mexico. The main priority of the HRI at this time is to create a website with a directory of all scientists and their activities in the Gulf of Mexico. P. Choucair said HRI could provide SEAMAP some advertisement, which would help in obtaining funding. He said it may be possible to develop collaboration and to jointly receive funding for software, platforms,

equipment, etc. After discussion, the Subcommittee agreed to invite a representative from HRI to give a presentation at the October meeting and maybe have a SEAMAP representative or a Gulf representative present at one of HRI's upcoming meetings. The Subcommittee asked P. Choucair to give the appropriate personnel copies of the SEAMAP Marine Directory for their use. A copy of P. Choucair's presentation is available at the GSMFC office.

Collecting Fish Tissue for Mercury Sampling

R. Lukens distributed information on collecting fish tissue for mercury sampling. He said Governor Riley Boykin Smith from Alabama gave the Commission a presentation on the state of Alabama's concern about mercury in marine fish. R. Smith then asked the GSMFC, in cooperation with the appropriate state and federal agencies, to encourage and facilitate the development of a gulf-wide survey to collect fish tissue for mercury analysis. R. Lukens said the survey will collect tissue from species commonly consumed by the public from commercial and recreational anglers. R. Lukens then discussed the draft recommendations the GSMFC is proposing to collect fish tissue. He said they are planning to use the FIN Program to collect samples and asked if SEAMAP and the individual state fishery independent programs would be willing to cooperate in collecting samples, also. This would not require new surveys. He is proposing to use existing surveys to collect extra samples for mercury testing and provide funding to defray costs, i.e., extra personnel, equipment, etc. He then reviewed the methodology they plan to use and other parts of the proposed program. The Subcommittee asked what funding sources he will be seeking. R. Lukens answered that funding would come from Congress. The Subcommittee suggested also seeking funding from the offshore oil industry and MMS. The Subcommittee agreed to cooperate if funding is available to help defray costs. R. Lukens will keep the Subcommittee informed.

Early Detection Exotic Species Sampling

R. Lukens stated he is an ex-officio member of the Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, which is a legislatively established task force, that has the responsibility of dealing with nonnative and invasive species. He said SEAMAP can play an important role in the future of early detection and monitoring for invasive species. He asked the Subcommittee to please instruct their field people to flag nonnative or invasive species in their database and send the samples to him. The Subcommittee agreed to do this and R. Lukens will work with J. Rester and M. McDuff on how this can be entered and queried in the database.

The Meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

The SEAMAP Gulf reconvened Thursday, August 8, 2002 at 8:40 a.m.

New SEAMAP Data Entry Program

M. Leiby reported that the archiving center had been having problems with the data entry program because it was a dBASE system and it led to a lot of errors. He said they spent an inordinate amount of time manually proofing the data, looking for typographical errors that inevitably occur whenever a large amount of data is being entered, and it was getting very frustrating. There were also problems

with the biocodes that he explained previously, so they created an entry system in Visual Basic. He explained how the program works and stated that basically, once the data is entered and proofed, it does not have to be re-entered ever again. The catalog numbers are also automatically incremented. He said the new system has increased their productivity enormously. He said they are also working on improving the data entry from the cruise stand point and M. McDuff will help with that.

New SEAMAP Real-Time Data Entry program

P. Choucair said that when he joined SEAMAP, Texas was at the beginning of the real-time data surveys. He wrote a data entry program in Microsoft Access because he had a problem going to a MS-DOS prompt to enter data. He then gave a demonstration on how Texas now enters their real-time data. He said the program reduces key strokes and checks for errors. The Subcommittee asked if all the states could use this program. He said for each state to send him their default values and he will incorporate them into the program for each state. The Subcommittee asked J. Rester if he had any problems with the new program in running the real-time data for distribution and he said that it worked fine. The Subcommittee asked P. Choucair to also adapt the program for the red snapper data that will be distributed at the end of the year.

Preparation of Cooperative Agreements

The Subcommittee reviewed changes to the Operations Plan and NMFS portion of the Cooperative Agreement. Final changes should be sent to J. Rester before August 15. A final copy will be mailed to the Subcommittee after all changes are incorporated.

Continuation of Activities and Budget Needs for FY2003

The Subcommittee discussed distributing the \$20,000 that Florida had in their budget the previous two years. As stated before, Alabama is in line for the money but S. Heath said that if the money could be use to install an onboard computer system on the R/V TOMMY MUNRO, it can be used for that and Alabama will use the extra money the following year. M. McDuff will investigate the price of the computers and installing the computers and the Subcommittee will have a final discussion on this topic via conference call after September 10. M. Leiby stated that if he is not available for the conference call, J. Hanifen has his proxy. J. Rester will contact the Subcommittee and set up the conference call when it is convenient for everyone.

Other Business

The Subcommittee asked to receive an updated email listing for the Subcommittee.

M. McDuff will demonstrate the Data Management System at the October meeting.

J. Hanifen reminded the members to contact their state directors to try to get more funding for SEAMAP.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Approved by: Aida Rosario

**SEAMAP - GULF, SOUTH ATLANTIC
AND CARIBBEAN SUBCOMMITTEES
JOINT MINUTES
San Antonio, Texas
August 7-8, 2002**

Chairman J. Hanifen called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

James Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Henry Ansley, GADNR, Brunswick, GA
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Mark Leiby, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Darlene Haverkamp, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
- Aida Rosario, FRL/PR-DNER, Mayaguez, PR
Roger Pugliese, SAFMC, Charleston, SC
Katy West, NCDENR, Washington, NC
Dale Theiling, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Lisa Kline, ASMFC, Washington, DC
John Merriner, NMFS-SEFSC, Beaufort, NC
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Others:

Perry Thompson, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Jeff Jenner, NCDDC, SSC, MS
Elizabeth Wenner, MRRI/SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Ellie F. Roche, NMFS/SER, St. Petersburg, FL
Larry DeLancey, SCDNR, Charleston, SC

Staff:

Scott Nichols, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Cynthia Binkley, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Mark McDuff, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Geoffrey White, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Edgardo Ojeda, UPR Sea Grant, Mayaguez, PR
Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as submitted.

Approval of Minutes

The August 8-9, 2001 minutes were approved as submitted. It was suggested to separate the members, others, and staff on future minutes.

Overview of SEAMAP-Caribbean

A. Rosario reported the conch survey in Puerto Rico was completed this past June. The USVI also completed their conch survey and the reef fish survey for the St. Croix area. They are now doing the Lobster survey which started in April and will run for a year and a half. They also added juvenile lobster collectors to this survey. They expect to start the same survey in Puerto Rico by the end of the month. She stated the Caribbean is on schedule for all of their surveys.

Overview of SEAMAP-Gulf

J. Hanifen reported the fall plankton cruise took place from August 28, 2001 through December 5, 2001. This was the eighteenth year for the survey. Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and the National Marine Fisheries Service sampled 171 stations on the west Florida shelf and the northern Gulf of Mexico. The objective of this survey was to collect ichthyoplankton samples with bongo and neuston gear for the purpose of estimating abundance and defining the distribution of eggs, larvae, and small juveniles of Gulf of Mexico fishes, particularly king and Spanish mackerel, lutjanids and sciaenids.

The fall groundfish cruise took place from October 10 - December 13, 2001. This was the seventeenth year for the survey. Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and the National Marine Fisheries Service sampled 334 trawl stations and 49 plankton stations during the survey. The objectives of the survey were to sample the northern Gulf of Mexico to determine abundance and distribution of demersal organisms from inshore waters to 60 fm, obtain length-frequency measurements for major finfish and shrimp species to determine population size structures, collect environmental data to investigate potential relationships between abundance and distribution of organisms and environmental parameters, and collect ichthyoplankton samples to determine relative abundance and distribution of eggs and larvae of commercially and recreationally important fish species. Data from this Survey were used to produce red snapper real-time plots. These plots described research trawl effort and catch rates for juvenile red snapper during the survey. This was the fourth year the plots were produced and distributed to interested individuals.

The NMFS portion of the Reef Fish Survey took place from April 2 - May 31, 2002. 324 sites were sampled using trap videos and fish traps. The objectives of the survey were to assess relative abundances of reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico as well as collecting fish hard parts for age and growth work.

The spring plankton survey took place from April 17 through May 31, 2002. 167 stations were sampled from the west Florida shelf to the Louisiana/Texas border. This was the twenty-first year for the survey. The objectives of the survey were to collect ichthyoplankton samples for estimates of the abundance and distribution of Atlantic bluefin tuna larvae and collect environmental data at all ichthyoplankton stations.

The summer shrimp/groundfish survey took place from June 3 - July 17, 2002. This was the twenty-first year for the survey. Objectives of the survey were to monitor size and distribution of penaeid shrimp during or prior to migration of brown shrimp from bays to the open Gulf, aid in evaluating the "Texas Closure" management measure of the Gulf Council's Shrimp Fishery Management Plan, and provide information on shrimp and groundfish stocks across the northern Gulf of Mexico from inshore waters to 50 fm. The overall sampling strategy was to work from the eastern Gulf to the Texas/Mexico border, in order to sample during or prior to migration of brown shrimp from bays to the open Gulf area. Real-time shrimp data were again produced from the survey. Catches of shrimp and finfish were reported weekly from the survey and plots and catch rates were distributed to interested individuals.

Finally, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will be using Gulf of Mexico SEAMAP data in the preparation of their Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement. SEAMAP will be providing larval, juvenile, and adult species data to the GIS contractor for use in species distribution maps for use in the EIS.

Overview of SEAMAP-South Atlantic

H. Ansley reported that in FY02 the South Atlantic component was very active, especially the Bottom Mapping Work Group. They finished and distributed the hard copy of the bottom mapping document and CD-ROM. Various agencies, libraries, contractors, fishermen, etc. have requested copies and have shown a huge interest in the mapping program. He said they were able to use funding from last year to help leverage additional funding for the bottom mapping program.

The Crustacean Work Group held a symposium in conjunction with the Southeast Estuarine Research Society in Savannah, Georgia in May 2002. The meetings went well and were basically an exchange of information on crustacean research, biology, etc. Draft proceedings are in preparation. He also stated the symposium was a good way to inform university personnel about the SEAMAP program.

Finally, the Shallow Trawl Survey continues on schedule. This is the thirteenth year for the survey and all goals and objectives are being done. The SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Offshore Tagging Cruise and the Pamlico Sound Survey are also continuing. These are not actual SEAMAP surveys but the information will be incorporated into the SEAMAP database.

J. Hanifen stated the hardbottom CD-ROM is very impressive and asked how they made the general public aware of it. G. White said he created a list of universities and libraries he thought would be interested and informed them of its availability. It is also posted on their website, FMRI's website and the Council's website. They also had good coverage at the EPA hearings.

Overview of NMFS

S. Nichols reported NMFS did not have any major ship failure this year so they were able to complete their surveys. He will give his complete report under the Data Management item on the agenda.

Status of FY2003 Funds

S. Nichols reported that SEAMAP should be level funded and he is not aware of any activities that may increase or decrease that.

Proposed Activities and Budget Needs for FY2003

A. Caribbean - A. Rosario stated they will continue activities with level funding which is \$145,000.

B. Gulf - J. Hanifen stated the Gulf will try to maintain all current programs with the same amount of funding which is \$612,403.

C. South Atlantic - H. Ansley stated in order to continue, they must have an additional \$21,676.00. He said their costs include 50% of the coordinator's time, meeting costs, the bottom mapping project, the shallow trawl survey and costs for the Crustacean Work Group Symposium. Their total budget needs are \$387,073.

D. NMFS - S. Nichols stated NMFS will continue current programs for the same amount of funding which is \$220,510. He said he does expect getting some funding back this year from a readjustment of the taxes. He proposes giving anything they receive over the \$220,510 to the South Atlantic. He expects to receive an additional \$10,000 but it could potentially be \$12,000.00.

E. Joint Discussion of SEAMAP Budget for FY2003 - The group asked S. Nichols if this will be a permanent increase and he said it depends on the taxes from year to year. After discussion, the Gulf and Caribbean components agreed to stay at level funding and to try to continue operating at their current level. The South Atlantic will receive an extra one time approximately \$10,000.00 increase from the NMFS tax refund. If the taxes continue to decrease each year, the extra funding will be on the table for discussion for all three components. S. Nichols will forward the breakdown of funding after he receives the final amount.

Mexican Participation in SEAMAP Activities

J. Rester informed the Committee that Mexico has expressed an interest in using SEAMAP protocols for their fishery independent sampling. P. Choucair reported he has been meeting with Mexican representatives and had invited them to attend this meeting but they were unable to attend. He said they are very interested in using SEAMAP protocols and would like the SEAMAP data coordinators to meet with them to help set up their system so eventually, data can be exchanged. M. McDuff said the survey design must be compatible to SEAMAP's in order for this to work. The Committee agreed to have P. Choucair continue to be the liaison to the Mexican representatives and keep the Committee informed.

Grant Reporting Requirements/Timing

C. Binkley distributed an example package for the new multi year grants program NOAA has agreed to try. She said the components will be able to submit one application package that will suffice for the entire three years. Guidelines are included in the package and she reviewed each one. She said this is just a pilot program and it is not mandatory if any of the states do not want to

participate. The Committee discussed the new reporting requirements and agreed to try the new procedure. She will be available to provide guidance when the new reporting period starts.

Discussion of Coordinated Fishery Independent Activities

D. Donaldson said that at the last meeting the Committee discussed coordinating the fishery independent activities in the southeast. The Committee tasked a subgroup consisting of the chairmen and coordinators of each of the three components to meet and begin addressing this issue. The subgroup met in May and submitted a report to be approved by the committee. D. Donaldson reviewed the report and discussion ensued. **K. West moved to pursue this task.** She said the intent of her motion is to endorse the concept that SEAMAP should be the appropriate body to undertake this task and should be expanded to incorporate the preferred methodology in coordinating the fishery independent activities in the southeast. After more discussion, J. Shultz seconded the motion and it passed.

D. Donaldson asked that by passing this motion does the Committee approve the report and the new goals and objectives. The Committee said the report will have to be reviewed by each component's policy board before approval. If approval is received, then a new work group will be appointed to continue developing this program. L. Kline will also ask their economic and social sciences committee to give suggestions on how SEAMAP can demonstrate the value of the SEAMAP program to receive more funding.

Data Management Issues

Mark McDuff reviewed the SEAMAP Data Management Report and the status of the SEAMAP Oracle Database and Data Entry Programs. He stated:

- A. The trawl data is currently in the Oracle database and is available via SQL, but the line speed is slow. Currently, there are seven users besides contractors and in house users. A T1 line has been ordered for Pascagoula and should be installed after August 15, 2002. The firewall design is in progress.
- B. The contractors are currently writing java interface for entry/edit and data access. This has been a very slow development. Access via Oracle Discoverer is available but the documentation is still lagging.
- C. Because development has been slow, they are trying to do as much in-house as possible so they are currently advertising for a Oracle DBA/programmer.
- D. The data entry system design will allow for multiple methods of entry such as PC based, web based, and data reformatting systems. All systems will store data in temporary tables which will then be ingested after all edit routines are completed. This should allow for the most flexibility.
- E. The plankton tables have been established and reviewed by the Gulf Plankton Work Group. The data is being readied to populate these tables. M. Leiby and M. McDuff

will meet next week to review the data entry systems developed and plan further work.

- F. The biocode is currently being revised by M. Leiby, Harriet Perry and David Hanisko. They are moving to full scientific names in the database with an up-to-date biocode. There are approximately 100 old species currently in the database that have to be reviewed.
- G. A shipboard data entry system, SCS/FSCS is being developed for NOAA ships by programmers at the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO). Butch Pellegrin is overseeing the move to this system for trawl cruises. This system was used during the summer cruise. Current plans call for its installation on the GORDON GUNTER this spring followed by the CARETTA. If the system is successful, it will be available to the states in 2004.
- H. The table structures for CTD data have been developed. Processing protocols have been developed for Seabird 911 plus and a draft set for SBE 25. A report/proposal is being prepared for the appropriate committees.
- I. An agreement has been made with National Coastal Data Development Center (NCDDC) to help develop the metadata for SEAMAP data.

H. Ansley suggested having all three component's data management work groups meet to discuss the data management portion of SEAMAP. He also suggested having the Mexican representatives participate at the meeting. The Committee agreed.

Planning for the 200³ Joint Annual Meeting

G. White will gather hotel/flight information for Myrtle Beach on August 6-7, 2003. He will send the information to the other coordinators and a final decision of where the meeting will take place will be made.

Other Business

Henry Ansley reported Dale Thieling is the new South Atlantic Chairman and Roger Pugliese is the Vice Chairman.

M. McDuff will demonstrate the new data entry software tomorrow morning, August 8, before the Gulf meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

**STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, August 13, 2002
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Facilitator Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. The following members and staff were present:

Members

Ginny Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Vernon Minton, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
John Forester, USFWS, Baton Rouge, LA (proxy for C. Brown)
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

Ron Lukens, Assistant Director
David Donaldson, Data Program Manager
Jason Keenum, Staff Accountant

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved with the addition of discussion of next species for fishery management plan (FMP) development.

Discussion and Final Approval of FIN Funding Activities for 2003

D. Donaldson provided a summary of the activities for potential funding in 2003. A list developed by the FIN Committee was presented to the group. The list is attached (Attachment A). The group then discussed the various jobs identified in the draft statement of work. Job 1 consists of coordination and administration of FIN activities and will provide for the coordination, planning, and administration of FIN activities throughout the year as well as provide recreational and commercial information to the FIN participants and other interested personnel. Job 2 pertains to the collection, management and dissemination of marine recreational fisheries data. This job will provide for the conduct of the MRFSS survey in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida for shore, for-hire, and private modes and for-hire field intercepts in Texas. This task will provide for coordination of the survey, field intercept survey of shore, for-hire and private boat anglers to estimate angler catch using the existing MRFSS methodology, and entry of the data. The states will also conduct weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort as well as social-economic data. It was noted that Texas has modified the for-hire telephone survey to include only charter vessels that operate offshore. Texas believes that their current creel survey adequately samples the inshore for-hire fishery so there was not a need to sample them via the telephone survey. Texas will

only be conducting this activity from January through August 2003. Job 3 refers to head boat port sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida and will provide for the sampling of catches, collection of catch reports from head boat personnel, and gathering effort data on head boats along the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. Job 4 consists of Gulf menhaden port sampling and will provide for sampling of gulf menhaden catches from menhaden purse-seine vessels that operate at in Louisiana. It was noted that the contract personnel received an increase in salary. It was also noted that each sampler received different amounts of salary increase. The group asked for a justification of these salary increases. It was also pointed out that this type of justification should be provided in the future to help the group evaluate each of the tasks on equal footing. D. Donaldson stated that he would contact J. Smith and provide the justification to the group. Job 5 refers to the development and implementation of FIN Data Management System (DMS) which will provide for further implementation of the data management system for the FIN including routine loading of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida commercial catch/effort data, Gulf biological data, Gulf recreational data; and maintenance of the DMS. In addition, this job included the addition of a ComFIN Survey Coordinator. This position is needed because the FIN DMS is now on-line and with the routine data feeds for the states, there needs to be someone who coordinates this activity. This person would be the liaison between the GSFMC and the states and address any issues or problems regarding the commercial data. In addition, this person will be available to help users access the system, fill data requests, answer questions and other pertinent tasks. Job 6 consists of the development and operation of trip ticket program in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Job 7 refers to the collection of biological data. This job will provide funding for collection of biological data from the recreational and commercial fisheries. Data collection efforts will focus on red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder and greater amberjack. That concluded all of the on-going activities. The group then discussed the night fishing activity. It was noted that this activity would end in December 2002. D. Donaldson stated that in 2003, the focus would be placed on analysis of the data. J. Roussel asked who would be taking the lead on the analysis and if any deadlines for completion of the analysis have been established. D. Donaldson responded that GSMFC, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, and NMFS would be involved in the analysis. While no specific deadlines have been developed, D. Donaldson noted that a presentation will be given to the FIN Committee at their 2003 June meeting. The group believed that not only a presentation should be done but a report should be developed as well. It was decided that a presentation and, if possible, a report should be presented at the Spring GSMFC Annual Meeting in March 2003. If a report cannot be completed by March 2003, the report will be presented to the FIN Committee at their June 2003 meeting.

Status of Funding

L. Simpson provided a brief overview regarding the status of 2003 funding for data collection and management activities. He stated that there is currently a \$3.5M mark for GulfFIN in the House. There is a potential problem with the Recreational Fisheries Harvesting (RecFIN) line item since it has been reduced in the House mark. Because of this reduction, there is the potential that only \$3.95M will be available for 2003 activities. However, there is also the potential the full funding will be restored in the Senate mark and the last year's amount will be available in 2003.

After some discussion, the group decided that if the available amount were significantly higher

or lower than last year's figure (\$4.18M), the Committee would get together and determine how to redistribute the funds. For planning purposes, the group decided to utilize the \$4.18M figure. Using this level, there was about a \$13,000 overage. V. Minton stated that Alabama would reduce their portion of Job 7 (biological sampling) to \$100,780. L. Simpson stated that the GSMFC would reduce Job 1 (coordination and administration) to \$372,926. And C. Perret stated that Mississippi would reduce their portion of Job 2 (recreational data collection) by \$1,000, Job 6 (trip tickets) by \$2,000, and Job 7 (biological sampling) by \$1,000. With these reductions, the total amount of all the jobs equals \$4,180,000. After some discussion, **C. Perret moved that the 2003 FIN cooperative agreement should be submitted for the funding levels outlined on the spreadsheet (Attachment B). These figures include the above-mentioned reductions.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The final allocation of funds for the 2003 FIN cooperative agreement is attached (Attachment B).

J. Roussel noted that although Louisiana does not currently charge indirect costs to this project that may change in the future. There are a variety of fringe benefit percentages and indirect cost rates for the various states. It might be useful to develop a standardize rate for these items. This will allow for a uniform rate to be used by each state and provide equity among states. J. Keenum stated that there is not a clear-cut formula for calculating indirect costs rates. He mentioned that there was some information regarding developing indirect costs rates and it was suggested that this information be distributed to the group. After some discussion, the group decided this issue should be discussed at the October State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) meeting. In order to discuss this topic, GSMFC staff will compile indirect costs and fringe benefit percentages for each of the states for the meeting.

D. Donaldson noted that the Social/Economic Work Group needed some guidance regarding a proposed inshore shrimp fishery project. The Work Group has found an alternate source of funds (Coastal Ocean Program) for this project but needed feedback from this group regarding the utility of this project. After some discussion, **the group agreed the Social/Economic Work Group should move forward in attempting to secure funds for the inshore shrimp fishery project.**

Other Business

L. Simpson distributed a memorandum to the group regarding the next species for fishery management plan (FMP) development. The group discussed the potential species for FMP development as well as FMPs that need to be revised. It was noted that there has been significant changes in the oyster and mullet fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and these FMPs should be considered for revision. It was pointed out that this issue does not need to be resolved at this meeting. The purpose of the memorandum was to put the issue in front of the group and have them begin thinking about the issue. Final discussion of this issue will take place at the S/FFMC meeting in October 2003.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

ITEMS FOR FUNDING CONSIDERATION IN 2003

High Priority (The following 9 items are ongoing activities)

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities
Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data
 Economic Add-on for Vessel Directory Telephone Survey
 Charter Boat Survey Offshore Texas
Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operation in Mississippi
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama
Trip Ticket Program Operations Louisiana
Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida
Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling
Development of FIN Data Management System
 ComFIN Survey Coordinator
Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling

Medium Priority (New activities in priority order)

Commercial Social/Economic Pilot Study
Biological Sampling for Additional Species

Low Priority (new activity)

Collection of Detailed Effort for Commercial Fisheries

Administration and coordination of FIN (Job1)		\$372,926
Recreational data collection (Job 2)		
Texas	\$66,014	
Louisiana	\$274,749	
Mississippi	\$175,290	
Alabama	\$140,915	
Florida	\$1,358,176	
GSMFC	\$216,020	
Recreational data collection subtotal		\$2,231,164
Head boat sampling (Job 3)		
Louisiana	\$25,684	
Florida	\$80,913	
Contractual-TX sampler	\$37,323	
Head boat subtotal		\$143,920
Menhaden sampling (Job 4)		
Menhaden – Louisiana	\$7,080	
Contractual-LA samplers	\$20,152	
Menhaden sampling subtotal		\$27,232
Development of FIN DMS (Job 5)		\$216,360
Development of trip ticket programs (Job 6)		
Louisiana	\$414,776	
Mississippi	\$82,068	
Alabama	\$103,899	
Contractual-SCBI	\$79,970	
Trip ticket subtotal		\$680,713
Biological sampling collection (Job 7)		
Louisiana	\$99,100	
Mississippi	\$42,499	
Alabama	\$100,778	
Florida	\$172,567	
Contractual-TX samplers and processors	\$92,393	
Biological sampling subtotal		\$507,337

APPROVED BY:

Harriet Perry
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**DERELICT TRAP TASK FORCE
MINUTES
August 22-23, 2002
New Orleans, LA**

The Derelict Trap Task Force was called to order by Chair Harriet Perry at 1:15 p.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Present

Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Gary Graham, TAEX, Palacios, TX
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Leslie Hartman, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Mark LaSalle, MSU CREC, Biloxi, MS
Harriet Perry, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Larry E. Young, TPWD, Austin, TX

Members Absent

Bob Fairbank, Recreational Rep, Gulfport, MS
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Robert Metz, Commercial Rep, Lakeshore, MS

Guests

Jerald Horst, LSU Sea Grant/Agricultural Center, Metairie, LA
Mike Liffman, LA Sea Grant College Program, Baton Rouge, LA
Rich Novak, Florida Sea Grant, UFL, Port Charlotte, LA
Tim Reid, MS/AL Sea Grant Consortium, Ocean Springs, MS
P.J. Waters, AUMERC/SG, Mobile, AL

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

T. Wagner moved to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by G. Graham and passed unanimously.

Adoption of Minutes

T. Wagner moved to adopt the minutes of the meeting held June 10-11, 2002, in Tampa, Florida, as written. L. Young seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Community-Based Restoration Program Proposal

The task force agreed to separate from the Sea Grant participants to review the statement of work and budget for the proposal entitled "Derelict Trap Program in the Southeast Region." Comments were noted, and H. Perry volunteered to work with S. VanderKooy and J. Rester on Monday, August 26, 2002, to incorporate the comments into the proposal.

Gulf of Mexico Derelict Trap Removal Program Guidelines Document

Sea Grant representatives reviewed the guidelines document and offered the following to be incorporated within the document outline:

"Pieces of the Derelict Trap Removal Process"

- Lead Agency with the Designation of Program Coordinator
- Identify stakeholders – shrimpers, crabbers, recreational, law enforcement, environmental, other state/fed agencies, Sea Grant and Extension, legislators, conservation groups, land owners (obtain ideas, educational audience, recruitment, help find money)
- Program Coordinator with assistance of other agencies sell the concept (creating buy-in) to the stakeholders – provide science, background, debunk myths (traps integral part of the fishery)
 - local meetings
 - media
 - state agency fish/wildlife publication and news releases
 - Sea Grant outreach
 - Presentations to interest group meetings
- Form the Planning Committee – general membership to be composed of those to address & contribute to tasks outlined below
- Committee puts together the derelict trap removal plan based on identified tasks
- Identification of Tasks
 - Management agency review legislation/regulations (propose new, if needed)
 - Determine type of program required (closure?, staggered/seasonal, closure dates)
 - Lead group to develop a budget
 - Seek funding/support – identify sources; solicit and coordinate funds and goods (private, legislative, grants, in kind, establish foundation? 501c-3); administer funds and maintain records for reporting; develop method to track costs including volunteer time, donations, etc.
 - Site(s) selection/scheduling – areal survey, complaint, access to water, deep water, shallow water, methodology (staggered, seasonal), site coordinator, tide, alternative date(s), economic impact to the fishermen
 - Volunteer recruitment and keeping them informed/engaged – pre-event outreach, post-event evaluation
 - Public relations/education
- Pre-event publicity
 - Onsite publicity event
 - Earth Day-type display/exhibits
 - Post-event coverage

- Volunteer training (onsite)
 - Safety
 - Release form
 - Distribution of supplies/goodies
 - Data collection instruction
 - Debris “litter”/trap disposal/waste receptacle/landfill/recycling
 - Data collection - forms (# people/# people per boat/# hours worked), components (generic species i.d.; live or dead bycatch), type of data, volunteer roster
- Delegation of Tasks – based on review by planning committee and participants
- Agency Program Review & Reporting

Once the guidelines document is complete, it will be made available online through the GSMFC web site. Those who download the document will be registered via e-mail address. When updates are made to the document, a mass E-mail can be generated to notify users to download the revision.

The guidelines document will be finalized and sent to the Technical Coordinating Committee for review. Action is anticipated at their October meeting.

Recess & Reconvene

The group recessed at 5:25 p.m. H. Perry reconvened the meeting Friday, August 23, 2002, at 8:30 a.m.

Sea Grant Educational Materials

The PowerPoint presentation on derelict traps and removal that was initially developed by the task force will be distributed to individual task force members for their use and further distribution as they see fit. S. VanderKooy explained that since the presentation will be adapted for use by whomever is giving the presentation, it may not consistently reflect Commission philosophy. Thus, it cannot be considered a Commission-sanctioned publication. It is asked, however, that any group who receives the presentation be asked to acknowledge the work of the Derelict Trap Task Force, especially lead author V. Guillory.

NMFS Blue Crab Fishery Categorization

S. VanderKooy reported that Wayne McFee and Keith Mullen (NOAA NMFS) have accepted the Commission’s invitation to attend its 53rd Annual Meeting to discuss the change of the blue crab fishery from Category III to Category II. Their official presentation will be made during the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee meeting on Wednesday; however, they do plan to attend the Joint Crab Subcommittee/Derelict Trap Task Force meeting, as well. VanderKooy distributed the group’s list of questions to be addressed. He intends to send the list to McFee and Mullen so that they will be prepared to address the concerns of the group.

VanderKooy will make a presentation to the S-FFMC on the Marine Mammals Stranding Network which will specifically address the determination of human and fisheries interactions. He will

explain that the network is made up predominantly by volunteers, interactions are determined on the beach in most cases, and that very few examinations include detailed necropsy to determine the cause of death. He reviewed the only standardized reporting form – the marine mammal stranding report and one additional form on evaluation of human interaction that are being used to determine human interaction.

The group discussed Dr. Wang's July 17 letter in which noticeable affects to the fishery are listed and downplayed (Attachment 1). Perry and others expressed their concerns about the negative connotations associated with being a Category II fishery. They were also surprised that many of the other commercial fisheries are not affected. Also surprising is that recreational fisheries cannot be affected because the Marine Mammal Protection Act does not have any provisions to address recreational fishery interaction.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a joint meeting of the TCC Crab Subcommittee/Derelict Trap Task Force and is scheduled for Tuesday, October 15, 2002, in Duck Key, Florida.

Other Business

L. Hartman announced that the second phase of Alabama's Derelict Trap Cleanup is being scheduled for the upcoming winter. Several participants from the Louisiana/Mississippi group that assisted in the first phase voiced their intent to participate.

T. Wagner announced that the next Texas Derelict Trap Cleanup has been scheduled for March 1-16, 2003.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned Friday, August 23, 2002, at 12:04 p.m.

**ComFIN Data Collection
Work Group Report**

September 2002

ComFIN Data Collection Work Group
Meeting Summary
September 17-18, 2002

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and the following people were present:

Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Jason Vasques, VIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Geoff White, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Dee Lupton, NCDMF, Morehead City, NC
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDENR, San Juan, PR
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Meeting

D. Donaldson stated that there were two main issues the group needed to discuss. The first issue was the development of the bycatch module for FIN. The group has discuss this issue in the past and needs to further develop this module since bycatch is becoming more and more of an issue in fisheries management. The other issue was to review Puerto Rico's commercial data collection activities as they relate to the FIN standards.

Development of the FIN Bycatch Module

D. Donaldson stated that the group has discussed this issue in the past and developed some general guidelines for this module. FIN has not really focused on this issue since the emphasis has been on designing and implementing commercial and recreational catch and effort programs. However, since more emphasis is being placed on bycatch, FIN needs to begin the development of this module. It was noted that the Gulf Restoration Network (GRN) sent a letter that asked FIN to address the issue of bycatch and the collection of these data. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has addressed this topic and developed an extensive data collection program. The FIN needs to develop a similar program to ensure that the two cooperative activities are compatible and comparable. Since the ACCSP has already devoted a large amount of time towards developing a bycatch module, the group believed that FIN should utilize all of their effort. It was decided that FIN should use the ACCSP bycatch module as a template for the development of the FIN module.

G. Davenport pointed out that the reef fish logbook program operated out of the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center has recently begun compiling bycatch information regarding commercial activities in that fishery. K. Anson noted that the Trip Interview Program (TIP) has a bycatch component and Alabama is currently collecting these data. G. Davenport stated that these data are not routinely collected by the other states but it could be possible to begin collecting them in the future. D. Donaldson noted that the Gulf of Mexico port samplers are scheduled to meet in November and this issue could be added to the agenda. After some discussion, **the group recommended that the issue of beginning the collection of bycatch data via TIP be added to the**

Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers meeting, scheduled for November 2002. The data collected via the logbooks and TIP (if approved) could provide some basic baseline and trends information regarding bycatch. These data are important because they provide a way of quantifying the magnitude of bycatch within various fisheries. These data collection programs can be used to help identify "problem" fisheries and prioritize the fisheries that need to be further examined (via an at-sea observer program). It was suggested that the bycatch data elements from the logbook and TIP be compared with the minimum data elements for the at-sea observer program. This will allow the group to ensure that a base level of data is collected to assist in the identification and prioritization of the various fisheries.

After some discussion, the Work Group developed two recommendations. **The first recommendation is to adopt the ACCSP at-sea observer program data elements (quantitative) as the FIN standard and work on interim solutions with TIP and logbook data (qualitative) collection to advance data quality until a full at-sea observer program is possible. The other recommendation is to utilize the TIP bycatch component to identify/prioritize fisheries for at-sea observer sampling.** D. Donaldson stated that he would modify the ACCSP information to reflect the discussions of the group. A brief overview of the program and the list of the minimum data elements are in Attachment A.

Review of Puerto Rico's Commercial Data Collection Activities

D. Donaldson stated that at the last FIN meeting, Puerto Rico asked FIN to provide some feedback regarding their commercial data collection activities. C. Lilyestrom provided an overview of Puerto Rico's commercial programs. Puerto Rico has had the same fishing regulations in place since 1938. However, in 1998, Puerto Rico passed legislation that provided comprehensive regulations covering both commercial and recreational fishing in the Commonwealth. The regulations defined the various types of commercial fishermen (full-time, part-time, beginner, etc.) as well as making it mandatory that fishermen report their catches to the Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (PRDENR). In order to implement these rules, PRDENR conducted outreach meetings with fishermen and dealers to get feedback from the industry. One of the biggest complaints from fishermen was that the commercial data was not believable. Although the legislation was passed, PRDNER has not been able to implement the regulations.

In order to provide justification for the need of these regulations, Puerto Rico is using the commercial and recreational data to bolster their arguments. In 2000, the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) was reinitiated in Puerto Rico. The data is critical to the management of the marine resources in Puerto Rico. It provided a fairly complete picture of the recreational activity and the data was readily available and accessible. On the other hand, there is very little effort data for the commercial activities and the data is somewhat difficult to access. To strengthen their justification, Puerto Rico want to improve their commercial program and asked the FIN to provide a review of their commercial programs. The group began reviewing Puerto Rico's programs and comparing them with the FIN standards. There were several issues including verification of fishermen's data, reporting data on a trip level, providing better access to the data and a variety of other issues. After some discussion, the group decided to consider these various issues and develop recommendations concerning the commercial data programs of Puerto Rico.

Recessed at 2:00 p.m.

September 18, 2002

Reconvened at 8:30 a.m.

Review of Puerto Rico's Commercial Data Collection Activities (cont'd)

The group continued to discuss Puerto Rico's commercial data collection programs. After some discussion, the group developed the following recommendations:

- **Implement a system that tracks the activities of fishermen to determine if fishermen are reporting their data in a timely manner. This will allow PRDENR personnel to identify non-reporting fishermen and contact them to obtain their data. In addition, there should be some type of outreach with fishermen to provide guidance in the proper way to complete the data forms. A copy of the regulations should be provided as well to outline the requirements for reporting. And annual summaries of landings should be provided to fishermen as a way of providing feedback to fishermen.**
- **Require all fishermen to report their data on a trip level. Forms can be developed that allow for multiple trips to be reported on one form, but data for each trip needs to be provided on that form.**
- **Expedite the implementation of the data confidentiality memorandum of agreement (MOA) between Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, NMFS, and GSMFC. The implementation of this MOA will allow these agencies to share the data collected in the Caribbean.**

A secondary recommendation was to begin collecting all of the FIN minimum data elements for commercial catch and effort that are currently not being obtained. They included vessel ID, landing condition, and market grade and count (if applicable). The next step in this process is put these recommendations in front of the FIN Committee. Since FIN will not be meeting again until June 2003, the group believed the best way to proceed was to get input from FIN via an e-mail ballot. D. Donaldson stated that he would develop a list of recommendations and provide them to the FIN Committee for their consideration and approval.

The rest of the morning was spent visiting local fishermen to observe the fishing practices of the area. While on site, the group observed several vessels been off loaded and Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources personnel sampling the catches. This activity was very beneficial to the group by allow everyone to observe how commercial fishing operates in the islands.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

FIN Bycatch Monitoring Program

The FIN bycatch monitoring program will be a coast-wide program (Texas through Florida, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands) to include all living marine resources in estuarine, inshore, and offshore waters. Data should be collected from all U.S. fishing vessels leaving from and landing at Gulf and Caribbean ports, including shore-based fishing operations. The program should be conducted throughout the year and will include commercial, recreational, and the for-hire fisheries.

The bycatch program will include quantitative and qualitative data collection components. The quantitative component includes an at-sea observer program for selected commercial and for-hire fisheries as well as the existing data on the number of released and discarded finfish species through existing recreational intercept surveys. The qualitative bycatch program will include utilizing existing commercial, recreational and for-hire intercept programs to provide trend information as well as identify fisheries that need more in-depth study

Release/discard data collected through the qualitative release/discard monitoring program will be used to identify and prioritize fisheries requiring collection of additional bycatch data through quantitative methods.

Table 1. Minimum standard data elements to be collected through the FIN at-sea observer program for collection of quantitative release, discard, and protected species interactions data for commercial fisheries.

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Vessel Information		
Vessel Identifier	Unique vessel identifier (Coast Guard or state registration number). These identifiers must be trackable through time and space.	11 digit character
Vessel Name	Name of vessel (if applicable)	20 digit character
Individual Identifier	An identifier unique to an individual (i.e. operator license number), traceable through time and space	11 digit character
Observer Identification Number	Unique certification number provided by the ACCSP at-sea observer-training program.	<i>To be developed</i>
Trip Information		
Reporting Form Series Number	Individual number for each reporting form, to be assigned by the collecting agency (i.e., trip ticket number). This data element may be blank in the dual reporting system.	12 digit alphanumeric
Form Type/Version Number	Version identification number for the ACCSP reporting form.	12 digit alphanumeric
Trip start	Date the trip started (this is unique to each trip and can be used to tie multiple unloadings into a trip record). A trip is shore to shore by gear/area combination, or in the case of transfers at sea, an off-loading at sea is a trip. This information should include trips with effort but no catch.	MM/DD/YYYY
Target Species or Species Group 1	The first target species or species group for that trip/haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 2	The second target species or species group for that trip.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 3	The third target species or species group for that trip.	ITIS 11 digit character
State Landed	The state where the product was landed or unloaded.	2 digit character postal code
Port Landed	The location within a state where the product was landed/unloaded.	5-digit FIPS code

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Primary Gear	The primary gear used to catch the landed species.	3-digit numeric
Primary Area Fished	Statistical area and distance from shore where most hauls occurred. The distance from shore where fishing occurred [inland (less than 0 nautical miles...nm), near shore (0-3 nm on Atlantic coast, 0-9 nm on Florida and Texas Gulf coast), EEZ (3-200 nm on Atlantic coast, 9-200 nm on Florida and Texas Gulf coast), territorial seas (in the USVI and Puerto Rico (12 nm), and international (>200 nm)] is embedded in this code.	3-digit numeric plus 2 decimals
Number of Hauls	Total number of hauls of gear during a trip.	3 digit numeric
Haul Information		
Trip Identifier	Trip start, vessel or individual identifier and trip number (see vessel and trip information)	21 digit character
Gear(s)	The type(s) of gear used to catch the landed species.	3 digit character
Quantity of Gear	The amount of gear employed.	4-digit numeric
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled, representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by either a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric
Haul Observed	Indication of whether the haul was actually observed (0=haul not observed, 1=complete catch data collected, 2=complete release/discard data only, 3=partial release/discard data, 4=observed kept portion, not release/discard data).	1 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 1	The first target species or species group for that haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 2	The second target species or species group for that haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 3	The third target species or species group for that haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Lat Begin	The latitude at the beginning of the haul.	6 digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Long Begin	The longitude at the beginning of the haul.	7 digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)
Lat End	The latitude at the beginning of the haul.	6 digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)
Long End	The longitude at the beginning of the haul.	7 digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)
Time Set	The time the gear was set. Used with time hauled to derive fishing time	MO:DD:HH:MM
Time Retrieved	The time the gear was hauled. Used with time set to derive fishing time	MO:DD:HH:MM
Depth Fished	Depth in fathom at which the gear is fished.	4 digit numeric plus 1 decimal
Minimum Bottom Depth	Minimum depth of bottom in fathoms.	4 digit numeric plus 1 decimal
Maximum Bottom Depth	Maximum depth of bottom in fathoms.	4 digit numeric plus 1 decimal
Deterrent Devices Operational	Indication of whether deterrent devices were operational during the haul	1 digit character (Y/N)
Deterrent Device	Indication of whether deterrent devices were used during the haul (0= pinger, 1= tory lines, 2 = deflectors, 3= other).	1 digit character
Deterrent Device 2	Indication of whether deterrent devices were used during the haul (0= pinger, 1= tory lines, 2 = deflectors, 3= other).	1 digit character
Deterrent Device 3	Indication of whether deterrent devices were used during the haul (0= pinger, 1= tory lines, 2 = deflectors, 3= other).	1 digit character
Gear Number	Consecutive number assigned to each uniquely configured gear hauled and for which characteristics are described.	2 digit numeric
Subsample Log		
Trip Identifier	Trip start, vessel or individual identifier and trip number (see vessel and trip information)	21 digit character
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled, representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by either a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Subsample Amount or Weight	The total amount, in whole pounds, numbers, or other appropriate unit of measurement of each marine species that is landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Quantity of protected species should be measured in numbers. This data element is linked to the units of measurement and disposition code for exact characterization of the quantity. For some species, especially protected species, these data are needed on a set basis.	8 digit numeric plus two decimals
Units of Measurement for Subsample Weight	Units of measurement for subsample weight (i.e., each, pounds, numbers, etc.)	2 digit character
Species	The species for each species of marine resources landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Each species is to be identified separately. Use of market or generalized categories is to be avoided within species code fields or variables.	ITIS 11 digit character
Disposition	Fate of the product (i.e. releases, discards, bait, industrial use, personal consumption, marine mammal interactions, etc.). Disposition of releases and discards should be recorded (i.e. regulatory versus other releases and discards, dead or alive).	3 digit character
Grade	Any grade categories that affect price, usually size related.	2 digit numeric
Subsample Quantity	The amount, in whole pounds, numbers, or some other appropriate unit of measurement of each marine species that is landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Quantity of protected species should be measured in numbers. This data element is linked to the units of measurement and disposition code for exact characterization of the quantity. For some species, especially protected species, these data are needed on a set basis.	8 digit numeric plus two decimals
Units of Measurement	Units of measurement for quantity (i.e. each, pounds, bushels, etc).	2 digit character
Estimated or Actual	How was quantity collected (0=actual, 1=estimated).	1 digit character
Biological Sample Weight	Weight of subsample for biological sampling	8 digit numeric plus two decimals

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Minimum Data Required for Observed Entanglements		
Field Number	Assigned by responding organization. Used to identify individual stranded animals.	
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled, representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric
Gear Number	Consecutive number assigned to each uniquely configured gear hauled and for which characteristics are described.	2 digit numeric
Entanglement Situation Code	00 - unknown 01 - fell from gear, point unknown 02 - fell from gear before exiting water 03 - fell from gear once out of water 04 - fell from gear due to force of roller 05 - removal requires cutting gear or animal 06 - removal does not require cutting gear/animal 99 - other Longline Gear Only 07 - foul hooked, cut from gear 08 - foul hooked, removed from gear 10 - bird caught - gangion attached to line 11 - bird caught - gangion not attached to line	2 digit character
Net Number (gillnet only)	Consecutive number assigned to that net where the animal is entangled.	2 digit numeric
Number of Floats (gillnet only)	Number of floats counted from where the animal is entangled to the nearest endline	3 digit numeric
Meters Below Floatline	Indication of where in the gear the animal was captured.	3 digit numeric
Taken on Set or Retrieval	Indication of when the animal was captured (1=set; 2=haul)	1 digit character

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Condition of Animal	Indication of the condition of the animal when released; record most appropriate code (0=unknown; 1=alive, condition unknown; 2=alive, not injured; 3=alive, injured; 4=alive, gear in/around mouth; 5=alive, gear in/around flipper; 6=alive, gear in/around another single body part; 7=alive, gear in/around multiple body parts; 8=alive, seen by captain/crew only; 10=dead, condition unknown; 11=dead, fresh; 12=dead, moderately decomposed; 13=dead, severely decomposed; 14=dead, seen by captain/crew; 99=other	2 digit numeric
Comments	Include information on where gear is on the animal and what part of the gear entangled the animal	50 digit character
Biological Information		
Trip Identifier	Trip start, vessel or individual identifier and trip number (see vessel and trip information)	21 digit character
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by either a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric
Species	The species for each species of marine resources landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Each species is to be identified separately. Use of market or generalized categories is to be avoided within species code fields or variables.	ITIS 11 digit character
Disposition	Fate of the product (i.e. releases, discards, bait, industrial use, personal consumption, marine mammal interactions, etc.). Disposition of releases and discards should be recorded (i.e. regulatory versus other releases and discards, dead or alive).	3 digit character
Minimum Data for Marine Mammals		
Species	Species of each marine mammal observed	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo(s)	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit numeric

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Tag Code(s)	Indication of whether the tag is pre-existing or newly applied. (0=unknown; 1=taken without tag, then tagged; 2=taken without tag, and not tagged; 3=taken with a tag, and retagged; 4=taken with a tag, and not retagged).	1 digit character
Length	Straight measurement as per protocols.	10 digit numeric
Units of Measurement	Units of length (i.e., feet, meters, etc.).	2 digit character
Length Type	Indicate whether length was measured or estimated (0=actual; 1=estimated)	1 digit character
Gender	1=male, 2=female, 3=unknown	1 digit character
Biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit character
Text Field	Comments or uncoded data	Text
Tag ID Number(s)	Tag number from pre-existing or newly applied tags.	12 digit character
Minimum Data for Sea Turtles		
Species	Species of each sea turtle observed	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo(s)	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit character
Tag ID Number(s)	All letters and numbers on pre-existing or newly applied tags.	12 digit character
Tag Code(s)	Indication of whether the tag is pre-existing or newly applied. (0=unknown; 1=taken without tag, then tagged; 2=taken without tag, and not tagged; 3=taken with a tag, and re-tagged; 4=taken with a tag, and not re-tagged).	1 digit character

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Units of Measurement	Units of length (i.e., feet, meters, etc.).	2 digit character
Length Type	Indicate whether length was measured or estimated (0=actual; 1=estimated)	1 digit numeric
Straight Carapace Length	Straight length of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of calipers)	5 digit numeric
Curved Carapace Length	Curved length of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of flexible measuring tape).	5 digit numeric
Straight Carapace Width	Straight width of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of calipers)	5 digit numeric
Curved Carapace Width	Curved width of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of flexible measuring tape)	5 digit numeric
Width Type	Indicate whether width was measured or estimated (0=actual; 1=estimated)	1 digit numeric
Were biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit numeric
Text Field	Comments or uncoded data	Text Field
Minimum Data for Fish and Crustaceans		
Species	Species of fishes and crustaceans observed	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit character
Length	Length measurement as per protocols.	10 digit numeric
Units of Measurement	Units of length (i.e., feet, meters, etc.).	2 digit character
Length Type	Type of length measurement (centerline, standard, total, etc).	2 digit character
Gender	1=male, 2=female, 3=unknown.	1 digit character
Were biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit character

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Minimum Data for Birds		
Species	Species of observed birds	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit character
Tag ID Number(s)	All letters and numbers on pre-existing or newly applied tags.	12 digit character
Tag Code(s)	Indication of whether the tag is pre-existing or newly applied.	1 digit character
Gender	1=male, 2=female, 3=unknown.	1 digit character
Age Class	Indication of age class (1=immature, 2=mature, 3=unknown).	1 digit character
Were biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit character
Text Field	Comments or uncoded data	Text Field

**GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES
MINUTES**

**Tuesday and Wednesday, October 1-2, 2002
Tampa, Florida**

Call to Order

Ron Lukens called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Introductions were made. Since this is the first meeting of the group, it was agreed that Lukens would serve as moderator. Lukens noted that election of a Chairman and Vice Chairman would take place during this meeting. The following were in attendance:

Attendees

Pat Carter, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX
Walter R. Courtenay, Jr., USGS, Gainesville, FL
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Pam Fuller, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Bryon Griffith, EPA/GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS
Sharon K. Gross, USFWS, Arlington, VA
Scott Hardin, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Thomas L. Herrington, FDA/GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS
Dewayne Hollin, Texas Sea Grant Program, College Station, TX
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Jim Kruse, Texas Sea Grant Program, Houston, TX
Herb Kumpf, _____ Panama City, FL
Wendell Lorio, BTNEP, Thibodaux, LA
Mark McElroy, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom McIlwain, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Marilyn O'Leary, Louisiana Sea Grant Program, Baton Rouge, LA
Harriet Perry, CFRD/GCRL/USM, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Pitman, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM
George Ramseur, TNC _____
Daniel Roberts, FFWCC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Ramon Ruiz-Carus, FFWCC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Cynthia Sarthou, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Don C. Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
John Teem, Florida Department of ____/Division of Aquaculture, Tallahassee, FL
Bruce A. Thompson, Coastal Fisheries Institute/LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
W. Jay Troxel, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
David W. Yeager, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile, AL

Staff

Ronald R. Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy K. Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES MINUTES

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Overview of Panel Status

Ron

Overview of ANS Task Force and Regional Panel Responsibilities

Coordinating a Response to Aquatic Nuisance Species

What is focus of task force and regional panel?

Task force established in 1991 - provides a forum to discuss ANS and coordinate activities

ANS Task Force Goals:

- 1 - Reduce thread of introduction of ANS
- 2 - minimize harmful effect of ans already in US waters
- 3 -

Implementation of ANS Task Force Activities:

- dependent on commitment and funding of individual agencies
- committees formed by ANS Task Force
- state/regional participation and coordination is critical

Levels of Coordination

National Level - ANS Task Force

regional level - regional panel

state level - comprehensive state management plans

Role of regional panels:

- *Establish regional priorities
- *Develop action plans
- *Coordinate regional activities
- states
- tribes
- federal agencies
- interstate organizations
- non-governmental entities

Regional Panel Benefits:

Regional level -

-issues/priorities are similar in smaller geographic areas - keeps focus from becoming too diluted

-collaboration established to address interjurisdictional resource issues

National level -

-identifies cross cutting issues

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MINUTES**

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-provides broad constituency

(Side 1B)

Panel Contributions: (from other regional panels)

- State/interstate ANS Plans
- Regional Rapid Response
 - rapid response plans
 - contingency planning
- Model State Plans
- Outreach and Education Efforts

Ron question - overlap in regional panels will translate more than just people having to attend 2 different meetings, different issues and priorities

comments from GOM program guy

Herb

Earl (TX)- some advantage of working through task force with plan?

Overview of National Invasive Species Council and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee

PowerPoint by Ron

(Tape 2B)

Database and Web Page

Pam Fuller - Tracking Nonindigenous Aquatic Species
Database Fields
60 fields

Sources of Data - literature, state and federal agencies, private individuals, universities, museums, field studies

<http://nas.er.usgs.gov>

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USGS NAS Database Capabilities

- source analysis
- pathway analysis
- spatial analysis
- patterns over time
- populations status
- distribution maps

Currently working on - the power of partnering

Dynamic Mapping - working with NatureServe to dynamically generate fish distribution maps

- NatureServe - native range
- USGS NAS - introduced range

Database Integration

SERC - marine data (Smithsonian....)

USGS - freshwater data

working on - user on internet will be able to retrieve info from both databases simultaneously

working to bring on GSMFC web site

larger effort with other countries and link all aquatic invasive data bases together.

Ron - Information Management Workgroup

Got web page from GCRL

Plan to provide a List Serve for the regional panel - would allow opportunity to post and send messages to entire groups at one button

Would you all like to be put on the list serve automatically? Other people could subscribe to it. Will go ahead and put panel members on, and at some time advertise to others that may want to subscribe.

Page to provide as many images of invasive species that are free to the public to use, want to make sure that every image on this page is free to be used - all of you make sure (when the page is available) provide pictures that are not there, if you have a better image than is there - provide that.

Information Management Workgroup would be involved in the web page maintenance.

Ron will be meeting with Pam and hope by end of next year make significant progress.

**GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES
MINUTES**

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Species Updates

Brown Tree Snake - Bob Pitman

Spread from Guam

1993 - military household goods Guam to Corpus Christi area
packed for 7 months

1998 - suspicious sighting
in the 18 months prior 4 shipments of household goods had been delivered within 2 miles

Areas at Risk

Studies indicate that further invasions are possible in other islands,

Conference June 13-14, 2000, proceedings distributed in conjunction with establishment of the
Noeth American Brow Tree Snake Control Team

Conference goals:

build collaborate team

Implementing conference objectives

designed a web page to coordinate team development, actions and provide education and information

Team meeting October 22-23, San Antonio

Web based coordination NABTSCT.org

Gulf Coast Regional Panel

Giant Salvinia - Bob Pitman

Giant Salvinia, Salvinia molesta, Control in North America

Out of aquariums into the wild

Lower Colorado River Task Force

Steering committee w/8 teams, meet 4 times a year, web page, mou defines partnership

National Conference for Control, March 13-15, 2001, Houston, TX

engage stakeholders

update and implement national control plan

raise awareness

funding strategies

Gulf coast regional panel role

help implement national control plan

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help connect stakeholder groups

Asian Swamp eel - Pat Carter

highly predatory, concern they could impact wading birds

(Side 3 B)

NISA Reauthorization

Allegra Cangelosi -

National Invasive Species Act Reauthorization - A Major Opportunity

Ballast water technology on new ships after 2006

Next Steps

-line-up more Congressional sponsors

-solicit more endorsements

-obtain hearings, mark-ups

-track legislative process, keep constituency groups involved, active

-hope for a Lame Duck, or, if not, reintroduce next year and push for timely passage

Agency review - this plan will go out for federal agency review, facilitate a timely review by your agency to prevent delays

Snakeheads and Lionfish

Walt Courtenay - lionfish, paper published this year first reported that lionfish are established on the Atlantic coast. Perhaps dive boat captains established population to bring divers out to see exotic fish. No environmental or economic impacts as yet.

Snakeheads - project a year and a half ago to study snakeheads

snakehead - fish with enlarged scales on head, eyes located forward on head all species are airbreathers, all give parental care to their young, approximately 28 species, 3 in Africa, 25 or more in Asia, several have elongated bodies. Others are heavy-bodied.. Several species are small, somewhat popular in the aquarium fish trade.

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MINUTES**

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Overview of Regional Panel Activities

Initial Survey - Herb Kumpf

Ballast Water Workshops - Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary

3 ballast water workshops that the regional panel sponsored, more information events to raise consciousness of certain groups to the whole idea of vectors

(Side 4 B)

Workshops were an attempt to get us started in the Gulf of Mexico

Shrimp Virus Initiative - Tom McIlwain

Proceedings are recommendations for research and where we need to go

Past Recommendations - Herb Kumpf

recommendations from the regional panel to the task force, 9 recommendations and some have already been acted upon

Ron - we are not required to make recommendations to the task force in the annual report, we can forward a recommendation at any time.

Working Groups

Establishment and Membership - ties in with the invasive species management plan
Side 5A

Pathways/Prevention

Eradication/Control/Restoration

Vessel Mediated Transport

Research/Development

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Education/Outreach

Early Detection/Rapid Response

Information/Management

Bob - information/management/coordination

How do you feel about this organizational structure?

Marilyn - work groups List Groups

Harriet move to accept these workgroups, Earl (TX) second

Tom Harrington - send this out on email

Pat - look into charter, other panels do have (operating procedures)

Assignments - to be made at a later date

Election of Officers - Earl question of nominating committee

Harriet make recommendation that Ron assume that role until next meeting

Chair

Vice-Chair

October 8, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Striped Bass TTF and others
FROM: Steve VanderKooy
SUBJECT: Meeting Summary

Well, the first meeting in several that we would have had a quorum, Hurricane Lili reduced our number and cut the meeting short. I appreciated the improved communication prior to the meeting this time. Even though we broke at 3:00 on Wednesday instead of continuing until noon on Thursday, we actually got quite a bit done. We managed to distribute a few of Doug's assignments around and even had people pick up the few that had not yet been assigned. We succeeded in getting all the way through sections 3 and 4; we will pick up sections 6 and 7 at the next meeting – tentatively scheduled during the week of January 27, 2003, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Please let me know as early as possible if you will be unable to attend so we don't make room arrangements for you.

The enclosed FMP draft on CD-Rom will serve as the meeting summary from Pensacola. Notes and questions for authors are in **bold**, *italics*, and may be highlighted for emphasis. I can not stress this enough, please provide all your comments and revisions directly on a hard copy. Do not attempt to convert the PDF file to Word or WordPerfect. If you need to revise an entire section and want it electronically, contact me, and I will forward it to you.

The new assignments are listed for each person on the attached pages. The Table of Contents also has newly assigned sections and authors. However, there are still several "state" issues in the river descriptions that Doug has been working on. Please review your state's descriptions and draft a few sentences or a paragraph for each river (where applicable) on point and non-point source pollution, refuge areas/springs and other important habitat area for striped bass, freshwater diversion (pumping, impounding, etc), and reservoirs. Please provide just the new text and where it should be inserted to Doug or myself ASAP.

As I stated earlier, we did not get to the fisheries or socio-economics sections at this meeting. Please provide any additional anadromous (not reservoir) commercial, recreational, and anecdotal landings information to

Striped Bass TTF
October 8, 2002
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Michael Bailey for inclusion. He needs everyone's assistance. Please review section 7 and provide your comments. I consider this section as complete as I can get it. If anything needs to be added or removed, do not hesitate to let me know.

The deadline for comments and additional materials is December 2. My goal is to have a complete draft by spring so that we may begin line-by-line editing. We will then finalize the draft and begin the approval process (TTF ▶ TCC ▶ SFFMC ▶ public comment period). My goal is to have the document to the Commissioners for their approval in October 2003.

Again, please let me know if you plan to attend the next meeting (during week of January 27). I am looking into the Cook Alumni and Convention Center on LSU's campus in Baton Rouge for the location. New Orleans will be our second choice.

\cby

Enclosures

Additional or Revised Assignments as of October 2002

- Doug Frugé
- Section 3.0 and 3.1 (Geographic Distribution)
 - Check on Forester and Frugé 1993 for Section 3.2.4.1 (Migration and movement)
 - Section 3.2.4.2 (Gonadal Development)
 - Section 3.3.3.5 (Total hardness)
 - Section 3.4 (Stock Enhancement)
 - Add and send Long the Horst 1976 reference for Section 4.2 (Preferred Habitats)
 - Add Keystone to Section 4.3.1 (Reservoirs)
 - Work with Howard adding Lake Pontchartrain in Section 4.3.2.2 (Louisiana)
 - Figure for Section 4.3.4 (Systems, Watersheds, and Rivers)
 - Check Locks in Section 4.3.4.3.1 (Calcasieu River)
 - Check note at end of Section 4.3.4.3.5 (Atchafalaya-Mississippi Rivers system)
 - Table and Figures for Section 4.3.4.6.6 (ACF)
 - Add St. Marks River sentence in Section 4.3.4.6.9 (Small Florida Panhandle Rivers)
 - Draft general language for Section 4.4.5 (Barriers and impediments to migration)
 - Mobile River discharge in Section 4.4.7 (thermal discharge)
 - Update Section 4.4.10 (introduction of non-native flora and fauna)
- Rick Long
- Section 3.3.1 (Eggs and Larvae)
 - Section 3.3.3.1 (Salinity)
 - Cleanup Section 3.3.2.2 (ph, Alkalinity, and hardness)
 - Clean up Section 4.2 (Preferred habitats)
 - Check citations of Coutant 1985 in Section 4.2.3.1 (Cool Water Habitats)
 - Thin down Section 4.3.2.5.6 (Ochlockonee Bay and Apalachee Bay)
 - Elaborate on Chipola refuge in Section 4.3.4.6.6 (ACF Rivers)
- Howard Rogillio
- Section 4.2.3.2 (Other Adult Habitats)
 - Work with Doug adding Lake Pontchartrain in Section 4.3.2.2 (Louisiana)
- Michael Bailey
- Check on *Refuge* vs. *Refugia*
 - Section 3.2 and following (Classification and Morphology)
 - Check Merck book on contagious diseases Section 3.6 (Parasites and Diseases),
- John Mareska
- Section 3.5 (Feeding, Prey, and Predators)
 - Contact D.J on Silviculture for Jim B. and Section 4.4.8 (Freshwater Diversion),
- Jim Barkuloo
- Find Temperature range for Section 3.3.3.2 (Temperature)
 - Check on Leetown Hatchery in Section 3.3.3.4 (pH Requirements)
 - Thin down Section 4.3.2.5.5 (Ochlockonee Bay and Apalachee Bay)
 - Add Eleven-Mile Creek point-source to Section 4.3.2.5.1 (Perdido Bay)
 - Find reference for Section 4.3.2.5.4 (St. Andrew Bay)
 - Provide text on Boiling Spring and streams out of Eglin AFB in Section 4.3.4.6.4 (Yellow River)

Find reference in Section 4.4 (habitat quality)
Add general info on in-channel spoil disposal and siltation to Section 4.4.4
(Riparian habitat Alteration)
Generalize Section 4.4.6.2 (Riverine impacts)
Check with Bainbridge or Albany for Section 4.4.7 (Thermal Discharge)
General discussion groundwater pumping for Section 4.4.8 (Freshwater Diversion)
Rework contaminants paragraph and add toxicity/temperature information in
Section 4.4.9 (point and non-point pollution)

Steve VanderKooy Add tables to Section 3.2.2 (Age and Growth)
Section 3.3 (Physiologic Requirements)
Steal from Wetzel limnology book for glossary
Fix Perdido Bay in AL/FL Section 4.3.2.5.1
Elaborate on Section 4.4.2 (El Nino/La Nina)
Section 4.4.11 (Global Warming and Sea Level Rise)

Ike Wirgin Several unanswered questions in Section 3.2.3 (Genetics)
Endocrine disruption in Section 4.4.9 (point and non-point source pollution)
Genetic recommendations in Section 8 similar to those from other genetics
management plans?

Larry Nicholson Section 3.2.1.3 (Anomalies and Abnormalities)
Add freshwater diversion Bayou Cassote to Section 4.3.4.4.2 (Pascagoula and
Escatawpa Rivers)

Pete Cooper Read and edit

All **Draft Point and non-point source pollution for your states rivers!!**
Draft refuge and springs for your states rivers!!
Draft any freshwater diversions for your states rivers!!
Provide descriptive information on reservoirs for your state's rivers!!
Identify any additional important striped bass habitats for your state!!
Read section 6 and provide data!!
Read section 7 and provide comment!!
Send photocopies of all references used in your sections!!

Caribbean Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
October 2-3, 2002
Miami, Florida

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and the following people were present:

Willie Ventura, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Hector Riveria, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Toby Tobias, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Stacy Albritton, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Ruth Gomez, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Shenell Gordon, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Hector Lopez Pelet, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Luis Riveria, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Wilfredo Torres, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Walter Irizarry, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Jesus Leon, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Daniel Matos, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Josh Bennett, NMFS, Miami, FL
Pam Eyo, NMFS, Miami, FL
Monica Valle, UM, Miami, FL
Nancie Cummings, NMFS, Miami, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

*Signed minutes are
included in the
June FIN meeting
minutes*

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved with the addition of discussion of the queen conch and yellowtail snapper assessments on the second day.

Status of ComFIN

D. Donaldson gave an overview of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN). He stated that FIN consists of two major components: ComFIN and RecFIN (SE). He discussed the various activities that FIN has recently undertaken including collection of recreational data, implementation of trip tickets, collection of detailed effort from commercial fisheries, biological sampling, and implementation of the FIN data management system (DMS). He stated that trip ticket programs implemented in states except Mississippi and Texas. Mississippi has implemented oyster and bait shrimp and are working on other components of the commercial fisheries in the future. Texas is still evaluating effectiveness of trip ticket program to collect commercial data in their state. One of the innovations is the implementation of electronic trip ticket reporting. Through a contractor, GSMFC has been working with dealers in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida to allow for the electronic reporting of data. This is a more efficient and less time consuming method for collecting the data. There could be as many as 120 commercial dealers on-line by December 2002. A pilot study regarding the collection of detailed effort is being conducted in Louisiana. Information such as multiple gear and area fished, quantity of gear, days at sea, number of crew, fishing time, etc. are

being collected and NMFS is examining these data and will be presenting the results to FIN in the near future. The FIN DMS is currently on-line and it contains a variety of commercial and recreational data as well as biological samples and SEAMAP (fishery-independent) data. Users must complete the appropriate forms and can access both confidential and non-confidential data. Recently, the Data Collection Work Group met in Puerto Rico to discuss development of bycatch module and develop recommendations for improvement of Puerto Rico's commercial data collection programs. From that meeting, several recommendations were developed including providing a system to track fishermen that will ensure reporting of the necessary data; capture data on a trip level and implement the Data Memorandum of Agreement that will allow access to FIN DMS.

Presentation of Caribbean Commercial Data Collected under TIP

J. Bennett stated that NMFS currently houses Puerto Rico landings and Trip Interview Program (TIP) from 1983 and U.S. Virgin Islands landings from July 1986 and TIP data from 1983. Recent historical data for USVI has been received but not reviewed. All data are currently under review and edit to ensure data sets match between NMFS and Caribbean and that the data are "the best possible data" under the Magnuson Act. He reviewed the processing cycle for Puerto Rico landings data. There are a variety of error checks run on the data including checking for incorrect codes, identifying duplicate records and others. The data are then sent, via e-mail, to NMFS and loaded on their main computer. Once the data are loaded, summary reports are provided to Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (PRDENR), although this is not automatic and consistency needs to be improved. Some recent improvements include updating the Puerto Rico to NMFS species code cross-reference table, elimination of duplicate records, and attempting to resolve effort data problems. J. Bennett then outlined the processing cycle for the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) landings data. The data are submitted on an annual basis to the NMFS. The NMFS then reviews the data and runs a variety of error checks including invalid codes, characters present in numeric fields, dates that fall outside the range of the fishing year, and pounds that are too small or large. This error checking process is a recent improvement. Once NMFS identifies these possible errors, the USVI then reviews the data and make the appropriate changes. The revised data are sent back to the NMFS. He outlined some of the problems with the USVI data. The table formats need to be unified to the best extent possible. All tables from similar forms must contain the same columns with the same headings and column width and format. Codes must be unified. A database management system such as Access needs to be eventually implemented in the USVI to maintain the integrity of the data.

J. Bennett then discussed the processing cycle for the Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands TIP data. The data are validated by Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands personnel prior to being sent to NMFS. Although there are validations, improvements can be made in this area. The TIP online system will have more extensive validations in the system. He provided some suggested for improving the quality of data collected under TIP. Samplers need to check entered data with the original data sheets to ensure minimal data entry mistakes. A series of validation tables that contain length-weight regression data has been developed and the plan is to use these tables as an initial outlier checks. It is necessary to have better communication between NMFS and the Caribbean regarding load reports and error listings. And Puerto Rico should submit fishermen id numbers with their data so that the TIP data can be better matched with the landings.

Overview of Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers Data Collection Methods

G. Davenport discussed the mission of NOAA fisheries which is to protect and preserve the nation's living marine resources through scientific research, fisheries management, law enforcement and habitat conservation. He provided a brief history of the TIP that was started in 1985 to collect information from commercial fisheries throughout the southeast coastal states. He outlined the procedures for conducting an interview and highlighted the major fisheries in the Southeast which include shrimp/oyster trawls, hook and line vessels targeting king mackerel and grouper/snapper, longline vessels targeting swordfish, shark and deep and shallow water reef fish, gillnet vessels targeting king and Spanish mackerel, menhaden/bait fish and shark, and trap vessels targeting lobsters, blue, golden and stone crabs and fish. He provided a detailed description of each of these fisheries regarding target species, type of gear, areal coverage, etc. He then discussed the TIP sampling methods which included meeting the vessel at the dock; interviewing the captain for trip information; identifying species; measuring length and weight frequencies; determining sex of fish and collecting gonads; and extracting otoliths. He reviewed the steps for entry of the data and submitting the hard parts to the NMFS laboratory. He outlined the sampling tools used by the port samplers. They included calipers, measuring boards, knives and tweezers for extracting otoliths. He then provided an overview of otolith extraction and analysis. Otoliths are bone structures found in all fish and help maintain balance in the fish. There are two types of otolith processing: using whole otolith and using sectioned otoliths. If an otolith is thin enough, it can be processed whole. The otolith is placed in a petri dish and submerged in clove oil. A fibro-optic light is used to count the annuli. When an otolith is too thick, it is sectioned and the section is read. The reading of otoliths is done using a microscope.

Field Sampling

In the afternoon, the group visited various dealers and fishermen to observe fishing activities in the Miami area. The activities seen included spiny lobster, golden crab and reef fish fisheries.

The meeting was recessed at 11:30 a.m.

October 3, 2002

The meeting reconvened at 9:00 a.m.

Field Sampling

In the morning, the group toured that NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center. They visited with various personnel and discussed a variety of issues including the turtle program, data management, marine mammal strandings, habitat assessment and other issues.

Discussion of Queen Conch Stock Assessment

M. Valle presented a data update regarding the U.S. Caribbean queen conch fishery. The objectives of the study were to describe the process to use commercial landings data in stock assessment which included a description of the commercial landings data from Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands (possibilities and limitations); description of the methods used to organize, edit/adjust and summarize the data; description of the approach used for analysis of the queen conch fisheries in the U.S. Caribbean; and description of the major findings. She provided some background information regarding the species, distribution and study area and description of the fisheries in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. The data sources for these data included commercial fisheries

information (landings statistics, fishers lists, TIP data, etc.), recreational fisheries data (MRFSS in Puerto Rico 2000), fishery-dependent and -independent survey, and other research. The U.S. Virgin Islands has been collecting commercial data via a mandatory reporting system since 1974. The U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Fish and Wildlife collect fishermen reports on a monthly basis. Fishing licenses are renewed upon receipt of the previous' years fishing reports. The best available data for U.S. Virgin Islands is from July 1986-December 1999. The goal for handling and analyzing the queen conch data was to assemble a single dataset with one record per trip to derive time-series of catch and effort by island. In order to accomplish this task, all datasets (3) needed to be combined and some assumptions were made during the editing process. It was assumed that all fields were equal in the duplicate records. The records with blanks or zeros for landings and date as well as outliers were removed. Records with no ID code were assumed to be one trip. And the ISLAND field was derived from the AREA LANDED field. The three datasets were combined and common fields were preserved (although that resulted in loss of individual trip details) and the final dataset consisted of total/conch/other species landing per trip/record. A subset of positive queen conch trips was used to calculate an estimation of catch and effort in directed and non-directed sectors. Some of the limitations and problems with the data included incompatible formats and levels of resolution, duplicate/triplicate data files per fishing year or incomplete/missing years/months, no deadlines for modifying the data, no standard criteria to edit/adjust data, limited or no verification of data, and limited potential for further analyses (for queen conch). She provided some results of her analysis regarding queen conch in the U.S. Virgin Islands but because of the data limitations, the analysis was very basic and varied among islands. In Puerto Rico, the fisheries statistics program began in 1967. Trip tickets are collected by on a voluntary basis from fishermen, buyers and associations. Port agents visit 88 fishing centers in 42 coastal municipalities around Puerto Rico to collect the data. Data are computerized and processed by Puerto Rico and then sent to NMFS. The data structure for the trip tickets has been consistent since the program's inception. The best available information is the commercial landings statistics from 1983-2000. The goal for handling and analyzing the queen conch data in Puerto Rico was the same as it was for U.S. Virgin Islands. A problem encountered was that the trips reported do not always equate to a single trip. There were several trips reported on a single ticket when multiple species were fished. The steps in the analysis included assembling a single dataset (83-00), edit and split into a new dataset (landings/species) that allowed for the merging of catch of different species under the same trip. Editing such as removal of outliers duplicated, zeros, and correcting of coding errors was conducted on the dataset. The next step was to summarize the dataset by conch/other/total landings. Single-trip records were extracted to derive an effort estimate as well as extracting a queen conch dataset to derive an estimation of catch and effort for the directed and non-directed fisheries. It was noted that updating, quality control and data validations are currently being conducted on the data. There were no major limitations or problems with the data. She then presented some results of the analysis and was able to provide some preliminary stock assessment results and projections for Puerto Rico. The conclusions of the presentation were it was a very elaborate process to get the data into shape for the stock assessment; commercial landings statistics in the U.S. Caribbean are limited but have a large potential for analysis; descriptive statistics provided a basic understanding of the trends and patterns in the queen conch fisheries; stock assessment analysis showed current population status and exploitation patterns; and further updating, editing, adjusting, and quality control of data is needed, particularly in the U.S. Virgin Islands. She presented some recommendations for the improvement of the data that will allow for more robust stock assessments to be conducted. The recommendations included

providing species identification to a finer level of detail, collect more detail on fishing effort, gear, area fished, etc, encourage fishermen to complete all field on the catch forms, encourage more frequent submission of the catch reports (monthly vs. yearly), develop and implement standard a data management system, quality control/validation processes, and transfer protocols. The group discussed some of the recommendations provided in the presentation. G. Davenport suggested that to improve the quality of the data, it would be beneficial to have U.S. Virgin Islands personnel conduct the quality control/validations on the data. Since these personnel are the ones collecting it, the result would be higher quality data with fewer errors, which would make it quicker and easier to process. The group asked the U.S. Virgin Islands how to make these changes. T. Tobias stated that a decision like that needs to be made by the U.S. Virgin Island directorship.

Discussion of Yellowtail Snapper Assessment

N.Cummings stated that NOAA is mandated to conduct stock assessments. There are several types of data that are needed for stock assessments. Annual productions (total catch), sociological information (regarding fishing communities) and relative effort by fisheries are needed to conduct these assessments. It is important to have good fielding sampling, which allows for better species composition determination. Better species composition provides analysts to develop trends in the various fisheries, which is very important for management purposes. In addition to composition, size distribution data are needed to examine growth over the various fisheries. This allows samplers to look at where each species group is being landed and allow for representative sampling of effort. Fisheries managers are looking at reef fishes in the Caribbean. They are identifying areas where there is incomplete or missing data and are conducting a comprehensive review of reef fishes in Puerto Rico. From this exercise, a stock assessment of yellowtail snapper will be conducted in the future. The model that will be used to conduct this assessment will rely on fishery-independent data and will be based on abundance. It will probably not be an age-based assessment.

Development of Recommendations

During the previous presentations, the group identified several areas of data deficiencies. After some discussion, the group believed it would be beneficial to develop some recommendations to present to FIN regarding data issues in the Caribbean. **The following recommendations were developed and will be presented to FIN (via mail ballot):**

- **U.S. Virgin Islands need to utilize a data base management software such as FoxPro, dBase, Microsoft Access, etc. This will provide a better method for transferring the data as well as make it easier to established routine data checks;**
- **U.S. Virgin Islands need to establish a standard data format for the data files as well as the individual fields and utilize only this structure. This will enable analysts to use more of the data for assessments and reduce the amount of time needed to prepare the data for assessments;**
- **A deadline for updating the data needs to be established for the data. This deadline will established a date for when the data are “final”;**
- **Standard criteria for reviewing the data need to be established;**

- **Routine verification of the data (checking for coding errors, outliers, duplicates, missing values, etc.) needs to be established. This will allow for “cleaner” data to be delivered and provide a more robust dataset for analysis. This task can be facilitated by utilizing a database management software (see above recommendation);**
- **The frequency of data submission needs to be monthly vs. yearly. By having monthly submission of data, potential errors have a better chance of being identified and corrected since there is a short recall period. The implementation of this recommendation could be accomplished via adding it to the NMFS/Caribbean Cooperative Statistics cooperative agreements;**
- **Establish mandatory reporting of biological statistics data. Again, this could be accomplished via adding it to the NMFS/Caribbean Cooperative Statistics cooperative agreements;**
- **Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands need to add trip ticket number/trip number into their databases. This will allow analysts to link all catch with a particular catch report and;**
- **There needs to be territorial support (financial) for the collection of commercial fisheries data in the Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.**

The group then discussed the importance of outreach to the fishing community. **It was decided that outreach meetings for users should be established in the Caribbean.** In order to conduct these meetings, dedicated funding would be needed. A representative would provide an overview of the management process and explain the importance of the data in terms of managing the resources. It was suggested that outside agencies, such as the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and Sea Grant, needed to be involved in this activity. **The group recommended that a letter be written to the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and Sea Grant regarding this concept and solicit their support.**

Discussion of Topics for Next Meeting

The group decided that the next meeting should be held in the eastern portion of Puerto Rico And be held during the first week of October 2003. The rationale for meeting in this area is that it will allow the group observe fishing activities and practices in some new areas of the island that have not been sampled in the past. D. Donaldson then asked the group for input regarding the next port samplers meeting. It was suggested that an update on the yellowtail snapper assessment be discussed at the next meeting. N. Cummings stated that work should be completed on the assessment and a presentation could be give at the meeting. D. Donaldson stated that he would develop a draft agenda prior to the meeting and distribute it to everyone for comment.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

**COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES
Monday, October 14, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

P. Horn called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

- Grey Cane, III, CCA, Daphne, AL
- Bob Fairbanks, Mississippi Power, Gulfport, MS
- DeGraff Adams, CCA, Richmond, TX
- Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS
- Randy Gros, Marrero, LA
- Daniel Babin, Gulf Fish, Inc., Houma, LA

Staff

- Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
- Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
- David Donaldson, Data Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

- Michael Bailey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
- Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
- Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
- Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
- David Hill, Aquatic Release Conservation, Inc., Ormond, FL
- Kristin Raabe, Aquatic Release Conservation, Inc., Ormond, FL
- Shawn Dick, Aquatic Release Conservation, Inc., Ormond, FL
- David Baker, Aquatic Release Conservation, Inc., Ormond, FL
- Walter Penry, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AL House of Representatives, Daphne, AL
- Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, VA
- Gary Graham, Texas A&M Marine Advisory Service, Palacios, TX
- Dave Burrage, MSU/MS Sea Grant, Biloxi, MS
- Ralph Rayburn, TX Sea Grant, College Station, TX
- Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Introductions

P. Horn welcomed everyone and reported that while there was a quorum for the combined Panel, only the Recreational Advisory Panel had enough members present. Horn also pointed out that the Florida recreational seat had been filled by Mark French who was unable to attend on short notice and that the Texas commercial seat was still vacant.

Adoption of Agenda

Harriet Perry requested to be moved up on the agenda and VanderKooy pointed out that the derelict trap item should probably be moved as she had some insight into the discussion. **R. Gros moved to accept the agenda as modified. B. Fairbank seconded and the agenda was approved.**

Approval of Minutes (March 18, 2002)

A minor change was suggested to the minutes from the last meeting to correct the chair from Pat Murray to P. Horn. **R. Gros moved to accept the minutes with the correction and was seconded by B. Fairbank and the minutes were approved.**

Protection of Egg Bearing Crabs

Harriet Perry (GCRL) presented a compelling argument which demonstrated the lack of a biological need to protect sponge crabs. She reported that the limiting factor in the Gulf for blue crab populations is habitat, not recruitment. Up to 89 and 90% of the recruits which make it into the estuary are lost due to fish predators and cannibalism by larger crabs. Each sponge can contain 2,000,000 eggs and a female can produce three or more broods from a single mating. In fact, most of the mature female crabs that do not display a sponge are already pregnant, making the issue of protecting the mother obsolete. Perry pointed out that processing sponge-crabs requires only one additional step, therefore it appears to be the "momma" stigma that is really behind the current regulations. In the revision to the blue crab FMP, the task force made a recommendation that sponge crabs should not be protected based on biological reasoning. Perry's presentation is available through the GSMFC office.

Update on Derelict Trap Guidance Document

VanderKooy discussed the current status of the guidance document developed by the Derelict Trap Task Force. The document is designed to be an outline/checklist for those attempting to initiate similar programs to remove derelict traps. The information provided in the document can be applied to other trap fisheries as well as other gears and even debris cleanups. B. Fairbank serves as the CRFAP representative on the Derelict Trap Task Force and has provided input along the way. VanderKooy was pleased to report that the task force would likely approve the document on Tuesday morning and provide it to the TCC for their review Tuesday afternoon.

Some discussion followed regarding Louisiana's plans and other efforts to recover deep water traps. Vince Guillory (LDWF) and Gary Graham (TX Sea Grant) were in the audience and fielded questions regarding both issues. VanderKooy also reported that the NOAA Habitat Restoration office was attending the crab meeting in the morning to discuss funding a proposal submitted by the GSMFC to assist the states financially to further develop existing recovery efforts and initiate new programs where needed. A lot of interest has been generated over the guidance document both in the region and on the Atlantic. The task force is optimistic that the document will have applications in many other states and be requested often.

FIN Data Program Update

D. Donaldson reported on the status of the FIN Data Program including updates on commercial and recreational data collection, charter boat, head boat, menhaden, trip tickets, biological sampling and development of the FIN data management system.

Staff was directed to provide a demonstration of the FIN database at the CRFAP meeting in Alabama next March.

Sea Grant Summit for a Sustainable Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Industry

Ralph Rayburn (Texas Sea Grant) presented information on the Shrimp Summit planned for March 6-8, 2003. A number of Sea Grant folks have been working to identify and invite participation by representatives of the Gulf of Mexico shrimping industry and engage them in discussion with state, regional, and federal managers and researchers. These individuals represent American and Mexican bay, inshore, and offshore shrimpers, processors, dealers, and marketers with a stake in the fishery. The idea is to begin dialog with a moderator on the priority issues to all attending. Topics for discussion include the history of the fishery, current management, market trends and consumer interests, and future issues such as data collection, research, marketing, habitat and bycatch, and economics. Anyone with an interest in participating or getting more information should contact Rayburn directly or through the GSMFC office

Mercury and Invasive Species Update

R. Lukens updated the Panel on both the activities of methylmercury and invasive species since the last meeting. Lukens indicated that some additional recommendations had been suggested by the Commissioners regarding the methylmercury report, and that several of the recommendations needed more detail especially as they relate to cost and expected funding levels of between \$4.8 and \$5.5 million over four years. The report will be provided to the Commission later in the week for approval in hopes of receiving authorization to proceed with the development of the recommendations outlined in the report.

The reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act (NISA) is currently underway, and a bill has been introduced called the National Aquatic Nuisance Protection Act. Zebra mussels were the catalyst to the legislative action but now has incorporated additional aquatic interests as well. The regional panel on invasive species is now under the administration of the GSMFC. The administrative change to the panel was a friendly one and appropriate under Lukens' current activities. Lukens will continue to update the group as those activities evolve.

In addition, Lukens followed-up on the actions from the GSMFC Annual Meeting last spring regarding the tire resolution and position statement, providing the final amended documents to the CRFAP.

Aquatic Release Conservation

Shawn Dick, Aquatic Release Conservation, provided a video presentation and demonstration of his company's de-hooking device. The Panel enjoyed the opportunity to witness firsthand a tool which could potentially improve the survival of undersized and foul-hooked fish.

IJF Activities

VanderKooy gave a short report on the activities currently underway in the IJF program. The otolith manual, which has been in development for over six years, is almost complete. VanderKooy reported that the work group is completing its final review and the TCC will be provided copies to review in the next few weeks. There has been a great interest along the Atlantic in the manual and the ASMFC has been in contact with VanderKooy indicating a need to incorporate the Gulf standards outlined in the manual with their own. It was suggested that the ASMFC may join our efforts and begin to include species of interest to the Atlantic. VanderKooy will be presenting this concept to the SFFMC for their consideration.

Other activities include the revision to the striped bass FMP which is making headway after a slow start. VanderKooy anticipates a complete draft sometime next summer. VanderKooy also indicated that the Gulf Menhaden website is complete and currently available for on-line review. He anticipates launching the science based site in the next few weeks.

Election of Chair

The Panel was content with the current leadership of the two panels and agreed unanimously that P. Horn and G. Cane will remain as chairs of the commercial and recreational panels, respectively.

Other Business

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Monday, October 14, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Chairman Joe O'Hop called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Leslie Hartman, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Leard (*Proxy for S. Atran*), GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Staff

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Tony Lamberte, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Chris Dorsett, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on March 18, 2002 in Biloxi, Mississippi were approved as written.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - J. O'Hop reported that the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) conducts applied marine research in Florida's estuarine and nearshore environments. They have active programs in many areas of marine research, including red tide research and monitoring, seagrass research and restoration projects, fisheries research and monitoring, marine turtles and marine mammal research and monitoring, environmental assessment and monitoring projects, and support functions including a research library, specimen collections, and computer systems. The Fisheries Dependent Monitoring (FDM) group is assigned the tasks of the collection and analyses of commercial marine fisheries trip tickets, collection of information on saltwater fishing in

Florida associated with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS), collection of angler catch and effort information and samples (fin clips) of red drum for Project Tampa Bay (an experimental assessment of stock enhancement releases and techniques), collection of log books and sampling of catches from head boats, and collection of biological samples from recreational anglers and commercial fishermen through the Fisheries Information network (FIN), Trip Interview Program (TIP) and NMFS Beaufort Head Boat Survey.

The collection and processing of marine fisheries trip tickets is operating normally, and Florida has reduced its backlog of unprocessed trip tickets to approximately 6 weeks. This small backlog will be reduced even more in the next two months. However, Florida will be entering a period of testing on their new server under a new operating system and version of Oracle. No problems are anticipated associated with this migration from our SGI server running IRIX (a UNIX variant) and Oracle 8.15 to the new DELL server running Microsoft's NT operating system and Oracle 9i. But, it is reasonably certain that the parallel testing of the systems will slow processing of trip tickets. The testing period and progress to full implementation on the new system should be accomplished by March of 2003 or sooner.

Angler catch and effort data collected by FDM staff for the MRFSS and Project Tampa Bay projects is proceeding normally. Florida expects to collect approximately the same or more angler interviews in 2002 for the MRFSS project as collected during 2001, exceeding the sampling targets by more than 33%. Florida has experienced good cooperation with the charter boat captains for the Vessel Directory Telephone survey (VDTS), and some are participating in the economic survey questions. All of the biologists associated with the MRFSS, Project Tampa Bay, TIP, FIN biological sampling, and head boat projects participated in 6-month training on fish identification during September 4-5, 2002. In conjunction with this training, Florida provided their staff with sessions on interaction with FWC Law Enforcement officers, upcoming assessment projects on wahoo and dolphin, recognition and reporting of invasive species (especially, the green mussel), and otolith collection and processing for the new staff. There is a greater level of staff turnover associated with this project than other projects. The reasons vary. For some, this is a "starter" biologist position and it is a stepping-stone for a better career or entrance to graduate school. For others, the lack of benefits and a full-time position make this temporary position really 'temporary'. This situation (the lack of full-time status and benefits) leads to higher turnover and more frequent hiring and training of new staff than preferred. Presently, all of the positions associated with the MRFSS survey are temporary and all of the advertising and hiring of staff is done.

Commercial catch and effort data collect for the TIP by state port agents is proceeding normally. It was noted that there is the upcoming annual port agent meeting scheduled for November 14-15, 2002, in St. Petersburg at FMRI.

The head boat project is also functioning normally. The resignation of Ms. Kristine Burns (head boat sampler in St. Petersburg) led to the hiring of Mr. Craig Lavine (formerly one of our MRFSS samplers) to fill this vacancy. During the interim between Kristine's resignation and Craig's hiring, Craig and Kelley Kowal (also one of our MRFSS samplers) continued to perform the duties associated with the head boat project.

The implementation of biological tissue sampling (primarily otolith, but also fish muscle tissue for mercury analyses and DNA assays) has been received very positively by the samplers. Many have expressed that they feel more like fishery biologists now instead of just staff who interview people and measure fish. With the increase in funding through FIN, Florida has increased the number of biological samples at least two-fold compared to last year. Also, they have expanded collections to the Atlantic Coast of Florida, and expect an even greater number of samples to be taken during 2002.

Alabama - L. Hartman reported that the MRFSS project in Alabama is running smoothly and the targets should be reached in wave 4. Problems with the recent tropical weather has made it somewhat difficult to obtain interviews, however, the targets should be reached. Due to personnel shortages, it has been somewhat difficult to get the required otoliths, particularly red snapper and southern flounder in the private/rental mode. The trip ticket program is still operating and several dealers are utilizing the electronic reporting system. Alabama staff are working with other dealers and attempting to get them on board with the system. Recently, there has been a problem with getting dealers to report their data via the trip ticket program. Alabama is conducting some outreach meetings with the industry to encourage them to participate and let them know why it is important to provide the data. Alabama has a derelict crab trap program and approximately 355 traps were retrieved in shallow waters this year. The second phase of the program dealt with deepwater abandoned traps and utilized the shrimp industry to retrieve these traps. However, there were only a handful of traps (~125 traps). Alabama is scheduling another derelict trap removal event in early 2003. Data are being collected on this activity so trends can be examined in future years. Oyster reef sampling is conducted once a year using a scuba and following a transect line. This year, everything was fairly average. Alabama has 20 years of fishery-independent data and all the data have been entered and some quality control/quality assurances checks are being run on the data. Alabama is also in the process of analyzing these data.

Mississippi - Although T. Van Devender was unable to attend the meeting, he provided a written report regarding Mississippi's activities. The report stated that by Legislative statute, Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources reconstituted as 5-member board on July 1, 2002. The former seven-member Commission lost representatives from the state's Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks Department and one member from non-seafood industry. Governor Musgrove named Dr. Bill Walker as new Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Executive Director July 1, 2002. The 2002-2003 oyster season opened October 9th after a few days delay following floodwaters from Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lili. Assessments of nearshore reef damages are currently underway as coastal counties experienced high wave action, beach erosion and rainfall totals from 12" to over 17" during September. The Seafood Technology Program continues in its quarterly inspections of molluscan shellfish and crab processing facilities and in assisting these facilities develop HACCP Plans. Also under a Gulf and South Atlantic Foundation grant, Seafood Technology is conducting studies of post-harvest treatment methods of Gulf oysters designed to prolong shelf life. These methods such as high pressure treatments of shellstock and individually frozen oyster meats will be evaluated by taste-test panels, and the processes and equipment required by these after-harvest treatments will be highlighted in educational videos and brochures aimed at the shellfish industry. Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lili destroyed two of the seven hydrological platforms positioned in Mississippi Sound. Data from the remaining instruments can be accessed via the Mississippi DMR web site. State

statutes were changed to allow the Commission on Marine Resources to declare a closed crab season each year of not less than 10 days or more than 30 days. Though the dates are not yet set, a closed period will facilitate the collection of derelict crab traps during a joint program to be carried out this winter by the DMR and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. The 2002 shrimp season opened June 6th. Preliminary commercial catch data reported by DMR for June and July indicate lower catches than in previous years, but August figures have improved, mostly due to white shrimp. DMR is seeking a temporary exemption from the TED requirements for Mississippi shrimpers due to heavy amounts of net-clogging marsh grass and other debris washed into Mississippi Sound by Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lili. The MRFSS program continues to provide recreational catch data into the cooperative regional database. In addition to the catch data, otoliths are being collected for red snapper, king mackerel and southern flounder. After two years the pilot night fishing survey is scheduled to end in December. Data will be analyzed for differences between day and night fishing in species composition and catch per unit of effort. Two-inch limestone rocks will be spread near piers and in shallow waters to create 24 nearshore fishing reefs across the three coastal counties. South of the barrier islands in open Gulf waters, 63 armored personnel carriers will be deployed in existing permitted reef sites by the end of October. Assessment of all reef sites is underway to determine any effects of the recent storms.

Louisiana - J. Shepard reported that Louisiana has deployed various artificial reefs including an inshore limestone reef, an ocean-going tug, and 4 offshore platforms. There are also 6 projects waiting to be deployed. Louisiana has been involved in the reevaluation of the national artificial reef plan. Like most of the Gulf states, Louisiana's shrimp year has not been very productive. The landings are significantly lower in 2002 compared with 2001. A combination of late spring cold fronts and the tropical weather has led to the low production. The price of shrimp has also dropped and through the trip ticket program, Louisiana was able to show a major economic impact to the shrimp fishery and the Governor provided some financial assistance. The trip ticket program continues to collect commercial data and seems to be operating well. Louisiana continues to encourage dealers to utilize the electronic reporting system. M. Kasprzak reported that the recreational data collections are running smoothly and there should not be any problems with reaching targets, despite all the tropical weather. The charter boat telephone economic add-on survey is operating okay, with about 45 captains unwilling to provide samplers with economic information. The biological sampling activity continues and to date 1,164 southern flounder, 870 red snapper, 225 king mackerel, and 23 greater amberjack have been sampled and otoliths collected. Also, 769 southern flounder, 584 red snapper, and 10 king mackerel have been aged. The processors are having some problems ageing the mackerel and amberjack since they have not had much experience ageing these fish. Although the otolith-training workshop was helpful, they believe additional training is needed. A combination wave meeting/otolith removal workshop was recently held to help samplers remove otoliths.

Texas - P. Campbell reported that Texas is planning another crab trap removal event in spring 2003. They are also testing new materials for degradable panels in crab traps. Texas is continuing the charter boat telephone survey. They made a modification in the methodology in that they are only collecting information on the offshore vessels since their creel survey adequately covers the inshore guide fishery. Texas is also continuing with the

FIN biological sampling and they are having the same problem with getting red snapper otoliths. Several of the commercial dealers in Texas have been developing forms (similar to trip tickets) and Texas is talking with these dealers and is planning to give a presentation (by Southwest Computer Bureau, Inc. (SCBI), the electronic trip ticket system contractor) to them. V. Swann noted that Texas began a buy back program for shrimp in 1995 and will continue until 2005. Round 10 was continued early this year and 119 licenses were purchased at an average price of \$6,600. Round 11 is currently operating and shrimpers have until October 25, 2002 to let Texas know if they will accept or deny the bid. So far, a total of 153 bids were taken at an average price of \$7,125. The overall goal of the program was to reduce the shrimp fleet by half. If all of the shrimpers who were selected in round 11 accept the bids, a grand total of 928 licenses or 28% of the fleet have been bought back. The crab buy back program has not had much activity. In the latest round, a total of 9 licenses were purchased from crabbers and to date, a total of 25 crab licenses were purchased. For finfish, in the latest round, over 100 applications were submitted. The crab and finfish programs have the same October 25, 2002 deadline for submission.

NMFS - G. Davenport reported on the status of Trip Interview Program (TIP) data entry. The online version 1.0 is now operational and a demonstration will be presented at the upcoming Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers meeting in November 2002. NMFS is routinely accessing the Louisiana trip ticket data and plans are in the works to allow the NMFS port agents to review and provide feedback on the data. In addition, the shrimp data are being translated and submitted to NMFS Galveston Lab. The landings are being summarized and updated to the NMFS commercial landings warehouse. Regarding data communications, most of the NMFS field offices now have remote access. Either DSL or T1 lines have been installed in all of the Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida field offices. The Texas field offices will be upgraded at a later date. G. Davenport reported on two main data collection activities. The first was collection of detailed effort data. Approximately 389 shrimp interviews were conducted in Louisiana from January to August 2002. There have been some problems with lack of cooperation in collecting the interviews, which is due, in part, to the low prices, roadside sales (retailing), and negative response to imports. There is definitely some potential for Federal Aid. There will be a presentation to the FIN committee in June 2003 with assistance from Galveston Lab. The second activity is the TIP and he reported that data collection efforts continue on schedule. The commercial red snapper quota was met and the fishery closed on August 7, 2002. The king mackerel quota has not been met and fishing is continuing. NMFS is involved in adult red drum sampling to determine the ageing structure of the offshore stock. The target is to collect 800-1000 otoliths from adult red drum and so far, 825 otolith pairs have been collected, mainly along Louisiana's coastline. The sampling is scheduled to continue through December 2002. There are currently two NMFS port agent positions vacant. One position is in the New Smyrna Beach area where the incumbent left to return to grad school. And the other position is in the St. Petersburg area where the incumbent accepted a position with NMFS HMS group. Shrimp fishermen will now need a permit to fish in the offshore (EEZ) shrimp fishery. Fishermen need to complete an application to apply for these permits. Anyone that needs information and/or applications can contact Bob Sadler at NMFS Southeast Regional Office. The application closure date is December 5, 2002. All of the NMFS port agents have application forms.

GSMFC - D. Donaldson stated that the recreational operations continue to run smoothly. The states are still exceeding quota on routine basis. The commercial aspects of FIN (trip tickets) are also operating quite well. One component of the trip ticket program is the electronic reporting of the data. To date, Southwest Computer Bureau, Inc. (SCBI) has installed 57 dealers, including 47 in Louisiana, 1 in Mississippi, 8 in Alabama and 1 in Florida. He noted that biological sampling continues in the five Gulf states and the status of this sampling will be discussed later in this meeting. The FIN Data Management System is now accessible at FIN web page (www.gsmfc.org/fin.html). There are two levels of access: non-confidential and confidential. The non-confidential user will have access to the SEAMAP data, recreational data, as well as the commercial data (summarized by species, state and year). The confidential user will have access to the SEAMAP data, recreational data, as well as various levels of confidential data. The user must complete the appropriate forms (available on the FIN web page) and provide them to the FIN Data Base Manager. Once the required forms have been completed and received, a user name and password will be provided to the user.

GMFMC - T. Lamberte reported that it has been decided that the Council needs to redo the red snapper rebuilding plan with particular emphasis on an environmental impact statement. The Council is currently trying to hire a contractor to conduct the EIS portion of this plan. Shrimp Amendment 11, which pertains to the permits for the shrimp fishery, should be approved in the near future. The charter boat moratorium has been implemented and the NMFS is working with the Gulf states and the Commission to determine compliance. Amendment 10 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which looks at additional bycatch requirements on the west coast of Florida, has been submitted to NMFS for their consideration and review. NMFS has yet to let the Council know if the documents are complete. The Council is still in the development phase of Amendment 13 to the Shrimp FMP. This Amendment reestablishes the status criteria for shrimp. Under Amendment 21 to the Reef Fish FMP, the Council has entered into a contract with Florida State researchers to conduct a study to examine the feasibility of extending the moratorium on the two closed areas for reef fish. The contractor for the Council is currently developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) amendment. The socio-economic panel has completed its development of the bioeconomic modeling and has used it to model red grouper. The Council has submitted an amendment for red grouper rebuilding.

Discussion of Florida Trip Ticket and Logbook Comparison Study

J. O'Hop stated that the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) was interested in comparing a one-ticket trip ticket program vs. a two-ticket program. After further examination, the group believed the best place to look at this issue was in Florida and compare the trip tickets and the vessel logbooks. There are some problems associated with this comparison since the NMFS permit system (for logbooks) is based on the vessel while the Florida trip ticket system is based on either an individual or a vessel. A NMFS port agent was tasked with matching up the Florida trip ticket with an associated logbook. In some cases, they matched very well while other times the link was not as clear. Approximately 75% of the landings were matched up between the trip tickets and logbooks. After NMFS had matched up these two datasets, Florida also attempted to match records within the data. From this exercise, an additional 10% of the landings were matched up.

The results of this matching showed that there were some major differences of how catches were reported between the two systems. In some cases, the information is more detailed on the logbooks vs. trip tickets while in other cases, the opposite is true.

Status of Detailed Effort Survey

G. Davenport reported that approximately 389 shrimp interviews were conducted in Louisiana from January to August 2002. There have been some problems with lack of cooperation in collecting the interviews, which is due, in part, to the low prices, roadside sales (retailing), and negative response to imports. Since there has been some problems with cooperation, there have been efforts to make sure samplers do not target only the fishermen who want to participate. The effort was mainly focused on offshore trips although some data on inshore trips has been collected. This activity should continue into 2003. D. Donaldson asked if any of the data have been analyzed and G. Davenport stated that plans are in the works to begin the analysis in the near future. It was noted that a presentation at the next FIN meeting in June 2003 could probably be arranged to look at some of the preliminary results. D. Donaldson stated that the purpose of this exercise is to determine if this methodology will adequately capture the necessary data on detailed effort for all species. The reason for presenting it to FIN is for the FIN Committee to consider expanding the sampling effort to the other Gulf states and detailed effort can be collected throughout the Gulf of Mexico. It was noted that it might be useful have some NMFS-Galveston personnel at the FIN meeting to present this analysis to provide their perspective on this data collection activity.

State Participation in Outreach for the Reef Fish Data Collection Effort

T. Lamberte stated that the Council is involved in some social/economic data collection efforts that will be targeting reef fish and mackerel fishermen. A similar activity is currently being conducted on the South Atlantic but it was decided to delay the implementation in the Gulf so some outreach with the industry could be conducted. They are looking at beginning the data collection during January 2004. The data will be collected via existing NMFS logbooks and two types of economic data will be collected. The first type will be costs and earnings information about the various costs associated with trips. The other part will be an annual expenditures survey where 20% of the fishermen who participated in the cost and earnings section will be asked to complete an annual survey. The Council needs to conduct workshops in the Gulf of Mexico in order to solicit comments and input from the industry regarding this data collection effort. The Council would like to contract with the states to identify the key sites within each state to conduct these workshops as well as identify the key industry people to attend the meetings. These workshops would be moderated by Council staff with the presence of state personnel.

Status of Charter Boat Economic Add-on Survey

D. Donaldson stated that the charter boat economic add-on survey is going better than expected. He distributed a summary of response rates for the survey. Most of the captains are participating in the survey on a routine basis. The exceptions are in Louisiana and the Florida Keys where the refusal rates are ~15% and ~30%, respectively. Although the high refusal rates are concerning, it is not surprising that they are high in these areas. It was

noted that although the captains may be refusing to participate in the economic add-on, they are still providing data on their effort. There were concerns that the add-on survey would negatively affect the effort survey but that does not seem to be the case. J. O'Hop asked about the analysis of these data and when preliminary results would be available. D. Donaldson responded that these issues have not been addressed by the NMFS economic staff and this would be a good item to discuss at the upcoming wave meeting. D. Donaldson stated that he would keep the group informed about this issue.

Status of Biological Sampling Activities

D. Donaldson distributed a summary of otolith collections for the recreational and commercial fisheries. The summary presents the number of otoliths that have been collected as well as the targets, by species, mode, and state. As mentioned during the several state reports, there appears to be problems with obtaining red snapper otoliths in the private/rental mode. Overall, the collections are going well and most of the states are providing the tracking information on a timely basis. It was noted that as this process becomes more routine, the sending of separate tally forms might not be necessary provided that the agencies send the actual data regarding collection activities. In order to accomplish this, it is imperative that the agencies send in the data by the established deadlines. D. Donaldson noted that there is a backlog of data since a data entry program was not available until recently. He asked what the status of reducing the backlog for each state. Several of the states do have a backlog and D. Donaldson noted these backlogs need to be eliminated as soon as possible. The other portion of this activity is the analysis of these otoliths. This information can be tracked through the actual data once it has been submitted. The states are at various stages of analyzing the otoliths and it was noted that they need to not only focus on the collection but on the analysis as well. One of the goals of this activity was to provide more ageing data for stock assessments and that entails both collection and analysis. **The group decided that status of biological sampling should be a standing agenda item and each state should provide what has been collected and processed, to date.** D. Donaldson stated that M. Sestak is working with J. Bennett to get the biological information that is collected by the federal port agents into the FIN DMS as well. J. O'Hop noted that there is the potential to have duplicate records in the system since state personnel collect otoliths via TIP. When Florida sends the data to the FIN DMS, the same records could be in the NMFS data that would be sent to the DMS. It was noted that there is a field in the database to allow for the identification of a duplicate record (collected under MRFSS, TIP, etc.) Therefore, when J. O'Hop sends the data, if he does not include these records, this would prevent duplicate records from being entered. J. O'Hop suggested a different approach to the tracking processing. It would be a web-based system where samplers would enter the different types of biological information that were collected (otolith, spine, gonad, tissue sample, etc.) and the system would provide a tracking number for that specific part. This would allow for better tracking of the specimens. Although it seems a bit futuristic right now, it certainly has potential for the future.

Discussion of Adding Artificial Reef Question on Intercept Survey

D. Donaldson stated that at the recent FIN meeting, the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee made a recommendation that a question regarding use of artificial reefs during fishing

activities be added to the MRFSS. The Artificial Reef Work Group met (via conference call) to work out the details of the specific wording of the question. The final wording of the question was presented to the group. The Work Group recommended that the question be added to the survey beginning in January 2003. However, it recently came to the group's attention that a conjoint study will be conducted in 2003 and probably will begin in wave 3 or 4. Although this was not what the group had planned for, it actually would be beneficial to have both the artificial reef question and the conjoint study operating at the same time since it provides some additional information regarding the economic value of artificial reefs. The group discussed the wording of the question and various aspects of the question. It was noted that this question would not be asked of fishermen fishing from shore. The group discussed the differences between artificial vs. natural reefs. **After some discussion, the Subcommittee approved the wording of the question as written and the question should be added to the MRFSS, beginning in January 2003. The group also decided that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee needed to provide definitions of artificial and natural reefs.**

Discussion of New Approach to Collection of Social/Economic Data

D. Donaldson stated that the current process of developing data collection for social/economic data does not appear to be working. The Social/Economic Work Group has met for the last three years and has yet to develop a viable social/economic data collection program. The problem appears to be that FIN is attempting to force the collection of these data when there is not a real push within the agencies to collect this information. The impetus for all of the current activities under FIN had come from the state and/or federal agencies in FIN. This does not seem to be true for the social/economic data and it appears the FIN is trying to "force" this activity. It was noted that the framework for the collection of social/economic data (minimum data elements, methods, etc.) have been developed by FIN so the infrastructure is there for data collection. It was suggested that instead of developing another data collection activity, FIN could focus on providing feedback to existing data collection activities (logbook add-ons, offshore shrimp fisheries interviews, etc.) in terms of meeting the FIN social/economic standards. It was noted that the infrastructure for collection of these types of data is in place and when a partner wants to collect social/economic data, the proposed activities will be evaluated based on these standards. **It was decided that this issue should be discussed by the FIN Committee in June 2003.**

Discussion of Data Collection Work Group Report

D. Donaldson reported that the Data Collection Work Group met in September 2002 to begin the development of the FIN bycatch module. Since the ACCSP has done extensive work on this issue, the group believed they should not reinvent the wheel and develop something completely different than the ACCSP. The proposed program will utilize both quantitative and qualitative collection methods. The Work Group developed several recommendations. The first recommendation is to adopt the ACCSP at-sea observer program data elements (quantitative) as the FIN standard and work on interim solutions with TIP and logbook data (qualitative) collection to advance data quality until a full at-sea observer program is possible. The other recommendation is to utilize the TIP bycatch component to identify/prioritize fisheries for at-sea observer sampling. **The**

Subcommittee discussed these recommendations and agreed to accept them.
The proposed data elements are attached. This issue will be further discussed at the FIN meeting in June 2003.

Election of Chairman

After some discussion, Page Campbell was elected Chairman and J. O'Hop was elected Vice Chairman.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

FIN Bycatch Monitoring Program

The FIN bycatch monitoring program will be a coast-wide program (Texas through Florida, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands) to include all living marine resources in estuarine, inshore, and offshore waters. Data should be collected from all U.S. fishing vessels leaving from and landing at Gulf and Caribbean ports, including shore-based fishing operations. The program should be conducted throughout the year and will include commercial, recreational, and the for-hire fisheries.

The bycatch program will include quantitative and qualitative data collection components. The quantitative component includes an at-sea observer program for selected commercial and for-hire fisheries as well as the existing data on the number of released and discarded finfish species through existing recreational intercept surveys. The qualitative bycatch program will include utilizing existing commercial, recreational and for-hire intercept programs to provide trend information as well as identify fisheries that need more in-depth study

Release/discard data collected through the qualitative release/discard monitoring program will be used to identify and prioritize fisheries requiring collection of additional bycatch data through quantitative methods.

Table 1. Minimum standard data elements to be collected through the FIN at-sea observer program for collection of quantitative release, discard, and protected species interactions data for commercial fisheries.

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Vessel Information		
Vessel Identifier	Unique vessel identifier (Coast Guard or state registration number). These identifiers must be trackable through time and space.	11 digit character
Vessel Name	Name of vessel (if applicable)	20 digit character
Individual Identifier	An identifier unique to an individual (i.e. operator license number), traceable through time and space	11 digit character
Observer Identification Number	Unique certification number provided by the ACCSP at-sea observer-training program.	<i>To be developed</i>
Trip Information		
Reporting Form Series Number	Individual number for each reporting form, to be assigned by the collecting agency (i.e., trip ticket number). This data element may be blank in the dual reporting system.	12 digit alphanumeric
Form Type/Version Number	Version identification number for the ACCSP reporting form.	12 digit alphanumeric
Trip start	Date the trip started (this is unique to each trip and can be used to tie multiple unloadings into a trip record). A trip is shore to shore by gear/area combination, or in the case of transfers at sea, an off-loading at sea is a trip. This information should include trips with effort but no catch.	MM/DD/YYYY
Target Species or Species Group 1	The first target species or species group for that trip/haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 2	The second target species or species group for that trip.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 3	The third target species or species group for that trip.	ITIS 11 digit character
State Landed	The state where the product was landed or unloaded.	2 digit character postal code
Port Landed	The location within a state where the product was landed/unloaded.	5-digit FIPS code

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Primary Gear	The primary gear used to catch the landed species.	3-digit numeric
Primary Area Fished	Statistical area and distance from shore where most hauls occurred. The distance from shore where fishing occurred [inland (less than 0 nautical miles...nm), near shore (0-3 nm on Atlantic coast, 0-9 nm on Florida and Texas Gulf coast), EEZ (3-200 nm on Atlantic coast, 9-200 nm on Florida and Texas Gulf coast), territorial seas (in the USVI and Puerto Rico (12 nm), and international (>200 nm)] is embedded in this code.	3-digit numeric plus 2 decimals
Number of Hauls	Total number of hauls of gear during a trip.	3 digit numeric
Haul Information		
Trip Identifier	Trip start, vessel or individual identifier and trip number (see vessel and trip information)	21 digit character
Gear(s)	The type(s) of gear used to catch the landed species.	3 digit character
Quantity of Gear	The amount of gear employed.	4-digit numeric
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled, representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by either a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric
Haul Observed	Indication of whether the haul was actually observed (0=haul not observed, 1=complete catch data collected, 2=complete release/discard data only, 3=partial release/discard data, 4=observed kept portion, not release/discard data).	1 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 1	The first target species or species group for that haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 2	The second target species or species group for that haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Target Species or Species Group 3	The third target species or species group for that haul.	ITIS 11 digit character
Lat Begin	The latitude at the beginning of the haul.	6 digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Long Begin	The longitude at the beginning of the haul.	7digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)
Lat End	The latitude at the beginning of the haul.	6 digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)
Long End	The longitude at the beginning of the haul.	7 digit numeric plus 1 character (2 decimal minutes)
Time Set	The time the gear was set. Used with time hauled to derive fishing time	MO:DD:HH:MM
Time Retrieved	The time the gear was hauled. Used with time set to derive fishing time	MO:DD:HH:MM
Depth Fished	Depth in fathom at which the gear is fished.	4 digit numeric plus 1 decimal
Minimum Bottom Depth	Minimum depth of bottom in fathoms.	4 digit numeric plus 1 decimal
Maximum Bottom Depth	Maximum depth of bottom in fathoms.	4 digit numeric plus 1 decimal
Deterrent Devices Operational	Indication of whether deterrent devices were operational during the haul	1 digit character (Y/N)
Deterrent Device	Indication of whether deterrent devices were used during the haul (0= pinger, 1= tory lines, 2 = deflectors, 3= other).	1 digit character
Deterrent Device 2	Indication of whether deterrent devices were used during the haul (0= pinger, 1= tory lines, 2 = deflectors, 3= other).	1 digit character
Deterrent Device 3	Indication of whether deterrent devices were used during the haul (0= pinger, 1= tory lines, 2 = deflectors, 3= other).	1 digit character
Gear Number	Consecutive number assigned to each uniquely configured gear hauled and for which characteristics are described.	2 digit numeric
Subsample Log		
Trip Identifier	Trip start, vessel or individual identifier and trip number (see vessel and trip information)	21 digit character
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled, representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by either a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Subsample Amount or Weight	The total amount, in whole pounds, numbers, or other appropriate unit of measurement of each marine species that is landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Quantity of protected species should be measured in numbers. This data element is linked to the units of measurement and disposition code for exact characterization of the quantity. For some species, especially protected species, these data are needed on a set basis.	8 digit numeric plus two decimals
Units of Measurement for Subsample Weight	Units of measurement for subsample weight (i.e., each, pounds, numbers, etc.)	2 digit character
Species	The species for each species of marine resources landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Each species is to be identified separately. Use of market or generalized categories is to be avoided within species code fields or variables.	ITIS 11 digit character
Disposition	Fate of the product (i.e. releases, discards, bait, industrial use, personal consumption, marine mammal interactions, etc.). Disposition of releases and discards should be recorded (i.e. regulatory versus other releases and discards, dead or alive).	3 digit character
Grade	Any grade categories that affect price, usually size related.	2 digit numeric
Subsample Quantity	The amount, in whole pounds, numbers, or some other appropriate unit of measurement of each marine species that is landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Quantity of protected species should be measured in numbers. This data element is linked to the units of measurement and disposition code for exact characterization of the quantity. For some species, especially protected species, these data are needed on a set basis.	8 digit numeric plus two decimals
Units of Measurement	Units of measurement for quantity (i.e. each, pounds, bushels, etc).	2 digit character
Estimated or Actual	How was quantity collected (0=actual, 1=estimated).	1 digit character
Biological Sample Weight	Weight of subsample for biological sampling	8 digit numeric plus two decimals

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Minimum Data Required for Observed Entanglements		
Field Number	Assigned by responding organization. Used to identify individual stranded animals.	
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled, representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric
Gear Number	Consecutive number assigned to each uniquely configured gear hauled and for which characteristics are described.	2 digit numeric
Entanglement Situation Code	00 - unknown 01 - fell from gear, point unknown 02 - fell from gear before exiting water 03 - fell from gear once out of water 04 - fell from gear due to force of roller 05 - removal requires cutting gear or animal 06 - removal does not require cutting gear/animal 99 - other Longline Gear Only 07 - foul hooked, cut from gear 08 - foul hooked, removed from gear 10 - bird caught - gangion attached to line 11 - bird caught - gangion not attached to line	2 digit character
Net Number (gillnet only)	Consecutive number assigned to that net where the animal is entangled.	2 digit numeric
Number of Floats (gillnet only)	Number of floats counted from where the animal is entangled to the nearest endline	3 digit numeric
Meters Below Floatline	Indication of where in the gear the animal was captured.	3 digit numeric
Taken on Set or Retrieval	Indication of when the animal was captured (1=set; 2=haul)	1 digit character

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Condition of Animal	Indication of the condition of the animal when released; record most appropriate code (0=unknown; 1=alive, condition unknown; 2=alive, not injured; 3=alive, injured; 4=alive, gear in/around mouth; 5=alive, gear in/around flipper; 6=alive, gear in/around another single body part; 7=alive, gear in/around multiple body parts; 8=alive, seen by captain/crew only; 10=dead, condition unknown; 11=dead, fresh; 12=dead, moderately decomposed; 13=dead, severely decomposed; 14=dead, seen by captain/crew; 99=other	2 digit numeric
Comments	Include information on where gear is on the animal and what part of the gear entangled the animal	50 digit character
Biological Information		
Trip Identifier	Trip start, vessel or individual identifier and trip number (see vessel and trip information)	21 digit character
Haul Number	Sequential number for unique locations where gear was hauled representing the number of hauls taken in a single trip by either a vessel or individual.	3 digit numeric
Species	The species for each species of marine resources landed, sold, released, discarded, etc. Each species is to be identified separately. Use of market or generalized categories is to be avoided within species code fields or variables.	ITIS 11 digit character
Disposition	Fate of the product (i.e. releases, discards, bait, industrial use, personal consumption, marine mammal interactions, etc.). Disposition of releases and discards should be recorded (i.e. regulatory versus other releases and discards, dead or alive).	3 digit character
Minimum Data for Marine Mammals		
Species	Species of each marine mammal observed	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo(s)	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit numeric

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Tag Code(s)	Indication of whether the tag is pre-existing or newly applied. (0=unknown; 1=taken without tag, then tagged; 2=taken without tag, and not tagged; 3=taken with a tag, and retagged; 4=taken with a tag, and not retagged).	1 digit character
Length	Straight measurement as per protocols.	10 digit numeric
Units of Measurement	Units of length (i.e., feet, meters, etc.).	2 digit character
Length Type	Indicate whether length was measured or estimated (0=actual; 1=estimated)	1 digit character
Gender	1=male, 2=female, 3=unknown	1 digit character
Biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit character
Text Field	Comments or uncoded data	Text
Tag ID Number(s)	Tag number from pre-existing or newly applied tags.	12 digit character
Minimum Data for Sea Turtles		
Species	Species of each sea turtle observed	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo(s)	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit character
Tag ID Number(s)	All letters and numbers on pre-existing or newly applied tags.	12 digit character
Tag Code(s)	Indication of whether the tag is pre-existing or newly applied. (0=unknown; 1=taken without tag, then tagged; 2=taken without tag, and not tagged; 3=taken with a tag, and re-tagged; 4=taken with a tag, and not re-tagged).	1 digit character

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Units of Measurement	Units of length (i.e., feet, meters, etc.).	2 digit character
Length Type	Indicate whether length was measured or estimated (0=actual; 1=estimated)	1 digit numeric
Straight Carapace Length	Straight length of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of calipers)	5 digit numeric
Curved Carapace Length	Curved length of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of flexible measuring tape).	5 digit numeric
Straight Carapace Width	Straight width of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of calipers)	5 digit numeric
Curved Carapace Width	Curved width of carapace from notch to notch (requires use of flexible measuring tape)	5 digit numeric
Width Type	Indicate whether width was measured or estimated (0=actual; 1=estimated)	1 digit numeric
Were biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit numeric
Text Field	Comments or uncoded data	Text Field
Minimum Data for Fish and Crustaceans		
Species	Species of fishes and crustaceans observed	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit character
Length	Length measurement as per protocols.	10 digit numeric
Units of Measurement	Units of length (i.e., feet, meters, etc.).	2 digit character
Length Type	Type of length measurement (centerline, standard, total, etc).	2 digit character
Gender	1=male, 2=female, 3=unknown.	1 digit character
Were biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit character

Table 1. (cont'd)

Data Element	Description / Criteria	Format
Minimum Data for Birds		
Species	Species of observed birds	ITIS 11 digit character
Photo	Were photos taken? (0=no; 1=yes) - Photo should include the tag number and trip identifier, where applicable.	1 digit character
Tag ID Number(s)	All letters and numbers on pre-existing or newly applied tags.	12 digit character
Tag Code(s)	Indication of whether the tag is pre-existing or newly applied.	1 digit character
Gender	1=male, 2=female, 3=unknown.	1 digit character
Age Class	Indication of age class (1=immature, 2=mature, 3=unknown).	1 digit character
Were biological samples taken?	Indication of whether biological samples were taken (0=no, 1=yes).	1 digit character
Text Field	Comments or uncoded data	Text Field

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
Monday, October 14, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

APPROVED BY: 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Jim Hanifen called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Jim Hanifen, *Chair*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Staff

Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Mark McDuff, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Dennis Shields, NOAA/OMAO, Silver Spring, MD
Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Harriet Perry, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

P. Choucair will discuss the Mexican Shrimp Fishery and R. Waller will discuss an electronic species identification guide being developed under "Other Business." With these changes, the agenda was adopted.

Approval of Minutes

R. Waller stated to add "not" in the second paragraph, second sentence under "Summary of 2002 Distribution of Shrimp Real-Time Data," "He said several fronts were **not** in the Gulf. . . ." **R. Waller moved to approve the August 2002 minutes with this change. S. Heath seconded, and the minutes passed unanimously.**

Update on Coordinated Fishery Independent Data Collection

D. Donaldson reported that the goals and objectives for developing a fishery independent data collection program were modified after the August SEAMAP meeting and will be presented to the TCC at this meeting. He said the modified goals and objectives were not

distributed to the TCC prior to the meeting so they may not be approved at the meeting, it may be by mail ballot. When the goals and objectives are approved by the TCC, the Gulf Subcommittee and other components will continue working on this new program.

The Subcommittee discussed the importance of data collection programs and the need for more funding. The GSMFC and the state agencies need to present a united front and approach Congress for more funding. R. Leard stated that data collection is more important than ever at the national level due to law suites, so hopefully, more funding will be available soon.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the Fall Plankton Survey is currently taking place. The Survey started on August 30, 2002 and should be completed soon. The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey is also currently taking place. Real time red snapper data will be produced after the surveys are completed. The annual Subcommittee report to the TCC was completed and a copy of the report is in the meeting folder. The GIS contractor for the Council's EFH EIS will be using SEAMAP data to produce species distribution and environmental data maps for the EIS.

SCS/FSCS: Shipboard Data Entry System

M. McDuff discussed a new shipboard data entry system called the Scientific Computer System (SCS) that NMFS has installed on the OREGON II. Dennis Shields then gave a complete overview of the SCS and Fisheries Scientific Computer System (FSCS). The SCS measures wind speed and direction, boat speed, water depth, along with other measurements. The FSCS measures biological data such as fish length and fish weight. After the presentation he demonstrated the software. D. Shields stated that the GORDON GUNTER will be fitted with the systems next year, and that Mississippi is also investigating outfitting their vessel with the system next year. A complete copy of the presentation is available at the GSMFC office.

New SEAMAP Biocode

M. McDuff discussed the new SEAMAP biocode that David Hanisko and others have been working on. M. McDuff reviewed the following report submitted by D. Hanisko and demonstrated what has been completed so far:

In the Fall of 2001, an ad-hoc committee was formed to address the need to update the NMFS Southeast Fisheries, Pascagoula Laboratories Bio-Numeric Code which catalogs marine organisms found in the SEAMAP Database System. The committee consists of David S. Hanisko, NMFS; Dr. Mark Leiby, Florida; Harriet Perry, Mississippi; and Dr. Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz, NMFS.

The current bio-numeric code has not undergone a full update in at least 10 to 15 years, and the following problems have been identified with the current code:

1. The code no longer follows a well identified taxonomic/phylogenic hierarchy.

2. Many orders and families found in the code are no longer accepted by the scientific community.
3. The current code does not allow for useful taxonomic levels such as suborders, infraorders, tribes and subfamilies.
4. There are many misspellings and gender changes found within the 13-character taxonomic name field.
5. The inability of the system to utilize the full scientific name of an organism results in duplicate 13-character taxonomic field names for several taxa that are commonly caught.

The Biocode Committee and NMFS Data Management group have identified the need for a hierarchical bio-numeric code. By having the code organized in this way, users of the data have the ability to run queries on ranges of codes, i.e., pulling down data on all the mollusks, or reversing the structure and collapsing lower taxonomic groups into higher level taxonomic groups for analysis. These possibilities are easily done with the use of a hierarchical code. Additionally, the Biocode Committee and NMFS Data Management has decided to use the full scientific name of all organisms in the new SEAMAP Database System.

A hierarchical listing of fishes and sharks from the western North Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico has been assembled and is being maintained by M. Leiby for inclusion into the new bio-numeric system. The list follows the phylogeny of fishes provided by William Eschmeyer's Catalog of Fishes at the following web site: <http://www.calacademy.org/research/ichthyology/catalog/fishcatsearch.html>.

A hierarchical listing of marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds, and marine invertebrates found in the SEAMAP Database System has been assembled by D. Hanisko and H. Perry. The phylogenetic order of this group closely follows the hierarchical structure of the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) found at the following web site: <http://www.itis.usda.gov/index.html>.

D. Hanisko is currently merging the two listings into a working database. The new database will become the core of the new bio-numeric system, and will be finished within the year.

D. Hanisko, M. Leiby or M. McDuff will give another update at the March meeting.

Update on the NCDDC Gulf of Mexico Habitat Pilot Project

J. Rester reported the National Coastal Data Development Center (NCDDC) is now open at the Stennis Space Center. One of their first projects is the development of a Gulf of Mexico Habitat Data Pilot Project. NCDDC wants to improve access to habitat data related to the Gulf of Mexico. The project will improve access to habitat data in support of the environmental stewardship mission of NOAA and collaborators. The initial focus is on fisheries, protected species and habitat in the Gulf of Mexico with future expansion. A meeting was held September 17-18 to demonstrate capabilities and gather feedback on the project. Group leaders were looking for data needs and projects in the Gulf of Mexico. Access to the SEAMAP trawl database is currently available through NCDDC's web site. Full casts from SEAMAP CTD data will be online in the first quarter of next year.

Election of Chairman

R. Waller moved to elect Jim Hanifen Chairman and Steve Heath Vice Chairman. Paul Choucair seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Other Business

R. Waller reported that H. Perry and other SEAMAP researchers have developed an electronic species identification guide which currently has approximately 250 illustrations. She asked for input on how to distribute the guide. The Subcommittee agreed that CD-ROM would be the best and most economical way. J. Hanifen stated that staff from Louisiana is also working on a similar project. J. Hanifen asked J. Rester to coordinate with H. Perry and others working on similar projects so they may exchange information and illustrations.

Paul Choucair demonstrated a new SEAMAP data entry system that he developed in Microsoft Access. He said the new data entry system has been a substantial time saver and he hopes to have it online completely in the near future.

P. Choucair reported that Mexico's brown shrimp fishery has collapsed and they had to close their offshore season. It will reopen November 1st for evaluation. Mexico has requested to send several scientists to Texas to review their sampling protocols. They are interested in using similar protocols so their data will be compatible. He requested to have someone at the federal level and from SEAMAP at the meeting to discuss all protocols. J. Hanifen asked P. Choucair to represent SEAMAP and T. McIlwain will ask N. Thompson to send someone from NMFS.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

**JOINT TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
& DERELICT TRAP TASK FORCE
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, October 15, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Subcommittee Chairman Tom Wagner called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following were in attendance:

Members

Bob Fairbank, C-RFAP, Gulfport, MS
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Gary Graham, TAEX, Palacios, TX
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Leslie Hartman, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Art Morris, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Harriet Perry, *Task Force Chair*, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Wagner, *Subcommittee Chair*, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Larry Young, TPWD LE, Austin, TX

Staff

Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Executive Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Habitat Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Walter Blessey, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Biloxi, MS
Grey Cane, III, C-RFAP, Daphne, AL
Wayne McFee, NOS, Charleston, SC
Tom McIlwain, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Tom Moore, NOAA Restoration Center, St. Petersburg, FL
Blair Mose-Guthrie, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Keith Mullin, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Ralph Rayburn, TX Sea Grant, College Station, TX
Phil Steele, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Kathy Wang, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL

Agenda

V. Guillory moved that the agenda proceed in the following order:

- **Approval of Minutes**
- **Derelict Trap Task Force - Final Approval of Guidelines Document**
- **Status of Community-Based Restoration Proposal**
- **Proposed Elevation of Gulf Crab Trap Fishery to Category II under the NOAA Fisheries Marine Mammal Authorization Program**
- **State Reports**
- **Election of Chairman**
- **Other Business**

L. Young seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Minutes

The group reviewed the minutes from the Crab Subcommittee (3/19/02) and Derelict Trap Task Force (8/22-23/02). **V. Guillory moved to accept the minutes as written. L. Hartman seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

Derelict Trap Task Force - Final Approval of the Guidelines Document

T. Wagner noted that this document is the result of a joint effort of state biologists, commercial and recreational fishermen, law enforcement, and Sea Grant. The document will be published in a three-ring binder to allow updates to be added as trap removal programs evolve throughout the Gulf states. The document will serve as an educational tool for government agencies, universities, conservation groups, and private industry.

H. Perry moved that the document is approved as written and presented to the Technical Coordinating Committee for their review and subsequent action. L. Hartman seconded the motion, and the *Guidelines for Developing Derelict Trap Removal Programs in the Gulf of Mexico* was unanimously approved.

Status of the Community-Based Restoration Proposal

J. Rester noted that a copy of the proposal (submitted in September) is included in the meeting packet. He expressed his appreciation to everyone involved in the assimilation of the Gulf proposal to remove derelict traps. He introduced Tom Moore, NOAA Restoration Center, St. Petersburg, who will discuss the overall Community-Based Restoration (CBR) Program, as well as the status of the Gulf proposal.

T. Moore explained that NOAA's CBR Program began in 1996 as a small program to perform grass-roots, volunteer-based restoration efforts. It was recognized formally in 1999 and has grown considerably. The 1999 budget was \$450,000 and has since increased to \$10 million. Level funding is expected for 2003. The program promotes

on-the-ground habitat restoration for fisheries using community-based volunteers. In the beginning, the program was not intended for large habitat restoration projects. At the time, small to medium projects were undertaken with an emphasis to get volunteers involved. The goal was not only to promote habitat restoration but also to promote stewardship in marine resources. In earlier efforts, some restoration projects failed; however, the resultant stewardship transcended that failure.

Examples of early and continuing projects include Tampa Bay Watch's Bay Grasses and Classes Program. It was first called the High School Classes Nursery and has expanded to include 15 high schools. Each school grows 10,000-20,000 *Spartina* plugs yearly and donates them to local groups performing habitat restoration in southwest Florida. The Water Management District performs a lot of habitat restoration in the bay, and most of their plant material is free of cost due to the program. An example of one of the local projects in the Keys is the Reef Medic Program in which training for volunteers is funded so they may learn how to restore coral reefs with local sanctuary staff.

The Community-Based Restoration Program has since expanded. Their niche is still with smaller community-based programs, but larger-scale projects are now possible. Their focus is broadening to include larger projects that include a large community component but not necessarily all volunteer-based. One example is Fort DeSoto Park in Tampa Bay. Tidal circulation in the park was closed during the process of road construction in the late 1960s. In the next year, a single-span bridge will be constructed to allow restoration of tidal circulation in the park.

Another factor in program growth is the expansion of national and regional partnerships. Rather than directly administering 500+ projects that have been funded over the last seven to eight years, NOAA has also entered into large, national partnerships through cooperative agreements. Those partners then apportion funds to individual projects. Early national partners included the Fish America Foundation, the American Sportfishing Association, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Restore Americas Estuaries.

The CBR Program is also attempting more innovative projects. It will continue with habitat restoration projects but will include stewardship of living marine resources. The Gulf States crab trap removal proposal fits the bill perfectly. Unfortunately, you missed the closing date on the call for proposals. However, discretionary funds are still available. The program also has good relationships with a number of partners that have additional funding sources.

After initial review of your proposal, suggestions can be made for a stronger proposal. As submitted, it does not fit perfectly within the model that is followed for CBR partnerships, but that does not mean it cannot work out. The intention is good and, in theory, exactly what the CBR Program is trying to accomplish. Historically, CBR partnerships have worked on a more competitive basis than your proposal which is more cooperative in nature. The CBR Program also looks for a one-to-one match. The match included in the Gulf States proposal may have only been a cash match. In kind resources should be considered and included. Items such as barge time, crane time, and backhoe time can be used as match. The current volunteer rate is \$16.10 per hour

(reference the National Points of Light Foundation). The CBR partnerships must have accountability. Management within NOAA and even Capitol Hill wants to know exactly where the money is going and what the money has done.

H. Perry asked that if a partnership is developed with Gulf States, would that mean there would be some level of funding or some program developed in which a yearly competition would be held for proposals? T. Moore replied that is the typical model for the CBR Program. They establish three-year partnerships with organizations, and funds are apportioned on a year-to-year basis.

T. Wagner asked what is the deadline for the next funding cycle? T. Moore replied there should be a new call for partnerships within the next year. However, the Gulf States proposal does not need to wait for that point in time. The Restoration Center and its management structure like the proposal, and other means of funding are being investigated. It may not be structured as a typical partnership, but the Restoration Center would like to work out the agreement.

R. Lukens wanted to point out that although the dynamics are less competitive than historical CBR Program partnerships, the Gulf States delivers a proposal package that has already been negotiated among the partners at the onset. It is, in effect, a competitive process using a cooperative, Gulf-wide approach. Our SEAMAP Program is a good example; each state comes to the table to negotiate their next year's program. The Gulf States provides the negotiating mechanism. You know when you begin a project what you will get done through the Gulf States, and the proposal can be evaluated based on each identified task.

H. Perry stated that the group has worked hard to bring together a regional program in which all the states are working together. Further, Sea Grant has been included in the process to bring in the educational component and outreach. A regional program is coming together well and should move forward. Therefore, H. Perry moved that Jeff Rester and Ron Lukens work with T. Moore and the NOAA Restoration Center to develop a partnership with Gulf States. B. Fairbank seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Proposed Elevation of Gulf Crab Trap Fishery to Category II under the NOAA Fisheries Marine Mammal Authorization Program

T. Wagner introduced Wayne McFee, Keith Mullin, Clair Mose-Gutherie, and Kathy Wang (NOAA/NMFS). He asked Ms. Wang to update the group on the time line for publication of the proposed List of Fisheries in the *Federal Register*. Wang stated that headquarters intended to have the proposed list of fisheries published by November 1. Once the proposed list of fisheries is published, a 90-day comment period occurs. Comments are considered, and the final list is then published. Publication of the proposed list of fisheries is an annual event.

Wagner explained that the Subcommittee has concerns and questions were pre submitted NOAA for discussion. What is the total impact of commercial crab trap

fisheries on the overall dolphin mortality? The Committee has read the stock assessment and understands how the potential biological removal (PBR) levels are calculated. They understand that when PBR level exceeds 1% of the population estimate, it automatically triggers the fishery from Category III to II. Do you have estimates of mortality or interactions from the recreational fishery? Wang replied that since mortality estimates come from strandings, it is difficult to determine unless obvious evidence is left behind. At times, a numbered float is attached that correlates to a licensed, commercial fisherman. Other times, it may just be a bleach bottle attached to the line. You cannot quantify the true level of mortality based on the odd stranding.

In South Carolina, NOAA was concerned, and the State Department of Natural Resources informed us that at least 85% of their effort was commercial. It was obvious that there were enough strandings to put that fishery into a Category II classification. Wang explained that she did not know if there was something that pointed to one fishery over the other in the Gulf, but the 1% level was certainly exceeded in some of the estuary stocks – a cautionary approach was used. NOAA presumes that most of the effort is commercial and that most of the dolphins are interacting with the commercial fishery rather than something thrown off a dock.

V. Guillory inquired whether the stone crab and spiny lobster fisheries had been scrutinized, as well? Wang replied affirmatively and noted that there is a record of strandings in each of the fisheries. The South Atlantic crab trap fishery has been a Category II for one year. W. McFee reported that no improvement has been seen in mortality rates. Wang noted that crab fishermen in the Atlantic have participated in the Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Team, and a list of voluntary measures was developed to reduce the levels of bottlenose dolphin mortality. Northern mid-Atlantic states still exceeded PBR.

H. Perry asked what kind of guidelines were suggested to reduce encounters. Wang reported there is a series of recommendations including ways to improve the stranding network and data collection for the monitoring and outreach and education efforts that include such things as the elimination of floating lines and not feeding dolphins. An inverted bait well was also developed in an attempt to reduce dolphin interaction with the traps.

H. Perry stated that one of the things that has bothered this group is that through this entire process, it would seem better for NOAA to work more closely with Sea Grant and the existing marine advisory service on the educational component for commercial fishermen as apposed to adding any layer of economic hardship. Even though the permit fee may be waived, there are already avenues to reach commercial fishermen. If the fishery is changed to Category II, you propose two groups which essentially do the same thing.

K. Wang stated that Sea Grant may be the way they approach things in the Atlantic. So far, no one in the Atlantic has had to submit the \$25 fee. They will, however, have to work with the Gulf states to integrate.

H. Perry replied that at our last meeting, Wang had implied that part of the rationale for the \$25 was to fund an educational component. That essentially stigmatizes a fishery in order for NOAA to institute an educational component. Other agencies already do that – that is their sole mission and charge.

Wang clarified that the \$25 fee is simply a processing fee to run the program. It is costly to implement the whole registration and authorization program. Since their program does not actually receive that money (it goes to some type of general fund), their office has tried to waive the fee whenever possible because it is a burden to the fisherman.

T. Wagner asked the state directors in the room [M. Ray (TX) and V. Vail (FL)] if there will be any problems with confidential information being giving to NOAA by the states. V. Vail replied that any confidential data will be eliminated; NOAA will simply receive a list of names and addresses.

D. Donaldson (FIN Program Manager) noted that the Gulf states probably will not have problems with confidential data as long as the requesting agency agrees to and signs off on the correct forms.

Wagner asked W. McFee to compare mortality from the crab trap fishery and any existing trawl fisheries. McFee explained that he mainly looks at strandings and will give a full presentation tomorrow at the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee. Looking at entanglements over the last ten years, there are approximately twice as many crab pot interactions than trawl interactions in the Gulf of Mexico.

H. Perry still has problems with the determination of float interactions. Most commercial fishermen have to mark their floats. If you have an interaction with a float that is not marked, how do you attribute that to a commercial fisherman as apposed to a recreational fisherman? McFee answered that we cannot be certain if it is a commercial or recreational fisherman. Obviously if it doesn't have any gear attached and just a rope, we cannot say for sure it is from the crab pot fishery. We tend to err on the side of caution. H. Perry - you feel confident that your volunteers are making that distinction?

B. Mose-Gutherie stated that the data collected by the stranding network members is not directly tied to a fishery unless there is strong evidence to link the stranding to a fishery. Many times, floats are involved, but it is very difficult to determine whether the gear is recreational or commercial. Rope marks are assigned as human interaction but are not assigned to a fishery. V. Guillory asked how monofilament line is categorized. B. Mose-Gutherie stated it, too, is categorized as human interaction.

V. Guillory stated that if the commercial blue crab fishery is being scrutinized, then the recreational fishery must be scrutinized, as well. Is there more interaction with monofilament fishing line than crab trap buoy lines? If mortality due to crab traps is significant then it would also be significant with the recreational crab trap fishery.

K. Wang stated they do not disagree; however, the Marine Mammal Protection Act does not allow them to regulate recreational fisheries. There is a proposal for Congress to amend the Act and allow them to address recreational fisheries, as well. This

recommendation originated from a take-reduction team in which fishers were justifiably upset because all the takes involved the same gear (gill nets), and the fishery had both commercial and recreational components.

H. Perry noted that at the last meeting of the Derelict Trap Task Force, Wang stated that interactions were occurring more with actively fished traps than derelict traps. The group disagreed and felt that the initiation of a derelict trap removal program would, in fact, lessen encounters. Perry would like to propose that NOAA give a Gulf-wide derelict trap removal program a chance to lessen the number of encounters before the fishery is classified as Category II.

Wang agreed that the removal of derelict crab traps may help; they had a recent incident of a dolphin caught in a derelict trap. For the most part, however, they presume that most derelict traps do not have a buoy line which is (most often) what entangles the dolphin. So dolphins are not (as often) entangled in derelict traps.

T. Wagner asked K. Mullin to further explain the stock structure of bottlenose dolphins. There are separate stocks for bay, sound, and estuarine (western, northern, and eastern Gulf of Mexico), and the crab trap fishery is about 100% from these areas since very few crab fishermen work in the open Gulf. If the inshore stocks are not reproductively isolated, what effect would that have on the PBR from the estuarine stock?

K. Mullin - The stock categorization or the assignment of the stock is a demographic isolation or a small component of genetic isolation. If they were genetically isolated, that would be used as clear evidence of the stock structure; however, it can be genetic panmixis with stock structure based on many components such as behavior, movement, site fidelity, morphology, feeding behavior, parasite loads, contaminants and isotopes. These components are considered and are not genetically based but are used in stock structure definition. Primarily in the Gulf of Mexico, the bay, sound, and estuary stock structure is a product of the fact that in almost all bay, sound, and estuaries where studied, there is a component of animals that exhibit a high degree of site fidelity. We use this community-based definition of stock because these animals stay in that area and interact with other animals in that area. There are communal bottlenose dolphin communities throughout the Gulf. There is some evidence of long-range movement from bottlenose dolphins, but by-in-large, you do not expect a bottlenose dolphin from Tampa Bay to move up to Pensacola Bay, for example. That is the basis of the stock structure even though there is genetic evidence (through mitochondrial DNA) that there exists some structuring in bay, sounds, and estuaries.

A. McMillen-Jackson - That was one of our first questions. If you have all these individual populations, how can one mortality within a demographically-assigned stock affect the entire Gulf stock?

K. Wang - Basically, the National Marine Mammal Group established the policies to determine categories of fisheries. One of the determining components is the analogy of "like" gear. For example, there are very little known data on many of the gill net fisheries in Alaska, but there exists a multitude of gill net fisheries there. We know that gill nets affect marine mammals. Several gill net fisheries in Alaska were listed as

Category II simply because they were gill net fisheries. Likewise, some trawl fisheries have been categorized where they had their specific type of trawl that was interacting with squid and pilot whales in one area, and if data were not available for another area, the fishery was elevated through like-gear analogy. Unfortunately, the stranding network is not as cohesive in the Gulf as the Atlantic, so we have many areas with very little data. So by analogy, we know where there are crab pots we are finding low-levels of interactions with dolphins. It makes sense that if we are finding interactions in one area, we will find them in others. We are trying to be proactive and get out to educate all the fishermen. We cannot get any funds to perform outreach unless we elevate the fishery to Category II.

H. Perry stated that it seems reasonable to do an educational program through the Commission's Crab Subcommittee and to review the states' implementation of measures to reduce encounters, such as reduction of floating line and better marking of traps. Give it a year to see if those measures reduce encounters before elevating the fishery to Category II.

K. Wang noted that interaction levels are so low that even one interaction makes an impact. Even if you go one year without an interaction, your efforts would not tell us enough. The numbers are averaged out, and the NMFS has a mandate to protect marine mammals. We cannot legally say that we are waiting to see whether a program implemented by an outside entity is going to work. Technically, we are supposed to take the initiative. We could, in the end, work through you, but it would have to be spelled out.

H. Perry emphasized the group's willingness to spell things out. Once again, she stated the group's problem with the range in Category II (1% to less than 50%). It is a sweeping range. K. Wang replied that is because they do not have the observer data to extrapolate and determine a true interaction rate.

H. Perry noted that even if the fishery is elevated to Category II, NMFS will not be able to do much. You cannot practically put observers on crab skiffs. A large educational component can be done, but that can be done without the elevation of the fishery. Face it, some of the volunteer-based information is questionable even though an effort is made to review it. You cannot separate the recreational from the commercial component. There are too many unknown variables.

Given the circling of discussion, H. Perry proposed the following motion:

The Crab Subcommittee of the GSMFC supports conservation of bottlenose dolphin stocks, but objects to the proposed reclassification of the Gulf of Mexico blue crab trap fishery to Category II under the Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries.

Subcommittee objections are based on:

- use of volunteer-collected data to assess fishery impacts**

- lack of rigor in stock assessment methodology
- lack of current population estimates (most recent count was in 1994)
- data for reclassification based on ten interactions since 1988, given an estimated bay, sound, and estuarine abundance of 5,000 animals.

The Crab Subcommittee would like to work with NOAA/NMFS Marine Mammal Authorization Program personnel and the existing Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service Derelict Trap Work Group to develop an educational/outreach program to inform fishermen of the pending reclassification of the crab fishery, and to develop guidelines to reduce the number of dolphin/crab trap interactions. Existing GSMFC structure and programmatic activities associated with the Crab Subcommittee and the proposed NOAA Habitat Restoration grant to remove derelict traps from all Gulf of Mexico waters will provide the framework and methodology for this proactive undertaking.

If buoys and lines from crab traps are the major source of mortality, then removal of abandoned traps with buoy lines throughout the Gulf of Mexico should reduce gear interactions of bottlenose dolphins with crab traps.

The motion was seconded by V. Guillory, and unanimously approved.

On behalf of the group, Chairman Wagner thanked Wang, McFee, Mullins, and Mose-Gutherie for sharing information and participating in this discussion. He noted that regardless of whether the fishery is reclassified as Category II, this group will continue to work with them as much as possible in educating the fishermen.

State Reports

Florida - A. McMillen-Jackson reported that final blue crab landings for 2001 were approximately 7.4 million pounds. It does not look much better for 2002. Through July 2002, 3.8 million pounds had been landed. This was only a bit lower than the same time period last year (~4.2 million pounds). Both 2001 and 2002 were much below the long-term annual averages (50 years and 10 years) of about 15 million pounds. Catches in the Gulf are, as usual, greater than in the Atlantic (2001: Gulf landings = 4.5 million pounds; Atlantic landings = 2.6 million pounds; inland landings = 0.3 million pounds).

A survey of Florida blue crab fishermen was conducted as part of the NOAA Interjurisdictional grant to the FMRI Crustacean Fisheries section. Questionnaires were mailed out during July 2002 and were followed up shortly thereafter by a reminder postcard. Questionnaires were sent to 855 individuals who showed blue crab landings in Florida in 2001. Twenty-five surveys were returned as undeliverable which decreased the potential sample size to 830.

To date, they have received a total of 260 completed questionnaires (31% return). Data has been entered for 238 of the completed questionnaires. We also have received a few letters and phone calls from people on the list who had blue crab landings as a by-product of shrimp trawling, but who did not fish with traps. Consequently, their return from trap fishermen likely exceeds 31%.

The data below was derived from a subset of questions that deal with trap usage and trap loss in the blue crab fishery in Florida. Not all questions were answered on all surveys. A more comprehensive analysis of all the data will be forthcoming.

Trap Usage. The information in the table below was obtained from 231 responses to Question 1 [On average, how many blue crab traps (total) do you fish?] on the questionnaire. The total number of traps fished is the summation of traps totals reported by the fishermen (some fishermen gave ranges). The average, minimum, and maximum number of traps/fishermen were derived from the individual responses to the total number of traps fished. Because they obtained a response from approximately one third of the blue crab fishermen, they estimated the numbers for the Estimated Total Fishery by multiplying the numbers from the survey responses by three.

Trap Usage	Survey Responses	Estimated Total Fishery
Total number of traps fished	78,884 - 81,789	236,652 - 245,367
Average number of traps/fisherman	345 - 357	
Standard deviation	305 - 307	
Minimum number of traps/fisherman	0	
Maximum number of traps/fisherman	3,000	

Trap Loss. The information in the table below was obtained from 231 responses to Question-1 and Question-9 [On average, what percentage of your blue crab traps are broken, lost, or stolen each year?]. The total number of traps lost/year was calculated as the number of traps reported by a fisherman multiplied by the percentage of traps that he/she reported as lost annually. The average, minimum, and maximum number of traps lost/year were derived from the individual responses to the total number of traps lost/year. Number for the Estimated Total Fishery were calculated as described above.

Trap Loss	Survey Responses	Estimated Total Fishery
Total number of traps lost/year	25,340 - 27,128	76,020 - 81,384
Average percentage of traps lost/year	35%	
Standard deviation	27%	
Minimum percentage of traps lost/year	0%	
Maximum percentage of traps lost/year	100%	

Factors Responsible for Trap Loss. The information in the table below was obtained from 222 complete responses to Question-11 [Based on your experience, which factors cause the greatest loss of blue crab traps? (Please rank the listed factors 1,2, and 3, with 1 causing the most trap loss, and 3 causing the least trap loss.) Bad weather _____, Theft _____, Loss of buoy/cut line _____]. Each cause was ranked separately from the other causes. The numbers represent the number of responses for that cause, with the cause-specific percentage in parentheses.

Causes of Trap Loss	Each Cause Ranked by Importance			
	High	Medium	Low	No Response
Bad weather	27 (12%)	43 (20%)	145 (65%)	7 (3%)
Theft	105 (47%)	83 (38%)	34 (15%)	
Loss of buoy/cut line	112 (50%)	77 (35%)	33 (15%)	

Overall, bad weather was regarded as the least important factor in the loss of traps in 65% of the responses. Theft and loss of buoy/cut line were perceived as being of much greater importance (in 47% and 50% of the responses, respectively) in the loss of traps. Also, phone calls from fishermen also indicated that theft was an important cause of trap loss.

A Derelict Trap Work Group has been formed and is investigating the problem in Florida. The blue crab fishery is not, however, being addressed. They are focusing effort on the lobster and stone crab fishery for now.

Alabama - L. Hartman distributed several handouts including Alabama's report on the recent cleanup. As in 2001, Alabama's commercial blue crab landings are down again.

Interesting enough, when speaking to the fishermen, they said the season has not been too bad. This may be due to an increase in price per pound being received. Fishery independent information was reviewed, and 2002 landings are below average. Juvenile blue crab CPUE is steady.

Mississippi - T. Floyd reported 2001 landings were 430,000 pounds, lower than in recent years but on average for the last ten years. Preliminary 2002 landings data show that Mississippi will experience a slight increase from 2001. The drop in landings may be the result of more fishermen selling their catch themselves (not going through dealers) and may have decreased their effort due to a price drop earlier this year. Decreased commercial license sales support the latter theory. Commercial and recreational license sales have been steady over the last several years. There are approximately 200 commercial and 700 recreational sold per year.

The Mississippi Crab Task Force has proposed several ordinance changes to the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources. These include non-floating line, a common float law based on Louisiana's, and protocol for a closed season. The closed season protocol just gives the Commission the authority to set the closed season and notify the public. They anticipate a closed season and derelict trap cleanup sometime in January-February 2003. Based on bycatch data from the cleanup, the Commission will look at a degradable panel options regulation. There are 11 licensed processors in the state; however, only five are actively processing crabs. There have been 2,400 derelict traps collected and recycled to date.

H. Perry reminded the group to keep an eye on the National Shellfish Association's web site. During their upcoming meeting in April (New Orleans), a session will be devoted to blue crabs in the Gulf of Mexico. Focus research includes management, culture, aquaculture, and genetics.

Louisiana - V. Guillory reported that last year, there were 40.6 million pounds of blue crabs landed in the State of Louisiana. This figure was down from the previous year's landings of 50 million pounds. In preliminary data from January to April, landings seem to be keeping pace. Production has been mixed; dealers were limiting the amount of crabs being bought. However, that has recently changed, and the dealers are buying all the product available.

Potential management issues are varied. The Louisiana Commission is very interested in a derelict trap program and instructed the Department to write a bill to create such a program for introduction to the Legislature next spring. The proposal includes both shallow- and deep-water components. The shallow-water component would take place in February/March over a 16 day period, and the deep-water component would coincide with the opening of the spring inshore shrimp season. The Commission is also very interested in trap limits and continues to discuss the issue. The Louisiana Crab Task Force is very interested in limited entry. In 1998, they submitted legislation to implement a limited entry program in Louisiana. The legislation did not pass, however. The task force meets again in late October and will begin drafting similar language for submission to the spring legislative session.

Fishery independent data from 1967-2000 was recently reviewed. An interesting trend was found when looking at catch per effort. In the data from 1967-2002, there was no significant correlation between overall catch per effort and year. If, however, you look at 1967-1989 data, overall catch per effort significantly increased. Then if you look at 1990-2002 data, overall catch per effort significantly decreased. Mortality also significantly increased over time.

V. Guillory also distributed the report entitled "*A Comparison of 5.87 cm and 6.03 cm Escape Rings for Blue Crab Traps*" for the groups' review.

Texas - T. Wagner reported 2001 landings in Texas at 5.2 million pounds with a value of \$3.9 million. Volume was down 11%, and value was up 18% from 2000 figures. The landings and value are both the lowest since 1994. Heavy rains this year should improve the fishery next year. The next derelict trap clean up is tentatively set for March 1-16, 2003. It will follow the same format as last year – the first seven days will allow fishermen to remove their traps, and a targeted, coast wide one-day event is scheduled for Saturday, March 8, 2003 (weather permitting).

Based on industry complaints over the inability to readily obtain materials currently required for degradable panels (e.g., 20 gauge or smaller diameter untreated steel wire), the Department will be testing alternative materials. The Department will test other more commonly found materials, such as concrete wire and bailing wire. Current regulations that give alternatives, such as jute twine loops to secure the trap tie-down strap to, are commonly rigged in such a way that if the loop breaks the tie-down strap will readily hook a trap wire and will not open as intended in case of trap loss. Thus the trap will continue to "ghost fish" long after it is lost. Also current regulations require the use of wire that is difficult to purchase readily, hard to work with in the field and is not currently being employed by all crab fishermen. The ability to use an optional material would save crab fishermen time in the field and would be more readily purchasable or if it were the only option available, the regulation would be more easily enforceable.

Similarly to past research which consisted of a set of four traps (one for each material tested and their replicates, totaling eight traps at each of four sites coast wide) four combinations of degradable panel construction types would be tested in the upper chamber of crab traps typically used by crab fishermen, one type each installed into each of the four sides of one trap with five replicates at each testing location. All panels would be constructed as currently required by law, measuring 3"x6" and made from material consistent with a material typically used to construct degradable panels, all hinged at the bottom and tied at the top with the test material.

- Degradable Panel Type 1 would be hinged with two stainless steel rings of the type commonly used in the construction of crab traps with a binding wire of concrete wire.
- Degradable Panel Type 2 would be hinged with two stainless steel rings of the type commonly used in the construction of crab traps with a binding wire of bailing wire.

- Degradable Panel Type 3 would be hinged with two stainless steel rings of the type commonly used in the construction of crab traps with a binding wire of jute twine.
- Degradable Panel Type 4 would be considered the control hinged with two untreated hog rings of a type currently approved with a binding wire of 20 gauge untreated wire.

To ensure that a full array of salinity and other hydrographic conditions are observed during testing, trial sites proposed are at the piers/docks at the Sabine Lake Field Station, Perry R. Bass Marine Fisheries Station, Rockport Marine Lab, and the Marine Development Center-CPL Cooling Reservoir. Traps would be submerged at all times, remain un-baited and tied to piers/docks in such a way that they are not lost or stolen.

Observation of traps would entail raising each of the five traps out of the water twice per week for 90 days, with no less than three days between observations. Based on past research, days-to-breaking for previously approved materials is 45-50 days. Full hydrological information would be collected prior to each observation. As a test material degrades and opens, the date (days-to-breaking) would be recorded and not be re-tested.

Election of Chairman

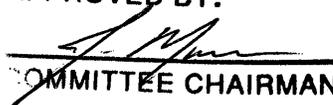
H. Perry nominated T. Wagner for Chairman, and L. Hartman seconded the nomination. T. Wagner was elected by unanimous acclamation.

Other Business

T. Wagner reminded the group to provide B. Pellegrin (NMFS Pascagoula) with their state's updated mortality estimates. It will be interesting to see how this trend continues.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, October 15, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Chairman Jeff Mayne called the meeting to order at 1:25 p.m. The meeting immediately followed the Charles H. Lyles Luncheon in which long-term enforcement representative, Jerald K. Waller (Alabama) was honored for his service. The recording secretary notes that all members of the committee were present:

Members

Bruce Buckson, FWC/DLE, Tallahassee, FL
Terry Bakker, MDMR Marine Patrol, Biloxi, MS
J.T. Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Richard Livingston, NOAA OLE, St. Petersburg, FL
Jeff Mayne, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Karen Raine, NOAA GCEL/SE, St. Petersburg, FL
Tom Riley, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
John Sherlock, USCG 8th District, New Orleans, LA
Larry Young, *Vice Chairman*, TPWD, Austin, TX

Staff

Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, FIN Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR Marine Patrol, Biloxi, MS
David Cinalli, USCG 7th District, Miami, FL
Tracy Dunn, NOAA OLE, St. Petersburg, FL
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Mike Long, FWC LE, Marathon, FL
Vernon Minton, *Commission Chairman*, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Dave McKinney, NOAA OLE, Austin, TX
Tom Moore, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Walter Penry, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AL House of Representatives, Daphne, AL
Tom Shuler, NOAA OLE, Stennis Space Center, MS
Jim Twiggs, MS Charter Boat Captains Assoc., Biloxi, MS

Adoption of Agenda

T. Bakker stated that there had been discussion prior to the meeting to focus discussion on Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs). J. Mayne noted that many of the agenda items could be *briefly* discussed, but the majority of their time would be used to discuss JEAs. **J.T. Jenkins moved to approve the agenda as presented. T. Bakker seconded the motion which passed by consensus.**

Approval of Minutes

To allow for more time, J. Mayne requested that committee members review the minutes on their own and deferred action to the Council's LEAP session.

FIN Update

D. Donaldson reported that the FIN data management system is now accessible at the FIN web page (www.gsmfc.org/fin.html). The following data currently reside within the system:

- Commercial data (trip ticket)
 - Florida - 1984-2002
 - Alabama - 2000-2002
 - Mississippi - 2002 (oyster only)
 - Louisiana - 2000-2002
 - NMFS historical data
- Recreational data - 1981-2001
- Menhaden data - 1987-1990 and 1993-1999
- Biological data - 2002
- SEAMAP data - 2002

There are two levels of access: 1) non-confidential data which includes SEAMAP data, recreational data, as well as commercial data summarized by species, state, and year and 2) confidential data which includes SEAMAP data, recreational data, as well as various levels of confidential data. All users must complete the appropriate forms (available on the FIN web page) and provide them to the FIN Data Base Manager. Once the required forms are completed and received, a user name and password will be provided to the user.

New data input is continuing including Texas recreational data and artificial reef information. Data services will continue to expand to provide public access to the data. The goal is to provide the needed data to fishery managers and scientists to ensure that the best management decisions are being made regarding the marine fisheries resources in the Gulf of Mexico.

J.T. Jenkins inquired into the turnaround time (i.e., how current is accessible data going to be?). Donaldson reported that about a month is needed for processing. D. McKinney inquired into query capabilities. Donaldson replied that users are able to query the system for desired data. To get access (user name and password) the appropriate state or federal agency signs off. He is not aware of any agency limiting access to enforcement.

State Trip Ticket Systems Update

Louisiana - J. Mayne reported they had open access to the information in Louisiana, and the system has been very beneficial to their work. There was a case involving mackerel in which they had problems getting federal information. There may have been a

problem in which the dealer was not reporting the same landings to the state as they were to federal authorities.

Mississippi - T. Bakker reported that the only trip ticket data collected in the state is for the oyster fishery. There is a move within the fisheries division to have the appropriate legislation passed to collect data for other fisheries.

Alabama - J.T. Jenkins reported their system has been in place for about two years. They still need to clarify regulations to refine the collection process. From an enforcement standpoint, the decision was made not to have open access to the data. They must document a case on the front or back end. There are some isolated problems with dealers who are not reporting correctly.

Texas - L. Young reported that Texas does not have a trip ticket system. Dealers do turn in monthly aquatic reports, but this information is for statistical purposes only – no law enforcement use.

Florida - B. Buckson reported that the trip ticket system in Florida has been in place since the mid to early 1990s. Enforcement has not always had free access to the data. They would like to be able to view the data at their leisure to determine whether or not there is a problem, but that is not the case. They do, however, have a method to receive specific information. Enforcement is developing a closer relationship with their state's data managers so that they will be more aware of data elements that may need enforcement review and follow-up.

IJF Program Activity

Striped Bass Technical Task Force - J.T. Jenkins reported that progress is not moving as quickly as anticipated. A complete draft should be available in July for review and revision.

Blue Crab Derelict Trap Task Force - L. Young reported that the guidelines document for derelict trap programs was completed by the group, and approval for publication was given during this morning's session. The document now moves to the Technical Coordinating Committee for their review. Another item of note is that the NMFS wants to change the blue crab fishery from Category III to Category II which would, in effect, cause the fishermen to buy a \$25 permit and state agencies would need to provide a list of their licensed fishermen to the NMFS. There is concern among the group that this move is not necessary, and the data used is not sufficient to warrant this action. The notice in the *Federal Register* may be published in November unless the NMFS can be convinced otherwise. If published, there will be a 90-day comment period before action can take place.

Menhaden Fishery Management Plan - C. Yocom reported that the management plan was published and distributed in July. Additional copies can be requested through the GSMFC office or downloaded from the web site (www.gsmfc.org).

Chloramphenicol Ban

J. Mayne reported that Louisiana and some of the other Gulf states have begun to address this problem regarding imported shrimp (mainly from China and other Asian nations) which is tainted by the use of the antibiotic, chloramphenicol, which is used in the production of farm-raised shrimp. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture was successful in passing state legislation which restricts the use or possession of this antibiotic in any kind of food substances. Stop orders were placed on seized shrimp that contained chloramphenicol at levels hundreds of times higher than permitted. The Food and Drug Administration restricts the use of chloramphenicol at one part per billion, and the seized product contained levels at 230 to 400 parts per billion. Officials knew that fraud was occurring in the repackaging of imported shrimp as domestic product, and the presence of chloramphenicol in the product actually assisted to identify the fraud. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and FDA attested that the product could only be imported due to the levels of chloramphenicol present in the product.

Gulf Safety Communications Protocol

J. Mayne reported on the activities of the Gulf Safety Committee which is made up of representatives from oil and gas companies, commercial and recreational fishermen, offshore transportation, recreational diving, offshore supply/towing industry, the U.S. Coast Guard, and state fisheries law enforcement in the Gulf of Mexico. One of the major issues that they wanted to address after 9/11 was communications protocol. Many ships, tankers, and vessels use manned, offshore facilities as navigational points. Ships may steer directly toward a facility and then change their coordinates as they move from rig to rig. Commercial and recreational vessels move from rig to rig as they fish or dive. After 9/11 occurred, concerns became heightened. Some of these rigs are valued at billions of dollars. A communications protocol was developed and adopted by the Committee. It is a voluntary protocol; there is no mandate to use it. It does, however, address an awareness issue on safety. The objective is to provide a voluntary marine communications protocol for Gulf of Mexico resource users to alert parties that will be interacting in the same general area and to provide a common protocol for notification and feedback between Gulf of Mexico platform and rig operators and others in responding to the safety needs of offshore platform and rig personnel. Louisiana has included the protocol within their fishing pamphlets. The Gulf Safety Committee will ask each of the Gulf states to include the protocol in their literature. J. Mayne will e-mail the final protocol to each of the state representatives.

Funding Initiatives

J. Mayne reported that a draft letter to solicit funds was sent to each member on the Committee so they could solicit any representative foundations or groups for funds to produce an enforcement video to show the importance of fisheries enforcement, prosecution, and adjudication. The Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Enforcement Agents Association has donated \$1,000. The Louisiana CCA may send out a challenge to other organizations to donate to the fund. The International Wildlife Association has also requested more information about the project.

Strategic Plan/2003 Operations Plan & Schedule of Work

The revised Operations Plan & Schedule of Work for 2003 was provided to the group two weeks prior and is included within the meeting folder for Committee action. **J.T. Jenkins moved to accept the 2003 Operations Plan and Schedule of Work as revised. Further, he asked that this action carry-over to the Council Law Enforcement Advisory Panel. T. Bakker seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.**

J.T. Jenkins also reminded the group that the regularly-scheduled, LEC conference call occurs *every* month – the first Monday of the month at 1:30 p.m. Central time. C. Yocom was asked to schedule the call the Monday prior so that each member will have an agenda, call-in number, and participant code early.

Joint Enforcement Agreements

General Discussion

D. McKinney distributed the JEA Meeting agenda. J. Mayne noted they would not have time for all the items, but there are many concerns and questions.

R. Livingston, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (Special Agent in Charge Southeast Region), began the discussion by noting his pleasure in attending his first Gulf States meeting. It is an exciting time for enforcement and JEAs, a program that has much potential for success once it gets running smoothly. The main premise behind JEAs was to put more law enforcement resources on the waterfront throughout the country. To do so, resources must go directly to the state enforcement chiefs. The program's main flaw is budgeting. If continuous, long-term funding is not available, personnel cannot be hired. What can be done in the future (in the out years) for funding? Personnel cannot (practically) be hired when funding is questionable every year. Resource enforcement as a group (state and federal) has opened the door, however. Funding from 2001 (the first year) was spent. The second year, the 2002 funding, is due. It is there; it is delayed. JEA funding for 2002 (FY ending September 30) is still there and awaits distribution. The delay in distribution of funds has been an aggravation, but those issues are not within the SAC's control.

The region has begun to identify priority issues, those issues that are heard at Council and Commission meetings on a regular basis. Baseline numbers and target figures are being identified for priority fisheries to see whether the state enforcement resources can get out to contact respective user groups. One of the main goals of the JEAs is high visibility, contacts, and deterrence.

J. Mayne asked to further the discussion on the strategy behind the projected number of contacts. In the field, the initiative already exists to make as many contacts as possible. If a specific goal is set and set too low, initiative in the field will decrease. Conversely, if the goal is set too high, the agreements may be deemed a failure. The first year of the program provides the only information to refer to and should be used as a baseline until two and three years into the program when averages can be determined.

R. Livingston assured the group that the numbers will be set in cooperation with all the participants. He is concerned that if baseline numbers are not identified, there will not be anything to measure the standards of success or failure. The reporting issues associated with the JEAs are the key to the success of the program (What are you getting for the JEAs? What are you doing with that information? How are you using it?). Questions have already begun in the first year. Those questions were anticipated to occur at the end of the three-year cycle, not year one. These questions are coming from the Inspector General. This gives us a heads-up as to what the future may hold. JEAs are being reviewed, and concerns are being allayed. Criteria must be set.

J. Mayne referred to the first year's evaluation. More citations were issued and an extra 20,000 individuals were contacted offshore in the months when the JEA was in place. The final report for the year shows the activity and results. The initial year should be used as a baseline.

Livingston counseled the group that if they want the program to succeed, parameters must be developed and substantive reports developed for evaluation and shared use. Parameters and criteria must be set; otherwise the program will be critiqued and subject to failure. By working with the participants and developing the criteria, the program can move forward. If our field agents know the criteria then information can be better shared up and down the line.

Mayne noted that they rely on field supervisors and individual agents to do their job, they are disciplined based upon their performance. If managers are going to have to sit behind a desk documenting (for example) bad weather in weeks number 4 and 5 because the "numbers" were not made will be a bureaucratic nightmare. He would rather worry about field agents performing their jobs well rather than making their numbers and separating them into categories.

J.T. Jenkins agreed that criteria may need to be set and efforts synchronized with NOAA's Strategic Plan; however, the first set of numbers he received was flawed mainly because state input was not sought. Input from the very beginning of criteria development would have been forthcoming if asked of the states. The process could have been moved along tremendously with all parties working cooperatively. Livingston indicated that dialog should have been ongoing, because this is a joint effort.

L. Young pointed out that the program can fail because of endless requests being made. The state officers have state responsibilities as well as their duties under the JEAs. A compromise can be reached, however, by working cooperatively with compromise by both parties.

B. Buckson offered an observation that the problem seems to be one of communication. As ugly as it may be, a face-to-face "pound the table" seems to be what is needed to come to a consensus on baseline determination. He stressed that contacts are a key component to success. Cases are made through contact; compliance is determined by contact. Both state and federal agencies need to be determined that they can sit together and hash these things out – it is a *joint* enforcement agreement.

J. Mayne inquired whether the contact proposal that was faxed out should be included in the JEA document. Will it be part of the Operations Plan for the upcoming year? Livingston stated that what was identified are perceived priorities in each state. Where it fits into your 2002 JEA document is within the Operations Plan.

J.T. Jenkins requested background. How have we gotten to this point? D. McKinney stated that they were asked to have the ASACs and field agents assess, in a general way, what needed to be done in terms of the gaps that the federal agency (NOAA) would not be able to provide in some type of level coverage. The ASACs were instructed to review the JEA components and funding hours in order to provide a needs assessment. General numbers were developed, and meetings were being scheduled with states. The hurricanes occurred, and meetings were delayed. He did meet with Mississippi and corresponded with Texas via e-mail. The numbers are not cast in stone; they are a starting point. The tier figures are important, but at this juncture, numbers had to be generated. The numbers need to be balanced with what the states actually see as doable. After two or three years of developing target numbers, we will be able to average them and develop a baseline.

J. Mayne summarized the situation in saying that the group realizes that numbers need to be developed. The group wanted to understand the philosophies behind the numbers that were distributed from NOAA. He emphasized that would be unproductive to develop numbers that have potential for failure based on circumstances beyond their control. On the other hand, they do not want to underestimate in order to achieve a perceived success. That sends the wrong message to field agents. Over three years, an accurate baseline is achievable. The criteria under development now should be developed carefully and cooperatively.

Livingston also noted that the reporting associated with the JEAs and monthly assessments allow for the identification of problems and the real-time analysis of collected data. Trends can be determined and followed up upon appropriately.

D. McKinney asked each state for their input on the numbers that were generated and sent to them. They may be too high or too low.

Update on Enforcement Action Reports (EAR)

T. Shuler noted that he is sure that everyone is aware that there was quite a bit of consternation relative to NOAA's request that an EAR be used to substantiate all boardings or contacts. A number of states currently do not have a means of recording when the contact does not involve a violation. Since the training session in September and subsequent discussions with Mississippi, the specific and immediate needs are as follows:

- Date
- Time
- Patrol Unit (vessel and individuals)
- Position of Boarding
- Activity at the Time of Boarding

- Vessel Information
 - Name
 - Identification Number
 - Type
 - Length
 - Color
 - Home Port
- 1. Personnel Information
 - 4. Captain's Name, Address, DOB, SS#
 - 5. Owner's Name, Address, DOB, SS#
 - 6. Crew Name, Address, DOB, SS# (not applicable to recreational vessels)
- 1. Hold Content
 - 4. Species
 - 5. Amount
- 1. Violation Information
- 2. Feedback from Subject

Shuler assured the group that if their state already had a form that collects this same information, then obviously you do not need another form. Basically they are looking to have a form for every contact with this information included. This information will subsequently be added to the monthly reporting software. Until the software is changed to include the data, NOAA will take the information via hard copy. Several members questioned the need for some of the data. Several states have policies not to request Social Security numbers. The group thoroughly reviewed the draft EAR but did not come to consensus.

Status of Current JEAs

K. Raine understands that there may be some additional language changes to the agreements. J. Mayne asked if there was anything they can do to speed the process along. D. McKinney explained that when they get in a JEA it goes to review as quickly as possible. If they don't leave the office immediately, it is incomplete. If the JEA is complete, it is reviewed and submitted to Washington immediately for DOC review.

B. Buckson noted that the hold up in processing and fund distribution is causing questions to be asked both within and among the state agencies. Who has the answers? Whom should they contact? D. McKinney stated that their first contact is R. Livingston and D. Jones, then Margaret Spring.

B. Buckson wanted to clarify that he understands that 2002 funds are there; is that correct? R. Livingston replied yes; distribution is forthcoming. Discussion ensued whether activities could be attributed to the JEA before the agreement has been finalized. L. Young noted that their first JEA ended in July, and they have continued the work under the impression that the next agreement and funding are forthcoming. L. Simpson stated that costs cannot be attributed to a contract until the contract is place. D. McKinney noted that the JEAs are significantly different from a contract. One of the things NOAA OLE attempted was to structure the JEAs in a more user-friendly manner. Since everyone has gone so long without a JEA, D. McKinney volunteered to frame the

question of continuity to D. Jones and will follow-up with an answer through Cindy (GSMFC).

The Gulf states would like to meet as a group to discuss broad-scale operations. They proposed a three-day Strategic Planning Session to review the NOAA Operations Plan, JEA continuity, long-term authorization for funding, Gulf goals and objectives, and JEA activities as a Gulf unit such as the coordinated high-contact weekends. This meeting would be in addition to the individual state meetings being held to discuss state-specific JEAs. D. Livingston indicated that such a meeting would be possible.

Department of Homeland Security Discussion/Potential Impacts

While representing resource enforcement on the Gulf Safety Committee, J. Mayne continues to point out that marine resource enforcement presence can add to the atmosphere that will help deter terrorist activity. In doing so, however, one of enforcement's deficits is offshore communication. The Gulf Safety Committee is soliciting Congress to request appropriations for a communications network upgrade. Gulf-wide communications would link enforcement, offshore workers, and resource users. An updated system would provide federally-deputized state enforcement communications while patrolling offshore among the nations gas and oil production facilities, the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port, and along the coast where the nation's strategic oil reserve is located.

Mississippi and Alabama use a 900-system. Florida is in the process of implementing a statewide 800-system. All the Gulf states are still involved in homeland security activities. The Coast Guard is very much involved in homeland security and expects to increase personnel by 20%.

Election of Officers

J.T. Jenkins advised the group that he spoke to the Vice Chairman, L. Young (scheduled to rotate up to Chairman this year) after the last meeting, and they discussed changing the rotation schedule to coincide with the Council schedule – every two years at the odd year. **J.T. Jenkins moved that the term of J. Mayne (Chairman) and L. Young (Vice Chairman) is extended until October 2003. L. Young seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

MINUTES
GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
LAW ENFORCEMENT ADVISORY PANEL
HAWK'S CAY RESORT
DUCK KEY, FLORIDA
OCTOBER 16, 2002

ATTENDANCE:

Members

John Jenkins, Chairman
Jeff Mayne, Vice Chairman
Terry Bakker
Bruce Buckson
Dave Cinalli
Dick Livingston
Karen Raine
John Sherlock
Tom Riley
Larry Young

Staff

Anne Alford
Richard Leard

Other Participants

Gino Freselli
Dave McKinney
Ralph Rayburn
Tom Riley
Tom Schuler
Phil Steele

The meeting of the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (LEAP) was called to order by Chairman John Thomas Jenkins at 8:30 a.m., on Tuesday, October 17, 2002.

- **Adoption of Agenda**
The agenda was adopted as written.
- **Adoption of the Minutes**
The minutes of the LEAP meeting held March 20, 2002 at the Casino Magic Hotel in Biloxi, Mississippi were approved as written.
- **Review of the Process Used by NMFS to Monitor Quota Openings and Closures**

Mr. Phil Steele, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding the process used by NMFS to monitor quota openings and closures (attachment A).

SAC Livingston asked if Mr. Steele felt that the numbers he presented matched the stock assessment or if he believed there was a large unreported catch. **Mr. Steele** responded that there had not been a stock assessment since 1999; however, he felt that the numbers were as close as could be obtained without real-time electronic reporting.

Lt Sherlock asked if there was any way to carry fishing days over to the following year in the event that weather precluded safe fishing. **Mr. Steele** responded no, under the current regulations. He noted, however, that the Council had the option to change the regulations.

Mr. Fischer related that carry over of the unharvested spring quota to the fall season had been brought up at the last Council meeting and hopefully would go to scoping meetings. He stated that his recommendation had been to use days instead of pounds to allow the fishers enough time to make a realistic trip. He suggested that the AP recommend a carry-over from one year to the next if desired.

Lt Sherlock asked if the season could be changed from a 10-day fishing period in the fall season to a 15-day fishing period to alleviate a derby fishery. **Mr. Fischer** responded that the Council had implemented a 10-day fishing period on the advice of dealers. He added that the fishermen did not appear to support the 10-day fishing period because of weather issues.

Dr. Leard noted that this item had been placed on the agenda because the Council had discussed it. One of the problems encountered during the past year was that NMFS had forecast that the spring season would end in July and the states notified the fishermen. However, the quota was not met and the fishery opened again in August with little advanced notice. He stated that discussion was now to close the spring season when projected and carry any quota shortage over to the fall season.

Mr. Steele pointed out that this issue would no longer be a problem if and when individual fishing quotas (IFQs) were implemented.

Maj. Buckson stated that the LEAP could address the fishing season from a safety perspective and noted that a 2-day fishery was not a good idea. He did not feel it was appropriate to address the quota.

Maj. Jenkins asked if the LEAP should recommend a limit on the minimum number of days in a fishing season. **L t Sherlock** responded that the Socioeconomic Panel (SEP) should make that recommendation.

Mr. Steele stated that the SEP had extensively analyzed the data and believed that the system currently used was the best from a socioeconomic standpoint.

Maj Buckson moved that the LEAP recommend that the Council refrain from having short derby-type fisheries for enforcement and safety purposes.

Lt Sherlock suggested that the motion include language that any days at or under 4 be carried over to the following fishing season to alleviate concerns for enforcement and safety.

Cpt Mayne asked what was the lowest percentage of projected catch that NMFS could use to estimate a closing date. **Mr. Steele** responded that if there was less than 200,000 pounds left at the end of a fishing month, it would be carried over to the fall season.

Cpt Mayne asked what was the farthest percentage the projections had been off from the actual harvest once actual landings data were accumulated. **Mr. Steele** responded that he had not seen that information because it took about 6 months to finalize the landings data. He noted that until real-time data were available it would be difficult to project.

SA McKinney noted that when the fishermen landed approximately 80,000 pounds/day, it took 2 ½ days to catch 800,000. He pointed out that this would mean a fishing season would be no less than 3 days. He noted that this quota would most likely be carried over to the fall season. He felt that the LEAP should make a stronger statement regarding the fall season.

Dr. Leard pointed out that if the fishing season were changed from a 10-day season to a 15-day season, the quota would probably be reached by the end of the November fishing season.

LCDR Cinalli suggested the following language for the motion: for law enforcement and safety concerns as per National Standard 10, the LEAP recommends that the Council and NMFS refrain from opening the season for any period less than 96 hours or 4 days. When this situation exists, the LEAP recommends to carry the quota over from the spring to the fall, and then the fall to the next season.

SA McKinney pointed out that the spring season did not appear to be the problem.

Lt Sherlock asked if the fishermen caught 80,000 pounds/day in the fall season. **Mr. Steele** responded no, catch/day in February was much higher than in July. When the fishing season began in October the catch was higher then decreased each month. It was dependent upon weather and price.

Maj Jenkins pointed out that the Council had not officially ruled that the fish not caught in the spring season would be carried over to the fall. He noted that was an adjustment made within NMFS the prior year. He believed that the language should be retained in the motion.

LCDR Cinalli offered a substitute motion that for law enforcement and safety concerns as per National Standard 10, the LEAP recommends that the Council and NMFS refrain from opening the season for any period less than 96 hours or 4 days. The LEAP

also recommends extending the open period of the fall season from 10 to 15 days in a goal to alleviate the possibility for a short fishing period (derby) in December.

SA McKinney noted that the motion was consistent with prior LEAP positions.

Mr. Steele related that the fishermen liked the 10-day fishing season because it allowed them to fish year round providing a local product. He noted that a closure allowed for imported products in the market creating a socioeconomic issue.

Maj Buckson withdrew the motion.

Motion carried that for law enforcement and safety concerns as per National Standard 10, the LEAP recommends that the Council and NMFS refrain from opening the season for any period less than 96 hours or 4 days. The LEAP also recommends extending the open period of the fall season from 10 to 15 days in a goal to alleviate the possibility for a short fishing period (derby) in December.

•Discussion of Council Response to the Office fo Inspector General

Maj Jenkins related that Mr. Swingle sent a response to the office of the Inspector General (IG) with a copy to the members of the LEAP. He felt that the LEAP should be more active in responses that dealt with enforcement.

Cpt Mayne stated that he had been under the impression that the LEAP was supposed to be involved and had been surprised when he received the response in light of the IG looking at the joint enforcement agreement (JEA) process.

Lt Sherlock asked if there had been a deadline to respond. **Dr. Leard** responded that he did not recall a deadline on the email but he did not know what verbal communication had occurred between Mr. Swingle and the IG office.

Cpt Mayne moved that in the future, if there are inquiries from other agencies regarding marine law enforcement issues, if time permits they be channeled through the LEAP. Motion carried.

Maj Jenkins asked if NMFS had provided comments to IG. **Ms. Raine** responded that she was not contacted. **S AC Livingston** responded that he had provided verbal comments in July. He stated that his general message to the IG was that enforcibility of rules and regulations was most important and the relationship of law enforcement input to Councils was critical.

•Discussion of Whether Vessels Should be Allowed to Simultaneously Possess Recreational and Commercial Bag Limits and Trip Limits, Respectively

Cpt Mayne noted that a problem existed with recreational fish onboard a commercial vessel being sold in a commercial market. He stated that it would be easier if the owner had to declare what type of trip was occurring and not be subject to two sets of regulations at the same time. He preferred to have regulations that any fish caught on an individual trip be classified as either commercial or recreational.

Maj Jenkins asked Maj Buckson if Florida had the same issue. **Maj Buckson** responded that Florida did not have a prohibition on possession of both when dealing with reef fish. He added that the trip did have to be designated for the shrimp fishery. Now that the Council and the states had implemented bag and varying minimum size limits it was becoming more of an issue. He agreed with Cpt Mayne that enforcement would be easier, although unless the state of Florida changed their regulations it would not be a state issue.

Lt Sherlock asked if this was primarily directed toward reef fish. **Maj Buckson** responded affirmatively.

Cpt Mayne moved that the LEAP recommend that the Council prohibit the possession of recreational caught fish on a commercial fishing trip.

Lt Sherlock asked where this type of regulation would fall within the penalty schedule, i.e., commercial or recreational. **Ms. Raine** responded that it would generally be treated as commercial unless the trip was designated recreational.

Maj Buckson asked if the motion could contain language reflecting the desire of the LEAP to have the Council consider problems associated with commercial vessels retaining recreational bag limits.

Dr. Leard explained that the Council developed a range of alternatives during the scoping process of developing amendments. He noted that this measure could be included as an alternative in future options papers.

Lt Sherlock stated that this issue could be more complex in the reef fish fishery than others.

Cpt Mayne agreed and modified the motion that the LEAP recommend that the Council consider problems associated with commercial vessels retaining recreational bag limits and prohibit the possession of recreational bag limits on commercial reef fish trips. Motion as modified carried.

•Update of Joint Enforcement Agreements and Adoption of 2003 Operations Plan

Maj Jenkins reported that all Gulf states had completed their 2001 JEA and all had applied for 2002 JEA funds. He stated that the process was moving forward and the states and NMFS continued to work through issues in a positive fashion. He noted that he could provide an update at the next meeting.

Regarding adoption of the 2003 Operations Plan, **Maj Jenkins** reported that it had been adopted at the GSMFC level.

Cpt Mayne moved that the LEAP adopt the 2003 Operations Plan. Motion carried.

•Discussion of Council Managed Fisheries Most in Need of VMS Requirements

Dr. Leard reported that the Council was proceeding through the scoping process in both the shrimp and reef fish fisheries. He stated that the red grouper issues had to be removed from Reef Fish Amendment 18 because red grouper were considered to be overfished. Therefore, a separate amendment had to be completed for red grouper. He reported that Reef Fish Amendment 18 was now back on track including alternatives for vessel monitoring systems (VMS), particularly on longline vessels that may still be in the fishery. He asked if the LEAP had recommendations on implementing VMS for any other fisheries in the Gulf.

SAC Livingston commented that a strong VMS program had been running in the northeast. He recommended that enforcement look for issues where the capabilities of VMS would be restricted because it could be used in areas to make cases against potential poachers. He stated that there had been a tendency for the Councils to select a VMS system that did not meet that criteria. He noted that real-time data was needed. He recommended that the Council make sure that any system selected was flexible and easily adapted to be used in any fashion deemed necessary to manage the fishery.

Dr. Leard reported that the Council had received an extensive presentation on VMS. He noted that the Council was looking at VMS from both the standpoint of collecting data with less expensive systems that were not real-time, and the satellite systems. He agreed that enforcement monitoring was available with satellite systems, but not with electronic logbooks or cellular systems.

SAC Livingston moved that the LEAP supports the requirement of VMS that provides the greatest versatility and ability to adapt to changing regulations while maintaining an enforcibility component. Motion carried.

Maj Jenkins asked if the LEAP wanted to list any other fisheries needing VMS requirements.

Maj Buckson noted that fish traps were being phased out. He believed VMS might be helpful in that fishery.

SA McKinney noted that the Council was discussing VMS for the longline and shrimp

fisheries. He suggested that the LEAP support VMS for these fisheries.

SAC Livingston pointed out that the outlay of funds needed to outfit the fish trap vessels would be expensive considering the time line for the phase out.

Maj Buckson stated that if industry did not want to consider VMS, the phase out could be stepped up. He believed it was a serious concern from an enforcement perspective.

Mr. Fischer reported that the feeling of the Council was to let the fish trap fishery phase out without any additional measures. He noted that even if the Council acted immediately, it would take approximately 2 more years before implementation. He agreed that some of the same vessels could remain in the reef fish fishery after the phase out and VMS may be required anyway.

Lt Sherlock recalled that VMS was included in the fish trap phase out.

Dr. Leard stated that the amendment specifically authorized NMFS to require VMS once a system was available.

SA McKinney noted that part of the law enforcement strategic plan had elements requiring reduction of regulations. He noted that VMS provided an excellent opportunity to review the regulation structure so that rather than putting VMS in on top of existing regulations, a determination could be made as to what regulations VMS could replace.

Cpt Mayne believed that VMS would be important if ITQs were implemented.

Maj Buckson moved that the LEAP recommend that the Council request that NMFS implement VMS for fish trap vessels. **Motion carried.**

SA McKinney requested that, to the extent practicable, the Council seek input from the LEAP when preparing scoping documents.

•Status of FMPs, Amendment, and Regulatory Actions

Dr. Leard reported that in mid 2001 the Council had approved Shrimp Amendment 11 requiring shrimp permits for all shrimp vessels fishing in the EEZ. It had gone through the NMFS process and the final rule published in August with an effective date of September 6, 2002. He stated that all permits were required to be issued and onboard by December 5, 2002. He stated that NMFS had been developing a protocol to certify additional bycatch reduction devices (BRDs). He noted that some legal problems had caused a delay but hopefully additional BRDs would be certified shortly. He stated that Shrimp Amendment 10 requiring BRDs on the remainder of the west coast of Florida, had been approved May 2001. Currently it was under review at NMFS and he stated that he did not know when it would be approved.

The notice of availability for Stone Crab Amendment 7 had been published in the Federal Register in April, 2001. He reported that the amendment was approved by NMFS in July, the proposed rule was published in June, with the final rule published in October. The rule would be effective November 4, with the exception of the part that required federal permits which would be effective December 2. He noted that this amendment tagged onto Florida's trap reduction program. He related that most of the vessels had state permits and would be subject to all the same requirements in federal waters.

The red snapper rebuilding plan had been submitted to NMFS in May, 2001. He noted that there were no real enforcement implications in this plan. He stated that NMFS had notified the Council that there were potentially significant impacts, therefore, a scoping process was begun to develop a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS).

Red grouper management measures had been removed from Reef Fish Amendment 18 and put into Secretarial Amendment 1. It was approved in July and submitted to NMFS in September. Currently it was undergoing the NMFS review and implementation process. In the meantime, a new stock assessment had been received that could have an impact on the Secretarial Amendment. He related that the main issues in the amendment were to move the longline boundary in Florida south and east of Cape San Blas from 20 fathoms out to 50 fathoms, and increase the minimum size limit from 20 to 22 inches.

Secretarial Amendment 2, the greater amberjack rebuilding plan, was scheduled to be approved by the Council in November, 2002 and would be submitted to NMFS. He noted that the amendment did not change any existing regulations.

A regulatory amendment for coastal migratory pelagics was underway to set overfished and overfishing definitions. He noted that the Council may consider changes to the total allowable catch (TAC); however, the current preferred alternative was not to change TAC.

SA McKinney reported that a new turtle excluder device (TED) regulation had been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), that required a much larger TED to be implemented in both the Atlantic and the Gulf. It was scheduled to be published around October 15, with a 30-day comment period, and a 6-month implementation date following that. Because it was a significant size change, he believed it could be problematic in the Gulf of Mexico.

State and Federal Reports

Alabama

Maj Jenkins reported that Alabama had been in the process of updating and clarifying regulations to make them more understandable for the public. He stated that their legislative packet for the next year was being developed with the goal to review older laws and make

them clearer. He noted that they had one officer graduate from the police academy the prior week. Three people had been hired and should be onboard by November 18, 2002. He was hopeful to have another person onboard before January 1, 2002. He noted that he had been promoted when Jerry Waller retired, Chris Blankenship had been promoted to the captain position in Mobile County, Scott Bannon had been promoted to lieutenant in Mobile County, and Keith Wallace had been promoted to sergeant position. The JEA for the 2002 had been completed and they were working on the JEA for 2003.

Florida

Maj Buckson, reported that both the Executive Director (ED) of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) and the of the law enforcement division had retired. He stated that Ken Haddad had been appointed as ED of FFWCC. Dr. Haddad had appointed Col Julie Jones as head of law enforcement on August 9. He reported that a class of new-hires had graduated and another class of new-hires had just started to primarily keep up with vacancies. He stated that the legislature had appropriated 25 positions two years earlier primarily targeting manatee protection zone enforcement and they were still trying to fill those positions. He reported that a federal lawsuit on manatees was being settled and that the stone crab program was progressing well. Legislatively, they were dealing with penalties for unlicensed fishermen. He added that they were working with other states, primarily Alabama and Texas, to manage derelict traps.

Louisiana

Cpt Mayne reported that Louisiana was still working with the effects of Hurricanes Isidore and Lili. He noted that some statewide oyster closures had been implemented but some of the oyster beds were gradually opening up, and monitoring and clean-up efforts were being done in some of the oyster beds to evaluate the storm damage on those areas. He noted that Louisiana Fish & Wildlife Department (LFWD) had been a large part of the rescue and recovery efforts during those storms. He related that a shrimp excise tax had been implemented during the last legislative session. Previously there had been a shrimp severance tax that was collected and paid for transactions between the commercial fishermen and the resident dealers. He explained that this was more a data collection mechanism to monitor the harvest levels of shrimp. The excise tax replaced the severance tax and also instituted a reporting requirement on imported shrimp coming into the state. He stated that the program had been in place for 4 to 5 months with interesting results. He noted that a main concern by industry was dumping of shrimp and Congress had no way to show that imports were having an effect on the market without numbers. Currently, they were able to collect information on those imported shrimp products. He reported that legislation was in process to devise laws to allow some derelict crab trap removal programs. He stated that there had been development of a Seafood Industry Advisory Board made up of key industry representatives from commercial fishermen, dealer/processor, and representatives of some of the larger groups. One of the main drives was to eliminate the requirements of possession of undersize fish after the first point of sale. Therefore, the dealers/processers would be exempt

from
ize requirements. He noted that there was an enforcement concern that there would be a new dumping ground for undersize fish. He recommended the AP discuss this issue under Other Business. He continued that mullet season would open October 21. There had been a push to reinstate night fishing for mullet but the LFWD was unable to do that because of legislative constraints. He noted that despite the effects of the storms there had been a high volume of red snapper harvested. He added that there had been positive feedback from both recreational and commercial entities regarding JEAs.

Mississippi

Col Bakker reported that Mississippi had hired a new Executive Director. He noted that all officers were fully staffed and had completed training. He stated that many training programs were underway. A dive team had been started approximately 3 months earlier, to work in conjunction with customs and DEA in various cities and counties. He noted that MDMR provided the vessel and fuel for training on a monthly basis and the Sheriff's Department provided water and food supplies. They were in the process of trying to get regulations changed in the legislature. He reported that Lt Col David Rose was serving in an administrative capacity. He stated that Lt Walter Chatigner would be attending the meetings and would eventually take Col Baker's place on the LEAP.

Texas

Mr. Young reported that Texas had reversed its decision to require a Texas licence from out-of-state fish dealers. During the last quarter of the fiscal year, there had been 37 retirees. Thirty-seven cadets had graduated on September 1. They were in the process of hiring 40 more cadets by January 1 in an attempt to build to a level of 500 to 520 officers. He stated that a second crab closure had been proposed for March 1-March 16 and it was anticipated that the Texas Commission would adopt it. He noted that the first crab closure was very successful. He reported that several large shrimp cases had been made during the past few weeks. The legislative session was scheduled for January with the only law enforcement issue being a request for more inspection authority. He stated that Kris Bishop had been hired in Austin as the Assistant Chief of Fishery Enforcement.

NOAA

SA McKinney reported that JEAs had been given top priority. He noted that VMS was also a very important issue. VMS had a very high rate of compliance record in excess of 90% and they were interested in seeing that applied over wide areas of closed waters. He stated that he had been the law enforcement participant on the Council's Ad Hoc Red Snapper Advisory Panel that developed an IFQ profile. He noted that IFQs had a proven track record of over 90% compliance and there was every expectation that would be the case in the Gulf. He reported that red snapper imports from Mexico were being reviewed because of concerns over co-mingling of Mexican imports with undersized U.S. red snapper. He noted that he

had been asked to present information regarding red snapper violations at the January, 2003 Council meeting. He reported that while gathering information for that presentation they had found several interesting violations, including where longliners had admitted to using undersized fish for bait.

USCG

Lt Sherlock reported that CMDR Chris Austin was now serving as Branch Chief of Law Enforcement. He stated that there had been reorganization within his office and he was now also involved in high interest vessel boardings with Homeland Security. He related that Lt Don Montoro was now in charge of the Gulf Reef and Fisheries Training Center. Lt Montoro held a masters degree in fisheries and had extensive experience. He stated that the Eighth Coast Guard District was fully engaged in Homeland Security Patrols and enforcement. He noted that significant threats existed in the Gulf with the petroleum industry. There had also been an increase in fishery boardings. He reported that between April 1 and September 30 there had been 1,660 law enforcement boardings, 615 of which were commercial fishing vessels, and 2 of which were foreign fishing vessels. Of those boardings, there were 66 violations of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, representing an observed compliance of 66%. There had been 431 shrimp boardings, 31 of which were TED violations (observed compliance of 93%). Of those boardings, 242 vessels required BRDs, 25 of which did not have them (observed compliance of 90%). There were 245 commercial fishing vessel safety violations (observed compliance of 60%) which continued to be a concern. Thirty-two of those vessel's trips had been terminated in the last 6 months because the violations were so gross that they presented a significant risk of loss of life at sea. There were 42 lancha sightings during the last 6 months. There had been 41 violations for commercial vessels operating without a U.S. Master aboard. There had been 69 people turned over to border patrol because they were undocumented aliens.

NOAA General Counsel

Ms. Raine reported that no less than 50 cases had been issued in the last quarter, 22 of which were from state involvement. Some of the cases had multiple counts. There were 18 cases involving TED violations, 13 involving BRD violations, 10 cases involving the Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary issues. A variety of smaller cases involved the Tortugas Shrimp Sanctuary, live bait, failing to maintain highly migratory species (HMS) form, insufficient trap endorsements, disposal of fishing gear, reef fish area closures, red snapper closures, undersized red grouper, a turtle, and a dolphin feeding case. She stated that a full report would be issued via email in the near future.

US Fish and Wildlife

Mr. Riley expressed his appreciation at being able to attend the meeting and his plans to attend LEAP meetings in the future. He anticipated that there would be an improved cooperative effort between the states, NMFS, and the USCG in the future. He stated that high priority had been placed on marine resources and USF&W would be more closely

monitoring imports and exports of fish and coral and the investigation of fishery violations.

•Review of the Gulf Safety Committee

Maj Jenkins noted that the LEAP had discussed the issue in-depth at the GSMFC Law Enforcement Meeting (see attached).

Mr. Fischer reported that there were various bills going through Washington regarding Homeland Security with the possibility of money appropriated for defense of natural energy sources. He believed this could open the possibility of states receiving additional funds for enforcement. He encouraged input from law enforcement agencies on the distribution of these funds.

Mr. Bakker related there had been a meeting in Knoxville where it was reported that all Homeland Security funds that were being distributed to the states were going to the state police to disburse. He noted that he had been checking with the state of Mississippi to see if this was true. He stated that he had contacted the Governor of Mississippi and now served on the Anti-Terrorism Task Force.

Cpt Mayne stated that it did not appear that any of the federal funds appropriated for 2002 for Department of Defense and Homeland Security were being designated for natural resource agencies. He related that FEMA would be a controlling entity for distribution of money. He also encouraged participation on any committee that could have input regarding fund distribution.

Mr. Fischer reported that another enforcement issue was the proposal by components of the oil industry to prohibit any fishing within 600 feet of oil platforms. He noted that even if it was restricted to a limited number of platforms, it would still require enforcement.

Cpt Mayne believed that too much emphasis was given to fishing around the oil rigs because there were many Gulf resources that depended upon access to those rigs. He noted that funding from JEAs could provide additional presence on the water to make the people on the rigs feel safer.

•Discussion of Rotating the LEAP Chairman and Vice Chairman Every 2 Years

Maj Jenkins noted that the GSMFC Law Enforcement Committee had extended the chairman's term for one additional year to be on the same schedule as the Gulf Council's AP appointments. He asked if the LEAP desired the same election system.

Dr. Leard advised that the Council approved advisory panels in March of odd years.

Historically, the LEAP elected the chairman and vice chairman at their meeting following appointment by the Council.

Col Bakker moved to continue the election of chairman and vice chairman of the LEAP every 2 years. He felt that this allowed the AP flexibility to elect a different chairmen if they desired. He opposed having the vice chairman automatically move to the chairman's position as set up for the GSMFC Law Enforcement Committee.

Maj Buckson noted that the intent was to provide continuity and required the vice chairman to stay abreast of the issues and gain experience before they moved into the chairmanship.

Maj Buckson offered a substitute motion to change election of chairman and vice chairman to a rotating system similar to that implemented for the GSMFC Law Enforcement Committee.

Mr. Bakker moved to table the motion until the following meeting. Motion to table carried.

•Other Business

Cpt Mayne moved that the LEAP request that the Council and the GSMFC write letters to Louisiana Seafood Industry Advisory Board requesting that they not take action on exempting dealers on size possession. Motion carried by consensus.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

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APPROVED BY: 3/18/03
ZSP
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, October 15, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Chairman Corky Perret called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Bill Balboa, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Joseph Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

Staff

Jeff Rester, Habitat/SEAMAP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Thomas Herrington, FDA/Gulf of Mexico Program, Stennis, MS
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Rick Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Marcia de Almeida, University of Miami, Miami, FL
Walter Blessey, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Biloxi, MS
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Jill Jensen, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Chris Dorsett, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Beverly Roberts, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on March 19, 2002 in Biloxi, Mississippi were approved.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - V. Vail reported that Florida has completed implementation of a stone crab trap certificate program. Approximately 1.2 million tags were allotted to 1,178 fishermen. Five hundred twenty-six appeals were filed to an appeals board. In this program, stone crab trap certificates are transferable. Florida is also trying to reduce traps by four percent in the spiny lobster fishery. V. Vail stated that Florida is investigating effort management in the blue crab fishery along with a trap retrieval program. Florida is looking to track landings in the sponge fishery. V. Vail stated that twelve percent of all commercial saltwater license holders stated an email address on their applications. A. McMillan-Jackson stated that a recent fish kill in New Smyrna Beach killed hundreds of thousands of fish. She also stated that the Florida Marine Research Institute recently received a web site design award.

Alabama - S. Heath stated that the red snapper aquaculture project has achieved natural spawnings this year. Approximately 2,000 red snapper fingerlings were tagged and released on artificial reef sites. In June, Alabama held their first derelict crab trap clean up with over 400 traps being picked up in shallow and deep-water areas. S. Heath reported that two new boat ramps were completed in 2002. Piers were damaged during Tropical Storm Isidore. Some of the seafood dealers involved in the trip ticket program have switched to electronic trip tickets and the system is running smoothly. S. Heath reported that 2,586 otoliths have been collected from red snapper, sheepshead, gag, amberjack, and flounder.

Mississippi - C. Perret reported that Dr. Bill Walker is the new DMR Director. He stated that while Dr. Walker was officially named as Director in July, but he is still working as a fellow in Senator Trent Lott's office. C. Perret stated the Commission on Marine Resources' membership has been reduced from seven members to five members. Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lili damaged piers and docks in Mississippi. A special kids fishing rodeo was cancelled due to a damaged pier. Two of the seven weather stations that monitor rainfall and river discharge were damaged in the storms. C. Perret stated that fellow Commissioner, Senator Billy Hewes, introduced legislation to remove derelict crab traps in Mississippi waters. Mississippi will have a closed crabbing season some time next spring. Mississippi's derelict trap program has

removed approximately 2,400 traps to date. C. Perret stated that they are requesting a TED waiver due to debris in the water from the tropical storms. Mississippi is collecting otoliths from red snapper, cobia, and southern flounder. Finally, Mississippi is spreading limestone rock on inshore artificial reefs and armored personnel carriers are being deployed on offshore sites.

Louisiana - J. Shepard reported that their artificial reef program is building a one-acre limestone reef in Terrebonne Parish, and that an ocean going tug was deployed off Terrebonne Parish. Four oil platforms have been donated and sited this year, and six more platforms are pending. J. Shepard stated that Louisiana is reevaluating their artificial reef plan. Hurricane Lili, Tropical Storm Isidore, and imports have impacted the Louisiana shrimp industry. J. Shepard stated that two late cold fronts moved shrimp out of the estuaries before the opening of the season and therefore shrimp landings are down. Money has been made available to shrimpers to help with utility bills. J. Shepard stated that it would not be a good year for oysters. Louisiana is also investigating a TED waiver due to storm debris.

Texas - J. Mambretti reported that the Texas Artificial Reef Program has created four new reefs along the coast and enhanced three others. The Artificial Reef Program is working with the Texas Department of Transportation on the potential donation of bridge structures to the program. The Coastal Fisheries genetics research team has been analyzing tarpon microsatellite data from fish collected from the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic, Caribbean, and Pacific Oceans. Tarpon are genetically highly variable with little population subdivision across much of their distribution. A new study on temporal variation in spotted seatrout has been initiated and will continue over the next four years. Round 10 of the shrimp license management program ended in August with a total of 119 commercial shrimp, 53 bait, and 66 bay licenses being bought back at an average price of \$6,607. The third round of crab license buybacks ended with 16 licenses bought for \$65,000. The second round of finfish license buybacks ended with 13 licenses retired at a cost of \$53,850. Forty sea turtle nests were located on Texas beaches in 2002, 38 of which were Kemp's ridley nests. These represent the most ever recorded in Texas.

NOAA Fisheries - T. McIlwain reported that NOAA is continuing operations under a continuing resolution. The preliminary budget is an increase over last year's budget. NOAA Fisheries will complete a new red snapper stock assessment in 2004. T. McIlwain stated that both NOAA Fisheries ships in the Gulf of Mexico are being outfitted with shipboard sensors to help in the collection of environmental and meteorological data. The Galveston Laboratory completed a stock assessment on shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico, and their findings show that shrimp stocks are healthy and are not being overfished. T. McIlwain stated that the new code of conduct for responsible aquaculture in the EEZ is out for public review. The Sea Grant offshore aquaculture cage survived both recent storms and is currently stocked with cobia. T. McIlwain stated that Dr. Hogarth has met with representatives from the shrimp industry to determine how they can provide relief to the fishermen.

USFWS - C. Brown reported that the Southeast Region's former Deputy Director, Dale Hall, was appointed in July as the new Regional Director for the Southwest Region. The

new Deputy Director for the Southeast Region is Mitch King. The USFWS and NMFS on June 6 published a proposal to list critical habitat for Gulf sturgeon. Critical habitat was proposed to be listed in portions of the Pearl, Pascagoula, Escambia, Yellow, Choctawhatchee, Apalachicola, and Suwannee River systems. The Panama City Field Office is continuing to work with the Corps of Engineers to modify operation of dams in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river system to benefit fish and wildlife resources. The compact for water management between the states in that basin was extended until January 19, 2003. The Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge on the lower Texas coast is working on a project to restore estuarine habitat in three basins that have been mostly dry during the last 70 years. These areas total approximately 9,000 acres and will be reconnected to the Laguna Madre by digging a canal. A Fisheries joint venture with southeastern state fisheries agencies and other organizations is being developed. In part due to efforts of the USFWS, an ordinance was passed in May affecting five of the 18 miles of developed beach in Bay County, Florida in order to prevent disorientation of hatchling sea turtles. C. Brown finally stated that the National Wildlife Refuge system would be celebrating its centennial in 2003.

Report on the Spring 2002 Blackwater Event off Florida

B. Roberts of the Florida Marine Research Institute stated that an unusual event occurred in early 2002 from Cape Romano, Florida to the Florida Keys. An area of dark colored water appeared off the coast and lasted for approximately three months. Most investigators believe a decaying coastal algae bloom caused the event. Others believed that freshwater released from Lake Okeechobee was the cause. B. Roberts stated that the blackwater killed or severely affected sponges, corals and other bottom dwelling organisms that were exposed to the water. B. Roberts stated that investigators are still undecided about the initial cause, its composition during January and February, and its effect on Gulf marine communities. The main topic of disagreement is the degree of contribution made by freshwater runoff. B. Roberts stated that many organizations are still monitoring the area, but it appears that the blackwater is no longer present.

Update on the Red Tide Rapid Development Technique

B. Roberts stated that one of the researchers involved in this project was scheduled to provide an update at the October meeting last year, but was unable to provide the update. She reported that the goal of the project was to improve the monitoring program when red tide affects the Gulf of Mexico and associated shellfish harvesting areas. She stated that the Gulf states had donated some of their disaster funds to help fund the project. Objectives for the project were to develop rapid identification methods for detecting and quantifying brevetoxins in shellfish and to develop a surface recognition probe that would distinguish among *Karenia brevis* strains and similar species. She stated that the benefits from the project would allow faster assessment of shellfish quality, more reliable identification of toxic dinoflagellates, and a shorter learning curve for analysts to identify *K. brevis*. Several researchers were working on different approaches to allow quick identification of *K. brevis*. While several of the approaches are promising, B. Roberts stated that further analysis is necessary to fully develop a probe that would allow quick identification of *K. brevis* in marine waters.

Gulf Council Seat on Artificial Reef Subcommittee

R. Lukens reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council requested that the Council have a seat on the Commission's Artificial Reef Subcommittee. R. Lukens stated that the Council thought they already had a seat, but that the seat was vacant and needed someone appointed. The Council then appointed a representative. R. Lukens stated that they were wrong in their thinking since the Council does not have an automatic seat on the Artificial Reef Subcommittee. He thought it would be a good idea if the Council did have a seat though. He asked the TCC if they would like to create a seat on the Subcommittee for a Council representative. C. Perret felt the Subcommittee should discuss the issue before the TCC designated a seat for a Council representative. S. Heath, as acting Chairman of the Artificial Reef Subcommittee, agreed. **T. McIlwain moved that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee discuss the issue of adding a seat to the Subcommittee for a Council representative and then report back to the TCC.** V. Vail seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Review of the Draft Commission Freshwater Inflow Policy

J. Rester stated that the Habitat Subcommittee drafted a freshwater inflow policy for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council last year. The Subcommittee felt that it was important that the Commission have a freshwater inflow policy also. J. Rester stated that he distributed the draft policy to the TCC in early February. It was subsequently redistributed for comments several times over the summer. He stated that he would now like the TCC to review the policy and make any changes they felt were necessary. D. Frugé suggested replacing the word estuarine with tidal in the policy. Several other minor changes were made to the policy. **C. Brown moved to forward the freshwater inflow policy to the Commission for their review and approval.** J. Shepard seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports

Crab – T. Wagner stated that the Derelict Trap Task Force submitted a grant proposal for derelict trap removal in the Gulf of Mexico. While the project has not been funded yet, discussions with funding personnel show a high interest in the project and possible funding in the near future. T. Wagner stated that J. Rester and R. Lukens will act as liaisons with the NOAA Restoration Center to try and obtain funding. T. Wagner reported that the Subcommittee would like to work with NMFS Marine Mammal personnel to educate crab fishermen about marine mammal interactions with crab traps to avoid reclassifying the blue crab fishery as a Category II fishery. The Crab Subcommittee passed the following motion:

The Crab Subcommittee of the GSMFC supports conservation of bottlenose dolphin stocks, but objects to the proposed reclassification of the Gulf of Mexico blue crab trap fishery to Category II under the Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries.

Subcommittee objections are based on:

- 1) use of volunteer collected data to assess fishery impacts
- 2) lack of rigor in stock assessment methodology

- 3) lack of current population estimates (most recent count was in 1994)
- 4) data for reclassification based on 10 interactions since 1988, given an estimated bay, sound, and estuarine of abundance of 5,000 animals.

The Crab Subcommittee would like to work with NOAA/NMFS Marine Mammal Authorization Program personnel and the existing Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service derelict trap work group to develop an educational/outreach program, to inform fishermen of the pending reclassification of the crab fishery, and to develop guidelines to reduce the number of dolphin/crab trap interactions. Existing GSMFC structure and programmatic activities associated with the Crab Subcommittee, and proposed NOAA Habitat Restoration grant to remove derelict traps from all Gulf of Mexico waters will provide the framework and methodology for this proactive undertaking.

If buoys and lines from crab traps are the major source of mortality, then removal of abandoned traps with buoy lines throughout the Gulf of Mexico should reduce gear interactions of bottlenose dolphins with crab traps.

Without objection, the TCC adopted the Crab Subcommittee resolution. T. Wagner requested that the TCC also accept a recommendation to ask the Commission to request NOAA to withdraw publication of the blue crab trap fishery reclassification to a Category II fishery until NOAA has explored the possibility of working with the Crab Subcommittee to educate crab fishermen about dolphin interactions with traps. Again, without objection, the TCC adopted the resolution. Finally, T. Wagner stated that he was again elected chairman.

SEAMAP - J. Hanifen reported several activities have taken place since the SEAMAP Subcommittee last reported to the TCC. He stated that information on the Spring Plankton Survey and Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey could be found in the SEAMAP annual report to the TCC. J. Hanifen stated that the Subcommittee met jointly with the South Atlantic and Caribbean in August to discuss respective program needs and priorities for FY2003. It appears that SEAMAP will be level funded for FY2003 at \$1.4 million. While SEAMAP received a \$200,000 increase in FY2002, the \$1.4 million level funding is the same funding that SEAMAP received in 1992 before the budget was decreased the next year. J. Hanifen stated that increased funding is needed for the program to continue to operate at the current level. Also at the joint meeting, the Subcommittee discussed using SEAMAP surveys to collect fish tissue for mercury sampling and using SEAMAP as a first alert system for exotic species detection. J. Hanifen stated that at the Subcommittee meeting on Monday afternoon, the Subcommittee discussed a new shipboard data entry system that NMFS has installed on the OREGON II. Dennis Shields gave an overview of the scientific computer system and fisheries scientific computer system. The SCS measures wind speed and direction, boat speed, water depth, along with other measurements. The FSCS measures biological data like fish length and fish weight. Dennis stated that the GORDON GUNTER will be fitted with the systems next year, and that Mississippi is also investigating outfitting their vessel with the system next year. Mark McDuff discussed the new SEAMAP biocode that several people have been working on. Paul Choucair demonstrated a new SEAMAP data entry system that he has developed in Microsoft Access. The Subcommittee also discussed a new species identification guide that several SEAMAP researchers are

developing. Finally, J. Hanifen stated that the SEAMAP Subcommittee was charged with developing a fishery independent data collection program. The Subcommittee is currently involved in formulating revised goals and objectives for this program. The Subcommittee revised SEAMAP's original goals and objectives for the new program. All three SEAMAP components reviewed the goals and objectives at their joint meeting in August and the SEAMAP Subcommittee is now seeking approval of the revised goals and objectives. Without objection, the TCC accepted the revised goals and objectives. J. Hanifen stated that he was again elected chairman.

Data Management - J. O'Hop reported the collection of fisheries dependent information from commercial dealers and fishermen, and recreational fishermen and charter boat captains is proceeding normally. He stated that the gathering of commercial landings data through trip ticket systems for Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida is routine. Louisiana has used the dockside price data collected on their trip tickets to examine the decline in shrimp prices during 2001 and 2002 in their state. Their analyses were used to support state efforts to provide affected fishermen with small business loans and other types of economic relief. J. O'Hop stated that while Texas does not currently have requirements for trip ticket reporting, some Texas dealers have expressed an interest in this type of system for reporting their commercial landings. J. O'Hop reported that Louisiana through Florida have met and generally exceeded their MRFSS sampling targets despite the difficulties with the recent storms in the Gulf. Texas is continuing with their charter boat vessel directory telephone survey (VDTS), but modified it to focus on vessels that fish offshore. The economic survey, conducted as part of the charter boat VDTS in Louisiana through Florida, has had more cooperation from charter boat operators than they originally anticipated. Currently, refusal rates for these interviews are averaging about 1 in 5. Fortunately, there does not seem to be any noticeable effect on participation with the VDTS as a result of the economic survey. Biological sampling, using funds from the FIN program by samplers from Texas through Florida, in 2002 is resulting in the collection of more otoliths for aging. Also, the processing of these samples is proceeding due to FIN funds that are supporting an otolith processor at the NMFS Panama City Laboratory and at FMRI in St. Petersburg. King mackerel, greater amberjack, red snapper, Gulf and southern flounder are the major target species for which they have established sampling targets. Lastly, there was a report from the Data Collection Work Group on the development of the FIN bycatch module and a review of commercial data collection in Puerto Rico. J. O'Hop reported that P. Campbell was elected as chair of the Data Management Subcommittee, and he was approved as vice-chair.

Artificial Reef - R. Lukens stated that the Subcommittee discussed a joint PCB study examining fish and invertebrates collected from ships sunk in the Ship-EX program. Study results showed that there were detectable levels of PCBs in the tissues, but in some cases were not higher than in control sites. All detectable levels were below EPA standards for environmental contamination and public health and therefore pose no health threat. With the issue of PCBs at its current status, the prospect of having Navy ships and vessels available for state programs is brighter. The Subcommittee is nearing completion of revising the "Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials" that was originally published in 1997. The Commission should have a chance to review this

document at the March meeting. R. Lukens reported that Steve Heath was elected chairman with Jon Dodrill serving as vice chairman.

Habitat – J. Rester reported that the Habitat Subcommittee has not met since the last meeting. He stated that at the last meeting, the TCC discussed the use of state logos on placemats used in seafood restaurants. J. Rester stated that the Subcommittee would not be able to distribute the placemats like they did earlier this year. J. Rester reported that the only restaurant using the placemat has switched back to their former placemats. He stated that the Habitat Subcommittee has been exploring a possible habitat video. Cost for the approximate 30-minute video discussing the various types of habitat within the Gulf of Mexico and habitat importance to marine resources and the economy of the nation would be around \$30,000. The Subcommittee will next be exploring funding opportunities. J. Rester stated that on June 15, he along with representatives from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, went to Alabama to help with their derelict crab trap removal day. Finally J. Rester reported that the habitat poster was reprinted this past summer. The new posters were delivered to the states last week. The Habitat Subcommittee would like to thank USFWS and specifically the Gulf Coast Coastal Program's Jacksonville and Panama City Field Offices for donating the money to reprint the poster.

Election of Chairman

C. Perret was again elected chairman of the Technical Coordinating Committee.

Other Business

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

18 March 03

Joseph W. Smith for
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
Corky Perret

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, October 16, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Joe Smith, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m., with the following in attendance:

Members

Barney White, Omega Protein, Inc., Houston, TX
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Behzad Mahmoudi, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Joe Shepard, (*Proxy to John Roussel*), LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Ginny Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, VA
Lance Garrison, Garrison Environmental Research, Miramar, FL
Jill Jensen, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Chris Dorsett, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Jim Twiggs, Mississippi Charterboat Association, Biloxi, MS

Introductions and Membership Review

J. Smith convened the meeting at 8:31 a.m. and started introductions.

Adoption of Agenda

J. Smith indicated that on the original agenda for the MAC meeting, Vince Guillory was scheduled to provide the Louisiana summary and forecast for 2003, but due to both a conflict with the concurrent Crab Subcommittee meeting and the recent string of storms, he was unable to prepare anything. Guillory indicated that he would provide something via mail in the next few weeks.

Smith suggested that with all the activity in Mississippi in the last several weeks regarding the reduction fishery, C. Perret should update the Committee on the current situation there under "Other Business." Perret agreed and also offered a short video of a

newscast which included some comments and information on shark/human interactions and the menhaden fishery.

D. Donaldson offered to update the Committee on the status of the menhaden port samplers. The modified agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes (March 19, 2002)

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. A correction was suggested to change "purse boats" to "steamers" in J. Smith's report. A new address was noted for Neils Moore and new fax numbers for Doug Vaughan and J. Smith. The corrected minutes were accepted by unanimous consent.

Status of 2002 Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishing Season

Smith gave his status report on the 2002 menhaden fishing season. Landings through September 2002 were around 527,000 mt which was up 13% over the same period last year and 1% above the five year average. Total 2002 landings are projected to be around 580,000 mt. Weather was a factor during April/May, and September/October. Peak landings occurred in July at 144,000 mt. Menhaden were landed by 43 vessels in 2002. Effort may be down overall primarily due to increased tropical activity in September. The preliminary forecast for 2003 is around 535,000 mt.

Atlantic Coast Update

Smith gave the update on the Atlantic fishery as well. Adjustments were made last year to the management board moving the industry to the advisory board. The current spawning stock biomass or SSB has been well above the target value and F is slightly below. They are still having a low recruitment to the fishery however. They are unsure of what is happening in the Northeast even though menhaden fishing effort has declined substantially. Smith promised to keep the Committee updated.

Multispecies Models: Menhaden Predator/Prey Interactions with Striped Bass, Bluefish and Weakfish on the Atlantic Coast

Lance Garrison (NMFS Miami) presented the multispecies models currently being employed on the Atlantic to assess the Atlantic menhaden stocks. The model includes mortality in the form of predation from striped bass, bluefish, and weakfish. The model expands the interactions with the fishery to determine the impacts at various life history stages of those key predators and relies heavily on published diet analysis, consumption rates, and evacuation rates for each predator at different ages. Garrison's model is an extension of VPA stock assessment used by Vaughan previously for menhaden. This is Garrison's second year of funding from the ASMFC. Garrison indicated that a preliminary search for useful data in the Gulf to model was lacking and that additional studies of the menhaden predators needs to take place over the next ten years to achieve a satisfactory starting dataset.

Alternative Modeling for Population Dynamics

Behzad Mahmoudi presented an alternative to “age-based” models which are currently being used in Florida. He went into considerable detail for the ECOPATH, ECOSIM, and ECOSPACE models. The interactions included in the model are much more elaborate and take into account predation, foraging, alternative prey, and is truly an “ecosystem” approach. The high number of interactions make this model very elaborate but easier than the Atlantic models because it uses the biomass approach rather than age-based data.

Status of CDFR Data Entry Initiative

VanderKooy reported that at present, all the CDFRs through 1985 have been entered with the exception of 1991 which was incomplete until recently. Smith has located the missing forms from that dataset and the GSMFC is planning to enter it and the 1984 CDFRs before quitting in 2003. Both VanderKooy and Smith agree that the CDFRs are becoming harder to interpret the further back they go and Smith was not at the Beaufort Lab prior to 1984. This provides a logical break point and would place the Gulf dataset one year earlier than the Atlantic which starts in 1985. Consensus among the MAC was that this was an acceptable conclusion to this effort.

Menhaden Facts Website Discussion

VanderKooy updated the group on the Gulf Menhaden Webpage. VanderKooy had provided the site to all the members of each of the Commission’s subcommittees and to date had received no additional comments. The MAC was pleased with the site and recommended immediate release to the public.

Election of Chair

B. Wallace reported that the chair fell back to the states and Mississippi was nominated to the position. C. Perret accepted the nomination and was unanimously elected chair for 2003.

Other Business

Perret updated the MAC on the recent events in Mississippi. Two of the three coastal counties requested that Mississippi’s Commission on Marine Resources (CMR) move the reduction fishery outside two miles from shore based on petition from the Mississippi Chapter of the CCA. Jackson County, home of Omega Protein’s Moss Point plant refused to ratify the CCA’s resolution stating that it had no merit. After meeting with the Harrison County Board of Supervisors and the CCA representatives, it was made clear that there had been no biological basis to make the request, they just didn’t like the boats so close and tourism and recreational fishing were more important in that county. The CMR will be meeting with the Hancock County supervisors in the next few weeks before making a regulatory decision.

Perret also presented a short video which included an interview with Dr. Richard Condrey (LSU). Dr. Condrey implicated the menhaden fishery as contributing to human/shark interactions by overfishing the menhaden stocks and essentially starving the sharks to the point of them targeting humans as prey. The MAC questioned Condrey's suggestion that the Atlantic stock was fished to 3% of its original population as it was completely false. The MAC pointed out that based on the shark attack database, the last few years have actually been lower than average although much more press coverage has occurred. This newscast further demonstrates the need and potential usefulness of a public website which clearly explains the fishery and provides the scientific data in laymen terms.

Finally, D. Donaldson (GSMFC) indicated that due to contractual regulations, Gulf menhaden samplers tasks may have to be assumed and supervised by the LDWF in summer 2004. These individuals would fall under the supervision of J. Shepherd and actually be LDWF field biologists. This arrangement does not preclude Smith from contacting the samplers and interacting with them.

It was suggested that an agenda item for next spring might include a presentation from Rocky Ward (TPWD) on the genetics study he has been conducting with Gulf menhaden. Staff was directed to make the necessary arrangements.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Wednesday, October 16, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Facilitator Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Larry Simpson, *GSMFC*, Ocean Springs, MS
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL

Staff

Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Grey Cane, Daphne, AL
Chris Dorsett, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve Heath, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Tom Herrington, FDA, Stennis Space Center, MS
Billy Hewes, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Mississippi Senate, Biloxi, MS
Jill Jensen, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Mike Liffman, Louisiana Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA
Blair Mase, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Wayne McFee, NOS, Charleston, SC
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Keith Mullin, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Walter Penry, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AL House of Representatives, Daphne, AL
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Rayburn, Texas Sea Grant, College Station, TX
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Rick Wallace, Alabama Sea Grant, Mobile, AL
Kathy Wang, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on March 20, 2002 in Biloxi, Mississippi and on August 13, 2002 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as presented.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

J. Smith of NMFS Beaufort Laboratory reported on the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) meeting. Smith reported that landings through September are up 13% from 2001, and up 1% over the previous 5 year average. Weather conditions hampered fishing operations during April, May and September. Peak landings occurred in July at 144,000mt, however landings fell in September due to several tropical storms. Smith noted that total landings for 2002 could reach 580,000mt, and the NMFS preliminary forecast for 2003 Gulf menhaden landings is 535,000mt. Smith also reported that all Captains Daily Fishing Reports (CDFR) for the 2001 season have been entered and edited.

Smith gave an update of the 2002 Atlantic menhaden fishery explaining the realignment of the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board, Technical Committee and Advisory Panel.

Smith reported that Dr. Lance Garrison of NOAA Fisheries Miami Lab gave a presentation on his work with Multi-Species Models and Atlantic menhaden predatory/prey interactions with striped bass, bluefish and weakfish. His model is an extension of VPA stock assessment used by Dr. D. Vaughan for menhaden assessment. Dr. Garrison did a preliminary data search for potential Gulf menhaden predators that might be modelled in the Gulf of Mexico, but found dietary data scarce.

Smith reported that Dr. B. Mahmoudi presented alternatives to "age-based" model of Dr. Garrison. Mahmoudi showed results of the West Florida Shelf Study using the ECOSPACE model. Smith then reported that S. VanderKooy discussed the latest version of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) Gulf menhaden website. The Advisory Committee voted to proceed and requested that the website be released to the public on *www.gsmfc.org* following a final review by the S/FFMC. VanderKooy also brought the Committee up to date on the CDFR key entry initiative. Currently the data through 1985 has been entered. Next year the data from 1991 and 1984 will be entered and this initiative will be complete. All historical data sheets for menhaden will have been electronically entered.

Smith reported that C. Perret of Mississippi was elected as next Chairman of Menhaden Advisory Committee beginning in October 2002. Smith noted that Perret updated the Committee on recent controversies in Mississippi over menhaden fishing.

Smith reported that D. Donaldson of GSMFC indicated that due to contractual regulations, Gulf menhaden sampler supervision will have to be assumed by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) in the 2004 season. These duties would be covered by J. Shepard's field personnel.

C. Perret moved to accept the Menhaden Advisory Committee report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Marine Mammal Presentations and Discussion

S. VanderKooy noted that this presentation is related to the change in classification of the Gulf blue crab trap fishery from a Category 3 to a 2. There has been continuing dialogue with personnel in the Marine Mammal section. The following presentation should give insight into stock assessments and strandings data.

Keith Mullin of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in Pascagoula, Mississippi presented information on the stock structure of bottlenose dolphins in the Gulf of Mexico and how the abundance of these stocks is estimated. Mullin noted that this subject is driven by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) which stipulates that marine mammals will be protected throughout their range. Mullin explained the various ways the stocks are identified including distribution of movement, population trends, genetic differences between animals in different areas, contaminants, parasite differences, habitat differences, and possibly culture. Bottlenose dolphins have different foraging behaviors and this is transmitted to their young. Mullin explained the current stock structure in the Gulf of Mexico in bays, sound, and estuaries. Mullin then described the methods used to estimate abundance of bottlenose dolphins including aerial surveys conducted in 1992, 1993, and 1994. A brief question and answer period followed Mullin's presentation. Several questions were raised regarding the outdated stock survey and strandings data.

Wayne McFee of the National Ocean Service (NOS) in Charleston, South Carolina reported that he had been asked to provide a review of the bottlenose dolphin entanglements in the blue crab pot fishery in the Gulf of Mexico based on the Southeastern Marine Mammal Stranding Network records. Using records from various agencies throughout the Gulf of Mexico covering the years 1988 through 2001 McFee selected records with rope entanglements, crab pot entanglements, mutilations, etc. McFee provided several photos of animals demonstrating the entanglements and noted that out of the 214 level A data forms that he reviewed, 10 dolphins died as a result of crab pot interactions and 11 were possible interactions. The question was raised as to whether or not it can be determined if a derelict crab trap was involved in an interaction. V. Minton noted that there is a derelict crab trap removal program being carried out in the Gulf of Mexico. Minton also noted that if it can be determined that derelict crab traps are a major factor in interactions, the necessity for a classification change could be affected.

Striped Bass....."Where do we go from here"

D. Frugé of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) gave the Committee an update on the revision of the Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP). In the fall of 2000 the GSMFC set up a technical task force (TTF) to revise the FMP. Frugé reported that the task force has met five times since January 2001. In the first two meetings there was a quorum, however in the last three meetings a quorum was not met. Frugé reviewed the status of the sections of the FMP in the revision process. Frugé noted that two or three more meetings will be held over the course of the next year and they should have the draft ready for review by this Committee by October 2003.

Frugé reported that as a result of a TTF workshop held last December, several issues had been discussed and a questionnaire was developed. Some of the results of this questionnaire are as follows: the TTF agreed that there is a benefit to updating the FMP; there was a unanimous belief that the FMP goals should be tailored to specific rivers rather than having one goal applied Gulfwide; a narrow majority of the TTF felt that the FMP should not address rivers that are not within the native range of striped bass in the Gulf; a large majority of members believe that an aspect of the goals of the FMP should be to conserve the Gulf race of striped bass which is a unique population; a large majority of TTF members felt that a goal to conserve the Gulf race should be applied to selected rivers addressing the FMP instead of all the rivers; a similar number felt that it would be acceptable to stock Atlantic race striped bass in those rivers where conservation of the Gulf race isn't ongoing; all TTF members responding to the questionnaire believe that stocking hybrid striped bass in the system can have detrimental impacts on achieving self sustaining populations; a large majority of the members felt that restoring self sustaining populations without a fishery would be an acceptable short term goal but the long term goal should be for a self sustaining fishery; and a substantial majority felt that imposing experimental harvest moratoriums in rivers to help restore self sustaining populations would be an appropriate management tool. Frugé then reported on some preliminary goals developed by the TTF.

C. Brown of USFWS in Atlanta noted that a key item to recognize is that we are dealing with the need to restore severely depleted stocks of a genetically unique race of fish that could be considered in peril. Brown noted that there are different jurisdictional issues in each state and he encouraged more dialogue between fresh water and salt water personnel since long term management implications could also affect freshwater managers. Brown stated that as a freshwater inflow policy becomes reality and the completion of the FMP nears, it may be time to study what needs to be done from a habitat standpoint. J. Roussel suggested that the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies could be a forum to try to engage freshwater managers.

D. Frugé gave a brief history of the striped bass program in the Gulf noting that the USFWS office in Panama City, Florida was very active in striped bass monitoring. However, after the Gulf sturgeon was listed as a threatened species much of their effort was changed to that species.

The Committee then discussed the problems associated with limited funding for striped bass.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy updated the Committee on the otolith manual and noted that the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) will begin to review this document in the next few weeks. Since the otolith manual is a technical document there was Committee consensus that final approval would rest with the TCC. VanderKooy then noted that the Crab Subcommittee and Derelict Trap Task Force had just approved the derelict trap guidance document and it has been presented to the TCC for their review within the next 30 days. Pending TCC approval, this document will be sent to members of the S/FFMC for their review, then there will be a public comment period, followed by presentation to the Commission at the March meeting.

VanderKooy reported that the MAC had approved the menhaden website and requested that the S/FFMC approve making it available to the public. The Committee agreed to review the menhaden website before granting approval for making it available to the public.

VanderKooy distributed a list of FMPs giving their status, either completed, revised, in progress, or identified for future development. The Committee approved reactivating the task forces for reviewing the out-of-date FMPs (striped mullet, black drum and oyster). After discussing the status of the Spanish Mackerel FMP it was decided that it would remain as an historical document. It was suggested that shrimp be added to the list of old FMPs in need of review. **After Committee discussion, V. Vail made a motion to have sheepshead be the next FMP developed. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The Committee directed VanderKooy to begin putting together a TTF for sheepshead.**

VanderKooy then reviewed the Summary of Changes to the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Compliance Matrix noting that the two new FMPs, seatrout and flounder have been added, as well as the menhaden and blue crab revisions. Other changes were listed by state.

VanderKooy reported that there has been significant interest from other regions in the otolith manual. He has been contacted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) since they have been working on a similar effort. In order to avoid duplicity, Joe Moran of ASMFC suggested that efforts be combined and that Atlantic species be added to the otolith manual. VanderKooy noted that there was a possibility that the ASMFC would assist with training and workshop costs.

FIN Data Program Update

D. Donaldson reported that the 2003 Fisheries Information Network (FIN) Cooperative Agreement was submitted and included coordination and administration of FIN activities, recreational data collection, head boat and menhaden port sampling, trip ticket implementation, biological sampling, and the FIN data management system. The total budget for 2003 is just under \$4.2 million.

Donaldson reported that a proposal was submitted to the Coastal Oceans Program for collection of social/economic data for commercial fisheries.

Donaldson distributed a matrix of recreational fishing licenses which listed the data elements that are necessary in order to utilize the licenses as a sampling frame to collect fishing effort. Donaldson noted that phone numbers are not collected in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida. Another gap in sampling are residents of Florida fishing from shore since a license is not required.

Donaldson reported that at the August meeting of the S/FFMC, J. Roussel noted that Louisiana, in the near future, will have to begin to charge indirect costs to all programs including FIN. Roussel suggested that it would be beneficial for a standard to be developed. Donaldson distributed a list of indirect costs and fringe costs for each state and asked the S/FFMC to determine appropriate indirect costs for the program and set a standard. The Committee discussed the subject of indirect costs at length, as well as the taxes on various programs and agreed to investigate the matter and discuss it further at the March 2003 meeting. The Committee also agreed to hold a conference call prior to the March meeting to discuss indirect costs.

Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel

S. VanderKooy reported that the Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel (C/RFAP) met earlier in the week and with six members present had a quorum. The Recreational Panel also had a quorum, however the Commercial Panel did not.

VanderKooy reported that H. Perry of the GCRL presented a compelling argument which demonstrated the lack of a biological need to protect sponge crabs, noting that processing sponge crabs only required one additional step.

VanderKooy reported that the status of the guidance document of the Derelict Trap Task Force was presented to the C/RFAP.

VanderKooy reported that D. Donaldson gave a presentation on the status of the FIN program and noted that staff was directed to provide a demonstration of the FIN database to the C/RFAP at the March meeting in Alabama.

VanderKooy reported that R. Lukens updated the Panel on activities concerning methyl-mercury, the Invasive Species Task Force, tire resolution and position statement.

VanderKooy reported that Shawn Dick of Aquatic Release Conservation gave a presentation on his company's de-hooking device which could potentially improve the survival of undersized and foul-hooked fish.

VanderKooy reported that Ralph Rayburn of Texas Sea Grant presented information on the Shrimp Summit planned for March 2003 which will involve participation by representatives of the Gulf of Mexico shrimping industry, managers, and researchers. Topics of discussion will include history of the fishery, current management, market

trends, data collection, research, habitat and bycatch. Rayburn requested that anyone interested in attending should contact him or the GSMFC.

Philip Horn will remain as Chairman of the Commercial Panel and Grey Cane will remain as Chairman of the Recreational Panel.

NMFS Review of NAPA Report and Data Quality Act

Anne Lange of NMFS, State/Federal Fisheries Division, Silver Spring, Maryland addressed the Committee on the activities and issues currently being addressed by NMFS. Some upcoming events are the State Marine Fisheries Directors Meeting being held in San Diego from March 31 to April 2, 2003. Another upcoming meeting is RecFish II being held in St. Petersburg in late February 2003. This meeting will focus on Marine Protected Areas planning and implementation. In November 2002 a symposium will be held in Tampa concerning the effects of fishing on benthic habitats. Lange reported that information on this symposium is available on their website. From November 18 to 21 a meeting will be held in New Orleans on the International Fishery Observer program.

Lange also reported on Section 515 of the Data Quality Act which was added into the Treasury bill and directs the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to develop government wide guidelines to provide policy and procedural guidance to federal agencies. Lange explained that anything that any federal agency makes available to the public on websites, reports, etc. is subject to scrutiny. NMFS/NOAA has developed their guidelines and they are available on their website (www.noaa.nmfs.gov). Lange noted that any contracted data is subject to the requirements of this Act. Any new contracts put out by NMFS/NOAA will include a statement that these compliance issues must be included in contracts. The Act also addresses third party data, which is data collected by the states and used by the federal government, and it is incumbent on the federal government that this data must have a level of compliance required by the Act. Lange requested that Commission staff and state partners review the OMB and NOAA guidelines. A full briefing on implementation will be given at the March meeting of State Marine Fisheries Directors.

Lange reported on internal and external reviews, noting that four reviews had been completed last summer. One of these reviews was the by National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) which includes key recommendations such as insuring timely action and realistic and reasonable regulations, eliminating conflict of interest, improving internal business practices, strengthening partnerships with the states, commissions, and industry. Lange noted that she hopes to work more closely with the states and commissions and if anyone needs assistance with any issues or problems they can contact Lange and she will see to it that the appropriate leadership people in the agency are notified.

Election of Chairman

L. Simpson was unanimously elected to remain Facilitator.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.



**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 53rd Annual Meeting
Wednesday, October 16, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Chairman Vernon Minton called the meeting to order at 1:18 p.m and invited the Commissioners to introduce themselves. He took the opportunity to thank Columbus Brown for providing handouts for the Commissioners, which included a "Blue Goose", a symbol the National Wildlife Refuge System, a boater key chain encouraging boater awareness of invasive species, a special report by the Sport Fishing and Boating Council, Quick Facts brochures, and information on US FWS America's National Wildlife Refuge System.

L. Simpson noted that a quorum was present and reviewed pertinent rules and regulations regarding voting procedures.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

Commissioners

Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Richard Liles*)
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Bon Secour, AL
Walter Penry, Alabama House of Representatives, Daphne, AL
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Robert L. Cook*)
Walter J. Blessey, IV, GSMFC, Biloxi, MS
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)
Billy Hewes, Mississippi Senate, Gulfport, MS
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for James H. Jenkins*)
Virginia Vail, FL FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)
William Ward, GSMFC, Tampa, FL

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Executive Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jason S. Keenum, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Jill Jenson, GRN, New Orleans, LA
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

George Henderson, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Phil Steele, NMFS/NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Ralph Rayburn, Texas Sea Grant College Program, College Station, TX

Adoption of Agenda

V. Minton called for approval of the agenda as presented. L. Simpson pointed out a typo in the agenda and stated the he would present the discussion on the Ocean Policy Commission instead of P. Sandifer. **The agenda was approved without objections.**

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held March 20 - 21, 2002, were reviewed. **J. Roussel moved to approve minutes. W. Ward seconded. The minutes were approved without objection.**

GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) - J. Mayne, Chairman for the LEC reported that the LEC met the morning of Wednesday, October 16, 2002. Among topics discussed were the success of the trip ticket system throughout the Gulf of Mexico and efforts to raise funds for a fisheries enforcement video. The LEC approved and adopted a 2003 Strategic Plan and/or Operations Plan.

The LEC had extensive discussions on Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs). Time lines were established. All FY2001 JEAs have been completed and applications for FY2002 JEAs have been submitted. The LEC would like to see these agreements continue without interruptions in funding.

Another major topic discussed was homeland security and fisheries enforcement's role in homeland security. J. Mayne reported on activities of the Gulf Safety Steering Committee which is made up of members from oil and gas companies, transportation companies, commercial and recreational fishermen as well as charter boat representatives. The Committee developed a voluntary communication protocol for Gulf of Mexico resource users to communicate with parties that are in the same general area and to provide a common protocol for notification and feedback between oil platforms and rig operators and others in responding to the safety needs of offshore platform and rig personnel. The Committee is also working with oil and gas companies to have communication towers installed on offshore facilities to assist law enforcement communication efforts.

The LEC extended J. Mayne's chairmanship until October 2003. This will coincide with the Council's schedule of holding elections every two years.

J. Mayne stated that the LEC had one action item that the Committee supported. The Louisiana Legislature established a Louisiana State Seafood Industry Advisory Board

which is made up of representatives from commercial fisheries, processors, and dealers/distributors. This Board supports legislation that would exempt dealers, after the first point of sale, from possession of undersized fish. He indicated that there had not been a problem in Louisiana as far as cases; or writing citations; or any problems with undersized fish movement in over two years. He indicated that an exemption on size limits at the dealer level could create a black market for undersized fish, not only in Louisiana but for other states. **J. Mayne requested on the behalf of the LEC that a letter be sent to the Louisiana State Seafood Industry Advisory Board requesting that they not pursue this proposal.** W. Ward suggested that the Commission write the Board and request information regarding this issue and upon a response from the Board, take action via a conference call. J. Mayne indicated that the Board will meet within the next two week and move forward with this action. C. Nelson asked if J. Mayne knew the justification for the Board's position? J. Mayne stated that the rationale was unclear and varied when discussed with various people, but he has heard that there is concern about citations for possession of undersized fish. C. Perret asked if we could get anything in writing regarding this proposal and the rationale behind it. **V. Minton directed staff to follow through on W. Ward's suggestion, to write the Board regarding this proposal and to ask the rationale behind this move. Upon a response, the Commissioners will hold a conference call to discuss the issue further and to decide what to do.**

The LEC report was approved without objection.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report - C. Perret reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, October 15, 2002. The Committee received status reports from the various states, NMFS and FWS.

C. Perret distributed copies of a "Draft Freshwater Inflow Policy". **On behalf of the TCC, C. Perret moved to approve the policy.** At V. Minton request, C. Perret continued with his report and it was agreed that all action items and reports would be voted on after the entire report was received.

The TCC received reports from the Crab Subcommittee, SEAMAP Subcommittee, Data Management Subcommittee, Artificial Reef Subcommittee, and the Habitat Subcommittee. The SEAMAP Subcommittee has revised their original goals and objectives for this program and they were approved by the TCC.

C. Perret reported that the Crab Subcommittee objects to NOAA's proposed reclassification of blue crab trap fishery to a Category II under the Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries. Their objections are based on several factors, including lack of current population estimates and good data and stock assessment. Some of the data used for reclassification is based on 10 dolphin/crab trap interactions since 1988. S. VanderKooy stated that the reclassification would probably not have much short term impact but could cause problems for the fishery in the long term. C. Perret stated that all states currently have proactive programs online now to remove derelict crab traps that should reduce interactions. **The TCC requests that the Commission write NOAA and ask that they withdraw publication in the *Federal Register* of the blue crab trap fishery reclassification to a Category II fishery until NOAA**

has explored the possibility of working with the Crab Subcommittee to educate crab fishermen about dolphin interactions with traps. V. Vail suggested that we request that NOAA defer reclassification until a crab stock assessment be completed. V. Minton requested that Larry write the letter based on the Crab Subcommittee's recommendations and include V. Vail's suggestion.

C. Perret reported that he was again elected Chairman and J. Roussel will serve as Vice Chairman of the TCC for the upcoming year.

The TCC report and recommended action items (adoption of Freshwater Inflow Policy and letter to NOAA) were approved without objections.

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report - L. Simpson stated that the S-FFMC met the morning of Wednesday, October 16, 2002. The Committee received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC); Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel (CRFAP); and, updates on Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program and Fisheries Information Network Programs.

He reported that the 2002 menhaden fishing season landings were approximately 580,000 metric tons which is up 13% over the previous year. The MAC received a report from B. Mahmoudi on an alternative "age-based" modeling approach that is currently being used in Florida. S.VanderKooy updated the MAC on the Gulf Menhaden Webpage and on the status of data entry of historical menhaden records.

W. McFee and K. Mullins provided a presentation to the S-FFMC on both the current status of dolphin stocks in the Gulf of Mexico and information that is included in determining human and fishery interactions. D. Frugé updated the S-FFMC on the current progress on the striped bass FMP.

A. Lange of NMFS gave a presentation on NAPA and the Data Quality Act. She briefed the Commissioners on upcoming events including State Marine Fisheries Directors Meetings, RecFish II, a Symposium on the effects of fishing on Benthic Habitats, and International Fisheries Observers Meeting.

R. Lukens reported that while working on invasive species issues, he became aware that the Western Governors Association has been very active in working with states and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission on not only invasive species issues but also with environmental concerns as well as natural resources issues. R. Lukens has made initial contacts with the Coordinator of Natural Resources and Environmental Issues for the Southern Governors Association. He asked the Commissioners if there were any objections to the Commission staff working with the Southern Governors Association on issues of mutual interest and relevance. V. Minton stated that he felt that this was an appropriate relationship for the Commission to establish and if there is any concern on the part of the staff on specific action to bring to the full Commission.

The S-FFMC report was approved without objection.

Tampa Bay National Estuary Program Report

George Henderson, FMRI, St. Petersburg, Florida, presented on behalf of the National Estuary Program. The mission of the program is to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. The program was established in 1987 as part of the Clean Water Act. It encourages a community-based approach to watershed management. The program develops and implements comprehensive plans to address problems in each estuary and encourages community outreach. There are currently 28 estuaries in the program, representing 17 states and Puerto Rico.

The program has worked well in Florida. He discussed estuarine values and problems in estuaries. One of the Tampa Bay program goals is to restore 13,000 acres of seagrass over the 1999 seagrass coverage, while preserving the existing 25,000 acres. He discussed various management measures to achieve this goal.

The Tampa Bay Program has identified toxic problems in the estuary and are evaluating options for addressing confined areas of sediment contamination, including removal, capping, and chemical remediation. He discussed estuary problems and how the program helps to resolve problems such as pathogens, altered water flow, invasive species, marine debris and unsustainable fishing. Not all of these problems impact the Tampa Bay Program.

The National Estuary Program is protecting nationally significant estuaries through pollution control; habitat enhancement and restoration; pathogen monitoring to guard human health; and community outreach.

USFWS Region 4 Office Report

C. Brown reported on behalf of USFWS Region 4. He reported that Dale Hall was appointed as the new Regional Director for the Southwest Region. The new Deputy Regional Director for the Southeast Region is Mitch King.

The FWS and NMFS published a proposal in the *Federal Register* to list critical habitat for the Gulf sturgeon. A public comment period ended on October 6, 2002. A final decision on the proposal will be made by February 28, 2003.

C. Brown gave status reports on activities in the Field Offices located in Panama City, Florida, Athens, Georgia, and, Daphne, Alabama. The Panama City Field Office continues working with the Corp of Engineers to modify operation of dams in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river system to benefit fish and wildlife resources.

The Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge on the lower Texas coast is working on a project to restore estuarine habitat conditions in three basins that have been mostly dry during the last 70 years. The refuge hopes to have all necessary environmental clearances and permits in place by spring.

Data collection for the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation is complete. The national report has been released and is

available on the FWS web site. The state reports will be released starting next month through March 2003. C. Brown distributed a brochure entitled *Quick Facts* from the 2001 National Survey that provides a quick overview of fishing, hunting and wildlife recreation activities. He reviewed participation in saltwater fishing by residents and non-residents in the Gulf states and presented charts on saltwater angling in the Gulf.

The FWS Fisheries Program has developed a draft strategic plan that is currently being reviewed. He distributed a report entitled *A Partnership Agenda for Fisheries Conservation* that was written by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council. The report puts emphasis on the importance of the fisheries programs within the FWS.

Because of efforts by the FWS, Bay County, and the Florida Commission, a lighting ordinance was passed in May affecting five of the 18 miles of developed beach in the county in order to prevent disorientation of hatchling sea turtles.

In a joint project by the FWS Panama City Fisheries Resource Office, the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 12 Gulf sturgeon were radio-tagged and released above and below the Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam on the Apalachicola River in efforts to help locate important habitat area above and below the dam as well as remnant populations that may still exist.

C. Brown reported that the DOI is currently operating under a continuing resolution. He distributed budget information that showed trends in FWS budgets for the period FY2000 through FY2003. He focused on ecological services, refuge systems and migratory birds, law enforcement and fisheries. Law enforcement will no longer be under the region but will report directly to Washington. It is apparent that law enforcement and fisheries are funded at a much lower amount and have been almost level funded for the past several years. He reviewed fisheries funding history.

The National Wildlife Refuge System (NWR) will celebrate its Centennial in 2003. The NWR system is composed of over 500 units of protected habitat. He provided the Commissioners with a large folder of materials relevant to the NWR Centennial Celebration.

V. Minton presented a *Resolution on the Importance of the National Wildlife Refuge System on the Occasion of its Centennial* (Attachment A). C. Nelson moved to approve the resolution. B. Hewes seconded. The resolution was approved without objection.

C. Perret moved to direct staff to write a letter to the Director of USFWS and copy the Gulf Congressional Delegation to emphasize the importance of fisheries within the agency and to point out that funding is not comparable for our region and for fisheries in particular. He suggested that we site information provided by their agency and include funding problems in the Southeast Region also. B. Hewes seconded. The motion was approved without objection.

NMFS Southeast Regional Office (NMFS/SERO) Report

T. McIlwain reported on behalf of the NMFS/SERO. He reiterated the importance of the NAPA report presented earlier by Ann Lange. Dr. Hogarth especially emphasizes the partnerships element. NMFS has a long history of working with the Commission and they look forward to continuing that partnership as time goes on.

T. McIlwain reported that like other federal agencies, NMFS is currently operating under a continuing resolution. He stated that if the budgets that are currently being reviewed by the House and Senate are approved as written, the Gulf will fare well.

He reported that a major highlight in the Gulf right now is the capability of NMFS research vessels to collect environmental and physical data as well as fishery data. The *Gordon Gunter* and the *Oregon II* have been equipped with automated computerized data collections systems that produces real-time data on information collected on their cruises and made available to the Pascagoula Laboratory and other laboratories that deal with stock assessments and other activities in support of the Council and Commission.

In regards to the shrimp fishery, T. McIlwain reported that we are only producing 10 % of the shrimp consumed in the U.S. compared to 25 % 6 to 10 years ago. Data indicates that the 3 major shrimp species in U.S. waters are not over fished, but that economics in the shrimp industry is disastrous at this time mainly due to imports. Imports currently are approaching a billion pounds of shrimp this year. Dr. Hogarth has already met once with representatives from the shrimp industry, and the Washington office and the Regional office are working to find a way to provide some relief and assistance to the U.S. shrimp industry.

Aquaculture continues to be discussed. Dr. Hogarth has created an Aquaculture Task Force within NMFS. They recently published a code of conduct for responsible aquaculture in the EEZ which is currently being reviewed. T. McIlwain discussed ongoing aquaculture projects in the Gulf.

In regards to the Shrimp Virus Workshop, T. McIlwain stated that the proceedings are complete and will be distributed shortly.

The States of Louisiana and Mississippi have filed for a TED exemption due to current environmental conditions. The exemptions have just been received and NMFS should review the request and act very quickly.

Report on the Oceans Policy Commission (OPC)

L. Simpson reported that he continues to follow actions of the OPC and to keep the Commissioners updated because he feels that this is an important issue. The OPC is a Congressionally authorized commission with 16 Presidentially appointed Commissioners. He distributed a mid-term report entitled *Developing a National Ocean Policy*. He stated that the OPC has held 1 national and 6 regional public meetings. Approximately 295 public witnesses have testified before the OPC.

He reviewed topics and issues that were used to develop a working strategy at a half-way point in the OPC's work that will enable the Commission to determine both scope and content of an integrated national ocean policy and to consider policy options to address key issues as required by the Oceans Act of 2000.

Some of the topics and issues included: living marine resources; pollution and water quality; governance; coastal zone management; nonliving marine resources; research, exploration, and monitoring; education; technology and marine operations; and, investment and federal governmental organization. One topic not addressed was agricultural run-off into the Mississippi River and other waterways. L. Simpson included this topic in his testimony before the OPC, but he will also write the OPC regarding the importance of addressing this topic.

L. Simpson will continue to monitor activities of the OPC and will keep the Commissioners updated. He encouraged the Commissioners to contact him if they have concerns or issues regarding the OPC.

Joint Commission/Council Habitat Program Report

J. Rester briefed the Commissioners on his recent activities. He reported that on June 15, 2002, he along with S. VanderKooy, and personnel from the MDMR and GCRL assisted ADCNR personnel in removing derelict crab traps. The team from Mississippi removed 169 traps from the Bayou La Batre area, which represented over half of the total traps removed during this one day event.

He reported that the GMFMC began working on their essential fish habitat environmental impact statement this summer. A contractor has produced a first draft of this document. It has been reviewed by a Technical Review Panel which provided comments and guidance to the GMFMC. The Council met in July to review comments and to instruct the contractor on how to proceed. A second draft was to have been completed by the end of August. The contractor was unable to meet the deadline. He anticipates that the second draft will be delivered to the Council office this week. The second draft will be reviewed by the Council's various committees and will again be reviewed at their November Council meeting.

The habitat posters have been produced and were distributed to the states last week. Ninety thousand posters were produced. J. Rester took this opportunity to thank USFWS for funding the reproduction of the posters.

Sea Grant Extension Programs Comments

R. Rayburn, Texas Sea Grant College Program, discussed Sea Grant Extension Program activities. He reported that Congress had directed Sea Grant to spend more money on fisheries extension enhancement. The unfunded mandate was to be at \$3 million level. The National Sea Grant Office reallocated at the state level, and with competitive grants, and regional programs came up with the funds to focus on fisheries enhancement.

Each state reprogrammed a certain amount of money and on a regional level they established 4 programs and held National competition for additional funds. All programs complement efforts of the Commission and the Gulf states. They included working with the derelict crab trap removal programs; methylmercury issues and concerns; and, result demonstrations on shrimp trawls. On a national competitive basis, Mississippi and Alabama received funds to enhance their efforts on methylmercury issues and concerns; and, Texas received funds for a summit for the sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico shrimp industry.

The summit will be held March 6-8, 2003 in Houston, Texas. The summit will bring together delegates from Mexico and the U.S. representing industry and government, U.S. environmental community and recreational fishermen to deal with the issues facing the sustainability of the shrimp industry in the Gulf of Mexico. He discussed how they would achieve these goals and detailed the objectives of the summit.

V. Minton took the opportunity to thank Gary Graham, Texas A & M Marine Advisory Service for his work on the offshore shrimp review that was recently published. He encouraged everyone to make sure they got a copy of this publication.

Invasive Species Commission Actions Update

R. Lukens gave the Commissioners an overview of what is currently being done in regards to invasive species in the Gulf of Mexico. He discussed plans for the Commission to take over the administration of the regional programs for controlling, management, and planning of invasive species activities in the Gulf of Mexico, beginning January 1, 2003. He reported that the Commission formally started administering the program in September 2002. The Commission has received a grant from FWS to accomplish these goals.

R. Lukens continues to represent the Commission on the National Invasive Species Advisory Committee, as well as an ex-officio seat on the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

R. Lukens reviewed the reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act. He gave a brief background of the legislation. He gave an overview of new bills being introduced in Congress, Senate Bill 2964; HR. 5395; and, HR 5396.

He focused on Senate Bill 2964, which was included in the briefing material provided to the Commissioners. His presentation referred to definitions within the bill, including hydrographically distinct zones, interstate organization; and invasive species - nonindigenous species which "may" cause harm. It is important to note that this bill recognizes the Invasive Species Council for the first time and requires the Invasive Species Council coordinate with the ANS Task Force. The bill specifically authorizes interstate compacts to be eligible to receive funds under the Act to coordinate regional programs. It also provides guidelines for state management plans.

Ballast water provisions have undergone extensive changes. It requires ballast water management for invasive species be mandatory. Any vessel entering U.S. water from

outside the EEZ must exchange or treat ballast water before entering port, this includes vessels entering U.S. waters if they first entered the EEZ of Canada or Mexico.

Other important sections include pathway management and screening; early detection and monitoring; rapid response; information, education, and outreach; and research. In general, this bill increases authorizations for appropriations for most sections. It specifically increases grants to states to \$30 million (up from \$5 million). The new authority for these funds allows grants for both developing and implementing state plans.

R. Lukens stated that this is the type of legislation the Commission should support and requested consideration for staff to continue to interact with the legislative process and to write letters in support of legislation indicating that the Gulf of Mexico has a stake in seeing these bills passed.

C. Nelson pointed out that the invasive species impact on the oyster industry has been devastating. He indicated that it was one of the most economically damaging factors in the oyster industry. He feels it is important that the Commission be involved in the prevention and control of invasive species.

Without objection the Commission endorsed staff's efforts in support of this legislation, but requested they use discretion, and discuss issues with the Commission when appropriate.

Methylmercury Issues Report

R. Lukens reviewed past directives. At the last meeting of the Commission they tabled consideration of the methylmercury report as presented, until such time as the Steering Committee, having added MMS and FWS to its membership, have an opportunity to investigate further the actual needs of the data to be collected, the cost of that and what the budgetary impact upon the Commission would be.

A Steering Committee was reorganized per Commission directives and the two issues that they dealt with were: Gulf-wide sampling programs to collect fish tissue for mercury analysis; and, collaborative effort to make state and federal mercury advisory levels and public health advisories more compatible.

He reviewed the Steering Committee's report on data from the 76 selected species. Of almost 8,500 samples Gulf-wide, 34 % were oyster samples; 23 species on the list had no data; and of 380 cells in the table, 75% of the cells were blank. So there is a definite need to improve the surveys. There are significant differences among state and federal agencies regarding reference doses, advisory levels, and seafood consumption advisories.

R. Lukens discussed in detail the following the recommendations of the Steering Committee. They were as follows:

1. The GSMFC, in conjunction with the appropriate state and federal agencies, should encourage and facilitate the development of a Gulf-wide survey to collect fish tissue for mercury analysis.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with the appropriate state and federal agencies, should encourage and facilitate the establishment of sufficient capacity for timely analysis of mercury tissue samples collected by the Gulf-wide survey.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with the appropriate state and federal agencies, should encourage and facilitate convening appropriate state and federal agency representatives to consider establishing consistent seafood consumption advisories and establishing standard action levels for mercury in fish tissue.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with the appropriate state and federal agencies, should encourage and facilitate the development of an education and outreach strategy to educate the general public about the risks associated with consumption of seafood that may be contaminated with mercury.
- The GSMFC, in cooperation with the appropriate state and federal agencies, should encourage and facilitate the development of a fish consumption survey of recreational anglers.
- The GSMFC, in conjunction with the appropriate state and federal agencies, should encourage and facilitate the establishment of a common, centralized database on mercury on marine fish tissue.
- The GSMFC should encourage similar initiatives for the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

R. Lukens presented a four year budget for the various recommendations. Recommendation 2 embodied 3 Options. The total costs were: Option 1 - \$5,452,000; Option 2 - \$4,812,000; Option 3 - \$4,935,000.

Other recommendations discussed by the Committee included the need to identify an agency for centralized coordination of this project if it were to be funded. Other recommendations included work with atmospheric deposition of mercury; surveys with benthic fauna and sediment; and, a study of bio-accumulation pathways.

C. Nelson stated that the focus should be on "fishery resources" being harvested for human consumption whether recreational or commercial. He also felt that "risk management" should be an outreach priority. Outreach should emphasize benefits and risks.

C. Brown discussed the possibility of using U.S. census data to determine what fish people buy. R. Lukens stated that any other work done would be a next tier activity. SEAMAP data would also be helpful in collecting information on these issues.

L. Simpson pointed out that the methylmercury issue is not a Commission initiative. This is an administrative report for your consideration that addresses a problem that surfaced. It is an effort to organize what needs to be done, how and cost.

R. Lukens reported that additional work on recommendations has been completed. The Steering Committee has given its approval to submit the report to the Commission. He asked if these recommendations should be considered and if approved, should funding be sought.

C. Nelson moved to endorse the report as a working draft and to send it to Senator Shelby and others for further action. C. Perret seconded. The motion was approved without objection.

The meeting recessed at 5:40 pm.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 53rd Annual Meeting
Wednesday, October 16, 2002
Duck Key, Florida**

Mike Ray

Chairman V. Minton reconvened the meeting at 8:05 a.m.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

Commissioners

Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Richard Liles*)
Richard Liles, ADCNR, Montgomery, AL
Chris Nelson, GSMFC, Bon Secour, AL
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Andrew Sansom*)
Billy Hewes, Mississippi Legislature, Gulfport, MS
Walter J. Blessey, IV, GSMFC, Biloxi, MS
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for James H. Jenkins*)
Virginia Vail, FL FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)
William Ward, GSMFC, Tampa, FL

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Executive Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jason Keenum, Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
Mike Sestak, FIN Database Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Gayle Jones, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Tom McIlwain, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Tom Herrington, USFDA/GMP, Stennis Space Center, MS
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Bosenberg, US Army/Corps of Engineers, New Orleans, LA
John Saia, US Army/Corps of Engineers, New Orleans, LA

Louisiana Coastal Area: Can the loss of Louisiana coastal wetlands be stopped?

R. Lukens introduced Mr. John Saia, Deputy District Engineer, U.S. Army/Corps of Engineers, New Orleans, LA.

J. Saia briefed the Commissioners on the loss of Louisiana marshlands over the last 50 - 100 years. These losses have not only impacted fisheries and wildlife, but have impacted the economy of Louisiana as well. Industries impacted include agriculture, energy, and the coastal communities. As those communities lose coastline, they lose the opportunity to dampen the hurricanes that may occur.

He discussed the coastal problems; Louisiana Coastal Restoration; status of Corps studies; programmatic authorization; management strategy; and the relationship of the Corps' studies and the Gulf of Mexico studies and how they can work together to protect the fisheries and economy of the Louisiana coastal areas.

He presented graphs and maps that showed the past and projected wetland losses. He reviewed the importance of the Gulf of Mexico to the nation as a whole and the importance of coastal Louisiana to the nation. He gave an historical perspective of coastal restoration beginning in 1989. In 2002, a comprehensive coast-wide ecosystem restoration feasibility study was initiated. The study resulted in programs to address coastal wetland loss. Action to be taken would be to expedite implementation and programmatic authorization with a comprehensive study. The plan would create a federal advisory task force and a Governor's advisory commission. It is important to initiate significant public involvement in the study.

Saia reviewed Louisiana Coastal Restoration Management structure. The management strategy will clearly define national importance of the Louisiana coastal marshes and appropriate linkages, and continue the Congressional program authorization from 2002 to 2004, leading to a firm commitment to restore Louisiana wetlands.

Saia stated that a lot has been done along the coast of Louisiana but there is still a lot to be done. The various projects are beginning to show benefits. He briefed the Commissioners on the various projects including freshwater diversion projects. This is still a big issue which will require long-term attention and large amounts of funding. But most important in solving the problem is commitment from federal and state governments and stakeholders in order to stop the loss of Louisiana coastal wetlands.

FIN Program Report and FIN Web Access of Data

D. Donaldson updated the Commissioners on 2002 and 2003 FIN activities, which include coordination and administration of the program. The program continues to provide for the collection, management and dissemination of marine recreational fisheries data. Other activities include head boat port sampling in Texas, Louisiana and Florida, and Gulf menhaden port sampling. Trip ticket programs for commercial fisheries data have been implemented in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Recreational and commercial biological sampling is also underway.

D. Donaldson introduced Mike Sestak, Fin Database Program Manager, who provided an overview of the FIN Web Access of data. M. Sestak briefed the Commissioners on the Fisheries Information Network. The FIN goal is to collect, manage, and disseminate statistical data and information on the marine and estuarine commercial and recreational fisheries of the southeast region.

He discussed the methods used to get data, the trip ticket program and intercept surveys. Once collected, the data are available for viewing by state and federal agencies, biologists, the public, and others. He reported that biological data are now being collected at both dealer locations and intercepts survey points.

These programs have resulted in a more complete statistical picture. When, where, and how fish were caught; how many were caught; the ocean conditions where the fish were caught, or not caught; how much it cost to catch; the condition of the catch itself; where the fish went after they were caught; how fish were sold to the dealer; and the disposition after sale by the dealer.

M. Sestak then accessed the FIN Web Data and reviewed information and options. He instructed the Commissioners on how to create a report or how to view reports that are available. He discussed the FAQ page and Help page. He encouraged the Commissioners to visit the site and to provide their suggestions and comments.

C. Nelson stated that this was a tremendous improvement in getting information in a more timely fashion and that this was a good program. But as a representative of the shrimp industry, one thing continues to be of concern. He has discussed it with NMFS and GSMFC many time over the years. In the shrimp fishery boats take 50 to 60 day trips and fish in 6 to 10 different statistical zones. They are landing different amounts, expending different efforts to land those amounts, and they are catching different species. The data is very heterogeneous, yet it is unfortunately being reported as much more homogeneous than it is. This data does not reflect reality and should not be used by managers to manage a fishery. He stated that this is not a new problem, but one that has needed to be addressed for a long time. He asked what the industry can do to fix this once and for all.

T. McIlwain stated that NMFS recognizes that this is a tremendous problem and there are new techniques available to get the correct data. He reported on a program with Texas Shrimp Association that is developing a data logger and a GPS. It is an inexpensive piece of equipment that requires little expertise. It is placed on a vessel and turned on. It is based on speed of the vessel, logging the location of the vessel continuously. This may be an option for future use. He reported that NMFS continues to work on its observer program.

V. Minton stated that some boat captains do not want to provide the requested data. C. Nelson stated that was a small part of the problem. The problem continues to exist because the programs that have been built to take the data simply will not accept the information and NMFS has not placed a high priority on this. C. Nelson stated if it takes putting a vessel monitoring system on every boat he will encourage the industry to do so. But he pointed out, that if it can be done with a pencil and paper it just has to be

done and soon. The data forms and database must be changed to accept the information. Something has to be done or the shrimp industry will continue to fail.

D. Donaldson pointed out that the FIN system can accept multiple areas fished and multiple gears, because they knew going in that this was a problem. Efforts are under way in Louisiana now to collect this detailed and multiple area/time data. He hopes that by 2004, assuming available funds, to expand their efforts throughout the Gulf states.

FY 2003 NMFS Budget

L. Simpson reviewed the federal budget regarding fisheries. At the time of the meeting there had been no action on the 2003 budget. The federal government is operating under the 4th continuing resolution, which goes through November 22, 2002. The budget probably will not be approved until after the November elections or possibly after the first of 2003.

He pointed out that the House and Senate Committee reports list the FIN and SEAMAP programs at 2002 levels. Gulf FIN Data Collection was designed as a \$7 million program and is level funded at \$3.5 million. The structure to expand this important program exists; however, full funding has not been available.

He reported that MARFIN is funded at \$2.5 million; MARFIN N.E. is funded at \$250K; and MARFIN red snapper at \$750K. RecFIN is funded at \$3.4 million, which supports the recreational survey of FIN. Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act funding for the interstate commissions is at level funding. The Regional Councils are funded at \$15 million, slightly more than last year.

L. Simpson pointed out that there was a line item for Rancho Nuevo Sea Turtles funded at \$350K, but to his and others' knowledge, almost none of the money goes to the Rancho Nuevo facility. L. Simpson asked T. McIlwain to look into this and report back to the Commissioners.

L. Simpson pointed out that the narrative recommends that the three interstate fisheries commissions may be eligible to receive a portion of the Cooperative Enforcement Program funds for use in providing law enforcement coordination among the states and NMFS. This would not be addressed unless requested and supported by the Commission's LEC.

The Oyster Initiatives line item was funded at \$1 million, and oyster diseases research was funded at \$2 million.

Federal Legislation

L. Simpson briefly reviewed the Freedom to Fish Act (S.1314). It sets out that recreational fishing will continue to be allowed in marine protected areas until it is demonstrated that there is a cause to prohibit all fishing in these areas.

Regarding the Magnuson Act, the option for federal Councils to implement ITQs have been reinstated, due to the expiration of the moratorium. He anticipates action on this Act by the end of 2002. He does not anticipate any major changes.

Executive Committee Report

V. Minton reported that the Executive Committee met on Wednesday, October 16. He reported that the Committee reviewed and approved a request by D. Frugé to restructure his personnel to be more in line with other federal offices and to increase the salary of his staff accordingly. There would be no increased cost to the Commission. This cost would be supported by a FWS agreement. **Without objection the Commissioners approved this request.**

On behalf of the Executive Committee he recommended an across the board increase of 3% for all employees. **Without objection the Commissioners approved this request.**

The Executive Committee requested the Executive Director and the Assistant Director develop a Performance Appraisal System, where each employee would be graded annually on an objective basis. This would assist the Executive Committee in making merit salary recommendations. This should be completed by March 2002 and reviewed by the Executive Committee. **Without objection the Commissioners approved this request.**

L. Simpson provided the FY2003 budget in the amount of \$5,050,336. **C. Perret moved to approve the budget. M. Ray seconded. The FY2003 budget was approved as presented (Attachment B).**

State Director's Reports

Florida - V. Vail reported on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). She stated that effective June 2002, Ken Haddad is the agency's new Executive Director. He has engaged the FWC in strategic planning, which will clarify how each operational unit will contribute toward the agency's priorities and mission. There will probably be a reorganization of the agency within the next few months.

She reported that the stone crab trap certification program has been implemented. Approximately 1.2 million trap tags were allocated to 1,178 individuals. Stone crab trap certificates are transferrable, and there is a 25% reduction every time they are sold. It is expected that this will reduce the total amount of traps being used in the fishery.

The FWC is considering several new endorsements to go with the commercial saltwater products license. A blue crab and sponge endorsement was established and effective July 2002. Efforts are under way for a ballyhoo permit that would establish a modified limited entry fishery.

V. Vail pointed out that the FWC application for saltwater licenses has a place for an email address. Of 12,000 applicants, only 12 % gave an address. Only 9 % of 1,100 wholesale dealers gave an address, 47 % of retail/other, 7 % of retail/central gave an address, but 37 % of special activity license applicants gave an email address.

Alabama - V. Minton reported on behalf of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources/Marine Resources Division (ADCNR/MRD). He briefed the Commissioners on their first derelict crab trap clean-up. On June 15th they did a shallow water pick-up. They plan to do another clean-up in late winter or early spring to take advantage of low tides.

He reported that the red snapper aquaculture project has achieved 20 natural spawns. This gave them a huge amount of larvae that were shared with Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. Approximately 2,000 red snapper fingerlings were tagged and released on patch reefs.

Regarding inshore artificial reefs, MRD has hired professional divers to evaluate the bottoms associated with gas rigs. They talked to local fishermen about their fishing experiences around these reefs.

There seems to be a relationship between materials and associated fish harvest. The MRD is experimenting with putting some additional limestone around the rigs to see if there is an improvement.

V. Minton reported that through September 2002, they have collected 2,586 otoliths. The otoliths were collected mainly from king mackerel, red snapper, amberjack, southern flounder and Gulf flounder. The MRD is expanding their outreach program to educate local fishermen on these efforts, otoliths, aging, and stock assessments.

Mississippi - C. Perret reported on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR). He reported that on July 1, Governor Musgrove announced that Dr. William Walker was the new DMR Director. Also, on July 1, legislative action restructured the Commission on Marine Resources and reduced its membership from seven members to five members.

C. Perret reported that Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lili damaged public piers in Mississippi. Two of seven weather stations that monitor rainfall and river discharge were damaged. Because of problems with debris due to the storms, the DMR has requested that NMFS grant an emergency waiver on the use of TEDs.

Mississippi's oyster season opened on October 6th. There is a 40 sack per day limit and fishermen are getting their limit. The DMR Seafood Technology Section is involved in a grant program with the Gulf and South Atlantic Fishery Development Foundation, studying post harvest treatment methods of Gulf oysters. It is basically a taste test conducted by citizens.

C. Perret stated the Senator Hewes, legislative Commissioner for Mississippi, was successful in introducing and passing legislation to remove derelict crab traps in

Mississippi waters. Mississippi will have a closed crab season some time next spring. Mississippi's derelict crab trap program has removed approximately 2,400 traps to date. The DMR won the "Keep Mississippi Beautiful" award for their derelict crab trap program.

DMR is replenishing materials on 24 near shore artificial reefs. The Department has 63 armored personnel carriers that will be deployed on offshore sites. In conclusion, C. Perret reported that the DMR has taken delivery of new color posters that depict saltwater fishes common to Mississippi.

Texas - M. Ray reported on behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). The Department's Aquaculture Outreach and Inspection Team completed 1,460 inspection protocols, in addition to 104 shrimp farmers self-submitted pond samples. So far, the program reports 100% compliance has been achieved with water-discharge procedures, and no viral disease was found in Texas farm raised shrimp for the third consecutive year.

The Artificial Reef Program staff created 4 new artificial reefs along the Texas coast since June 2002, and enhanced 3 other sites. The total number of active reef sites is 46 and total petroleum platforms reefed is 66. The program is continuing to draft procedures with TXDOT on the potential donation of bridge structures.

M. Ray reported that round 10 of TPWD Shrimp License Management Program ended on 31 August 2002. During Round 10, a total of 119 commercial shrimp licenses, 53 bait and 66 bay, were bought back at an average price of \$6,607, for a total of \$786,285. Since September 1996, TPWD has spent \$4.3 million in retiring 806, or about 25%, of commercial shrimping licenses, of which 390 are bait and 416 are bay. TPWD should meet its target of retiring 50% of bait/bay licenses in three years.

Regarding the Crab License Management Program, the application period for the third round of crab buy backs ended in September 2002. Buy backs should be completed in December 2002. To date TPWD has purchased 16 crabbing licenses for \$65,000, averaging about \$4,000 each.

The application period for the second round of finfish license buy backs also ended in September 2002. Buy back should be completed in December 2002. To date, 13 commercial finfish licenses have been retired at a cost of \$53,850, averaging \$4,142.00 per license.

To date, approximately 31 million red drum fingerlings and 2 million spotted sea trout fingerlings have been stocked in Texas bays. The crab trap removal period is proposed to run from March 1-16, 2003. Public hearings to take comments on the proposed dates will occur in October.

Coastal Fisheries is testing new materials for degradable panels in commercial crab traps. Current regulations call for materials that apparently are not readily available to most crabbers and are difficult to work with. Recently, the Texas in-house crab committee, after sitting with an industry representative, worked out the details of a

testing protocol for additional materials that, if approved, would be more "user friendly."

Coastal Fisheries is compiling information from a mail survey questionnaire sent to all licensed fishing guides, to obtain feedback concerning the idea of establishing a "boat limit" for charter boats and a requirement for guide "certification."

Forty sea turtle nests were located on Texas beaches in 2002, 38 of which were Kemp's Ridley nests. The figures for total nests and Kemp's Ridley nests are the most ever recorded in Texas. The National Fisheries Institute presented the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission their 2002 Ridley Award in August.

The Texas Legislature will convene in January 2003. Few natural resource initiatives that could affect Coastal Fisheries are anticipated this session. A comprehensive report titled "The Texas Shrimp Fishery" was completed and submitted to the Texas Legislature. This report is the most thorough document the agency has produced regarding the shrimp fishery in Texas.

Louisiana - J. Roussel submitted the following report on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Preliminary shrimp landings for 2002 through August are about 15% below those of the previous year for the same time period. Brown shrimp production through July was below average and strongly influenced by the occurrence of two strong cold fronts in late spring. Analysis of trip ticket data indicated that 70% of the shrimpers who had sales in January to May of 2002 were impacted, experiencing a 50% or more reduction in income from shrimp sales relative to the same time period the previous year. As a result of these events along with depressed dockside prices, the Governor's office was successful in obtaining financial assistance for shrimpers and related businesses in 14 of Louisiana's coastal parishes. The relief made available was in the form of low interest SBA loans. Additionally \$377,000 was made available through the Louisiana Housing Finance Authority for assistance with utility bills.

Following Hurricane Lili, Department staff and shrimpers have documented the presence of storm related debris over widespread areas of Louisiana's coast. Most debris consists of spatina mats, Roseau cane, floating materials, willow trees and branches. As a result of this debris, the Department has written the NMFS requesting a temporary exemption from TED requirements in Louisiana and offshore waters.

Louisiana led the nation in oyster production with 13.1 million pounds of meat landed in 2001. Our assessment of the level of seed and sack oysters available on the public grounds last year was the highest ever recorded and landings from the public grounds set an all time record. Landings from the public grounds accounted for about one half of the total landings reflecting a trend in recent years of increasing reliance by oyster harvesters on the public seed grounds. Our assessment of the public grounds this year indicated a substantial reduction in seed and sack oyster availability relative to last year. The 2002-2003 season on the public grounds reflects these decreases and a shortened season using staggered opening dates were approved by our Commission in August.

Tropical storm Isidore (9/26/02) resulted in the precautionary closure by the Department of Health & Hospitals of oyster harvest areas from the Mississippi state line to the east side of Vermillion Bay. Hurricane Lili forced additional closure from Vermillion Bay to Freshwater Bayou. All of these areas have been subsequently reopened, however during the closure, under an Executive Order issued by the Governor, leaseholders were allowed to inspect their leases for storm related damages on Monday, October 14th from 7:00am to 5:00pm under several stringent conditions.

The moratorium on new oyster lease acreage implemented by our Commission in response to the current status of a number of pending lawsuits continues and there has been no decision regarding when the moratorium will be lifted. The legislature this past spring adopted a resolution directing the Louisiana State Law Institute to study all aspects of liability relating to coastal restoration and make specific recommendations to limit the liability of the state. That study is ongoing.

The tag for use by oyster post harvest treatment processors, who are approved by the Department of Health and Hospitals, is now available for use by the industry.

Our artificial reef program accepted its first vessel, an ocean going tug. The vessel was cleaned at the owner's expense at a cost of nearly \$200,000. Modifications were made to minimize diver access and allow air to escape upon deployment. We also deployed 4 offshore platforms and have 6 additional projects pending. We have reformed the Louisiana Artificial Reef Initiative Committee to review and update our state's Artificial Reef Plan to determine what, if any changes are needed to the state program. This group is made up of state and federal regulatory agencies, academics, oil and gas representatives, conservation groups, and commercial and recreational fisher persons.

The Louisiana Non-Indigenous Aquatic Species Advisory Task Force has been created by Executive Order of the Governor. The purpose of the Task Force is to develop a state plan for dealing with non-indigenous aquatic species. The Task Force is composed of 29 members appointed by the Governor and chaired by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Membership includes representatives of multiple state and federal agencies, the designees of the chancellor of 4 of Louisiana's universities, the Louisiana Sea Grant Program, the state Farm Bureau Association, the State Nursery and Landscape Association, the state Marine Trades Association, the state Wildlife Federation, and representatives of businesses and industries that may be adversely affected by the spread or existence of non-indigenous aquatic species.

Future Meetings

G. Herring reported that she had entered into an agreement with Marriott's Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Alabama for the March 17-20, 2003 meeting.

Upon discussion with Texas representatives, she will seek proposals from the Corpus Christi, Texas area for the October 13-16, 2003 meeting.

Election of Chairman

V. Minton made the following nominations:

Chairman - M. Ray (TX)
1st Vice Chairman - B. Hewes (MS)
2nd Vice Chairman - J. Roussel (LA)

Without objection, the nominations were approved.

M. Ray took the opportunity to present a gift of appreciation to V. Minton. L. Simpson presented M. Ray, the new chairman with a small gift.

Publication List

L. Simpson stated the Publication List has been updated and is provided for informational purposes. Contact the office if you need copies of any publication.

Other Business

W. Ward requested that the staff include the following items for follow-up and/or discussion at the next meeting:

- National Estuary Program of the GOMP and it's relationship to the Commission
- Pelagic sargassum update (EEF/Habitat)
- Gulf Stream Gas Company presented information regarding a pipeline from Mobile to Tampa (deployment of pipeline and monitoring schedule)

In Appreciation

C. Nelson, stated that he was not at the special presentation to W. Penry at the social on Wednesday evening and he wanted to take the opportunity to express his appreciation to Mr. Penry upon his retirement from the Commission and the Alabama Legislature. C. Nelson stated that he provided behind the scene support to the fishing industry. He was a key leader in crafting the gill net compromise in Alabama and in establishing the Artificial Reef Program in the State. He was a great leader and he will be missed.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.



GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

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Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

RESOLUTION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM ON THE OCCASION OF ITS CENTENNIAL

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission resolves as follows:

WHEREAS, the States along the Gulf of Mexico coasts, from Florida through Texas, work together in close partnership to promote and protect the valuable marine fishery resources that they share; and

WHEREAS, these States share public trust responsibilities for these resources not only with each other, but also with the Federal government; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuge System, under careful management by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, provide important habitat for our nation's fish and wildlife species, including the marine fishery resources of the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 40 national wildlife refuges located along the Gulf of Mexico that provide more than 800,000 acres of habitat for fish and wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, national wildlife refuges along the Gulf of Mexico provide essential habitat for coastal and marine fisheries that support a multi-billion dollar industry of commercial and recreational fisheries; and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Refuges have made and are continuing to make substantial contributions to the management, restoration, recovery and sustainability of coastal fisheries resources; and

WHEREAS, our nation's second national wildlife refuge, Breton National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana, is located along the Gulf of Mexico, and eight of our nation's first 51 refuges established by President Theodore Roosevelt are located along the Gulf of Mexico; and

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WHEREAS, national wildlife refuges provide numerous opportunities for recreational anglers, with over one million visitor use-days for salt water fishing; and

WHEREAS, the national wildlife refuge system will celebrate its centennial on March 14, 2003, marking 100 years since President Theodore Roosevelt established the first national wildlife refuge at Pelican Island, Florida.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission congratulates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System on 100 years of conservation success through carefully applied fishery and wildlife management principles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission commends the United States Congress on passage of the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act of 2000, and encourages increased funding and support of the national wildlife refuge system by the Congress to support management assistance for coastal fisheries, cooperative conservation programs for anadromous species, conservation and enhancement of valuable coastal fisheries habitat, and research to provide information for State and Federal agencies to secure the public trust in coastal fishery resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission recognizes the National Wildlife Refuge System's key role in the conservation and management of the valuable coastal fisheries resources of this Nation.

Given this the 16th day of October in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Two.

R. Vernon Minton, Chairman

GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
January 1, 2003 - December 31, 2003

Attachment B

	FY2003 Operating Funds	FY2003 Total Grants	FY2003 Total Budget
SALARIES			
Personnel (designated)	70,112	656,608	726,720
Personnel (not designated)	4,018	35,952	39,970
Contract Labor	-	232,070	232,070
Health Insurance	7,567	125,916	133,483
Retirement	4,908	43,578	48,486
Payroll Taxes	5,655	50,482	56,137
MAINTENANCE/OPERATIONS			
Facilities	18,000	5,400	23,400
Office Supplies	3,900	29,156	33,056
Postage	1,200	15,650	16,850
Committee Travel	-	223,899	223,899
Travel (Staff)	9,500	34,538	44,038
Telephone	1,700	26,905	28,605
Office Equipment	-	9,100	9,100
Copying Expenses	1,000	30,476	31,476
Printing	400	5,900	6,300
Meeting Costs	13,000	20,770	33,770
Subscriptions/Dues	550	1,000	1,550
Auto Expenses	1,000	6,000	7,000
Insurance	4,770	11,630	16,400
Maintenance	675	116,134	116,809
Professional Services	1,200	11,820	13,020
Taxes (property)	1,050	2,745	3,795
Automobile Purchase/Lease	-	5,954	5,954
Contractual	-	3,173,076	3,173,076
Utilities	3,050	8,079	11,129
Janitorial (service/supplies)	2,900	11,343	14,243
TOTAL	156,155	4,894,181	5,050,336
INCOME			
STATE CONTRIBUTIONS			
Alabama	22,500		
Florida	22,500		
Louisiana	22,500		
Mississippi	22,500		
Texas	22,500		
TOTAL DUES			112,500
INTEREST	7,000		7,000
REGISTRATION FEES	9,000		9,000
FUNDS FROM RESERVES	17,815		17,815
RENT	9,840		9,840
GRANTS			
SEAMAP		90,564	
Interjurisdictional Fisheries		250,000	
Sport Fish Restoration		200,000	
Council		30,000	
Habitat		44,559	
FWS		43,925	
RecFIN/ComFIN		4,179,652	
ANS		55,481	
TOTAL GRANTS			4,894,181
TOTAL	156,155	4,894,181	5,050,336

DRAFT

MINUTES

**GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
JOINT HABITAT PROTECTION ADVISORY PANELS MEETING
TAMPA, FLORIDA
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2002**

ATTENDANCE:

Members:

David Anthony	
Randy Lanctot	Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Dana Larson	Rigs to Reefs Company
Robin Lewis	Lewis Environmental Services
Andy Mager	NOAA Fisheries
Bethlyn McCloskey	
Cynthia Sarthou	Gulf Restoration Network
Bob Spain	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Michael Walker	Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
David Yeager	Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

Staff:

Jeffrey Rester	Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Cheryl Noble	Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

Others:

Gregg Gitschlag	NOAA Fisheries
Pam Latham	MRAG Americas
Heidi Lovett	MRAG Americas
Ron Lukens	Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Dave Rydene	MRAG Americas

After recessing for lunch, the joint meeting of the Council's Habitat Protection Advisory Panels (APs) was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chairman Randy Lanctot on Thursday, October 31, 2002 at the Tampa Airport Hilton in Tampa, Florida.

Explosive Removal of Oil and Gas Structures and Possible Fishery Impacts

G. Gitschlag of NOAA Fisheries presented his work on fisheries impacts due to explosive removals of oil and gas platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. G. Gitschlag reported that the goals of the 1993-1999 explosive removal study were to estimate the mortality of finfish, estimate the annual mortality due to all explosive removals, and estimate this mortality's impact on fish stocks. G. Gitschlag stated that approximately 100 platforms each year were removed with explosives fifteen feet below the mud line. He stated that explosive removals represented about 64% of the total removals each year. Other methods besides explosives were used to remove the remaining platforms. Explosives were usually used to sever the platforms legs because they were faster and safer than mechanical cutting.

The study sampled dead fish around 10 platforms that were removed with explosives in water depths of 45 to 105 feet. Sampling frames were placed around the platform, and these were later used for counting dead fish. Also, divers sampled transect lines radiating out from the center of the platform to count dead fish. The study found that approximately 3,390 fish were killed at each removal, and G. Gitschlag stated that four species accounted for 86% of all observed fish mortality. Atlantic spadefish had the highest mortality with approximately 1,431 fish killed at each removal. Blue runner were next with mortality averaging 541 individuals followed by red snapper with 515 individuals, and finally sheepshead with 455 individuals. G. Gitschlag stated that when population models were run to estimate the impact of explosive removals on red snapper stocks, even doubling the estimated red snapper mortality due to removals kept the mortality within the variation of current red snapper stock assessments.

D. Larson asked what size fish the researchers counted in the study. G. Gitschlag stated that divers only recovered fish that were larger than 8 cm. D. Larson then asked if the study looked at blennies. G. Gitschlag reported that the researchers avoided collecting blennies since they were hard to recover and hard to identify. G. Gitschlag also stated that the study only examined effects on finfish and did not include other animals.

C. Sarthou asked what happened to the sampled fish in the study. She was wondering if the fish were sold or if they could be sold. G. Gitschlag stated that the sampling took three to five hours to complete and then another few hours to complete identifying and measuring the fish. He stated that after that time period, the fish were starting to stink and probably were not edible.

D. Larson asked if the researchers examined the loss of habitat aspect of removing the platform. G. Gitschlag stated that they did not, but that the loss of habitat could be work for a future study.

Methylmercury in Marine Fish

R. Lukens of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) discussed recent work that the Commission had accomplished to address the issue of methylmercury in marine fish. R. Lukens stated that one of the Commission's Commissioners requested that the Commission work to address the methylmercury issue since a series of newspaper articles in 2001 brought the issue to the public's attention. R. Lukens stated that a steering committee, composed of state and federal agencies, was formed to provide recommendations. The steering committee developed goals to help address the problem. These included: developing a fishery independent and dependent sampling program to

gather fish tissue for analysis; developing sufficient laboratory capacity to analyze collected samples; establishing consistent public consumption advisory levels; developing an education and outreach program to educate the public about the risks of eating seafood with mercury; and establishing a common centralized database on mercury in fish. R. Lukens stated that the Commission recently adopted the recommendations produced by the steering committee, and the steering committee is now seeking funding to implement the recommendations.

B. Spain asked how much money would be needed to implement the recommendations. R. Lukens stated that approximately \$5 million would be needed to implement the recommendations.

B. Spain stated that in Texas the different state agencies are starting to work together to start examining mercury in their freshwater rivers, lakes, and streams.

D. Larson stated the mercury issue is not a new issue. He stated that there were concerns over mercury in swordfish approximately 30 years ago. He reported that the Smithsonian Institute might be a possible source of data for historical mercury levels in fish. R. Lukens stated that it might be a possibility, but some of the preserved samples were preserved in formaldehyde that contained mercury and this could bias results.

D. Anthony stated that the Great Lakes area might also be a good source of information since they have been dealing with mercury and contaminate problems for quite some time.

With no other questions for the two speakers, the APs continued their review of the Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement.

**Port Samplers Meeting
Meeting Summary
November 13 and 14, 2002
St. Petersburg, Florida**

On November 13, 2002 at 8:30 a.m. a fish identification and sampling allocation workshop was conducted by Joe O'Hop at the Florida Marine Research Institute.

David Donaldson of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the port samplers meeting to order on November 13, 2002 at 1:30 p.m. The following were present:

Pete Antosh, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chuck Armstrong, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Danica Bailey, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Laura Baird, FFWCC, Melbourne, FL
Rick Beaver, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
Josh Bennett, NMFS, Miami, FL
Jay Boulet, NMFS, Chalmette, LA
Beth Bourgeois, NMFS, New Iberia, LA
Pamela Brown Eyo, NMFS, Miami, FL
Lew Bullock, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Graham Cole, FFWCC, Jacksonville, FL
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Claudia Dennis, NMFS, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Kit Doncaster, NMFS, Brownsville, TX
Wendy Dyer, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Noel Estes, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Debbie Fable, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Ted Flowers, NMFS, Mobile, AL
Michelle Gamby, NMFS, Tequesta, FL
Gary Haddle, FFWCC, Jacksonville, FL
Lisa Hallock, FFWCC, Port Charlotte, FL
Chad Hanson, FFWCC, East Point, FL
Brian Hardcastle, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Tom Herbert, NMFS, Fort Myers, FL
J. Koslak, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Laura Lambremont, FFWCC, Tequesta, FL
Jude LeDoux, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Albert Lefort, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Ed Little, NMFS, Key West, FL
Linda Lombardi, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Edie Lopez, NMFS, Brownsville, TX
Pamela Machuga, NMFS, Key West, FL

Anthony MacWhinnie, FFWCC, Pensacola, FL
Karen Meador, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Lloyd Muccio, NMFS, Miami, FL
Joe O'Hop, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Michelle Padgett, NMFS, Freeport, TX
Keith Roberts, NMFS, Galveston, TX
Renee Roman, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Rouse, NMFS, Golden Meadow, LA
Eric Sander, FFWCC, Daytona, FL
Jeff Sauer, FFWCC, Melbourne, FL
Roy Spears, NMFS, Aransas Pass, TX
Mandy Strano, LDWF, Lake Charles, LA
Bryan Summerlin, FFWCC, Cedar Key, FL
Linda Trahan, NMFS, Port Arthur, TX
Bill Tucker, NMFS, Houma, LA
June Weeks, NMFS, Panama City Beach, FL

Staff

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Demonstration of TIP Data Entry Program

Lloyd Muccio of NMFS in Miami gave a presentation to the port samplers on the new TIP data entry program explaining that the main motivation for re-designing TIP was that the ACCSP and FIN now require additional data that had not previously been collected. Muccio noted several other factors including Foxpro software losing support, manual data transmissions unreliability, and difficulty in keeping users synchronized using PC versions of the TIP program. Muccio noted that several options were considered before selecting web based applications. He noted some of the web's strengths including lower maintenance costs, ability to access data from anywhere, instantaneous updates, users always on the same application, and the Web being upgraded continuously. Weaknesses include user interface being weaker, entry is not as fast as client server or PC, requires an internet connection, and new languages for programming staff to learn. An outside contractor, Artech, was brought in to re-design the TIP program for ACCSP and FIN. Muccio noted that the presentation is version 1.0 which is a partial implementation of TIPONLINE

and that sometime in January or February of 2003 new users will have access to improved versions of the program agency by agency.

Muccio requested that the port samplers keep an open mind and give the new program a chance. He also requested that samplers let him know what they like and dislike about the program and also to make suggestions on how to improve it.

J. Bennett of NMFS in Miami demonstrated Oracle Portal to the port samplers. Bennett explained that each user would have control over his/her own data and the agency managers will have control over their own agency's data. One of the features of TIPONLINE is that each agency will be able to enter data using their own codes. Bennett then reviewed the screens detailing how an account would be set up including the administrator creating the agency, user, user profile, defaults, code tables, and customizing pages. At this point in the presentation, Bennett connected to the internet for a live demonstration of entering and retrieving data in TIPONLINE.

After demonstrating various data entry and retrieval situations, a question and answer period was conducted with the port samplers. Bennett noted that sampling requirements are changing as a result of standardization with the FIN and ACCSP. Several points were raised including:

- the need to go through two screens when entering species, length, and otoliths on one fish,
- why the tag number isn't the unique interview number plus 1, 2, 3, etc.,
- is there a possibility of dealing with special needs as in the case of lobsters,
- in the observation section there are three fields for length information and Florida samplers are currently taking four lengths for biosamples,
- on landings page one field is for quantity of fish - is it necessary to count all fish?
- is it possible to work offline?
- is data entered lost if internet connection is interrupted?
- how will sampler know interview tag number when sampling in the field? Will need the tag number to cross reference samples,
- need programming for multiple sampled fish,

Bennett then discussed data security noting that since the data is on the main server, backup is done on a regular basis and samplers will not lose data. Muccio explained that there will be a general data warehouse and TIP data will be included when funds become available. G. Davenport discussed security for federal samplers stating that a VPN will be established and in the future may

be available to the states. Bennett noted that the data that the outside users access should reside with the FIN/ACCSP and if the user is not able to obtain the data they were seeking, they would have to go to the agency generating the data.

Bennett and Muccio suggested sending an e-mail to the samplers in order to have input from the samplers regarding changes being considered. Muccio noted that with the Web there will be incremental development and samplers will be able to indicate the order in which things are done. Discussion continued concerning various aspects of data entry and the use of FIN and/or agency codes. Bennett explained that when an agency code is entered it is cross referenced with a FIN code and the FIN code goes into the table. The group then discussed landings size and Bennett explained that the codes came from FIN/ACCSP and were shortened to fit the computer screen, but the definitions can be clarified. D. Donaldson suggested that the Standard Codes Committee review the codes for clarification. Problems with validation was discussed and Muccio noted that this is still being developed.

The meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m. and reconvened on November 14, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.

Status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN)

D. Donaldson reviewed recent ComFIN activities noting that trip ticket programs are being operated and implemented in three of the Gulf states. Other ComFIN activities include the collection of detailed effort, biological sampling, as well as the implementation of the data management system.

Donaldson reported that trip ticket programs are operating in Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana. Mississippi collects information on oyster and bait shrimp and hopefully finfish will be added in the future. Texas is evaluating the effectiveness of a trip ticket program. Donaldson reported that a company in Gonzalez, Louisiana has developed a program for electronic reporting. FIN has a contract with them to work with dealers in Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama. This program is useful to the dealers since it can be used for inventory, accounting, etc. Donaldson noted that there are some dealers in Galveston, Texas who are interested in trying this program. Currently there are 70 dealers online, primarily in Louisiana, with the potential of 120 by the end of the year. Donaldson reported that a catch/effort pilot study collecting multiple gears is being

conducted in Louisiana. G. Davenport will give a report on this pilot study at the 2003 FIN meeting.

Donaldson reported that trip ticket data is in the data management system as well as historical data back to 1984 (NMFS TIP information), menhaden data, and recreational data. Biological information and SEAMAP data are being worked on. The system is online as of July, 2002. Confidentiality forms are on the website and approval by state representatives is required to access confidential data.

Donaldson reported that the Data Collection Work Group has made some recommendations concerning the collection of bycatch information. It was recommended that the TIP program be utilized to collect qualitative information in order to prioritize fisheries for at-sea observers. The Work Group also recommended that this issue be discussed at this meeting.

Discussion of Bycatch Data Collection Methods

The recommendations of the Data Collection Work Group were distributed to samplers. Donaldson noted that some bycatch information is being collected in Alabama. The Work Group requested feedback from the samplers on the feasibility of collecting bycatch information and whether this would be useful information. Bycatch was defined as anything caught and not targeted. Donaldson noted that for the present the TIP program could be used to collect bycatch information. Davenport noted that the offshore shrimp fishery has an ongoing bycatch data collection program. Part of the group discussion focused on the need to have outreach as part of the bycatch program since the support of industry is essential. Bennett noted that it would probably be best to put the questions on bycatch at the end of the interview. Several comments were made, including access to logbook bycatch data, use of discard codes or comments field in the TIP system, the fact that tuna, shark, and swordfish are not being interviewed, and the possibility that samplers can begin to ask bycatch questions which will make the transition easier to TIP online. It was suggested that samplers begin to ask fishermen if they would be willing, in the future, to give information on bycatch and what kind of information would they be able to provide. Species, quantity (estimate), area fished, and disposition are key areas to focus on. The samplers agreed that they would be able to begin asking questions and record answers in the comments field of the TIP interview. Donaldson stated that this information will be presented to the FIN Committee at their meeting in June 2003 and he

will keep samplers informed of the results.

Discussion of Otolith Processing

Linda Lombardi of the NMFS Panama City Laboratory gave a presentation on otolith processing. Lombardi noted that the samples sent to the Panama City Lab can provide information to define overfishing for a certain stock and she stressed the importance of random samples since age structure models are very sensitive to that data. For some species, the Panama City Lab is aging five thousand or more samples per year. The sampling of hard parts began in the early 1980's and since 1998 there has been a dramatic increase in sampling. Lombardi noted that the Panama City Lab is mostly concerned with gag, red grouper, red snapper, and vermillion snapper based on the frequency of assessment.

Lombardi reported that the sources of their samples were from port samplers. 22,000 samples came to the Panama City Lab in 2001 with 81% collected by the TIP samplers, and others provided by the MRFSS, Beaufort head boat survey, NMFS scientific survey, and others. Lombardi then explained the tracking process used when samples are received at the Panama City Lab. An archive program was started in 1998 with over 90,000 samples. Some of those samples date back to the 1980's with approximately 70% of the samples being snapper. Lombardi then gave an overview of the methods and processing used at the Panama City Lab.

In closing, Lombardi stated that demand is always increasing but funds and resources are always in flux. She noted the need to be able to switch from one assessment species to another, to choose priority species, to divide the workload between federal, state, and other partners, and increase and improve communications. Lombardi then went online to the Panama City Lab website, demonstrated for samplers, and explained that an updated website would be online by the end of the month. A brief question and answer period followed the presentation.

Results of Fish Sampling Exercise

J. O'Hop gave a brief summary on the fish sampling exercise conducted by the port samplers the previous day. O'Hop noted that for the most part the variance components that were measured were comparable to the true variance of each box although the ranges were somewhat restricted. A brief discussion followed O'Hop's summary.

Review of State and Federal Data Collection Methods

State and federal port samplers from each of the Gulf states gave a brief description of their daily routine and methods employed. Justin Esslinger of TPWD reported that samplers for each bay system go to local fish houses in order to collect fish lengths; snapper when in season and black drum. They have a reporting system that the fish houses submit monthly and they also have a monitoring program which involves gill nets. They collect bay trawl and Gulf trawl samples. There is a longline sampling program that is conducted in March and April as well as a pilot study using a video camera. Esslinger also gave an overview of their stocking program. J. Bennett noted that he would be interested in obtaining the size data being collected in Texas.

Keith Roberts, a NMFS port agent from Texas reported that he collects landings data from major commercial shrimp dealers. In January they do a process product survey; in February landings of red snapper are collected as well as quota monitoring for Texas and Louisiana, and TIP sampling. In spring and summer information on shrimp landings is collected. Roberts noted that this year they started doing some redfish sampling with charter boats. J. Bennett noted that they are not receiving gear information on landings in Texas.

Gary Rouse, a NMFS port agent from Louisiana reported that they conduct shrimp interviews in the south Louisiana area. Snapper landings are also collected and that work is done cooperatively with the LDWF sampler. There was a brief discussion on the need for outreach with Vietnamese fisherman due to the language barrier and distrust. Rouse also commented on the success of electronic reporting.

Albert Lefort stated that LDWF began collecting otoliths through the FIN program and the four species used were red snapper, greater amberjack, king mackerel, and southern flounder. Using commercial trip ticket information from the previous year they were able to compute totals for the year while recreational quotas were obtained from MRFSS data. Lefort noted that the otoliths collected for the FIN program are worked up at the Baton Rouge age and growth lab, and other otoliths are worked up at the Grand Terre Marine Lab. Lefort noted that Louisiana has a fresh products license which allows fishermen to sell their catch to the public and it is difficult to get accurate pricing data.

Chuck Armstrong of the Pascagoula Lab works Pascagoula, Mobile, and Pensacola. Since a quota on inshore flounder has been instituted this is monitored, as well as speckled trout and

redfish. State and federal samplers share TIP sampling duties. Periodically menhaden are monitored. Armstrong noted that he does red drum sampling and edits 8 years worth of vessel data.

Jude LeDoux of MDMR noted that there are four large fish houses on the Mississippi coast and they are very cooperative. TIP and FIN sampling are done at one of these fish houses. Fisheries Assessment and Monitoring (FAM) sampling is done using gill nets on four estuaries in Mississippi. Otoliths are pulled and are combined with otoliths from the commercial side. All otoliths are cataloged in the new laboratory. LeDoux and the two federal port samplers are responsible for red snapper sampling.

Noel Estes of ADCNR is the port sampler for Mobile County. Estes noted that since the implementation of the trip ticket program she visits from 20 to 25 seafood dealers each month where she collects trip tickets, delivers pre-printed trip tickets, and answer any questions. TIP data is collected from 4 or 5 fish houses, with red snapper, mullet, and southern flounder being the primary species. Estes also collects otoliths from red snapper and flounder. Pete Antosh of ADCNR is the port sampler for Baldwin County. Antosh noted that he does TIP sampling 3 days a week, and the rest of the time works on the MRFSS survey and otolith extractions on flounder. He also takes TIP samples on mullet, sheepshead, and flounder.

Ted Flowers of NMFS Mobile office covers Escambia County in Florida and parts of Alabama. They are now utilizing the trip ticket system as a source of data. Flowers noted that most of his duties involve TIP sampling and redfish, as well as seasonal reports.

Federal and state samplers from Florida reported that in the panhandle they cover hook and line fisheries for vermillion snapper, red snapper and king mackerel. Both recreational and commercial sampling are done including TIP sampling, charter boat, MRFSS, the inshore and offshore shrimp fishery. From the panhandle to St. Petersburg trap fishing, long line, hook and line, shrimp trawls, bait fishing, TIP sampling, and shark are covered as well as traps. Another one of their duties is editing trip ticket data and collecting trip information and interviews for effort information. Fisheries in other parts of Florida are grouper, stone crab, and lobster. There was discussion on red grouper, which are not usually seen in the northern Gulf. This was probably a result of recent storms.

Other Business

D. Donaldson requested agenda items for the next port samplers meeting which will be held in 2003. Donaldson asked port samplers to contact him, J. O'Hop, or G. Davenport with suggestions. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the 2003 meeting would be held in November in either Miami or St. Petersburg, Florida.

Mark Godcharles of NMFS addressed the group and thanked them for the job they do. He suggested that the subject of closures could be a topic for the next meeting since quota management is so important to fisheries management.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.