

**SHEEPSHEAD TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
February 19, 2004
Pensacola Beach, Florida**

Chairman Chuck Adams called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. He introduced Jessica McCawley who replaced Andrew Strelcheck as Florida's state representative. Mike Jepson was welcomed to the group as the task force anthropologist/sociologist.

Members Attending:

Chuck Adams, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Jason Adriance, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Mike Brackin, Breakaway Fishing, Gulfport, MS
Mike Jepson, Gainesville, FL
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Jessica McCawley, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Perry Trial, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX

Members Absent:

Paul Cook, LDWF, New Iberia, LA
Jeff Mayne, LDWF Enforcement Division, Baton Rouge, LA
Erick Porche, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Simon Zirlott, Commercial Representative, Coden, AL

Staff:

Steven J. VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cynthia B. Yocom, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

With the deletion of item 3, the group adopted the agenda by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held October 27-28, 2003, in New Orleans, Louisiana, were reviewed. J. Mareska moved to approve the minutes as written. P. Trial seconded the motion, which passed by consensus.

General Discussion

S. VanderKooy presented cover art for the profile. Gayle and Steve Jones developed the design. Gayle is the talented Commission receptionist, and her husband has a background in graphics design. The design was received positively and by consensus.

The draft to date was reviewed thoroughly by the group. The following action items were noted:

- J. McCawley – get Florida genetics info to P. Trial
Get third subspecies (Mexico) info from A. Strelcheck
Send E. Porche info on fish health
Send status & trends data to J. Adriance
Send recreational fishing landing summary to J. Adriance
- P. Trial – get the most recent TX genetics study.
Recheck Jennings to see if more info can be added to 3.2.5
Check numbers 3.2.5 (50 mm), 3.2.7 (35 mm), 4.4 (50 mm)
Specify standard or fork length
Get C. Adams a contact name for TX mariculture activity
- C. Adams – get third subspecies (Mexico) info from D. Muree
Send fish kill counts to P. Cook
- S. VanderKooy/C. Yocom – update Table of Contents on the next version
Incorporate E. Porche's parasite's addition
Send Lukens M.S. work to P. Trial
Put tables/figures in next version
Clean up table formats
Send P. Trial contact info for Winner
Work up contaminant section (re: human risk)
Add state web site addresses to Section 5
Work with M. Brackin to develop a description of recreational gear for Section 6
Get antidotal info to J. Adriance (large AL catches/Maryland lump crab)
Talk to E. Porche re: MS Asian market
Get numbers/size range data from Jewel's midden info & send to J. Adriance
Send M. Jepson a LEC roster
Send M. Jepson MS rodeo statistics
Review SAT roster/request membership from State Director if needed
Convene a conference call of the SAT to determine if an assessment can be done
Send J. McCawley a flounder & seatrout plan
Send J. Adriance a flounder plan
Add a scientific illustration of sheepshead
- E. Porche – Add abnormalities
Alabama *Vibrio* case from sheepshead spine.
3.2.7 add Sedberry reference
6.2.2.3 expand
- P. Cook – add dredge & fill issues for each state
- J. Adriance – recheck MRFSS numbers
Check commercial fishing rank – MS & FL both ranked fourth (6.2.2.1 & 6.2.2.3)
Show landings by gear type.

Get defined values of finfish from LA statutes to C. Adams
Add fishery-independent data to clarify fluctuations in landings

C. Adams – MRFSS data 363,986 fishermen targeted sheepshead
Check TX & MS landings/dockside value (doesn't equate to 6.2)

All – send M. Jepson any info to contribute to the section (e.g., rodeo results, NOLA Sheepshead Club, Texas snowbirds targeting sheepshead, guides)

Send an up-to-date list of state fishing organizations to S. VanderKooy

Send fishery-independent data to J. Adriance

Send hard copy of all literature cited used within the document to S. VanderKooy.

Recommendation – minimum size limit 400 mm (according to growth characteristics)

Review of Assignments/Deadlines

C. Yocom will send the committee action items as soon as possible. **The next draft is due to the Commission two weeks prior to the next meeting.** A reminder will be sent.

Next Meeting

The meeting was scheduled for either the week of May 24, 2004 or June 14, 2004. C. Adams suggested the next meeting be held at the Key's Marine Laboratory in Long Key, Florida. The Lime Tree Bay Resort is next door and honors government rates. Adams will provide contact information to S. VanderKooy. Other locations discussed were Marathon and Cedar Key, Florida.

The group also tentatively scheduled a fall meeting for the week of November 18, 2004, at South Padre Island, Texas.

Other Business

Simon Zirlot, the commercial representative, has not attended any meetings. The group requested S. VanderKooy investigate a replacement who can participate.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 4:30 p.m.

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 54th Spring Meeting
Monday, March 15, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

B. Wallace, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Rick Schillaci, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Ed Swindell, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Doug Vaughan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Kevin Anson, AMRD/ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)
Toby Gascon, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Tom Wittmann, Omega Protein, Inc., Abbeville, LA
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, VA
Nancy Thompson, NMFS/SEFSC, Miami, FL

Introductions and Membership Review

B. Wallace led the introductions of the MAC and the audience.

Adoption of Agenda

C. Perret moved to adopt the agenda as written, **R. Schillaci** seconded the motion, and with no opposition, the agenda was adopted.

Approval of Minutes (October 14, 2003)

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. **R. Schillaci** moved to accept the minutes as written. **J. Mambretti** seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Forecast for 2004 Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishing Season

J. Smith reported that landings of Gulf menhaden in 2003 were 517,079 mt or 1,701 million standard fish which was down 10% from 2002 (574,530 mt) and down 9% from previous 5-yr average of 569,136 mt. The highest landings in 2003 occurred in May and June at 101,000 mt each. July experienced the lowest landings since 1996 at 68,500 mt mainly due to inclement weather. Landings in the "extended season" were 54,600 mt which was higher than the 10-yr mean (1993-2002) of 50,958 mt.

April saw good catches during the first week of the season with the prices for meal and oil starting off strong. May and June saw good catches but low oil yields from near drought conditions in the western Gulf. Drought turned to monsoon in parts of the western Gulf in the end of June and fish oil yields improved with the western ports setting near record landings for plant-weeks. July landings fell substantially due to holidays and two tropical systems. August weather and catches were good with the exception of mid-month when T.S. Erika made its way into the Brownsville area. Windy weather and T.S. Larry in mid-September resulted in an ending to the 2003 season.

Vessel participation in 2003 included 42 vessels (39 regular steamers, 2 run boats, and one bait boat), which was similar to 2002. Nominal fishing effort in 2003 was 363,200 vessel ton weeks; the lowest since 1965 which was down 6% from 2002 and down 10% from previous 5-yr mean (405,700 vtwks).

It should be noted that the 2003 landings were 1% greater than March '03 forecast provided by **J. Smith** at the NMFS in Beaufort.

In 2004 **Smith** predicts that there should be 4 factories operating in the Gulf with 43 vessels [40 steamers, 2 run boats, and 1 bait boat] at 385,000 vtwks of nominal effort. With those values, it is estimated that the landings in 2004 should be around 515,000 mt.

Louisiana Forecast

V. Guillory provided Louisiana's annual forecast based on environmental data, recruitment, and previous years juvenile abundance indices. Based on low average water temps in January 2003, high river discharge, low rainfall, and lower salinities in early 2003, and average juvenile abundances overall in 2003, the forecast for Louisiana waters is between 387,000 and 439,000 mt.

Gulf Menhaden Stock Assessment

D. Vaughan provided the current assessment for Gulf menhaden. Using information on growth, reproduction, natural mortality, fishery landings, and fishery-independent surveys, Vaughan estimated age-specific fishing mortality and population abundances of Gulf menhaden between 1964-2002. In addition, he proposed benchmarks (targets and limits) to determine stock status in the future.

Regardless of the model Vaughan used, estimates of fishing mortality have generally decreased over the assessment period, while estimates of reproductive success have generally increased (measured as spawning stock biomass or population fecundity). Estimates of the terminal (2002) population fecundity are well above target, suggesting that the stock is healthy (not overfished). Meanwhile, estimates of the terminal fishing mortality are between the target and limit benchmarks, suggesting that the stock is not overfished nor is overfishing occurring. SPR for the Gulf menhaden stock is around 60%, which is nearly double the target SPR for most federally managed species. It is believed that the next assessment, scheduled for 2008/2009, will likely be completed through the SEDAR process.

CDFR/LA Trip Ticket Forms

A short discussion ended the debate over combining the CDFR with the LA menhaden trip ticket. It is not likely that the CDFR can be incorporated into the trip ticket format to prevent duplication. **J. Smith** would like to continue modifying the CDFR however to include more useful data fields considering today's navigational technology. **Smith** will develop a working form to field test this summer.

Status of CDFR Data Entry Initiative

S. VanderKooy reported on the work that is nearing completion to computerize historical CDFRs from NOAA. At this time, all the forms from 1983 to present are entered and the Commission plans to enter 1982 as the terminal year for this effort. Forms continue to 1979 but the quality and completeness of the data is questionable. **It was moved and passed by the MAC that the Commission would scan the remaining forms to preserve them electronically in the event they should be key entered in the future.** Staff would complete this effort this summer.

Other Business

It was suggested by **J. Rester** that the MAC might want to watch the situation with proposed LNG (Liquid Natural Gas) plants in the region. Intakes for water are being discussed in the estuaries and passes that would cause serious impingement problems for eggs and larvae of many critical estuarine species. It was suggested that Rester continue to monitor the status of the proposed plants and report to the MAC in the fall.

C. Perret brought to the MACs attention the proposed reservoirs on the Pearl River around Jackson, Mississippi. The concern regarding freshwater flow to the Gulf was highlighted. It seems that a lot of support for the project exists away from the Gulf. It was recommended that J. Rester continue to monitor the projects and report to the MAC as it proceeds.

With no further business, the MAC adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

Traci Floyd
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES - 54th Spring Meeting
Monday, March 15, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Due to a ban on out-of-state travel, Chairman Tom Wagner was unable to attend. Leslie Hartman (Alabama) was recruited to run the meeting. She called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Present

Susan Gerhart, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL (*Proxy for A. McMillen-Jackson*)
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Leslie Hartman, AMRD/ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Harriet Perry, USM/GCRL

Members Absent

Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWS, St. Petersburg, FL
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Staff

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

Others

Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL

Agenda

The agenda was adopted by consensus. **H. Perry and S. VanderKooy** indicated they both had items to discuss under "Other Business".

Minutes

The group reviewed the minutes from the meeting held October 13, 2003, in Corpus Christi, Texas. The recording secretary was asked to correct the dates of Mississippi's cleanup to include April 3. **With that correction, V. Guillory moved to approve the minutes. S. Gerhart seconded the motion, which passed.**

Community-Based Restoration Project

2005 Proposal - **H. Perry** lead discussion and noted that the cleanups have been very successful in Alabama and Mississippi. **L. Hartman** noted that Alabama's cleanup has

been very efficient, and number of traps collected has declined from more than 1,000 down to 375. **V. Guillory** noted that Louisiana's first cleanup was very successful but only covered a small area. The amount of work needed in Louisiana is awesome. In 2005, the project may shift focus to the implementation of a blue crab trap cleanup in Florida, and ongoing support for Louisiana and Texas. **H. Perry** agreed to coordinate proposal development with J. Rester. She asked all to supply budget numbers. The request for proposals will be out in May 2004; the group will submit in June and ask for a January 1, 2005 start date.

Standardized Acreage - NOAA wants to determine how much habitat is restored when crab traps are removed. All agreed that whatever method is used, it should be approached with caution to avoid extrapolation. **H. Perry** suggested they compute per unit trap.

Gulf Guardian Award - The application was distributed for review, and all agreed to have comments to J. Rester by Monday, March 22.

Winter Cleanups

Louisiana - **V. Guillory** reported on the first cleanup in Louisiana. Only a small area was closed; the area was quite remote. The event was publicized by numerous newspaper articles and local television. They may attempt to involve local CCA and other fishing organizations in the next cleanup. The next cleanup may also be closer to a metropolitan area in an effort to increase volunteers. Trouble spots included the difficulty in coordinating carrier vessels and the need for more dumpsters. **V. Guillory** thanked those who came over to assist in the effort (TPWD – T. Wagner; MDMR – B. Richardson, T. Floyd; GCRL – H. Perry, B. Randall, J. Anderson; GSMFC – J. Rester, C. Yocom). The lab's trap mashers were a success and proved very useful. The total number of retrieved traps, boats, and volunteers for each time frame are as follows:

First Volunteer Day (February 28)

- Pointe aux Chenes: 22 boats with 47 volunteers – 2,112 traps
- Cozy Campers: 14 boats with 35 volunteers – 665 traps
- Seabreeze: 9 boats with 25 volunteers – 478 traps
- Josh's: 8 boats with 16 volunteers – 155 traps
- Total = 53 boats with 123 volunteers – 3,410 traps

February 29 – March 5

- Pointe aux Chenes: 863 traps
- Cozy Campers: 40 traps
- Seabreeze: 0 traps
- Josh's: 90 traps
- Total = 993 traps

Second Volunteer Day (March 6)

- Pointe aux Chenes: 13 boats with 27 volunteers – 740 traps
- Cozy Campers: 7 boats with 23 volunteers – 215 traps
- Seabreeze: 7 boats with 17 volunteers – 557 traps

- Josh's 5 boats with 8 volunteers – 200 traps
- Total = 32 boats with 198 volunteers – 1,712

Cumulative Total

- Pointe aux Chenes: 3,715 traps
- Cozy Campers: 920 traps
- Seabreeze: 1,035 traps
- Josh's: 445 traps
- **Total = 6,115 traps**

Mississippi - T. Floyd was unable to attend the meeting but provided information for the group regarding Mississippi's upcoming effort. In order to make the second year of the closed season less burdensome to crab fishermen and more efficient for trap retrieval personnel, the DMR decided to alternate closure areas by county. The next cleanup is scheduled for: Hancock County, Bayou Caddy Launching Ramp, Waveland – Saturday, March 20; Harrison County, Ocean Springs Marine Mart, Ocean Springs – Saturday, March 27; Jackson County, Tucei's Fishing Camp in Gautier and the Grand Bay NERR in east Jackson County – Saturday, April 3.

Alabama - **L. Hartman** reported the return in 2003 was 1,074 traps with 183 volunteers. In 2004, the return was 375 traps with 180 volunteers. The decline was significant - the program is a success. **L. Hartman** noted that their cleanup got excellent press. One show from *Outdoor Alabama* has gone to cable and may be national. Unlike Louisiana, Alabama actually had too many dumpsters. One problem was with the designated "dumpster sitter" who was in charge of the count. Some abandoned their posts resulting in lost data.

Texas - **R. Adami** reported for Texas. From February 20-29, 2004, 3,571 traps were collected along 14 sites on eight bay systems. There were about 50 sponsors/donors with 311 volunteers and 103 vessels. Trap return is declining; in 2002 (when the program started) 8,070 traps were collected. From 2002-2004, 15,499 traps were collected. The majority of traps were collected from Galveston, Matagorda, and San Antonio bays. Those bay systems continue to need work. About 23 species of organisms were found in the traps including red drum, black drum, southern flounder, spotted seatrout, gray snapper, and some diamondback terrapin. The majority of bycatch were alive. This year, one volunteer found a trap with 29 fish inside (seven Gulf toadfish, six gray snapper, four black drum, and three Atlantic spadefish). Texas will continue their program in 2005 focusing on the three trouble spots mentioned above.

Florida - **S. Gerhart** reported that the current annual budget of \$40,000 supports a trap retrieval program in the Keys conducted by Organized Fishermen of Florida. A grant from Ocean Trust will support pilot projects in Steinhatchee, Crystal River, Tampa Bay, St. Petersburg, and Fort Meyers this summer. These projects will help determine costs and establish a volunteer effort that is needed to reduce cost. On July 1, 2000, the FWC began collecting \$125 for stone crab endorsements, \$25 of which is specified for trap retrieval. The Stone Crab Advisory Board has requested Marine Resources Conservation Trust Funds from the state legislature for the retrieval of lost and abandoned stone crab

traps. The new effort management plan recommended for the blue crab fishery includes a provision to have rotating closed seasons (probably one week) to allow for trap clean up projects.

State Reports

Florida - **S. Gerhard** reported blue crab landings for 2003:

	HARD-SHELL		SOFT-SHELL/PEELERS	
	Pounds	Trips	Pounds	Trips
East Coast	1,881,039	11,474	34,392	855
West Coast	6,661,946	34,702	80,108	3,075
Total	8,542,985	46,176	114,500	3,930

Total hard crab landings in 2003 were 8.8% higher than landings for 2002; however, West Coast landings increased (21.4%), while East Coast landings decreased (14.7%). All values are once again below the long-term average for approximately 15 million pounds. In summer 2003, FWC assembled the Blue Crab Advisory Board (BCAB) composed of 15 harvesters and dealers plus an FWC representative. During fall and winter, four public meetings were held to develop an effort management program. From these two meetings, two plans emerged differing mainly in the type of access. The board also determined to separate the hard crab and soft-shell fisheries, although plans for each are similar. Recommendations common to all plans were:

- Minimum annual landing-qualifying criteria during one year of a three-year period
- Second or third endorsements for an individual will have higher landings qualifier than the first
- Endorsement could be either individual or vessel
- Traps required to have individual tags/certificates
- Endorsement fee and tag fee
- Limit number of traps per endorsement
- Two-week apprenticeship program for new entrants
- Allow degradable hog-rings and allow degradable panels to be horizontal or vertical
- Reevaluate escape ring regulations
- EEZ as blue crab sanctuary
- Regional rotating short-term closures to facilitate trap cleanup projects
- Soft crab exemption – 150 peeler bycatch in hard crab traps; no soft-shell endorsement for one to three shedding tanks
- Establish permanent BCAB
- Allow alternate buoy types

Recommendations only in the preferred plan:

- Number of participants capped at number of initial qualifying entries
- Post-moratorium, endorsements and trap tags may be bought as a package from someone leaving the fishery

Recommendations only in the alternative plan:

- Overall number of tags/certificates capped at number initially issued
- Post-moratorium, fishers with valid SPL and RS could buy certificates on open market and fish those traps for one year to qualify for an endorsement
- Certificates bought in this fashion would be subject to a passive reduction outside the immediate family

Additional recommendations for the soft-shell fishery:

- Endorsement allows shedding operation
- Allow bait in peeler traps to keep jimmie crab alive
- Require separate specifications for peeler traps

Workshops are currently being held throughout the state to solicit public comments on the plans. The BCAB will meet again to incorporate public comments into the recommendations and present recommendations to the Commission. By summer, a draft rule should be ready for workshops for public comment. The rule will be presented to the Commission in the fall-winter for approval/modification. If the plan cannot be put before the legislature next year, the moratorium (scheduled to end June 2005) must be extended.

Stone crab landings decreased 21.3% from 2001-2002 landings but are consistent with an eight-year average of approximately 3.0 million pounds. The decrease is a reflection of Gulf landings (21.7% decrease) that make up 98% of the total. Atlantic landings increased 16.6% but did little to affect the overall fishery. East Coast landings equaled 45,938 pounds from 1,612 trips; West Coast landings equaled 2,699,518 pounds from 29,262 trips. Preliminary analysis from the Tampa Bay stone crab trapping study data (15 years) indicated that although relative abundance decreased only slightly, the proportion of male crabs caught in traps decreased significantly. Consequently, size of crabs (carapace width) and size of claws also decreased.

In addition to the money requested for the trap retrieval program, the Stone Crab Advisory Board made two budget requests. Spending authority was requested to equip law enforcement vessels with trap pullers. The pullers will enhance the ability of officers to pull and inspect stone crab traps. Funds will also pay for warning signs near boat ramps to educate the public that it is unlawful to tamper with stone crab traps. The second request is for continuing funding of a fisheries-independent monitoring program. The program would be conducted in northwest Florida (centered around Cedar Key) and southwest Florida (centered at Florida Bay) – the two regions where stone crab fishing is most concentrated. The first year's funding would go toward start up costs (purchasing

boats, travel to established sampling locations, etc.) and then be converted to salaries during the ensuing years. Two new employees will be hired to manage the two teams.

Alabama - **L. Hartman** reported monthly blue crab landings are lower than those of 2003. The larger processing shops are closed because there is not enough work for the pickers; however, "Mom & Pop" shops are averaging a couple thousand pounds. Prices started to rebound in December. License sales are down from 170 to 146. Fisheries-independent data on catch per unit effort showed pronounced decline in 1999, but from October 1998 through September 2000, Alabama performed quarterly sampling instead of monthly sampling. The number of sites was increased but frequency of sampling decreased. The initial drop in 1999 is a result in that shift of sampling. She plans to go back through the data base and eliminate the additional sites during that time. Prior to the last gubernatorial election, a suite of regulations was proposed to address the crab fishery. That effort is on hold.

Mississippi - **H. Perry** distributed T. Floyd's report (attached). She noted that resident recreational license sales have declined, but commercial license sales have increased. Settlement sampling has been discontinued.

Louisiana - **V. Guillory** will summarize fishery-independent data and present at the next meeting. Landings in 2002 equaled 53.9 million pounds. Through August 2003, landings were slightly below those of 2002. There has been quite an interest in the crab fishery this year. The Crab Task Force is sponsoring legislation to implement a license moratorium. The task force introduced the original moratorium in 1996-1998 with the idea of following through with limited entry legislation. Limited entry legislation failed to pass in 1997. A limited entry bill was proposed and will give the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission authority to establish a limited entry program with input from the Crab Task Force. Another bill addresses undersized crab possession after the first sale.

Texas - T. Wagner provided a written report as follows. Preliminary 2003 Texas reported hard crab landings were 4.6 million pounds worth \$4.8 million, down from 5.1 million pounds in 2002. Although these numbers are likely to increase, 2003 landings would be the lowest since 1970, ex-vessel value the highest since 1970, and price/pound (\$1.04) the first time over \$1.00 per pound ever in Texas. Anecdotal information from dealers revealed that market conditions and cold weather in the Chesapeake Bay area place high demand for Texas hard crabs, even though production was often inconsistent. Fishery-independent data from 2002 showed declining trends in bag seine catch rates (third lowest since 1980) and bay trawl catch rates (fourth lowest since 1982), although trawl catch rates have increased since 2000. T. Wagner is currently working with Glen Sutton (TPWD Coastal Fisheries, Galveston Bay) on a status report on Texas blue crab stocks and fishery. This report will update fishery-independent and fishery-dependent data from Texas, as well as look at data from shrimp trawl bycatch studies and reported soft crab data. Additionally, this research will assess fishery-independent length data using Hoenig's length-based model to update total mortality rates (Pellegrin et al. 2001). Where available, fishery-dependent length data from commercial and recreational fisheries sampling will be compared to fishery-independent length data.

The group agreed to update the Gulf index for juvenile blue crabs. **S. VanderKooy** volunteered to contact B. Pellegrin (NOAA, Pascagoula Laboratory) and coordinate this effort. If possible, he can present the summarized data at the October meeting in Biloxi.

Other Business

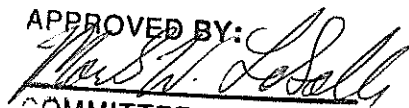
The Subcommittee discussed the review and comment of Seafood Watch Seafood Reports being developed by the Monterey Bay Aquarium on fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico and resultant consumer bulletins warning of the negative impacts these fisheries may have on habitat and sustainability of these fisheries.

H. Perry reported that she will present a Gulf overview of the blue crab fishery to the Blue Crab Colloquium in Maryland next week. Aquaculture efforts in the Chesapeake focus on stock enhancement; whereas, aquaculture efforts in the Gulf focus on providing test animals for parasite and disease studies. The presentation was well received, and the entire Subcommittee requested a copy of her presentation.

H. Perry noted the Subcommittee was invited to participate in the stone crab trap cleanup, and the Keys Marine Laboratory dormitory was providing sleeping rooms.

There being no further business, V. Guillory moved to adjourn the meeting, and S. Gerhart seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES - 54th Spring Meeting
Monday, March 15, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Mark LaSalle 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, FFWCC, Port Manatee, FL
Kevin Madley, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Bob Spain, TPWD, Austin, TX
Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Mark LaSalle, MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center, Biloxi, MS
Heather Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Paul Cook, LDWF, New Iberia, LA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

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

Others

Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Joseph Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the October 13, 2003 meeting were adopted as written.

Administrative Report

J. Rester stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel met in December. The Advisory Panel discussed the Sabine-Neches waterway deepening project, freshwater inflow alteration at the mouth of the Colorado River, the Harte Research Institute, the Bahia Grande restoration project, current freshwater inflow issues in Texas, and beneficial use of dredged material in

Galveston Bay. **J. Rester** reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council finalized their Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement last week. The Council now has 17 months to enact management measures related to the alternatives in the EIS. This would include designating EFH and HAPCs and also enacting management measures to reduce fishing gear impact on habitat. **J. Rester** stated that the Council and NMFS would be sponsoring a meeting in late April to discuss the impacts of liquefied natural gas facilities (LNG) on fish stocks in the Gulf of Mexico. Approximately 12 LNGs were submitting regulatory applications for locations off Mobile Bay, Alabama to Corpus Christi, Texas. **J. Rester** stated that most of these facilities would have flow rates of 100 million gallons of water each day. Review of one offshore LNG showed that its once through intake systems was expected to kill 4.9 billion fish eggs and larvae each year.

Endangered Species Act Money for Habitat Planning

J. Rester stated that the speaker from the FWS informed him last week that she would not be able to attend the meeting. He stated that someone from FWS would be able to make the presentation at the October meeting. **J. Rester** informed the Subcommittee that \$8.6 million was budgeted for FY2004 habitat conservation planning assistance. The money would support development of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) for federally listed threatened or endangered species, proposed and candidate species, and unlisted species proposed to be covered by the HCP. **J. Rester** stated that states that have entered into cooperative agreements with the FWS for endangered and threatened species conservation were eligible for the funds. **J. Rester** stated that the funding was national in scope, but most of the money was going to the Pacific Northwest. The grants paid for 75% of the project cost if one state was involved. If two or more states were involved, the grants paid for 90% of project costs. **J. Rester** reported that if the Subcommittee was still interested in applying for some of the available funding, he would arrange for a speaker at the October meeting. The Subcommittee responded that they would like to learn more about this opportunity.

Bottom Mapping in the Gulf of Mexico

J. Rester stated that the South Atlantic component of SEAMAP began an effort in 1985 to map hardbottom habitat from North Carolina to southern Florida. Their goal was to develop a regional database that described the location and characteristics of hardbottom reef habitats from the shoreline out to 200 meters throughout the South Atlantic Bight. **J. Rester** reported that individual state documents were developed as funding became available. The final summary document, compiled database, and CD-ROM were published in 2001. **J. Rester** stated that no new data was collected for the project. It only involved analyzing existing data. The group conducted an extensive search of existing databases to identify and acquire data records that could be used to classify where hardbottom reef habitats were present. Protocols were developed to determine the presence or absence of hardbottom habitat. **J. Rester** stated that with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council establishing fishing gear regulations on certain types of habitat, that a similar hardbottom mapping project was needed in the Gulf of Mexico. He

reported that the Council might be able to provide some of the initial funding for the required work. He asked the Subcommittee if they felt this was a project that they would like to try and tackle. Everyone felt it was a worthy project. The Subcommittee agreed to check within their respective states to determine if their agencies contained any datasets that may be of use and also determine the interest of their agency. **J. Rester** stated that he would try to check with Minerals Management Service and determine if they would be able to release some of their side scan sonar data. He would also check with USGS and look for possible funding sources besides the Council.

Derelict Crab Trap Activities in the Gulf of Mexico

J. Rester reported on the status of traps recovery efforts in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the NOAA Community Based Restoration grant that the Commission received. He stated that Texas held its derelict trap recovery from February 20-29, 2004. He stated that 311 volunteers in 103 boats recovered 3,571 traps from across the state. **J. Rester** reported that this was the third year for the Texas clean up and the total number of traps collected was down from the two previous years. Louisiana held its first trap clean up from February 28 to March 14, 2004 in the upper Terrebonne Bay estuary. In this limited area, 215 volunteers in 90 boats removed 6,676 traps during the closed period. This was a very successful first effort. **J. Rester** stated that Alabama held its third derelict trap removal on March 13, 2004. **J. Rester** reported that 180 volunteers removed 375 traps. This total was down from 1,074 traps in 2003, so removal efforts appeared to be working. Finally, **J. Rester** stated that Mississippi would hold its trap removal efforts from March 14 to April 3, 2004. He stated that a weekly rotating closure would take place in the three coastal counties. He reported that he was unsure whether all five Gulf States would be applying for funding next year.

Habitat Web Site Discussion

J. Rester stated that he sent a draft version of the web site out to everyone a few weeks before the meeting. He stated that his interpretation of the web site at the last meeting was geared towards producing a site that educated developers, county officials and others on the importance of wetlands and ways to incorporate wetlands into development projects. **J. Rester** demonstrated the web site and stated that this was a rough draft and he was seeking input on this idea along with any other ideas the Subcommittee had on developing helpful web pages.

M. LaSalle stated that one topic he would like to see was restoration projects. He stated that information on restoration projects was hard to find. He would like to know what new techniques or technologies other states were using for habitat restoration.

H. Finley asked if everyone was familiar with the Gulf-wide Information System (G-WIS) that Minerals Management Service produced for oil spill response planning. She stated that all Gulf states have these GIS maps that were produced from the original environmental sensitivity index maps. She wanted to know if the habitat web site could provide a portal to these GIS maps. The maps show locations of all habitat types as well

as other important biological resources. **H. Finley** stated that these maps could show developers areas that were sensitive to disturbance.

M. LaSalle stated that he would like to discuss a range of possible topics that the Subcommittee would like to see discussed on a web site. He stated he would like to see general information on the topic, case studies, and points of contact for the case studies. **B. Spain** stated that coastal restoration and wetland regulations should be included. **S. Heath** stated that developers should see examples of how development can benefit by incorporating wetlands into their design. **S. Heath** stated that he would like to see best management practices discussed. **J. Rester** asked all Subcommittee members to compile a list of developments that incorporated wetlands and best management practices into their design. **M. LaSalle** stated that he would like to see stormwater retention, coastal restoration, wastewater treatment, and erosion control. **S. Heath** stated that he would like to add oyster reef restoration and stream buffers. **J. Rester** stated that he would send the list of topics out to the Subcommittee after the meeting for them to find case studies, photographs, and points of contact for the different topics. **D. Frugé** stated that before the web site was developed he wanted the Subcommittee to check and make sure that other sites do not currently exist that provides the same information. **J. Rester** stated that he would investigate these topics and make sure that another organization has not completed this task before.

Habitat Issues of Interest From Each State

S. Heath stated that Alabama was performing oyster reef restoration in Mobile Bay and both inshore and offshore artificial reef creation. **S. Heath** reported that Alabama received a \$50,000 donation from the Orange Beach Fishing Association for use in building artificial reefs. The donation would be used as match for Wallop-Breaux funds. **S. Heath** stated that BioMarine Technologies was granted a permit for an offshore aquaculture facility. The company now wants to move the facility into deeper water. Unfortunately, the new location was close to a few artificial reef sites. The facility would fence off 27 acres of public waters. **S. Heath** stated that someone was granted a permit to land a seaplane on Fish River, a popular skiing and fishing area.

F. Courtney stated that Florida would be holding several public meetings to discuss the issue of derelict crab traps. **K. Madley** reported that groups were planning a fishing gear clean up of Boca Grande Pass, a heavily used tarpon fishing area. Divers would be used to remove the lost fishing line and hooks off the bottom. This would be the second fishing gear clean up of Boca Grande Pass. The first clean up resulted in two dumpsters full of fishing gear. He stated he would report on this at the next meeting. **K. Madley** stated that the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program funded oyster cultivation around Estero Bay. The National Estuary Program was trying to restore oyster habitat that has been lost over the years. **K. Madley** stated that Florida was searching for funding to map hardbottom areas off Florida.

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H. Finley stated that in the past she had reported on coastal restoration funding efforts. She reported that funding for large-scale projects might be available through funding of

the next water resources development act. **H. Finley** also discussed the possibility of sand mining off Louisiana. This would be a very large project that would be led by Minerals Management Service (MMS). The sand would be used in coastal restoration projects. MMS funded a study to look at the effects of sand removal on the environment. She stated that one problem with the MMS plan was that they do not prioritize uses for the sand. **H. Finley** reported that anyone could purchase the sand and use it for a multitude of uses when priority should be given to coastal restoration projects.

M. LaSalle reported on the Two Lakes project in Jackson, Mississippi. He stated that the Vicksburg Corps of Engineers wanted to build two new reservoirs that were twenty miles long. The Corps did not think that the coastal area would be affected by the project so they did not notify any of the coastal agencies. **M. LaSalle** stated that after coastal agencies found out about the project they were strongly opposed to it. **M. LaSalle** reported that the project's purpose was supposedly to alleviate flooding, but most people felt that developers were behind the idea since it would increase lake front property. He stated that the project probably would not be implemented. **M. LaSalle** reported that a rapid assessment on invasive species would take place in Mississippi this fall. A rapid assessment took place in Alabama last September. The rapid assessment provides a baseline of organisms within the area to allow researchers to study any changes in invasive species distribution. **M. LaSalle** stated that the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve would be holding a bioblitz for 24 hours to sample everything located within the reserve. **M. LaSalle** stated that the Department of Marine Resources was trying to develop nine beneficial dredge disposal sites across the state.

D. Frugé discussed the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP). **D. Frugé** stated that SARP was composed of agencies throughout the southeast region. He stated that the group wanted to apply for a grant to perform six watershed management plans. One of the watersheds was the Pascagoula River. **D. Frugé** stated that the Pascagoula River Basin Alliance would be preparing the plan.

B. Spain stated that a number of restoration projects were taking place in Texas. He stated that most of the projects were partnered with several different organizations. **B. Spain** reported on a project at Jumbile Cove in Galveston Bay. He stated that these restoration projects were all doing very well. **B. Spain** reported that he would be discussing these projects in detail tomorrow at the Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel meeting.

D. Frugé stated that the Bahia Grande project in south Texas was going well. The project would restore tidal inflow into a 6,000 acre area that had lost its tidal connection approximately 50 years ago. **D. Frugé** stated that he sent out an email to all of the wildlife refuges around the southeast stating that the habitat poster was available to anyone who wanted copies. **D. Frugé** stated that within a couple of days they were all distributed. **D. Frugé** requested any extra copies of the poster if anyone still had any available.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 54th Spring Meeting
Monday, March 15, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Chairman Page Campbell called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.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
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for T. Van Devender*)
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Staff

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Doug Vaughan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved with the addition of *Discussion of Collection of Data regarding Yellowfin Tuna* under “Other Business”.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on October 13, 2003 in Corpus Christi, Texas were approved as written.

Status of Biological Sampling Activities

D. Donaldson distributed a summary of otolith collections for the recreational and commercial fisheries in 2003 and 2004. The summary presents the number of otoliths that have been collected as well as the targets, by species, mode, and state. **D.**

Donaldson noted that overall, the collection of otoliths and reaching the targets were fairly successful. Since it is still in the formative years of this process, he believed the states did a good job of reaching the targets and as the process gets more routine; there should be some improvement. It was noted that the work group would be meeting later this year to discuss the necessary targets in subsequent years. **D. Donaldson** noted that the biological data collected under FIN in 2002 for red snapper has been provided NMFS for inclusion in the upcoming red snapper SEDAR data meeting. **D. Donaldson** mentioned that the states needed to make sure they provide the collection data to the GSMFC on the established deadlines. This will allow staff to provide the states with feedback about the collection efforts and make modifications in efforts, as needed. He also mentioned that the states needed to provide the analysis data to the GSMFC as soon as possible. Staff is working on getting these data into the FIN Data Management System (via the biological module) so users may access it and it is important to have as much biological data available to scientists for the assessments. **D. Donaldson** asked the group about the time frame for the next Data Collection Plan Work Group. He was concerned that there would not be any feedback from the SEDAR process to assist the group in modifying (if necessary) the established targets for red snapper. It was mentioned that although the entire process will not be completed until October (which is past the 2005 cooperative agreement submission deadline), feedback from the data workshop could be beneficial to the work group in determining the adequacy of red snapper otolith collections. Therefore, it was suggested that the Data Collection Plan Work Group meet prior to the FIN meeting in June and develop recommendations for 2005 sampling targets for the FIN priority species.

Another issue addressed by the group concerned the fate of otoliths collected from species currently not being targeted by FIN activities. **K. Anson** stated that Alabama has collected a variety of species that are currently not on the FIN priority list and was wondering how to handle these samples. After some discussion, the Subcommittee decided to catalog these specimens for future analysis. Since there are no dedicated funds to process these samples, the group believed that the best approach was to store them until they are needed for an assessment. Also, since the states are not targeting these species, the sample size of the specimens potentially could be very small and not all that useful for an assessment. And, if an assessment is not scheduled for the near future, the samples may need to be re-processed when an assessment finally occurs. **J. O'Hop** suggested that it would be useful to know what each state regarding these stored otoliths. The Subcommittee requested that each state provide staff with an otolith inventory (of those species not currently targeted by FIN). The inventory should be sent to staff no later than May 3, 2004.

D. Donaldson stated that the state and federal otolith processors would be meeting in May to discuss issues regarding analysis of otoliths. One of the tasks will be to read a variety of otoliths for the FIN target species and compare the results with the other readers. This activity ensures that all readers are analyzing the otoliths in similar methods and helps identify potential problems with analysis. **J. O'Hop** asked about the status of the MARFIN project regarding greater amberjack. **D. Donaldson** stated that, unfortunately, it was not funded and FIN is still looking for some help regarding the

analysis of greater amberjack otoliths. It was suggested that FIN could potentially fund this project (assuming additional funds are received) in 2005. **D. Donaldson** stated that he would add this job to the list of activities for funding consideration and contact Debra Murie to get a copy of the project.

Discussion of Mississippi Tournament Sampling Protocols

D. Donaldson stated that FIN has tasked the Biological/Environmental Work Group with developing a sampling protocol for fishing tournaments. The group has been working on this issue for quite a while and the latest approach was to implement a pilot survey to collect catch and effort data from tournaments. Mississippi volunteered to conduct the survey. The GSMFC and Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) personnel met in February 2004 to discuss setting up tournament sampling protocols in Mississippi. However, as the group met, several issues and problems were identified. One of the issues dealt with the overall sample design. It needs to be stratified by species/species groups and since there are a large number of species, the sample size for each of the groups may be very small. Therefore, all of the tournaments may end up being surveyed (census). Also, some tournaments require only the vessels to register (not anglers) and may be difficult to get a good estimate of effort. Another issue concerned dockside sampling. There is a high probability of large bias because not all anglers will come through the weigh station. If an angler does not catch any fish or has a fish that will not place, he/she might bypass the weigh station and thus the data will not be collected. And other issue related to using a mail survey. There are the same biases involved with dockside, that is, it is likely to get the more avid anglers as well as those who caught fish. Also, the cost of conducting a mail survey could be high due to multiply mailings although a low response rate may still be the end result. The group asked that this Subcommittee address these issues and problems and provide some guidance regarding handling these issues.

The Subcommittee discussed the issues and problems address by the group and agreed that all of these issues could potentially bias the data and these problems should be considered when collecting the data. However, after some discussion, the Subcommittee believed that a pilot study for sampling fishing tournaments should still be conducted in Mississippi. Although there are potential biases, these biases are identified and can be measured to determine if they are significant (statistically). The Subcommittee believed that work should proceed with the pilot study and the results from the study can show if the potential biases are actually present and cause the perceived problems that the group identified. Because of lack of funding, the Subcommittee recommended that voluntary catch log be distributed to each of the anglers participating in the tournament. This approach will keep the costs low while still collecting the necessary data. The Subcommittee directed staff to pursue the development of a pilot study for tournament sampling in Mississippi. Staff will set up another meeting with DMR personnel to begin the development of this study.

Discussion of Head Boat Sampling in the Gulf of Mexico

D. Donaldson reported that the Subcommittee needed to discuss the status of the telephone calls to head boat operators in the Gulf. When the telephone calls were implemented in July 2003, it was hoped that additional funding to conduct at-sea and dockside sampling to collect catch data from head boats would be available in 2004. Unfortunately, this additional funding was not appropriated and FIN is currently just collecting effort data from the head boat fishery. By the end of June 2004, FIN will have 12 months of effort data and this group needs to decide if FIN should continue collecting effort data (via the phone survey) even though catch data are not being collected. **S. Atran** stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has passed a recommendation (through a reef fish FMP amendment) that effort data for charter and head boats should be collected via the For-Hire Telephone Survey. After some discussion, the Subcommittee recommended that the state continue conducting the telephone calls until December 2004 so a complete year (January – December) of data was available for analysis. The FIN Committee will further discuss this issue at their June meeting. It was suggested that the effort data collected from the head boat fishery needs to be incorporated into the review process. **D. Donaldson** noted that he has asked NMFS to generate head boat effort estimates for the group to review at the upcoming wave meeting in June.

D. Donaldson stated that with carry-over funds (obtained from M. Sestak being deployed in the army), Alabama is conducting a pilot survey to test the at-sea sampling methodology for collecting discard information as well as catch data. **K. Anson** distributed the operations manual and sampling form to the group and asked for any feedback from the group. He stated that two samplers will be riding head boat and will be randomly selecting anglers to collect discards data. He mentioned that the samplers will also collecting information about the released condition of the fish after it has been thrown overboard. This will record the relative “health” of the fish after it has been released. This type of information is very useful to stock assessment scientist when determining mortality rates. **D. Donaldson** stated that collecting this information could potentially affect the samplers’ ability to collect the basic discards data. Since this component was added to the proposed project, it should be collected as time permits and samplers should not let the collection of these data impact the collection of the discards information. The group then discussed collecting discards data at an angler level vs. vessel level. The proposed methodology will collect the discards data at an angler level. There was some discussion that the discards information does not need to be collected to that fine of a level. It will limit the amount of discards data the sampler can collect and this may be problematic. The vessel level will provide adequate data to determine discards rates and will allow samplers to collect more discards information. Based on the developed protocols, the ultimate goal is to sample all the anglers on the vessel. However, when that is not possible, the samplers would randomly select a subset of anglers to collected discards data. The group asked **D. Vaughan** (an assessment biologist) at what level should the discards data be collected. **D. Vaughan** stated that the discards information should be collected at the same level that the catch information.

J. Shepard asked if FIN was pursuing stratifying the for-hire vessels by passenger capacity. This would incorporate the head boats into the sampling design and allow for more representative sampling of all the vessels. **D. Donaldson** stated that this approach will eventually be the method used to sample all for-hire vessels but since FIN is still determining the best way to sample head boats, it would be premature to implement this methodology.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - **J. O'Hop** reported that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) is charged with the management, protection, and conservation of Florida's wild animal, fresh water, and marine life. The FWC administers the following programs: Law Enforcement, Wildlife, Freshwater Fisheries, Marine Fisheries, Florida Marine Research Institute, and the Executive Direction and Administrative Services. The FWC is currently planning a reorganization to be implemented, with the approval of the legislature, on July 1, 2004. The FWC will be attempting to reorganize along functional lines and separating, to the extent possible, research and monitoring processes from resource management. As part of this reorganization, Gil McRae will head the new Division of Research formed from staff and portions of the Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI), the Division of Freshwater Fisheries, and the Division of Wildlife, and FMRI will be renamed to the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

On the research and monitoring side of things, the Fisheries Assessment Section of FMRI has completed or participated in several state and federal assessments of marine fish during 2003, including yellowtail snapper, goliath grouper, hogfish, snowy grouper, speckled hind, warsaw, golden tilefish, and spotted seatrout. On April 6-7 in Cedar Key, FMRI fisheries research and monitoring staff will meet with the Division of Marine Fisheries. This work plan meeting is our attempt to plan for assessments and reports in the upcoming year and project research and data needs for the next 3-5 years. The impact of clearing of forested tracts and development in the Florida Big Bend and Panhandle area have the potential of altering the estuarine habitats, seagrass beds, offshore habitats, the Florida gulf coast and perhaps beyond. The implications of development in this relatively undeveloped area on water quality and fish and invertebrate populations for the Florida Gulf Coast may be substantial, and I expect that this may be a topic for discussion at the work plan meeting.

FMRI's Fish Biology group is again gearing up for additional research on a study of hook and bait use in the tarpon fishery. There is still a lot of contention between fishing guides and charter boat captains who use live bait or break-away jigs, and the low level of cooperation between the captains and FMRI's research staff may jeopardize our ability to provide any useful data on fishing mortality associated with the different gears used. Also, several fishing tournaments have applied for Special Activity Licenses so that tournament participants may hold red drum in live tanks and cull fish. This group is also involved with monitoring snook populations in South Florida, and conducts visual surveys in the Florida Keys relative to monitoring projects with the marine sanctuaries.

There are various surveys for spiny lobster and stone crabs conducted with the FMRI South Florida Regional Lab in Marathon, and the Fish Biology group is developing the details needed for potential expansion of stone crab pre-recruit monitoring along Florida's Gulf Coast funded through fees accumulating from the Stone Crab Trap Certificate Program. FMRI's Fisheries Independent Monitoring group has received grants for sampling relating to establishing low-flow requirements in rivers and for examining the effects on marine fauna of establishing the new security zones around vital infrastructures (i.e., these zones may function as marine protected areas), and continues their programs to monitor fish and invertebrates from several estuarine systems around Florida. FMRI's Fisheries Dependent Monitoring group has been improving the level of degradation protection for stored trip ticket paper archives and will be setting records retention policies on trip tickets in the upcoming months, processing trip tickets received during February of 2004, conducting dockside interviews of commercial fishermen and recreational anglers for the TIP, MRFSS and Head Boat surveys, conducting biological sampling for otoliths and tissues for DNA and mercury analyses. Staff has been increasing contacts with wholesale dealers in an effort to convince them to switch from paper trip tickets to computerized reporting using the software developed for the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) program and customized for Florida. The Stock Assessment and Modeling group worked on several stock assessments in 2003, is completing work on their annual "Trends Report" which provides a quick way of observing trends in CPUE (utilizing data from many sources within FMRI and from other partners) over the last 15 or so years for several species of marine fish and invertebrates, and is involved with a project to begin work on spatial modeling of grouper in conjunction with NMFS SEFSC and Mote Marine Laboratory. FMRI's Endangered and Threatened Species Section continues work on monitoring manatee populations and mortality, turtle nesting and mortality, and right whale populations. Manatee mortality was lower in 2003 than in 2002, but deaths due to red tide and boat collisions are still at high levels. Deaths from cold water stress in the winter is expected as freshwater withdrawals from aquifers increase, reducing the flows in freshwater springs which are traditional over-wintering areas for manatees, and as aging power plants with warm-water discharges go off-line for maintenance during the winter. Counts of turtle nests for loggerheads are noticeably declining, reversing a trend of increases over the previous 5 years, and strandings particularly of loggerheads have also been increasing. The monitoring of right whales over the last several years has resulted in the mapping of habitat use for these animals, and work is beginning on the development of predictive models to help ships avoid collisions with this particular species.

Alabama - **K. Anson** reported that due to inclement weather, Alabama Marine Resources Division (AMDR) personnel struggled to reach the targets for all of the modes for the recreational sampling. Although they did reach the targets for shore and charter boat, they were unable to obtain the target for the private/rental mode. For the same reason, collection of otoliths has been down since people just are not fishing. The Trip Interview Program (TIP) continues to operate in Alabama. There were some initial problems and issues with the TIP online data entry program but it appears to be running a little smoother. There is one dealer moving back to paper tickets (vs. the electronic trip ticket program) because he is unable to find someone who can accurately enter the data.

AMDR personnel is receiving a lot of requests for the data collected via the trip ticket program. The legal department is becoming more involved with the program due to confidentiality issues. AMDR conducted another derelict crab trap removal project and collected just over 350 derelict traps. This number is down from approximately 1,150 that were collected during last year's event. From these results, it appears that the project is meeting its objectives. AMDR personnel are working on establishing a proposed oyster dredging area. The area would be open to dredging and the allowable harvest would be based on the tonging limits. The area will be on a reef developed by a private company and could potentially open for dredging in October 2004. AMDR personnel will set up an oyster management station to collect data on the oysters that are harvested from this site. Via their routine sampling, AMRD personnel observed the first brown shrimp PLs at the end of February and the CPUE were higher than average. And a saltwater pipeline to the AMDR hatchery almost completed. It runs from the Gulf of Mexico to the hatchery (approximately 5½ miles).

Mississippi - **K. Cuevas** reported that the Seafood and Technology Bureau conducted 1,073 regulatory and technical assistance activities since October 2003. They assisted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration by providing mailing lists of processors and shippers of seafood required for Domestic Food Registration under the Bio-Terrorism Regulations. In addition two FDA workshops were attended on food security measures and the information received at these workshops are being used to educate the seafood industry.

The Shrimp and Crab Bureau will conduct a closed crab trap season and cleanup that will begin with Hancock County on March 14-21, then, move to Harrison County on March 22-27, and then Jackson county March 28 through April 3. A crab trap aerial count was conducted to identify areas with the largest concentrations of traps. By-catch data will be taken from derelict crab traps collected. On February 28, the DMR fisheries personnel participated in Louisiana's first derelict crab trap clean up. Fisheries personnel will also assist Alabama in their derelict crab trap clean up.

The American Fisheries Society's 2003 Sport Fish Restoration Award for "Outstanding Project of the Year" in the research and surveys category recognizes was jointly given to the DMR and the University of Southern Mississippi's GCRL to investigate Sargassum. Mr. Mike Buchanan was DMR's representative for the award. The artificial reef program deployed three derelict barges on an offshore reef in conjunction with the derelict vessel program. Approximately 2000 acres of habitat was mapped utilizing DMR's side scan sonar. There have been 15,491 trip tickets received from a combination of oyster trips, live bait dealers and finfish commercial fishermen. In addition, total shrimp landings for 2003 were 15.9 million pounds (heads-on) this is above the 12 year average (91-02) of 13.1 million pounds (heads-on).

All oyster areas have been closed to harvesting for the past 4 weeks. Area 2 Approved has been opened this past week for harvest. Mississippi plans to keep season open through April. As of the end of February 2004 there have been 384,973 sacks harvested and 15,477 trips made.

The DMR, in conjunction with GCRL, Cedar Point Facility, is in the planning stages of developing the technology for a spotted seatrout hatchery. Fish reared in the facility will be used to augment wild populations.

Louisiana - **J. Shepard** reported that Louisiana also conducted a derelict crab trap removal program and 6,115 traps from their waters. These traps were removed from only one section of the Louisiana coast. The trip ticket data was used to distribute the recent disaster relief funds to Louisiana shrimpers. There were 3,841 shrimpers who qualified to receive some portion of these funds. About 21% of the shrimpers got at least \$3,000. Louisiana is facing some problems regarding the for-hire telephone survey. Samplers are having difficulty contacting captains and are encountering a lot of answering machines. In an attempt to resolve this issue, a bill has been drafted and presented to the Louisiana legislature that would make participation in the phone survey mandatory. There is federal legislation that mandates the collection of social security number (SSN) by the states. It is the opinion of the Louisiana legal counsel that Louisiana does not have to pass state legislation to require the collection of this information. Louisiana can use the federal legislation as their requirement of collect SSN. Therefore, Louisiana is requiring anyone who purchases some type of commercial license to provide the SSN.

M. Kasprzak reported that the weather was an issue in Louisiana as well and because of the weather, Louisiana samplers were unable to reach their target in shore mode. There were some complaints from the samplers about the new draw program (for allocating interview sites). Since the fishing activity was so low, visiting the low-pressure sites seemed to be a waste of time. Therefore, there was concern that the new program could adversely affect the samplers' ability to reach the targets. As in Alabama, weather affected the otolith collections as well. As the weather has improved, productivity has also improved. She noted that she recently uploaded the 2003 trip ticket data to the FIN Data Management System (DMS). There was a problem with duplicate records but the issue has been resolved and the revised data is now in the FIN DMS. Louisiana has begun sending birth date as well as the other elements needed for the FIN registration tracking system. It was pointed out that if the states can collect SSN, the need for birth date is not necessary. Louisiana is now including all for-hire vessels (including all head boats) under the For-Hire Telephone Survey. It was asked if NMFS would continue to collect data from head boats (via logbooks) as well and **D. Donaldson** stated that NMFS has recently secured funds to continue this activity. It was asked how to handle the situation where both a MRFSS and head boat interview occurs at the same site. **D. Donaldson** stated in the past, it was whoever was the first person at the site took precedence. **M. Kasprzak** noted that she would call Bob Dixon and discuss this issue to ensure there was not confusion among the various samplers.

Texas - **V. Swann** reported that Texas is in the process of distributing the shrimp disaster funds to their fishermen. They are distributing the funds by an application process since a list of active shrimpers (as in Louisiana) does not exist. In round 13 of the shrimp license buyback, 78 shrimp licenses were bought back, of which 41 were bait and 37 were bay. The average price paid was \$7,500. The highest paid price was \$9,800 while

the lowest price was \$3,800. Of the original 3231 licenses 1083 have been bought back for a reduction of 33.5%. After three buyback rounds, TPWD has retired 21 crabbing licenses. About 220 commercial crabbing licenses remain in effect. In addition, 96 finfish licenses have been purchased to date. The Department has purchased about 17% of the licenses that were issued the first year of the program (567 Total). TPWD's 3rd Annual Crab Trap Removal Program (ACTRP) collected 3,571 traps with the help of over 300 volunteers. Over the last 3 years, this project has helped remove almost 15,500 traps from Texas coastal waters. This year, the oldest trap found had a tag dated 1992. Winds on the facilitated clean-up Saturday hampered efforts, but those who participated managed to collect 2,443 traps.

P. Campbell reported that in a reorganization effort to enhance Texas conservation with a focus on water, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) folded its Resource Protection Division, one of its 11 divisions, into other divisions, including Coastal Fisheries. The plan is to improve TPWD's ability to focus on water and water issues, including inflows into bays and estuaries, as one of the Department's top conservation priorities. Since Resource Protection functions are mandated by the State Parks and Wildlife Code, TPWD will not stop providing those functions, rather merge them with Coastal Fisheries, Inland Fisheries, and our Executive Office to gain efficiencies and provide more resources to support and enhance those functions. As part of this change, Dr. Larry McKinney was named the new Coastal Fisheries Division Director on 20 January 2004, filling the position vacated when Hal Osburn retired in August 2003. The first stage of the Department's internal science review has started. A contract is being prepared with the American Fisheries Society to review Coastal Fisheries research methods. Funding for this voluntary review is coming from federal State Wildlife Grants. TPWD is reviewing its fishing regulations and policies and is considering changes to its licensing structure, including fishing license packages that anglers could choose from: a freshwater fishing license, a saltwater fishing license or an all water fishing license good for both fresh and saltwater. All packages come with the appropriate required stamps/endorsements. TPWD continues its Gulf Charter Boat Survey. Texas will continue to survey the Gulf charter boat fleet until December of 2004 following FIN and MRFSS protocols. Texas will also continue to conduct otolith sampling for another year following the FIN protocols. We probably will continue biological (otolith) sampling next year, but the decision has not been finalized. Coastal staff is currently evaluating the charter boat survey. Funding of future charter boat and otolith programs are planned for discussion at the FIN meeting in June.

GMFMC - **S. Atran** reported that the Council has completed the SEDAR process on goliath grouper and hogfish. For goliath grouper, the data workshop determined that there was not enough data available to conduct a stock assessment. However, after further examination, it was determined that some analysis could be conducted and NMFS developed some relative fishing mortality and biomass estimates for this species. From this process, the results showed that goliath grouper is still overfished although it could recover within the next 10 years. These results still need to be reviewed by the various Council committees. For hogfish, the Council received a stock assessment from the state of Florida that was conducted by a contractor. Therefore, there were no data or

assessment workshop conducted for this species. The assessment review group identified many problems with the explanatory information in the assessment. One of the problems was the way MRFSS data was used to determine trips that target hogfish. The results from this analysis showed that the population was declining for this fishery. However, most of the other indices did not show that overfishing was occurring. The review committee has not accepted the assessment.

There is a final rule on the red grouper rebuilding amendment (Secretarial amendment 1) after two years of work. For the recreational fishery, there is a 5 grouper bag limit but only 2 of those fish can be red grouper. On the commercial side, there is a deep-water grouper quota of 1.02M pounds (gutted weight), which is a slight reduction from the current quota. For shallow-water groupers, NMFS is looking for a 10% reduction in shallow-water grouper harvest. So, to accomplish this reduction, the shallow-water grouper quota will be reduced to 8.8M pounds (gutted weight). In addition, within this quota, there will be a red grouper quota of 5.3M pounds (gutted weight). When either of these quotas are met, the entire shallow-water grouper fishery will be closed. NMFS is also going to implement a tilefish quota of 0.44M pounds (gutted weight). Currently, NMFS is not planned to implement the Council recommendation that when 75% of the shallow-water grouper quota is met, a 4,000-pound trip level would be implemented. The greater amberjack rebuilding plan (Secretarial amendment 2) has been approved by NMFS. This plan will not change any of the current fishing regulations for greater amberjack.

At the recent Council meeting, final action was not taken on the red snapper rebuilding plan (Reef fish amendment 23) because the public comment period just closed and the EPA has not provided their comments. The Council will seek final approval at their next meeting in May. The provisions in the plan are to maintain the existing 9.12M TAC and have periodic assessments until 2032. This amendment will have bycatch reporting requirements for all reef fish. One preferred alternatives is to implement an observer program (contingent on funding) and another is enhance the recreational fishing data collection activities by including head boats using the same methodology implemented to collect effort data from the charter boat fishery. The red snapper SEDAR process will be conducted this year. The data meeting is scheduled for April 2004, the assessment meeting will be in August 2004 and the review meeting will be conducted in October 2004. The Council is also moving forward with the development of a red snapper ITQ plan.

Shrimp amendment 13 is at the options paper stage. It contains various options regarding bycatch monitoring in the shrimp fishery. The alternative concern the implementation of a logbook for the shrimp fishery. The stock assessments scheduled to be conducted in 2005 include vermilion snapper, greater amberjack and scamp. The Council has hired a new economist and he will begin working in August. NMFS will be conducting a constituent workshop regarding the recreational data and how to utilize these data. This meeting is tentatively scheduled to meet in conjunction with the Gulf Council meeting in September.

NMFS - **G. Davenport** asked that everyone continue working with the TIP online program. NMFS is continuing to update the program, however, people need to utilize the program as well. This has presented some unique problems. NMFS continues to work with Louisiana to review the trip ticket data. Louisiana provides the data to NMFS and it is distributed to their field agents who in turn, provide comments back to Louisiana about possible updates. All the shrimp data from the Louisiana trip ticket system is utilized in the NMFS gulf shrimp program. It is supplemented with interviews and the combined data set served as the official database. This system has become routine. NMFS is also exploring establishing a similar routine with Alabama. There has been some problems with establishing adequate (speed) data connections in the field. NMFS is attempting to set up DSL connections but has encountered some problems. NMFS with the assistance of Louisiana personnel are attempting to increase the detailed effort data collection activities for shrimp. This is an ongoing project and NMFS is still not getting adequate number of interviews to be representative of the fishing activity. The TIP sampling continues but due to bad weather, it has been difficult to collect the data. Quota monitoring for grouper is now a mail-in system where dealers are required to send the data into NMFS. The weight that is required is now gutted weight and the reason for this change was because there was confusion and concerns about conversion factors (from landed weight to gutted weight). The king mackerel quota has yet to be met this year. Usually the quota is met very quickly but it has not happened this year. There are some theories that there is colder water in the region, which has spread the fish out over a larger area as well as some "black water" events. Since the quota was implemented, it has always been met so this is a very unique year. NMFS is conducting some computer training for their Louisiana field staff. LSU is allowing NMFS to bring their personnel to the LSU computer facility and utilize their resources. One of the NMFS field agents is retiring and there are no plans to fill that position once that person leaves.

GSMFC -**D. Donaldson** reported that the recreational activities continue to run smoothly and the states are still exceeding quota on routine basis. He mentioned that later this month Alabama would begin collecting data from head boat data via the at-sea sampling methods. The purpose of the pilot is to test this methodology. He noted that the states, GSMFC and NMFS met last month to discuss the data collection activities. One of the issues presented were the results from the for-hire economic value survey. He distributed some shark ID manuals produced by the Sea Grant program. This book will be very useful to samplers by assisting them in identifying the various sharks of the region. Although only several per state were received, it is possible to order additional copies. It was suggested that GSMFC could order the additional copies in order to take advantage of the cost savings when ordering in bulk. Therefore, it was agreed that the states would provide staff with their ID book requests, and GSMFC will order them. The states need to provide this information to the GSMFC no later than April 5, 2004.

Regarding the commercial aspects of FIN, the trip tickets programs are running smoothly. The electronic trip ticket reporting system is continuing to grow. There are currently 206 dealers (75 in Louisiana; 18 in Alabama and 113 in Florida) utilizing the system. The FIN DMS is now accessible at the FIN web page (www.gsmfc.org/fin.html) and is operating smoothly. **D. Donaldson** noted that Mike Sestak and Gregg Bray are working

on loading the biological data into the system. These data should be available by April of this year. In addition, Mike Sestak and Donna Bellais are working with the states to compile the necessary data for the registration tracking system. And Texas recreational data is now available in the system.

Other Business

S. Atran stated that at the last Gulf Council meeting, the Council discussed the collection of highly migratory species (HMS) in the Gulf of Mexico. There is concern that recreational harvest (and associated effort) of HMS species is not adequately being captured with the current sampling programs operating in the Gulf of Mexico. The Council made a recommendation that FIN examine the issue of collecting harvest, effort and size frequency data for highly migratory species, specifically yellowfin tuna, in the Gulf of Mexico. **D. Donaldson** noted that the FIN has addressed this issue and FIN recognizes the importance of these data. However, in order to expand the data collection activities to cover these species, additional funds are needed to implement this expansion. After a brief discussion, it was suggested that this issue be added to the FIN agenda and discussed at the FIN Committee meeting scheduled for June 2004.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 54th Spring Meeting
Monday, March 15, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Jim Hanifen called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Mark Leiby, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Terry Henwood, NMFS, Pascagoula, 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
Virginia Herring, Executive Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Ann Lange, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Karen Mitchell, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Mark McDuff, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Terry Romaine, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Michael Harden, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Peter Hoar, NCDDC, Stennis Space Center, MS
Doug Vaughn, NMFS, Beaufort, NC

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as submitted.

Approval of Minutes

S. Heath moved to approve the October 14, 2003 minutes as submitted. **P. Choucair** seconded the motion and it passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the Fall Groundfish Survey took place last fall. Mississippi was not able to conduct fall plankton sampling as he reported last year, but they were able to do some plankton sampling during December. **R. Waller** said they were able to collect at four standard SEAMAP stations and those samples have been put into the system.

J. Rester reported the Marine Directory was produced and distributed in February, as was the 2001 SEAMAP Atlas. He reminded the Subcommittee that they will be doing the real time shrimp summaries this summer and asked that they get their information in as soon as possible.

J. Rester said Cynthia Binkley would contact him on how to submit the grant amendments for the new funding allocations. He will contact the Subcommittee when he receives this information. He also reported \$10,000 was taken out of the \$350,000 for NMFS taxes. **L. Simpson** suggested the Subcommittee draft a letter asking NMFS to waive these taxes as it has in the past. After discussion, **S. Heath** moved for **J. Rester** to draft a letter for **J. Hanifen's** signature on behalf of the Subcommittee asking NMFS to exempt SEAMAP from these taxes. **R. Waller** seconded the motion and it passed.

SEAMAP Database Management Report

M. McDuff reported they installed the new SCS data entry system onto the *TOMMY MUNRO* and it should be up and running by June. He demonstrated the new system to the Subcommittee and stated that by using this system with the sensors, it automates entering the data into the system. If there was not a sensor for certain data, it could still be entered manually. He then discussed the FSCUS system and the Microsoft Access data entry system and demonstrated the features of the systems. He said he was planning to set up a training session in May for anyone who was interested in using the new system. He will contact the Subcommittee with the exact dates for the training.

SEAMAP ArcIMS Website

P. Hoar, Coastal Ecosystem Program Manager for the new NOAA Coastal Data Development Center (NCDDC) reported that some time ago he was approached by **J. Rester** to develop display capabilities for the SEAMAP database. He said they had a meeting at Stennis Space Center (SSC) last month and they came up with some potential ideas on how ArcIMS can be used to improve the display of SEAMAP data. He stated the NCDDC was the newest of the four NOAA data centers and it was designed primarily to improve access to data, whether that was to derive products such as mapping, or actually to provide access to raw data, as opposed to the other centers, which are

primarily archival. He said they provide access to data through gateways and Internet links, data management, and metadata services. They have developed a metadata tool that allows a user to develop metadata without having a great deal of experience. It guides the user through the process. He then started his presentation and explained they do data displays through GIS mapping analysis and data rescue. He said that with M. McDuff's help they have developed an initial gateway to the SEAMAP portion of the overall SEMAP database. He then showed examples of the metadata records they have set up. They were also developing online querying capabilities to use with the ArcIMS and he showed examples on how to use this feature. He then showed various maps that he produced using the ArcIMS by creating shapefiles from the data. He then distributed a CD-ROM that contains the agenda, list of attendees and presentations that were made at the meeting, and the presentation he just gave.

S. Heath suggested that while they are developing this system, there should be a comment line or some place to annotate any important changes or trends that happened when the data was collected. **M. McDuff** said they were still in the process of developing a manual that documents any differences on how each state and NMFS collects their data that was not exactly how it was in the SEAMAP Manual.

J. Hanifen thanked P. Hoar for his presentation. **J. Rester** asked if the Subcommittee should give P. Hoar any guidance to his ongoing development of this system. The Subcommittee stated they would address this after the Atlas presentation.

SEAMAP Atlas Discussion

J. Rester reported that he and P. Choucair met in the Commission office after the meeting at Stennis to discuss developing a new version of the atlas using the newest technology and making it more user friendly. **P. Choucair** stated that historically the SEAMAP atlas has been a compilation of that year's work. He said that after the last meeting he developed different forms of summaries for the SEAMAP data. He envisions having a CD version of the atlas with several options on what to do with the data. He then explained and demonstrated how to use the ArcExplorer software capabilities to make shapefiles to display the data that was already summarized on the CD. The user would have the option of exploring everything on the CD. He said the main thing he wants to discuss was the user capability that was available from the SEAMAP database, i.e., species abundance, frequency of occurrence, and so forth. He then demonstrated how to use the program by showing different queries, reports, and summaries that can be displayed using the program. He said they have agreed to use 10 x 10 grids so it would be a standardized system, then showed tables and maps created with catch rate data. He also said this information can be exported into other software programs such as Excel.

J. Hanifen asked him what it took to get to this point. **P. Choucair** said a user needs the standard data and metadata and has to know what to request. He said he recommends transforming the SEAMAP database into such a format where everything was leveled out. In other words, the 30-minute tows would not have the minutes fished but rather the hours fished and that would already be transformed to the stored database. **M. McDuff**

said that for the atlas, the data preparation always takes more time than the actual plotting. **J. Hanifen** said that for the last several meetings the Subcommittee has been discussing greater and quicker access to the SEAMAP data and changes have to be made to do this. He said that in P. Hoar's presentation, he showed some of the differences in the survey designs over time and thinks P. Choucair's suggestions to address these issues sounded reasonable. **R. Lukens** said the Subcommittee needs to find a way to make the delivery side of the program data more up to date and useful from a management standpoint. There should not be so much lag time with today's technology.

P. Choucair said there were two different issues: cleaning up the data and getting it into the database, and then being able to access the data. He said accessing and knowing exactly what the user was getting was the main problem. He asked if it would be possible to have a duplicate of the SEAMAP database where all of these quirks were already addressed. He said he also noticed -9's in the database and asked if it was in ORACLE. **M. McDuff** said it was in ORACLE but the new database will not have that. **P. Choucair** said another product that needs to be a part of the atlas was a summary of how many samples and tows were in there and any differences in the survey designs.

J. Rester informed the Subcommittee about ArcExplorer which is a free software that will take GIS files and do manipulations with them but the main files have to be generated elsewhere. He said the software was free and can be distributed on CD-ROM. A readme file can be used for viewing the SEAMAP data in different ways. He then demonstrated the software to the Subcommittee. He said in ArcGIS and ArcView different breaks can be set up but when shapefiles are imported into ArcExplorer, a user has to manually set up the different breaks between the levels and the scales cannot be changed. Basic queries can also be done with ArcExplorer. He said this was a powerful program but would take some explaining. Readme files would have to be set up but this was a way to visually look at SEAMAP data.

After discussion, the Subcommittee decided to appoint a subgroup to meet and discuss these issues. The group should point the Subcommittee in a direction that makes SEAMAP relevant to today's fisheries managers. SEAMAP has good fisheries independent data and there needs to be a way to let users know it was there and can be used fairly easily. The group should further refine the questions of how to get the data, who was the customer, what is available, and what are the processes to get the data. If possible, the subgroup should meet this afternoon.

J. Rester asked the Subcommittee if he and P. Choucair should proceed with the new ideas for the 2002 atlas. After discussion, **S. Heath moved to accept all suggestions on the atlas and have J. Rester and P. Choucair proceed for the 2002 atlas. R. Waller seconded, and the motion passed.**

P. Choucair moved to develop a committee to consider a project to try to integrate the different state's data and give further direction for the data management for SEAMAP data. S. Heath seconded, and the motion passed.

Other Business

M. Leiby said that after the Subcommittee met to discuss the new funding allocations, university policy has changed and he needs to put some of that money into upgrading salaries. He would have approximately \$5,000.00 - \$10,000.00 left over that he can give to someone else. The Subcommittee agreed to wait to see what the exact amount would be before deciding how to allocate the money. It was suggested to use the money for software or travel expenses.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES – 54th Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 16, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

G. Cane called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Grey Cane III, CCA, Daphne, AL
Bob Fairbanks, MS Power, Gulfport, MS
Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS
Randy Gros, Marrero, LA
Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Coden, AL
Degraff Adams, CCA, Richmond, TX

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

Others

Oneil Malbrough, Shaw Coastal, Inc.,
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Frank Courtney, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Bob Spain, TPWD, Austin, TX
Mark LaSalle, MS Sea Grant Extension, Biloxi, MS
Nancy Thompson, NMFS/SEFSC, Miami, FL
Steve Heath, AMRD/ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Michael Bailey, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, VA

Introductions

G. Cane welcomed everyone and reported that a quorum for both the commercial and recreational sectors had been met although a few members were unable to attend. It was pointed out that the Texas commercial seat was still vacant.

Adoption of Agenda

R. Gros moved to adopt the agenda as written, **B. Fairbanks** seconded and the agenda was adopted.

Approval of Minutes (October 14, 2003)

R. Gros moved to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by **D. Adams** and the minutes were approved.

Coastal Restoration Projects

All five states presented proposed and ongoing work in their respective states related to coastal habitat restoration. Several of the states highlighted projects to rebuild marshes and find beneficial use for dredge spoil. **Mark LaSalle**, MS Sea Grant, stated it best... "most dredge spoil began as marsh and could become marsh again." The projects covered the full spectrum from artificial reefs in offshore waters to inshore reefs and tidal marshes, to upland pine savanna, bayhead swamp, and bottomland forest. A key component of most of the projects discussed was the involvement of stakeholders and community groups. Success depended upon the cooperation and contribution by these private groups and organizations.

Bob Spain, TPWD, provided information on several of the projects undergoing in coastal Texas including Galveston and Christmas Bay as well as the cooperative efforts with local community groups and the Army Corp of Engineers. **Mark LaSalle**, MS Sea Grant, identified several sites in Mississippi waters currently under restoration activities including Deer Island and several proposed sites around the state.

Steve Heath, AMRD/ADCNR, discussed several projects underway in Alabama waters primarily focusing on reef building both offshore and inshore. Also mentioned were activities in the Mobile Bay NEERS site using local groups for both oyster and SAV gardening. **Frank Courtney**, FWS, discussed similar topics throughout the Gulf coast of Florida and included several projects which focused on replacement of exotic terrestrial fauna with native species.

Oneil Malbrough, Shaw Coastal, Inc., gave a review of Louisiana's legislative responses to coastal habitat restoration. Malbrough discussed several of the coastal wetlands projects and explained how several funded projects in the past had failed due to lack of participation and support at the local level. The new approach starts at the local level and asks citizens and parish officials to propose projects and has achieved high success towards completing those projects.

Participation in Permit Fisheries

Robert Sadler, NMFS/SERO Permits Branch, was unable to attend the meeting due to travel restrictions but provided some preliminary data on federal permits and

participation in the various federal fisheries. Since B. Zales had originally proposed this topic, it was suggested that he be contacted to determine if the Panel would take this up again at the October meeting.

Invasive Species Update

R. Lukens, GSMFC, updated the Panel on his activities related to invasive and non-indigenous species. He provided a summary of activities of the Gulf of Mexico Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species, including the upcoming meeting scheduled for March 31 and April 1, 2004 in Mobile, Alabama. Currently, three work groups are inactive, and three work groups are active. All five Gulf states are in some stage of developing a state aquatic invasive species management plan. Texas, Florida, and Louisiana are near completion of the process, while Mississippi has just begun its plan development. There is interest on the part of Alabama, and it is expected that some plan development activity could begin there in the near future. Finally, Lukens informed the Panel that the newly revised web site for invasive species, hosted by the GSMFC, has been launched, found at [www.gsmfc.org/Invasive Species](http://www.gsmfc.org/Invasive_Species).

IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy gave a very short update on the activities of the IJF program highlighting progress on both the Striped Bass FMP Revision and the Sheepshead Profile. He briefly discussed a few of the other activities of the IJF office including the key entry of menhaden CDFRs and continuing participation of the derelict trap task force in state cleanups.

Other Business

P. Barber voiced concern over how ComFIN and Federal Log Books were being handled and asked staff to check into the possibility of double counting landings. Concern was initiated by newly established quota on small coastal sharks. **D. Donaldson** indicated he would check on exactly how and if the various data sources are evaluated and if they are meshed in any way. He would report back in the fall.

R. Lukens provided a short report on the Artificial Reef Subcommittee activities. He indicated that the Artificial Reef Materials Guidelines was currently at the printer and would be available soon. Lukens also reported on continuing discussion between MARAD (Maritime Administration) and the Navy regarding the availability to the states of decommissioned ships for reef building. MARAD refuses to accept the terms set by the states regarding cleaning, scrapping, and deploying of ships. The Navy, however, has been more cooperative regarding the state criteria for distributing ships. An international conference on artificial reefs has been scheduled for April of 2005 in Biloxi. The last time this conference took place was in 2002 in Italy.

The CRFAP indicated an interest in “truth in labeling” for seafood products. Staff will arrange for presentations on this topic for the October meeting.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE
Minutes – 54th Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 16, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana

Chairman Larry Young (Texas) called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following attended:

Members

Bruce Buckson, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Walter Chataginer, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Thomas Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
David McKinney, NOAA OLE, Austin, TX
Don Montoro, USCG, New Orleans, LA (*Proxy for J. Sherlock*)
Karen Raine, NOAA/GCEL/SE, St. Petersburg, FL
Larry E. Young, TPWD, Austin, TX

Members Absent

USFWS Representative (*T. Riley retired*)
John Sherlock, USCG 8th District, New Orleans, LA

Staff

Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Ron Dearmin, NOAA Fisheries, Stennis Space Center, MS
Andrew Jones, USCG, New Orleans, LA
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Adoption of Agenda

J.T. Jenkins moved to adopt the agenda as presented. **J. Mayne** seconded, and the agenda was adopted as written.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the October 14, 2003 meeting held in Corpus Christi, Texas. **C. Yocom** noted that the attached LEAP minutes from the same day are for informational purposes only. **J.T. Jenkins** moved to adopt the minutes as written, and **B. Buckson** seconded the motion, which was approved.

IJF Program Activity

Striped Bass FMP. **J.T. Jenkins** reported that the striped bass plan is wrapping up, and the committee will meet one final time. He will forward the enforcement section to the Committee for one final review before publication.

Sheepshead FMP. **J. Mayne** reported that the task force has met twice, and the document is approximately half complete.

FDA Shellfish Specialist Training

J.T. Jenkins reminded the Committee that Miriam Stuckey (FDA) wanted to meet with the group in conjunction with today's meeting. There was some confusion since she never confirmed, and J.T. explained that many in the group would not be staying the extra night. He suggested that she join the group during their next conference call, and he requested that all members be ready to schedule a meeting for development of the training, which will be placed on the DVD. The meeting will entail three days and be within the next two to three months.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - **B. Buckson** reported that one of the primary issues in the state is manatee protection. Several state judges have declared portions of the speed zone rules in Lee County unconstitutional. Temporary federal zones were declared. Lawsuits in the Jacksonville area are pending. Additional positions were added to marine patrol to deal with manatee protection. A recent change was made to the single bag limit on redfish rule. Tournaments were having a problem with anglers culling their catch to increase the likelihood of winning. A rule adjustment was made so that redfish will be eligible for a tournament exemption. The fisherman will be able to catch a redfish and if they continue to fish during the day and catch a larger redfish, they may release the smaller, live redfish. B. Buckson noted that it would be interesting if the group could address tournament-caught fish and issues involving regulations and disposition of the fish.

D. McKinney moved that each member review the regulations pertinent to tournament fishing in their respective jurisdiction for the purposes of discussion for a plank sometime in the future. **J. Mayne** seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Division of Marine Fisheries is undergoing a complete review of all marine fisheries rules. Currently, rules are categorized by species. The division plans to revamp the rules into commercial and recreational sections. Florida contracted P. Allen (retired) to work on this project. The legislative session is underway, and a few issues need to be addressed, primarily the budget. Major considerations include bringing their fleet of vessels up to date. Several bills are being tracked; net limitation is still being addressed. Another bill deals with night driving without headlights by all enforcement in the state; a

very detailed policy must be developed. This legislation is in response to an unfortunate accident which resulted in the death of two FWC officers in 2001.

W. Chatagner noted that in Mississippi, tournaments may be required in the near future to report all landings – who caught the fish, where they were landed, size, weight, gear used, etc. K. Cuevas is writing the ordinance at this time.

B. Buckson also noted that Florida is in the process of industry workshops to come up with a derelict crab trap program which may include a temporary closure.

Alabama - J.T. Jenkins reported the Alabama Marine Resources Division is under a new administration since the election of Governor Riley. Their advisory board has a more active role in the division's process. The board met in March to set up items for input; they will meet again on May 22 to take action on several issues. There has been a big push to close some of the inshore shrimping areas, especially the upper Mobile Bay and upper Mississippi Sound along Grand Bay. The last push for closure was in 1997. One difference in this effort is The National Estuary Program in the Mobile Bay is coordinating the project and mediating between user groups. In May, recommendations will be given. Certain user groups are always against any closures, and rumors abound. Commercial fishermen called with concerns that all inshore waters were closing to the shrimp fishery. Most environmental groups are fighting to preserve the grass beds in these inshore areas.

In Alabama, oyster dredging is not allowed on public reefs. Mississippi and Louisiana both have active dredging programs. Gulf Stream, a pipeline company, provided the funding to build two experimental reefs in Portersville Bay as a pilot project. The project met with resistance from the fishing community, which feels tonging is the correct way to harvest oysters. The social environment is one hurdle this experiment faced. The advisory board will address this issue in May.

The division is refining net regulations. Alabama never had a requirement where you could not use a float rope. A rule added the use of corks. An extensive point system is in place, and additions were made to add points for under-tended gill nets and increase marking on seines.

These are the main issues Alabama is working on between now and May 22. The new process is more structured. Four new officers are onboard April 5. Two officers are currently in the boat school. All new officers have taken the USCG's boarding officer's class. The legislature is in session; there are budget problems in the general fund. Most agencies took a 15%-25% cut last year in their operating budget, and this year, agencies may have to work at that level again. Alabama has three separate divisions within the state – wildlife and freshwater fisheries, marine police, and marine fisheries division. The marine police division recently moved under the wildlife and freshwater fisheries director. An enhanced jurisdictional bill passed the House and will come up for vote in the Senate within the next two weeks.

Mississippi. **W. Chatagner** reported Mississippi also elected a new Governor. Like other states, Mississippi is working under budget constraints. Fortunately, legislators are impressed with the financial management within the Department. Unlike the three previous years, the Department ran under a full operating budget last year. For three prior years, the Department ran with 30% cuts in operating funds. Legislation on the oyster relaying project is under revision. Statute currently requires that a marine enforcement officer be onboard the vessel from start to finish of the relay. The change will be for any DMR employee to be onboard the vessel from start to finish. The derelict crab trap removal program is underway. The season is closed in one-week increments per county moving the crab traps out a half mile from the beach. This will lighten the burden on the fishermen. The first week of shrimp season, the crab traps will be moved inside the half mile line to assist the shrimp fishermen. The Department has lost three people to retirement (a combined 50 years of law enforcement experience) since January. We expect to lose another man in June with 28 years of experience. Since the last meeting, two have graduated from academy. Another cadet graduated two weeks ago. Yesterday, the Department hired two officers and performed interviews for one more position. A dispatcher was recently hired. A new ordinance (9.004) went into effect in November 2003 that authorized law enforcement officers to request bills of lading from factories on certain species of fish (speckled trout, red fish, black drum, etc.). Data given to enforcement is now comparable to the data given to biologists. The Boat & Water Safety Division conducted 91 classes and certified 1,100 students (of the total 1,300 attempting the class). The division conducted 23 different outreach and 18 presentation classes. There were four boat-related fatalities last year from 18 boating accidents. Last Thursday marked the first boating accident on the coast this year. Homeland security work continues, and the Naval Air Station in Meridian offered numerous investigative classes (interview and interrogation, drug interdiction, surveillance, crime scene videography, etc.).

Louisiana. **J. Mayne** reported Louisiana has also gone through an administrative change. Governor Blanco appointed Dwight Landreneau as Secretary of Wildlife and Fisheries. There are 13 cadets in the academy. The Louisiana shrimp industry is affected negatively by imports and is raising money to institute a tariff on imported shrimp. Louisiana just finished its first pilot program on derelict trap collection south of Terrebonne Parish. In two weeks, about 7,000 crab traps were collected. Many different agencies came to assist including (but not limited to) the National Marine Fisheries Service, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The regular session of the legislature will begin March 29. Several Department bills are proposed, one of which would be a mandatory life jacket wearing law when in a vessel less than 26' in length while the motor is running. Another will separate commercial and recreational finfish fishing trips. While on a commercial finfish fishing trip, all the catch must abide by the commercial season, commercial bag limits, and commercial size requirements. The Commission just approved a notice of intent to modify the declaration of emergency for the southwestern portion of the state next to the Texas boundary where speckled trout is limited to two fish over 27 inches. Other bills were filed to require crab

traps not having to be marked with a float in freshwater portions of the state, mainly intended for camp owners troubled with theft. The Crab Task Force proposed legislation to issue a crab trap moratorium on the issuance of crab trap gear licenses. Because of the collapsing shrimp industry, fishermen are moving toward the crab fishery. Aquaculture legislation is being researched. Historically, the LDWF has legislated aquaculture issues; the Department of Agriculture is now attempting to oversee. There have been constitutional challenges, and legislation is being developed for the two agencies to work together. Other legislation initiated by the Seafood Advisory Board included a bill that allows a dealer to possess undersized crabs when their paperwork reflects that those undersized crabs possessed and bought that day was sufficient to cover the tolerance. Another bill filed addressed a commercial quota on red drum.

Louisiana has a regional homeland security training center as part of the Ascension Parish sheriff's department and in cooperation with the FBI, the LDWF, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Texas. **L. Young** commented that when Texas implemented the limit of one speckled trout allowed over 25 inches, everyone wanted to allow two. One fishing guide was adamantly opposed to the one fish limit, but when the hearing officer asked him in his forty years of guide fishing, how many times had the guide experienced a trip where he caught a trout over 25 inches. The guide stated it had never happened.

An academy is going on in Texas to try to recoup the recent retirement sweep. Over 50 officers have retired since September 1. We began with 40 cadets on January 1 and have lost one. These cadets will graduate this summer and they hope to begin another academy September 1 with 40 more. That will get the total number of officers in the state up to 500. Texas continues to fight with budget problems and limited funding. The one positive aspect is that law enforcement seems to be holding its own in these tough times. While their agency is not getting everything they want, they are getting what they need. Like the other agencies, they too are more heavily involved in homeland security. Game wardens are working big refineries and deep-water ports. One positive side includes getting fuel from other sources which supplements their budget.

In February, Texas had its third closed season for crab traps. Naturally in the first year, more traps were pulled from the water. In the second year, the number was down. This year 4,000 traps were retrieved; there are still more traps to pull, but not nearly as many. You can definitely see a difference in the bays.

The agency has proposed a whole list of new fishing licenses. It was needed to an extent because it was ridiculously high for a nonresident to come into the state to fish for a day (minimum \$40). There are several new combination licenses for hunting and fishing opportunities.

A bill was proposed last session to ban inshore shrimping and was defeated early, but there is already talk about a new bill with more support. The Gulf, bait, and bay shrimp

fishermen are really struggling with the imports. The majority of these fishermen have all three licenses. About 1500 fishermen will be impacted.

Peace officers are gathering to make a run for a pay-raise in 2005 for all state certified peace officers. All Texas officers have or are going through training for a dual commission with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Finally, there was an opportunity for him to go back to the field as a Major in Corpus Christi, and he chose to take it. He is no longer at Austin headquarters, and he will not be serving on the Committee. He hopes to attend the October meeting with his replacement who will serve on the Committee.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - No report. Since Tom Riley retired, staff was instructed to inquire into his replacement.

U.S. Coast Guard - **D. Montoro** invited all to utilize the Gulf Fisheries Training Center in New Orleans. Their facility will accommodate the states' officers. Technical questions on TEDs and other federal regulations are answerable 24 hours a day. The Coast Guard has continued to perform medium endurance cutter patrols off the Gulf, primarily homeland security, but they are doing ancillary living marine resource (LMR) patrols. ATC Mobile continues to fly over several of the closed areas on a daily basis. Last year they did about 690 LMR boarding's. Since 9/11 the numbers have dropped drastically. Last year, they did 65 cases in comparison to 110 the year before. The Coast Guard, along with NOAA OLE, has commented heavily on the Madison-Swanson reauthorization, which changes the regulations dealing with surface trawling and allowing coastal migratory pelagic fishing during six months per year. The Coast Guard is concerned about the ability to enforce these regulations. They are also concerned about bottom long-lining which would allow shark because it is a highly migratory species (HMS). Headquarters is working on comments dealing with the new rules on HMS, specifically circle hooks and its specifications. Fisheries enforcement is becoming more proactive in commenting on proposed regulations. Since the last meeting, the Coast Guard had 406 LMR boarding's. There is an increase in blue crab trawling in Mississippi and Alabama inside state waters. These vessels are not using TEDs. In looking at ESA definitions of a shrimp trawler, many of the crab trawlers fit those definitions. There is no requirement for product to be aboard; it is the capability of the vessel to catch shrimp. Many of these vessels are operating near shrimp vessels and do retain shrimp in their nets. Turtles have a 30-minute drowning rate, and the crab fishermen are trawling longer than 30 minutes without TEDs.

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement - **D. McKinney** wished L. Young well in his new position. The marine protected area (MPA) issue at the Council meeting in Naples caused a large objection by the law enforcement community, but the Council did not agree. He has coined two phrases since: MPA = marine protected area where no fishing can occur and MPA = marine privileged area where some people can fish. Clearly there is a distinction.

Dick Livingston retired. An advertisement came out in December to fill the Southeast Special Agent in Charge (SAC). Interviews are beginning this week, and he hopes the new SAC will be at the October meeting. Three new agents were hired, and have been through criminal investigation school. They will attend boat school next. One agent each is being added to Marathon, Florida; Harlingen, Texas; and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

A NOAA Operating Order that falls on the heels of the NOAA Administrator's intent for NOAA - Safe Place to Work created a set of guidelines that included vessel inspections. Vessels loaned to other organizations fall under those guidelines. A NOAA Corps officer will be inspecting the vessels, and if equipment is needed to bring the vessel up to code 217, NOAA OLE will bear the expense. R. Dearmin will be working with you.

A new VMS program for pelagic long line was instituted. The program is robust in terms of the servers and other electronic machinery, and several technical people were hired. The program has the capability to add 10,000 to 20,000 vessels. Several other fisheries are proposed for VMS, the red snapper long line fishery that seems to have a lot of support by the commercial fisherman and a certain number of Council members. The other VMS proposal is for the shrimp fleet which seems to have enough problems as it is.

Several issues are coming up on the Mexican border. Forgery of DOC documentation on facilitating imports and exports through Mexico is still a problem. A number of years ago, Americans were getting their shrimp processed in Mexico within the free zone. Mexico was concerned with wild stock viruses affecting aquaculture product and requested inspections. America agreed to inspect the product on their side and issue a health certificate. The health certifications were forged. A ring of Mexican forgers were busted, and an American company was also closed down. There have been a number of cases of illegal fishing in the Mexican EEZ area. VMS may assist in making these cases.

The overall number of cases within the Southeast Division is still high even with the aftermath of 9/11. That is, in part, in due to the cooperation between agencies. Since the level of sophistication within NOAA OLE and the states has risen to the point that combined covert investigations are possible.

The new TED regulations went into effect in November, and normal enforcement procedures are in effect. Finally, there is a move to put together a protected radar system like the one in Florida at Smith Shoals to protect the Flower Gardens Marine Sanctuary system.

NOAA General Counsel - **K. Raine** distributed all quarterly reports from 2003 to the group. With the shrimp permit in place in the Gulf, notices of intent have been issued to deny permits to those people who owe money when they apply for the permit. That has been a positive note in the enforcement collections effort. The total number of cases in which NOVAs were issued was 154 and includes 365 counts. The amount of penalties assessed was \$1,750,000. There were 2,180 permit sanctions assessed, and just over

\$175,000 worth of property was seized and sold. There were 90 Magnuson Act cases, 12 Endangered Species Act cases, and 54 Marine Sanctuary cases.

J.T. Jenkins noted that through the JEAs the states have begun handling the majority of their own federal cases now. He inquired if a printout was available of the number of federal cases handled within the states. The information is on the JEA monthly reports.

D. McKinney stated that when the new software is in place, it should be able to track those numbers.

B. Buckson inquired whether NOAA GC has seen a reduction in the number of federal cases since the JEAs have been in place. **K. Raine** noted that in a cursory look through the quarterly reports, it appears so.

Joint Enforcement Agreements

L. Young asked D. McKinney to update the group – is funding is going to happen, at what level? **D. McKinney** replied that both he and Chef D. Jones have been on travel, so he does not have any additional information. What he can share with the group is that D. Jones made funding allocations to Louisiana and Alabama. His recommendation would be since J. Mayne and J.T. Jenkins reached out with a conference call to D. Jones and subsequently received their allocation that the other states do the same. That way he can speak to each state specifically regarding funding. D. Jones determines the funding and allocation of funding. **J.T. Jenkins** noted that Alabama has actually asked for more than NOAA wanted to allocate, and during that conference call, D. Jones indicated that everyone should know what their allocation was within the month. That did not happen.

D. McKinney noted that states like Alaska may not need the JEA money. There may be other states, as well, who do not need the JEA funds. D. Jones anticipated that money would be available to other states to fully fund their JEA Program.

L. Young asked that for Texas to get any further in the progress, he needs to call D. Jones? **D. McKinney** replied to give D. Jones' office a call and ask to be placed on the calendar for time to discuss Texas' JEA allocation with D. Jones.

J.T. Jenkins noted that NOAA was supposed to have taken administrative funds to help manage the program better. Did that occur? By law, 10% of the program went to fund the administrative process. **D. McKinney** noted that no hire occurred. They may be looking at contract people.

W. Chatagner noted that the first year of the JEA Program had a good funding force with money coming to the states. Then, the second year, NOAA did not get the funds out in time, and Congress stepped in and took it back. NOAA came to the states and asked them to lobby to get money back into the program. The states did so, and this year, money is back in the program, but the states have not been allocated or funded. Is the money going to be lost again?

D. McKinney stated that he senses their frustration, but he does not control the program or the funding.

W. Chatagner moved that the Chairman of the Law Enforcement Committee write a letter to D. Jones expressing their frustration with this process. Other members of the Committee suggested that the states reach out to D. Jones individually first. The motion died without a second.

B. Buckson noted that another idea that fell through the cracks was after Motorola's PDA demonstration given during a past meeting. D. Livingston had agreed to do research in an attempt to integrate their use in the JEA Programs for reporting. The group never heard an update from NOAA. **D. McKinney** agreed to follow-up with J. Mayne and see what happened. The group thought that it would be a front-end input to the JEA software. **J. Mayne** noted that Motorola proposed a lease on the equipment.

D. McKinney noted that the states need a discussion with D. Jones and the subsequent letter of intent from NOAA. He agrees that the level of communication needs improvement. Once again, **D. McKinney** suggested they each give D. Jones' office a call and ask to be placed on the calendar for time to discuss their JEAs.

Other Business

D. McKinney gave the group an update on individual quotas (IQs) in the red snapper fishery. A referendum on the issue was held last fall to determine whether or not fishermen would like to develop an IQ Program. The IQ passed overwhelmingly by the fishing industry sending a solid message that they would like to pursue it. Under the Magnuson Act there are two requirements – a first referendum and a second referendum. Between the first and second, you must have a scoping document. The Council has that material for scoping sessions using the options papers as a fundamental issue. The agency will likely be required to develop a law enforcement program similar to the one developed for Alaska Individual Fishing Quota Program. A component in Alaska's program required dockside inspection. Depending upon where you are in the process of compliance, it could be as high as 25% or as low as 10%, but at some point there must be a dockside inspection. In the dockside inspection mode, there are only two methods used internationally, law enforcement officers or weigh masters. The Alaska program used federal officers which resulted in 22 new positions. When Canada added on to their program, it added weigh masters. The Gulf of Mexico has a choice. He suggested to the group that state officers perform the dockside inspections provided additional JEA funds are provided. If the states do not agree, he will support the use of weigh masters.

L. Young noted that it is time to update the Cooperative Strategic Plan. That type of work is nearly impossible during a regular meeting. He suggested a summer session in a central meeting location so everyone can drive in and out. **C. Yocom** noted that Commission funding is tight, and **R. Leard** suggested meeting costs be split between the Commission and Council. **J. Mayne** moved that the Committee hold a two-day work session using half Commission, half Council funds; a central location (Baton

Rouge); and C. Yocom to assist. All state representatives agreed to drive state vehicles to the meeting. J. Mayne volunteered to check availability at the Baton Rouge enforcement academy for a workroom and dormitory space. Tentative dates scheduled were July 20-21, 2004. J.T. Jenkins seconded the motion that passed unanimously.

The Committee briefly discussed the Chairman's upcoming departure, and B. Buckson suggested the Vice Chair take over those duties at that time. All agreed a special election would not be needed.

Both L. Young (Chair), J.T. Jenkins (Vice Chair), and J. Mayne (Past Chair) would be unable to attend the Commission Business Session on Wednesday. D. Montoro volunteered that since he is stationed in New Orleans, he could attend and read the Chairman's report.

There being no further business W. Chatagner moved to adjourn. J.T. Jenkins seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 11:29 a.m.

APPROVED BY:
CRP 10/12/04
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES - 54th Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 16, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

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
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Joseph Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Nancy Thompson, NMFS, Miami, FL
Page Campbell

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

Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Don Johnson, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Lytle, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Julia Lytle, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on October 14, 2003 were approved as written.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - **V. Vail** stated that the FWC was currently planning a reorganization to be implemented on July 1, 2004. The FWC would be attempting to reorganize along functional lines and separating research and monitoring processes from resource management. As part of this reorganization, Gil McRae would head the new Division of Research formed from staff and portions of the Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI), the Division of Freshwater Fisheries, and the Division of Wildlife, and FMRI would be renamed the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. A bill supported by fishermen would increase the spiny lobster license fee by \$25 with the money going towards derelict trap retrieval. The FWC established effort management measures on the commercial catch of spiny lobsters by diving. **V. Vail** stated that a commercial outreach position was filled, and the first product produced was a summary of all commercial fishing regulations. The summary would be updated twice a year. **V. Vail** stated that 1,202 checks were distributed to food shrimp fishermen from disaster relief funds. **J. O'Hop** stated that the FMRI Fish Biology group was again studying hook and bait use in the tarpon fishery. The low level of cooperation between the captains and the FMRI research staff may jeopardize their ability to provide any useful data on fishing mortality associated with the different gears used. FWC has been increasing contacts with wholesale dealers in an effort to convince them to switch from paper trip tickets to computerized reporting using the software developed for the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) program and customized for Florida.

Alabama - **S. Heath** reported that the third Alabama derelict trap recovery took place March 13, 2004. He stated that 375 traps were removed. The program appeared to be working since volunteers had a hard time finding traps to remove. The Alabama Marine Resources Division (AMRD) 2004 calendar features drawings from local school kids. **S. Heath** reported that AMRD was working with the Corps of Engineers and the state port authority to determine mitigation for a project at Garrows Bend. The Corps of Engineers stated that the sediments at Garrows Bend were polluted and their solution was to bury the polluted sediment with clean fill material. Along with this project, the port authority would like to build a rail yard on the new fill material. **S. Heath** stated that Alabama was developing a state aquatic nuisance species plan. Finally, **S. Heath** reported that the Orange Beach Fishing Association donated \$50,000 towards artificial reef development.

Mississippi - **K. Cuevas** stated that Mississippi had also produced a 2004 children's calendar. **K. Cuevas** reported that the Seafood and Technology Bureau conducted 1,073 regulatory and technical assistance activities since October 2003. They assisted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration by providing mailing lists of processors and shippers of seafood required for Domestic Food Registration under the Bio-Terrorism Regulations. In addition two FDA workshops were attended on food security measures and the information received at these workshops were being used to educate the seafood industry. **K. Cuevas** stated the Shrimp and Crab Bureau would hold another derelict trap removal from March 14 to April 3. The closure would rotate weekly among the three coastal counties. The American Fisheries Society's Sport Fish Restoration outstanding project of

the year award went to the DMR and GCRL for their investigation of *Sargassum* ecology in the Gulf. The Artificial Reef Program deployed three derelict barges in cooperation with the Derelict Vessel Program. Approximately 2,000 acres have been mapped with side scan sonar in Mississippi Sound. Shrimp landings for 2003 were 15.9 million pounds, which was above the twelve-year average. The Grand Bay NERR received \$6 million for a new research and education facility in Jackson County. **K. Cuevas** stated that DMR and GCRL were developing the technology to raise spotted sea trout at their Cedar Point facility. Finally, **K. Cuevas** reported that all oyster areas have been closed to harvesting for the past 4 weeks.

Louisiana - **J. Shepard** reported that Louisiana's first derelict trap clean up took place from February 28 through March 14, 2004. Approximately 6,115 traps were recovered. Another closure would be held in conjunction with the opening of shrimp season in Vermillion Bay. **J. Shepard** stated that shrimp disaster relief money was distributed to qualifying individuals. Checks ranged from \$124 to \$3,000 with 21% of individuals receiving the maximum amount. He stated that LDWF would be planting some of their oyster seed grounds. He stated that the GulfFIN program was going well. **J. Shepard** stated that otolith collections went well and would continue since funding was recently made available.

Texas - **J. Mambretti** reported that in a reorganization effort, TPWD folded its Resource Protection Division into other divisions, including Coastal Fisheries. The plan was to improve TPWD's ability to focus on water and water issues. The first stage of the Department's internal science review started recently. The National Academy of Sciences is reviewing methodology used by TPWD for river instream flow and bay inflow recommendations. **J. Mambretti** reported that genetic studies on blacktip and bonnet head sharks were nearly complete. Collection of samples for the shoalgrass genetic work was almost complete. TPWD staff awaits news from the Maritime Administration (MARAD) and the Navy concerning the fate of the *USS Oriskany*. TPWD submitted an application to MARAD to transfer the ship to Texas to be sunk for an artificial reef, but MARAD has not made a decision yet. Another round of shrimp license buyback, bought another 78 shrimp licenses, of which 41 were bait and 37 were bay licenses. The average price was \$7,500. During round 4 of crab licenses buyback, 2 licenses were purchased. Twenty-eight commercial finfish licenses were bought back during round 4. During TPWD's third annual derelict trap removal from February 20-29, 311 volunteers removed 3,571 traps. TPWD's Kills and Spills Team investigated a fish kill in Trinity Bay in February. *Pfiesteria piscicida* was identified in water samples and samples were sent to North Carolina for further evaluation.

NMFS - **N. Thompson** stated that extra money was provided in the FY 2004 budget for the stock assessment improvement plan and also for ecosystem management in the southeast region. Council coral reef funding was continued for FY 2004. **N. Thompson** also reported that money was provided in 2004 for additional observers on shrimp vessels.

USFWS – **C. Brown** reported that Bob Cooke, Assistant Regional Director for Federal Aid and State Programs in the Southeast Region has announced that he will be retiring April 1. **C. Brown** stated that Tom Riley, the Southeast Assistant Regional Director for Law Enforcement, has retired. **C. Brown** reported that Emily Jo Williams was recently appointed the new Chief of the Southeast Region's Migratory Bird Office. **C. Brown** stated that the Fish and Wildlife Service would like to congratulate the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory as recent recipients of the American Fisheries Society's Sport Fish Restoration Outstanding Project of the Year Award for the investigation of *Sargassum* ecology in the Gulf. The Fish and Wildlife Service provided funding for the project through the Sport Fish Restoration Program. The FWS determined late last week that funding to help support the Rancho Nuevo Kemp's ridley sea turtle project in Mexico would again be provided this year. Severe cuts in the Endangered Species funding allocation to the Southwest Region along with deficit spending last fiscal year required the curtailment of many Endangered Species activities in that region this year; however the sea turtle project would be funded. Finally, the FWS was again cut off from general Internet access to the outside world as of yesterday. As with the previous similar situation in 2001, this involves a court order connected to a judicial case involving Native American Trust Fund account information that resides on some computers within the Department of the Interior. As before, FWS offices can communicate by e-mail with each other and within the Department, but e-mail to and from addresses outside the Department would be blocked.

SEDAR Update

N. Thompson stated that the SEDAR process began in 2002 as a rigorous review of the data, methods, and results from the 2002 red porgy stock assessment. **N. Thompson** stated that NMFS was redoing stock assessments after they were being questioned on the soundness of the assessment. SEDAR began as a way to include more participation from biologists, data managers, analysts, stakeholders and fishery managers. The goal of SEDAR was to improve the quality, reliability, and relevance of stock assessments. **N. Thompson** stated that data workshops were held to evaluate data sources and data used in stock assessments. **N. Thompson** stated that after the assessment was completed, a peer review by different members of an assessment team was held. She stated that so far, the SEDAR process has run smoothly.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Gulf of Mexico Fish

J. Lytle started the presentation by explaining the difference between omega-3 (marine based) and omega-6 (land based) fatty acids. She stated that diets high in omega-3 fatty acids protect the heart, lower triglycerides, and delay immune deficiency diseases such as cancer, arthritis, diabetes, schizophrenia, and Alzheimer's. While several studies had examined omega-3 fatty acids in cold-water fish, the purpose of her study was to determine the amount of omega-3 fatty acids in warm-water fish of the Gulf of Mexico. The study found that warm-water fish provide an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, that omega-3 levels vary with total fat, and that while cold-water species have more total omega-3, warm-water species were leaner and have higher percentage levels of omega-3

fatty acids compared to total fat in the fish. **J. Lytle** stated that in conclusion people should eat more warm water fish for good health.

Circulation in the Gulf of Mexico Applied to Fisheries

D. Johnson stated that he was investigating water circulation patterns on fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. He wanted to learn how species had adapted to using the physical environment in their life history. **D. Johnson** stated that his goal was to develop an interactive mapping tool to investigate the effect of ocean circulation on fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. The project would utilize data that had already been collected. **D. Johnson** stated that he had applied his model to jellyfish and blue crabs. **D. Johnson** reported that most organisms that have a planktonic larval stage have adapted to using consistent, yearly circulation patterns in their dispersal. He was interested in what happened when there was a change in these circulation patterns. He stated that the Loop Current played a significant role in larval dispersal. **D. Johnson** discussed the major wind patterns in the northern Gulf of Mexico and how these patterns interact with the Loop Current and Desoto Canyon to influence dispersal patterns in the northeast Gulf. **D. Johnson** stated that if a Loop Current eddy breaks off while estuarine dependent larvae were on the shelf, they would be lost since the Loop Current eddy would not allow them to enter the estuary. The larvae would be transported off the shelf into the open Gulf. He then used archived data for blue crabs and jellyfish to show how circulation patterns affected larval transport.

Staph Infection in Gulf of Mexico Fishermen

J. Rester reported that C. Perret was interested in this presentation since a few fishermen off Mississippi had contracted a strange *Staph* infection. **J. Rester** reported that the presentation was from Bob Jones of the Southeastern Fisheries Association (SFA). Mr. Jones was unable to attend the meeting, but had the presentation from a previous meeting. **J. Rester** stated that methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) was a type of bacteria found on the skin or in the nose of healthy individuals. MRSA bacteria were one of the most common causes of skin infections in the U.S. Antibiotics were the main treatment and must be used only according to the directions. Antibiotics must be used for the full prescription for best results. Taking only half can result in strengthening remaining bacteria. Methicillin, oxacillin and nafcillin have been used to treat *S. aureus* infections very well in the past, but methicillin was losing its effectiveness. Bacterial resistance to methicillin increased from 2.4% in 1975 to 29% in 1991. **J. Rester** stated that in October 2003, the Daytona Beach News-Journal ran a story about several grouper fishermen who contracted MRSA or a similar *Staph* infection after a fishing trip. A local doctor diagnosed it as MRSA. SFA heard from numerous members who knew of bad infections on fishermen that had to be treated with antibiotics. SFA was notified about 35 or so cases where fishermen had to come to shore and go to the hospital for treatment with very strong antibiotics over the past few years.

C. Perret questioned whether any other states besides Florida and Mississippi had experienced any MRSA infections. No one stated that they had heard of any, but stated that they would remember to look for it in the future.

Review of the Updated Summary of Aquaculture Programs by State Document

J. Rester stated that the Habitat Subcommittee updated and approved the document in 2004. J. Rester reported that he sent the document out to the TCC prior to the meeting for their review. He was now seeking the TCC's approval to submit the document to the Commission for their approval. C. Perret asked how the document would be distributed. J. Rester replied that the document would be available on the Commission's web site and also in hard copy if requested. J. Rester stated that the Subcommittee wanted the ability to update the document routinely when legislation changed within the states. The TCC agreed to this since the information would be coming from state agency personnel. S. Heath motioned to submit the document to the Commission for their review and approval. K. Cuevas seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Reports

Crab – C. Perret stated that the Subcommittee discussed ongoing projects, including the renewal of the derelict crab trap community based restoration project. He stated that for 2005, the project might shift focus to Louisiana and Texas and starting a program in Florida. Another discussion issue was a review of the Seafood Watch Seafood Reports being developed by the Monterey Bay Aquarium on fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and resultant consumer bulletins warning of the sustainability of these fisheries. The Subcommittee also discussed an overview of the Gulf of Mexico blue crab fishery at the Blue Crab Colloquium in Maryland. Aquaculture efforts in Chesapeake Bay focus on stock assessment, whereas, aquaculture in the Gulf focuses on providing test animals for parasite and disease studies.

SEAMAP – J. Rester reported that SEAMAP received a \$350 thousand increase in 2004 funding. The increase was divided evenly between the three SEAMAP components. The Subcommittee requested the TCC's approval for drafting a letter to request that SEAMAP be exempted from any future NMFS budgetary taxes. J. Rester stated that SEAMAP was a core NMFS program and the Subcommittee feels that as such, it should not be taxed. Taxes amount to approximately \$55,000 each year. The TCC granted its approval with the understanding that the TCC would have a chance to review the letter before it was sent. J. Rester next stated that the Subcommittee discussed GIS mapping of SEAMAP data. SEAMAP was working with the National Coastal Data Development Center on an interactive GIS mapping web site using SEAMAP data. The site would display historical effort, catch information, and also allow users to compare catches and distributions from different years. The web site should be online shortly. Finally, the Subcommittee discussed changing the format of the Environmental and Biological Data Atlas that was produced yearly. A new format would be produced this year that allows users to query the SEAMAP database and produce yearly trend information along with producing simple GIS maps.

Data Management - **P. Campbell** reported that the Subcommittee reviewed biological collection and analysis activities. During 2003, 50,000 otoliths were collected. The Subcommittee discussed tournament sampling protocols in Mississippi. The Subcommittee recommended that Mississippi develop a logbook and try it on several tournaments. The voluntary logbook would be given to a selected number of participants at the tournament. Although no money was available for collecting head boat catch information, the Subcommittee felt that effort should continue and hopefully money would be available in the future for collecting catch information.

Artificial Reef - **R. Lukens** reported that the Subcommittee has not met since last October, but was scheduled to meet in May. The Subcommittee was working on several items. The first was working with MARAD and the Navy on receiving ships for artificial reef development. The states were having problems working with MARAD on receiving ships since MARAD wants the states to clean, assume immediate liability, and deploy the ships. The Navy appeared to be more accommodating of the states' requests for deployment protocols. The regional artificial reef database was almost ready to be released online. The database would allow state reef program managers to enter data on their reefs over the Internet. The second edition of the "Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials" was at the printer. Finally, **R. Lukens** stated that the International Conference on Artificial Habitats for Fisheries would be held in Biloxi, Mississippi in 2005 and the joint ASMFC and GSMFC Artificial Reef Committees have been asked to host a session.

Habitat - **J. Rester** reported that the Subcommittee discussed the derelict trap programs in the Gulf of Mexico. The Subcommittee also discussed working on a bottom mapping project in the Gulf of Mexico. The project would be similar to a project that SEAMAP-South Atlantic conducted in the past. The project would involve mapping hard bottom habitat in the Gulf of Mexico and making the data available in a GIS format. The project would not involve collecting new data, but would involve compiling and interpreting existing data. Finally, the Subcommittee discussed developing a new habitat web site.

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

APPROVED BY:
UBS
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 54th Spring Meeting
Wednesday, March 17, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Chairman John Roussel called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Vernon Minton, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Virginia Vail, 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
Jason Keenum, Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Cynthia Sarthou, GRN, New Orleans, LA

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 15, 2003 in Corpus Christi, Texas were approved as presented.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

S. VanderKooy gave the Menhaden Advisory Committee Report since Chairman Wallace was unable to report. **VanderKooy** reported that Joe Smith of NMFS gave his

annual review and upcoming season forecast. Smith reported that landings of Gulf menhaden in 2003 were 517,079 metric tons, which was down 10% from 2002 (574,530 mt) and down 9% from the previous five year average of 569,136 mt. The highest landings in 2003 occurred in May and June at 101,000 mt each. July experienced the lowest landings since 1996 at 68,500 mt mainly due to inclement weather. Landings in the "extended season" were 54,600 mt which was higher than the 10-yr mean (1993-2002) = 50,958 mt.

Vessel participation in 2003 included 42 vessels (39 regular steamers, two run boats, and one bait boat), similar to 2002. Nominal fishing effort in 2003 was 363,200 vessel ton weeks (vtwks), the lowest since 1965.

In 2004 it is predicted that there should be four factories operating in the Gulf with 43 vessels (40 steamers, two run boats, and one bait boat) at 385,000 vtwks of nominal effort. With those values, it is predicted that the landings in 2004 should be around 515,000 mt.

VanderKooy reported that Vince Guillory provided Louisiana's annual forecast based on environmental data, recruitment, and previous years juvenile abundance indices. Based on low average water temps in January 2003, high river discharge, low rainfall, and lower salinities in early 2003, and average juvenile abundances overall in 2003, the forecast for Louisiana waters is between 387,000 and 439,000 mt.

VanderKooy reported that Doug Vaughan provided the status of the menhaden stock. Using information on growth, reproduction, natural mortality, fishery landings, and fishery-independent surveys, Vaughan estimated age-specific fishing mortality and population abundances of Gulf menhaden between 1964-2002. In addition, he proposed benchmarks (targets and limits) to determine stock status in the future.

Regardless of the model used, estimates of fishing mortality have generally decreased over the assessment period, while estimates of reproductive success have generally increased (measured as spawning stock biomass or population fecundity). Estimates of the terminal (2002) population fecundity are well above target, suggesting that the stock is healthy and not over fished. SPR for the Gulf menhaden stock is around 60%, which is nearly double the target SPR for most federally managed species. It is believed that the next assessment scheduled for 2008/2009 will likely be completed through the SEDAR process.

VanderKooy reported that a short discussion ended the debate over combining the Captain's Daily Fishing Report (CDFR) with the Louisiana menhaden trip ticket. It is not likely that the CDFR can be incorporated into the trip ticket format without duplication. Joe Smith would like to continue modifying the CDFR to include more useful data fields. Smith will develop a working form to field test this summer.

VanderKooy reported that the key entering of historical CDFRs from NOAA is almost complete. All the forms from 1983 to present are entered and the GSMFC plans to enter

1982 as the terminal year for this effort. Forms continue to 1979 but the quality and completeness of the data is questionable. The Menhaden Advisory Committee passed a motion that the Commission will scan the remaining forms to preserve them electronically in the event they should be key entered in the future. Staff will complete this effort this summer.

VanderKooy reported that J. Rester suggested that the Menhaden Advisory Committee be aware of the proposed Liquid Natural Gas plants in the region. Rester noted that intakes for water in the estuaries are being discussed which would cause impingement problems for eggs and larvae of many critical estuarine species. The MAC suggested that Rester continue to monitor the status of the proposed plants and report to the Committee in the fall.

VanderKooy reported that C. Perret commented on proposed reservoirs on the Pearl River near Jackson, Mississippi. The MAC recommended that Rester monitor these projects as well and report to the Committee. **C. Perret moved to accept the Menhaden Advisory Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel Report

S. VanderKooy reported that a presentation was given at the Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel (C/RFAP) meeting on proposed and ongoing projects in the five Gulf states related to coastal habitat restoration. The projects cover artificial reefs in offshore waters, inshore reefs, tidal marshes, pine savannah, bayhead swamps, and bottomland forest. The success of these projects depends upon the cooperation of stakeholders and community groups and organizations.

R. Lukens updated the Panel on his activities related to invasive and non-indigenous species as well as providing a report on the current status of the Artificial Reef Subcommittee and the artificial reef materials guidelines document.

VanderKooy reported that the C/RFAP indicated an interest in "truth in labeling" for seafood products. Staff will arrange for a presentation on this topic at the October meeting.

The S/FFMC discussed the "truth in labeling" issue, including country of origin, menu names for seafood, market names, etc. **J. Roussel** suggested inviting industry people who understand this issue.

V. Vail moved to accept the C/RFAP report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

SARP Discussion

D. Frugé of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) reported that the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) was developed by state fishery leaders primarily

in the southeastern states. **Frugé** reported that at the last GSMFC meeting the Commission voted to become a signatory member of SARP. **Frugé** then reviewed the Executive Summary for SARP, which was a proposal submitted to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and was funded for \$232,500 to cover a three-year period. This will be used to hire a person to act as an Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator for SARP. The Coordinator will be working with the southeastern states to assist in developing state Aquatic Nuisance Species Plans.

Frugé then reported on another proposal which was submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and was funded in the amount of \$75,000 to be used to develop model watershed management plans for the Duck River, Pascagoula River, Altamaha River, and the Roanoke River.

Frugé reviewed the SARP FY 2005 budget initiative, described the eight major components, and the funding available to each of the partner agencies. **Frugé** noted that \$4.6 million would go to the USFWS for bolstering coastal fisheries offices in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic areas. There was discussion regarding whether this would be new money or the redistribution of existing funds.

R. Lukens will find out who the contact person is to assist the states in developing Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plans. Lukens will keep Committee members informed on SARP activities.

Frugé reported that he has been named as temporary coordinator for SARP at least until December 2004. The next SARP meeting is scheduled for May 11 and 12, 2004 in Nashville, Tennessee.

FIN Data Program Update

D. Donaldson reported that because of a funding shortfall, greater amberjack and king mackerel had to be removed from the list of species identified for pulling otoliths, however Nancy Thompson of NMFS was able to provide \$57,000 and these species will be added back into the list.

Donaldson provided the Committee with a matrix for marine recreational fishing licenses and noted that the Florida shore exemption for residents remains. **Donaldson** noted that he had contacted the company doing the telephone survey to get an estimate for a pilot survey without Florida shore fishing. Depending on the cost and availability of funds, it may be possible to conduct this pilot survey next year in order to get more precise effort estimates for the private rental and shore mode.

Donaldson reported that the FIN has been working on confidentiality issues since the beginning of the program and stressed that it is very important that the information collected is to be used for fishery management issues only. **Donaldson** will keep the S/FFMC apprised of any new developments in the area of confidentiality.

Donaldson also reported that the next FIN meeting is scheduled for June 2004. A facilitated session will be held at that time in order to map out the future direction of the FIN program.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy reported that the Striped Bass Technical Task Force (TTF) is currently working on a revision of the 1985 FMP. Several sections of the FMP revision have been drafted and reviewed and hopefully will be finished by mid-summer and released by the TTF in the fall. The Sheepshead TTF is working on the profile, and pending review of the profile a decision will be made concerning a stock assessment and FMP. The Stock Assessment Team will hold a conference call to discuss the available data for a sheepshead stock assessment in the event the TTF is directed to move forward.

VanderKooy reported that the Crab Subcommittee is continuing to participate in derelict crab trap removal. Another issue being addressed by the Crab Subcommittee is dolphin interactions with crab traps, which is being addressed by NOAA's Office of Protective Resources. At this time NOAA does not intend to re-classify the crab fishery. **VanderKooy** reported that the Law Enforcement Committee continues to hold monthly conference calls and the Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel will provide input for the review process of the striped bass FMP and the sheepshead profile.

Other IJF activities include the data entry of menhaden Captain's Daily Fishing Reports (CDFR) for the Gulf of Mexico. This project should be completed by summer. **VanderKooy** reported that the Commission is preserving its repository of reprints by converting them to PDF files and storing them electronically on DVD. This activity has freed substantial storage space at the GSMFC office.

VanderKooy reported that the State Directors recently had a discussion on red drum escapement rates. A conference call will be held to provide the existing data and techniques that were used to determine those escapement rates in each state. This information may be used to evaluate the red drum stock in the state waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Texas Habitat Advisory Panel met last December. Last week at the GMFMC meeting in Mobile they finalized their Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Once this EIS has been submitted the GMFMC will have 17 months to enact management measures related to the alternatives in the EIS.

Rester reported that the GMFMC and the NMFS will be sponsoring a meeting in late April to discuss the impacts of liquefied natural gas facilities on fish stocks in the Gulf of Mexico. Hopefully this meeting will provide information to NMFS Habitat Conservation Division in their review of these projects.

Rester reported that the Habitat Program continues to provide administrative oversight to the derelict trap program grant that was provided by NOAA's Restoration Center.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.



**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 54th Spring Meeting
Wednesday, March 17, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Chairman Billy Hewes called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. **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 Barnett Lawley*)
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, 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 Dwight Landreneau*)
Dwight Landreneau, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Administrative Officer, 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

Roy Crabtree, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Don Montoro, USCG, Division 8, New Orleans, LA
Andy Jones, USCG, Division 8, New Orleans, LA
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held October 16, 2003, were reviewed. **C. Brown corrected Ms. Mamie Parker's title on page 53. It should be Assistant Director for Habitat Conservation and Fisheries. W. Blessey moved to approve minutes as corrected. J. Roussel seconded. The minutes were approved without objection.**

GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – Don Montoro, USGC, presented on behalf of Chairman Larry Young who was unable to attend the Business Session. He reported that the LEC met on Tuesday, March 16, 2004. Items of discussion included enforcement issues relating to fishing tournaments, derelict crab trap cleanups, and Joint Enforcement Agreements.

The LEC requested a work session be funded to update the Commission's law enforcement strategic plan. R. Leard, GMFMC suggested the meeting be funded equally by the Commission and the GMFMC. A central location was agreed upon (Baton Rouge, LA) and state representatives would drive to keep travel costs down. Jeff Mayne will check availability at the academy for a work room and dormitory space. Tentative dates were scheduled for July 20-21, 2004. **C. Perret moved to approve this work session as presented. V. Minton seconded. The motion was approved.**

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report - **C. Perret** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, March 16, 2004. The TCC received status reports from the various states, NMFS and FWS. The following subcommittees reported to the TCC: Crab; SEAMAP; Data Management; Artificial Reef; and, Habitat.

On behalf of the TCC and Habitat Subcommittee, C. Perret recommended that the Commission approve the updated *Summary of Aquaculture Programs by State* document. J. Roussel seconded. The document was approved.

Other presentations to the TCC included reports from the various states; an update on the SEDAR process; a report from J. Lytle, USM/GCRL on Omega-3 fatty acids in Gulf of Mexico Fish; water circulation in the Gulf of Mexico; and staph infection in fishermen.

The states reviewed their various derelict crab trap removal programs. C. Perret reported that the Commission will be nominated to receive the Gulf Guardian Award for their efforts in the derelict crab trap removal program.

Without objection, the TCC report was approved.

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report – **J. Roussel** reported that the S-FFMC met earlier in the day. The Committee received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC); Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory

Panel (CRFAP); and updates on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program, Fisheries Information Network Programs, and Habitat Programs.

Joe Smith presented the annual review and upcoming season forecast for the menhaden industry. Landings in 2003 were 517,079 metric tons, which was down 10% from 2002, and down 9% from the previous 5 year average. Vessel participation included 42 vessels. He predicted that in 2004 there should be 4 factories operating in the Gulf with 43 vessels. It is predicted that 2004 landings should be around 515,000 metric tons. The Committee also received reports from Louisiana and D. Vaughn provided a status of the menhaden stock. The Commission continues to work on the Menhaden CDFR data entry. At this time all forms from 1983 to present have been entered. S. VanderKooy reported that 1982 data will be entered as the terminal year for this effort.

The CRFAP received reports from the various states on proposed and ongoing coastal habitat restoration projects. R. Lukens updated the Panel on activities related to invasive and non-indigenous species as well as the current status of the Artificial Reef Subcommittee and their Materials Guidelines Document.

D. Frugé gave a presentation on the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP). He reviewed the SARP budget. An Aquatic Nuisance Species contact will be named shortly and will work with state personnel to assist in developing aquatic nuisance species plans for states. He also reported that watershed management plans for 4 rivers in the Southeast are being developed under the SARP. D. Frugé is the SARP Interim Coordinator until December 2004.

NMFS Southeast Regional Office (NMFS/SERO) Report

R. Crabtree reported on behalf of the NMFS/SERO. He has been the Regional Administrator for approximately 1 ½ years and hopes to be able to attend more Commission meetings. He stated that the leadership within the SER has undergone many changes. Buck Sutter is the new Deputy Regional Administrator. Ginny Faye is Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries and Miles Croom is Assistant Regional Administrator for Habitat. With these changes he hopes to streamline the regulatory process. The new leadership is team oriented and will work on making the entire process more timely and come up with documents that are defensible and ready for easy approval.

He reported that efforts to transform the antiquated permits data system to an Oracle system continues. This process will allow the SERO to be compatible with the database of the Commission, the ACCSP and others. It has been a long drawn out process but the end results will prove beneficial. He anticipates that it will be up and running this year.

The shrimp fishery remains a big concern in the Gulf, especially the economic impacts. Shrimp fishery permitting is complete and at last count 2,625 permits have been issued in the Gulf. The Council is discussing permit moratoriums and other effort management

issues. Funding will be made available to the South Atlantic Research Foundation for ongoing research into TEDs and also funding observers in the shrimp fishery.

In regards to red snapper, the Magnuson Act requires that a referendum of all Class I license holders be held prior to the Council developing a ITQ. This has been completed and the license holders voted by a large majority in favor of the Council proceeding to develop an ITQ program. In April a data workshop will be held and then later in the summer a red snapper assessment workshop will be held with the review workshop following in the fall.

USFWS Region 4 Office Report

C. Brown reported on behalf of USFWS Region 4. He briefed the Commissioners on several personnel changes. Bob Cooke, Assistant Regional Director for Federal Aid and State Programs will be retiring in April. Tom Riley, the Southeast Assistant Regional Director for Law Enforcement has retired and Emily Jo Williams was appointed the new Chief of the Southeast Region's Migratory Bird Office.

On behalf of the FWS, **C. Brown** congratulated the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory as the recent recipients of the American Fisheries Society's Sport Fish Restoration Outstanding Project of the Year Award for their investigation of sargassum ecology in the Gulf of Mexico. The FWS provides funding for the project through the Sport Fish Restoration Program.

C. Brown reported that there have been severe cuts in the Endangered Species funding allocations to the Southwest Region. Despite the curtailment of funding, FWS will provide funding in the amount of \$200K to help support the Rancho Nuevo Kemp's Ridley sea turtle project in Mexico.

He reported that FWS is again cut off from general Internet access due to a court order connected to a judicial case involving Native American Trust Fund account information that resides on some computers within the Department of the Interior. He is hopeful that this situation will not last long.

In conclusion, he reported that the FWS will celebrate the Centennial of the second National Wildlife Refuge System in Breton, Louisiana on October 4, 2004. He will keep the Commissioner's posted on this activity.

FY 2004 NMFS Budget

L. Simpson reported that an Omnibus Appropriation Bill was passed that included the balance of the 13 appropriation bills not previously passed. This was better than preceding under continuous resolutions which require spending at the same rate as the previous year. He pointed out several points of interest. There was language that showed concern for TED related activities, new regulations and loss of income. The Bill supports funding to the Gulf and South Atlantic Research Foundation to research their concerns.

L. Simpson reported that of the \$350K allocated for the Rancho Nuevo Sea Turtle project, only \$50K directly goes to the Ranch. FWS provides \$200K and the State of Texas provide \$50 to \$60K.

L. Simpson briefed the Commissioners on appropriations for projects of major interest in the Gulf. He will continue to keep the Commissioners informed on budget issues.

FY 2004 USFWS Budget.

C. Brown presented budget information that showed trends in FWS budgets for the period FY2001 through FY2005. He pointed out that the trend shows increases in the Resource Management area. In the Construction area the trend shows decreased funding. The focus for FY2005 is to increase grants to the states and others. There is a \$98 million increase to grant programs. New programs have been provided for in part by the new Cara type legislation.

He reported that under Resource Management all services have shown continue increases, although Fisheries shows an \$11 million decrease. Fisheries only represent 18.6% of the total budget. The Fisheries Coordinator's office will see decreases in FY2005.

C. Perret expressed concern over the continued decreases in fishery funding.

Selection of Charles H. Lyles Award Recipient

V. Minton nominated **Hal Osburn**. He discussed Hal's career in fisheries and his actions with the Commission and the Gulf Council. **C. Perret** moved to close the nomination. **Hal Osburn** was named the 2005 *Charles H. Lyles Award* recipient by unanimous acclamation.

GSMFC Staff Reports

Invasive Species Program - **R. Lukens**, updated the Commissioners on his activities related to invasive and non-indigenous species. He provided a summary of activities of the Gulf of Mexico Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species, including the upcoming meeting scheduled for March 31 and April 1, 2004 in Mobile, Alabama. Currently, three work groups are inactive, and three work groups are active. All five Gulf states are in some stage of developing a state aquatic invasive species management plan. Texas, Florida, and Louisiana are near completion of the process, while Mississippi has just begun its plan development. There is interest on the part of Alabama, and it is expected that some plan development activity could begin there in the near future. Finally, **R. Lukens** informed the Commissioners that the newly revised web site for invasive species, hosted by the GSMFC, has been launched, found at [www.gsmfc.org/Invasive Species](http://www.gsmfc.org/Invasive_Species).

FIN 2004 Activities - **D. Donaldson** reviewed 2004 activities. The total amount awarded to the Commission and states for FY2004, is \$4.2 million. He provided a written report in the briefing material.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program Update – **S. VanderKooy** provided a written statement in the briefing material.

Habitat Program and Joint Program with Council – **J. Rester** reported on the status of trap recovery efforts in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the NOAA Community Based Restoration grant that the Commission received.

He reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Texas Habitat Advisory Panel met last December. The GMFMC finalized their Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Once the EIS is submitted, they will have 17 months to enact management measures. The GMFMC and NMFS will sponsor a meeting to discuss the impacts of liquefied natural gas facilities on fish stocks in the Gulf of Mexico.

State Directors' Reports

Florida - **V. Vail** reported on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). She stated that the Florida Legislature is currently in session. FWC has several bills before the Legislature. A priority for FWC is legislation that would reorganize the agency with a focus on program areas rather than divisions. The intent is to free-up the staff so that program staff can concentrate on the mission of FWC and administrative staff can support programs. A new Office of License and Permits will handle commercial licensing and will eventually handle all license and permits as an administrative function. The Florida Marine Research Institute will become the FWC Commission Research Institute. All details of the reorganization have not been finalized, but the FWC is working towards this end.

Other bills that FWC has submitted include an increase to \$25 for the lobster endorsement. The increase will be dedicated to trap retrieval, and should generate about \$35K. Also sponsored by the FWC is a bill that would make flagrant violations of the no net ban a felony, and would carry civil penalties and license suspensions. A bill that would affect the FWC includes a proposal to put the agency under the University system. This probably will not pass.

She reported that FWC is beginning to look at limited entry or limited effort management protocol in several fisheries. It has been done in the ballyhoo fishery where participants have to show a minimum landing level in certain base years (10,000 lbs) in order to get the endorsement. If you could not show it, you could not participate. This has also been done for dive fishing endorsements. Marine life and blue crab endorsements are being discussed for this type of approach.

Commercial outreach personnel have published a summary of commercial regulations which will come out twice a year. They will also do summaries of FWC actions, notices of workshops, etc.

On February 2, 2004, 1,202 checks were issued to eligible shrimpers who met the qualifications for disaster relief. The checks ranged from \$1.45 to several thousand dollars.

Alabama – **V. Minton** reported on behalf of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR). He reported that the saltwater pipeline is almost finished and it will provide seawater to mariculture centers. He anticipates that it will be complete in late March and early April 2004.

The ADCNR held a derelict crab trap clean-up on March 13. He noted that with the decrease in traps, they will probably do clean-ups every other year instead of annually.

The first brown shrimp post larvae have begun to show for the 2004. Although the CPU's look above average at this point, it is still too early to tell if this is due to a concentration of freshwater impact.

The ADCNR participated in a Florida Sportsman's Fishing Show held February 28-29, 2004 in Mobile, Alabama. They provided information to approximately 2,300 children and adults during the two day event.

The Department is currently involved in a Corps of Engineer permitting issue involving marsh and shallow water habitat located at the head of Mobile Bay. They are requesting monitoring of fishery resources during mitigation to determine the effectiveness of the mitigation process. They hope to have a condition added to the permit that would require mitigation to continue until those fisheries are recovered.

The ADCNR is involved in a cooperative effort with their freshwater counterparts to develop materials to create an Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Awareness in the Governor's office. The goal is to establish a state ANS management plan.

He reported that the Department is in the process of developing regulations that would prohibit trawling in the very upper parts of Mobile Bay and Upper Mississippi Sound. Biological data supports the closure of these areas.

Several years ago, the ADCNR created two oyster reefs on bottom substrate that was not previously growing oysters. They would like to get regulations signed that would open these reefs to experimental dredging for evaluation.

The Orange Beach Fishing Association is planning a red snapper tournament. They have collected \$300,000 in prize money. They have provided \$50,000 to ADCNR to use for offshore artificial reefs.

The Alabama Legislature is currently in session. A Jurisdictional Bill was introduced that would allow prosecution of cases made in the EEZ in State District Court. This has the support of the ADCNR and NMFS. It has passed the House and is out of Committee in the Senate. It is hopeful that it will pass.

Mississippi - **C. Perret** reported on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR). He thanked C. Brown for acknowledging the Sport Fish Restoration Award for "Outstanding Project of the Year" in the research and surveys category which was given to MDMR and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory jointly to investigate sagassum in the Gulf of Mexico.

He stated that the derelict crab trap removal program is ongoing in the state. The number of derelict traps are greatly reduced from previous clean-ups.

Major oyster areas have been closed to harvesting due to rainfall and flooding of the Pearl River. He anticipates that the reefs will reopen on Friday, March 19. Water samples have been good in the last several days. As of February 2004, there have been 384,973 sacks harvested, this will be a record season. The MDMR recommended that the season be closed April 30.

He reported that the Grand Bay National Estuarine Reserve received a \$6 million grant from NOAA to construct a research and education facility in Jackson County. This new building will be used to promote education and research addressing critical coastal issues.

The MDMR was recently named as lead agency for the Coastal Mississippi Fire Management Cooperative CIAP grant. The purpose of the \$437,000 grant is to expand the application of prescribed fire management in coastal Mississippi to reduce the risks of severe wildfires and maximize the ecological functions of our fire-adapted coastal ecosystems.

In regards to shrimp disaster funds in Mississippi, **C. Perret** provided a breakdown of how the \$1,003,307 were distributed to date. After distribution to vessel owners, deckhands and related business there was a small amount of funds still available. This was used for TED Technology Transfer. All resident commercial shrimp fishermen received a NOAA video, "*Better TEDS for Better Fisheries*". They were also able to support Mississippi Domestic Shrimp Marketing by installing three billboards promoting domestic shrimp.

Louisiana - **J. Roussel** reported on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). He reported that since the last meeting, Louisiana has a new Governor and a new LDWF Secretary. Governor Kathleen Blanco is Louisiana's first female governor.

The Louisiana Legislature is currently in special session addressing fiscal matters. They are scheduled to go into general session on March 29.

He reported that the previous Governor had appointed an Invasive Species Task Force. The Task Force has recently completed an Invasive Species Plan which was approved. One of the recommendations in the Plan is a legislative proposal to permanently establish an Invasive Species Council and to designate LDWF as the lead agency for implementing the Plan.

The LDWF has been working closely with the economic development and industry people in the Callasieu area to propose legislation to authorize dredging in Callasieu Lake. It would be limited to hand dredges only with a maximum size of 36 inches, maintaining daily limits and other provisions.

The LDWF proposed that charterboat reporting requirements be put into statute. The bill has been drafted and this has been discussed with charterboat associations about their reasons for this legislation. Basically they have had trouble getting cooperation from charterboat operators with the Charterboat Telephone Survey.

LDWF is still in the process of trying to implement a vessel monitoring system for oysters landed out of state. The basic elements of the program is to have a monitoring system that allows enforcement agents to monitor the vessel in real time.

J. Roussel briefed the Commissioners on derelict trap removal in Louisiana. He stated that volunteers from the Louisiana Crab Task Force, CCA, Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Sea Grant, GSMFC, GCRL and volunteers from sister state agencies consisted of 311 people and 103 vessels. He was impressed that recreational and commercial fishermen worked well together on this project. The deep water component of this program will take place with the opening of the shrimp season this spring.

In regards to the oyster fishery in Louisiana, there are several major shell plantings scheduled for the spring. These will be in Baratavia Bay, Lake Chien, Lake Felicity, Lake Mechant, and Sister Lake. They currently have \$1.6 million to fund these plants.

The LDWF has added over 20 oil and gas structures to their artificial reef program. They have created 4 experimental reefs in Lake Pontchartrain in cooperation with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation using reef balls. The reef balls were placed on shell pads that were the site of drilling activity in the 1960's to minimize sinkage in the typically soft mud bottom of the Lake. The University of New Orleans is going to study their effectiveness and the stability of the reef balls in an estuarine situation.

All payments for the Louisiana Shrimp Disaster Program have gone out. Average payment was \$1,841.64 and the maximum payment was \$3,034.94. The total amount paid out was \$7,171,331, distributed in 3,812 checks. The remainder of the disaster funds was programmed to the Seafood Marketing Board for seafood marketing activities, which includes a quality assurance program for the shrimp industry.

Texas - **M. Ray** reported on behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). In a reorganization effort to enhance Texas conservation with a focus on water, Resource

Protection Division components are being merged into Coastal Fisheries and Inland Fisheries Divisions to gain efficiencies and provide more resources to support and enhance those functions. This rearrangement should be completed by 1 September 2004. Dr. Larry McKinney, was named the new Coastal Fisheries Division Director.

The first stage of the Department's internal science review has started. The National Academy of Sciences is reviewing methodology used for river in stream flow and bay inflow recommendations. A contract is being prepared with the American Fisheries Society to review Coastal Fisheries research methods. Funding for this voluntary review is coming from federal State Wildlife Grants.

TPWD staff continue to await word from the US Maritime Administration / US Navy on the fate of the *USS Oriskany*. Staff submitted an application to the administration to transfer the ship to Texas and to sink it off shore as an artificial reef.

To date, 1,083 of the original 3,231 bait and bay shrimp licenses have been bought back through Round 13, which represents a 33.5% reduction in the number licenses issued. A total of 23 commercial crab licenses (10% reduction) and 96 commercial fin fish licenses (17 % reduction) have been purchased since the initiation of the respective buy back programs.

TPWD is considering changes to its licensing structure, including fishing license packages that anglers could choose from: a freshwater fishing license (\$28 for residents, \$55 for non-residents), a saltwater fishing license (\$33 for residents, \$60 for non-residents) or an all water fishing license good for both fresh and saltwater (\$38 for residents, \$65 for non-residents). All packages come with the appropriate required stamps/endorsements. Similar license packages would also be available in conjunction with hunting licenses, including a freshwater combo (\$47 for residents, and \$15 for seniors), a saltwater combo (\$52 for residents, \$20 for seniors), and an all-water combo (\$57 for residents, \$25 for seniors). The popular super combo, "one stop shop" license package would incur just the additional cost of the freshwater stamp (\$64), as would the senior super combo (\$30). TPWD is also recommending changes in temporary fishing licenses, eliminating the 3-day resident, the 5-day non-resident and the 14-day temporary and replacing them with a 1-day temporary with an option to buy additional daily privileges at the time of purchase.

A 1-day resident license would sell for \$13 for freshwater, \$18 for saltwater and \$23 for all water privileges. Non-residents could purchase a 1-day license for freshwater for \$20, for saltwater (\$25) or for all water (\$30). Residents could purchase subsequent days for \$2 each and non-residents for \$5 each.

TPWD's 3rd annual ACTRP collected 3,571 traps with the help of over 300 volunteers. Over the last 3 years, this project has helped remove almost 15,500 traps from Texas coastal waters. This year, the oldest trap found had a tag dated 1992.

Future Meetings

G. Herring reported the October 11-14, 2004 meeting will be held at the Isle of Capri, Biloxi, Mississippi. Special plans will be made to visit the Seafood Museum and perhaps a Schooner Race if funds are available.

The March 14-17, 2005 meeting will be held in Alabama. Proposals will be submitted at a later date.

Publication List

A current list was provided for information purposes.

Other Business

L. Simpson reported that the Ocean Policy Commission report will be out April 20, 2004. He anticipates some legislative changes to take place as a result of this report. He will keep the Commissioners informed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:38 pm.

Ronald R. Lukens

**GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES
MINUTES**

Thursday, April 1, 2004

Mobile, Alabama

CALL TO ORDER

Ron Lukens called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The meeting began with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

Members

Phil Bass, Mississippi DEQ, Jackson, MS
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX
Pat Carter, U.S. FWS, Atlanta, GA
Walter R. Courtenay, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Pam Fuller, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL
Bryon Griffith, U.S. EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, Stennis Space Center, MS
Scott Hardin, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Leslie Hartman, AL Marine Resources Division, Dauphin Island, AL
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL
Herb Kumpf, Member at Large, Panama City, FL
Jim Long, National Park Service, Atlanta, GA
Ronald R. Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Mark McElroy, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Roberto Mendoza, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico
John E. Meyers, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Pitman, U.S. FWS, Albuquerque, NM
Dennis Riecke, MDWFP, Jackson, MS
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
Judy Shearer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg, MS
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL
Bruce A. Thompson, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA
David Yeager, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile, AL

add
Tom
Herrington

Others

Dana Blume, Port of Houston Authority, Houston, TX
Nicole Cass, Port of Houston Authority, Houston, TX
Joe Jernigan, AL Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, Daphne, AL
Alysia R. Kravitz, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
Martin O'Connell, Pont. Inst., University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA
Steve Rider, AL Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, Montgomery, AL
Gwen White, DJ Case & Associates, Indianapolis, IN

Staff

Nancy Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

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PUBLIC COMMENT

Martin O'Connell, University of New Orleans, informed the Panel that he has been working with Mark Peterson and Todd Slack regarding invasive fish. He mentioned that they are finding increasingly that invasive freshwater cichlids, the Rio Grande cichlid specifically, are able to move into estuarine habitats. He also mentioned that there are reports from Florida that the freshwater Mayan cichlid is moving into estuarine habitats as well. He indicated that he, Peterson, and Slack are working on a white paper discussing this issue and they would like some input from the Regional Panel and others regarding the possibility for a regional approach to examine this habitat shift.

REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Lukens suggested that an item be added under Work Group Reports for a Conference Ad Hoc Work Group Report from Herb Kumpf. Roberto Mendoza requested time on the agenda to provide an update on the Mexico program. **A motion was made by Walt Courtney to adopt the agenda with the additions noted. Bruce Thompson seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.**

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

John Meyers made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 20-21, 2003 meeting. Pam Fuller seconded the motion, and without objection the minutes were approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Mexican Government Membership - At the last meeting the Panel discussed an issue associated with additional membership. One of those was a recommendation from the Panel to invite a representative of the Mexican government to join the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel. Roberto Mendoza has spoken with Dr. Porfirio Alvarez, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, General Division of Planning and Evaluation, and Dr. Alvarez has indicated that he is interested in joining the Panel. The Panel would then need to make a recommendation to the ANS Task Force and they would issue the invitation directly.

A motion was made by Herb Kumpf and seconded by Walt Courtenay, to forward a recommendation to the ANS Task Force to invite a representative of the Mexican government, and accept Roberto's recommendation for Dr. Porfirio Alvarez, to become a member of the GOM Regional Panel. The motion passed without objection.

The Panel then discussed a recommendation from the October 2003 meeting to invite the states of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina to join the Regional Panel and then become the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel. The reason behind this is because those are the only three states in the continental United States that are not attached to a Regional Panel. Lukens sent out a request to those three states asking if they were interested in such a venture. Georgia wrote back saying that

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they are interested and provided a contact person. North Carolina had not responded, and South Carolina said that they are not interested.

Lukens indicated that he would be addressing the status of them joining at the Task Force meeting in May. He would then find out if they want to go ahead with having Georgia join without North and South Carolina, or would they rather wait and see if they can get them to join as a block. Lukens asked the preference of the group.

The Panel then discussed the issue, with comments ranging from maintaining the Panel membership as is to a desire to leave the invitation open. The final decision was the following motion:

Bryon Griffith made a motion to request that the proposal to the ANS Task Force to ask the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina to join the GOM Regional Panel be withdrawn. The motion was seconded by Paul Carangelo. Eighteen members voted in favor of the motion and 5 members opposed. The motion passed.

Don Schmitz asked if the motion precluded the Panel from inviting them in the future if they express an interest. There was general agreement that the three states should decide if they would like to join, and the Panel could raise the issue again if any of them do so.

ANSTF Update - The Fall 2003 meeting of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force was held on November 4-5 in Arlington, Virginia. In addition to the usual topics such as ballast water, regional panel reports, and reports from its various committees and working groups, the meeting also included a review of federal agency activities for FY2004, an update on the status of Injurious Wildlife activities, and another from the North American Brown Tree Snake Control Team. The meeting was a productive one in which three state Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plans - Hawaii, Indiana, and Wisconsin - were approved. The Task Force also approved two control/management plans: Chinese Mitten Crab and European Green Crab. Finally, the Task Force also approved the establishment of a Mid-Atlantic Regional Panel. On the day after the Task Force meeting, the Executive Secretary and FWS staff met with the Regional Panel Heads to discuss standard operating procedures and other business.

The Spring Task Force meeting is scheduled for May 26-27, 2004 in Columbia, Missouri. The first day of the meeting will focus on Task Force business; the second day will include regional presentations and a field trip. Topics to be covered during the ANS Task Force meeting include: an update of Regional Panel activities, status reports from several ANSTF committees and working groups, including the Prevention and Outreach Committees and the New Zealand mudsnail and *Caulerpa* working groups; presentations by the Mississippi River Basin Panel; and update on ballast water management activities; and update on the activities of the National Invasive Species Council; and other topics. One of the most important topics of the meeting will be a discussion on making the ANSTF Strategic Plan operational.

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The USFWS vacancy announcement for the Chief of the Branch of Invasive Species closed on March 12, 2004. The USFWS currently plans to advertise a second vacancy announcement for the Executive Secretary of the ANS Task Force after the Branch Chief position is filled.

The following are actions and notes from the meeting of the Regional ANS Panel heads which took place on November 6, 2003.

Actions/Tasks:

- Need to update ANSTF membership list (list on web page, e-mail lists, etc.) - take off Norm Stucky's name and add Jay Rendall
- Panels need to start being more creative about alternatives to travel - teleconferencing, for example. Need some criteria on when/who the Regional Panels can reimburse for travel
- Great Lakes Panel to send their language they use when they submit something created by the Panel but submitted by the Great Lakes Commission.
- Executive Secretary to hold Regional Panel Head Meetings once a year along with the Task Force Meetings
- To improve coordination and communication, each Federal Task Force member should consider getting on the listservers of all the Regional Panels. The Executive Secretary will send out an e-mail to all Task Force members and Regional Panel heads with information on how to get on their listservers or e-mail groups
- Regional Panels should coordinate on some sort of larger list and/or database of outreach materials
- Regional Panels are asked to keep membership lists on their web pages and to keep it as up-to-date as possible
- Annual reports and priorities - how can the Task Force be more responsive to the Panels? We need to develop a template for Annual Priorities from the Regions and language on why the Task Force needs this info.

Important Points/New Policies:

- Next Task Force Meeting - keep Regional Panel presentations to 15 minutes and 5 minutes for questions
- States need to decide who will represent them on Panels, but we need to make sure that they understand that they do not have to participate - we need to encourage participation, but make clear that it is not mandatory - it is an opportunity, not an obligation
- Regional Panel Meetings - all meetings need to be advertised 15 days in advance and to do this properly, staff needs 6 weeks advance notice. Meeting facilities need to have handicapped access.
- Meetings - we need to be better about handouts - the administrative entity of the Regional Panel can keep track of the handouts just as long as we can get them if we need them.

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- What is the definition of Quorum?
 - Ron Lukens sent this by e-mail after the meeting: Consensus is reaching a decision wherein most of the group agrees. Commonly, if anyone is unsure, the following question can be asked: Can you live with it? If the answer is no, then there is not consensus and a vote is needed.
- When sitting on the Task Force, it is important that the Panel Heads act/speak more for their geographic region than the Panel itself; however, they do represent the Panel when they give their Regional Panel presentations
- Order for speaking during meetings: federal members, then ex-officio members, then audience if there is time - if not, they have to wait until the public comment period
- Should all Regional Panel Heads be on the Task Force?
- New members of Panels - must be brought to the Executive Secretary of the Task Force and letters of invitation go out from the co-chairs
- Do we need a listserver for the Regional Panel heads? Or all Regional Panel members? Or perhaps just an e-mail group?
- Coordination - how to better coordinate between Regional Panels and Committees
 - Committee chairs should be instructed to include Regional Panel Heads in e-mails
 - Must be careful of the “inside the beltway” phenomenon
 - Every Panel should have someone on the ANSTF committees
- Need to look at ANS website - what needs to be updated, content, etc.

NISC/ISAC Update - Lukens attended the ISAC meeting held February 2004 in Honolulu, Hawaii. This was the final meeting for the current membership. New members are currently being selected. The next ISAC meeting will be held in October 2004, likely in Washington, DC.

At the Honolulu meeting a letter was drafted from ISAC to NISC regarding “cross-cut initiatives.” By identifying a subset of important invasive species issues as “cross-cut initiatives,” NISC is automatically drawing attention to these issues individually and as a portfolio of issues. Furthermore, NISC’s intention to keep this list largely unchanged for several years (in order to track performance of these multi-agency programs) makes the selection of topics and the justification of them very important. The issues on the list will become symbols of the federal government’s efforts. IASC made three recommendations about this list:

1. An introduction and re-packaging of the list of cross-cut initiatives would make it a more effective vehicle for communicating overall NISC priorities.
2. NISC should promote strongly the use of cost-avoidance to evaluate the performance of prevention initiatives.
3. Because screening for intentional introductions is such a central and urgent component of prevention, NISC should make sure that all the agencies (including EPA) that had committed in the National Management Plan to participate in developing new screening protocols commit much more attention to this.

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Invasive Species of the Month Public Information and Education Project - Section I of "Meeting the Invasive Species Challenge," the National Invasive Species Management Plan, Education and Public Awareness, recognizes that all sectors of American society have a stake in preventing the introduction of new invasive species, as well as controlling and reducing the negative impacts of existing invaders. The Plan stresses the need for a wide variety of education, outreach, and training programs to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of the introduction of invasive species in order to help motivate people to take positive action.

It is unrealistic to expect that the public will recognize and understand all of the hundreds of invasive species currently established in the U.S. It is important to avoid media (and viewer/reader) overload with a deluge of information on too many invasive species, while at the same time providing an ongoing information/education stream on certain high-profile invasive species. One ideal method for doing so is by the implementation of an "Invasive Species of the Month" project in which twelve high-priority invasive species (or potential invasive species) are targeted for a media campaign. The outreach campaign would consist of press releases to appropriate mass media outlets and a highly visible, top page-placed Invasive Species of the Month on the federal invasive species website, *invasivespecies.gov*.

A visually appealing Invasive Species of the Month component will be added to the top page of the *invasivespecies.gov* website. By necessity, this will most likely be a picture of the species along with an Invasive Species of the Month header and an interesting sentence or two along with a link to a full profile of the species. Invasive Species of the Month designation would be the responsibility of the National Invasive Species Council staff, in coordination with the Department Liaisons and the invasive species staff of the various federal departments and agencies. A potential starting point could be the list of high impact "candidate species" which was submitted to NISC from ISAC in 2003 for consideration as the targets for federal economic impact studies. The actual writing of species profile for press releases and the website would be the responsibility of invasive species staff of the involved federal departments and agencies. Assistance from outside invasive species "experts" could also be utilized at this stage of the project.

Legislative Update - Lukens distributed a handout from The Nature Conservancy on Invasive Species Bills of 2003. This is a quick overview of bills before Congress that deal with invasive species.

Jonathan Champion also reported to Lukens on legislative status for the year in regard to NAISA:

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
 - Engaged, especially with ballast water
 - Wants to pass a bill this Congress, maybe not NAISA
- House Resources Committee
 - Not very engaged
 - Concern over private property rights - being compared to Endangered Species Act
 - Actions underway to address this issue

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- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
 - engaged and wants to move a bill this Congress
 - may be something other than NAISA (scope is an issue)
- Rumored that hearings and possibly mark-ups would take place in March, 2004.

Web site Statistics (Since 3rd week of December through mid-March)

- 42,097 successful page hits
- 14,638 distinct hosts served
- 594 mean successful page hits per day

Lukens brought up a subject for possible Regional Panel action - development of a logo for the Panel. The Panel agreed to begin the process and after discussing possibilities such as a contest or competition, Schmitz volunteered to have his graphics department come up with 5 different logos to hand out at next meeting for review. Judy Shearer indicated that she would do the same.

DISCUSSION OF FACILITATED SESSION

The Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel has identified a need to develop a strategic plan to address issues and problems relative to aquatic invasive species in the Gulf region. As a first step, the Gulf Panel convened on Wednesday, March 31, 2004, to engage in dialogue, brainstorming activities, and strategic planning exercises to provide high-level inputs to the eventual strategic plan. The goal of the strategic plan is to provide a blueprint for aquatic invasive species activities to be conducted or recommended by the Gulf Panel during the next three to five years. To accelerate the strategic planning process, the Gulf Panel engaged ICF Consulting to facilitate a strategic planning workshop. The workshop design mirrored a traditional gap analysis format assessing the Gulf Panel "as is" state, the Gulf Panel "to be" state, and lastly, some high-level strategies recommended by the Panel to close the gaps.

After completing the "as is" and the "to be" exercises, the Panel then developed high-level ideas and strategies to close gaps. The focus of the exercise was not to develop "perfect" strategies the first time but rather to identify high-level areas and ideas that can serve as a foundation for developing more explicit strategies later on. To complete the exercise the Panel was divided into five groups. Each group worked to compile ideas and strategies as time permitted. The groups then presented their ideas and strategies to the larger group. The key questions asked were:

The workshop results were presented along with recommended next steps required to develop a strategic plan. These recommendations included:

- Completing the "strategies to close gaps" exercise
- Determining the strategic plan audience(s) or stakeholders (public-facing document or internal-facing document or both?)

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- Ensuring the strategic plan is written with intended audience in mind (may or may not warrant different writing style)
- Determining the structure, format, and length of the aquatic invasive species strategic plan, reviewing other aquatic invasive species strategic plans for ideas
- Identifying the strategic plan development timeline (when do you want the plan complete?)
- Forming the strategic plan development core team (4-5 members) to drive the general direction for developing the plan
- Core team leveraging the appropriate Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to help develop aspects of the plan consistent with SME expertise at appropriate times
- Defining key strategic plan terms (generic strategic plan terms and aquatic invasive species terms) once structure, format, length have been determined
- Determining the desired distinction between “strategic plan” and “implementation plan” (same document or different document?)
- Determining the level of detail of the implementation plan (will the document be public-facing? Will there be a more specific “back-office” implementation plan for internal use?)

A copy of the entire workshop results are available at the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission office.

AQUACULTURE ACTIVITIES IN MEXICO

Roberto Mendoza provided the Panel with a presentation regarding aquaculture activities in Mexico. He discussed the use of various cichlid species and the occurrence of suckermouth catfishes, which are now abundant in various locations. He indicated that while there is concern regarding the environmental impact of cichlids, in many cases, the use of cichlids (tilapia in particular) represents an important economic benefit to areas of Mexico. He expressed concern that cichlid species could become spread even wider throughout Mexico.

WORK GROUP REPORTS

Information Management Work Group - Lukens reported that the Work Group launched the revised website since last meeting. He continues to get 1-2 e-mails a month from the general public that compliment the site. It is going to be used as a centerpiece, and every one is going to be asked to provide information on a routine basis. The Panel will continue to use the Information Management Work Group as the core group for that function.

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Along with the website comes the database inherited from the GCRL. Comparatively speaking, it is a very small database. The Commission office does not have an effective way to feed that database. It requires a person dedicated to it on a full time basis to examine literature, to follow up on reports received over the Internet, and to be able to react to situations in a timely manner, including all of the verification and identification tasks needed to be completed if a report is made by a private citizen. Resources to do that are not available in the GSMFC office at this point. If the Panel would agree, Lukens would like to ask the Information Management Work Group to explore this issue and examine the benefits and drawbacks of the GSMFC maintaining the database or transferring the database to the USGS database and providing a link on the Regional Panel site so that people can report directly to the USGS staff and that database. Larry Simpson, Executive Director of the Commission, wanted to see more thought given to this issue to determine the best recommendation. Lukens asked that this issue be referred to the Information Management Work Group. The Work Group will present findings to entire Panel. The Panel agreed to allow the Information Management Work Group to proceed with that activity.

Education and Outreach Work Group - Chuck Jacoby reported that the Work Group has started, but has not completed, an inventory of recent education products that are available. The plan is to use that information to identify gaps and move forward. The Work Group has been tasked with development of a draft brochure about the Panel. There was also discussion about some time in the future having a newsletter as one way to disseminate information. That is on the back burner at this point. Since the last meeting they have reviewed the web site and provided input.

Their main activity has been to develop a protocol for science fairs for the international science and engineering fair competitions that go on worldwide. The main reason for this project was that invasive species sometimes show up in these projects and there was concern that it might be a mechanism by which they are spread. There is a long version that went to the ANS Task Force, which essentially was approved, but there was a request that the Panel create a short version of the protocol for students. A copy of that document was provided to the Panel.

John Teem pointed out some errors regarding *Calerpa taxiflora*. The statement that "...*Calerpa taxifolia* evolved tolerance for colder temperatures while growing in aquaria in Europe", is not supported by scientific evidence. This type of document should not include things that are not scientifically demonstrated as facts. It may seem like a minor point, but as a Panel it must be very accurate in terms of information to present to other people.

Teem also questioned the need for the sentence beginning the last paragraph "Why Not Ban Use of All Nonindigenous Species?" It does not relate to the rest of that paragraph but it is a question that doesn't make sense to suggest to students that it is a reasonable thing to get rid of all non-indigenous species or to ban them. Because they are talking about nonindigenous species and invasive species, the distinction should be made between those species which are invasive and those which are simply nonindigenous.

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Lukens added that the use of the word "ban" is in science fairs, not the global banning of all nonindigenous species.

Scott Hardin added that there is some language in the hydrilla paragraph that needs to be clarified. He will offer some language on that subject.

Lukens explained that all of the language has been accepted by the Task Force. Nothing has taken place yet because of two things: 1) they were waiting on the student version to go along with it, and 2) one of the Task Force members believes that there were a number of references in the package that were outdated, and he is having someone look over those. It will not change any of the text, just the references in the document. It is hoped to have the student version as a companion to send with it so they have both versions.

It was suggested that Scott Hardin, John Teem, and Don Schmitz address these specific issues with the Education and Outreach Work Group either by conference call or e-mail. All Panel members will vote on the final version.

Early Detection/Rapid Response Work Group - Lukens reported that \$20,000 was received from Sea Grant, through NOAA, for the Panel to develop a Gulf wide rapid response plan. Due to other commitments, this activity was not started until December 2003. Chris Dionigi, staff person for the National Invasive Species Council, joined the Work Group for the first meeting. He was one of the writers and overall coordinator to produce the document "General Guidelines for the Establishment and Evaluation of Invasive Species Early Detection and Rapid Response Systems". The group used that document and determined how it applied to the Work Group project. Assignments were made at that meeting.

The assignments for each of the state representatives was to take a look at all state laws and identify who within the state agencies has legislative or executive office responsibility for some aspect of invasive species. This is going to be important in terms of putting together a core group of people to be called in the event of a need for a rapid response. The group is also including a section on taxonomic experts.

Lukens has received information from 3 of the 5 states. Plans are to evaluate the current situation from a staff perspective and establish a date for a follow up Rapid Response Work Group meeting. It is expected that this project will be completed by the end of 2004.

Research and Development Work Group - Harriet Perry reported that they are in the process of gathering invasive research that has been done in each of the states. They ask that each state supply species of concern for their state. Don Schmitz indicated that he would like to be added to the Work Group. They asked that a taxonomic work group be assigned to the Research and Development Work Group to develop a taxonomic experts database.

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Ad Hoc Work Group for Symposium - Herb Kumpf reported that the Work Group met several times to discuss the possibility of holding a conference to provide a summary of research happening in Gulf of Mexico areas, status and trends, and policy issues. In November of 2005 there will be a "State of the Gulf" symposium in Corpus Christi, Texas, sponsored by the Hart Association. Plans are to find out more information on that. Kumpf asked for volunteers for the Work Group.

IAFWA OUTREACH AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PROJECT

Gwen White of D.J. Case and Associates provided a project overview of the IAFWA Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Communication Strategies Project Update and Workshop Invitation - March 2004. The Fisheries and Water Policy Committee of the IAFWA was awarded a 2003 Multi-state Conservation Grant for a 3-year project to help address ANS issues. This project is unique in that it involves the cooperation of multiple partners including the IAFWA, the four Regional Associations, four Pilot State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and their respective in-state partners, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The focus of this project is to help states increase their capacity to address Aquatic Nuisance Species issues within their state through the development of comprehensive communications strategies and collectively help the Regional Associations and the IAFWA develop a stronger voice and greater capabilities when addressing regional and national ANS efforts. To carry out the project, a contract has been awarded to Southwick Associates, Inc. on behalf of D.J. Case and Associates, S.R. Enterprises, Silvertip Productions, all of whom will work closely with the IAFWA and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Objective I: Pilot State Communication Programs. IAFWA is working with a pilot state from each of the four Regional Associations to implement a comprehensive communications plan to increase awareness of ANS threats and potential damages, to promote prevention steps that could be taken by recreational users, to assess results and make recommendations available to other state agencies.

Progress to date:

1. The Advisory Panel selected one pilot state from each Regional Association: Missouri, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Arizona. Several states are considering using the process to reinvigorate interagency ANS teams and initiate *State ANS Management Plans*.
2. The IAFWA Project Team provided guidance for each state in how they wanted to engage in this project with respect to staying in-house or involving external partners.
3. The IAFWA Project Team conducted 40 interviews and met with all four states locally to define the scope and focus of the ANS issue in their respective states, to identify associated target audiences, and to begin developing the communications strategies.

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Teams from each pilot state have selected priority issues and target audiences, including:

- recreational boaters, anglers, and duck hunters
- bait dealers
- hobbyists and suppliers of aquarium pets and backyard ponds
- policy makers
- seafood businesses and consumers
- urban residents who are not outdoor enthusiasts
- water suppliers and users via canals and irrigation districts.

Next steps:

1. Each state is in the process of developing or finalizing their strategies and any associated partnerships and materials.
2. All actions will be evaluated using a combination of survey and tracking techniques.
3. Many of the pilot states have realized the value of the USFWS *Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!* campaign, and are choosing to incorporate it into their communications strategies. As part of the partnership, the Service will be expanding the website to include state-specific information and supporting messages.
4. A project webpage will be developed to provide information on the pilot state efforts for review by other state fish and wildlife agencies in the region.

Objective II: Regional Coordination Workshops. Four regional workshops will be held to increase coordination between state fish and wildlife agencies, state and federal law enforcement, regional entities, and federal agencies responsible for regulating ANS. This task serves all states, focusing on regulatory and law enforcement aspects of ANS management, and other potential issues. To support and maintain workshop activities and subsequent work, an electronic list serve will be developed to allow agencies and organizations to regularly discuss regional ANS issues.

Progress to date:

1. Confirmed conference dates for 2004 regional meetings.
 - Northeastern Fish & Wildlife Conference, April 28, 2004, Ocean City, MD
 - Western Fish & Wildlife Conference, July 24, 2004, Sun Valley, ID
 - **Southeastern Fish & Wildlife Conference, October 30, 2004, Hilton Head, SC**
 - Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference, December 12, 2004, Indianapolis, IN.
2. IAFWA sent introductory letters to all state directors and fisheries chiefs in January, asking them to invite ANS coordinators, law enforcement, other agencies and NGOs from their state that have an interest in ANS.

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3. The contractor team continues to work with states ahead of each regional meeting to invite participation and set a preliminary agenda for the workshop.

Next steps:

1. Continue email and telephone contact with directors, fisheries chiefs, and others they identify in anticipation of each region's workshop.
2. Conduct workshops in the regions and develop and implement action plans.

The IAFWA Advisory Panel oversees this project to ensure that all activities are in the best interest of the states, have the greatest potential to be replicated later in other states, and will enhance ANS activities at the regional and national levels. Members represent each of the four IAFWA regions. The implementation team combines the necessary skills to provide effective support to the advisory panel, pilot states, and regional workshops.

White extended an invitation to the Panel to consider involvement in the October 30 workshop and identify issues for the southeast region. Lukens added that issues that this project is addressing are relevant to Regional Panel issues and an exciting opportunity for a job to get done that will feed into the Panel. Kumpf was pleased that the workshop would address internet trade. No action was taken, but plans are to work with the regional panels to avoid duplication of effort.

HACCP PRESENTATION

Bob Pitman, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator for FWS Southeast Region, gave a presentation entitled "Managing Pathways."

Resource management work could provide pathways to unintentionally spread species, which may be invasive, to unique and critical habitats for already endangered species. Next to habitat loss, invasive species are resource management's biggest challenge. Executive Order 13112, 1998, directs federal agencies to prevent spreading invasive species in their work but few management tools exist to implement this Directive. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) planning could provide the management tool needed. HACCP has been modified from the food industry for natural resource work. Without planning, hitchhiking species of plants, animals and other biologics may contaminate natural resource pathways. HACCP's five linked forms identify risks of hitchhiking species and focuses preventative actions on specific problem areas in the pathway. Best management practices (BMP) are recorded. Risks are identified for easy review. Funding needs and management decisions based on HACCP plans ensure priorities are addressed strategically and in a consistent manner.

The Fish & Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center and partners developed a two day training course to teach HACCP planning procedures for managers, biologists and technicians. Attendees learn to manage natural resource pathways using HACCP planning principles.

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Responsible natural resource management means just that! Learn the planning process that will help you identify risks and focus attention on critical control points where non-target species and other biologists (hitchhikers) can be removed from your pathway. Lack of planning could spread invasive species.

HACCP information and support is web-based at www.HACCP-NRM.org. Forms, a searchable database of completed HACCP plans, supporting documents and future training announcements are available. Sharing HACCP plans and BMPs helps manage all pathways. The website is linked on the Regional Panel website

BACKGROUND AND STATUS OF FISH RISK ASSESSMENTS

Walt Courtenay gave a presentation entitled "The Lacey Act - Injurious Wildlife Provisions."

What is an injurious wildlife species? Those species, including offspring and eggs, that are injurious to:

- Health and welfare of human beings
- Interest of forestry, agriculture, and horticulture
- Welfare and survival of the wildlife or wildlife resources of the U.S.

What is the process for listing species?

- Evaluation can be initiated with or without a petition
- If warranted, publish a *Federal Register* notice requesting biological and economic information
- Evaluate scientific data using established criteria
- If data support listing, publish a proposed rule to list and request public input
- Publish a final rule to list or a notice explaining why the species will not be listed.

Who implements the Injurious Wildlife Provisions?

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - promulgates regulations for listings
 - Division of Law Enforcement
 - enforces regulations
 - Division of International Affairs
 - issues permits
 - Division of Environmental Quality
 - evaluates species of injurious listings
 - provides recommendations on listings

What is prohibited if a species is listed?

- Importation
- Interstate shipment.

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What are the exceptions? Permits may be issued for the following purposes:

- Zoological
- Educational
- Medical
- Scientific

(Federal Agencies, without a permit, for their own use)

How can permits be obtained? Division of Management Authority

- Federal Fish and Wildlife License/Permit Application Form 3-200-42
- On the web: <http://forms.fws.gov/3-200-42.pdf>
- 1-800-358-2104

What groups of animals may be listed under the Injurious Wildlife Provision?

- Live wild mammals
- Live wild birds or eggs
- Live or dead fish (including mollusks and crustaceans) or eggs
- Live amphibians or eggs, and
- Live reptiles or eggs
- Plants and insects are not covered

What is currently listed:

Mammals

- Flying fox or fruit bat genus
- 7 Mongoose genera
- European rabbit genus
- Indian wild dog, red dog or dhole genus
- Multimammal rat or mouse genus
- Raccoon dog
- Brushtail possum - July 2002

Birds

- Pink starling or rosy pastor
- Species of dioch
- Java sparrow
- Red whiskered bul-bul

Reptiles

- Brown tree snake

Amphibians

- None

Fish, Mollusks, Crustaceans

- Walking catfish family
- Mitten crabs
- Zebra mussels

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- Live or dead whole fish, live fertilized eggs, or gametes of salmonids unless they have a health certificate
- Snakehead family Channidae - October 2002

The Listing Process

- A full biological synopsis is required
- That document must contain most or all known biological data about that species or group of species
- Much or all of that information must be published in the *Federal Register* for a given time of public response
- The biological synopsis must contain, based on the best data available, a risk assessment should a species (or group of species) be introduced that can withstand challenges and outside specialist peer reviews of this information.

Status of Fish Risk Assessments

- Entire snakehead family listed in 2002
- Biological synopsis and risk assessment document on bigheaded carps in advanced stage of preparation
- Black carp document in completion stage
- Swamp eel document should be completed by May-June 2004.

What's next?

- Review of 80+ foreign fish species (most temperate), using the Species Analyst Model, is in progress and should be completed by late summer/early fall 2004
- From that review, some 20+ species that have records of introductions beyond their native ranges or are in culture elsewhere may be considered for listing.

If all goes as is currently projected, many fishes not listed as injurious wildlife may be added within the next two years. The objective is to become PROACTIVE rather than REACTIVE.

Mark McElroy asked that Courtenay's presentation be added to the Panel's website.

MOBILE BAY RAPID ASSESSMENT PROJECT

David Yeager and Harriet Perry gave an overview of the Mobile Bay Rapid Assessment Project. The Panel was shown the video that was created entitled "The Search for Alien Invaders." The rapid assessments provide a baseline on what is there and the status of invasive species. They encouraged this type of project in other areas of the Gulf.

Kumpf asked that copies of the video be provided to the Information and Outreach Group.

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Perry reported that the Mississippi rapid assessment project will take place the last week in August and going into first week of September. The Gulf Coast Research Laboratory will host the Mississippi event.

NEXT MEETING

Don Schmitz mentioned that he would like to see field trips incorporated into the meetings. Lukens added that when a time and location is established, the Panel member from that area could suggest potential field trip ideas.

Schmitz indicated that the Keys have the only living reef system in the Gulf states and he does not think they know the risks of invasive species. He suggested holding the next meeting in the Keys somewhere between Key Largo and Key West. He could probably arrange a tour of a national refuge.

Dennis Riecke suggested meeting in Mississippi or Texas.

A motion was made to hold the next meeting in mid to late September 2004 in Mississippi. The March 2005 meeting could be held in Corpus Christi or another location in Texas, and then the Keys in September 2005. The motion was seconded by Leslie Hartman and with no objection the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Herb Kumpf inquired about the timetable for submitting the next Regional Panel grant. Lukens indicated that the proposal would be submitted in September.

There was discussion during the facilitated session to combine the Pathways & Prevention Work Group with the Vessel Mediated Transport Work Group. A motion was made by Herb Kumpf and seconded by Walt Courtenay to combine those two work groups. There was no objection and the motion passed.

Pat Carter provided a summary of carp activities. The FWS sponsored a black carp survey and the project was conducted by Dr. Hal Schramm from Mississippi State University. The purpose of the study was to identify methods of sampling/capturing black carp *Mylopharyngodon piceus* and survey for the presence of black carp in rivers in close proximity to Mississippi aquaculture facilities permitted to stock black carp. They electrofished 0.25-0.75 acre aquaculture ponds containing known densities of adult triploid black carp. They collected black carp with 60 Hz AC output. The number of black carp captured per unit of effort increased with density. No black carp were collected with 15 or 120 Hz pulsed DC. Three rivers in close proximity to permitted aquaculture facilities (Big Sunflower, Yazoo, Bogue Phalia) were surveyed with AC electrofishing during October-November. No black carp were observed. These and additional sites will be sampled in spring and summer 2004 to further investigate the possibility of the presence of black carp in waters

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close to the aquaculture facilities that use them. Next steps are to assess the abundance of black carp in public waters within 30 km of permitted sites where black carp have been stocked in Arkansas. Additionally, plans are to survey public waters in proximity to facilities holding black carp in Louisiana.

Carter also noted that the Asian Carp Work Group is being established to develop an Asian Carp Management Plan. Efforts are continuing to populate that group (state, federal, local, NGOs, academia, and industry). The first meeting will be held on May 24th in Columbia, Missouri, the day before the Mississippi River Basin Panel meeting and the National Task Force meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lukens again provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Otolith Processors Training Workshop
Meeting Summary
May 4, 2004
St. Petersburg, Florida

Attachment C

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and the following people were present:

Adam Richardson, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Janet Tunnell, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Laura Crabtree, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jerome Little, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Jude LeDoux, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Debbie Belk, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tonie Saylor, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Isis Longo, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Ken Edds, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Prince Robinson, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lisa Bare, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Teresa DeBruler, Mote Marine Lab, Sarasota, FL
Nick Parnell, Mote Marine Lab, Sarasota, FL
Chris Palmer, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Beverly Barnett, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Andy Fischer, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Gary Gray, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Discussion of Establishing Primary Readers for Otolith Processing

D. Donaldson stated that the issue of primary reader came up during the recent SEDAR data meeting for red snapper. NMFS-Panama City was tasked with compiling the ageing data for the data meeting. All of the 2002 red snapper biological data collected under the FIN program was provided to NMFS. Under the FIN program, there are two (2) readers for each otolith. This ensures that several people look at the otolith to determine the age and there is some comparability among the readers. However, the readers are not consistent, that is, a person could be reader1 for one otolith and be reader2 for another otolith. It was pointed out that there needs to be some consistency for reader1 in the states. There was concern that if reader1 and reader2 did not agree upon the number of rings and edge codes, there could be confusion when using these data with which reader (1 or 2) was the "official" age. It was noted that when there are discrepancies between the two readers, they get together and come to agreement about the ring count and edge code. If agreement cannot be reach, the otolith is discarded and not included in the data set. Therefore, it appears that that states have been using an informal system for primary reader. After some discussion, **the group recommended that the agreed upon number of rings and edge code would be entered into the reader1 variable. When states send their data to the FIN Data Management System (DMS), the information from reader2**

will not be sent. However, the states will continue to utilize the reader2 information as a reference to identify potential discrepancies between the readers.

Status of University of Florida Greater Amberjack Project

D. Donaldson stated that Debra Murie for the University of Florida had submitted a project to MARFIN to determine the best structure for ageing greater amberjacks. FIN was very interested in this project since greater amberjack is one of the priority species that is being sampled. Unfortunately, MARFIN chose not to fund this project. However, it was suggested that FIN consider funding this project (in 2005) since it would answer various questions about the ageing of amberjack. Therefore, D. Donaldson noted that this project would be one of the items for funding consideration in 2005 on the FIN agenda.

Discussion of Red Snapper Reference Set

D. Donaldson discussed the reference set which contains 300 otoliths taken from all months as well as 100 annotated otolith images and an excel file with ring counts and edge types. This set is utilized to test reader precision among all the personnel reading red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. The preliminary report compiled by NMFS-Panama City showed that the average percent errors (APE) for each agency were fairly good and most were either at or under the 5% APE standard. For those agencies where the APE was higher than the standard, steps have been taken to correct the problems and additional training was conducted to ensure the problems would not occur again. Currently, the reference set has been distributed to NMFS, state agencies (Texas-Florida) as well as Mote Marine Laboratory. It was suggested that LSU and GCRL be included in the rotation so their personnel can look at the reference set as well. The primary point of contact for the set is Bob Allman at NMFS-Panama City. The group talked about the amount of time necessary for each agency to read the reference set. There was concern that an agency could hold onto the set for an indefinite amount of time and stall the purpose of the set (training). **Therefore, the group established a one (1) month time frame for having the set. Each agency would have one month to read the otoliths and then would have to pass it on to the next agency.** The group believed that the reference set provides critical training for readers. **It was agreed that conducting reading exercises with the set should be done on an annual basis. For established readers, they would read a subset of the otoliths just to refresh their memory but for new readers, they should conduct the reading of all the otoliths in the reference set every year for the first couple of years.** The group then discussed the annotated images. There are currently 100 otolith images in the set. It was suggested that more images be added since the states have provided otoliths to the reference set which may not be reflected in the annotated images. After some discussion, **the group decided that 100 images were adequate and adding more may actually be detrimental to the process.** At this time, the NMFS and state otolith sets are separate. **It is the desire of the group that the NMFS and state sets be combined into one complete set.** This will allow the readers to examine the all of the otoliths at one time. The last issue discussed by the group concerned edge codes. It was pointed out that although each agency has their own set of edge codes, these codes need to be mapped to the established FIN codes when the data are sent to the FIN DMS. This will ensure that the data set within the FIN DMS is consistent and make it easier to use by scientists and managers.

Discussion of Development of Reference Sets for Additional Species

The group then discussed the development of reference sets for additional species. D. Donaldson stated that a reference set for each of the FIN priority species should be developed. C. Palmer noted that he and Doug Devries have been working on the development of a reference set for king and Spanish mackerel. It has been suggested that a total of 400 samples for each species (200 whole and 200 sectioned) would be necessary. There was some concern that 800 total otoliths would be too cumbersome to read and NMFS personnel are continuing to examine this issue. C. Palmer stated that NMFS-Panama City should be able to complete a reference set for king and Spanish mackerel in about 2 months. One of the problems that need to be addressed concerns the transportation of the whole otoliths. Since these otoliths are very fragile, it is difficult to transport them without breaking them. The group discussed several possible solutions including embedding them in Flotex and NMFS will continue looking at this issue.

The group then discussed the development of a reference set for southern flounder. It was decided that there should be 300 otoliths and 100 annotated images in this set. A. Fischer and L. Bare will take the lead on developing this set. It was requested that Joey Shepard and Chuck Wilson be contacted to notify them that their staff will be involved in the development of this reference set and ensure that they do not have a problem with their involvement. The group discussed the development of a gulf flounder reference set but believed there was not a need to such a set since the majority of flounder otoliths are pulled from southern flounder.

Discussion of Determination of the First Annulus for Red Snapper

D. Donaldson stated Alabama personnel raised this issue at the recent red snapper SEDAR data meeting. There are three different core types present in cross sections of otoliths used for determination of the first annulus: small core ring, large core ring that merges with an annulus and a large core ring. In the case of both the small and merging core types the first annulus is identified along the sulcus. However, otoliths with the large core, the core is counted as an annulus because it is held that these fish were spawned late in the season. The concerns are, determining a large from a small core can be rather subjective. A. Fischer stated that at LSU, the core (large) is always counted as an annulus and several of the other agencies agreed that they count the large core as an annulus. A. Fischer mentioned that LSU conducted a project to examine this issue and found that there is a lot of variability between otoliths. It was noted that this situation occurs in other species (red drum, spotted sea trout, etc.) as well, however, it is not very well defined in red snapper. The group further discussed this issue but did not come to any resolution.

Discussion of Adding a Commercial/Recreational Designator in Data Entry Program

D. Donaldson stated that Mississippi and Texas have requested that a commercial/recreational designator be added to the data entry program. This designator would make it much easier to find individual records when attempting to add the ageing data onto the record. D. Donaldson stated that he would contact Joey Shepard/Michelle Kasprzak about the possibility of adding this designator. It was also pointed out that if the samplers were giving unique numbers (regardless of where the otolith was collected i.e. commercial or recreational fisheries), it would alleviate this problem.

Presentation of King Mackerel Training Guide

C. Palmer provided an overview of processing and reading king mackerel otoliths. He

presented several examples and tips for reading both whole and sectioned otoliths. He stated that the training guide is available on CD and anyone needing a copy should contact him for a copy.

Processing Status of Otoliths Collected in 2003 and 2004

D. Donaldson stated that the group needed to discuss the status of the otolith processing. T. Saylor noted that for 2003, 80% of the otoliths have been processed and about 50% have been read. Work has not begun on the otoliths collected in 2004. For Louisiana, K. Edds stated that all otoliths collected in 2003 have been processed and read and Louisiana staff working on the flounder and red snapper otoliths collected in 2004. J. LeDoux noted that Mississippi has processed and read all the otoliths collected in 2003 but have not entered that data into the computer. For 2004, the otoliths collected in Mississippi are ready to be processed. For Alabama, J. Little stated that all the otoliths collected in 2003 have been processed and read and the status of otoliths collected in 2004 is unknown. And in Florida, J. Tunnell stated that the red snapper otoliths collected in 2003 have been completed and about 80% of the king mackerel otoliths have been processed and 70% have been read.

Conducting Otolith Reading Activities for Red Snapper and Flounders

The group split into three sections and conducted reading of 15 sets of otoliths for red snappers (2 groups) and gulf and southern flounder. Each group read the otoliths and determined the age and edge type for each fish. This information was recorded and provided to moderator for compilation.

Review and Comparison of Reading Exercise by Groups

After each group determined the ages of the various fish, the information was entered into a spreadsheet and J. Tunnell and D. Donaldson calculated APE for each of the species. For the flounders, the overall APE was 22.22% and for red snapper, the overall APE was 4.97%. For the flounders, although the APE was quite high, the majority of the flounders were gulf flounder and most states are processing and reading southern flounder. Also, there were no determined ages for these fish so an average among the group was calculated to determine APE. For red snapper, the overall APE was below the standard 5%. Most of the groups were around 2% although one group had an APE of approximately 10%. This prompted the group to look at some of the otoliths where there were differences. However, it should be noted that the differences in age among the groups for both species was usually only off by one year.

After the comparison exercise, several otoliths were selected where there were differences among the groups and everyone examined these otoliths (as a group) to determine where each group had differed. The group believed this was a useful activity and helped everyone identify where errors can (and were) made while reading the otoliths.

Discussion of Future Training Meeting

The group decided that the next meeting should be held at Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) during May 2005. D. Donaldson then asked the group for input regarding the next meeting. It was suggested that the reading exercises for all five species needs to be continued and should be the basis of the meeting. Other pertinent presentations and discussions could be added, such as discussion of status of the reference sets and other issues. It was also suggested that the meeting be extended to 1½ days. This would allow for more time for the reading exercises and comparison of the differences among the groups for selected otoliths. The

first day would consist of the reading exercise in the morning and group discussion about various issues in the afternoon. Then the morning of the second day would be devoted to examining the otoliths where there were differences among the groups. 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 5:00 p.m.

**JOINT ASMFC/GSMFC ARTIFICIAL REEF MEETING
MINUTES
Thursday, May 6, 2004
Jacksonville, Florida**

Co-chairmen Vin Malkoski and Jon Dodrill called the meeting to order at 9:05 am. Introductions were made and the following members and guests were in attendance:

Members

Henry Ansley, GADNR, Brunswick, GA
C. Michael Bailey, DOC/NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Mel Bell, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Mike Buchanan, MS DMR, Biloxi, MS
John Dodrill, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Bill Figley, NJDFW, Port Republic, NJ
Jim Francesconi, NCDMF, Morehead City, NC
Paul Hammerschmidt, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Dale Shively*)
Bill Horn, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Joe Kalista, VMRC, Newport News, VA
Rick Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Christopher LaPorta, NYSDEC, East Setauket, NY
Craig Lilyestrom, PR DNER, San Juan, PR
Vin Malkoski, MA DMR, Pocasset, MA
Bob Martore, SCFNR, Charleston, SC
Richard Satchwill, RIDFW, Jamestown, RI
Jeff C. Tinsman, DDFW, Little Creek, DE

Staff

Ronald R. Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Carrie Selberg, Habitat Specialist, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Mike Sestak, FIN Database Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Larry Beggs, Reef Innovations/ReefBall, St. Cloud, FL
Glen Clark, Naval Sea Systems Command, Washington, DC
Kurtis Gregg, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
James Mahaffy, Dominion Marine Group, Ltd., Portsmouth, VA
Keith Mille, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Tim Mullane, Dominion Marine Group, Ltd., Portsmouth, VA
DeWitt Myatt, Easton, MD

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Bill Sargent, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Donna M. Schroeder, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA
Robert Turpin, Escambia County Marine Resources Division, Pensacola, FL

Adoption of Agenda

Bill Figley mentioned that he had an 8 minute video that he would like to show the group. **Henry Ansley made a motion to adopt the agenda with that addition. The motion was seconded by Michael Bailey and the agenda was adopted.**

Approval of Minutes

Michael Bailey made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held April 3, 2003 in Jacksonville, Florida. Mike Buchanan seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

MARAD/Navy Subcommittee Update and Discussion

The first item of business of the Subcommittee was to elect Mel Bell as chairman. Mel reported that a while back a letter was sent to the Maritime Administration to engage in some dialogue with them on the new federal reef program. After the reply was received from the Maritime Administration it was decided that perhaps it would be beneficial to sit down face to face with them, as well as representatives from NAVSEA, and talk about the committees vision regarding ships for reefs and what their vision was. To expedite this activity, a Subcommittee was formed.

Committee Membership

- Formed a MARAD subcommittee of the Artificial Reef Committee with representatives from Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Texas and staffed by both ASMFC and GSMFC

Recent Activities

- Subcommittee meeting (February) in Washington, DC with MARAD

"Joint Program" Updates

- Appears that Navy and MARAD are not on the same page and that there is not actually a "joint Program"
- Navy puts domestic reefing higher in their list of prioritized options that MARAD
- Navy appears to be more flexible on key issues and willing to engage with AR Committees
- MARAD for the time being will not be attending joint meetings

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Title Transfer Update

- ASMFC/GSMFC has indicated this is a key issue
- MARAD:
 - as is, where is
 - has indicated lacks legislative authority to do any other way
- Navy
 - more flexible on title transfer issue

EPA/BMPs Update

- EPA has developed best management practices but they have not been released and it is unclear when they will be
- Indications last week that they may be out soon for public comment

Recommendations from Subcommittee to full Committee

- Send a letter to Navy similar to MARAD letter
- Send a letter to EPA encouraging release of BMPs
- Develop a GSMFC/ASMFC "plan"
- Recommend to Navy that application should be revised based on bulleted list
- Monitor opportunities on Capitol Hill

Recommendation - Fair and Equitable Distribution

- not a competitive process
- all states with an interest in reefing ships have an opportunity to get ships
- random selection of order for each size class
- first round: each ship allocated until every state has a ship
- once you get a ship - bottom of the list until every state has one

After much discussion the committees came to the consensus that any action taken should be a unified effort. Glen Clark added that a letter to MARAD would not work and emphasis should be placed on changing the law. Lukens summarized that a letter would be sent from the Commissions thanking MARAD for their efforts and understanding why the process will not work and that pursuing legislative change would benefit the artificial reef programs.

GSMFC Web-based Oracle Database of Reefs in the Gulf

Mike Sestak and Donna Bellais of the GSMFC office reviewed the artificial reef database that they have been developing. As more artificial reefs are created each year it has become apparent that a centralized means for reef data management is required. The Artificial Reef Program (ARP) database was created in order to provide this means. The initial intent of the ARP is for the management of Gulf of Mexico reefs and may later include both the Atlantic and Pacific areas. WEB based GIS mapping of all permits, areas, and reefs will be incorporated into the design at a later date. Ability to identify all species within an area and reef will also be incorporated into the

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design at a later date. The GSMFC TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee will approve all ARP changes.

The ARP will be designed and maintained for the following usage(s):

1. Track the location of each permit, areas, and artificial reef by longitude and latitude.
2. Record the name, number, size, material, owner, creation date, material, and materials addition dates of each permit, area, and artificial reef.
3. Record the permit owner(s) name, address, and affiliation associated with each permit.
4. Provide a means for data entry for NEW reef permits, reef permit holders, reef areas, reefs, and reef materials.
5. Provide a means for updating existing reef permits, reef permit holders, reef areas, reefs, and reef materials.
6. Record those individuals with the permission to enter and update ARP data.
7. Provide a means for public access to artificial reef data. (Inquiry Only)

The ARP database will be designed in Oracle Version 9.0.2. (9i), with Oracle version updates as needed. The ARP data sets will be stored and maintained at the GSMFC on the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) server. Any existing reef data will be loaded or imported into the new ARP datasets as structures permit. Any data that cannot be loaded or imported will be manually entered. The data entry forms will be WEB based and designed in Oracle Forms 6i which will be later upgraded to Oracle Forms 9.0. The WEB forms will be stored at the GSMFC and accessed through the *gsmfc.org* FIN web site. The Public Inquiry forms will be designed in either WEBI or Oracle Forms 6i and also accessed through the *gsmfc.org* FIN web site.

Paul Hammerschmidt requested that a field be added for a detailed description of materials since most inquiries they receive from the public want details. This could be placed in a comment field.

Bob Martore suggested that there be a field for historical permit numbers, because as permits are renewed they are given new numbers.

It was suggested that perhaps it should include a disclaimer that this is for use by artificial reef program managers. It was clarified that the program that will be available for public use will not contain all the detail.

This topic will be discussed in more detail in the individual subcommittee meetings on Friday.

Using Donated Materials as Matching Funds

Jeff Tinsman reviewed his program "Delaware Reef Program - Banked Match for Wallop-Breaux Funding."

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On 11 existing sites they are using materials of opportunity consisting mostly of concrete products. Work is done by a contractor, they are paid price per ton, and they obtain documented contribution of the concrete products to use as banked match. Some examples of the documentation:

“Kerr Concrete Pipe Company contributed 6600 tons of concrete pipes to the Delaware Reef Program between 1/1/2002 through 12/31/2002. The manufacturing cost of these products was \$45/ton for a total of \$297,000.”

“In the year of 2002 Rinker Materials donated 2060 tons of Reinforced Concrete pipe to a reef project. The production cost including freight for this material is \$164,800.”

The Delaware program also received 619 “red bird” subway cars as donations. The total contribution to Delaware based on the first 467 cars was \$4,452,704. The donation of the last 152 cars were valued at \$1,373,472. FWS was requested to reflect these contributions as “banked match” to the Federal Aid Project.

By pursuing this avenue, Tinsman’s project had received an inkind balance of \$7,344,391.35. Other programs may want to investigate this approach in the future.

MRFSS Questions About Reefs

Gregg Bray, GSMFC office, presented preliminary results from the artificial reef question which was added to the 2003 dockside intercept survey.

1984 - 1992 Question on MRFSS Intercept Survey

“Did you fish withing 200 feet of an oil/gas platform or an artificial reef?”

1=No

2=Oil and Gas Platform or Artificial Reef

2003 Question on MRFSS Intercept Survey

“Did you spend the majority of your fishing trip today fishing within 200 feet of:

1=standing oil & gas platform

2= submerged artificial reef

3=neither

4=refused

Research goals were the same used 2 years ago to analyze the 1992 data. They tried to do similar comparisons with the 1992 data analysis as with the 2003 data.

1. Determine the contribution of fishing trips adjacent to artificial structures to the total catch of selected reef fish.
2. Compare the catch rates of angler trips fishing adjacent to these structures with trips that did not fish adjacent to these structures
3. Look at trends in the number of fishing trips to artificial structures.

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They selected red snapper, gag grouper, and gray triggerfish in both 1992 and 2003 since they provided the largest amount of data to work with and these species are all associated with reef fishing. They calculated the number of angler trips, catch per angler trip, and generated expanded estimates of total catch.

Conclusions:

- A large percentage of anglers interviewed were charter trips and said they fished within 200 feet of one of these structures. The numbers were lower for private boats.
- The majority of the trips in Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi fished submerged artificial reefs.
- Louisiana anglers primarily fished standing oil and gas structures.
- Anglers fishing around these structures or adjacent to these structures had higher catch and harvest rates of red snapper than anglers who did not. Results were the same for gray triggerfish.
- The catch and harvest rates were higher for charter boats than for private boats.
- The contribution of trips fishing adjacent to these structures to the total catch and total harvest of red snapper was substantial, on average greater than 60%. In Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi generally over 80%, sometimes close to 100%. Similar relationship to gray triggerfish and less substantial for gag. Similar results between 1992 and 2003.
- Overall angling effort is up from 1992, but the number of trips fishing adjacent to these structures is relatively static for the most part.

Results are fairly similar to those of 1992 or a little higher. There is no Texas data since Texas does not participate in the MRFSS. The 2003 results are still preliminary at this time.

Reef Colonization Study

Bill Figley gave an overview of his study, "Marine Life Colonization of Experimental Reef Habitat in Temperate Ocean Waters of New Jersey." Thirty experimental reef habitats were designed and deployed in 1996. Sampling of the habitats was conducted from 1998 through 2001. To obtain samples, divers sent the encapsulated habitats to the surface using an air lift bag. For details of this study, a paper is available.

Update on Materials Guidelines

Lukens indicated that the "Guidelines" document was complete and was currently at the printers. A limited number of copies were available at the meeting for committee members. As soon as the bulk copies are received in the GSMFC office they would be forwarded to the state programs.

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Research on Oil and Gas Rigs Off of California

Donna Schroeder from the Marine Science Institute of the University of California in Santa Barbara, California gave a presentation entitled, "Oil Platforms as Artificial Reefs: A Review of the Evidence in the Southern California Bight."

The study encompassed 26 platforms, in 400+ feet range

Decommissioning options of obsolete platforms: leave in place or removal

Survey methods - Delta submersible/scuba (1995-2001)

There is no characteristic species assemblage around an oil platform

Species richness and abundance depends on

- depth
- biogeographic region
- oceanographic variability
- random factors

Conclusions:

- platform and natural reef fish assemblages vary according to depth, biogeographic region, and oceanographic conditions
- some fish species prefer platform habitat to natural reef habitat
- platforms and natural reefs both attract and produce fishes
- platforms may act as defacto marine protected areas.

National Plan Update

Michael Bailey advised that his office has been reorganized again and Linda Chavez is now the Aquaculture Matrix Manager for NOAA. The National Plan update is now on the fast track with persons at the NOAA and Commerce level reading revisions. They anticipate publication this summer. Bailey added that the National Marine Sanctuary has developed their own artificial reef plan

Other Business

The video "Subway Car Ocean Reef Project: South Carolina" was shown to the group.

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

FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group

Attachment E

Meeting Summary

May 11, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. The following people were present:

Bob Muller, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Behzad Mahmoudi, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Britt Bumgardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
James "Tut" Warren, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Linda Lombardi, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Review of 2003 and 2004 Otolith and Length Data Collection Activities

D. Donaldson noted that the group needed to review the status of the data collection for biological data. The first item addressed by the group was the priority and secondary species list. After some discussion, **the group recommended that black grouper be added to the priority species list.** The revised list is attached. The group then reviewed the 2003 (Jan-Dec) and 2004 (Jan-Mar) biological sampling activities, by state. For the most part, the state and federal samplers are collecting the necessary number of otoliths by the established cells. It was noted that the number of otoliths collected reflected "state sampled" and not "state landed". It was pointed out that the targets were developed on state landed and the number of otoliths collected need reflect stated landed so there is an accurate comparison. D. Donaldson stated that this modification would be made and the next otolith tally document would reflect state landed. The group discussed the targets for each of the priority species. There are overall targets for each priority species that were developed based on 0.5% of the landings (a 3-year average) and this provided a total number of otoliths needed for each species. This total was distributed about the various cells (based on percentage of landings) and the otolith targets were established. Then, NMFS provided the number of otoliths they have been collecting for these species and that number was subtracted from total number of otoliths so you have a FIN and NMFS total target by species. However, the NMFS target was not broken down by cell, it was just a total number. After some discussion, **the group recommended the targets (by the established cells) should be developed for the federal totals. This would not only allow for better tracking of the otolith collections but also allow for the update of the federal targets and potentially free up funds to collect otoliths for additional species.** As the group was reviewing the number of otoliths collected, it appeared that not all the otoliths collected by the states were included in the list. D. Donaldson stated that since this is still a fairly new activity, it was decided to include only the otoliths collected under FIN and TIP protocols. Although there may be more biological information available, only these data are currently being reported. However, the system can handle these additional data. It was noted that one of the main purposes of this system was to provide all of the biological data in one database. Therefore, **the group recommended that the FIN begin compiling other sources of biological data and providing these data to the FIN Data Management System.** It was also suggested that more descriptive title headings be

provided in the number of otoliths collected (by state/NMFS) document such as TIP samples, collected vs. processed, etc.

The group then looked at the document that compared the percent landing vs. percent otoliths collected. This document compares the landing with the otolith collected to ensure that the otolith collections were representative of the landings. For most species, it appears that sampling is representative. However, there were some problems with gulf and southern flounder. One of the reasons for the problems concerned the difficulty in finding these fish. Another reason for the problem was that in many cases, the flounders are not speciated and are lumped into a general "flounders" category (for commercial fisheries). It was suggested that an additional category be added to the document for "flounder" (for commercial fisheries). Also, the number of otoliths collection (both state and federal) need to be state landed (not state sampled). D. Donaldson stated that he would modify the document and distribute the revised spreadsheet to the group.

Development of Targets for Biological Sampling

Recommendations for Necessary Lengths and Otoliths for FIN Priority Species

The group then discussed the collection of necessary data. It was pointed out that the purpose of this activity was to improve stock assessments for the various species in the Gulf. The group discussed the recreational targets for red snapper. Since the season is closed for part of the year, it would make sense to reallocate the recreational red snapper targets for waves 1 and 6 into the other waves. Therefore, D. Donaldson will reallocate the targets to reflect the red snapper season. In determining the number of otoliths and lengths that are needed, there are three questions that need to be answered so an accurate picture for a particular species can be determined:

- What is the total number of otoliths needed?
- Are additional lengths needed?
- What are the cells of "significance"?

Gulf of Mexico

Recreational/commercial

State

Mode (recreational)/Gear (commercial)

Wave

In order to answer this question, someone needs to examine and analysis the existing data (only look at the last five years of data). Ultimately, these questions should be addressed by the SEDAR and as this process is being conducted, these questions will addressed and the answers will be provided in the final report. However, in the meantime, FIN needs to task someone to look at these questions but the questions is, "who?" The group discussed the possibility of contracting this activity out to interested parties. The problem with this idea is that it would require additional funds and currently FIN is capped in terms of funding. Another suggestion was to ask the experts for the various species. Although these people are busy, they are the ones who have intimate knowledge about a particular species. There was concern that because these folks were so busy, nothing would get accomplished. After some discussion, **the group**

recommended that FIN send a letter to the experts asking for their assistance in determining the necessary otoliths and lengths for the various species. The letter should outline the process and identify the desired products for the various species. The group then identified the various species and associated expert. The list is as follows:

- King and Spanish Mackerel (Mauricio Ortiz)
- Red Snapper (Steve Turner)
- Flounders (Joey Shepard)
- Greater Amberjack (Debra Murie)
- Gag Grouper (Steve Turner)
- Gray Triggerfish
- Red Drum (Mike Murphy)
- Red Grouper (Steve Turner)
- Spotted Seatrout (Mike Murphy)
- Striped Mullet (Behzad Mahmoudi)
- Vermilion Snapper (Shannon Cass-Calay)
- Yellowtail Snapper (Bob Muller)

Once the letter has been drafted, it will be distributed to the group for their review and comment. It was envisioned that results the five species currently being sampled under FIN could be provided in 2005 and the results could be used to determine the 2006 targets. Work on the other species could be accomplished as time permitted.

The group then discussed the necessary lengths and otoliths for FIN priority species in 2005. Although the outlined process will provide guidance regarding the needed number of lengths and otoliths, the process will not functional until 2006. Therefore, **the group recommended that FIN use the existing targets for the priority species for sampling activities in 2005.** The group then discussed the sampling of greater amberjack. Because the appropriate age structure has not yet been determined, **it was recommended that sampling for greater amberjack be stopped in 2005 and the monies be used to fund the University of Florida's greater amberjack project. This project will help determine the appropriate age structure for greater amberjack.**

Discussion of Adding New Species

D. Donaldson stated that if additional funds become available in 2005, a list of additional species for sampling consideration should be developed. After some discussion, the group recommended that the following species be considered (in priority order):

1. Gray Snapper
2. Gag Grouper
3. Red Grouper
4. Gray Triggerfish
5. Red Drum

The group discussed methods for including these species in the 2005 cooperative agreement to help facilitate the sampling, if additional funds become available. It was suggested that these

species could be added to the cooperative agreement without any associated targets. This would allow for sampling of these species (assuming additional funding) without amending the cooperative agreement. It was noted that although this approach would allow for little to no changes in the statement of work, there would still need to be modifications to the budgets (since the states would require more funds to sample more fish). Therefore, there is really no time saving in the process by adding the additional species into the cooperative agreement ahead of time. The best approach would be to just amend the cooperative agreement if and when more funding becomes available. The amendment process has become somewhat streamline and is not as cumbersome as in the past.

Discussion of Developing Sampling Targets for East Florida

D. Donaldson mentioned that J O'Hop had asked the group to consider developing targets for the east coast of Florida. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has generated a list of species that need to be targets. In addition, targets have been generated for these species; however, these targets are very general and provide the level of detail of the Gulf of Mexico targets. In order to be consistent, **the group recommended the targets be generated for the east coast of Florida, utilizing the same process for establishing targets for the Gulf of Mexico.** J. O'Hop stated that he would send the list of species to D. Donaldson and D. Donaldson would generate the targets.

Development of 2005 FIN Data Collection Plan Document

D. Donaldson stated that he would update the 2004 document and distribute the document to the group for review. It was suggested that the updated spreadsheet containing FIN and NMFS targets be added to the document. D. Donaldson stated that he would update the document with these additions and distribute it to the group for review. Once the document was reviewed and approved, FIN staff will print and distribute it to the appropriate FIN committees, subcommittees, work groups and other interested parties.

Other Business

The group discussed otolith processing capabilities and discussed the backlog at the NMFS-Panama City lab. It was suggested that FIN could provide funding to hire additional personnel to process otoliths. Currently, there is a FMRI staff member who assists in processing the otoliths received at the NMFS lab. If there is a need, an additional person could be hired and provided to NMFS-Panama City to help in this task. This idea needs to be further discussed and could be considered by FIN at their upcoming meeting.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Priority and secondary species list (species in bold denote priority).

GULF OF MEXICO

BLACK DRUM
BLACK GROUPER
COBIA
DOLPHIN
GAG
GRAY SNAPPER
GRAY TRIGGERFISH
GREATER AMBERJACK
GULF FLOUNDER
HOGFISH
KING MACKEREL
LANE SNAPPER
MUTTON SNAPPER
RED DRUM
RED GROUPER
RED PORGY
RED SNAPPER
SCAMP
SNOWY GROUPER
SOUTHERN FLOUNDER
SPANISH MACKEREL
SPECKLED HIND
SPOTTED SEATROUT
STRIPED MULLET
VERMILION SNAPPER
WARSAW GROUPER
WHITE GRUNT
YELLOWEDGE GROUPER
YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER
BLUEFISH
CERO MACKEREL
WRECKFISH
TILEFISH
LITTLE TUNNY
LESSER AMBERJACK

GOLDEN TILEFISH
ALMACO JACK
BANDED RUDDERFISH
BLACKFIN SNAPPER
BLACKLINE TILEFISH
BLUELINE TILEFISH
CARIBBEAN RED SNAPPER
CUBERA SNAPPER
DOG SNAPPER
GOLDFACE TILEFISH
MAHOGANY SNAPPER
MISTY GROUPER
NASSAU GROUPER
QUEEN SNAPPER
RED HIND
RED HOGFISH
ROCK HIND
SAND PERCH
SCHOOLMASTER
SILK SNAPPER
SLIPPER LOBSTERS
SPANISH SLIPPER LOBSTER
TILEFISHES
WENCHMAN
YELLOWFIN GROUPER
YELLOWMOUTH GROUPER

**FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)
MINUTES
June 3 and 4, 2004
Fajardo, Puerto Rico**

Chairman Joseph Shepard called the meeting to order on June 3, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

Members

Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Bob Dixon, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Stephen Holiman, NOAA Fisheries, 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
Ana Roman, USFWS, Boqueron, PR (proxy for D. Frugé)
Joseph Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX
Jason Vasques, USVIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI

Staff

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

Others

Troy Barker, ICF Consulting, Fairfax, VA
Mike Cahall, ACCSP, Washington, DC
Tom Fazio, ICF Consulting, Fairfax, VA
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Robert Sadler, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Carolyn Sranek, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Dave Van Voorhees, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) meeting held on June 4 and 5, 2003 in Orlando, Florida were approved as presented.

Summary of FIN Facilitated Session Discussions

Troy Barker of ICF Consulting in Fairfax, Virginia presented the results of the FIN Facilitated Session held on June 2, 2004. Barker noted that the purpose of the Facilitated Session was to do strategic and implementation planning. During the session, the state of the FIN "as is" and "to be" were discussed as well as the strategies and actions required to close the gap. Barker then gave an overall view of the workshop outcomes or expectations.

Barker reviewed the "as is" findings, "to be" findings, and strategies that can be used to meet goals for the various modules of the FIN program in both the commercial and recreational fisheries. Barker then reviewed the recommended next steps in strategic plan development. Tom Fazio of ICF Consulting noted that although this is a planning tool for FIN it could also be used as a selling tool.

During Committee discussion R. Lukens noted that the FIN utilizes a Framework Plan for long standing goals and objectives, procedures, etc. D. Donaldson reported that after the last Facilitated Session a work group was formed to identify major actions, turn them into tasks, and associate them back to goals and objectives.

S. Holiman moved to have the Administrative Subcommittee, augmented by other interested members, create a document that outlines the general strategies from this Facilitated Session, develop specific tasks related to them, and prioritize these tasks. The motion was seconded and failed to pass.

S. Atran moved to create an ad hoc Recommendations Work Group. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The work group will be made up of the following members: R. Lukens, C. Lilyestrom, T. Sminkey, and J. Shepard.

The Committee agreed that the charge to the Recommendations Work Group is to take the general findings from the Facilitated Session and develop specific objectives and tasks for each finding, associate them with the current goals and objectives of FIN, and prioritize those activities. Previous recommendation documents developed by the earlier Work Group can be used for guidance. The Recommendations Work Group will meet prior to June 2005 and will be prepared to present their findings at the 2005 FIN meeting.

Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)

M. Cahall reported on recent activities of the ACCSP including, finishing the Technical Source Document (TSD) #6, re-writing the program design for the 2004 through 2008 implementation plan, and moving forward with the biological tracking system. The ACCSP has funded 16 projects in FY2004 with 38% of the budget for administration, eight commercial catch and effort projects, registration tracking work, biological sampling and monitoring. In FY2005 they are planning on being level funded at \$3.5 million.

Cahall explained that the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) is a web based electronic real-time reporting system and gave a presentation on this system. SAFIS can be used for quota monitoring and compliance monitoring, and will also provide real-time data back to the dealers and fishermen. Cahall explained the technical aspects of the SAFIS program noting that the data flow comes into the ACCSP office in Washington, DC, is then audited, and shared with NMFS Northeast Regional Office (NERO). Cahall reported that it is

expected they will be asked to add biological sampling as well as trip reporting, and they will also be collaborating on Highly Migratory Species (HMS). Some registration tracking is being done using state license information, and state or federal vessel information.

Review of List of Personnel with Access to Confidential Data

Committee members were provided with a list of personnel with access to confidential data for the FIN data management system (DMS) as well as the NMFS system. D. Donaldson requested that Committee members review the lists and make any corrections, additions, or deletions.

Status of FIN Data Management System

D. Donaldson reported on the status of the FIN DMS. Donaldson noted that trip tickets are routinely being loaded as well as biological data. This information is available on the web. Historical biological data is not available at this time since TIP is in the process of revamping the database. Once this is completed this information will be available. The Committee discussed putting headboat data in the FIN database and agreed to task the Recommendations Work Group with evaluating whether the headboat survey should be included in the system.

Status of Data Confidentiality MOA

D. Donaldson briefly reviewed the history of the FIN Data Confidentiality MOA. The FIN is in the process of updating the original MOA and creating a Caribbean MOA. At a recent State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) meeting it was suggested by lawyers that legislative cites be added to the MOA in order to add protection in the area of confidentiality until such time as the language in the Magnusson/Stevens Act provides that protection. R. Lukens noted that sub-contracts between GSMFC and the states offer some protection and shows the intent to cooperate. The Committee agreed to move forward with seeking review and approval of the Caribbean MOA.

Presentation of Recreational Artificial Reef Data

G. Bray of GSMFC gave a presentation on recreational artificial reef data. Bray reported that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee found that data had been collected in the past on the MRFSS survey asking about fishing adjacent to artificial reefs. The Subcommittee requested that these questions be added back on to the MRFSS survey for 2003. Bray's presentation compared the data from the earlier survey with the 2003 data. Bray gave a brief history of the MRFSS survey and noted that the area covered by the survey is from west Florida to Louisiana. The MRFSS began in 1979 to provide a database for estimating the impact of marine recreational fishing on marine resources. In 1992 the basic methods were two independent but complimentary surveys, a random digit dial survey of coastal households, and the dockside intercept survey. In 2003 the methodology changed to three surveys by adding the for-hire telephone survey that collects data directly from the charter boat captains.

Bray explained that the question added to the MRFSS survey was, did you spend the majority of your fishing trip today fishing within 200 feet of: a standing oil or gas structure, a submerged artificial reef, neither, or refused. Red snapper, gag, and triggerfish were the species selected for the comparison. Bray then gave a summary of the data collected in 2003.

The Committee discussed whether to continue asking this question on the MRFSS survey. **R. Lukens moved to continue to ask the artificial reef question through December of 2004. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Discussion of Area Fished Codes

C. Denson explained that dealers and fishermen were asking about the difference in the codes used in the logbooks and those used in the trip ticket program. The dealers and fishermen were concerned that the offshore codes were not being used in the logbooks so when the codes were compared between the logbooks and the landings there would be a difference in the area fished. Denson stated that the basic question is whether or not sub-areas are collected under the logbook program and D. Donaldson stated that that is not the case. J. O'Hop explained that the sub-areas are more precise. G. Davenport will get with C. Denson and give him copies of the grid maps from the logbooks. If this issue cannot be resolved it will be brought to the FIN Committee.

Discussion of Access for Biological Data

D. Donaldson explained that this issue came up because GSMFC is now routinely loading biological data into the DMS. Mike Sestak asked the FIN Committee to review the list before it is released to people who have access to non-confidential data. The biological data are not confidential, however there were some questions and objections regarding releasing these data. Donaldson requested guidance from the FIN Committee on how to handle access to biological data.

D. Donaldson noted that the information is identified by dealer number not vessel information and people with access to non-confidential data would have no use for this information. J. Shepard suggested having two levels of access to the data: confidential having access to all data elements, and non-confidential having access to a limited number of data elements such as, total number of species, otoliths, length, sex, etc.

Donaldson stated that M. Sestak will generate the non-confidential universe, probably within the next month, and will e-mail the Committee with this information.

Discussion of Collection Methods for Highly Migratory Species in the Gulf of Mexico

D. Donaldson reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) requested that the FIN Committee assist them in trying to develop a methodology for collecting information on Highly Migratory Species, specifically yellowfin tuna. Donaldson explained the HMS large pelagic survey has not been conducted in the Gulf of Mexico.

S. Atran explained that the problem is primarily in the recreational fishery and there could be problems in the future if data collection is not improved. After the Committee discussed the situation, J. Shepard suggested sending this issue to the Biological/Environmental Work Group with the task of developing a methodology for more precise estimates. **R. Lukens moved that since there are two requests for assistance in the area of data collection for tuna in the Gulf of Mexico, one from the GMFMC and another from the Director of Sustainable Fisheries at NMFS, the FIN Committee should respond that this is an appropriate roll for the FIN Committee. Since this issue is too complex to resolve at this meeting, it will be referred to the Biological/Environmental Work Group for action. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Discussion of Strategies for Implementation of Registration Tracking Module

Committee members were provided with a list of the registration tracking minimum data elements as well as information on which of these data elements are being collected through current licensing systems. D. Donaldson explained that the key data element is birth date and for this module to be fully implemented this information must be collected. Donaldson requested that the agencies that do not collect birth date at this time seriously consider doing so. M. Cahall reported that since SAFIS is an interagency system, without birth dates and vessel identification numbers, matches become very difficult and requires manual intervention. The Committee discussed the various data elements on the matrix and gave corrections to staff.

D. Donaldson reported that early in this program it was illegal to collect social security numbers, however some of those laws have now changed and some states are collecting social security numbers to generate an ID number. After lengthy Committee discussion, **P. Campbell made a motion to add Social Security number and tax ID number to the Registration Tracking database as an alternative to date of birth. The motion was seconded and passed with GMFMC opposed.**

Discussion of Next Steps for Implementation of Bycatch Module

D. Donaldson reported that the work group had developed a bycatch monitoring program. The Committee was provided with a list of the data elements. The next step was to prioritize the fisheries for at-sea sampling and through routine fishery dependent and independent sampling. Donaldson noted that NMFS had been working on a prioritization plan for bycatch and from that process a bycatch priorities and implementation plan was developed. Donaldson requested that the Committee review the NMFS list to be certain that all fisheries that FIN is focusing on are listed. Donaldson explained that if money becomes available for bycatch data collection, FIN needs to know which fisheries to focus on.

After Committee discussion, **T. Sminkey moved to task the Data Collection and Biological/Environmental Work Groups with developing a list of priority of Gulf of Mexico fisheries for bycatch. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Review and Approval of 2003 FIN Annual Report

Committee members were provided with draft copies of the 2003 FIN Annual Report. After reviewing the Report and making editorial changes, **S. Holiman moved to approve the 2003 FIN Annual Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Review and Approval of FIN Commercial QA/QC Document

Committee members were provided with draft copies of the FIN Commercial QA/QC Document. The Committee reviewed the Document and **P. Campbell moved to approve the FIN Commercial QA/QC Document. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Subcommittee and Work Group Reports

The FIN Committee was provided with copies of the Subcommittee and Work Group Reports.

Commercial Port Sampler Meeting (Attachment A)

D. Donaldson reported that the Caribbean Port Samplers met in October 2003 in Puerto Rico and discussed a variety of issues. There were no recommendations made at this port

samplers meeting. The FIN Committee was provided with copies of the Caribbean Port Samplers Meeting Report. **C. Johnson moved to accept the Caribbean Port Samplers Meeting Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Donaldson reported that the Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers met in November 2003 with approximately 50 samplers in attendance. Several issues were discussed and no recommendations or action items were generated from this meeting. **The FIN Committee accepted this report.**

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee (Attachment B)

Donaldson reported that the GSMFC Data Management Subcommittee and the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee are made up of essentially the same Committee members and they meet in October and March. The Subcommittee report includes motions that have been addressed at this FIN meeting. **The FIN Committee accepted these reports.**

Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Attachment C)

Donaldson reported that this workshop was attended by otolith processors from the Gulf states as well as processors from the NMFS Panama City Lab and others. Donaldson reported that there were some recommendations made by the group, including information sent to the data management system, as well as a recommendation from this group to add a half-day to the training workshop. **S. Atran moved to accept the recommendations of the Otolith Processors Training Workshop. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Biological/Environmental Work Group (Attachment D)

Donaldson reported that the Biological/Environmental Work Group (BEWG) met via conference call and agreed that it appears that night fishing activities are similar to daytime in catch rates and species composition. The work group recommended that further collection of these data is not required at this time, but that FIN should periodically examine night fishing activities. **T. Sminkey moved that based on the available data, further collection of shore-based night fishing activities is not recommended at this time.** It was suggested that FIN annually examine night fishing activities via the telephone survey.

Donaldson reported that during a conference call the BEWG recommended that a pilot study be conducted in Mississippi for fishing tournaments. The BEWG asked for guidance from the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee. A pilot survey has been implemented in Mississippi. K. Cuevas reported that tournaments with a few selected species and where the number of anglers is known would be surveyed. Questionnaires include date, daily hours fished, fish landed and released, and fish caught in state waters or EEZ. These questionnaires will be distributed during the Captain's meetings.

Donaldson reported that the BEWG met and developed two options for non-hook-and-line sampling. The first was to develop a pilot survey for recreational shrimping and crabbing utilizing a mail survey. The second option was to require fishermen for non-hook-and-line fisheries to provide catch and effort information to the agency issuing the license. The Committee agreed to add this pilot survey to the list of items to be considered for funding in 2005.

Donaldson reported that the BEWG developed two methods to survey private access sites. One method is to survey fishermen on the water and ask if they left from a private site and the other method would be to do an add-on to the Household Telephone Survey. The Committee

discussed the two methods and agreed to investigate an add-on to the Household Telephone Survey which could begin in 2006. **The FIN Committee accepted the BEWG report.**

Data Collection Plan Work Group (Attachment E)

Donaldson reported that this work group develops the otolith targets for priority species. At a recent meeting the work group made several recommendations: they reviewed the priority and secondary species lists and recommended that black grouper be added to the priority list, they recommended that targets be developed for federal species, and they recommended that FIN begin compiling other sources of biological data for the data management system (TIP being one of those sources). **P. Campbell moved to task the Data Collection Plan Work Group with compiling lists of other biological datasets, evaluate those datasets to assure they fit the FIN standard, and prioritize the lists for inclusion into the data management system. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Donaldson reported that the work group also discussed developing targets. The work group raised three questions: what are the total number of otoliths needed, are additional lengths needed for a particular species, and what are the cells of significance. Donaldson reported that the work group recommended that FIN send a letter to experts for each of 15 species asking for their assistance in determining the necessary otoliths and lengths from the various species and identify cells of significance. The work group would like to receive feedback in order to modify targets for 2006. G. Davenport suggested directing the letters to the agency rather than the individual. Donaldson reported that the work group recommended for 2005 to keep existing sampling targets with modifications to red snapper recreational targets.

Donaldson reported that the work group recommended that otolith sampling for greater amberjack be stopped in 2005 since recent information shows there may be a better method for aging and that monies be used to fund the University of Florida greater amberjack project. After lengthy Committee discussion, Chairman Shepard polled the Committee to determine whether there was a consensus for stopping the sampling of greater amberjack until there is clarification on the best method. The majority of the Committee wants to continue sampling greater amberjack and agreed to disregard the recommendation of the work group.

Donaldson then reported that the work group discussed adding five new species to the priority list in the event that there are additional funds available. These species, in priority order, are: grey snapper, gag grouper, red grouper, grey triggerfish, and red drum. S. Atran recommended that goliath grouper be added to the secondary list and the Committee agreed. Donaldson next reported that the work group recommended that targets be generated for the east coast of Florida utilizing the same process as in the Gulf. The Committee agreed with this recommendation.

For-Hire Work Group (Attachment F)

Donaldson reported that the work group met twice in the past year. At the first meeting the work group decided that headboats would be sampled at a 25% rate with sampling beginning in July 2003. The work group discussed looking at fishing methods in the telephone survey to see if adding target species is possible. The work group agreed to review effort headboat data in conjunction with Wave meetings. Donaldson reported that the work group then recommended sampling methodologies. Catch data could be collected via dockside and/or at-sea sampling, and effort could be collected through the telephone survey. With full funding catch and bycatch information could be collected through at-sea sampling. **R. Lukens moved to accept the**

recommendation of the For-Hire Work Group. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Donaldson reported that the work group held a conference call meeting in March. The work group discussed collection of effort through the telephone survey with the hope that there would be funding in 2004 for headboat dockside sampling. Since funding did not become available only effort information has been collected since July 2003. Because catch information is not being collected, there was discussion about whether to continue collecting effort information. The work group reached no consensus on this subject but agreed that the FIN Committee should address this issue. The FIN Committee discussed at great length whether to stop telephone calls for effort by the end of June or to continue them through December. **R. Lukens moved to continue to collect headboat effort with the telephone survey through the end of this calendar year. Before the end of this calendar year FIN will know if additional funding will be available and if it is not the telephone survey will be stopped on January 1, 2005. The motion was seconded and passed with NMES voting no and GMFMC abstaining.**

D. Donaldson reported that since M. Sestak was on active duty in the Army, some of that money was used to fund a pilot in Alabama for at-sea sampling for bycatch. K. Anson reported that a training manual was developed and training of observers began in the middle of March. Due to bad weather, only four trips were taken in April and six in May. Alabama has conducted 250 interviews with anglers and obtained measurements of 97% of discarded catch. Overall participation from anglers has been very good with only one refusal. Anson noted that an estimate of discards is approximately 20% to 30% however this varies. Six trips are scheduled in June. The pilot study will continue through December 2004.

Social/Economic Work Group (Attachment G)

D. Donaldson reported that the work group met in September with the purpose of developing a social/economic data collection plan. The work group also met via conference call in May. An outline was developed and activities were listed and hopefully there will be a presentation in June 2005. The FIN Committee was provided with information on what has been developed and S. Holiman stated that the work group would like some feedback on the outline. Holiman noted that there are two components of the plan. One deals with the legal mandates and/or statutes that provide the framework under which social science data elements can be collected. Holiman noted that each of the agencies already do some social/economic work and he requested that FIN members check with their agencies and notify him of which data collection programs are already in place as well as any mandates/statutes to facilitate collection of information. D. Donaldson would like these sent to him no later than June 30 and he will compile this information for the Social/Economic Work Group.

Operations Plan

The FIN Committee was provided with a list of data collection and management activities and D. Donaldson reported that they have either been accomplished or are being addressed.

Donaldson noted that after discussions held today, there are new tasks that need to be added to the 2005 Operations Plan. One is the Highly Migratory Species task for the Biological/Environmental Work Group. The other is for the Ad Hoc Recommendations Work Group to develop a recommendations document based on the information and issues discussed

during the facilitated session. Also the Data Collection Plan Work Group and the Biological/Environmental Work Group to develop and prioritize a list of fisheries for bycatch. Donaldson noted that in 2005 the FIN needs to plan for a program review in 2006. Another charge to the Biological/Environmental Work Group is to map out strategy to capture non-consumptive activities. Donaldson noted that he will add the additional tasks to the Operations Plan. The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee meets in August to review and approve the Plan and Donaldson will send the updated approved Operations Plan to Committee members. **S. Holiman moved to approve the 2005 FIN Operations Plan with the contingency of adding the additional tasks. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

The meeting was recessed at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting reconvened on Friday, June 4, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

Discussion of 2005 FIN Funding Priorities

Committee members were provided with guidelines on the funding decision process for FIN and a list of items for consideration in 2005. D. Donaldson reported that the list was generated from activities conducted last year as well as discussions in work group meetings. Donaldson noted that the final prioritized list will be forwarded to the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) and they will decide which items will be included in the 2005 FIN cooperative agreement.

Donaldson noted that as a result of discussion yesterday, the pilot survey for recreational shrimp and crab would be added to the list of items for discussion and prioritization. Donaldson also noted that any new items are contingent on additional funding.

One of the items listed for consideration in 2005 was a proposal submitted by the University of Florida for "Age and growth, sexual maturity, and fecundity of greater amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico". After lengthy discussion, and since this is an academic project to conduct research, **R. Lukens made a motion to remove the amberjack proposal from the funding list, not because of a lack of need, quality, or substance of the proposal, but because FIN would be an inappropriate funding source. The motion was seconded and passed with the GMFMC opposed.** S. Atran noted that his opposition to the motion was based on the fact that this proposal needs to be funded by someone since this information is needed by the GMFMC.

The Committee agreed to list as high priority all ongoing activities. The prioritized list of activities for funding in 2005 is as follows:

High Priority

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)

Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (ongoing)

Charter Boat Survey Offshore Texas (ongoing)

Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)

Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)

Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System (ongoing)

Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi (ongoing)

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana (ongoing)
Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Texas (new)
Continuation of Alabama Head Boat Pilot Survey through April 2005 (ongoing)
Implementation of For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and Field Sampling (catch) for Head Boats (new)
Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana (new)
Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)
Develop Frame for Sampling using Recreational Fishing Licenses (new)

Medium Priority

Pilot Study for Recreational Fishing Effort using Fishing Licenses as Sampling Frame (new)
Pilot Study for Bycatch Data Collection (head boat and commercial fisheries) (new)

Low Priority

Pilot Study for Recreational Shrimp and Crab

D. Donaldson stated that for every item that is ranked high he needs a statement of work and an associated budget by June 30. This information will be presented to the S/FFMC in August.

Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting

The next FIN Committee meeting will be held during the first week of June 2005. First choice of location is Baton Rouge, Louisiana, second is San Antonio, Texas, and third Silver Spring, Maryland.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Caribbean Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
October 1-2, 2003
Puerto Real, Puerto Rico

Attachment A

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and the following people were present:

Willie Ventura, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Toby Tobias, USVIDFW, St. Croix, VI
Roger Uwate, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Ruth Gomez, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Jason Vasques, 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
Milagros Cartagena, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Lucia Vargas, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Noemi Pena, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Daniel Matos, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as written.

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). In 2004, a pilot survey in Alabama to collect catch and bycatch data via at-sea sampling from head boats will be conducted. This pilot will test the feasibility of at-sea sampling for collecting bycatch and recommendations will be developed and presented to FIN regarding the methodology. He stated that trip ticket programs implemented in states except Mississippi and Texas. Mississippi has implemented oyster, bait shrimp and finfish 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. Currently, there are almost 170 commercial dealers utilizing the system. 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 by NMFS and in 2004, Louisiana personnel will be collecting the same data for the blue crab fishery. 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. In order for Caribbean personnel to utilize the system, a Data Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, GSMFC and NMFS needs to be implemented. These agencies have been working on putting the MOA into place. Recently, an issue arose in the Gulf and the Commission decided that additional legislative cites needed to be added to the Gulf MOA (as well as the Caribbean MOA). Therefore, the current Caribbean MOA needs to be modified and undergo legal review from the various agencies.

Status of Yellowtail Snapper Assessment

G. Davenport stated that he was unable to get an update regarding the yellowtail snapper assessment. There are some issues concerning the landings and he will meet with personnel working on the assessment and notify the group regarding its status. He then provided an overview of the NMFS commercial data collection activities. There are currently 29 federal port agents from Florida to Texas. One of the programs these agents are working on is the Gulf Shrimp program. With the implementation of trip ticket programs, the landings information that port samplers collected was also being collected via the trip ticket programs. Therefore, their tasks have been modified and they are focusing on increasing the number of interviews for collecting detailed effort data from shrimp fishermen. The sampling target is to collect data from 10% of all the shrimp trips. Unfortunately, due to lack of cooperation from the fishermen, only 2-3% of the trips are being sampled. Also, the port agents are providing updates to the trip ticket data. NMFS publishes the Market News, which provided information about total landings and price/pound on a monthly basis. NMFS port agents are working with the states samplers and GSMFC to collect otoliths for a variety of species. The targets (developed by FIN) were established in 2001 and FIN decided to stay with these targets since no stock assessments have been conducted since the start of this activity. Once assessments have been conducted, the group can examine if not enough or too much samples have been collected and make the appropriate modifications. The port agents are also involved in quota monitoring by helping fishermen/dealers provide the necessary data. NMFS currently has quotas in the Gulf for shallow and deep-water groupers, Spanish and king mackerel and red snapper and tilefish, wreckfish and the snapper/grouper complex in the South Atlantic. NMFS continues to collect data regarding the operating units in the various fisheries. These data are critical because they provide a tally of the number of vessels operating in fisheries. It is very important that these numbers are accurate since under- or overestimation can affect the effort estimates. The TIP program is moving into on-line data entry. At the Gulf port samplers meeting, the group will be testing the system. It was pointed out that fast access to the Internet is needed to effectively utilize this system. NMFS has begun the implementation of a shrimp vessel registration system. This will allow managers to get an accurate count of the number of vessels operating in the shrimp fishery although the industry has expressed some concerns about the program. And NMFS has recently adopted new TED regulations that expand the size of TEDs.

Data Collection Recommendations

D. Donaldson stated that at the 2002 Caribbean port samplers meeting, the group developed a variety of recommendations regarding the collection of data in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. At this meeting, the group discussed the status of the recommendations and Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands gave an update.

D. Matos stated that Puerto Rico has implemented a trip ticket program, beginning in January 2003. Each fisherman is responsible for reporting his trip-level data to the Department. If multiple trips are reported on a ticket, the ticket is returned to the fisherman and he must fix the problem and send the fixed ticket back to the Department. Trip ticket number has also been added to the reporting form so it can be tracked over time. Puerto Rico is also providing updates to the historical TIP data. D. Matos noted that fishermen must return the trip ticket information before 60 days. After that 60-day period, the data are rejected since after that amount of time, the data are suspect and may not reflect the actual catch. G. Davenport pointed out that these data should not be automatically rejected since there can be legitimate reasons for turning in data past the deadline. Although rejecting the data automatically prevents "bad" data from getting into the system, it might also inadvertently throw out legitimate data. He stated that the data should be examined before rejecting it so potentially "good" data are not lost. He explained that it is somewhat problematic keeping tracking of the commercial fishermen. It was noted that commercial fishermen are only licensed every 4 years. Because of that fact, it makes it difficult to know who is actually participating in the fisheries. Although fishermen are licensed every 4 years, boat registration is every year. And he mentioned that Puerto Rico has submitted a proposal to MARFIN regarding the collection of bycatch data in Puerto Rico.

R. Uwate reviewed the status (as of 2000) of the commercial data collected in U.S. Virgin Islands. For 1974 to 1986, there are no data files and the status is unknown. For 1986 to 1992, there are annual data files and it is organized into 6 to 9 columns. There are also hard copies of the data but they are unorganized or poorly organized. For 1992 to 2000, the all the data from St. Thomas/St. John has been entered and proofed. For St. Croix, 4 years of data has been entered, but not proofed (1993-1998). The four other years of St. Croix data not have not been entered or proofed. Most of the U.S. Virgin Islands_Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) data files from 1986 to 2000 are not available or organized at a single location. The available DFW data files are in various formats: (1) Dbase, (2) Excel, (3) Paradox, (4) FoxPro, and (5) QuatroPro. In addition, the available data file fields are not consistent or uniform. He reviewed the catch record forms utilized by U.S. Virgin Islands and noted the changes that have occurred over the years. He provided an overview of the USVI Fishing Areas from the early 1990 to present and showed how these areas have varied over time. He then provided a current status of the data (as of September 2003). Old catch report forms (from 1974 to 1986) were found by DFW personnel. These reports were never entered into a computer database. NOAA/Fisheries provided support to DFW personnel to organize and enter these historic data files. The DFW personnel entered and proofed all available catch report data into Excel data files. All data files are now similar in format. In addition, DFW personnel completed compliance data files (list of fishers indicating which month reports were submitted) for all of these years. All of these data have been submitted to NOAA/Fisheries. For the data from 1986 to 1992 as well as 1992 to 2000, DFW personnel searched over 500 floppy disks and several old computers and located many data files for this period. The most complete data files were selected and converted to Excel. The DFW personnel assembled a summary spreadsheet and submitted it to NOAA/Fisheries for comparison with their data files. NOAA/Fisheries reviewed data files and

identified data cells (such as out of range data or date) that needed checking. The DFW personnel spot-checked data and identified any problems with the data. There were also problems with different data base structure size (6 to 9 columns vs. 20 columns). The DFW personnel identified all available hard copies and organized them by district, year, and fisher. Recently, DFW personnel are attempting to get support for entry of missing data into data files and make them comparable to the 1974/86 data formats. The DFW personnel completed verification of St. Thomas/St. John 1992/1993 and 1994/1995 data files and made respective compliance sheets. In addition, they completed entry and proofing of catch data from St. Croix (1992/1993, 1997/1998, 1999/2000 and 2000/2001) and completed proofing 1993/1994 data from St. Croix. They also began verification of the data file from St. Thomas/St. John (1995/1996) and construction of the associated compliance sheet and began proofing of data from St. Croix (1994/1995 and 1995/1996). For 2000 to present, the data from 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 has been entered, proofed and submitted to NOAA/Fisheries. For 2002/2003 data, the DFW personnel have completed entry of the data from St. Thomas/St. John (2002/2003) and the data are being proofed. Personnel have completed 80% of data entry for the data from St. Croix (2002/2003). It was pointed out the in some years, 2 or 3 different commercial catch report forms were used to collect data. This makes compatibility of data files and future comparisons difficult. Also, the catch report forms have changed over time, i.e. in 2003/2004, a bycatch column has been added to the form for the first time. In 2003, NOAA/Fisheries approved funding for a fisheries biologist III database position. An individual has been selected and paperwork is being finalized. Guidance and recommendations such as those provided at the last Caribbean Port Samplers meeting can be useful, however, based on the presentation here, it should be apparent that there remains much effort to get existing data to the point where they can be compared and analyzed. The DFW monitors and assesses the fisheries and marine resources of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Information is the basis for management of these resources. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, catch report data has been collected for about three decades.

Round Table Discussions/Next Meeting

D. Donaldson asked the group if there were issues that needed to be discussed. The group was very interested in the shrimp industry in the Gulf of Mexico. The group also discussed establishing some type of outreach program to inform fishermen about fisheries management and how the data that is collected is utilized in the management process. R. Uwate pointed out that the Caribbean Council has provided the U.S. Virgin Islands a grant to conduct a fishermen census in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This grant will identify all commercial fishermen operating in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The group also discussed the upcoming GCFI meeting. It was noted that several papers regarding activities in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands would be presented at this meeting. After some discussion, the group decided that the next meeting would be held during the first week of October 2004 in Galveston, Texas. Some of the topics to be discussed included the papers being presented at the GCFI meeting and a Gulf shrimp program overview. The field trip would involve visiting several shrimping ports in the Galveston area. The meeting would be held at the NMFS laboratory in Galveston.

The meeting was recessed at 11:44 a.m.

Field Sampling

In the afternoon, the group visited various dealers and fishermen to observe fishing activities in the eastern Puerto Rico area of Farjardo. The species encountered included conch and spiny lobster as well as a visit to one of the largest marinas in Puerto Rico.

October 2, 2003

The meeting reconvened at 8:30 a.m.

Field Sampling

The group spent the entire day touring the fish stores and docks of Vieques. The group rode a ferry to the island in the morning and visited several fish stores to monitor and record the catches at these sites. Species included conch, spiny lobster, and various reef fishes. The group also toured the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Refuge located on the island.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Gulf of Mexico Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
November 5 and 6, 2003
Miami, Florida

David Donaldson of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the port sampler meeting to order on November 5, 2003 at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

Pete Antosh, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chuck Armstrong, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Laura Baird, FFWCC, Melbourne, FL
Debbie Batiste, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Rick Beaver, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
David Bennett, TPWD, Highland, TX
Josh Bennett, NMFS, Miami, FL
Chris Bohnsack, FFWCC, Tequesta, FL
Jay Boulet, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Beth Bourgeois, NMFS, Lafayette, LA
Maggie Bourgeois, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Pamela Brown Eyo, NMFS, Miami, FL
Steve Brown, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, 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
Aimee Eschete, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
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
Linda Guidry, NMFS, Lafayette, LA
Gary Haddle, NMFS, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Lisa Hallock, FFWCC, Port Charlotte, FL
Chad Hanson, FFWCC, East Point, FL
Brett Hano, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Kathleen Hebert, NMFS, Houma, LA
Tom Herbert, NMFS, Fort Myers, FL
Rene Labadens, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Jude LeDoux, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
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

Vanessa Maxwell, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
Lloyd Muccio, NMFS, Miami, FL
Michelle Padgett, NMFS, Freeport, TX
Keith Roberts, NMFS, Galveston, TX
Renee Roman, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Rouse, NMFS, Golden Meadow, LA
Jimmy Sanders, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Charlie Schaefer, NMFS, Tequesta, FL
Jan Simpson, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Roy Spears, NMFS, Aransas Pass, TX
Mandy Strano, LDWF, Lake Charles, LA
June Weeks, NMFS, Panama City Beach, FL
Robert Wiggers, SCDNR, Charleston, SC

Staff

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Training Session for TIP Online Data Entry Program

G. Davenport and J. Bennett of NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) welcomed the port samplers. Bennett explained the new features of TIPONLINE as well as modifications and "improvements." L. Muccio discussed minimum requirements for using TIPONLINE. After a question and answer session, the remainder of the day was spent with all federal and state port samplers being given the opportunity for hands on data entry training using TIPONLINE.

The meeting was recessed at 4:30 p.m.

The meeting resumed on November 6, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.

Status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network

D. Donaldson of Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) stated that the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) is a cooperative state-federal program to collect information on recreational and commercial fisheries. Donaldson reported on several FIN activities currently taking place, including the trip ticket program, headboat and menhaden sampling, biological sampling, and implementation of the data management plan. The trip ticket program is operating in Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida. Mississippi has trip tickets for oyster, bait shrimp, and finfish, and Texas is looking at the feasibility of a trip ticket program. Approximately 170 dealers are currently using electronic trip ticket reporting.

Donaldson reported that 40,000 otoliths from 60 different species have been collected for biological sampling, however in 2004 greater amberjack and king mackerel will not be targeted due to a funding shortfall. Donaldson reported that the data management system is now online with trip ticket information as well as historical information, recreational data, menhaden data, and SEAMAP data.

Donaldson reported that there were some new activities planned for 2004 but because of the funding deficit they will not be done. One of these activities was to test the at-sea sampling methodology in Alabama on headboats, and another was to collect detailed effort for blue crab in Louisiana. Donaldson reported that NMFS is currently involved in a bycatch initiative and this information will be used to identify priority species.

Presentation of Fish Maturation Photos

Ed Little of NMFS in Key West, Florida gave a presentation on fish maturation. Little noted that he took the photos with a digital camera and Pam Eyo of the NMFS Miami office produced the PowerPoint presentation and graphics.

Little noted that from each sex, up to eight stages of reproduction can be identified. These stages are virgin, maturing virgin, developing, developed, gravid, spawning, spent, and resting. Little had photographs of four major fish species groups found in South Florida, mangrove snapper, king mackerel, yellowtail snapper, and groupers showing details for determining sex and stages of maturation in each.

After Little's presentation there was a question and answer session with the port samplers. Linda Lombardi reported that the NMFS Panama City Lab website has information on how to correctly remove gonads. The Panama City Lab will also provide samplers with needed supplies.

Presentation of Survey for Sampling Methods

Guy Davenport of NMFS Miami reported that the TIP Work Group has been reviewing sampling techniques and protocols. Davenport noted that this Work Group wants to do a survey of field personnel activities in order to provide constructive recommendations for samplers so assessment scientists can better utilize the efforts of those in the field.

Davenport introduced Jim Zweifel and Patty Phares to the port samplers. Phares explained that the TIP Work Group is made up of several people from Sustainable Fisheries Division from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. The goals are to provide a comprehensive review of TIP and to make recommendations for improvements. Members of the Work Group include Josh Bennett, Nancy Cummings, Jim Zweifel (designer of TIP), Ching-ping Chih and Patty Phares. Phares noted that John Poffenberger is also involved in the project.

Phares noted that TIP is a very complex program and is now 20 years old and has not had a major review until this time. Phares reported that the Work Group will be communicating with the port samplers beginning in the next few months through the next year with site visits and telephone calls. A questionnaire has been developed on how samplers respond to certain situations and Phares stressed the importance of accurately answering these questions.

Jim Zweifel reported that TIP was first introduced almost 20 years ago at Atlantic Beach, North Carolina and after two decades it seems time to review and evaluate. Zweifel noted the importance of the samplers role in fisheries management and their experience and knowledge should be utilized whenever possible.

G. Davenport noted that they will be contacting state supervisors and all federal samplers will be involved in this survey. Davenport also noted that TIP biological sampling and the biological sampling being done with FIN have some slight differences and this effort will attempt to bring the two programs more closely aligned.

D. Donaldson suggested that a status of the survey be given at the port samplers meeting in 2004. The group discussed a possible location and time for the 2004 meeting. Linda

Lombardi suggested having the meeting at the NMFS Panama City Lab and it was agreed to hold the meeting sometime during the first week in November. It was also suggested that there be some otolith training and stock assessment information as agenda items.

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

DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE (GULF OF MEXICO GEOGRAPHIC SUBCOMMITTEE)
MINUTES

Monday, October 13, 2003
Corpus Christi, Texas

Chairman Page Campbell called the meeting to order at 1:00 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
Kerwin Cuevas (proxy for T. Van Devender), MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Leard (proxy for S. Atran), GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director
David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant

Others

Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Shannon Bettridge, ACCSP, Washington, DC
Bob Zales, II, PCBA, Panama City, FL
Bobbi Walker, GMFMC, Orange Beach, AL
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Jill Jensen, GNR, 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 17, 2003 in Point Clear, Alabama were approved as written.

Discussion of Collection of Birth Date for Registration Tracking Module

D. Donaldson stated that at the recent FIN meeting, there was concern regarding the feasibility of collecting birth date for fishermen and dealers. This data element is essential in the current design of registration tracking module and without this element, it will not possible to

uniquely identify individual fishermen and/or dealers. If this element cannot be collected, FIN needs to revisit this issue and develop an alternative approach for uniquely identifying these participants. J. Shepard was concerned that using this system will not almost uniquely identify an individual. He believes there is a better method (such as using the last four digits of the social security number) for identifying these individuals. It was pointed out that this system (using birth date) is currently being used in New Hampshire and is working quite well. It was suggested that a unique number could be assigned to individuals to identify them in the system. It was pointed out that if this system was for the Gulf of Mexico only, it might work, however, this system needs to work on a national level and the logistics of ensuring that duplicate numbers are not distributed could be very problematic. It was noted that this system has been approved by FIN although ACCSP is still seeking approval of the module. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided that this issue be referred back to the FIN/ACCSP Registration Tracking Work Group to examine alternate methods for uniquely identifying fishermen and dealers. D. Donaldson stated that he would convene the group (via conference call) to address this issue.

Discussion of Development of More Detailed QA/QC for Data Quality Act

D. Donaldson noted that at the recent FIN meeting, T. Gleason presented an overview of Data Quality Act (DQA). Since the FIN Committee regularly provides data to NOAA and this data is used to develop information products, this data must be of known quality and consistent with NOAA's Information Quality Guidelines. There was some question regarding the need to further documentation on QA/QC procedures for commercial and recreational data collection activities and this issue was referred to this group for recommendation. D. Donaldson noted that a DQA checklist has been distributed to the group. In a discussion with T. Gleason, D. Donaldson noted that since all FIN data is subject to QA/QC procedures, it is probably of high enough quality that it will meet NOAA information quality standards, at this time. Therefore, the Subcommittee recommended that additional QA/QC documentation for the FIN data collection activities does not need to be developed at this time.

Discussion of Detailed Effort Data Collection Activities in Louisiana

J. Shepard stated that Louisiana was scheduled to conduct a detailed effort survey for the blue crab fishery in 2004. However, due to funding shortfalls, this activity will not be conducted. Although it will not be conducted, J. Shepard still wanted to provide the group with a brief overview of the procedures and methods that were going to be utilized. He distributed a detailed effort sampling sheet to the group, which outlines the data elements that were proposed to be collected such as trip date, trip number, trip ticket type, trip ticket number, gear, quantity of gear, area fished, disposition, days at sea, number of crew, fishing time, and number of sets. He stated that all commercial data collection is based on having a trip ticket program within the state. The trip ticket program defines the sampling universe and from there, sampling for detailed effort, biological samplings, social/economic data, etc can be accomplished. In order to sample, the amount of necessary sampling needs to be determined and the type of information need to accomplish this included trip ticket program, area fished, gear used, measure of fishing time, and sampling period. J. Shepard presented and explained the formula utilized to determine sample size for the blue crab fishery. Using this formula, J. Shepard developed sampling targets for each of the areas within Louisiana.

Discussion of For-Hire Telephone Survey as "Official" Method

D. Donaldson stated that since the states have now begun collecting effort information from head boats as well as charter boats via the telephone survey, it has been suggested that the name of the effort telephone survey be changed from the Charter Boat Telephone Survey to the For-Hire Telephone Survey. The new name is more accurate in terms of the vessels that are surveyed through the program. **After some discussion, K. Cuevas moved that the survey utilized to collect effort data for the head and charter boats be called For-Hire Telephone Survey.** The motion passed unanimously.

Fishing Tournament Discussions

D. Donaldson stated that at the recent FIN meeting, it was decided that the states needed to examine the feasibility of registering state fishing tournaments. The purpose of this activity was to establish a sampling universe of fishing tournaments and could then be sampled to determine the potential impacts on the resources of fishing tournaments. D. Donaldson asked each state about registering tournaments within their jurisdiction. Texas and Mississippi are currently examining the possibility of requiring all fishing tournament to register their event. Mississippi is actually attempting to pass an annual registration rule. Florida would need to pass some type of regulations to implement this requirement and have been discussing the issue with several groups within the state. And Alabama and Louisiana are not currently exploring the possibility of a registration requirement and would need to pass some type of rule (Alabama) or legislation (Louisiana) to implement such an action. The group discussed various aspects of sampling fishing tournaments. It was noted that fishing tournaments have the potential to have a large impact on the resources. Therefore, data needs to be collected on them to assess this impact. By having each state register tournaments that occur in their jurisdiction, it provides a simple method for sampling these events. It was noted that in order to require tournaments to register, a definition of tournament needs to be developed. After some discussion, the group defined a fishing tournament as any fishing competition involving finfish in which participants must register or otherwise enter and in which a prize or award is offered for catching or landing such fish. **J. Shepard moved that states begin examining registered tournaments, based on the definition that a fishing tournament as any fishing competition involving finfish in which participants must register or otherwise enter and in which a prize or award is offered for catching or landing such fish.** The motion passed unanimously.

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. In addition, a list of otoliths collected from all species (not just the targeted species) was provided to the group. It was noted that there are several species group (fish not identified to species and genus) in the complete list of species sampled. It was pointed out the collecting otoliths from fish not identifies to the species/genus provides no useful data. D. Donaldson will check with G. Bray to ensure that there is not a computer glitch with these fish. P. Campbell asked if otoliths collected via the head boat survey in Texas are included in this tally. D. Donaldson stated that he does not routinely get information from the head boat survey. He will contact B. Dixon and attempt to establish routine data loads with him. Overall, the collections are going well and most of the agencies are providing the collection data on a timely basis. Most are the states are adhering to the targets

and collecting the appropriate amount of otoliths. D. Donaldson stressed the importance of submitting the data in a timely manner so monthly progress reports can be generated and distribute to the agencies. These reports allow the GSMFC, NMFS and states to evaluate the progress of the collection activities and make any needed modifications to sampling activities. J. Shepard asked if any of this information has been provided to the SEDAR process. It was stated that no requests for the information has been made although FIN staff will be attending these meetings on a routine basis.

Other Business

D. Donaldson stated that C. Denson asked this Subcommittee to discuss an issue related to trip time versus soak time in the crab fishery. There appears to be some confusion among fishermen and dealers regarding trip time and fishing (soak) time. In Florida, both trip time and soak time are collected on the trip tickets. In Louisiana, the information collected on the trip ticket is trip time only.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE (GULF OF MEXICO GEOGRAPHIC SUBCOMMITTEE)
MINUTES

Monday, March 15, 2004

New Orleans, Louisiana

Chairman Page Campbell called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.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
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Kerwin Cuevas (*proxy for T. Van Devender*), MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Staff

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant
Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director

Others

Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Doug Vaughan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved with the addition of Discussion of *Collection of Data regarding Yellowfin Tuna* under Other Business.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on October 13, 2003 in Corpus Christi, Texas were approved as written.

Status of Biological Sampling Activities

D. Donaldson distributed a summary of otolith collections for the recreational and commercial fisheries in 2003 and 2004. The summary presents the number of otoliths that have been collected as well as the targets, by species, mode, and state. D. Donaldson noted that overall, the collection of otoliths and reaching the targets were fairly successful. Since it is still in the formative years of this process, he believed the states did a good job of reaching the targets and as the process gets more routine; there should be some improvement. It was noted that the work group would be meeting later this year to discuss the necessary targets in subsequent years.

D. Donaldson noted that the biological data collected under FIN in 2002 for red snapper has been provided NMFS for inclusion in the upcoming red snapper SEDAR data meeting. D. Donaldson mentioned that the states needed to make sure they provide the collection data to the GSMFC on the established deadlines. This will allow staff to provide the states with feedback about the collection efforts and make modifications in efforts, as needed. He also mentioned that the states needed to provide the analysis data to the GSMFC as soon as possible. Staff is working on getting these data into the FIN Data Management System (via the biological module) so users may access it and it is important to have as much biological data available to scientists for the assessments. D. Donaldson asked the group about the time frame for the next Data Collection Plan Work Group. He was concerned that there would not be any feedback from the SEDAR process to assist the group in modifying (if necessary) the established targets for red snapper. It was mentioned that although the entire process will not be completed until October (which is past the 2005 cooperative agreement submission deadline), feedback from the data workshop could be beneficial to the work group in determining the adequacy of red snapper otolith collections. Therefore, it was suggested that the Data Collection Plan Work Group meet prior to the FIN meeting in June and develop recommendations for 2005 sampling targets for the FIN priority species.

Another issue addressed by the group concerned the fate of otoliths collected from species currently not being targeted by FIN activities. **K. Anson** stated that Alabama has collected a variety of species that are currently not on the FIN priority list and was wondering how to handle these samples. After some discussion, the Subcommittee decided to catalog these specimens for future analysis. Since there are no dedicated funds to process these samples, the group believed that the best approach was to store them until they are needed for an assessment. Also, since the states are not targeting these species, the sample size of the specimens potentially could be very small and not all that useful for an assessment. And, if an assessment is not scheduled for the near future, the samples may need to be re-processed when an assessment finally occurs. **J. O'Hop** suggested that it would be useful to know what each state regarding these stored otoliths. The Subcommittee requested that each state provide staff with an otolith inventory (of those species not currently targeted by FIN). The inventory should be sent to staff no later than May 3, 2004.

D. Donaldson stated that the state and federal otolith processors would be meeting in May to discuss issues regarding analysis of otoliths. One of the tasks will be to read a variety of otoliths for the FIN target species and compare the results with the other readers. This activity ensures that all readers are analyzing the otoliths in similar methods and helps identify potential problems with analysis. **J. O'Hop** asked about the status of the MARFIN project regarding greater amberjack. **D. Donaldson** stated that, unfortunately, it was not funded and FIN is still looking for some help regarding the analysis of greater amberjack otoliths. It was suggested that FIN could potentially fund this project (assuming additional funds are received) in 2005. D. Donaldson stated that he would add this job to the list of activities for funding consideration and contact Debra Murie to get a copy of the project.

Discussion of Mississippi Tournament Sampling Protocols

D. Donaldson stated that FIN has tasked the Biological/Environmental Work Group with developing a sampling protocol for fishing tournaments. The group has been working on this issue for quite a while and the latest approach was to implement a pilot survey to collect catch and effort data from tournaments. Mississippi volunteered to conduct the survey. The GSMFC

and Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) personnel met in February 2004 to discuss setting up tournament sampling protocols in Mississippi. However, as the group met, several issues and problems were identified. One of the issues dealt with the overall sample design. It needs to be stratified by species/species groups and since there are a large number of species, the sample size for each of the groups may be very small. Therefore, all of the tournaments may end up being surveyed (census). Also, some tournaments require only the vessels to register (not anglers) and may be difficult to get a good estimate of effort. Another issue concerned dockside sampling. There is a high probability of large bias because not all anglers will come through the weigh station. If an angler does not catch any fish or has a fish that will not place, he/she might bypass the weigh station and thus the data will not be collected. And other issue related to using a mail survey. There are the same biases involved with dockside, that is, it is likely to get the more avid anglers as well as those who caught fish. Also, the cost of conducting a mail survey could be high due to multiply mailings although a low response rate may still be the end result. The group asked that this Subcommittee address these issues and problems and provide some guidance regarding handling these issues.

The Subcommittee discussed the issues and problems address by the group and agreed that all of these issues could potentially bias the data and these problems should be considered when collecting the data. However, after some discussion, the Subcommittee believed that a pilot study for sampling fishing tournaments should still be conducted in Mississippi. Although there are potential biases, these biases are identified and can be measured to determine if they are significant (statistically). The Subcommittee believed that work should proceed with the pilot study and the results from the study can show if the potential biases are actually present and cause the perceived problems that the group identified. Because of lack of funding, the Subcommittee recommended that voluntary catch log be distributed to each of the anglers participating in the tournament. This approach will keep the costs low while still collecting the necessary data. The Subcommittee directed staff to pursue the development of a pilot study for tournament sampling in Mississippi. Staff will set up another meeting with DMR personnel to begin the development of this study.

Discussion of Head Boat Sampling in the Gulf of Mexico

D. Donaldson reported that the Subcommittee needed to discuss the status of the telephone calls to head boat operators in the Gulf. When the telephone calls were implemented in July 2003, it was hoped that additional funding to conduct at-sea and dockside sampling to collect catch data from head boats would be available in 2004. Unfortunately, this additional funding was not appropriated and FIN is currently just collecting effort data from the head boat fishery. By the end of June 2004, FIN will have 12 months of effort data and this group needs to decide if FIN should continue collecting effort data (via the phone survey) even though catch data are not being collected. **S. Atran** stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has passed a recommendation (through a reef fish FMP amendment) that effort data for charter and head boats should be collected via the For-Hire Telephone Survey. After some discussion, the Subcommittee recommended that the state continue conducting the telephone calls until December 2004 so a complete year (January – December) of data was available for analysis. The FIN Committee will further discuss this issue at their June meeting. It was suggested that the effort data collected from the head boat fishery needs to be incorporated into the review process. **D. Donaldson** noted that he has asked NMFS to generate head boat effort estimates for the group to review at the upcoming wave meeting in June.

D. Donaldson stated that with carry-over funds (obtained from M. Sestak being deployed in the army), Alabama is conducting a pilot survey to test the at-sea sampling methodology for collecting discard information as well as catch data. **K. Anson** distributed the operations manual and sampling form to the group and asked for any feedback from the group. He stated that two samplers will be riding head boat and will be randomly selecting anglers to collect discards data. He mentioned that the samplers will also collecting information about the released condition of the fish after it has been thrown overboard. This will record the relative "health" of the fish after it has been released. This type of information is very useful to stock assessment scientist when determining mortality rates. **D. Donaldson** stated that collecting this information could potentially affect the samplers' ability to collect the basic discards data. Since this component was added to the proposed project, it should be collected as time permits and samplers should not let the collection of these data impact the collection of the discards information. The group then discussed collecting discards data at an angler level vs. vessel level. The proposed methodology will collect the discards data at an angler level. There was some discussion that the discards information does not need to be collected to that fine of a level. It will limit the amount of discards data the sampler can collect and this may be problematic. The vessel level will provide adequate data to determine discards rates and will allow samplers to collect more discards information. Based on the developed protocols, the ultimate goal is to sample all the anglers on the vessel. However, when that is not possible, the samplers would randomly select a subset of anglers to collected discards data. The group asked **D. Vaughan** (an assessment biologist) at what level should the discards data be collected. **D. Vaughan** stated that the discards information should be collected at the same level that the catch information.

J. Shepard asked if FIN was pursuing stratifying the for-hire vessels by passenger capacity. This would incorporate the head boats into the sampling design and allow for more representative sampling of all the vessels. **D. Donaldson** stated that this approach will eventually be the method used to sample all for-hire vessels but since FIN is still determining the best way to sample head boats, it would be premature to implement this methodology.

Other Business

S. Atran stated that at the last Gulf Council meeting, the Council discussed the collection of highly migratory species (HMS) in the Gulf of Mexico. There is concern that recreational harvest (and associated effort) of HMS species is not adequately being captured with the current sampling programs operating in the Gulf of Mexico. The Council made a recommendation that FIN examine the issue of collecting harvest, effort and size frequency data for highly migratory species, specifically yellowfin tuna, in the Gulf of Mexico. **D. Donaldson** noted that the FIN has addressed this issue and FIN recognizes the importance of these data. However, in order to expand the data collection activities to cover these species, additional funds are needed to implement this expansion. After a brief discussion, it was suggested that this issue be added to the FIN agenda and discussed at the FIN Committee meeting scheduled for June 2004.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Otolith Processors Training Workshop
Meeting Summary
May 4, 2004
St. Petersburg, Florida

Attachment C

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and the following people were present:

Adam Richardson, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Janet Tunnell, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Laura Crabtree, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jerome Little, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Jude LeDoux, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Debbie Belk, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tonie Saylor, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Isis Longo, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Ken Edds, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Prince Robinson, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lisa Bare, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Teresa DeBruler, Mote Marine Lab, Sarasota, FL
Nick Parnell, Mote Marine Lab, Sarasota, FL
Chris Palmer, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Beverly Barnett, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Andy Fischer, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Gary Gray, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Discussion of Establishing Primary Readers for Otolith Processing

D. Donaldson stated that the issue of primary reader came up during the recent SEDAR data meeting for red snapper. NMFS-Panama City was tasked with compiling the ageing data for the data meeting. All of the 2002 red snapper biological data collected under the FIN program was provided to NMFS. Under the FIN program, there are two (2) readers for each otolith. This ensures that several people look at the otolith to determine the age and there is some comparability among the readers. However, the readers are not consistent, that is, a person could be reader1 for one otolith and be reader2 for another otolith. It was pointed out that there needs to be some consistency for reader1 in the states. There was concern that if reader1 and reader2 did not agree upon the number of rings and edge codes, there could be confusion when using these data with which reader (1 or 2) was the "official" age. It was noted that when there are discrepancies between the two readers, they get together and come to agreement about the ring count and edge code. If agreement cannot be reach, the otolith is discarded and not included in the data set. Therefore, it appears that that states have been using an informal system for primary reader. After some discussion, **the group recommended that the agreed upon number of rings and edge code would be entered into the reader1 variable. When states send their data to the FIN Data Management System (DMS), the information from reader2**

will not be sent. However, the states will continue to utilize the reader2 information as a reference to identify potential discrepancies between the readers.

Status of University of Florida Greater Amberjack Project

D. Donaldson stated that Debra Murie for the University of Florida had submitted a project to MARFIN to determine the best structure for ageing greater amberjacks. FIN was very interested in this project since greater amberjack is one of the priority species that is being sampled. Unfortunately, MARFIN chose not to fund this project. However, it was suggested that FIN consider funding this project (in 2005) since it would answer various questions about the ageing of amberjack. Therefore, D. Donaldson noted that this project would be one of the items for funding consideration in 2005 on the FIN agenda.

Discussion of Red Snapper Reference Set

D. Donaldson discussed the reference set which contains 300 otoliths taken from all months as well as 100 annotated otolith images and an excel file with ring counts and edge types. This set is utilized to test reader precision among all the personnel reading red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. The preliminary report compiled by NMFS-Panama City showed that the average percent errors (APE) for each agency were fairly good and most were either at or under the 5% APE standard. For those agencies where the APE was higher than the standard, steps have been taken to correct the problems and additional training was conducted to ensure the problems would not occur again. Currently, the reference set has been distributed to NMFS, state agencies (Texas-Florida) as well as Mote Marine Laboratory. It was suggested that LSU and GCRL be included in the rotation so their personnel can look at the reference set as well. The primary point of contact for the set is Bob Allman at NMFS-Panama City. The group talked about the amount of time necessary for each agency to read the reference set. There was concern that an agency could hold onto the set for an indefinite amount of time and stall the purpose of the set (training). **Therefore, the group established a one (1) month time frame for having the set. Each agency would have one month to read the otoliths and then would have to pass it on to the next agency.** The group believed that the reference set provides critical training for readers. **It was agreed that conducting reading exercises with the set should be done on an annual basis. For established readers, they would read a subset of the otoliths just to refresh their memory but for new readers, they should conduct the reading of all the otoliths in the reference set every year for the first couple of years.** The group then discussed the annotated images. There are currently 100 otolith images in the set. It was suggested that more images be added since the states have provided otoliths to the reference set which may not be reflected in the annotated images. After some discussion, **the group decided that 100 images were adequate and adding more may actually be detrimental to the process.** At this time, the NMFS and state otolith sets are separate. **It is the desire of the group that the NMFS and state sets be combined into one complete set.** This will allow the readers to examine the all of the otoliths at one time. The last issue discussed by the group concerned edge codes. It was pointed out that although each agency has their own set of edge codes, these codes need to be mapped to the established FIN codes when the data are sent to the FIN DMS. This will ensure that the data set within the FIN DMS is consistent and make it easier to use by scientists and managers.

Discussion of Development of Reference Sets for Additional Species

The group then discussed the development of reference sets for additional species. D. Donaldson stated that a reference set for each of the FIN priority species should be developed. C. Palmer noted that he and Doug Devries have been working on the development of a reference set for king and Spanish mackerel. It has been suggested that a total of 400 samples for each species (200 whole and 200 sectioned) would be necessary. There was some concern that 800 total otoliths would be too cumbersome to read and NMFS personnel are continuing to examine this issue. C. Palmer stated that NMFS-Panama City should be able to complete a reference set for king and Spanish mackerel in about 2 months. One of the problems that need to be addressed concerns the transportation of the whole otoliths. Since these otoliths are very fragile, it is difficult to transport them without breaking them. The group discussed several possible solutions including embedding them in Flotex and NMFS will continue looking at this issue.

The group then discussed the development of a reference set for southern flounder. It was decided that there should be 300 otoliths and 100 annotated images in this set. A. Fischer and L. Bare will take the lead on developing this set. It was requested that Joey Shepard and Chuck Wilson be contacted to notify them that their staff will be involved in the development of this reference set and ensure that they do not have a problem with their involvement. The group discussed the development of a gulf flounder reference set but believed there was not a need to such a set since the majority of flounder otoliths are pulled from southern flounder.

Discussion of Determination of the First Annulus for Red Snapper

D. Donaldson stated Alabama personnel raised this issue at the recent red snapper SEDAR data meeting. There are three different core types present in cross sections of otoliths used for determination of the first annulus: small core ring, large core ring that merges with an annulus and a large core ring. In the case of both the small and merging core types the first annulus is identified along the sulcus. However, otoliths with the large core, the core is counted as an annulus because it is held that these fish were spawned late in the season. The concerns are, determining a large from a small core can be rather subjective. A. Fischer stated that at LSU, the core (large) is always counted as an annulus and several of the other agencies agreed that they count the large core as an annulus. A. Fischer mentioned that LSU conducted a project to examine this issue and found that there is a lot of variability between otoliths. It was noted that this situation occurs in other species (red drum, spotted sea trout, etc.) as well, however, it is not very well defined in red snapper. The group further discussed this issue but did not come to any resolution.

Discussion of Adding a Commercial/Recreational Designator in Data Entry Program

D. Donaldson stated that Mississippi and Texas have requested that a commercial/recreational designator be added to the data entry program. This designator would make it much easier to find individual records when attempting to add the ageing data onto the record. D. Donaldson stated that he would contact Joey Shepard/Michelle Kasprzak about the possibility of adding this designator. It was also pointed out that if the samplers were giving unique numbers (regardless of where the otolith was collected i.e. commercial or recreational fisheries), it would alleviate this problem.

Presentation of King Mackerel Training Guide

C. Palmer provided an overview of processing and reading king mackerel otoliths. He

presented several examples and tips for reading both whole and sectioned otoliths. He stated that the training guide is available on CD and anyone needing a copy should contact him for a copy.

Processing Status of Otoliths Collected in 2003 and 2004

D. Donaldson stated that the group needed to discuss the status of the otolith processing. T. Saylor noted that for 2003, 80% of the otoliths have been processed and about 50% have been read. Work has not begun on the otoliths collected in 2004. For Louisiana, K. Edds stated that all otoliths collected in 2003 have been processed and read and Louisiana staff working on the flounder and red snapper otoliths collected in 2004. J. LeDoux noted that Mississippi has processed and read all the otoliths collected in 2003 but have not entered that data into the computer. For 2004, the otoliths collected in Mississippi are ready to be processed. For Alabama, J. Little stated that all the otoliths collected in 2003 have been processed and read and the status of otoliths collected in 2004 is unknown. And in Florida, J. Tunnell stated that the red snapper otoliths collected in 2003 have been completed and about 80% of the king mackerel otoliths have been processed and 70% have been read.

Conducting Otolith Reading Activities for Red Snapper and Flounders

The group split into three sections and conducted reading of 15 sets of otoliths for red snappers (2 groups) and gulf and southern flounder. Each group read the otoliths and determined the age and edge type for each fish. This information was recorded and provided to moderator for compilation.

Review and Comparison of Reading Exercise by Groups

After each group determined the ages of the various fish, the information was entered into a spreadsheet and J. Tunnell and D. Donaldson calculated APE for each of the species. For the flounders, the overall APE was 22.22% and for red snapper, the overall APE was 4.97%. For the flounders, although the APE was quite high, the majority of the flounders were gulf flounder and most states are processing and reading southern flounder. Also, there were no determined ages for these fish so an average among the group was calculated to determine APE. For red snapper, the overall APE was below the standard 5%. Most of the groups were around 2% although one group had an APE of approximately 10%. This prompted the group to look at some of the otoliths where there were differences. However, it should be noted that the differences in age among the groups for both species was usually only off by one year.

After the comparison exercise, several otoliths were selected where there were differences among the groups and everyone examined these otoliths (as a group) to determine where each group had differed. The group believed this was a useful activity and helped everyone identify where errors can (and were) made while reading the otoliths.

Discussion of Future Training Meeting

The group decided that the next meeting should be held at Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) during May 2005. D. Donaldson then asked the group for input regarding the next meeting. It was suggested that the reading exercises for all five species needs to be continued and should be the basis of the meeting. Other pertinent presentations and discussions could be added, such as discussion of status of the reference sets and other issues. It was also suggested that the meeting be extended to 1½ days. This would allow for more time for the reading exercises and comparison of the differences among the groups for selected otoliths. The

first day would consist of the reading exercise in the morning and group discussion about various issues in the afternoon. Then the morning of the second day would be devoted to examining the otoliths where there were differences among the groups. 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 5:00 p.m.

RecFIN(SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group

Attachment D

Conference Call Meeting Summary

December 11, 2003

The call was convened at 9:00 a.m. The following people were present:

Geoff White, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Rob Andrews, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Bryan Stone, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Roger Uwate, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Meeting

D. Donaldson stated that the main topics of discussion were the next steps for night fishing sampling, update the group regarding fishing tournaments and continue the development of the non rod-and-reel fisheries sampling strategies.

Next Steps for Night Fishing Sampling

D. Donaldson stated FIN conducted a pilot study in Mississippi regarding night fishing activities in 2000-2001. There results were recently presented to FIN and they showed that there are no significant differences in night and day fishing activities. However, these results may only be applicable to Mississippi. It was noted that Alabama activities may be similar to the Mississippi's results but that might not be true for Texas, Louisiana and Florida. R. Andrews pointed out that the night fishing data from the telephone survey appears to be fairly consistent across the states (~15-20% for the shore mode). Based on those results, it could be assumed that the Mississippi results are representative of the Gulf of Mexico. After some discussion, **the group recommended that based on the available data, it appears that night fishing activities are similar (for catch rates and species composition) to day time activities and further collection of data for night fishing activities is not required at this time. It was also suggested that FIN periodically examine the night fishing activities (via the telephone survey data) to ensure that significant changes have not occurred.**

Discussion of Fishing Tournament Sampling

D. Donaldson stated that this group had been charged with the development of a sampling program for fishing tournaments. At the last FIN meeting, it was recommended that states explore the possibility of registering all tournaments conducted within the states and adopted by FIN. Currently, the NMFS is responsible for registering all highly migratory species (HMS) fishing tournaments. However, there are a wide variety of tournaments that target non-HMS species that are not registered. If all tournaments (those targeting HMS and non-HMS species) can be registered, it will provide a complete universe of fishing tournaments in the Gulf of Mexico. Once the universe has been developed, a sampling regimen can be developed to survey the selected tournaments. At the recent Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting, the FIN recommendation was passed and presented to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) of the GSMFC. After some discussion, the TCC revised the motion to have

the state representatives explore what would need to be done to accomplish starting registration of fishing tournaments and as well as examine alternative possibilities for collecting this information. Therefore, this group needs to reexamine the approach to sampling tournaments. It was suggested that the list of tournaments that has already be compile could be updated and a pilot study could be conducted. However, D. Donaldson noted that there are no dedicated funds available for this activity. K. Cuevas stated that Mississippi currently monitors most of the tournaments operating with the state and would be interested in collecting the necessary data from the various tournaments. After some discussion, **the group recommended that a pilot study to collect catch and effort data from fishing tournaments be conducted in Mississippi.** D. Donaldson stated that Mississippi and GSMFC personnel would work on developing a sampling strategy to ensure that the tournaments are representatively sampled. It was noted that U.S. Virgin Islands has been sampling tournaments for over 10 years and has developed procedures for conducting this type of activity. D. Donaldson stated that he has these protocols and will provide them to K. Cuevas. It was also suggested that the program partners update the list of tournaments. D. Donaldson stated that he would distribute the list to the FIN for updating.

Discussion of Non Rod-and-Reel Sampling Strategies

D. Donaldson stated that this group has also been charged with developing sampling protocols for non rod-and-reel recreational fisheries. FIN has compiled a list of non rod-and-reel activities within the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean regions. The group needs to compile information about existing data collection programs regarding non rod-and-reel activities. The group discussed several data collection programs such Florida spiny lobster fishery, recreational crabbing surveys, collection of catch information about steelhead, salmon, sturgeon, halibut or Dungeness crab in Washington and shrimp baiting in South Carolina. This information will be compiled and distributed to the group. In addition, the list of non rod-and-reel activities will be distributed to FIN and updated by the program partners. The group also discussed identifying the major fisheries (by gear) that used non rod-and-reel gears. The group will discuss the documents and issues at a work group meeting to be held in 2004.

Being no further business, the call was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

RecFIN(SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group

Conference Call Meeting Summary

March 23, 2004

The call was convened at 9:05 a.m. The following people were present:

Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC

Rob Andrews, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Bryan Stone, SCDNR, Charleston, SC

Jason Vasques, USVIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI

David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Meeting

D. Donaldson stated that the main topics of discussion were the tournament sampling issue and the status of tournament sampling in Mississippi, development of sampling strategies for recreational non-rod-and-reel activities and private access site sampling.

Status of Fishing Tournament Sampling

D. Donaldson stated that this group had been charged with the development of a sampling program for fishing tournaments. He provided a brief history regarding this topic. He stated that it has been recommended that states explore the possibility of registering all tournaments conducted within the states; however, Technical Coordinating Committee of the GSMFC tasked the state representatives to explore what would need to be done to accomplish starting registration of fishing tournaments and as well as examine alternative possibilities for collecting this information. Mississippi expressed an interest in conducting a pilot study on the fishing tournaments operating within the state. Mississippi and GSMFC personnel met in February to develop a sampling protocol for the pilot. Unfortunately, there were a variety of issues that would make sampling tournaments problematic. Therefore, the group believed that there were too many problems associated with tournament sampling and asked the FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee to examine this issue and provide some guidance to the group. The Subcommittee recently met and although there were some inherent problems with tournament sampling, the Subcommittee believed FIN should attempt to collect the data (via a catch log) and asked the Mississippi and GSMFC personnel develop some protocols to accomplish these activities.

D. Donaldson asked the Work Group if there were any problems with this approach and the group agreed with the Subcommittee and asked the Mississippi and GSMFC personnel proceed with this task. R. Andrews noted that NMFS is also interested in this issue and will be undertaking a pilot study in New Jersey this summer to collect data from summer flounder fishing tournaments. It will collect catch and effort data as well as demographics and other economic information via a catch card methodology. The group asked if NMFS could provide their sampling strategies to assist in the development of the Mississippi pilot survey and R. Andrews stated that he should be able to provide these materials to the group.

Discussion of Non Rod-and-Reel Sampling Strategies

D. Donaldson stated that this group has also been charged with developing sampling protocols for non rod-and-reel recreational fisheries. D. Donaldson noted that information on

various non rod-and-reel projects have been compiled and distributed to the group. The first step in this process is to identify the major fisheries that used non rod-and-reel gears. B. Dixon asked what the purpose of collecting these data was since this portion of the fishery may account for a very small portion of the overall landings. It was noted that unfortunately, there are no data to answer that question and that is why the FIN is examining this issue. The group discussed what fisheries data should be collected on and it was noted that efforts should probably be focused on fisheries that require some type of additional license or permit in addition to the standard recreational fishing license. This would allow for identification of the sampling universe and make conducting some type of survey more efficient. It was mentioned that many of the finfish gears could potentially be collected via the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). R. Andrews provided some distribution number regarding the use of various gears and that information is attached. It was suggested that potentially, estimates for these gears could be generated from the recreational data although the percent standard errors (PSEs) could be extremely large. The group talked about the major shellfish fisheries that utilize non rod-and-reel gear and agreed that shrimp and crab were probably the biggest fisheries and efforts should focus on these species. After some discussion, **the group developed two recommendations. The first recommendation was to develop a pilot survey for recreational shrimp and crabbing, utilizing a mail survey methodology. Information to be collected would include species catch, number of trips, location, gear(s) used, etc. The cost of this type of survey would be approximately \$5,000 to \$10,000. The other recommendation was to require fishermen (for fisheries that require an additional license) to provide catch and effort data to the state fishery management agency. A catch log would be provided when a fisherman purchased a license and that fisherman would be responsible for provided the needed data. If that fisherman did not provide the data, he/she would not be able to renew their license in subsequent years. It was noted that this method would greatly increase the administrative requirements for the agency implementing this method. Although the group did not estimate a cost for this activity, it would be much higher than the pilot survey recommendation.**

Discussion of Private Access Site Sampling

The last issue the group discussed dealt with the collection of data for anglers leaving from private access sites. D. Donaldson stated that this issue has been discussed by FIN for a number of years and it is a very difficult issue. The first question that needs to be answered is there a significant presence of this activity occurring in the states. According to the random digit dialing (RDD) telephone data, the percent of trips that depart from private access sites range from about 15-25% throughout the Gulf of Mexico (attached). Based on these data, it appears that there is enough activity occurring from private access sites that FIN needs to further explore this issue. It is currently assumed that activities from public and private sites are similar. However, based on a study conducted in North Carolina, that may not be a safe assumption. After some discussion, the group decided that there were two methods for capturing this type of data. The first was to conduct an on-the-water survey with anglers and determine what type of site they used (public vs. private) and then collect data about species composition, fishing avidity, etc. B. Stone noted that South Carolina looked at conducting this type of survey and found that they were unable to conduct it because it was cost-prohibitive. The other method was to conduct an add-on to the RDD and poll a sub-sample of anglers using public and private access sites to determine species composition, avidity, etc. for each group and determine if there

were significant differences between the groups. It was noted that in order to conduct this add-on, catch information would have to be collected via the telephone survey and there are inherent biases related to getting catch information over the phone. B. Dixon noted that the group needs to get a copy of the North Carolina report and look at the details of the survey and determine if the results are significant before making any recommendations about sampling methods. It may turn out that there are not significant differences in catch rate, avidity, species composition, etc. The group decided that D. Donaldson and B. Dixon will contact North Carolina and ask for a copy of the report and if it exists, the report will be distributed to the Work Group. Once the information has been provided, the group will get together (via conference call) and further discuss this issue.

Being no further business, the call was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group

Attachment E

Meeting Summary

May 11, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. The following people were present:

Bob Muller, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Behzad Mahmoudi, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Britt Bumguardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
James "Tut" Warren, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Linda Lombardi, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Review of 2003 and 2004 Otolith and Length Data Collection Activities

D. Donaldson noted that the group needed to review the status of the data collection for biological data. The first item addressed by the group was the priority and secondary species list. After some discussion, **the group recommended that black grouper be added to the priority species list.** The revised list is attached. The group then reviewed the 2003 (Jan-Dec) and 2004 (Jan-Mar) biological sampling activities, by state. For the most part, the state and federal samplers are collecting the necessary number of otoliths by the established cells. It was noted that the number of otoliths collected reflected "state sampled" and not "state landed". It was pointed out that the targets were developed on state landed and the number of otoliths collected need reflect stated landed so there is an accurate comparison. D. Donaldson stated that this modification would be made and the next otolith tally document would reflect state landed. The group discussed the targets for each of the priority species. There are overall targets for each priority species that were developed based on 0.5% of the landings (a 3-year average) and this provided a total number of otoliths needed for each species. This total was distributed about the various cells (based on percentage of landings) and the otolith targets were established. Then, NMFS provided the number of otoliths they have been collecting for these species and that number was subtracted from total number of otoliths so you have a FIN and NMFS total target by species. However, the NMFS target was not broken down by cell, it was just a total number. After some discussion, **the group recommended the targets (by the established cells) should be developed for the federal totals. This would not only allow for better tracking of the otolith collections but also allow for the update of the federal targets and potentially free up funds to collect otoliths for additional species.** As the group was reviewing the number of otoliths collected, it appeared that not all the otoliths collected by the states were included in the list. D. Donaldson stated that since this is still a fairly new activity, it was decided to include only the otoliths collected under FIN and TIP protocols. Although there may be more biological information available, only these data are currently being reported. However, the system can handle these additional data. It was noted that one of the main purposes of this system was to provide all of the biological data in one database. Therefore, **the group recommended that the FIN begin compiling other sources of biological data and providing these data to the FIN Data Management System.** It was also suggested that more descriptive title headings be

provided in the number of otoliths collected (by state/NMFS) document such as TIP samples, collected vs. processed, etc.

The group then looked at the document that compared the percent landing vs. percent otoliths collected. This document compares the landing with the otolith collected to ensure that the otolith collections were representative of the landings. For most species, it appears that sampling is representative. However, there were some problems with gulf and southern flounder. One of the reasons for the problems concerned the difficulty in finding these fish. Another reason for the problem was that in many cases, the flounders are not speciated and are lumped into a general "flounders" category (for commercial fisheries). It was suggested that an additional category be added to the document for "flounder" (for commercial fisheries). Also, the number of otoliths collection (both state and federal) need to be state landed (not state sampled). D. Donaldson stated that he would modify the document and distribute the revised spreadsheet to the group.

Development of Targets for Biological Sampling

Recommendations for Necessary Lengths and Otoliths for FIN Priority Species

The group then discussed the collection of necessary data. It was pointed out that the purpose of this activity was to improve stock assessments for the various species in the Gulf. The group discussed the recreational targets for red snapper. Since the season is closed for part of the year, it would make sense to reallocate the recreational red snapper targets for waves 1 and 6 into the other waves. Therefore, D. Donaldson will reallocate the targets to reflect the red snapper season. In determining the number of otoliths and lengths that are needed, there are three questions that need to be answered so an accurate picture for a particular species can be determined:

- What is the total number of otoliths needed?
- Are additional lengths needed?
- What are the cells of "significance"?

Gulf of Mexico

Recreational/commercial

State

Mode (recreational)/Gear (commercial)

Wave

In order to answer this question, someone needs to examine and analysis the existing data (only look at the last five years of data). Ultimately, these questions should be addressed by the SEDAR and as this process is being conducted, these questions will addressed and the answers will be provided in the final report. However, in the meantime, FIN needs to task someone to look at these questions but the questions is, "who?" The group discussed the possibility of contracting this activity out to interested parties. The problem with this idea is that it would require additional funds and currently FIN is capped in terms of funding. Another suggestion was to ask the experts for the various species. Although these people are busy, they are the ones who have intimate knowledge about a particular species. There was concern that because these folks were so busy, nothing would get accomplished. After some discussion, **the group**

recommended that FIN send a letter to the experts asking for their assistance in determining the necessary otoliths and lengths for the various species. The letter should outline the process and identify the desired products for the various species. The group then identified the various species and associated expert. The list is as follows:

- King and Spanish Mackerel (Mauricio Ortiz)
- Red Snapper (Steve Turner)
- Flounders (Joey Shepard)
- Greater Amberjack (Debra Murie)
- Gag Grouper (Steve Turner)
- Gray Triggerfish
- Red Drum (Mike Murphy)
- Red Grouper (Steve Turner)
- Spotted Seatrout (Mike Murphy)
- Striped Mullet (Behzad Mahmoudi)
- Vermilion Snapper (Shannon Cass-Calay)
- Yellowtail Snapper (Bob Muller)

Once the letter has been drafted, it will be distributed to the group for their review and comment. It was envisioned that results the five species currently being sampled under FIN could be provided in 2005 and the results could be used to determine the 2006 targets. Work on the other species could be accomplished as time permitted.

The group then discussed the necessary lengths and otoliths for FIN priority species in 2005. Although the outlined process will provide guidance regarding the needed number of lengths and otoliths, the process will not functional until 2006. Therefore, **the group recommended that FIN use the existing targets for the priority species for sampling activities in 2005.** The group then discussed the sampling of greater amberjack. Because the appropriate age structure has not yet been determined, **it was recommended that sampling for greater amberjack be stopped in 2005 and the monies be used to fund the University of Florida's greater amberjack project. This project will help determine the appropriate age structure for greater amberjack.**

Discussion of Adding New Species

D. Donaldson stated that if additional funds become available in 2005, a list of additional species for sampling consideration should be developed. After some discussion, the group recommended that the following species be considered (in priority order):

1. Gray Snapper
2. Gag Grouper
3. Red Grouper
4. Gray Triggerfish
5. Red Drum

The group discussed methods for including these species in the 2005 cooperative agreement to help facilitate the sampling, if additional funds become available. It was suggested that these

species could be added to the cooperative agreement without any associated targets. This would allow for sampling of these species (assuming additional funding) without amending the cooperative agreement. It was noted that although this approach would allow for little to no changes in the statement of work, there would still need to be modifications to the budgets (since the states would require more funds to sample more fish). Therefore, there is really no time saving in the process by adding the additional species into the cooperative agreement ahead of time. The best approach would be to just amend the cooperative agreement if and when more funding becomes available. The amendment process has become somewhat streamline and is not as cumbersome as in the past.

Discussion of Developing Sampling Targets for East Florida

D. Donaldson mentioned that J O'Hop had asked the group to consider developing targets for the east coast of Florida. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has generated a list of species that need to be targets. In addition, targets have been generated for these species; however, these targets are very general and provide the level of detail of the Gulf of Mexico targets. In order to be consistent, **the group recommended the targets be generated for the east coast of Florida, utilizing the same process for establishing targets for the Gulf of Mexico.** J. O'Hop stated that he would send the list of species to D. Donaldson and D. Donaldson would generate the targets.

Development of 2005 FIN Data Collection Plan Document

D. Donaldson stated that he would update the 2004 document and distribute the document to the group for review. It was suggested that the updated spreadsheet containing FIN and NMFS targets be added to the document. D. Donaldson stated that he would update the document with these additions and distribute it to the group for review. Once the document was reviewed and approved, FIN staff will print and distribute it to the appropriate FIN committees, subcommittees, work groups and other interested parties.

Other Business

The group discussed otolith processing capabilities and discussed the backlog at the NMFS-Panama City lab. It was suggested that FIN could provide funding to hire additional personnel to process otoliths. Currently, there is a FMRI staff member who assists in processing the otoliths received at the NMFS lab. If there is a need, an additional person could be hired and provided to NMFS-Panama City to help in this task. This idea needs to be further discussed and could be considered by FIN at their upcoming meeting.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Priority and secondary species list (species in bold denote priority).

GULF OF MEXICO

BLACK DRUM
<u>BLACK GROUPER</u>
COBIA
DOLPHIN
GAG
GRAY SNAPPER
GRAY TRIGGERFISH
GREATER AMBERJACK
GULF FLOUNDER
HOGFISH
KING MACKEREL
LANE SNAPPER
MUTTON SNAPPER
RED DRUM
RED GROUPER
RED PORGY
RED SNAPPER
SCAMP
SNOWY GROUPER
SOUTHERN FLOUNDER
SPANISH MACKEREL
SPECKLED HIND
SPOTTED SEATROUT
STRIPED MULLET
VERMILION SNAPPER
WARSAW GROUPER
WHITE GRUNT
YELLOWEDGE GROUPER
YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER
BLUEFISH
CERO MACKEREL
WRECKFISH
TILEFISH
LITTLE TUNNY
LESSER AMBERJACK

GOLDEN TILEFISH
ALMACO JACK
BANDED RUDDERFISH
BLACKFIN SNAPPER
BLACKLINE TILEFISH
BLUELINE TILEFISH
CARIBBEAN RED SNAPPER
CUBERA SNAPPER
DOG SNAPPER
GOLDFACE TILEFISH
MAHOGANY SNAPPER
MISTY GROUPER
NASSAU GROUPER
QUEEN SNAPPER
RED HIND
RED HOGFISH
ROCK HIND
SAND PERCH
SCHOOLMASTER
SILK SNAPPER
SLIPPER LOBSTERS
SPANISH SLIPPER LOBSTER
TILEFISHES
WENCHMAN
YELLOWFIN GROUPER
YELLOWMOUTH GROUPER

FIN For-Hire Work Group

Attachment F

Meeting Summary
June 6, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. and the following people were present:

Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Joey Shepard, LDWF Baton Rouge, LA
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Beverly Sauls, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Steve Brown, Amy Spencer, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Amy Spencer, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Craig LaVine, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jon Wolfson, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Tom Sminkey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Review of Vessel Directory Telephone Survey (VDTS) Methods

D. Donaldson reviewed the procedures for the Vessel Directory Telephone Survey (VDTS). At the last meeting, the group decided that the states would begin making the telephone calls to the selected head boats operators in the Gulf of Mexico in 2003. The group then discussed the sampling rate. It was initially suggested that a 15% rate would adequate sampling the head boat fleet. This was the rate that was used in the South Carolina pilot survey. However, B. Dixon noted that the 15% rate was not sufficient for the South Carolina study and suggested that an increase in the sampling rate was needed. After some discussion, **the group decided that the head boats would be sampled at a 25% rate and data collection will begin in wave 4 (July 2003).** T. Sminkey proposed "fishing methods" be taken off the questionnaire and be replaced by "target species". The reason is that it appears that no one is using the data from "methods" question. In addition, this modification is being done on the Atlantic coast in order to make the telephone survey more compatible with the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS). There were concerns about the utility of the "fishing methods" question. After some discussion, **it was suggested that NMFS poll the stock assessment personnel regarding the utility of "methods" question and make sure that by removing it, it does not jeopardy any assessments.** The group discussed the review of the data. D. Donaldson pointed out that the charter boat data is reviewed in conjunction with the wave meetings and since the majority of people involved in the head boat project are already attending the wave meetings, it would make sense to the review the head boat data on the same schedule. B. Dixon noted that there might be a lag with the logbook data since some of the captains do not always return the logbooks on a timely manner. Although there may be a lag, it will not prevent the group from reviewing the data although it might not be the most recent data. **The group decided to review the head boat**

data in conjunction with the wave meetings. The group then discussed the upcoming charter boat moratorium. The rule, which establishes the moratorium, states that charter and head boat operators must participate in a variety of surveys in order to maintain their reef fish permit. Both the VDTS and the NMFS logbook program are included in the required surveys. The question was raised about which survey captains need to participate in order to keep their permits. After some discussion, **the group agreed that captains must participate in the NMFS logbook program since that is still the official method for collecting data from head boats.** The last issue the group addressed pertained to the development of a brochure that outlines the program and asks for support from the industry. It was pointed out the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) developed a brochure for the pilot study that was conducted in South Carolina. It was suggested that this brochure could be used as a template for the Gulf document and T. Sminkey stated that he would have Nicole DeJeet send the ACCSP brochure to FIN staff.

Discussion of Sampling Methodology for Field Activities

D. Donaldson stated that the charge to the group was to recommend to the FIN Committee which method is best for collecting data from the head boat fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. It was stated that field activities on the Atlantic coast would initially be 50% at-sea sampling and 50% dockside sampling. B. Dixon noted that the group might not need to make a decision regarding the best method for collecting catch data on head boats at this point. It might be beneficial to learn from the experiences of ACCSP before making a decision. It was mentioned that FIN has delayed making a decision on this issue for quite some time (awaiting results from the ACCSP pilot survey) and the FIN Committee has made it clear that a decision regarding the preferred method in the Gulf of Mexico need to be made in the near future. The group discussed some of the concerns about conducting dockside sampling. There is the potential for head boat and MRFSS samplers to be at the same site to conduct interviews. The group stated that there needs to be coordination between the samplers to ensure head boat patrons are not inundated by samplers. If a head boat and MRFSS sampler show up at the same site, the head boat sampler would take precedence over the MRFSS sampler. Another issue discussed was related to industry's willingness to participate. There is concern that head boat operators will not be willing to participate in both the NMFS logbook program and the VDTS. The group discussed conducting outreach meeting however, D. Donaldson noted that there were no funds available in 2004 for outreach meetings. It was pointed out that information about the telephone survey is in the current for-hire newsletter and a directed mailing explaining the purpose of the survey and asking for support scheduled for the near future. It was also mentioned that the development of a brochure could help distribute information about the survey. T. Sminkey stated that catch/effort and bycatch are two distinct components and this group needs to focus on the catch/effort activities. J. Shepard noted that catch/effort and bycatch issues need to be kept separate and FIN needs to develop specific modules for each component. B. Dixon mentioned the need for benchmarking of the two surveys. Dedicated funding needs to be secured so both methods can be effectively tested before activities begin. He was concerned that the work will be done in a patchwork fashion since adequate funding is not currently available. B. Dixon also stated that the goal for head boat monitoring should be 100% at-sea sampling. The group then discussed some of the details about at-sea sampling. It is difficult to follow and keep track of anglers throughout the entire fishing trip. To assist in this problem, it would be useful to have two samplers on board the vessel (although that increases the cost). One sampler

could observe fish being discards while the other sampler could be getting measurements from the fish. And samplers should only focus on getting measurements for managed species. After some discussion, **the group recommended that for head boat sampling in the Gulf of Mexico, effort data be collected via the Vessel Directory Telephone Survey; catch data be collected via dockside interviews if limited funds were available; if additional funds were available, catch data could be collected via 50% dockside and 50% at-sea sampling; and bycatch data be collected via at-sea sampling as well as some catch data (for QA/QC purposes).** In addition, FIN will monitor the results of the ACCSP implementation of head boat sampling on the Atlantic coast and make the necessary modifications depending on the results of the implementation. The group then discussed the coordination of state and federal port samplers. Since there is a possibility the both state and federal port agents could attempt to sample the same head boat, it is critical that they coordinate their scheduled and talk to one another on a routine basis. The last issue the group addressed related to the development of a head boat vessel directory and the development of interview targets for head boats. **It was decided that NMFS and GSMFC staff develop sample sizes by wave/by vessel for the head boats operating in the Gulf of Mexico.**

J. O'Hop stated that Florida would be conducting phone calls to head boat operators in 2003 (along with the other Gulf states) as well as conducting ad hoc at-sea sampling. The purpose of conducting the at-sea sampling is to test the methodology for collecting bycatch (and related catch data) to ensure the methods operate smoothly and efficiently.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

FIN For-Hire Work Group

Conference Call Summary

March 31, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. and the following people were present:

Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Richard Cody, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Rob Andrews, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Call

D. Donaldson stated that the purpose of the call was to discuss the status of the telephone calls to head boat operators in the Gulf. When the telephone calls were implemented, it was hoped that additional funding to conduct at-sea and dockside sampling to collect catch data from head boats would be available. Unfortunately, this additional funding was not appropriated and this group needs to develop recommendations about continuing to collect effort data (via the phone survey) even though catch data are not being collected. D. Donaldson noted that this issue was discussed at the recent FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee (Data Management Subcommittee) and they recommended that the telephone survey continue.

The group then discussed the various options regarding head boat sampling. It was suggested that this group could follow the lead from the FIN Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee and also recommend that phone calls (via the For-Hire Telephone Survey) continue past June 2004. It was pointed out that the recommendation from the Subcommittee was to continue the telephone calls at least until December 2004 so a complete year (January – December) of data was available for analysis. It was noted that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has passed a recommendation (through a reef fish FMP amendment) that effort data for charter and head boats should be collected via the For-Hire Telephone Survey. B. Dixon believed that continuing the telephone calls after the June 2004 time frame was contrary to the initial intent of this activity. The phone calls were initiated with the understanding that funds would be available to collect catch data in 2004. However, since that did not happen, only half of the needed information is being collected and FIN will not be able to fully address the issue with only part of the necessary data. It was also pointed out that undue burden is being placed on the industry and if FIN cannot address the issue completely, why should FIN be burdening the industry unnecessarily. After June 2004, FIN will have 12 months (July 2003-June 2004) of effort data and emphasis should be placed on analyzing these data instead of continue the collection of these data. D. Donaldson asked the states if they have been hearing complaints about having to report via two different surveys. R. Cody mentioned that several west coast Florida (where the majority of the head boats operate) captains have been complaining about this issue. He also noted that these captains believe that the samplers will stop calling them (via the For-Hire Telephone Survey) after June 2004. If the calls continue, this

could cause problems within the industry and hinder the success of future data collection efforts. On the other hand, M. Kasprzak asked the group what would happen if the phone calls were stopped in June 2004 and funds became available in 2005 to begin both catch and effort data collections. This could also upset the industry if FIN stops the call and then resumes them 6 months later. J. O'Hop stated that regardless of how this issue is resolved, FIN needs to analyze these data and provide feedback to the industry. This was a major component of the charter boat initiative and the same type of effort should be focused on the head boat fishery. By providing feedback to the industry, it creates buy-in for the data collection activity and provides information back to the industry about the data that have been collected. After a lengthy discussion, the group could not come to consensus about this issue. The group believes that FIN needs to examine this issue further and look at the various options (and associated pros and cons of the options) to determine the next step to take regarding head boat sampling. Therefore, the group agreed that FIN should address this issue at the June 2004 Committee meeting.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

FIN Social/Economic Work Group

Attachment G

Meeting Summary
September 23, 2003
Miami, Florida

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. and the following people were present:

Mike Travis, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Rita Curtis, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Jack Isaacs, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
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 a data collection plan for social/economic activities under FIN. This plan will help FIN develop social/economic data collection projects. This issue was discussed at the recent FIN meeting in Orlando and the FIN Committee asked the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) for guidance regarding the need for development of such a plan. The S/FFMC met in August and discussed this topic and determined that the development of a plan would be useful to the program partners and directed FIN to proceed. Therefore, the Social/Economic Work Group was tasked with the development of FIN Social/Economic Data Collection Plan.

Review of Existing Social/Economic Data Collection Plans

The group review the various data collection plans developed by NMFS-Southeast Region and Headquarters. D. Donaldson stated that the group needed to determine what types of information needed to be included in the plan. The group decided that the plan should include information concerning the commercial and recreational fisheries as well as information about the fishing communities (anthropological data).

Development of FIN Social/Economic Data Collection Plan

The group discussed the outline for the plan (attachment A). The group determined that there should be seven (7) major sections in the plan. Section 1 would consist of the questions and issues that can be addressed in social sciences. It would address the questions that can be answered with the collection of social and economic data. Section 2 would outline the various federal (and state?) legislative mandates that require the collection of social and economic data. Section 3 would provide an overview of the types of analysis that need to be conducted in order to fully utilize the social and economic data that are collected. Section 4 would consist of two parts. The first part (a) would provide a description of all the fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Included in this subsection would be a description of all the existing data collection programs and projects (divided into Gulf-wide vs. state and ongoing vs. one-time activities). This description would be included in the appendix of the plan. The second part (b) would be a description of all the fishing communities in the Gulf. The group reviewed a document that listed all the existing data collection programs and **it was decided that each member of the group should review these summaries and provide updated to R. Curtis.** Section 5 would identify the information gaps (by fisheries) that currently exist in social and economic data collection. Section 6 would provide prioritization of the fisheries. It would outline how to

determine the importance of the various fisheries such as economic value, number of participants, social/cultural value as well as other factors. And section 7 would provide the program implementation plan for social and economic data collection activities. In the section, there would be subsections regarding staffing (organizational and personnel issues such as who will do data collection - NMFS, states, GSMFC), data collection (voluntary vs. mandatory methods) and research (methods, procedures/protocols for collecting data). In addition, there would be a description of the various social and economic models that are used by scientists.

The group then identified the various fisheries that are targeted in the Gulf of Mexico. The federal fisheries have been sufficiently outlined in the federal fishery management plans (FMPs). The group then listed the state FMPs including Spanish mackerel, striped bass, menhaden, blue crab, oyster, black drum, striped mullet, flounder, spotted sea trout and sheepshead. The group then discussed the development of the various sections of the plan. It was decided that the best approach for the development of the plan would be to develop the first several sections of the plan (sections 1-4) and then those sections would help guide the development of the other sections (5-7). **After some discussion, the initial drafts of the first sections were assigned to the following personnel: an initial draft of sections 1 and 2 would be prepared by R. Curtis; an initial draft of section 3 would be prepared by M. Travis; an initial draft of section 4(a) would be prepared by D. Donaldson; an initial draft of section 4(b) would be prepared by M. Travis. Each person will develop their assigned section(s) and provide it to staff for compilation by December 2003/January 2004. Once a first draft of sections (1-4) has been completed, a draft will be distributed to the work group and they will meet (via conference call) in the January/February 2004 time frame to review the draft; discuss assignments for completing the draft; and discuss the development of the other sections of the plan.**

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Gulf States Economic and Social Sciences Research Plan Outline

- I. Overview of the types of questions economics and social sciences can address (Rita)
- II. Legal Mandates for conducting economic research (see Appendix A for statutes) (Rita)
- III. General requirements for conducting economic social science research. (Mike)
Identify by sector (commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, communities) the data and types of analyses (Appendix B list of minimum data elements)
- IV. Fisheries & Communities Description: Identify & describe state FMPs, primary fisheries (Dave)
 - a. Existing economic & social sciences data collection projects, programs (see Appendix C for list of data collection projects/programs (and research?))
 - b. For communities, had proposed that the research plan would use NMFS baseline community profiling info as starting point
- V. Information Gaps: Data and modeling gaps
- VI. Program Priorities (excerpt from hypoxia management strategy below)
- VII. Program implementation plan
 - a. Summary of status quo on FTEs, funding, etc.
 - May also include description of LA program and program funding here (Jack)
 - b. Program implementation options

Research Priorities (excerpted from hypoxia management strategy)

Prioritization of Fisheries-Related Activities. Overall, given that the fisheries data collection activities and, to some extent, modeling and research activities are specific to each user group and/or fishery, a prioritization of tasks is needed. Two key criteria are: a) ranking fisheries (species) by the degree to which they are known/perceived to be directly impacted by hypoxia, and b) the economic and social importance of the commercial or recreational fishery (species). Species that are likely to be directly impacted by hypoxia are those found in hypoxic regions, and within these regions, especially those found in bottom waters where eutrophication tends to occur. As more information becomes available and biologists and ecologists establish linkages with respect to the indirect effects of hypoxia on a growing number of species, the prioritization of data collection, modeling, and research activities should be modified to reflect this new information.

A third criterion for prioritizing projects is tractability. In particular, low-cost data collection projects (e.g., economic add-ons to existing surveys) might receive higher priority, particularly if the project has applicability for other fishery management issues. A benefit of this approach is that it establishes a time series collection that may be useful for revealing more subtle or indirect impacts of hypoxia.

FIN Social/Economic Work Group
Conference Call Summary
May 13, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. and the following people were present:

Mike Travis, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Rita Curtis, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Walter Keithly, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Stephen Holiman, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Tony Lamberte, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Larry Perruso, NMFS, Miami, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Meeting/Overview of FIN

D. Donaldson stated that the main purpose of the conference call was to discuss the status of the data collection plan for social/economic activities under FIN. This plan will help FIN develop social/economic data collection projects. This issue was discussed at the FIN meeting last year and the FIN Committee asked the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) for guidance regarding the need for development of such a plan. The S/FFMC discussed this topic and determined that the development of a plan would be useful to the program partners and directed FIN to proceed. Therefore, the Social/Economic Work Group was tasked with the development of FIN Social/Economic Data Collection Plan.

Status of the FIN Social/Economic Data Collection Plan

D. Donaldson noted that after the September 2003 work group meeting, tasks were assigned to begin the development of the various sections of the plan. Unfortunately, due to limited time to focus on this issue, not much progress has been made on developing the sections of the plan. D. Donaldson stated that this work group needed to provide the Committee with a draft of the data collection plan and recommendations about how to proceed with the development of the rest of the document. S. Holiman suggested that each agency update the legal statutes and various social/economic programs to ensure that the information is up-to-date and accurate. **After some discussion, the group decided to present the outline and the appendices to the FIN Committee for their review and comment. The group wanted to get some feedback from the Committee regarding the direction of the plan and to ensure that they were heading in the correct direction. In addition, the group needs each of the agencies to review appendix A (legal statutes) and appendix C (existing social/economic programs and projects). Once the Committee has provided some feedback about the approach, the Work Group will continue to develop the various sections.** R. Curtis stated that she would attempt to put together some introductory language for the document. The draft outline and appendices (A-C) are included in this report.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Gulf States Economic and Social Sciences Research Plan Outline

- VIII. Overview of the types of questions economics and social sciences can address
- IX. Legal Mandates for conducting economic research (see Appendix A for statutes)
(Rita)
- X. General requirements for conducting economic social science research.
Identify by sector (commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, communities) the data and types of analyses (Appendix B list of minimum data elements)
- XI. Fisheries & Communities Description: Identify & describe state FMPs, primary fisheries
 - a. Existing economic & social sciences data collection projects, programs (see Appendix C for list of data collection projects/programs (and research?))
 - b. For communities, had proposed that the research plan would use NMFS baseline community profiling info as starting point
- XII. Information Gaps: Data and modeling gaps
- XIII. Program Priorities (excerpt from hypoxia management strategy below)
- XIV. Program implementation plan
 - a. Summary of status quo on FTEs, funding, etc.
 - May also include description of LA program and program funding here
 - b. Program implementation options

APPENDIX A. STATE STATUTES REQUIRING ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

FLORIDA STATUTE

Chapter 120 Administrative Procedures Act

120-54 (1) (d) In adopting rules, all agencies must, among the alternative approaches to any regulatory objective and to the extent allowed by law, choose the alternative that does not impose regulatory costs on the regulated person, county, or city which could be reduced by the adoption of less costly alternatives that substantially accomplish the statutory objectives

LOUISIANA REVISED STATUTE

RS 49:214.27

§214.27. Coastal management programs; development; guidelines

C. The state guidelines shall have the following goals:

(4) Recognize the value of special features of the coastal zone such as barrier islands, fishery nursery grounds, recreation areas, ports and other areas where developments and facilities are dependent upon the utilization of or access to coastal waters, and areas particularly suited for industrial, commercial, or residential development and manage those areas so as to enhance their value to the people of Louisiana.

(11) Require the consideration of available scientific understanding of natural systems, available engineering technology and economics in the development of management programs.

TEXAS

SUBCHAPTER B. RULEMAKING § 2001.022. Local Employment Impact Statements

(a) A state agency shall determine whether a rule may affect a local economy before proposing the rule for adoption. If a state agency determines that a proposed rule may affect a local economy, the agency shall prepare a local employment impact statement for the proposed rule. The impact statement must describe in detail the probable effect of the rule on employment in each geographic area affected by the rule for each year of the first five years that the rule will be in effect and may include other factors at the agency's discretion.

(c) Failure to comply with this section does not impair the legal effect of a rule adopted under this chapter.

§ 2001.0225. Regulatory Analysis of Major Environmental Rules

(b) Before adopting a major environmental rule subject to this section, a state agency shall conduct a regulatory analysis that:

(3) considers the benefits and costs of the proposed rule in relationship to state agencies, local governments, the public, the regulated community, and the environment.

(c) When giving notice of a major environmental rule subject to this section, a state agency shall incorporate into the fiscal note required by Section 2001.024 a draft impact analysis describing the anticipated effects of the proposed rule. The draft impact analysis, at a minimum, must:

(2) identify the costs that the agency anticipates state agencies, local governments, the public, and the regulated community will experience after implementation of the rule;

(3) describe the benefits and costs anticipated from implementation of the rule in as quantitative a manner as feasible, but including a qualitative description when a quantitative description is not feasible or adequately descriptive;

(d) After considering public comments submitted under Section 2001.029 and determining that a proposed rule should be adopted, the agency shall prepare a final regulatory analysis that complies with Section 2001.033. Additionally, the agency shall find that, compared to the alternative proposals considered and rejected, the rule will result in the best combination of effectiveness in obtaining the desired results and of economic costs not materially greater than the costs of any alternative regulatory method considered.

(g) In this section:

(1) "Benefit" means a reasonably identifiable, significant, direct or indirect, favorable effect, including a quantifiable or nonquantifiable environmental, health, or economic effect, that is expected to result from implementation of a rule.

(2) "Cost" means a reasonably identifiable, significant, direct or indirect, adverse effect, including a quantifiable or nonquantifiable environmental, health, or economic effect, that is expected to result from implementation of a rule.

APPENDIX B. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DATA COLLECTION PROGRAM

A. Commercial Social and Economic Data Collection Activities

The FIN will collect social and economic data on commercial harvesters using three separate surveys. The annual fixed cost survey will be directed at the owner/operator. The data elements are listed in Table 7. The trip cost survey will evaluate the variable costs associated with the most recent commercial fishing trip of a particular vessel. The data elements are listed in Table 8. This survey will be directed at the captain of the vessel. And the annual owner/captain/crew survey will be used to gather sociological information. The data elements are listed in Table 9. These surveys will be conducted on a voluntary basis. The ACCSP is conducting an evaluation study to determine the appropriate survey methodology (i.e., mode of collection, statistical design) for the three commercial harvester surveys listed above. The FIN and the Social/Economic Work Group will be involved in these evaluations and the results will be utilized by the FIN. The FIN noted that special studies to collect more in-depth social and economic data might be needed in addition to the long-term data collection efforts. All social and economic data will be confidential, with access granted only to authorized users as identified in the FIN confidentiality protocols.

Table 7. Social and economic data element to be collected on commercial harvesters through the FIN Annual Fixed Cost Survey on an annual basis.

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAT
Fixed Costs		
Vessel Identification	Unique vessel identifier (i.e. Coast Guard, state registration number, etc.) These identifiers must be trackable through time and space.	11 character
Annual insurance costs	Hull, health, protection and indemnity, mortgage, etc.	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Annual haulout/overhaul	Total cost for haulout/overhaul for the vessel	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Dockage	Total cost for vessel dockage, home port and transient dockage	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Professional fees	Accounting, legal, bookkeeping, tax filing, etc.	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Loan payments	Principal and interest	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
New gear acquired list, cost	Total cost of new gear acquired (total cost of replacement gear and total cost of additional gear)	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Repairs	Total cost of repairs that were conducted in the previous year	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Maintenance	Total cost of maintenance that was conducted in the previous year	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Crew salary	Total crew cost for those crew not paid on a trip basis	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Crew benefits	Total cost for crew benefits	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Taxes	Income, property, etc.	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Vessel improvement cost	Total cost of vessel	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Vessel permit fees	Total cost of all permits held by the vessel	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Auto/trailer	Total payments on autos and trailers used by the vessel (Check with CESS to clarify)	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Office	Total cost of office space used by the vessel crew and support staff	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Association(s) fees	Total fees and dues paid to commercial fishing associations	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Onshore permits/export/import/license/etc. fees	Total fees import/export permits/licenses	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Cold storage rental	Total cost for cold storage rental	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAT
Onshore (non-owned) processing/holding costs, leases	Total cost for leases of rental of onshore processing/holding facilities	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Advertising	Total cost for advertising of for-hire vessels and supporting activities	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Lease or mortgage of onshore facilities	Total cost for lease or mortgage payments for onshore facilities	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Onshore employee salaries and benefits	Total cost for onshore employees salaries and benefits	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Sources of financing	List the sources of financing for the vessel and onshore facilities	25 characters
Additional Annual Information		
Value of Catch in Storage	Total value of catch that is in storage	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Ownership type	Sole proprietor, partnership, owner-operator, etc.	20 characters
Relationship to any partner (s)	e.g., household member, relative, friend, neighbor, etc.	20 characters
Engine brand(s) (Propulsion Equipment) Fuel type	Engine Manufacturer	20 characters
Engine Age(s)	Age of engine in years	4 digit numeric
Engine fuel type(s)	Type of fuel used to run engine	15 characters
Harvest gear	Number and description of gear that are used in the harvest of marine resources from the vessel	LOOK AT CATCH EFFORT
Deck gear	Number and description of gear that is permanently affixed to the vessel	LOOK AT CATCH EFFORT
Wheelhouse electronics	Number and description of all electronics that are located in the wheelhouse of the vessel	25 digit alpha numeric
Gear-mounted electronics	Number and description of all electronics that are mounted to the harvest gear.	25 digit alpha numeric
On-board processing/refrigeration	Equipment list, descriptions, capacities of all equipment on board that are used for processing/refrigeration	25 digit alpha numeric
Vessel purchase year	Purchase or acquisition year	4 digit numeric
Vessel price	Price of vessel at time of purchase or acquisition	8 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Estimated market value of vessel	Estimated market value of the vessel excluding all harvest gear	8 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Estimated market value of gear	Estimated market value of all harvest gear that is used by the vessel	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Onshore facilities (list, descriptors, capacities)	List the onshore facilities that are leased/rented/owned by the vessel	25 alpha numeric
Number of other vessels that also use the same onshore facilities	Other vessels that use the same onshore facilities	3 digit numeric

Table 8. Social and economic data to be collected on commercial harvester through the FIN Monthly Trip Report.

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAT
Variable costs (Trip Costs)		
Vessel Identification	Unique vessel identifier (i.e. Coast Guard, state registration number, etc.) These identifiers must be trackable through time and space.	11 character
Trip Identification	Trip identification that is derived from the vessel/dealer trip report	reference trip ID description
Replacement or repair cost of gear and equipment lost or damaged	Total replacement or repair cost of equipment lost or damaged on this trip	6 digits numerical plus 2 decimal places
Fuel used on this trip - Quantity	Gallons of fuel used on this trip	4 digit numeric
Fuel used on this trip - Cost	Cost for all fuel used on this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Oil used on this trip - Quantity	Gallons of oil used on this trip	3 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Oil used on this trip - Cost	Cost for all oil used on this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Bait	Description, Quantity, and Cost of all bait used on this trip	
Ice used on this trip - Quantity	Tons of ice used on this trip	3 digits numeric
Ice used on this trip - Cost	Cost for all ice used on this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Water used on this trip - Quantity	Gallons of water used on this trip	4 digits numeric
Water used on this trip - Cost	Cost for all water used on this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Total food cost	Total food cost for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Trip grading/ handling/ unloading	Total cost of grading/handling/ unloading of catch for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
On-board processing costs	Total cost for on-board processing of catch for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Local transport costs	Total cost of local transporting of catch for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Supplies	Total cost of additional supplies not itemized above	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Labor costs		
Crew share formula	Description of the formula that is used to determine crew share for this trip	25 alpha numeric
Total crew cost	Total monetary amount that was given to the crew for this trip	6 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAT
Total captain cost	Total monetary amount that was given to the captain for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Non-monetary compensation estimated value	Estimated value of all non-monetary compensation that was given to the crew for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Non-monetary compensation distribution formula	Estimated value of all non-monetary compensation that was given to the captain for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places
Captain and crew bonuses	Total of bonuses that was given to the captain and crew for this trip	5 digit numeric plus 2 decimal places

Table 9. Socio-demographic data elements to be collected on commercial harvester through the FIN Owner/Captain/Crew Survey.

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAT
Vessel Identification	Unique vessel identifier (i.e. Coast Guard, state registration number, etc.) These identifiers must be trackable through time and space.	11 character
Trip Identification	Trip identification that is derived from the vessel/dealer trip report	reference trip ID description
Classify yourself	Owner, Captain, Crew, or Other	15 characters
Household composition	Number and relationship of individuals in the household	
Employment status of adults	e.g., employed, unemployed, retired, student, full-time, part-time, self-employed, any combination	20 characters
Education	Highest level of education that was completed	2 digits
Marital/cohabitational status	Current marital or cohabitational status of respondent	2 digits
Age	Age of the respondent	3 digits numeric
Gender	Gender of the respondent	1 character
Ethnicity	Ethnic background	15 character
Primary language spoken in the household	Primary language spoken by household members	15 characters
English-language skills	English language proficiency	2 character
Religious affiliation	Religion of respondent	15 characters
General health	Current health status	2 character
Percent of annual household income from commercial fishing	Net & gross percent of household income that is generated through commercial fishing or support activities	3 digits numeric
Alternative occupational opportunities that are available to you	Of these opportunities how many years of experience do you have in each	25 character

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAT
Total annual income from commercial fishing	Total household income that is generated through commercial fishing	6 digits numeric plus 2 decimal places
Primary source of income for the previous Spring	List the activity that generated the majority of your income during the previous Spring	25 characters
Primary source of income for the previous Summer	List the activity that generated the majority of your income during the previous Summer	25 characters
Primary source of income for the previous Fall	List the activity that generated the majority of your income during the previous Fall	25 characters
Primary source of income for the previous Winter	List the activity that generated the majority of your income during the previous Winter	25 characters
List your memberships of organizations or associations that are involved in fishery issues	Names of fishery organizations or associations of which respondent is a member	25 characters

B. Recreational Social and Economic Data Collection Activities

Recreational and for-hire social and economic data will be collected through four separate surveys. Social and economic data for finfish recreational and for-hire fisheries will be collected through the addition of data elements to existing telephone and intercept surveys. These additional data elements will be added at three and six year intervals. The data elements are listed in Table 10. The social/economic for shellfish/crustacean and non-consumptive surveys are currently being developed and the FIN and Social/Economic Work Group will be involved in the development of these surveys. All of these surveys will be conducted on a voluntary basis.

Table 10. Social and economic data to be collected through the FIN recreational and for-hire finfish survey to be conducted every three years. *NOTE: All of the surveys are add-ons to the MRFSS and for right now will use MRFSS formats.*

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	FORMAT
Data elements to be added every three years (Year 3, 6, 9, etc.)		
Trip-related expenditures	lodging, food, transportation, fees, equipment rental, private/rental boat operating expenses, bait	
Other purchases primarily for marine recreational and for-hire fishing	fishing tackle, boats, other fishing related equipment, other items	
Origin of purchases	The location where purchases were made, by expenditure category	
Hourly wage/income	hourly wage if known - if not annual gross income	
Employment Status	Current employment status (i.e. employed full-time, part-time, unemployed, retired, etc.)	
Age	Age of respondent	
Boat ownership	Ascertain boat ownership and primary use (i.e. fishing)	
Primary trip purpose	Primary purpose of trip (i.e. fishing, vacation, business trip, etc.)	
Trip Length	Length of trip (i.e. day-trip or overnight-trip) and number of days fished on trip	
Additional data elements to be added every other third year (Year 6, 12, etc.)		
Education	Highest level of formal education that was completed	
Ethnicity	Ethnic background	
Gender	gender of the respondent	
Occupation	Job description	
Household composition	Number and relationship of individuals in the house hold	
Motivations for fishing	Reasons for salt water fishing	
Substitute activities	Alternative use of time	
Attitudes toward management	Attitudes about management regulations	
Attitudes toward and knowledge of marine contamination	Attitudes toward and knowledge of contaminated fishing sites	
Self-Definition as Subsistence/Recreational/For-Hire	Whether anglers see themselves as recreational, for-hire, subsistence, or a mixture	
Involvement in commercial fishing	Extent, if any, of angler household involvement in commercial fishing	
Other recreational/for-hire/subsistence activities involving collection of natural resources	Types and use of non-fish marine organisms (e.g. shellfish, crustaceans, kelp) and other natural resources (e.g. berries, fruit, other wild plants, wood for fuel)	
Catch distribution networks	Categories of people with whom the above are shared (e.g. household, other family, neighbors, local charities)	
Satisfaction level	Give your overall satisfaction level with this fishing trip	

APPENDIX C. EXISTING & ONGOING GULF OF MEXICO SURVEYS

Part I. Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Economic Data Collection Programs

Trip Ticket for Louisiana Commercial Fishermen

Focus: Harvest quantities of commercial species; prices received
Instrument: Computer readable reporting sheet
Years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002
Sample: All fishermen holding a commercial license and selling catch commercially
Data collected: Coast Guard boat identification; harvest quantities by species and trip; area in which harvest took place; condition of harvest sold; price received; trip length;

Note: Spatial resolution extremely coarse for inshore and state coastal waters; landings made by Louisiana boat in another state not in database; no environmental data collected.

Louisiana Commercial Shrimp Fisher's Survey 1999

Focus: Technology and cost structure of Louisiana shrimp fleet
Instrument: Mail survey
Sample: Mailed to 1800 fishers holding a commercial shrimp trawl gear license with boats greater than or equal to 25 ft in length;
Approximately 16% response rate
Data collected: Boat information - value, size, power, gear, use and costs (for multiple gears), storage/transportation
Fishing operation - trips by season, crew, crew costs, harvests, revenue
Economic operation - repair and maintenance costs, trip costs, revenues.
Demographics - experience, ownership, percent income from fishing

Note: Spatial resolution of data limited to the number of fishing trips taking place inshore, state offshore waters, and federal waters; no environmental data collected

Louisiana Commercial Shrimp Fisher's Survey 2001

Focus: Technology and cost structure of Louisiana shrimp fleet, Damage of Storm Allison, environmental perturbations
Instrument: Mail survey
Years: 2001
Sample: Mailed to all fishers in 2001 holding a commercial shrimp gear license (8,500);
Approximately 15% response rate; 418 were active commercial fishermen
Data collected: Boat information - value, size, power, gear, use and costs (for multiple gears), storage/transportation
Fishing operation - trips by season, crew, harvests.
Economic operation - repair and maintenance costs, trip costs, revenues.
Demographics - experience, ownership, percent income from fishing
Perturbations - effects of Allison, opinion of other impacts (including hypoxia)

Note: Spatial resolution of data limited to the percentage of fishing taking place inshore, state offshore waters, and federal waters;

Louisiana Charter Boat Operator's Survey 1999

Focus: Technology and cost structure of Louisiana charter boat fleet
Instrument: Mail survey
Years: 1999
Sample: Mailed to all Louisiana Commercial Charter Guide license holders (327), 90 answered back for response rate of 27.5%.
Data collected: Boat information - value, size, power, gear, use and costs (for multiple gears), storage/transportation
Fishing Operation - activities (fishing, diving, sight-seeing), trip length and destination, number of passenger, crew.
Economic Operation - trip costs, business expenses, initial investment, trip fees, revenues.
Demographics - experience, education, ownership

Note: Spatial resolution of data limited to the percentage of fishing taking place inshore, state offshore waters, and federal waters; no environmental data collected

Louisiana Commercial Shrimp Fishermen Logbook 1999-2001

Focus: Detailed information on the operation of vessels in the shrimp fleet
Instrument: Initial personal interview and data collection; monthly logbooks (paid)
Years: 1999, 2000, 2001 (change in data collection between 1999 and 2000, 2001)
Sample: 26 commercial vessels
Data collected: Boat information - initial interview collected detailed vessel and equipment information;
Fishing Operation – Location, destination, fishing location, fishing time, crew size, sea conditions, species and quantity harvested.
Economic Operation - detailed trip costs, maintenance/repair expenses, share arrangement, condition of harvest sold, price received, etc.
Demographics - experience, education, ownership, income.

Note: Spatial resolution varies from area to actual longitude/latitude; includes information on depth fished.

Louisiana Charter Boat Operator's Logbook 1999-2001

Focus: Detailed information on the operation of Louisiana charter boats
Instrument: Initial personal interview and data collection; monthly logbooks (paid)
Years: 1999, 2000, 2001 (change in data collection between 1999 and 2000, 2001)
Sample: 46 charter vessels
Data collected: Boat information - initial interview collected detailed vessel and equipment information;
Fishing Operation – date, destination, fishing location, fishing time, crew size and number of passengers, sea conditions, target and caught species.
Economic operation - detailed operation costs (trip, fixed, capital costs), trip fees and extra-fees, revenues.
Demographics - experience, education, ownership, income

Note: Spatial resolution varies from area to actual longitude/latitude; includes information on depth fished.

Gulf of Mexico Economic Reef Fish Fishery Survey

One hundred ninety six commercial reef fish boats from Collier County, Florida, through Cameron County, Texas, were sampled in a stratified random sampling design with eight strata defined by region, gear and scale of operation. Interviewers collected information about the respondents, their capital investments in boat, gear and electronics, and rankings of their current fishing activities in terms of annual revenues.

Year? Spatial specificity?

Pilot Survey of Commercial Mackerel Fisherman (NC and LA)

As of early October 2002, work by the contractor on a one-time pilot economic survey of commercial mackerel fishermen in North Carolina and Louisiana is essentially complete. Information was obtained by in-person interview on annual vessel costs and revenue for 2001, major expenditures in 2001, fish caught, vessel physical characteristics, equipment on board, and gear used. Revenues and costs were obtained for one to three individual trips for key fish, along with numbers of trips for such fish by month, length of trip and gear used. Some information was also obtained on demographics, fishing and other work experience, etc. for captains and owners. The confidential data, documentation, some user programs and other information will be contained in several SAS files, EXCEL files and a contractor's report.

Cost and Revenues in the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

While cost and revenue data is not routinely collected in the southeastern region of the United States, many specialized data collection efforts have been funded by Sea Grant, Saltonstall/Kennedy grants, and Marine Fisheries Initiative cooperative agreements to collect data concerning the financial viability of the shrimp fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. This study describes a new data collection effort in the Gulf of Mexico and presents a statistical analysis of a data set that combines the newly collected data with historical data sets provided by the authors of existing studies from 1969 to 1992. A survey conducted in 1982 covering the entire Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery was used as the basis for the 1992 survey to ensure comparability of data. The 1992 survey was conducted over the 1987 to 1992 time period for major fishing ports in Texas. The statistical analysis suggests that homeport and hull construction material do not directly affect the total costs of operating in the shrimp fishery. The resulting statistical model allows the estimation of total operating costs for vessels operating in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery so that the impacts of proposed fishery management regulations can be determined by cost-benefit analysis. The last Shrimp Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation report (Ward and Nance, 1994) provides estimates of operating costs, net revenues, and net benefits by mobility class and vessel size based on this survey and operating cost model. Data has not been collected for any component of the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery since 1992. A new data collection program is in the process of being developed for the inshore and offshore shrimp fishing fleets operating in the Gulf of Mexico.

MRFSS Angler Survey

Focus: Excluding Texas, Gulf-wide survey of marine anglers
Instrument: In person intercept survey and telephone survey
Years: Since 1981.
Sample:
Intercept: Random sample of marine anglers collected continuously throughout the year.
RDD: Random sample of household in coastal counties
Data collected:
Intercept: Catch by species (number, weight and length); target species; effort (gear used, hours fished this trip); mode of fishing (shore, pier, charterboat, private boat, etc.); avidity level (trips made in past year, past two months); primary area of fishing; residence (state and county)
RDD: Number of anglers per household; fishing trips in past two months; mode of each trip; location (county) of each trip

Note: spatial resolution is limited to ocean (3 mile or less from shore; more than 3 miles); sound, bay, river, and estuary (lists several alternatives)

MRFSS Angler Survey Valuation Add-on

Focus: Excluding Texas, Gulf-wide survey of marine anglers
Instrument: In person intercept survey and telephone survey
Years: 1997, 2000
Sample: Intercept and RDD, same as above; telephone includes only those anglers that agree to a follow-up telephone interview
Data collected:
Intercept: travel, lodging and fishing trip expenses; trip length (time away from home)
Telephone: response to regulations; WTP, additional expenditures not captured on intercept; vessel ownership info; demographic information
RDD: response to regulations; vessel ownership info; demographic information

MRFSS Angler Survey Expenditure Add-on

Focus: Excluding Texas, Gulf-wide survey of marine anglers
Instrument: In person intercept survey and telephone survey
Years: 1999
Sample: Intercept and RDD, same as above; telephone includes only those anglers that agree to a follow-up telephone interview
Data collected:
Intercept: fishing trip expenses; trip length, income, boat ownership
Telephone: additional fishing trip expenditures; fishing related expenditures;
RDD: vessel ownership info; trip expenses, fishing expenses

Gulf Charter boat Survey

Focus: Excluding Texas, Gulf-wide survey of charter boat owners
Instrument: Telephone survey
Years: 2001-ongoing; economic data only collected for July 2003-June 2003 period
Sample: random sample of charterboat vessels

Data collected:

Effort: area and time fished, trip length, number of anglers;

Economic: trip revenue and expenses; other fishing-related expenditures

Note: spatial resolution is limited to inland, state waters and ocean

Fishery Products Reports

The National Marine Fisheries Service and its predecessor agencies have been collecting seafood-processing data since 1918. This survey is the only comprehensive review of the U.S. seafood industry conducted annually. The data are reported in *Fisheries of the United States*, and the FAO yearbook *Fishery Statistics - Commodities*. The data are also used for calculating the U.S. seafood consumption and for determining the value added, margins, and consumer expenditures for commercial fisheries. There are two principal methods by which to conduct the survey. Mailing the survey to the company is the method most commonly used by the majority of agents. The alternative is direct contact with the firm either by personal visit or by phone.

There are four types of status. "ACTIVE" indicates that the plant was surveyed during the previous survey period and remained operational. A firm that ceases to function or is sold outright to another individual or company during the survey period is considered to be "OUT OF BUSINESS". "REACTIVATED" is used for those firms that were temporarily out of business due to plant damage, financial difficulty, etc. and are now back in operation. A "NEW" company is an operation that has never been previously identified by this survey or a previously surveyed firm that has been sold and has indicated that it has changed its corporate structure. Companies that change their name for enhancement purposes and maintain the same corporate structure are not considered to be NEW.

General Canvass Monthly Landings Statistics

The data maintained in this database are monthly summaries of the purchases of marine seafood products made by dealers in the Southeast Region. These statistics include the monthly quantity (pounds whole weight) and value for each species purchased. It also includes information on the type of gear and area where the fishing occurred. These statistics are collected by each state, territory or commonwealth in the Southeast and provided to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) in an agreed upon format. Many of the states (Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana) have implemented trip ticket programs, but continue to provide the landings data in the monthly format.

Part II. Gulf of Mexico fisheries data collection programs that might have important economic meaning or value¹:

Hypoxia Monitoring 1998-2001

Focus: Attempts to map the inshore front of the summer hypoxic zone off the Louisiana coast between Quatre Bayou and Cat Island Passes with hydrologic and dissolved oxygen readings at the 10, 30, 50, and 70 foot depth contour. Normally, 10 trips per year conducted every 2 weeks starting in April and ending in late August or early September.

Instrument: Direct sampling

Years: 1999-2001

Sample: 40 stations

Data collected: location coordinates, date, physical data (salinity, turbidity, etc), nekton data, water chemistry data at top, middle, and bottom (alkalinity, chemical content, chlorophyll, dissolved oxygen, etc), Plankton data, sediment data, biological data, etc.

LOOP environmental Monitoring Program 1978-1995

Focus: Monitoring animal and plant life including data on estuarine and marine samples around the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP) to document impacts.

Instrument: Direct sampling

Years: 1978-1995

Sample: 376 stations

Geographic location: Louisiana Coastal Areas 3 and 4.

Data collected: location coordinates, date, physical data (salinity, turbidity, etc), nekton data, water chemistry data at top, middle, and bottom (alkalinity, chemical content, chlorophyll, dissolved oxygen, etc), Plankton data, sediment data, biological data, etc.

Note: This data set has a more comprehensive number of variables but its geographical location is smaller than the Hypoxia Monitoring Program.

Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) 1982-Ongoing

Focus: To collect, manage, and disseminate fishery-independent data in the southeast United States.

Instrument: Direct sampling

Years: 1982-Ongoing

Sample: Stations locations are randomly selected each cruise by NMFS.

Geographic location: From 89 °30' to 91° 30' west longitude, shoreline to 40 miles out (i.e., 28°30' north latitude).

Data collected: SEAMAP resource surveys include the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Spring Plankton Survey, Reef Fish Survey, Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Fall Plankton Survey and plankton and environmental surveys. (taken from: <http://www.gsmfc.org/>)

1: Reference: The Louisiana Department of wildlife and Fisheries, Office of Fisheries, Marine Fisheries Division, Database Description. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Baton Rouge, June 30, 2000. Funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. Grant no. DE-FG96-87PO13145.

Note: This data set has a more comprehensive number of variables than the Hypoxia Monitoring Program. Publications of the SEAMAP program include environmental and biological atlases of the Gulf of Mexico for each year from 1983 through 1997. NMFS Trip Interview Program

This program provides biological data on many of the species that are being managed by states and the NMFS in the Southeast Region. Biologists located at fishing ports along the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic coast collect these data. These field personnel sample fish as they are being off-loaded or have been packed out and collect detailed size and weight information. They also interview the captain or crew and collect data on the fishing effort and location for the trip. Because of the large volume of commercial fishing trips in the SE, only a sample can be intercepted. General guidelines are provided to the field samplers that include the species and numbers of fish to sample. In addition to length-weight information, the field biologists also take bioprofile samples, which can include otoliths, gonads and stomach contents. State and NMFS biologists that specialize in aging and sexing fish and shellfish process these samples. These data result in age-length keys that are critical in stock assessments.

Vessel Operating Units

This database includes data on active commercial fishing vessels and includes information on the physical characteristics of the vessels (e.g., length, type of hull construction, engine horsepower). This information is collected in an annual inventory either from state or Federal permit/license data or directly by the field agents. This inventory only includes vessels that are registered with the U.S. Coast Guard and are larger than 5 net tons.

Vessel Logbooks

The SEFSC collects detailed catch and effort data by vessel logbooks for many of the major commercial fisheries in the Southeast Region. Under Federal regulations, vessels that are issued a Federal permit in the Gulf of Mexico reef fish, South Atlantic snapper-grouper, king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, shark or swordfish fishery are required to complete and submit a vessel logbook for every trip in which species in these fishery management plans are caught.

Large Pelagic At-sea Observer Program

Trained personnel are deployed on vessels in the large pelagic fishery in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. The observers are tasked with collecting information on the type and quantity of gear, locations and times of longline sets, the quantity and species of the catch, information on the species and condition of any catches that are released, and any interactions with marine mammals or endangered species.

Shrimp Trawl Fishery At-sea Observer Program

Trained personnel are deployed on vessels in the shrimp trawl fishery in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. The observers are tasked with collecting information on the type and quantity of gear, locations and times of trawling activity, the quantity and species of the catch, information on the species, and any interactions with marine mammals or endangered species. This program began data collection in 1992. Number of annual sea days has varied over the years with changes in funding levels. The data set is composed of characterization tows (all species identified), and bycatch reduction device evaluation (select species identified).

Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Landings Files

Port agents in the Gulf of Mexico collect monthly shrimp landings data from each of the seafood dealers in the assigned ports. This is considered a complete canvas of the landings and includes species, port and date of landing, size composition of catch, ex-vessel value by size and species, and area fished (subjectively determined by the port agents). Some of the trips are interviewed, and these records would also have effort expended as a variable. This data set extends from 1960 to present, with more detailed size data recorded from 1985 to present.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**SHEEPSHEAD TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
June 22-23, 2004
Marathon, Florida**

Chairman Chuck Adams called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 22, 2004, at the Keys Marine Laboratory. Attendance is indicated below:

Members Attending:

Chuck Adams, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Jason Adriance, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Paul Cook, LDWF, New Iberia, LA
Mike Jepson, Gainesville, FL
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Perry Trial, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX

Members Absent:

Mike Brackin, Breakaway Fishing, Gulfport, MS
Jeff Mayne, LDWF Enforcement Division, Baton Rouge, LA
Jessica McCawley, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Harlon Pearce, Commercial Representative, Kenner, LA
Erick Porche, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff:

Steven J. VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cynthia B. Yocom, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The group adopted the agenda as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held February 19, 2004, in Pensacola Beach, Florida, were reviewed and approved as written.

General Discussion

The draft to date was reviewed thoroughly by the group. The following action items were noted:

- Soften the “wobble” on the cover art.
- Update the Table of Contents next draft.
- Add common names.
- Check conversion problems from WordPerfect to Word.
- Check for “flounder” within the document.

- Table headings go above, figure headings go below.
- E. Porche – add Sedberry (1984) to substrate section.
- All need to look over their state portions of Section 4 and send any changes/additions to P. Cook.
- Each state add any info on methylmercury.
- Each state look over freshwater diversion discussions for accuracy.
- Each state look over their state portions for needed updates.
- Each state review Section 6.
- C. Adams to check on mariculture operations.
- C. Adams to check with J. Jamieson on bycatch information.
- J. Mareska (AL) & E. Porche (MS) send fishery-independent data on sheephead to J. Adriance.
- C. Adams will incorporate data from the completed market survey into Section 7.

The group divided into several work groups to revise and discuss various sections. S. VanderKooy will send the revised Word copies of Sections 3 and 4 to P. Cook and P. Trial immediately upon returning to the office.

The group decided that a full draft would be possible by this fall. The next meeting will consist of line-by-line editing and was tentatively set for late September in the south Texas area (Port Aransas, Padre Island, etc.).

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 23, 2004.

**SEAMAP - GULF, SOUTH ATLANTIC
AND CARIBBEAN SUBCOMMITTEES
JOINT MINUTES**

Rincón, Puerto Rico
August 4, 2004

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman D. Theiling called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

James Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Dale Theiling, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Jeanne Boylan, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Darlene Haverkamp, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Richard Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
John Merriner, NMFS/SEFSC, Beaufort, NC
Katy West, NCDMR, Washington, NC
Roger Uwate, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Barbara Kojis, VIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Graciela Garcia-Moliner, CFMC, Hato Rey, PR
Miguel Rolón, CFMC, Hato Rey, PR
Richard Appeldoorn, UPR, Mayaguez, PR
Aida Rosario, FRL/PR-DNER, Mayaguez, PR
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores,
Roger Pugliese, SAFMC, Charleston, SC
Henry Ansley, GADNR, Brunswick, GA
Tina Udouj, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL

Others:

Ellie F. Roche, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Larry DeLancey, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Peter Eldridge, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
José Rivera, NMFS/SEFSC, Hato Rey, PR

Staff:

Scott Nichols, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Cynthia Binkley, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Mark McDuff, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Elizabeth Griffen, 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

M. McDuff asked to move the *Data Management Issues* topic after *Overview of the Components*.
With this change, the agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes

The August 6, 2003 minutes were approved as submitted.

Overview of SEAMAP-Caribbean

A. Rosario reported that this past year the Caribbean was involved in two different surveys. The Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico continued with the whelk survey, which started in 2003. The Virgin Islands completed fieldwork for their whelk survey and Puerto Rico was currently doing fieldwork for their whelk survey and plans to complete it by September. The Caribbean started a coral reef fish survey. The Virgin Islands would start fieldwork as soon as possible. There was a delay with the accounts but as soon as the accounts are opened, they will start. Puerto Rico started doing fieldwork on the coral reef fish survey in May and has been sampling with hook and line and fish traps. They were having maintenance problems with the vessel and do not know when they will finish. She said the Virgin Islands are waiting for funding to correct some data entry errors with the reef fish database. When they receive funding, the corrections will be made.

Overview of SEAMAP-Gulf

J. Hanifen reported the Fall Plankton Survey was completed last September. Alabama, NMFS, Mississippi, and Louisiana sampled waters in 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 to estimate abundance and define distribution of eggs, larvae and small juveniles of Gulf of Mexico fish, particularly king and Spanish mackerel.

The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted last October-December from off Mobile, Alabama to the U.S./Mexican border. Vessels sampled waters out to 60 fm with trawls and plankton nets, and collected environmental samples. Objectives of this survey were to sample the northern Gulf to determine abundance and distribution of demersal organisms from inshore waters to 60 fm, collect 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.

The Spring Plankton Survey took place this year in May from the west Florida shelf to the Texas/Louisiana border. This was the 23rd year for the survey and 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 was conducted in June and July of this year and it was also the 23rd year for this survey. Objectives of the survey were to monitor size and distribution of penaeid shrimp during or prior to migration of brown shrimp from the bays to the open gulf, aid in evaluating the Texas Closure, and provide information on shrimp and groundfish stock across the northern Gulf of Mexico from inshore waters to 50 fm. The overall strategy was to work through the eastern Gulf to the Texas/Mexico border in order to sample during or prior to migration of brown

shrimp from the bays to the open Gulf. Real time data were collected and distributed from this survey during which catch of shrimp and finfish were reported weekly from the surveys and plots and catch rates were distributed to interested individuals.

The Gulf was working with the National Coastal Data Development Center at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi to develop an ArcIMS website that would allow users to visually display SEAMAP trawl and environmental data. Work on standardizing the database so users can easily access the data and develop the plots they were interested in is currently being done and it should be operational within months.

Overview of SEAMAP-South Atlantic

D. Theiling reported the Shallow Water Trawl survey was conducted by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. There were three cruises that sampled trawl and fauna at 102 locations between Cape Hatteras and Cape Canaveral. This was the 16th year for the program. The bottom-mapping program also continued with data acquisition particularly in the deep-water component, and was working with the ESDIM program to acquire more offshore live bottom mapping data. The Crustacean Work Group, though not funded through SEAMAP, published the summarization of the workshop held on blue crabs in the South Atlantic. He said things were running normal for the South Atlantic component but like the other components; there is never enough money.

Overview of NMFS

S. Nichols said all cruises have already been covered and M. McDuff would report on data management. He said he wanted to mention how prominent SEAMAP data was in the red snapper SEDAR process in the Gulf of Mexico this past April. He said the southeast has developed a process called SEDAR that stands for Southeast Data Assessment Review, and it reviews stock assessments for the councils. There was a major review in April for red snapper and they were able to air analytical papers based on the SEAMAP trawl survey data, the SEAMAP plankton data, the SEAMAP trap video data, and the NMFS fishery independent work on longlines. He said it felt very rewarding to see all the hard work pay off after all these years. SEAMAP is now synonymous with fishery independent data in the minds of all the experts and council members that attended the meetings.

Data Management Issues

M. McDuff gave a presentation on the new database and what to expect in the near future. He reported that Congress passed the *Data Quality Act* that requires a process for reporting/resolving errors; requires data transparency, quality, integrity, and utility; and requires clearly defined data management practices. He said there were major problems with the database such as incomplete or non-existent documentation on the data for a lot of the surveys. There have been end user complaints on data quality. He stated there were no clearly defined processes for reporting/resolving data issues. He reported that there were database model deficiencies and outdated hardware/software. He stated that data access was very painful, and it would be a labor-intensive effort for any system modification.

There are several national/regional systems that they have taken advantage of such as the NMFS FIS effort and the design of the ACCSP/GSMFC FIN data structure and objectives. He said the field names and data types needed to be standardized, and they need to manage metadata for all data elements in a data registry.

The Data Element Registry was part of the FIS. Specifically, the Pacific Islands Science Center submitted a proposal and started developing a data element registry. They were also building the programs to go with the registry to allow the user to interface and define each data element, track changes over time, and hopefully by using this standard, metadata forms could be generated from these tables. This would give each component direct access to update modules and elements that they own. It would provide an interface for editing or updating.

He said once the registry was up and running, the Data Stewardship Module could be used. Data elements would be assigned to those who own the data and they would be responsible for the correct documentation and this should promote data quality throughout the system. The Reference Code Management was very much the same concept. This was also from the Pacific Islands and would provide a means to document codes, provide quick and easy updates, give ownership of codes, have expandability of the system and provide a code history.

The Data Issues Manager is an Oracle Forms Based System and will provide means of questioning data, and track data issues and resolution. This was also borrowed from the Pacific Islands Science Center. The Data Entry/Edit System would make data easy to enter, provide quality control, minimize keypunching, be adaptive to the data source whether onboard ship or onshore, it would have real time error checking, and eliminate back doors. The second part of the system would interface with fish measuring boards. He then explained the FSCS and SCS modules that some of the states are now working with. This would reduce errors and give real time quality features.

M. McDuff discussed enhancements to the database on the cruise level. The database would provide storage of cruise instructions, reports and plots in the database. On the leg level they would be able to identify participants. At the station level they would be able to record multiple events at the same station, and on the catch level they would have the ability to record data on a species separated by catch codes. On an individual species level, enhancements would include the ability to record multiple data for an individual, have the ability to record and track multiple samples taken from an individual, and the ability to search comments.

The Taxonomic System would allow users to use the full scientific name, provide full taxonomic information, and the ability for ITIS integration and robust query capabilities. They were trying to get one master database for the Ichthyoplankton System, create an end-to-end system, allow ownership of modules, and eliminate redundant entry and provide missing modules.

Status of FY2005 Funds

S. Nichols said he had very little information on the rescissions for this year. He said he gave the coordinators a base figure but it might have been an error. He said the amount in question was \$20,000 to the South Atlantic component that has been spent through the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council. He said he thought this was in the base amount for the South Atlantic but it did not read that way in last year's minutes. He said for planning purposes, the \$1.4 million amount should be used, because that was what was in the President's budget. He said he does not think SEAMAP would get the \$1.75 million again, but the components can plan using both amounts. The Committee asked when the final proposals have to be in to NOAA Grants and C. Binkley said by June 30th. The components agreed to plan using both amounts and if a different amount is given as the final figure, the chairs and coordinators would meet via conference call to change the final amounts. E. Roche explained after the final amount was awarded, the components would then have to deduct all rescissions. She said if the same cuts were used as last year, the first tax cut, or rescission would be .465% that comes from Congress. There was another federal across the board rescission of .59% and another realignment requirement on all PPAs that was 3.461%. So the actual amounts to use would be \$1.353 million and \$1,671,655.

S. Nichols said that for last year NMFS was told they were getting \$1.62 but ended up with more. He said it was too late in the year to get it to the components but whatever the amount was at the end of the year, it would be in the Center's budget and could be spent on SEAMAP for next year.

Proposed Activities and Budget Needs for FY 2005

Caribbean - A. Rosario said the priority for the Caribbean in 2006 was to purchase a new vessel for the USVI. She said she realized that this program alone cannot purchase a new vessel but some of the funds can be used towards the purchase. If they receive the minimum amount they would continue sampling in St. Thomas and St. Croix. If the higher amount was received, they would increase sample size at each site, have concurring sampling with reef fish, conch and lobster, and try to squeeze the gap between samples of years for conch and lobster. They would also consider expanding the geographical size for the SEAMAP surveys. They would expand to the east coast in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. If the lesser amount is received, they would try to continue the same projects. The two levels are \$145,000 and \$237,500.

Gulf - J. Hanifen said if the higher amount was received, the Gulf would restore some work they had been doing and try to recoup some operating costs, etc. If the lower amount were received, they would have to make some adjustments to continue the same work. The two levels are \$612,400 and \$705,700

South Atlantic - D. Theiling said that in 2004 the South Atlantic was at \$468,000 and that included the extra \$10,000 from S. Nichols but that would not be available so it brings the South Atlantic to \$458,000. He said they would have no trouble continuing at status quo. The lower figure would be \$395,387 (not \$375,387, they have \$20,000 that is contracted to the SAFMC).

Joint Discussion of SEAMAP Budget for FY2005

J. Rester asked where the extra \$20,000 was coming from. After lengthy discussion, the extra \$20,000 was subcontracted by purchase order to the SAFMC from NMFS to do bottom mapping work. The amount on record should be \$375,387 as it was in the last minutes. J. Rester also stated that since 1997, the official record in the minutes showed NMFS as getting \$220,010 but this year it went to \$261,096. S. Nichols said his share is around \$230,000 and that includes the taxes but during the course of the year there were several adjustments, usually downward of SEAMAP money, so he actually gets approximately \$221,000. S. Nichols said that for planning purposes, NMFS would use \$230,000 and \$218,000.

S. Nichols said that if SEAMAP gets the higher rate, there should be approximately a one-time extra \$40,000. He said that for this year there should be an extra \$30,000 but E. Roche does not think that will be available. S. Nichols stated that the extra money would be from 2004 funds but it would have to go to the Center. There would not be enough time to distribute it to the components. It would stay in the Center funds. If it does become available, it would be Center money from 2005 funds going into SEAMAP (by supplemental grants) so the Committee needed to discuss what to do if the money becomes available. After more discussion, **J. Hanifen moved that the committee requests from NMFS that the overage of 2004 money, not to exceed \$40,000, be allocated to the Caribbean (Virgin Islands) towards purchase of a vessel for SEAMAP data collection. R. Pugliese seconded the motion and it passed.** The Committee asked if a formal letter needs to be sent requesting this and S. Nichols said the minutes would reflect the action.

The Committee then discussed the extra \$40,000 if the higher funding was received. **H. Ansley moved to divide the amount equally amongst the three components. R. Pugliese seconded the motion.** It was then suggested that NMFS keep the money and use it for data management but M. McDuff stated that not much could be done with this amount of money but it could be used to purchase equipment for the states such as a SCS system. **H. Ansley withdrew his motion.**

J. Hanifen moved that if the extra money becomes available, the chairmen should meet via conference call to decide how to divide it and how it should be used. R. Waller seconded the motion and it passed. After discussion, the motion was modified to include that data management be considered the highest priority for the extra funding, and then helping the Caribbean purchase a vessel.

Updating the SEAMAP Management Plan

E. Griffen said she would be responsible for doing the 2006-2010 Management Plan. She would be sending draft copies by email and asked everyone to please send her comments as soon as possible. She was hoping to have a draft by the next meeting in August for approval in 2006. D. Theiling asked E. Griffen to email all comments she receives to the coordinators so they can distribute them to their Committee members.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting re-convened at 9:04 a.m. on Thursday, August 5, 2004

Discussion of Coordinated Fishery Independent Activities

D. Donaldson gave a brief history on the Coordinated Fishery Independent Activities and distributed draft sampling protocols and comments on the protocols. He then opened the floor for comments, changes, deletions and additions, and asked that any other changes be sent to him before August 20th for incorporation into the document. Quite a few changes were given and the general consensus seemed to be the draft was too specific and should be more general. He said he hopes to present the final document to the policy boards in October, but it would probably be March before it can be presented. D. Donaldson stated he would incorporate all changes and distribute the revised document to the committee members.

Grant Reporting Requirements/Timing

C. Binkley reported that nothing would be required for the 2005 grants base funds. If supplemental funds were received, an amendment would be required. If SEAMAP does receive supplemental funds, she would send an email call for proposals. The proposals sent in should represent only the additional funds. She also reported that in 2006, NOAA Grants would be implementing a 5-year multiyear grant that would be from 2006 through 2010. The multi-year grant would be more flexible because planning for additional funding in the out years would be allowed. The additional funds can be put in but if they were not received, new proposals would not have to be submitted.

She said NOAA Grants would be converting to an electronic grants processing on October 1st. Every organization needs to register with www.grants.gov. She said this is not a simple process that it will take about 2 weeks to go through the steps to get authorized to submit proposals. She said even though your organization may be registered, anyone submitting proposals needed to register. She said this was not their system so she would not be able to access it and provide guidance during the registration process. Several states have successfully completed registration and have submitted dummy proposals.

Planning for 2005 Joint Annual Meeting

The Committee thanked Edgardo and Aida for the meeting. The Gulf will host the next meeting. The Committee agreed to have the meeting during the first week of August. J. Rester will check prices and send information to the other coordinators. Suggested locations were New Orleans, Tampa, Galveston, and Biloxi,

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

APPROVED BY: 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

SEAMAP Subcommittee Meeting
MINUTES
Rincón, Puerto Rico
August 4, 2004

Call to Order

Chairman Jim Hanifen called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Others:

Mark McDuff, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

Staff:

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

The agenda was adopted as submitted.

Approval of Minutes ((03/15/04))

M. McDuff asked to change "FISCUS" to "FSCS". S. Heath moved to approve the March 15, 2004 minutes with this change. P. Choucair seconded the motion and it passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the NMFS vessel completed the Spring Plankton Survey in May 2004. The Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey took place in June and July. Alabama was only able to sample three stations due to vessel problems. The real time surveys were distributed with no problems and for the first time, the complete summaries were distributed via email only. He said he has been discussing with M. McDuff possible ways to improve the surveys with new software capabilities. This will be discussed further under agenda item 10. He then referred to the handout distributed,

Defining Essential Fish Habitat: A Model-Based Approach. This is a short paper published using NMFS data to map distribution levels of fish. He said that in the future he would like to see SEAMAP do something similar to this using the trawl data. He said he has received Microsoft access training in the past months and has been trying to standardize the SEAMAP database on a 60-minute tow time and a 40-foot net. He said that in doing this, he found errors that need to be corrected. Once he gets the database standardized, the NCDDC should be able to develop an ArcIMS site for the Subcommittee to view in October

Status of the FY2005 Budget

J. Rester said they do not have a final budget but for planning purposes they should use level funding at \$1.75 for 2004 or the \$1.4 for 2003.

Activities and Budget Needs for FY2005

Below are the total breakdowns for 2004 and 2003:

	2004	2003
Florida	\$152,635	\$121,340
Alabama	\$83,995	\$68,000
Mississippi	\$124,120	\$118,349
Louisiana	\$154,327	\$135,200
Texas	\$73,347	\$58,804
GSMFC	\$117,313	\$95,564
NMFS	\$260,196	????

The Subcommittee decided to plan 2005 activities using both amounts.

J. Rester said if SEAMAP were funded at the \$1.4 million level there would be the rotating \$20,000 to consider. For 2004, Alabama used \$15,000 of that and GSMFC bought the computer for Texas with the other \$5,000. J. Hanifen asked for suggestions on how to spend the \$20,000 this coming year. J. Rester stated the natural rotation was Florida and Alabama, so in fairness, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas should discuss how to use the money. J. Rester said that if SEAMAP were funded at \$1.75 million for 2005, Florida would not need \$20,000, according to Kim Williams. She said that for the first time ever, the archiving center is completely caught up and everything is being shipped from Poland. A third person was hired with the extra money and that has made them more efficient. So if SEAMAP is level funded at \$1.75 million, there will be an extra \$20,000 available for the Gulf, but Florida may need it back in 2006. D. Donaldson stated that if they may need it back in the future, it would be easier for them to just keep the funds. J. Rester suggested having that as the new floating \$20,000, not to be confused with the old \$20,000. J. Hanifen stated that it would be presumptuous to take the \$20,000 from Florida with no representation for them at this meeting, but J. Rester said Kim Williams stated on Mark Leiby's behalf that they would go with \$20,000 less for 2005 if SEAMAP stays at \$1.75 million. If it were not level funded, they would need that extra \$20,000 because that would drop them back to the 2003 funding level without it. D. Donaldson suggested leaving Florida at the 2004 level if the \$20,000 is not floating. P. Choucair suggested

buying a hydro lab as a one-time purchase and he explained in detail what the hydro lab is and how it works. He said he has already volunteered to test the unit and it will cost around \$3,000 to purchase a unit. S. Heath suggested putting the \$20,000 in the GSMFC budget with a contingency to purchase equipment or to use for meetings. D. Donaldson said it would be easier to give an individual state the money because this will be the end of a three-year contract. It can go into GSMFC as a one-time equipment purchase but would have to be spent before the end of 2005. The Subcommittee agreed to give the \$20,000 to GSMFC for a one-time equipment purchase, but if Florida does need the money this coming year, it will be given to them. P. Choucair asked if the funds could be used for meetings and J. Rester said it may be possible to get permission to change categories, and if the money is not spent by 2005, they can apply for a 90-day extension. It was also suggested to use the money for data management and/or software purchases if it has not been used by the end of 2005.

J. Hanifen suggested the Subcommittee develop a "shopping list" not to exceed \$40,000 for next year. D. Donaldson said it should be \$20,000.00 for discussion because it has been agreed upon to leave the \$15,000 in Alabama. J. Rester agreed and said it would be the \$20,000 from Florida. J. Hanifen said he does not have a problem with that but since representatives from Mississippi and Florida are not present to agree, he would like to have some options and then have a conference call with all members to finalize before submitting the new funding application. R. Leard suggested deferring this to the conference call to come up with the final split.

D. Donaldson said to summarize, there are essentially two \$20,000 to discuss either later during this meeting or via conference call at a later date. One scenario is \$15,000 stays with Alabama and \$5,000 will go to GSMFC for equipment purchases for either the GSMFC or any of the partners. The other \$20,000 would be an equipment line item for the GSMFC for a one-time purchase. Suggestions so far have been the hydro lab, software or other data management needs, and asking permission to change to meetings.

J. Rester said another thing that needs to be discussed is NMFS has always agreed to level funding which should be \$220,510, but when trying to track down the tax money, nothing was adding up. NMFS was not receiving level funding but they were receiving \$260,196, almost a \$40,000 increase over level funding. J. Rester said that in discussions with S. Nichols, if SEAMAP is level funded, that additional \$40,000 (or as little as \$20,000) may be split between the components. J. Rester also stated that he is concerned because during budget discussions every year, NMFS stated they would stay level funded and pay the taxes, but they were actually receiving more money than discussed. He would like to know if NMFS actually spent the money or returned it.

D. Donaldson stated that the Subcommittee needs to decide if they can use the extra money from NMFS or if they want to give it to one of the partners. If it is between \$10,000 - \$40,000 and the Gulf has the additional \$20,000, something can definitely be done with the money. It is hard to plan because it may only be one-time money.

J. Rester read an email from S. Nichols concerning how the Subcommittee should plan for FY2005: "For FY04 funds, i.e., this year, the account now shows more than we were told we would get due to the mid-year reduction. Ellie believes that amount will remain there and she has me "almost" convinced. Unfortunately, we are passed the grant's office deadline so even if the amount does hold,

I'll have to retain it within NMFS. However, my intent would be to make the amount available if it holds up to the components FY05 using other funds from the center. I would like to propose postponing dealing with that money until such a time as we address the additional funding and mid-year adjustments. Right now the amount is uncertain, but thanks to some detective work by Ellie and Cynthia, it appears to be in the order of 10K." J. Rester said he is not sure why it went down from 40K to 10K and he does not understand how the accounting practices work. J. Hanifen stated that in summation, there is some money available, but he is not sure how much or when it will be available to the components.

D. Donaldson said the Gulf still needs to decide if there is something they can use the money for or if they want to give it to the other components. P. Choucair suggested using it for data management regardless of the amount. J. Hanifen stated he liked the suggestion to use it for data management but which component would it go to? D. Donaldson said he would be hesitant to give it to NMFS for data management. P. Choucair said he meant GSMFC data management such as new atlas format development, GIS mapping for the data, contracting to build new interfaces for all the states, etc. J. Rester suggested improving real time by standardizing the format. The Subcommittee agreed with all suggestions and agreed to have a conference call when they know the exact amount of money they need to discuss.

Questions Regarding SEAMAP Taxes

J. Rester said that at the March meeting the Subcommittee decided to send a letter to Bill Hogarth asking that SEAMAP be exempt from the taxes with justification being a lot more work can be done with that money. SEAMAP is a key component for stock assessments and other data that NMFS needs. B. Hogarth's reply was that he agreed SEAMAP was a very valuable program, but they are still going to be taxed. The taxes for 2004 were \$78,345. J. Rester said that is when they realized the amounts were not adding up. He said that with the amounts all the components agreed to were subtracted from \$1.75 million, it would be more than \$40,000 that was not accounted for. L. Simpson made quite a few telephone calls and sent emails trying to get answers. E. Roche said that for the 2004 funding of \$1.75 million there was a commerce, justice and state recession of .465%, which equaled \$8,100, then there was a federal across the board rescission of .59% and that equaled to \$10,277. The realignment requirements of all PPAs were reduced by 3.461%, which equaled roughly \$60,000. Deducting all of these amounts equal \$78,345 so the questions were finally answered but the Subcommittee needs to know if that amount should be expected to be deducted in 2005, and so far there has been no answer.

D. Donaldson said that some programs last year were able to skirt that rescission, but they do not expect that to happen this year. J. Rester said the .59% and the 3.461% were taken out after being told they received the new money. He said they would like to know where these "taxes" are going and the best answer he has had was from E. Roche who said it goes somewhere in the treasury. R. Leard said SEAMAP is a line item in the budget like the Councils and the Councils are not taxed, so why is SEAMAP? J. Rester said that is one of the arguments. D. Donaldson said historically, SEAMAP has not been taxed and FIN has not either, but all of a sudden FIN was taxed. J. Rester asked how much money is NMFS agreeing to and how much are they actually receiving. He said he has gone back since 1985 and looked at the funding totals of the three components and NMFS

numbers are not adding up, SEAMAP is losing money to something. J. Hanifen stated that in the past the Subcommittee knew the amount of taxes before planning their budgets, but this past year the taxes were taken out after the documents were completed. After more discussion, the Subcommittee decided to take this issue to the joint meeting and ask S. Nichols and E. Roche to explain the accounting practices more clearly so the component's can budget more efficiently.

Fishery Independent Database Issues

D. Donaldson said this issue will be discussed in detail at the joint meeting, but he wanted to make the Subcommittee aware that the subgroup has developed some protocols and minimum data elements, and he will go into depth on those items at the joint meeting. He said they are moving forward with taking the SEAMAP data and other fishery-independent data and developing a data management system and housing it at the commission to provide access to fishery independent data. He said this is a region wide initiative, but the South Atlantic and Caribbean have not really gotten involved. The Subcommittee agreed to keep pursuing this with or without the other component's cooperation.

SEAMAP Database Issues

J. Rester said he completed Microsoft Access training and has received the SEAMAP database in Access format. He has started to standardize the information, but has come across some problems in the database. He said he wanted to bring up some of these issues today. He said the Subcommittee should appoint a group to identify fully all the issues with the database and how to fix it. He said one of the issues with the database and why users have problems using the data is some of the things in the database are not SEAMAP. D. Donaldson said the reason for that is because it is a NMFS database and that is fine, but if SEAMAP data only is requested, that data should be the only thing that comes up. He said that goes back to data management issues, they do not see the difference between what they do and SEAMAP so they do not separate it and that has hurt the SEAMAP program. R. Leard suggested the problem may be too many people have access to not only entering data into the database, but to determine and having the authority to say what goes in there. The data manager may not even be aware of all that is in there. After discussion it was determined that J. Rester received the wrong information and M. McDuff will rerun the data and send him SEAMAP data only. J. Rester then asked which trawls do they want to standardize in the database for the ArcIMS site. P. Choucair suggested using the term normalized instead of standardize. J. Rester said that he has been documenting everything he has done with the database. J. Hanifen suggested using the 20 and 40 ft. trawls as the standard gear for use on the ArcIMS site and all agreed. M. McDuff suggested using only the standard surveys and all agreed. P. Choucair suggested having specific codes in the data identifying it as SEAMAP data, which survey it is, year, month, etc. He then explained how he has set up tables for Texas data. After more lengthy discussion, the Subcommittee asked M. McDuff to give a complete presentation on the abilities and querying the database at the October meeting. He requested to have high-speed Internet access for his presentation.

M. McDuff said they do not have full documentation sets on what the differences are in the data with each state. He said each state needs to document anything that is done differently from the standard SEAMAP protocols.

J. Rester asked what the status is of the full taxonomic name in the database that the biocode group was working on. M. McDuff said they have basically developed the ORACLE structures to fit the new database, but they are not going to try to go back and put them in the old one. He said they have submitted everything in the database to ITIS and most everything was in there and those that were not were added.

J. Rester asked in reference to the list of errors he found in the database with count and subcount and weights and subweights, etc., what type of error checks run after the data is entered into the database? M. McDuff said that is a problem in that nothing is run after the data is entered. The original design was that error checking was done at the PC level. It was supposed to be fully processed and cleaned and then uploaded into the database, but most people did not do that. He said that in the new version they will have every check they can at the database level. They want it to be as close to the data collection as possible. They want the error checking in the field in real time, but they also want the same error checks to be built into the database. P. Choucair suggested building into the system a way to generate a report summarizing the data when submitted by each state. This will help verify that all the information is in the system. The Subcommittee will ask the data group to discuss this issue and have recommendations in October.

M. McDuff also suggested having documentation of the protocols each state uses stating the differences between the data. He said that right now they only have documentation on the different gear types used to collect the data not how the data differs from one dataset to the next. J. Hanifen asked M. McDuff to send a questionnaire to each state with specific questions on how they collect the data. He can then compare to see the differences. This will probably have to be done yearly. M. McDuff also said that NOAA data quality is requiring documentation be given with all data explaining the survey design. He also asked that each state send him the cruise reports so they can be put in PDF format. J. Hanifen said this is another thing the data group can discuss and have recommendations for October.

2004 Real Time Data

J. Rester said the real time data was distributed this summer to over 200 people by mail and 70 by email. He said he will develop some new ideas to show at the October meeting on making the real time data a better product to serve the public. J. Hanifen asked him to email his ideas as he is developing them so they will have previews beforehand.

Other Business

M. McDuff asked if Alabama and Louisiana are still interested in using the FSCS. They said yes but it would have to be done by laptop instead of wiring the vessels. M. McDuff said he will work on this and set up training for both states.

M. McDuff said they also want to retire the old clipper data entry system and go with the Microsoft Access entry system that feeds right into the FSCS and SCS. He will also set up training for this at Stennis if possible.

P. Choucair suggested requesting more time for the October meeting. J. Rester said he would make the necessary arrangements.

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

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Tuesday, August 24, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana

Facilitator Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. The following members and staff were present:

Members

Ginny Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Vernon Minton, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Joe Jewell (proxy for C. Perret), MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
Buck Sutter (proxy for R. Crabtree), NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Alex Chester, NMFS, Miami, FL
John Forester (proxy for C. Brown), USFWS, Baton Rouge, LA
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

Ron Lukens, Assistant Director
David Donaldson, Data Program Manager

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as written.

Discussion and Final Approval of FIN Funding Activities for 2005

L. Simpson provided a brief overview regarding the status of 2005 funding for data collection and management activities. He stated that unfortunately, both the House and the Senate have not taken any action on the budget so far this year. There is a very general NMFS budget from the House that shows a slight increase from last year but does not provide any detail for the specific line items. He believes that FIN will get an increase in funding but because there are no marks available, the group should use level funding as a planning number for 2005. From last year, the amount included in the GulfFIN line item (less the tax) is \$3,325,000 and the Gulf's portion of the Recreational Fisheries Harvesting (RecFIN) line item is \$855,000, for a total of \$4,180,000. The group agreed that this number should be the amount utilized for the development of the 2005 FIN cooperative agreement. Hopefully, once the budget is passed, FIN will realize an increase and the group will convene to discuss the distribution of these additional funds.

D. Donaldson provided an overview of the documents that were provided to the group. He then discussed the summary of the activities for potential funding in 2005 that was developed by the FIN Committee. 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. Job 3.1 refers to head boat port sampling in Texas 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 and Florida. In addition, it includes the continuation of the Alabama pilot survey to test the at-sea sampling methods for collecting catch and bycatch data from the head boat fishery. Job 3.2 refers to the collection of catch and effort data for head boats operating in the Gulf of Mexico. The effort data will be collected via the Telephone For-Hire Survey where the states will conduct weekly telephone calls to a 25% random sample of the Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida head boat captains to obtain estimates of head boat fishing effort. The catch and bycatch data will mainly be collected via at-sea sampling, where the states will conduct an at-sea sampling survey of approximately 10% of the trips made by for-hire vessels, using the protocols established by FIN and tested in Alabama. In addition, some catch data will be collected via dockside sampling, using MRFSS protocols. Job 4 consists of Gulf menhaden port sampling and will provide for sampling of gulf menhaden catches from menhaden purse-seine vessels that operate in Louisiana. Job 5 refers to the development and implementation of the 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. Job 6 consists of the development and operation of the trip ticket program in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas. This task will provide for continued development and implementation of components for a commercial trip ticket system to census the commercial fisheries landings in Mississippi and for limited number of dealers in Texas, using the data elements and standards developed by the ComFIN. It also provided funding for Louisiana and Alabama to operate their trip ticket programs. In addition, it provides funding to contract for implementation and operation of electronic trip ticket reporting. 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. And Job 8 refers to the collection of detailed effort (multiply gears/areas fished) from the commercial blue crab fishery in Louisiana. This activity will be used to test the methodology (developed by FIN) for collecting detailed effort from commercial fisheries. Detailed effort is not collected via the trip ticket programs so alternate methods need to be developed to compile this information. As additional funds become available, this activity will be expanded to cover other fisheries and other states. **D. Donaldson** pointed out the there is actually two additional items on the list that are not included in the statement of work. The first was biological sampling for additional species and since the cost of the existing jobs already exceeded the available funds for 2005, it was decided not to include this item in the agreement. He did point out that if the group decides to add additional species, there is a spreadsheet that can calculate the costs for each species. The other item was the development of a sampling frame using

recreational fishing licenses and this task will not require any additional funding so it will not be included in the cooperative agreement (but will be included in the 2005 Operations Plan).

Based on increases to existing jobs and new jobs for 2005, the total amount needed is approximately \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 over the projected funding level. Therefore, the group needs to reduce the tasks to meet the projected funding level. **J. Roussel** stated that trip tickets are the backbone of the commercial data collection and the group needs to find a way to fund the Texas trip ticket task. It was suggested that funding be provided for Job 1 (coordination and administration of FIN), Job 2 (collection, management and dissemination of marine recreational fisheries data), Job 4 (Gulf menhaden port sampling), Job 5 (development and implementation of the FIN DMS) and Job 6 (development and operation of the trip ticket programs including Texas) at the 2005 proposed levels.

It was noted that this would cut out all head boat sampling in the Gulf of Mexico. It was pointed out that during the SEDAR assessments for king mackerel and red snapper, the head boat data was not utilized in these assessments. **A. Chester** stated that although the landings data may not have been used, the biological data collected via the head boat program did provide valuable data to the assessments and would like to see head boat sampling added back into the mix. **V. Minton** stated that biological sampling is very important in stock assessments and that the data collected under the FIN were vital in the recent king mackerel and red snapper SEDAR processes and suggested that biological sampling be added back into the pot. He suggested another alternative where funding be provided for Job 1 (coordination and administration of FIN), Job 2 (collection, management and dissemination of marine recreational fisheries data), Job 3 (head boat port sampling), Job 4 (Gulf menhaden port sampling), Job 5 (development and implementation of the FIN DMS), Job 6 (development and operation of the trip ticket programs) and Job 7 (collection of biological data). The two other alternatives consisted of the same jobs listed above, however, at 2004 existing funding levels. So, the four alternatives that were on the table for consideration were (number in parentheses is total cost of option):

- Option A: Jobs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 (including TX trip tickets) and 7 at 2004 proposed levels (\$4,334,938)
- Option B: Jobs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (including TX trip tickets) at 2005 proposed levels (\$3,920,136)
- Option C: Jobs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (including TX trip tickets) 7 at 2005 proposed levels (\$4,511,121)
- Option D: Jobs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (including TX trip tickets) at 2004 existing levels (\$3,787,197)

The group then discussed these various options. It was pointed out that options A and C exceed the available funding level for 2005. **V. Minton** asked about the cost of conducting the recreational data collection activities on the east coast of Florida. It was noted that this approach was taken at the request of Florida so the state would not be divided into two parts. Florida views their state as one area and collection and management activities should be conducted on both the west and east coasts to obtain the entire picture. It was also pointed out that the total cost to begin sampling on the east coast was not a large amount of money since Florida had already geared up for sampling on the west coast. **J. Roussel** noted that as trip tickets programs were implemented, there would be some savings realized by the Cooperative Statistics Program (CSP) and these monies could be redirected to collect needed information. It was understood that this redirection of monies would take some time but since several of the Gulf States now have operating trip ticket programs, he was wondering what

changes have occurred in the CSP. **D. Donaldson** stated that many of the port agents are no longer collecting catch data (since it is capture via the trip tickets) and they are focusing more of collecting biological data and detailed effort data. **J. Roussel** stated that these changes need to be documented and discussed by FIN. **D. Donaldson** stated that this issue will be put on the Data Management Subcommittee agenda and be discussed at the October meeting.

After some discussion, **V. Minton** made a motion that the 2005 FIN cooperative agreement includes Jobs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (including TX trip tickets) at 2004 existing levels. The balance of the funds will be used to fund biological sampling (Job 7) for gulf flounder greater amberjack, king mackerel and red snapper as well as continuation of the at-sea head boat pilot survey in Alabama through April 2005. The motion was seconded. Then, **J. Roussel** made a substitute motion that the 2005 FIN cooperative agreement include Jobs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (including TX trip tickets) at 2005 proposed levels. The balance of the funds will be used to fund biological sampling (Job 7) for gulf and southern flounder (at 2005 levels) as well as continuation of the at-sea head boat pilot survey in Alabama through April 2005. In addition, the group requested that NMFS pick up sampling for greater amberjack, king mackerel and red snapper. The motion was seconded. After some discussion, the substitution motion (funding Jobs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (including TX trip tickets), 7 (for gulf and southern flounder only) at 2005 proposed levels as well as continuation of the at-sea head boat pilot survey in Alabama through April 2005) was passed. It was pointed out that utilizing this option, there was approximately \$45,000 still available to funds additional activities. After some discussion, the group decided that monies would be used to fund the at-sea head boat pilot survey in Alabama through December 2005 and biological sampling for greater amberjack (at 100%) and king mackerel (at approximately 90%). The final allocation of funds for the 2005 FIN cooperative agreement is attached (Attachment B).

Review and Approval of Caribbean Data Confidentiality MOA

D. Donaldson distributed a draft data confidentiality MOA between Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, GSMFC, and NMFS. He stated that the purpose of the MOA is to allow the Caribbean to utilize the FIN data management system by providing access to data (from the Caribbean region). Although the Committee has addressed this issue in the past, action was curtailed because of the confidentiality issues raised by NOAA General Counsel. He asked the group to allow him to request that NOAA General Counsel review the draft MOA. Once NOAA reviews and signs the MOA, it would be presented to the GSMFC, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands for their signature. After some discussion, the Committee directed staff to move forward with the MOA by requesting the NOAA General Counsel review and approve the MOA.

Discussion of NMFS Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation

L. Simpson stated that this issue concerns a NMFS initiative for the compilation of gear interactions with sea turtles for the United States. The GSMFC had been asked to coordinate this activity in the Gulf, however, it was decided that the Commission should not get involved in the project. Therefore, NMFS began entering into individual contract with each state to conduct this work. Some of the states have already entered into contracts while others have not at this time. The group discussed that it might be beneficial to have the GSMFC involved in this project after all.

After some discussion, the Committee directed staff to proceed with this task and explore several options. The first option would be that each agency (including the GSMFC) enters into an individual contract with NMFS and the GSMFC would still provide coordination of the all the activities. And the other option would be that GSMFC would enter into one contract with NMFS and under that contract, GSMFC would subcontract with each state to conduct the work as well as provide coordination of the activities. R. Lukens stated that he would talk with the appropriate people in NMFS to explore these options and keep the group apprised of the outcome.

Recommendations for South Atlantic Representation on the Billfish Project Review Panel

L. Simpson stated that NMFS has provided the GSMFC with funding to hold an open competition to fund an Atlantic Billfish Research Program. Total funding is anticipated to be \$1.8 million over two years. In order to review the proposed project, the GSMFC needs to create a review panel as an oversight board. It was suggested that the Technical Coordinating Committee, State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) or Executive Committee of the GSMFC could serve as this board. After some discussion, **the group recommended that the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee serve as the Billfish Project Review Panel.** As part of the board, it was suggested that the South Atlantic has some representation on this panel. Since the S/FFMC does not have a South Atlantic representative, the group needed to determine how many and who should be on the panel from the South Atlantic. After some discussion, **the Committee agreed to ask the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) South Atlantic Board to provide recommendations to this panel for one representative from the South Atlantic.** Staff will contact the ASMFC and request that the South Atlantic Board provide a recommendation for one representative to serve on the Billfish Project Review Panel.

Other Business

J. Forester stated that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has an extensive national wildlife refuge system and there are a variety of recreational fishing activities that occur in these areas. He mentioned that these refuges are available as access points for the collection recreational landings data. R. Lukens noted that some of these sites have already been added to the site registers of the stated and sampling is occurring at these locations.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN 2005

High Priority

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)
Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (ongoing)
Charter Boat Survey Offshore Texas (ongoing)
Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)
Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)
Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Texas (new)
Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling (ongoing)
Continuation of Alabama Head Boat Pilot Survey through April 2005 (ongoing)
Implementation of For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and Field Sampling (catch) for Head Boats (new)
Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana (new)
Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)
Develop Frame for Sampling using Recreational Fishing Licenses (new)

Medium Priority

Pilot Study for Recreational Fishing Effort using Fishing Licenses as Sampling Frame (new)
Pilot Study for Bycatch Data Collection (head boat and commercial fisheries) (new)

Low Priority

Pilot Survey for Collection of Data on Recreational Shrimping and Crabbing Activities

Attachment B

ACTIVITY	2005	
HIGH PRIORITY		COST
Admin and coordination of FIN (Job1)		\$395,107
Recreational data collection (Job 2)		
Texas	\$84,289	
Louisiana	\$383,280	
Mississippi	\$203,992	
Alabama	\$142,141	
Florida	\$1,348,642	
GSMFC	\$201,176	
Rec survey subtotal		\$2,363,520
Head boat sampling (Job 3.1)		
Alabama	\$25,331	
Head boat subtotal		\$25,331
Menhaden sampling (Job 4)		\$38,115
FIN DMS (Job 5)		\$213,134
Trip ticket programs (Job 6)		
Texas	\$220,073	
Louisiana	\$417,625	
Mississippi	\$72,173	
Alabama	\$118,419	
Contractual - SCBI	\$81,970	
Trip ticket subtotal		\$910,260
Biological sampling collection (Job 7)		
Contractual - TX samplers	\$33,715	
Texas	\$7,359	
Louisiana	\$64,168	
Mississippi	\$25,435	
Alabama	\$37,799	
Florida	\$66,057	
Biol sampling subtotal		\$234,533
GRAND TOTAL		\$4,180,000

**Caribbean Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
September 28 and 29, 2004
Galveston, Texas**

David Donaldson of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the meeting to order on September 28, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

David Camoyan, USVI DPNR, St. Croix, USVI
Milagros Cartagena, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Shenell Gordon, USVI DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Walter Irizarry, PRDNER, Lajas, PR
Jesus Leon, PRDNER, Fajardo, PR
Hector Lopez Pelet, PRDNER, Barceoneta, PR
Daniel Matos Coraballo, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Jennifer Messineo, USVI DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Jim Nance, NMFS, Galveston, TX
Frank Patella, NMFS, Galveston, TX
Noemi Pena Alvarado, PRDNER, San German, PR
Luis Rivera, PRDNER, Boqueron, PR
Keith Roberts, NMFS, Galveston, TX
William Tobias, USVI DPNR, Frederiksted, USVI
Jason Vasques, USVI DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Willy Ventura, USVI DPNR, St. Croix, USVI

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 of Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) stated that the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) is a cooperative state-federal program to collect and disseminate information on recreational and commercial fisheries. The ComFIN is the commercial side and the RecFIN is the recreational side. Donaldson reported on recent FIN

activities, including the collection of recreational data, implementation of trip tickets in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, biological sampling, and operation of the FIN data management system. The trip ticket program is operating in Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida. Beginning in 2005 trip tickets will be implemented in Texas on a limited basis with approximately 60 dealers reporting monthly. Mississippi has trip tickets on a fishery-by-fishery basis. Approximately 250 dealers are currently using electronic trip ticket reporting on the Gulf coast. Puerto Rico has implemented trip level reporting.

Donaldson reported that the data management system has been online since July of 2002 and includes trip ticket data from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi (oysters), and Louisiana, as well as historical data from NMFS, recreational data, menhaden data, biological data, and SEAMAP data. Donaldson reported that FIN is trying to get access and begin loading data from the Caribbean into the system within the year.

Donaldson reported that there were some new activities to report including headboat sampling for catch and bycatch, effort data, testing at-sea sampling methodology in Alabama on headboats, and collecting detailed effort.

Overview of Gulf Shrimp Program

J. Nance of NMFS Galveston introduced Frank Patella who gave a presentation on the Gulf Shrimp Program. Patella reported that NMFS started the collection of Gulf shrimp data in 1956 in the major ports only. Biological analysis was done and more detailed data was collected as more people began using this information. The states got involved when they began checking on economic impact. The grids were developed for the United States and now go out 200 miles. Some of the depths had to be increased due to the royal red fishery. Patella noted that over the years there have been many changes, including gear, engines, new management strategies, etc. Economic factors have caused a lot of stress in the shrimp fishery with higher costs for insurance and fuel, as well as imports. All these factors have made it necessary to collect more information.

J. Nance gave an overview of the analysis of the Gulf Shrimp Program and explained how the data are used. Nance noted that shrimp effort can be defined by number of hours,

number of vessels, number of licenses, and number of trips and CPUE is derived from sampler interviews. Nance explained how the port samplers record the catches when interviewing the captains and noted that some vessels have electronic logbooks. Port samplers are located all along the Gulf coast with 450 to 500 dealers being contacted each month. Nance also noted that observers are needed in headboats and charterboats. Nance mentioned several sources of bias, including unreported catch, mis-assigned locations, sampling bias, days per trip, etc. Nance noted that the stocks of shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico are very healthy, however the problem is with effort and the bycatch associated with the shrimp fishery. The group had a lengthy discussion on the problem of bycatch. Nance discussed technological advances and described an electronic logbook program that has been developed over the last five years. This device will be used to measure position only and will not be used for law enforcement.

Overview of NMFS Caribbean SEDAR Process

G. Davenport of NMFS gave a presentation on the SouthEast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process. Davenport explained that the reason SEDAR came about was because in the past one assessment biologist was responsible for a fishery, which put a lot of pressure on that individual. The SEDAR process utilizes a committee of assessment biologists for specific fisheries. SEDAR is a Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council process and includes coordination with NMFS and the Interstate Fishery Commissions. Davenport explained that SEDAR is comprised of three workshops: a data workshop, a stock assessment workshop, and a stock assessment review workshop. Davenport reviewed assessments for various species, both commercial and recreational, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and also noted the SEDAR history and future priorities for the Caribbean. In closing, Davenport announced the dates and locations for workshops in the Caribbean for 2004 and 2005 and listed key NMFS personnel involved in the SEDAR process.

Portrait of the Fishery of the Red Hind in Puerto Rico during 1988-2001

D. Matos of PRDNER reported that the red hind has become the most important species of grouper taken commercially in Puerto Rico. Since this species are known to aggregate for

spawning they are very vulnerable to overfishing. Matos reported that since 1995, three spawning sites of red hind have been closed to fishing activities from December 1 to February 28 each year. Matos then reported on landings of red hind from 1988 to 2001 by fish trap, bottom line and SCUBA with bottom line the most efficient gear, followed by fish traps then SCUBA. Matos then compared the length frequency before and after the 1995 closures and noted that the red hind caught from 1995 to 2001 were larger. This data shows that the regulation establishing a closed season for red hind has helped to improve this fishery.

Portrait of the Fishery of the Mutton Snapper in Puerto Rico during 1988 - 2001

D. Matos reported that the mutton snapper has an average length of 500mm. In Puerto Rico commercial fisherman reported mutton snapper aggregation during the full moon of April, May and June. The main methods to catch mutton snapper are bottom line, fish traps, beach seine, and SCUBA. As with the red hind, data collected from 1988 to 2001 was used to describe the mutton snapper fishery. Matos reported that two types of data were used: landings collected by port samplers from fish houses and commercial fishermen, and biostatistics. These data were entered in computers using the NMFS Trip Interview Program (TIP). Matos reported that 90% of the mutton snapper caught by beach seine have not reach sexual maturity and because of that the PRDNER will prohibit the use of this gear beginning in 2007. The DNER also created a closed season from April 1 to May 31 since this is when the first two spawning aggregations occur. The spawning, which takes place during June, will continue to be open for fishing.

Field Sampling with Gulf Shrimp Port Samplers

The port samplers spent the afternoon visiting shrimp operations in the Galveston area to observe different sampling techniques.

The meeting was recessed at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting resumed on September 29, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

Portrait of the Fishery of the Spiny Lobster in Puerto Rico during 1988 – 2001

N. Pena of the PRDNER gave a presentation on the spiny lobster fishery in Puerto Rico and noted that the spiny lobster is a very valuable marine crustacean in the Caribbean. In the early 1950's spiny lobster were used as bait in fish traps but since 1970 it has become the most important shellfish by weight and price per pound in Puerto Rico. Since 1980 the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the PRDNER have regulations in effect to protect the spiny lobster. They must be 3.5-inch minimum length, no egg-bearing females, no gaffs, and they must be landed whole. Two types of dependent data were used: landings collected by port samplers, fish houses, and fishermen, and biostatistics. Pena reported that data was entered in computers and the NMFS TIP program was used. Gear used were fish and lobster traps and SCUBA. Beginning in 1995 law enforcement became more involved in enforcing regulations and since that time the size of the spiny lobsters being caught are significantly larger.

Presentation of Licensed Commercial Fishers in the U.S. Virgin Islands from 1973 to 2003

J. Vasques of the USVIDPNR reported that the number of licensed commercial fishermen has changed over the years. A moratorium went into effect in 2001 and only fishermen who held a license in the prior three years were eligible for a commercial license. The sources of information used were from landings summaries, catch report data files, and registration slips. Vasques distributed examples of catch report forms to port samplers and also explained that figures for St. Thomas and St. John are combined, and figures for St. Croix are separate. The data covering the period from 1984 to 2003 shows that the number of licensed commercial fishermen on St. Thomas/St. John have decreased almost 50%, while on St. Croix the numbers have remained stable over this same period of time. Vasques noted that another possible reason for the decline in fishermen on St. Thomas/St. John is that in good economic times, some fishermen work in the tourist industry.

Presentation of U.S. Virgin Islands Fish Prices from 1973 to 2003

J. Vasques gave a presentation on fish prices in the U.S. Virgin Islands over the past 30 years. Fish prices are necessary when estimating the total value of commercial landings for a

particular time period. The sources of information used for this project were commercial fisheries landings summary reports, commercial catch report data files, internal files, and fish prices from a small survey of fishermen. Vasques presented graphs demonstrating prices per pound for various species using different types of gear in St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix. In general, overall ex-vessel prices were similar in St. Thomas/St. John compared with those in St. Croix.

Puerto Rico's Commercial Landings Reported in 2003

D. Matos of PRDNER gave a presentation on Puerto Rico's commercial landings for the last three years. The data is collected from commercial fishermen and fish houses on as many as 42 species. Matos then listed the top 12 most important species landed and also gave a breakdown of the landings by coast and by gear. Matos reviewed the biostatistical data giving the number of interviews per year and the number of fish measured. Between 2001 and 2003 over 62,000 fish were measured and almost 4,000 spiny lobster.

Round Table Discussions

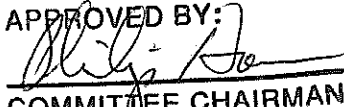
W. Tobias of the USVI DPNR distributed copies of the USVI Commercial and Recreational Fisher's Information Booklet to meeting participants. Tobias noted that this booklet is given to commercial fishermen as they register each year, as well as a booklet of twelve commercial catch report forms (one for each month). Fishermen must sign a form at the time of registration stating that they have been given the above forms and information. Tobias also distributed copies of a Netfishing Overview Paper, and explained that in 2002 the Fishery Advisory Committee recommended that gill and trammel nets be banned on St. Croix. The Fishery Advisory Committees on each island have been tasked with making recommendations on how to distribute a buy-back grant from National Marine Fishery Service for gill and trammel nets. Tobias reported that the Advisory Committee indicated a target date of January 1, 2005 for the net ban regulation and buy-back program.

Other Business

The Caribbean port samplers agreed to meet in 2005 during the first week of October in St. Thomas, USVI. D. Donaldson requested that attendees send him agenda items and subjects of interest for next year's meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, port samplers visited the NMFS Galveston Lab Sea Turtle facility.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES – 55th Annual Meeting
Monday, October 11, 2004
New Orleans, Louisiana
Biloxi, Mississippi

G. Cane called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Grey Cane III, CCA, Daphne, AL
Bob Fairbanks, MS Power, Gulfport, MS
Randy Gros, Marrero, LA
Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Coden, AL
Daniel Babin, Houma, LA

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IIF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Gary Graham, TX Sea Grant, West Columbia, TX
Judy Jamison, Gulf and South Atlantic, Tampa, FL
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Empire, LA
Wendell Lorio, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Judy Lytle, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Lytle, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Dave Medici, Gulf and South Atlantic, Tampa, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, VA
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Introductions

G. Cane welcomed everyone and reported that a quorum for the recreational sector had been met but that the commercial panel had not. The combined panel had also reached a quorum and could conduct business and accept motions. It was pointed out that with the resignation of **Degraaf Adams** from the recreational panel, both Texas seats were vacant. **S. VanderKooy** assured the group that Mike Ray, TPWD, would be appointing a recreational representative shortly and they were still attempting to locate a commercial representative.

Adoption of Agenda

S. VanderKooy pointed out that **J. Rester** was asked to give an update on the Liquefied Natural Gas plants proposed in the Gulf but that he was in another meeting and would like to make his presentation as his time permitted. All agreed to keep the agenda as it was and that an adjustment would be made whenever Jeff was available. **R. Gros** moved to adopt the agenda as written, **B. Fairbanks** seconded and the agenda was adopted.

Approval of Minutes (March 16, 2004)

R. Gros moved to accept the minutes as written. D. Babin seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Side Scan Sonar and Applications

Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, demonstrated the use and uses of the side scan sonar. **Kerwin** gave several examples of how they are utilizing the technology in Mississippi waters and presented data and images from several projects the Department is involved with. The imaging software can clearly identify debris, derelict traps, and assess both artificial reefs and sunken vessels; they have even helped the Coast Guard with the recovery of drowning victims. It has been used to successfully assess damages for grounding events when reefs or grass bottoms have been impacted. The advantages of the system are far reaching and the Department plans to continue to find ways to utilize the technology and the expertise they have acquired.

Under-Utilized Food Fish Species

Dr. Judy Lytle of the Gulf Coast Research Lab made a presentation on the value of warm-water marine fish to human health. Historically, the most beneficial fish for Omega-3 fatty acids were thought to be associated only with cold-water fish such as salmon. Studies, which looked at the effects of fish based diet in humans, were based almost entirely on northern human populations such as the Greenland Eskimos. However, the Lytle's research has found that although marine fishes in the Gulf of Mexico have lower amounts of Omega-3s, they have less total fat making them much leaner and probably healthier to humans overall. The current ratio of land-based fats to marine-based fats is greatly skewed towards land-based fats (beef, pork, and chicken) these are mostly Omega-6 fatty acids and have been recently been shown in medical studies to lead to increased risk of many immuno-deficiency diseases such as cancer, asthma, heart disease, and even diabetes. The medical community is strongly encouraging patients to begin to consume more fish, however, only marine fish accumulate Omega-3s, freshwater fish such as catfish do not have the Omega-3 benefits.

Dr. Tom Lytle continued the presentation by discussing numerous species that have been consumed in foreign cultures. If the American public were to find these species acceptable and palatable, it could open several potential fisheries that would possibly reduce the pressure on the current fish populations. The Lytles pointed out that students at GCRL have frequently identified fish species considered 'trash' species by most

consumers but which were readily consumed elsewhere in the country and world. These students have been informally testing the acceptance of various species among the other students with surprising results. It is hoped that at the spring meeting of the CRFAP, the Lytles could present a small taste test with a few of these species and recipes.

Invasive Species Update

R. Lukens presented information on invasive species and the current status of the activities of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel (Gulf Panel) on Aquatic Invasive Species. The Gulf Panel is one of several organized as an advisory committee to the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, which is a Congressionally established task force made up of federal agencies that have authority over some aspect of non-native species. **Lukens** indicated that invasive species continue to be reported with increasing frequency. He partially attributed that increase to an increased awareness in the need to report sightings or collections of unusual animals or plants. **Lukens** indicated that all five Gulf States are in some phase of developing a state plan, ranging from Alabama where the process is in its infancy to Louisiana who recently completed their plan. The Gulf Panel continues to provide support to each of the states regarding plan development.

Lukens indicated that the Gulf Panel has just completed in first draft form a five-year strategic plan, which outlines a variety of activities that will be addressed by the panel over the next five years. In addition, a regional rapid response plan is in the final draft stages. That plan will provide the basis for inter- and intrastate cooperation to rapidly assess reports of non-native species. Finally, **Lukens** reported that the Gulf Panel would be meeting during November 8, 9, and 10 when the strategic plan will be finalized. Also the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force will be meeting in the Washington, DC area the following week.

Lukens also offered a brief overview of the contents of the second edition of the Artificial Reef Materials Guidelines document that was a joint effort with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. In addition to the document, **Lukens** also updated the group on the availability of decommissioned military ships from both MARAD and the Navy. EPA guidelines offer ways to deal with PCB and anti-fouling paint on ship bottoms and it is believed that more vessels will become available to the states for reef building.

LNG Development in the Gulf

J. Rester updated the group on the status of the Liquefied Natural Gas plants in the Gulf. Several applications have been submitted for development. Four terminals currently exist in the US but with the amendment of the 1974 Deep Water Port Act have resulted in a fast track for development of these facilities. Two types of processing exist to warm LNG back into a gas form. The super cooled liquid must be warmed after transport using ambient water resulting in outfall temperatures of -13 to -30 degrees F below normal. The Closed System Plant recycles the cooled outfall water back up to ambient temperatures using heat from the burning of natural gas. The system does not require the release of the cooled water back into the environment. In Japan, one of the largest closed

system LNG plants adjoins a large refrigeration facility which almost exclusively utilizes the cold water outfall for maintaining cold storage and blast freezers and in return warms the water being returned to the LNG plant for reuse. The other type of LNG warming system, an Open System Plant, continuously pumps new water into the plant and releases the chilled water back into the environment. It is estimated that 100 million gallons of water will be taken from the estuary each year by this system that would result in billions of fish eggs and larvae of recreational and commercial species becoming impinged annually. In addition, the super-cooled outfall water would significantly impact the temperatures in the estuary and create a thermal shock situation. The GMFMC is supporting the closed loop system. NOAA and NMFS want better estimates of fish mortality and better EISs.

The CFRAP would like the minutes to reflect that there is great concern on both sides regarding the impacts these facilities would have on our resident fish populations and they would like to be kept informed as these proposed facilities progress. They would also like the Commission to consider the consequences of these facilities on our existing fisheries. The Panel would like to have J Rester continue to update them and they would like to have the opportunity to offer comments on this issue if deemed necessary in the near future.

Com FIN and Federal Log Books

D. Donaldson discussed the issue raised at a prior meeting regarding concern over double counting from Federal Log Books and State Trip Tickets. The question had been brought up by members of the Panel that there was no way to determine if multiple agencies using the same data in different forms was causing overestimates in the actual landings by accumulating these numbers incorrectly. **P. Barber** would like to see a flowchart to 'trace' the landings through both systems and if and how the numbers are reconciled. Donaldson agreed to make the attempt for the next meeting.

IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy updated the Panel on the activities in IJF program. Two FMPs are in the final stages of development and the otolith manual is ready to be revised by the work group and will be including a representative from the ASMFC to begin incorporating the Atlantic techniques and species.

Election of Chairs

Grey Cane was re-elected as Chair of the Recreational Panel and Philip Horn remains Chair of the Commercial Panel.

Other Business

The next meeting of the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel would be in March 2005 in Pointe Clear, Alabama. Topics to be discussed at the next meeting will include the Log Book/Trip Ticket system and update/overview of the current status of

Marine Protected Areas in the Gulf region. In addition, VanderKooy will work on getting a presentation on the 'truth-in-labeling' of commercial fish products issue.

It was suggested by the members of the Commercial Panel that if Texas was still having trouble finding representation for their Panel, TPWD might consider contacting Pat Garcia in Palacios.

With no further business, the Panel adjourned at 5:07 pm.

APPROVED BY:
KPC
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 55th Annual Meeting
Monday, October 11, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Page Campbell called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.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
Jim Hamifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for J. Shepard*)
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for T. Van Devender*)
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Mike Sestak, FIN Data Base Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Doug Snyder, RecFIN(SE) Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Jason Duet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Walter Tatum, Gulf Shores, AL
Wendell Lorio, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes, for the meeting held on March 15, 2005 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as written.

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. In addition, a list of otoliths collected from all species (not just the targeted species) was provided to the group. It was noted that there are several species group (fish not identified to species and genus) in the complete list of species sampled. It was pointed out the collecting otoliths from fish not identifies to the species/genus provides no useful data. Due to the various hurricanes, the sampling levels in the eastern Gulf appear to be down (which is understandable). The states need to focus on getting as close to the targets as possible. Again, it was pointed out that these numbers are just targets and if they are not reached, there are no penalties. **D. Donaldson** asked the group if the biological sampling tallies were useful. **K. Anson** stated that he uses the tallies as a check for his activities and believes the tallies are helpful. The group generally agreed that the tallies were useful and should be continued.

The group then discussed the analysis aspects of biological sampling. **D. Donaldson** distributed a table which outlined the status of each state's analysis situation. All states except Florida have provided the ages for the otoliths collected in 2002 and 2003. **J. O'Hop** noted that there had been a problem with reconciling Florida and NMFS biological data but he believed that issue had been resolved. He stated that he would talk with staff and get the data into the system. **D. Donaldson** noted the he had talked with Florida personnel and they mentioned they were working on getting the data into the system but just had not had time to accomplish it. All these data have been loaded into the FIN Data Management System (DMS) except Texas (as well as Florida). The reason Texas biological data has not been loaded into the system is that FIN does not have access site descriptions and without these descriptions, the data will not load. **P. Campbell** stated that staff are working on compiling these data and will provide it to FIN in the near future.

The last issue discussed by the group concerned the establishment of federal targets. **D. Donaldson** stated that at a recent Data Collection Plan Work Group meeting, this issue was discussed and the work group decided to develop federal targets for each of the priority species. Therefore, FIN staff in conjunction with NMFS, developed some targets, based on historical collections, and these targets were presented to the Subcommittee for their consideration. After some discussion, the group agreed that the establishment of federal targets would useful and would allow for better tracking of the otolith collections. **D. Donaldson** stated that he would use these targets (Attachment A) for tracking beginning in 2005.

Discussion of Status of Registration Tracking Module

D. Donaldson noted at the recent FIN meeting, it was decided to move forward with the implementation of the vessel portion of the registration tracking module. As the module was being populated, there were several issues that arose and after various conference calls, several options were developed to address these issues. These options were

presented to the Subcommittee for their consideration. The group discussed the two options and it was pointed out that they are very similar. **M. Sestak** stated that the main difference is that one option will allow for the tracking of all permits throughout time while the other one will only track the most recent permits. After some minor modifications, the group decided on a data layout and variable structure (Attachment B). **D. Donaldson** stated that staff will provide the states with the final layout and structure and states need to begin providing these data to the FIN DMS on a routine basis. The next step in this process will be to compile information on fishermen and dealers.

Discussion of Using Fishing Licenses as Sampling Frame Methods

D. Donaldson stated at the recent FIN meeting, the Committee decided that FIN should begin compiling a sampling frame, which would include a license data base from each of states. Once this frame is compiled, analysis can be conducted to determine the completeness of the frame and staff can determine the feasibility of using this method for collecting fishing effort. Therefore, **D. Donaldson** wanted to notify the states that a request for their marine recreational fishing license data base would be coming in the near future and to please provide staff with this needed information as quickly as possible.

Discussion of Monitoring of Changes in Scientific Names

D. Donaldson stated that the group discussed the issue of monitoring the changes in scientific names. It was noted this responsibility should be addressed by the ITIS group, however, the ITIS does not currently conduct this activity because of an overloaded work schedule. Therefore, the group discussed some alternative methods for accomplishing this task. It was suggested that if there was some type of notification process, FIN needed to tap into this process. Unfortunately, no one was aware of such a process. The group mentioned that AFS does provide updates (every 10 years) and this may be the best available method. After some discussion, the group decided to use the AFS accepted name (which is updated every 10 years) and in the interim, each partner would be responsible for providing updates to the FIN Data Base Manager as they become aware of any change. It was noted that both the old and new names would have to be maintained to ensure that all data associated with a particular species could be accessed. Staff would also talk with Mark Leiby and AFS about establishing some type of notification system and provide an update to the Subcommittee at their next meeting.

Discussion of Head Boat Sampling in the Gulf of Mexico

D. Donaldson stated that the group needed to discuss the collection of catch and effort data for the head boat fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. Regarding effort, based on the FIN recommendation, the for-hire telephone survey (for head boats) would be stopped in January 2005 for all states except Louisiana and Alabama. Regarding catch, at the recent State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee meeting, the Committee decided not to fund the NMFS head boat logbook survey in 2005. It was hoped that NMFS would secure monies to fund this activity. However, if monies are not provided and FIN does

not realize the proposed increase in the GulfFIN line item, there will be no head boat sampling in the Gulf of Mexico in 2005. The group asked about the probability of NMFS funding the head boat activities in 2005. **G. Davenport** mentioned that he had talked with Nancy Thompson and NMFS had to make a decision about funding this activity. Therefore, it was suggested that the group develop some contingencies for collected catch data from the head boat fishery. It was noted that both catch and effort data would be collecting in Louisiana and Alabama in 2005 so the group needed to focus on methods for collecting these data in Texas and Florida. For effort, a continuation of the for-hire survey could easily be continued into 2005 without additional funding. The collection of catch data would be a bit more problematic without more funds. It was suggested that site registers and sampling targets be developed for Texas and Florida and dockside sampling could potentially be conducted in those states. Based on the targets, each state would have to examine the feasibility of conducting dockside sampling. It was understood that the developed sampling targets would just be goals and the states would collect as much data as possible on the existing funds.

Discussion of Changes in TIP since Implementation of Trip Ticket Programs

D. Donaldson stated at the recent State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee meeting, the Committee asked what changes to the Trip Interview Program (TIP) had occurred as state trip ticket programs came online. Staff provided the group with a list of changes and the Committee asked if any of these changes had been documented. It was mentioned that these changes had not been documented and it was suggested that a white paper be developed that outlines the changes to TIP (due to trip ticket implementation) be developed by NMFS and the states. The Subcommittee agreed that such a paper would be useful and decided to provide comments to staff no later than December 1, 2004. Staff would then develop a draft white paper and present it to the Subcommittee at the March meeting.

Discussion of Confidentiality Issues regarding the FIN Data Management System

D. Donaldson stated FIN has been attempting to execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding confidentiality with Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and NMFS without much success. It was suggested that another approach might be a better way of addressing this issue. FIN could enter into subgrants (similar to the one with Florida for trip ticket data) with Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands which outlines that confidential data would be protected and the penalties for releasing these data. After some discussion, the group directed staff to develop subgrants with Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands that protected the confidentiality of commercial data and to implement these documents.

The group then discussed third party access to confidential data accessed via the FIN DMS. There was concern that if someone who obtained access to confidential data (via the established protocols of completing all the necessary forms) then provides those data to someone else (who had not completed all the necessary forms), the second person could release confidential data (since he/she did not know it was confidential). **G. Davenport** stated that the first person would be responsible for protecting the

confidentiality of the data and would have the onus of notifying anyone he/she releases the data to that the data are confidential. After some discussion, the group agreed that third party access did not jeopardize the confidentiality of the data and should be allowed. **M. Sestak** mentioned that it might be useful to create a database (accessible via the Internet) that contained all personnel with access to confidential data. This would allow people to check if a person had access to confidential data. The group agreed that this type of database would be useful and tasked staff with examining the feasibility of establishing such a database.

State/Federal Reports

GSMFC - **D. Donaldson** reported that the recreational operations continue to run smoothly with the states still exceeding quota on routine basis. There were some problems associated with all the tropical storms and hurricanes but the states are continuing to conduct interviews. Alabama personnel continue to collect catch and bycatch data from Alabama head boat vessels and they are testing at-sea sampling methods. Staff has implemented scanning technology for entering the recreational data. They will run the scanning system concurrently with old data entry to ensure QA/QC. On the commercial side, trip tickets are running smoothly and there are almost 250 dealers online with the electronic trip ticket reporting system. In the FIN DMS, the biological data is now in system with two levels of access. Staff will begin compiling vessel registration tracking data and putting into system. FIN is moving to Oracle Discoverer as its web access tool. There will probably need to be some training associated with new software and staff will set up time(s) to meet and discuss the new program. Regarding program funding, the Senate mark for GulfFIN has an increase (\$4.5M) and the group needs to discuss the activities that will be added if this funding is realized. After some discussion, the group decided to add the following activities if additional funding becomes available:

- Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida
- Reinstated Red Snapper and King Mackerel Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling
- Implementation of For-Hire Telephone Survey and Field Sampling for Head Boats
- Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana

Texas - **P. Campbell** reported that the American Fisheries Society began a review of TPWD's fisheries division's science practices. In May, Coastal Fisheries celebrated its 30-year anniversary of its fishery dependent recreational harvest monitoring program. The last spring gill net season that ended in June, found Texas red drum and spotted sea trout populations in the best condition in 28 years. The Coastal Fisheries continued data collection for a comprehensive biological and water quality study of tidal streams and continued its work with regional water planning groups to implement freshwater inflow

recommendations in regional water plans. The final genetic research reports on bonnethead and blacktip sharks and shoal grass were submitted to USFWS. There were 152 concrete power poles deployed as artificial reefs east of Corpus Christi. During this summer's bay shrimp season, TPWD counted 293 shrimp boats on opening day, which is down 27% from last year. In June four Texas mariculture facilities were quarantined after tests confirmed Taura virus was present. Quarantines were lifted after the threat to native shrimp had passed.

Florida - **J. O'Hop** reported that the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) underwent a major internal restructuring along functional lines on July 1, 2004. As part of the reorganization, researchers from all of the former divisions and institutes, including the Florida Marine Research Institute, were combined into the new Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. The intent is to separate the research and management functions within the Commission, and to facilitate communication and cooperation to promote greater opportunities for linkages between upland habitat, wildlife, freshwater, and marine research programs. The collection and processing of marine fisheries trip tickets is operating normally. Florida is currently editing trip tickets that were received during September and October. Several audits of seafood dealers were conducted by the Division of Marine Fisheries in 2004 because of irregularities in reporting of trip tickets discovered during the shrimp disaster relief and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. Some seafood dealers as a result of the disaster relief programs and audits have submitted additional data from the 2001-2003 years to the FWC. The monitoring of Gulf of Mexico shallow-water and deepwater grouper quotas by NMFS has resulted in some increased workload due to the apparent lack of agreement of quota monitoring amounts with trip ticket reports. Most of the problems to date have been caused by 1) dealers reporting information to NMFS which were not reported promptly on trip tickets; 2) some data reported to NMFS appeared to have been wholesale-to-wholesale transactions which should not have been included in the quota tallies; and 3) some landings in the Florida Keys may have been from South Atlantic areas fished (though some landings were marked with South Atlantic areas fished when they should have been Gulf of Mexico areas). Angler catch and effort data collected by staff for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) and Project Tampa Bay (monitoring releases of hatchery-reared red drum) were proceeding normally through July of 2004. The number of interviews and measurements obtained from these projects was on track until hurricanes and evacuations disrupted fishing activities throughout the state. With landfalls on both coasts and the Florida Panhandle of major hurricanes, some fishing and boating access sites and marinas have been severely damaged, large amounts of debris have been dumped into nearshore areas, and the number of out-of-state anglers has decreased or charter boats have been unable to schedule trips. The samplers have been conducting inventories of fishing access sites for the site register during August and September to help keep the assignment draws from scheduling assignments at sites, which are unusable by anglers. Commercial catch and effort data collected for the Trip Interview Program (TIP) by state port samplers has slowed in August and September due to hurricanes and office closures. Some seafood dealers have been adversely impacted by the storms either directly through flooding and wind damage or through loss of electric power. Most of the dealers that have been contacted were able to cope with the losses

and there were dealers in several areas of the state that shared ice with other dealers and with the public during the power outages. The port samplers are also engaged in a project to characterize the use of fishing gear in nearshore areas of Florida. Florida has scheduled the next training session for early October, but had to postpone this training due to the stress that the hurricanes have put on staff and the need for increasing the number of field assignments in October to obtain sufficient interviews to meet the MRFSS quota targets. The number of shore interviews looks obtainable, but personnel are concerned that they may not be able to meet the charter boat and private/rental boat mode interview targets. The closures of some popular marinas and boating access sites in some areas on both coasts has meant that likelihood of obtaining interviews in these fishing modes has decreased, and it may be some months before some sites re-open (if at all).

Alabama - **K. Anson** reported that through August 2004, Alabama has met or exceeded all intercept quotas for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey. Alabama Marine Resources Division staff have identified over 60 species of fish and weighed and/or measured over 5,000 individual fish. Training sessions for MRFSS staff were held in August where MRFSS interviewing procedures were reviewed and fish identification tests were given. Damage from Hurricane Ivan in Baldwin County was excessive. Quotas in shore and charter modes may not be met in Wave 5 and 6 as many of the sites with this activity have been seriously damaged. There were no major problems encountered with the collection of data/trip tickets. A total of 23 seafood dealers are providing information via the electronic reporting program. A new license program was implemented in October. This program allows both commercial (MRD offices only) and recreational licenses to be sold and simultaneously stored in a database. This is a major upgrade from the previous system; however, some paper recreational fishing licenses may still be purchased. The collection of biological samples (otoliths) remained below target for recreationally caught king mackerel, southern flounder and red snapper. Discussions with staff over the winter will help to determine why the numbers of otoliths and lengths collected have fallen and methods to improve success will be discussed. Collections for the remainder of the year may be down due to the negative effects from Hurricane Ivan. The required number of SEAMAP cruises has not been completed due to weather and mechanical troubles with the research vessel. Through July 2004, the landings for both brown and white shrimp are higher than the landing through July for 2002 and 2003. Through July, the preliminary brown shrimp landings in Alabama inshore waters were 43% higher than the same time period in 2003. The majority of the increase was due in part to larger quantities of shrimp in counts ranging between 31- 35 and 41 – 50 count/pound. The higher landings, in addition to the larger sizes, are helping Alabama shrimpers offset higher fuel costs and competition from imported shrimp. An amendment to help Alabama shrimp market their product will be on the ballot in November. If passed, this amendment would allow shrimpers to take a portion of the monies they collect through the sale of shrimp and place in a fund which would be used for advertising and promotion of locally caught shrimp. A TED exemption was requested from the NMFS due to the excessive amount of debris in local waters from Hurricane Ivan. A total of twenty-eight at-sea head boat trips have been completed and 766 anglers interviewed through August. Over 1,500 discarded fish were identified and 93% of these

fish were measured. Another training session will be held in the fall to evaluate this year's effort and discuss ways to improve sampling. Nearly all of the 223 concrete pyramids purchased with federal matching funds and a donation from the organizers of the red snapper World Championship have been deployed in federal waters off Alabama. The remaining reefs will be deployed by November. The majority of these reefs will be located off Baldwin County within 25 miles from shore. The GPS numbers for these reefs will not be given out until June 2005 in an effort to promote greater fish attraction. After Hurricane Ivan approximately 15% of the offshore public reefs were inventoried. These reefs included concrete pyramid reefs, tanks, concrete rubble and boats. All but a few of these reefs were located in the same location as they were prior to the storm. Water depths ranged from 60' – 120'. An assessment of Alabama's oyster reefs was made after Hurricane Ivan with divers and nearly 75% of the two most productive reefs were destroyed. MRD was working with FEMA to determine economic loss to oystermen. And staff from Alabama assisted Mississippi Marine Resources Department personnel during the second Alabama Mississippi Rapid Assessment Team (AMRAT) project. This is the second year of the project that attempts to provide a snapshot of biological diversity within the coastal waters of the two states in addition to identifying invasive species.

Mississippi - **K. Cuevas** reported that there were 7 barge loads of concrete manholes (5 ft diameter x 6 ft tall) deployed on four fish havens with water depths range from 45' to 75'. Final preparations are being completed on a 150 ft tugboat (Marquette Transportation) and a 78 ft tugboat (Pearl River Navigation) for deployment within the next few weeks. Several companies conducted the donation, cleaning, transport and sinking of tugboats with no cost to Mississippi. The Marine Resources Commission considered the adoption of spotted seatrout minimum size change from 14 inches to 12 inches at their recent meeting. There was several state fishing records set recently. They included: Fly Fishing: Yellow Chub – 1 lb 14.72 oz, Pinfish – 0 lbs 13.44 oz, Spanish Mackerel – 5 lbs 1.60 oz.; Conventional Tackle: Striped Burrfish – 0 lbs 11.68 oz, Dog Snapper – 15 lbs 0.00 oz, Great Barracuda – 48 lbs 4.80 oz, Sandbar Shark 96 lbs 0.00 oz, Warsaw Grouper – 250 lbs 0.00 oz, Spinner Shark – 159 lbs 4.80 oz, Horse-eye Jack – 22 lbs 15.52 oz, Ocean Triggerfish – 1 lb 6.56 oz, Gulf Kingfish – 1 lb 13.76 oz, Cubbyu – 0 lb 9.44 oz, Longspined Porgy – 0 lb 9.92 oz. The Department Marine Resources (DMR) renewed a contract with USGS to continue operation and maintenance at seven sites in the Mississippi Sound with USGS. A real-time turbidity sensor at the mouth of the Pearl was installed to help monitor conditions affecting the oyster reef through a cooperative effort between USGS and DMR. Through a cooperative effort with NOAA's Nation Data Buoy Center, real-time meteorological monitoring instruments have been added to the DMR's existing sites with USGS. The Pass Marianne site equipment has been installed so far. All real-time hydrological and meteorological data is available on the DMR webpage. The DMR personnel participated in the AMRAT Invasive Species Rapid Assessment and the Mississippi Crab Task Force meeting held at the DMR in September to discuss future derelict trap cleanups and gear conflict solutions. An updated Live Bait Shrimping Ordinance 6.006 was adopted at the September Commission on Marine Resources meeting. This update was to clarify the law's intentions and allow for better enforcement. The Seafood and Technology Bureau has processed 1151 total regulatory and technical assistance requests and renewed certifications of 77 permitted dealers and

processors. The Seafood and Technology Bureau also certified the water quality of 56 seafood-processing facilities June 2004. The Mississippi Shellfish Sanitation Program has successfully passed the Program Element Evaluation Inspection by the Food and Drug Administration's Regional Shellfish Specialist. The Seafood and Technology Bureau also participated in a partnership meeting with the MS Department of Health (MSDOH), MS Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MSDAC), MS Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) in September. The Shellfish Bureau opened the oyster season in selected areas on September 13, 2004. They also planted 150 acres of oyster reef with 11,700 cubic yards of oyster shell and 2,209 cubic yards of limestone and conducted preliminary reef damage assessment due to Hurricane Ivan. Finally, the Shellfish Bureau completed annual and tri-annual sanitary survey report for shellfish growing waters.

Louisiana - **J. Hanifen** reported that Louisiana MRFSS data collection is on target. Approximately one week of sampling was missed due to impacts of Hurricane Ivan. The trip ticket program currently has 88 dealers reporting with the electronic program. All data are being processed and QA/QC edits conducted. Louisiana is now using scannable monthly submission forms. The FIN biological sampling is proceeding. Louisiana is still having problems collecting commercial flounder and private boat red snapper data because it has been hard to locate dealers handling commercial flounder and many of the red snapper fishermen are returning to private camps instead of launches. All otoliths collected have been analyzed with the exception of greater amberjack. Staff is awaiting further direction before completing this analysis. The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and Louisiana State University personnel are currently compiling a southern flounder reference set. Southern flounder otoliths have been provided by LDWF for fish sampled from 2002 through 2004. An effort has been made to select otolith samples equally over month, year, and sex. This has been challenging given the 9:1 female to male ratio in the sample population and the lack of individuals (especially males) older than age of 2. The completed collection will consist of 150 otolith sections and a disc containing images of each. An additional 75 annotated images will be included for training/reference purposes. Louisiana personnel have sorted 70 older individuals (> age 3) from the LDWF samples to be included in the reference collection. We currently have a total of 48 images completed; 24 of those annotated. The Department's Finfish Program is currently reviewing sampling protocol to ensure data validity. Louisiana shrimp landings for 2003 totaled 77.2 million pounds (all species combined - heads-off weight). This is well above the long-term mean. The white shrimp landings were the third highest on record. Governor Blanco issued an executive order creating the LA Wild Caught Shrimp Trade Action Advisory Council, which is tasked with developing and recommending additional methods of generating revenue to fund the trade action. Act 904 of the 2004 Legislature is projected to generate \$265K in each of the next two years dedicated to funding the trade action. These funds will come from added fees assessed to sales of shrimp fishing gear; wholesale/retail seafood dealers who are required to pay state shrimp excise taxes; and wholesale/retail seafood dealers who purchase, handle, acquire, etc more than 250K pounds of shrimp annually. As a result of debris associated with Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ivan, Louisiana has requested a temporary exemption from federal TED regulations in state territorial waters from

MS/LA territorial sea boundary to the western shore of SW Pass of the MS River. If the exemption is authorized, tow time restrictions will be enforced (75 minutes through Oct 31 and 55 minutes beginning Nov 1). The results of the derelict crab trap program were the removal and disposal of approximately 6,900 abandoned crab traps from coastal inshore waters with the cooperation of 215 volunteers using 90 boats. Louisiana is planning to implement 4 trap closures and clean ups in 2005: three winter closures (St. Bernard, Terrebonne and Sabine Lake) and one spring closure (Vermilion Bay). Oyster production on the public seed grounds during the 2003/2004 season was estimated at over 579,000 sacks of market oysters and nearly 372,000 barrels of seed oysters. The 2003/2004 oyster season ended on April 1, 2004. Six new oyster cultch plants were constructed with approximately 55,000 cubic yards of cultch material covering nearly 250 acres. The cultch material used included crushed concrete, limestone, and oyster shell. A heavy spat set occurred on 4 of the 6 new cultch plants although heavy summertime rains reduced salinities and impacted spat sets on the remaining two cultch plant sites. Oyster sampling on public oyster grounds east of the Mississippi River following the passage of Hurricane Ivan showed little sediment and vegetative overburden on reefs. One reef near the Louisiana/Mississippi border showed an increase in seed oyster (< 3") mortality of nearly 30% following the hurricane. The Louisiana Legislature passed a resolution in 2004 creating a task force to consider the use of decommissioned oil and gas platforms for mariculture. The task force is slated to produce a final report by 31 January 2005. LDWF has been participating in task force deliberations. One of the topics for discussion has been so-called "open ocean ranching" or "sea farming – that is stocking, feeding and providing habitat to fish in an unconfined system until they reach market size. The Gulf Council has previously declined to consider this alternative in their draft scoping document on mariculture after NOAA General Council concluded such activity would constitute fishing under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA).

NMFS - **G. Davenport** reported that the TIP online data entry program is operational. All the viewlets, instruction manual, documentation etc. are available on the website. There is a new maintenance module, which will allow users to set up their own defaults and profiles as well as search and sort tools. The Louisiana trip ticket data (shrimp) is currently being provided to the NMFS-Galveston laboratory. The landings are being summarized and submitted to the Accumulated Landing System (ALS). The port samplers are routinely reviewing the Louisiana trip ticket data for the last five months. NMFS is in the process of implementing a similar system for Alabama trip ticket data. NMFS has established an official FTP site at the Miami Laboratory. Anyone that would like access to this site for transmission of data back and forth should contact Guy Davenport. Port samplers continue to conduct detailed effort interviews for the shrimp fishery in Louisiana. They are keeping track of the refusal from the various fishermen and once one year's worth of data has been collected, a refusal report will be generated. NMFS will be working with Louisiana personnel to establish a coordinated process for the shrimp interviews. As in the states, the hurricanes have disrupted some of the TIP sampling activities but sampling is continuing. Regarding quota monitoring, the commercial red snapper fishery opened recently for their fall season but Guy does not have any preliminary reports about landings. The landing for the western Gulf group of

king mackerel has reached about 91% of the quota. This fishery should close in the near future. The landing for eastern Gulf group has only reached about 15% of the quota. There was a field agent training session in Galveston. The topic of the session was training on Windows XP as well as Excel. The training booklets are available to any interested personnel. NMFS has developed a brief report on not only the direct impacts to vessels and dealers of the hurricanes but impacts on lost fishing time as well. That report has been submitted to NMFS-HQ (via the Regional Office).

Election of Chairman

After some discussion, Page Campbell was reelected Chairman and Kevin Anson was reelected Vice Chairman.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Total collection (numbers)

	TX		LA		MS		AL		FL		TOTAL		
	FIN target	Fed target	FIN target	Fed target	FIN target	Fed target	FIN target	Fed target	FIN target	Fed target	FIN target	Fed target	All targets
Greater Amberjack	12	3	39	0	0	0	54	0	302	95	407	98	505
Gulf Flounder	12	0	1	0	0	0	21	0	642	0	676	0	676
King Mackerel	200	82	20	209	37	0	264	0	1302	395	1823	686	2,509
Red Snapper	1775	800	952	3139	244	101	2556	87	3344	568	8871	4695	13,566
Southern Flounder	1444	0	2371	0	985	0	1206	0	491	0	6497	0	6,497
Gray Snapper	68	4	485	0	12	0	95	0	2,011	222	2,671	226	2,897
Gag	0	14	67	0	3	0	120	0	2,518	844	2,708	858	3,566
Red Grouper	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2,393	1,994	2,394	1,994	4,388
Gray Triggerfish	43	42	320	0	18	0	393	0	1,086	75	1,860	117	1,977
Red Drum	1,558	256	5,485	0	320	0	468	0	846	0	8,677	256	8,933
Black Drum	2,668	24	4,836	0	39	0	139	0	128	0	7,810	24	7,834
Cobia	12	4	42	0	6	0	28	0	135	0	223	4	227
Dolphin	59	3	64	0	7	0	4	0	3,062	0	3,196	3	3,199
Hogfish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	271	0	271	0	271
Lane Snapper	5	17	102	11	4	0	52	0	485	110	648	138	786
Mutton Snapper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	184	34	184	34	218
Red Porgy	0	0	55	0	52	0	40	0	348	0	495	0	495
Scamp	0	3	6	47	0	4	3	0	134	177	143	231	374
Snowy Grouper	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	19	72	22	72	94
Spanish Mackerel	280	1	244	0	240	0	1,522	0	5,461	39	7,747	40	7,787
Speckled Hind	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	4	21	4	25
Spotted Seatrout	5,143	2,156	10,058	0	2,123	0	753	0	6,376	0	24,453	2,156	26,609
Striped Mullet	225	0	1,033	0	2,573	0	5,763	0	18,607	0	28,201	0	28,201
Vermilion Snapper	1,293	249	2,320	180	252	48	861	0	3,686	1,695	8,412	2,172	10,584
Warsaw Grouper	1	0	9	5	0	0	1	0	3	2	14	7	21
White Grunt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,452	0	7,452	0	7,452
Yellowedge Grouper	48	0	57	17	0	0	0	0	1	375	106	392	498
Yellowtail Snapper	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6,125	401	6,126	401	6,527
Total	14,585	3,919	29,624	2,554	6,915	153	14,344	87	67,511	7,024	132,979	13,737	146,716

Table: vessel_characteristics

Description: The characteristics of each vessel

vessel_hin	NUMBER (20,0)	REQUIRED	-PK
data_source	NUMBER (4,0)	REQUIRED	
event_id	NUMBER (4,0)	REQUIRED	-SG
gross_tonnage	NUMBER (4,2)		
net_tonnage	NUMBER (4,2)		
hold_capacity	NUMBER (4,2)		
vess_length	NUMBER (4,2)		
horsepower	NUMBER (4,0)		
hull_material	VARCHAR2 (15)		
year_built	NUMBER (4,0)		
data_load_date	DATE		
supplier_action_flag	VARCHAR2 (1)		

Table: vessel_licenses

Description: Each license that a vessel has ever purchased.

vessel_hin	NUMBER (20,0)	REQUIRED	- PK
ltype_code	VARCHAR2 (4)	REQUIRED	- PK
license_number	VARCHAR2 (30)	REQUIRED	- PK
license_issue_date	DATE	REQUIRED	- PK
license_state	NUMBER (2,0)	REQUIRED	- PK
data_source	VARCHAR2 (4)	REQUIRED	
event_id	NUMBER (4,0)	REQUIRED	-SG
coast_guard_nbr	VARCHAR2 (20)		
state_reg_nbr	VARCHAR2 (20)		
registering_state	VARCHAR2 (2)		
license_holder_last_name	VARCHAR2 (30)		
license_holder_fisrt_name	VARCHAR2 (25)		
license_holder_mi	VARCHAR2 (1)		
license_holder_suffix	VARCHAR2 (3)		
license_holder_dob	DATE		
license_holder_ph_nbr	NUMBER (10,0)		
lic_holder_phy_address_1	VARCHAR2 (50)		
lic_holder_phy_address_2	VARCHAR2 (50)		
lic_holder_phy_city	VARCHAR2 (30)		
lic_holder_phy_state	VARCHAR2 (2)		
lic_holder_phy_postal_code	VARCHAR2 (9)		
lic_holder_phy_country	VARCHAR2 (30)		
lic_holder_mail_address_1	VARCHAR2 (50)		
lic_holder_mail_address_2	VARCHAR2 (50)		
lic_holder_mail_city	VARCHAR2 (30)		
lic_holder_mail_state	VARCHAR2 (2)		
lic_holder_mail_postal_code	VARCHAR2 (9)		
lic_holder_mail_country	VARCHAR2 (30)		
data_load_date	DATE		
supplier_action_flag	VARCHAR2 (1)		

Table: license_types

Description: Each type of license that a vessel may have. (**Full Description)

state	NUMBER (2,0)	REQUIRED - PK
ltype_code	VARCHAR2 (4)	REQUIRED - PK
l_name	VARCHAR2 (60)	REQUIRED
l_discription	VARCHAR2 (100)	REQUIRED
event_id	NUMBER (4,0)	REQUIRED - SG
data_source	VARCHAR2 (4)	REQUIRED

**Full Description - (Mississippi: Louisiana Resident Gill/Trammel Net)

Table: vessel_owners

Description: Each owner of each vessel.

vessel_hin	NUMBER (20,0)	REQUIRED - PK
owner_last_name	VARCHAR2 (30)	REQUIRED - PK
owner_fisrt_name	VARCHAR2 (25)	REQUIRED - PK
owner_owner_mi	VARCHAR2 (1)	REQUIRED - PK
owner_dob	DATE	REQUIRED - PK
vessel_purchase_date	DATE	REQUIRED - PK
event_id	NUMBER (4,0)	REQUIRED - SG
data_source	VARCHAR2 (4)	REQUIRED
owner_suffix	VARCHAR2 (3)	
owner_ph_nbr	NUMBER (10,0)	
owner_phy_address_1	VARCHAR2 (50)	
owner_phy_address_2	VARCHAR2 (50)	
owner_phy_city	VARCHAR2 (30)	
owner_phy_state	VARCHAR2 (2)	
owner_phy_postal_code	VARCHAR2 (9)	
owner_phy_country	VARCHAR2 (30)	
owner_mail_address_1	VARCHAR2 (50)	
owner_mail_address_2	VARCHAR2 (50)	
owner_mail_city	VARCHAR2 (30)	
owner_mail_state	VARCHAR2 (2)	
owner_mail_postal_code	VARCHAR2 (9)	
owner_mail_country	VARCHAR2 (30)	
business_name	VARCHAR2 (30)	
business_phone	NUMBER (10,0)	
ownership_code	VARCHAR2 (30)	
data_load_date	DATE	
supplier_action_flag	VARCHAR2 (1)	

SG - System Generated field

PK - Primary Key

REQUIRED - Must not be a NULL (blank) field when sent from state.

DATE - Required format is: DD-MON-YYYY

VARCHAR2 - Character based field - numbers or letters.

NUMBER - Must be a numeric value.

APPROVED BY:
Traci Floyd
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 55th Annual Meeting
Monday, October 11, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Due to a family conflict, Chairman Tom Wagner was unable to attend, sent a proxy, and arranged for Leslie Hartman (Alabama) to lead the meeting. She called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following were in attendance:

Members Present

Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Leslie Hartman, AMRD/ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Harriet Perry, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Glen Sutton, TPWD/CFD, Dickinson, TX (*Proxy for T. Wagner*)

Members Absent

Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Gary Graham, Texas A&M Marine Advisory, West Columbia, TX
Judy Jamison, G&SAFDF, Tampa, FL
Wendell Lorio, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Walter Tatum, AMRD Retired, Foley, Alabama
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL

Adoption of Agenda

G. Graham requested a few minutes of the Subcommittee's time during "Other Business". **V. Guillory** moved to adopt the agenda, and **T. Floyd** seconded the motion, which passed.

Approval of Minutes

The group reviewed the minutes from the meeting held March 15, 2004, in New Orleans, Louisiana. **V. Guillory** moved to approve the minutes as written. **L. Hartman** seconded the motion, which passed.

Blue Crab Aging Technique – Biochemical Lipofuscin

Anne McMillen-Jackson briefed the Subcommittee on the use of lipofuscin to age crabs in the Chesapeake Bay. Lipofuscins are fluorescent age pigments that accumulate in cells over time. Environmental conditions affect lipofuscins less than growth rates. Researchers at the University of Maryland developed a protocol for the biochemical assessment of lipofuscin levels in blue crabs. Using a solvent extraction method, lipofuscin is removed from the external eyestalks of blue crabs. A portion of the extract is run through a fluorescence spectrophotometer to determine lipofuscin fluorescence intensity. Another portion of the extract is assayed to determine protein content for standardization of the samples.

McMillen- Jackson distributed papers by Ju, Secor, and Harvey 1999; Ju, Secor, and Harvey 2001; and Ju, Secor, and Harvey 2003. Data was also analyzed blue crab age composition in Chesapeake Bay (Secor, Ju, Harvey 2004). Results included:

- ♦ Gender differences did not significantly affect lipofuscin accumulation.
- ♦ Lipofuscin accumulation can be distinguished among crabs that differ in age by less than six months.
- ♦ Lipofuscin accumulation rate was nearly constant throughout the year, despite growth rates that varied strongly with season.
- ♦ In pond-reared blue crabs of known age, lipofuscin levels were significantly correlated with carapace width but more closely correlated with chronological age.
- ♦ For field-collected adult blue crabs, lipofuscin values revealed multiple modes, whereas carapace widths showed only one or two broad modes.
- ♦ Lipofuscin modal analysis showed that most adult blue crabs collected in Chesapeake Bay were less than two years old.
- ♦ Lipofuscin-based age composition analyses in Chesapeake Bay allowed better estimations of instantaneous mortality rates, annual exploitation rates, and more accurate representations of age structure than size data.

McMillen-Jackson discussed techniques necessary for a Gulf study including training, regional calibration, and subsequent modal distribution of age range. Lipofuscin aging studies can be used to estimate mortality rates, growth rates, and age at maturation. From these, natural mortality rates can be estimated and used in stock assessments. Project costs include a capital expenditure for scanning fluorescence spectrophotometer at approximately \$35,000. Samples should be run by an experienced technician or post-doctoral student; costs are estimated at \$72 to \$88 per sample (labor including benefits) and \$8 to \$10 per sample (materials).

The Subcommittee agreed that a similar research project would be excellent for the Gulf region. McMillen-Jackson volunteered to act as point-person and will gather information from each of the states regarding available equipment and personnel. She will compile an estimated budget and rationale for submission to funding sources (yet to be determined).

Upcoming Derelict Crab Trap Cleanups

Louisiana - **V. Guillory** distributed the *Derelict Crab Trap Program Source Document*. The program received a first place award by Keep Louisiana Beautiful in 2004. The spring deepwater cleanup was less successful than the inshore cleanup. Approximately 118 agency personnel picked up 218 traps. The proposed 2005 Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program includes three winter closures. In Sabine Lake, the LWFC intends to prohibit the use of crab traps for a 10-day period from 6:00 a.m. February 18, 2005 through 6:00 a.m. February 27, 2005 within a designated area in Cameron Parish. In the Terrebonne Parish Estuary, the LWFC intends to prohibit the use of crab traps for a 16-day period from 6:00 a.m. March 5, 2005 through 6:00 a.m. March 20, 2005 within a designated area of Terrebonne Parish. In the Breton Sound Estuary, the LWFC intends to prohibit the use of crab traps for a 16-day period from 6:00 a.m. February 26, 2005 through 6:00 a.m. March 13, 2005 within a designated area in St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes. Further, the LWFC intends to prohibit the use of crab traps for a 9-day period beginning at 6:00 a.m. on the opening day of the 2005 spring inshore shrimp season in Vermilion Bay/West Cote Blanche Bay and ending at 6:00 a.m. nine days following the opening of the 2005 spring inshore shrimp season in Vermilion Bay/West Cote Blanche Bay within a designated portion of Iberia and St. Mary Parishes. Temporary disposal sites with dumpsters will be located at convenient locations such as marinas, boat launches, etc. Tentative sites include:

- ♦ Sabine Lake: Public Launch at Louisiana Highway 82.
- ♦ Terrebonne Bay Estuary: LUMCON on Louisiana Highway 56 in Cocodrie and Boudreaux's Marina at the end of Four Point Road south of Dulac.
- ♦ Breton Sound Estuary: End of World Marina on Louisiana Highway 300 in Delacroix and Pointe a la Hache Marina on Louisiana Highway 39 in Pointe a la Hache.
- ♦ Vermilion Bay/West Cote Blanche Bay: Quintana Canal at Cypremort Point off Louisiana Highway 319 and Marsh Island Refuge headquarters.

Plans for the 2005 cleanup are modeled after the 2004 program. A broad-based group of volunteers will participate in the winter cleanups. Volunteers may pick up traps in the water or assist LDWF personnel at the disposal sites. The spring cleanup will depend primarily upon shrimp fishermen returning traps incidentally caught in their gear, although volunteers may also retrieve visible traps.

Louisiana received a \$5,000 grant from the Barataria Natural Estuary to partially fund the upcoming cleanups. The Louisiana Blue Crab Task Force is moving to introduce legislation to permanently fund the Louisiana cleanups through license fees.

Mississippi - **T. Floyd** reported that 800 traps were retrieved from shallow waters in March, and 60 traps were retrieved from deep waters in June. To date, over 5,000 traps were collected and recycled. A closed season will not be recommended in 2005, but a concentrated effort to clean up during winter low tides will continue cooperatively

between GCRL and MDMR. Department members may be able to assist with other states' cleanups.

Alabama - **L. Hartman** reported that 463 traps were collected from shallow waters in March. The decline from 1,074 traps collected in 2003 was significant. Alabama is not planning a 2005 cleanup but intends to schedule a 2006 cleanup.

Florida – **A. McMillen-Jackson** reported the annual stone and lobster trap retrieval effort was conducted in the Keys, from Key Largo to Key West, during the first two weeks in June. A total of 3,001 traps were retrieved. In June 2005, the program will expand to include retrievals in the Tortugas/Marquesas area. In early 2005, requests for proposals will be posted for statewide trap retrieval projects using \$100,000 from stone crab endorsement fees. A portion of each endorsement fee is specified for trap retrieval. The Stone Crab Advisory Board recommended and the legislature approved the dedication of this allotment of money solely to trap retrieval.

A blue crab derelict trap cleanup is scheduled for Tampa Bay on November 20, 2004. The cleanup is being hosted by the “Ghost Busters” group and Tampa Bay Watch. Approximately 20 vessels have volunteered (air boats and skiffs), and Ghost Buster committee members or “authorized” trained volunteers will be on each vessel. The effort is community based in conjunction with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the local Sheriff's Office, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other groups. Goodie bags will be given to Captains and most participants. Tampa Bay Watch will provide lunch. Members of the FWC/Fish and Wildlife Research Institute Crustacean Fisheries research group will participate.

Texas – **G. Sutton** reported that from February 20-29, 2004, 3,571 traps were collected along 14 sites on eight bay systems. There were about 50 sponsors/donors with 311 volunteers and 103 vessels. From 2002-2004, 15,499 traps were collected. The majority of traps were collected from Galveston, Matagorda, and San Antonio Bays. Those bay systems continue to need work. Texas will continue their program in 2005 focusing on the three trouble spots mentioned above. The next cleanup is scheduled for February 18-27, 2005. In fall 2003, the TPWD adopted a permanent 10-day closure to begin on the third Friday of February each year.

State Reports

Florida – **A. McMillen-Jackson** reported blue crab landings for 2003 (final figures):

	HARD-SHELL		SOFT-SHELL/PEELERS	
	Pounds	Trips	Pounds	Trips
East Coast	2,033,825 (-8%)	12,311 (-9%)	35,372 (+36%)	864 (+7%)
West Coast	7,130,612 (+30%)	36,463 (+9%)	82,054 (+7%)	3,148 (+21%)

Total	9,164,437 (+17%)	48,774 (+4%)	117,426 (+13%)	4,012 (+18%)
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(Numbers in parentheses are the changes over 2002 landings.)

Statewide, landings are well below the long-term mean. The trip ticket program for collecting data on commercial fishery landings was instituted in Florida in 1986, so landings figures since that time should be considered the most reliable. Using only those figures, recent landings are still well below average, although the 2003 landings were moving into the range of one standard deviation from the 1990-2004 mean. From January-July 2004, landings of hard blue crabs totaled 4,385,583 pounds. There is a slight increase over the same time period in 2003 but still much lower than levels seen in the first half of previous years.

The Tampa Bay Blue Crab Trapping Study continued, and 2.5 years of data is available, which provides a better idea of seasonal trends in abundance. The 2004 summer catch maintained numbers higher than those observed during the drought summer of 2002. The project should continue for at least another three years to compare catch values to those obtained for other life stages and to commercial catch and to evaluate trapping methods for possible statewide expansion should monies become available.

In summer 2003, the FWC assembled the Blue Crab Advisory Board, composed of 15 harvesters and dealers plus a FWC representative. During the fall and winter meetings, the Board developed two proposals to an effort management plan – one proposal capped the number of fishermen in the fishery and the other capped the number of traps in the fishery. During the June meeting, the Board presented the limited entry plan to the FWC. The FWC preferred the idea of a trap certificate program and advised staff to evaluate at the Board's next meeting scheduled on October 25-26, 2004. Mississippi and Louisiana expressed interest in both proposals and had several questions such as determining the number of tags issued per fisherman. **V. Vail** suggested both states should invite Bill Teehan to provide an overview of Florida's limited entry and trap certificate programs to their respective state task force meetings.

In the 2003-2004 fishing season, 379,157 lbs of stone crab claw were landed on the East Coast (17,054 trips), and 2,363,119 lbs were landed on the West Coast (65,298 trips). Total landings increased 6% from 2002-2003 landings. The regional pattern was similar to that for hard blue crab landings; stone crab claw landings and effort increased in the Gulf but decreased in the Atlantic. Gulf landings comprised about 84% of the total landings.

The legislature approved spending authority for several issues associated with the stone crab fishery, including law enforcement, educational signs, and trap retrieval and stone crab monitoring. Enforcement vessels will be equipped with trap pullers to assist officers when pulling and inspecting stone crab traps. Warning signs will be posted near boat ramps to educate the public that it is unlawful to tamper with crab traps. The illustrations on the signs show both plastic/wood traps and wire traps, thus also covering the blue crab fishery. The stone crab fishery-independent monitoring program in southwest Florida

will have recurring funding. A vehicle and supplies will be purchased, and two employees will run traps with the assistance of local fishermen who will be contracted to take the samplers out to the trap lines. The trap lines will be run independent of the fisherman's traps and will include four to five trap lines in two to three locations. The study protocol was based on stone crab work in Tampa Bay, which contributed data for stock assessments and manuscripts on stone crab population dynamics and fishery biology. In July, the Stone Crab Advisory Board recommended that additional funds be appropriated next year to initiate a similar monitoring program in northwest Florida.

Alabama - **L. Hartman** distributed Alabama's mean monthly blue crab landings chart. Landings are preliminary and do not include any delinquent reports, which means landings may increase but will not decrease. Fishermen are complaining regularly that the cost of blue crab meat is held down artificially by an influx of Venezuelan blue crab meat imports. The monthly value chart was distributed and showed a significant increase in the landings but not an equal increase in value. The blue crab fishery may attempt litigation to impose tariffs against blue crab imports similar to the shrimp fishery.

V. Guillory noted that Louisiana's Blue Crab Task Force is also complaining about imports. The imported meat is consistently priced at \$3.00 per pound lower than domestic product. Processors are very interested in starting an industry-wide initiative for an anti-dumping suite. Max Turnipseed, an attorney from Baton Rouge, spoke to the task force and explained that there are several ways to approach the issue – a Section 201 appeal, which previously failed. A different type appeal in which the only fact that must be proven is that imports economically hurt the domestic industry. The task force will begin to contact other states to start the petition process. **V. Guillory** asked the group to send him blue crab industry contacts for each state. **L. Hartman** stated that as domestic processors shut down, able-bodied skilled workers are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

There are 170 licensed blue crab fishermen in Alabama. Using the trip ticket system, landing gear can be determined, and a number of license holders are shrimp fishermen. Only three to four crab fishermen show landings for 10-12 months, and up to 40 crab fishermen reported landings in May.

NEP is trying to start a Crab Watch program. Volunteers will pull crab traps and will look at *similus* versus *sapidus* and the incidence of *bocourti*. A large *bocourti* was caught in Heron Bay, but there have not been any other recorded incidences.

Mississippi – **T. Floyd** reported that 2003 landings were the highest in ten years at over 900,000 lbs. Preliminary landings for 2004 are 640,000 lbs through September. Mississippi has 14 licensed and permitted crab dealers. Of those, only about half actively process blue crabs. One of the main crab houses in Mississippi was closed for sanitation issues over the last couple of months. For the first time, Mississippi was able to issue separate commercial crabbing licenses based on gear type. Preliminary numbers for 2004 indicate 165 crab trap fishermen and 53 crab trawlers or shrimp fishermen who buy the license to keep trawl-caught crabs. There have been 600 recreational licenses sold thus

far. There have not been any ordinance changes. The Mississippi Crab Task Force met in September, and the group expressed an interest in proactively supporting a crab trap TED requirement. The TED would be required in bay areas or within 1,000 feet of the shoreline in highly populated diamondback terrapin areas on the coast pending further investigations. A Tideland's Trust Fund proposal was submitted to locate deeper water derelict traps to include piles of traps deposited by shrimp fishermen at navigational beacons.

H. Perry reported that the rapid assessment was recently completed in Mississippi. A cooperative effort, 120 scientists and 28 agencies participated. A total of 500 samples were collected and processed. Thus far, 330 species were identified. Invasive species found include Asian clam and tilapia. The consortium was able to rear eggs through C6-C7 stage, and 5,000 megalopae were harvested. The consortium hopes to work with LSU for pond grow out. There is an interest within Louisiana to pond culture crabs. Perry suggested that a speaker from VIMs be invited to the next Subcommittee meeting to discuss their study on global trends in fisheries, perhaps a graduate student for Dr. Lipschuis. It was also suggested that a speaker from the Florida Conservation Turtle Trust be invited to speak to the Subcommittee on terrapin biology.

Louisiana - **V. Guillory** reported 2003 landings at 44 million pounds, and 2002 landings at 53.9 million pounds. It appears that 2004 landings will be similar to those of 2003. According to trip tickets, 1,900 to 2,100 fishermen sell crabs. That equates to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the license holders.

The Crab Task Force sponsored legislation to implement a license moratorium for one year in 2005. In 2006, fishermen must have had the proper gear license and show trip ticket sales. By 2008, fishermen must prove that 25% of their earned income came from commercial fishing. No fisherman could hold more than one gear license, and corporations will not be eligible to buy a license. Proceeds from the \$10 gear fee will be equally split between the Seafood Promotion Board and the Derelict Trap Program. Legislation was proposed to exempt the requirement for floats north of the Intracoastal Waterway. Another piece of legislation will cleanup a problem with dealer's being in violation of the undersized tolerance after they have separated crabs by size.

Texas - **G. Sutton** reported Texas landings for 2003 were down at 4.8 million pounds and valued at \$3.2 million from 7 million pounds and valued at \$4.5 million in 2002. Preliminary landings for 2004 are not available; however, good rains from March through May should equate to good catch rates. Mean price per pound for hard crabs was \$0.64/lb, slightly up from 2002. Catch per unit effort was down during 2003 with a sharp decline in landings and a slight increase in effort. Since commercial crab fishing licenses were sold in 1998, license sales have dropped from 302 in 1999 to 222 in 2004. The buyback component of Texas' Limited Entry Program retired 23 licenses since inception, or 9% of the 277 commercial crab licenses sold in 2001. The fifth round of buybacks closed on October 1, 2004; no information is available on the number of bids submitted. Fishery-independent monitoring data show similar, somewhat disturbing trends in all gear. CPUE in bag seines declined from 95/ha in 1980 to 71/ha in 2003, although rates

have increased since 2000. Bay trawl CPUE declined sharply from 19/hr in 1982 to <6/hr in 2003, the second lowest catch rate on record. Gulf trawl catch rates declined but not as sharply. Mean width of crabs declined in bag seines and Gulf trawls, yet increased slightly in bay trawl samples.

Texas continued its multi-year project compiling and analyzing all available fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data for blue crab fisheries in Texas. Total mortality estimates developed for the 2001 regional FMP will be updated. The mortality estimate will be derived from length-based models such as Hoening (1987).

Other Business

B. Pellegrin requested each state provide their most current independent data set so that he could update the Gulf index for blue crabs. **S. VanderKooy** volunteered to work with him to coordinate the effort. The group would like Pellegrin to provide a progress report at the March 2005 meeting in Alabama.

S. VanderKooy asked each state to review the Derelict Trap Manual and send him updates accordingly.

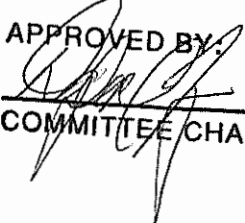
H. Perry asked for volunteers to assist in Louisiana's March 5 cleanup. Several members and staff expressed an interest in participating.

G. Graham reported that he has been performing inshore TED work at Bayou Caddy in Mississippi Sound. In two days, he snagged 10-11 heavily encrusted traps, which he estimated to affect 20% of the catch. He also informed the Subcommittee that long-time friend of the committee, Charles Moss, is not doing well.

Election of Chairman

H. Perry nominated **T. Floyd** as the next Subcommittee Chairman, and **V. Guillory** seconded the motion. **T. Floyd** was elected Chair by unanimous acclamation.

There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

APPROVED BY:  03/14/2004
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES - 55th Annual Meeting
Monday, October 11, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Mark LaSalle called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and asked members and guests to introduce themselves. The following members and others were present:

Members

Frank Courtney, FFWCC, Port Manatee, FL
Kevin Madley, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Bob Spain, TPWD, Austin, TX
Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Mark LaSalle, MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center, Biloxi, MS
Paul Cook, LDWF, New Iberia, LA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

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

Others

Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Johnathan Davis, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Jim Allen, Mississippi Power Company, Gulfport, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the March 15, 2004 meeting were adopted as written.

Administrative Report

J. Rester stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and NMFS sponsored a meeting in late April to discuss the impacts of liquefied natural gas facilities on fish stocks in the Gulf of Mexico. Approximately 12 LNGs were submitting regulatory applications for locations off Mobile Bay, Alabama to Corpus Christi, Texas.

He reported that NMFS Headquarters Office of Habitat Protection sponsored a national LNG meeting in July to discuss impacts of liquefied natural gas facilities on fish stocks throughout the country. While most of the LNG applications were for facilities in the Gulf of Mexico, the Northeast and Southwest are also receiving applications. **J. Rester** stated that he attended the eleventh meeting of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force on September 1. He reported that the 2004 hypoxic zone was 5,800 square miles which was a little above the 5 year average. A goal of the Action Plan was to reduce the size of the hypoxic zone to 2,000 square miles by 2015. **J. Rester** stated that the Council was in the process of drafting a public hearing draft of their EFH Amendment that should be completed by the end of the year. Finally, **J. Rester** reported that the Commission and states' derelict trap program project won a second place Gulf Guardian Award in the Government Category.

USFWS Money for Habitat Work

M. Lawal stated that Division of Federal Aid was now the Division of Federal Assistance, and that money was available for different types of habitat related work and conservation. **M. Lawal** stated that the three main programs were the State Wildlife Grant Program, the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, and the Landowner Incentive Program. She reported that the State Wildlife Grant Program was designed to assist states by providing federal funds for the development and implementation of programs that benefit wildlife and their habitat, including species that were not hunted or fished. She stated that both planning and implementation of programs were permitted. **M. Lawal** reported that the primary goal of the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program was the long-term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems. She stated that this goal was accomplished by helping states in their efforts to protect, restore, and enhance their coastal habitats. The Landowner Incentive Program was designed to assist states by providing grants to establish or supplement landowner incentive programs that protect and restore habitats on private lands, to benefit federally listed, proposed or candidate species or other species determined to be at-risk, and provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners for habitat protection and restoration. **M. Lawal** next discussed monetary matches to qualify for the grants. She stated that both the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and the Landowner Incentive Program require a 25% in kind match while the State Wildlife Grant Program requires a 25% match for drafting an action plan and required a 50% match for project implementation.

Video Production

J. Allen stated that he was a video producer for Mississippi Power. He stated that a video was not a good medium for displaying facts or figures. He stated that facts and figures get lost on the viewer, and the viewer loses focus of the video. He reported that when producing a video it was best to keep it simple. In order to keep everything simple, a video objective must be developed. **J. Allen** stated that if this objective would not fit on a car bumper sticker, then it needed to be revised. If the video tries to cover several issues, then each issue must also have an objective. He stated that a committee can

develop the video objectives, but the committee should not be composed of more than four members and the membership should not change over the course of video production. A concise, targeted video should capture the audience's attention within the first few minutes. He distributed a questionnaire that would help in developing the video. The questionnaire also would help in producing a video script. Video producers can provide better bids for video productions if a detailed script exists. **J. Allen** stated that most videos cost around \$1,500 to \$2,000 per finished minute. **J. Allen** stated that it was important to view samples of producer's work before hiring them. The Subcommittee decided to explore the habitat video concept by forming a committee to further develop the objectives of the video and pursue possible funding. The committee consisted of B. Spain, M. LaSalle, D. Frugé, P. Cook, and J. Rester. J. Rester stated that he would fill out the questionnaire and send it the other committee members for their comments.

Bottom Mapping in the Gulf of Mexico

J. Rester stated that the Habitat Subcommittee submitted a \$210,621 MARFIN proposal to map bottom habitat within the Gulf of Mexico. The objective of the project was to create and distribute a digital spatial database of bottom habitats on the continental shelf and slope in the Gulf of Mexico. The database will be created from the recovery, interpretation, and integration of existing data for this region. **J. Rester** stated that if unsuccessful, alternative funding sources would be explored. J. Rester stated that if funded, the project would start in January 2005, and he needed the Subcommittee to develop a list of possible representatives for a bottom-mapping committee that would be formed to develop analysis protocols and identify potential datasets for the project. **R. Adami** stated that Dr. Wes Tunnel at the Harte Research Institute might be a good committee member. **K. Madley** stated either Henry Norris or himself could represent FWRI on the committee. **P. Cook** stated Harry Roberts from LSU, Shea Penland from UNO, and Heather Finley might make good members. **S. Heath** stated that Will Schroeder from the Dauphin Island Sea Lab had done benthic mapping off Mobile Bay. Subcommittee members stated that the state artificial reef programs might be potential sources of data. **K. Madley** stated that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection also might have data from pipeline projects. The Corps of Engineers also might have pipeline data. **K. Madley** stated that the USGS Caribbean Research Lab in Gainesville might be able to provide data. He stated that a contact person would be Robert Brooks. **J. Rester** stated that he would let everyone know the outcome of the MARFIN proposal and also if they needed to contact any of the suggested members. He stated that he did not have a problem calling potential members, but if Subcommittee members knew the potential candidates it might be better for them to contact potential members and explain the project.

Habitat Web Site Discussion

J. Rester stated that the Subcommittee had decided in March to focus on stormwater retention, coastal restoration, wastewater treatment, erosion control, oyster reef restoration, and stream buffers as topics of interest for the habitat web site. He stated he sent out requests for projects within each state to be detailed along with links to project

contact information for users requesting more detailed information. He stated that the objective of the site was to provide information on innovative ideas or techniques being used in the topic areas. **B. Spain** discussed the information he brought concerning stormwater retention at the TPWD office in Austin, Texas. **K. Madley** asked whether we only wanted to post information on projects that had monitoring associated with them and were successful projects. **K. Madley** wanted to only showcase projects that followed best management practices. **F. Courtney** stated that he found several projects on a NOAA web site. He stated that since his agency was not involved in any of the projects, he was not sure if his synopsis of the project would be adequate. He felt it would be better to contact the parties involved with the project and ask them to provide the needed information. **P. Cook** reported that he had brought some information, but after hearing the discussion, he felt it needed some work before submitting it. **M. LaSalle** wanted everyone to provide the requested information to J. Rester by November 19, 2004. **K. Madley** wanted to include a links section to web sites with related information and a section on best management practices. **F. Courtney** reported that NOAA published a document on science-based restoration techniques that we should attempt to link with. **K. Madley** mentioned that calfish.org provides a wealth of fisheries and habitat information for the west coast.

Habitat Issues of Interest From Each State

Texas – **B. Spain** stated that TPWD was dealing with several applications for liquefied natural gas facilities across the coastal area. He stated that they were trying to determine possible impacts to fishery resources. **B. Spain** stated that the department continues to provide recommendations to the state water-permitting agency to secure freshwater inflow levels to protect Texas Bays. **B. Spain** also discussed recent seagrass restoration work that TPWD was undertaking. **R. Adami** stated that during 2004, 3,571 derelict crab traps were removed from Texas' waters. The derelict trap program has removed approximately 15,000 derelict crab traps in the past three years. He reported that the 2005 removal effort has been scheduled for the third Saturday in February. **R. Adami** reported that several shrimp farms on the lower Texas coast were infected with *Taura* virus this past summer. The farms were using non-disease resistant shrimp. Approximately 8 to 9 million pounds of shrimp were produced. **R. Adami** stated that this was the first time that *Taura* had been detected in Texas shrimp farms since 1999.

Louisiana – **P. Cook** stated that Louisiana was also dealing with LNG issues, but these were related to the siting of pipelines associated with the LNG facilities. **P. Cook** stated that the Louisiana Coastal Area Restoration Plan was seeking \$1.9 billion in funding in the 2004 Water Resources Development Act to help restore coastal Louisiana. **P. Cook** stated that Hurricane Ivan damaged oysters in Louisiana east of the Mississippi River. He reported that about 38% of the 900 acres of Cabbage Reef were damaged. This equated to 200,000 sacks of oysters killed due to the storm. In 2004, the Louisiana legislature created the Platforms for Mariculture Task Force. The Task Force was charged with assessing the economic feasibility of using offshore oil and gas platforms for mariculture.

Mississippi – **M. LaSalle** stated that the Mississippi coastal birding trail map was released recently. He stated that there was an ongoing push towards ecotourism in coastal Mississippi. **M. LaSalle** reported that there was also a greenway project in the Turkey Creek watershed. He stated that the Turkey Creek community was one of the oldest on the coast. The project was hoping to protect the watershed from potential future development. **M. LaSalle** also stated that Mississippi recently completed their AMRAT sampling for invasive species.

Alabama – **S. Heath** reported that Hurricane Ivan had severe impacts on coastal Alabama. He stated that Gulf Shores now had two major cuts between the Gulf and the bay. **S. Heath** reported that Alabama oyster reefs suffered about 80% mortality. Preliminary examinations showed that both inshore and offshore artificial reefs fared fairly well. He stated that the saltwater pipeline for the mariculture facility was destroyed. **S. Heath** also reported that there was tremendous beach erosion throughout coastal Alabama.

Florida – **K. Madley** reported that an update of a 1995 prop scarring report showed a 50% increase in prop scarring. He stated this was mainly due to increased population and an increase in the number of boats. **K. Madley** stated that the Gulf of Mexico Program would soon release a Gulf-wide status and trends report on seagrass in all Gulf States. He reported that the journal Estuaries would be releasing a volume dealing with hurricane impacts to marine resources. **K. Madley** stated that a reorganization of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission should help in providing a better science-based approach to management in Florida. **F. Courtney** reported that a derelict crab trap removal would take place in Tampa Bay in 2005.

USFWS – **D. Frugé** reported that the ACF water compact had fallen apart. He stated that there currently was no formal compact for water rights. **D. Frugé** stated that SARP with help from the Nature Conservancy was currently producing reports on four watersheds in the Southeast. The Pascagoula watershed was the only one that flowed into the Gulf of Mexico. **D. Frugé** stated that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation was sponsoring a special grant program to sponsor research in Mobile Bay.

Election of Chairman

D. Frugé nominated M. LaSalle to again serve as Chairman. The Subcommittee unanimously agreed to have M. LaSalle serve as Chairman with D. Frugé serving as Vice-chairman.

Other Business

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 55th Annual Meeting
Monday, October 11, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY: 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Call to Order

Chairman Jim Hanifen called the meeting to order at 12:40 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Mark Leiby, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, MS

Others

Mark McDuff, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Terry Henwood, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Read Hendon, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Karen Mitchell, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Joanne-Lyczkowski-Shultz, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Walter Tatum, Gulf Shores, AL

Staff

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

Adoption of Agenda

R. Waller will discuss the new invertebrate key that is now on the GSMFC website, and the Spring Plankton Survey under "Other Business". P. Choucair will discuss real time data under agenda item 10. **The agenda was adopted as modified.**

Approval of Minutes (08/04/04)

P. Choucair moved to approve the August 4, 2004 minutes as submitted. **M. Leiby** seconded the motion and it passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the Fall Plankton cruise started at the end of August and ran through September of this year. The rest of his report will be covered under other agenda items.

Status of the FY2005 Budget

J. Rester said the Senate mark for 2005 is \$1.75 million, but this is not a signed, final budget. He said the 2004 budget level should be used for planning purposes. The budget was discussed at the August meeting, but the Subcommittee did not resolve what to do with the \$20,000 from Florida. One option discussed was to purchase a hydro lab, but P. Choucair withdrew that request because the company decided not to let them field test the product. **M. Leiby** said that if the others states cannot use the \$20,000, Florida would find something to do with it. **R. Waller** asked if the money could be used to expand some surveys and **J. Rester** said yes, but this extra \$20,000 is for this coming year only. **J. Rester** said more funding might be available from NMFS in 2005 but final word has not been received. The three SEAMAP coordinators and chairman will have to meet to discuss the three-way split if extra funds are available through NMFS. **R. Waller** said Mississippi could use the money to increase plankton sampling. **M. Leiby moved to give the \$20,000 to Mississippi to be used for plankton sampling. S. Heath seconded the motion and it passed.** **R. Waller** and others involved in the plankton sampling will meet at GCRL soon to discuss how the cruise will be expanded with the \$20,000, and will then inform the Subcommittee. **R. Waller** said he would not have to discuss plankton sampling under other business now that they have the extra \$20,000. **J. Hanifen** said the Subcommittee would meet via conference call after the final budget is passed to discuss priorities if additional or less funding is received. **J. Rester** asked all the members to please submit their cooperative agreements as soon as possible.

SEAMAP ArcIMS Site Demonstration

J. Rester said P. Hoar was unable to attend this meeting so he will demonstrate the site. He said the first thing that needs to be discussed is how to standardize the database. He showed a word document on how he standardized the database, and then showed several examples of shape files that he created with different years, species, weights, environmental parameters, etc. He explained how to use the legends with the files to make comparisons and see different trends. **J. Rester** asked which environmental parameters the Subcommittee wanted to have available and they said all by cruise.

S. Heath said there needs to be a way to show the metadata for each cruise, especially if the cruise is not seasonal or if anything different from the standard SEAMAP protocols were done. Also, both the scientific and common species' names need to be in the drop down menu list. **M. McDuff** asked the Subcommittee for feedback on what else to include and what to change. It was suggested to put it out by survey. The "zero" catches also need to be shown. **J. Rester** will discuss this with P. Hoar to see how this can be set up. There will also be a comment box for explanations. **M. McDuff** suggested having a plot of effort. **S. Heath** said there needs to be a time factor with effort for the maps so

there will not be a misrepresentation of the data. He said the information needs to be conveyed up front so users will not think it is a simultaneous event.

J. Rester said there are four drop down menus with the species, either weight per hour or number per hour category, the year, and the specific cruise with the dates. **S. Heath** asked to have the actual months. **J. Rester** will have to discuss this with P. Hoar because he does not know how specific it can be. **P. Choucair** said all of the data could be obtained by clicking on a specific 10 x 10 block. **J. Rester** said he created three columns, one with the 10 x 10 minute square, and the number and weight per hour. He said everything is set up in Access and he is not sure if all the information can be brought in. **P. Choucair** said that would be a different table. **M. McDuff** said it could be by vessel also, not just survey design, and the bottom of the screen could show exactly when they were sampling. **J. Rester** said the legends are limited but he will check to see if all of this can be added.

R. Waller suggested having links to other sites with similar information. **J. Rester** said they have discussed providing a link to fishbase, which has all the information on the species, and explains what fishery-independent sampling is. **J. Rester** asked the Subcommittee if they wanted standardized legends across all years and they said yes. The Subcommittee said to show environmental parameters too. **M. Leiby** said it should state somewhere that this is just a snapshot of what is in the database. If users want to do analysis, they need to request the data.

J. Hanifen asked J. Rester to give all of the suggestions to P. Hoar, and after they are incorporated the Subcommittee can review it again. **M. McDuff** asked if the Subcommittee wants the shapefiles to be downloadable and they said no. **J. Rester** asked if the Subcommittee would like to do something similar to this for plankton to show effort by year and maybe some of the catches. **J. Hanifen** said to focus on finalizing the trawl data and then M. Leiby and J. Shultz can meet to design the plankton information.

J. Rester asked which species the Subcommittee wanted on the list. He said it takes time to create shapefiles for every single species. **R. Waller** suggested having the top ten dominant species that have been in the atlas and then any other important species of interest. **J. Hanifen** said to add *longspine porgy* to the list. **J. Rester** said there are 12 fish, 3 shrimp and 2 squid on the list. J. Rester commented that in discussions with personnel from NCDDC they seem to be dedicated to keeping this website up for the long haul.

Approval of Draft Protocols for Fishery-Independent Sampling

D. Donaldson said that in the packets are the revised protocols for the fishery-independent sampling and comments from Katy West from South Carolina. He reminded the Subcommittee that at the joint meeting in August, the components thought the protocols developed were too specific for each of the gears and they instructed him to make the protocols less specific. He compiled the comments into this handout. He said he was hoping to get approval from the TCC and then the Commission to proceed, but based on the comments from the South Atlantic, this may not happen soon.

P. Choucair recommended having the start and complete date and time in the station data. **M. Leiby** said the latitude and longitude should also have the completion time. **P. Choucair** asked to add the state code. **S. Heath** asked to add a paragraph under "Sampling Locations" that will pertain to inshore sampling.

J. Hanifen asked the Subcommittee to send all comments to D. Donaldson within two weeks. After all comments were incorporated, the work group would meet again to develop the protocols and then distribute them for another review.

New SEAMAP Database Demonstration

M. McDuff gave a demonstration on the new database. He discussed metadata, cruise reports, data documentation questionnaires, the data entry system, ITIS status and data access.

He then showed an example of a Cruise Report, which has a general introduction, objectives, methods, results, cruise participants, plot of station locations, and effort. He explained each section to the Subcommittee and stated a link can be set up with the plots that will have all of the information on the cruise. He said the Subcommittee needs to decide how detailed they want this to be. The Subcommittee agreed that the information would be very useful and asked him to set up the link. J. Rester will send out the forms for the cruise participants to fill out.

M. McDuff then discussed the questionnaire and showed a draft of what he perceives it to be. The main purpose of the questionnaire is to determine if anything other than the standard SEAMAP protocols are being done. The form asks for the survey name, data source, time frame, brief description of purpose, and description of current data collection protocols. It also asks how the survey collection procedures has changed over time; has the survey platform changed over time; has the survey gear changed over time; how are station locations selected; and to describe any factors that might explain the data, especially changes over time or differences with standard SEAMAP data collection. He then asked the Subcommittee if they wanted to add or delete anything on the form. **J. Hanifen** suggested the Subcommittee take the form and distribute it to all personnel involved in the surveys for their input, and then send the suggestions to M. McDuff with any changes, additions, or deletions.

M. McDuff said the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center produced the Metadata Repository, but they do not have the demo ready to show the Subcommittee. He said they have been working on the demo but they want to double-check it to make sure it is very general and generic before distribution. He said the planned items for the repository would have a general introduction page, a SEAMAP manual to describe the protocols, and an observer manual. It will describe the differences in specific collection protocols between each state and NMFS. It will have a reference codes table and the values for each code. He suggested having frequently asked questions and stated all the forms will be available online for print out.

The Data Element Registry or Manager is the data dictionary. He said it gives the name and meaning for each field and table. The system is designed to outline the structure of all the tables that are shared. He said the national metadata standard would still be used, but that this is in an easier to understand format. He then showed the database design, the table structures, the view structures, the codes, the statement of survey designs, the statement of all protocols, frequently asked questions, and then quality control, and how the data were processed. It has everything that is done before the data is distributed. It lets the user know where everything is located; it gives a short definition, history, and coordinates.

M. McDuff said the SEAMAP data entry system could be obtained at: <ftp://ftp.mslabs.noaa.gov/pub/SEAMAP/DES>. He said it is now working but some changes have to be made. He demonstrated how to open and link to the tables in the other database. He showed an example of a trawl cruise with the tabs along the top and said the tabs could be changed to the user's preference. He then demonstrated how the Access database could be used with GIS programs to show maps of the data.

M. McDuff then updated the Subcommittee on the progress of the new biocode and taxonomic system. He said the review and loading into the ITIS database is about 85% complete. He said that ArcDiscover is almost ready and he will demonstrate at the next meeting if the Subcommittee wants.

Data Tracking and Quality Control

P. Choucair said J. Rester asked him to discuss the problems they have found in the database. He said the topics for discussion will be to identify problems in the SEAMAP Database, discuss how the GSMFC can have a more active role in the SEAMAP database management, data summary procedures and statistical processes, and a new real-time data presentation.

P. Choucair distributed handouts with examples of station tables and discussed some of the problems he and J. Rester have found in the database. He said some station tables have comments and no ops codes, some has ops codes and no comments, some have comments such as "no fish, net not on bottom," but it has catch in the table, etc. He discussed the difficulties J. Rester and he had in standardizing the data. He asked if the data should be in the database if it has an ops code. **M. Leiby** said data is never removed and that the analysts know that if there is an ops code, it should not be used for analytical purposes. **P. Choucair** said he recommends having user defined fields as a way of determining if the data should be used or not. There was a lengthy discussion on these and other problems in the database. **J. Hanifen** stated that due to lack of time, all of these problems could not be resolved at this meeting so a data quality control meeting needs to be scheduled. He said the Subcommittee members and all personnel who work with the data should attend the meeting. J. Rester and M. McDuff will schedule a meeting before the end of the year and contact the appropriate personnel with details. **P. Choucair** said there also needs to be a way for each state to verify that all the data they have submitted is in the database. **M. McDuff** said he will build in views in the database so the sender can verify that all of the data that was submitted, is in the database. They

will also discuss the future role GSMFC should have in SEAMAP data management at the quality control meeting.

Data Summary and Statistical Analysis Discussion

P. Choucair stated that he felt the SEAMAP Subcommittee needed to examine the way they were doing these analyses. He stated that he had concerns over the way SEAMAP was currently calculating some of their catch rates. His main concern related to calculating catch rates with long tows and short tows and weighting the tows the same. He stated that when he started doing his analysis, he summed the time of two 30-minute tows and a 20-minute tow, 80 minutes total, summed all the organisms, divided the sum of the time, and calculated a catch rate for that area. This is different than the way SEAMAP currently does it. He showed tables demonstrating the differences between the two methods. He stated that for some of his examples there was a 276% difference. **P. Choucair** wanted to determine the better methodology and what was more statistically valid. He stated that currently SEAMAP was weighting a specific trawl, and if the 10-minute tow caught a lot more shrimp than the one-hour tow, it was contributing an equal amount as the 1-hour tow, when it should in reality be contributing 1/6 of the overall time. He stated that he thought the Subcommittee needed to start thinking about how to approach some of these new analyses.

J. Rester stated that SEAMAP does their analysis products (Atlas and real-time) different than the way **P. Choucair** does. **J. Hanifen** stated that he wanted to know why SEAMAP just could not say this was what we did and there were other ways to do it. **B. Pellegrin** stated that he wanted to comment on the two methods of estimating relative abundance, if this committee wanted to address the question it would really take a statistical exercise because that was essentially what you were trying to answer. He stated that the question was usually answered in two ways, and they were accuracy and precision. He stated that we would never know the accuracy because we do not know what the population parameter was that we were trying to estimate. He stated that differences exist, but we do not know which one was right. **B. Pellegrin** stated that we can examine precision by computing means or ratio estimators both ways and associated precisions and deciding that we would accept the one with greater precision. He stated that unless the subcommittee wanted to put the effort into a statistical exercise, the question could not be answered. He stated that he would feel comfortable with either way as long as it was stated the way that things were summarized. The Subcommittee agreed with that.

Election of Chairman

M. Leiby moved to re-elect **J. Hanifen** as Chairman and **S. Heath** as Vice Chairman. **R. Waller** seconded the motion and it passed.

Other Business

D. Waller showed the Subcommittee the invertebrate key developed by Harriet Perry which is on the GSMFC website. He said they have had positive input so far and people are offering more pictures to display.

J. Rester said he and P. Choucair will discuss different ways of presenting the real time data and will report to the Subcommittee in March.

T. Henwood announced B. Pellegrin has replaced him as the NMFS representative on the Subcommittee. Scott Nichols will send an official letter or email stating this in the near future.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES - 55th Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 12, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Corky Perret called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Joe O'Hop, FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS

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

Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Paul Sandifer, NOS, Charleston, SC
Mike Payne, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Empire, LA
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Johnathan Davis, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Wendell Lorio, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Cynthia Sarthou, GRN, New Orleans, LA
Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Bill Hogarth, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on March 16, 2004 were approved as written.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - **V. Vail** stated that Florida was affected by four hurricanes this past summer. She stated that fisheries have been affected. She noted that a lack of tourists was also hurting fishermen. She stated that a special session of the legislature would convene in December to examine the lack of tourism on the state budget. **V. Vail** stated that marine turtles, especially loggerheads, were expected to show some declines in nesting success this year and preliminary information from the volunteer network was confirming this trend. However, final counts on nesting success were not due until December. It was expected, with the erosion of beach areas in several key nesting areas of the state, that nest counts would show losses this year. **V. Vail** reported that the FWC underwent a major internal restructuring along functional lines on July 1, 2004. As part of the reorganization, researchers from all of the former divisions and institutes, including the Florida Marine Research Institute, were combined into the new Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. The intent was to separate the research and management functions within the Commission, and to facilitate communication and cooperation to promote greater opportunities for linkages between upland habitat, wildlife, freshwater, and marine research programs. **V. Vail** stated that Florida has instituted a dive permit in the spiny lobster fishery. The permit was needed since effort was shifting from the trap fishery to diving due to trap reduction programs. **J. O'Hop** stated that FWRI was investigating minimum flow levels in several rivers. FWRI was also updating mercury advisories for some fish species and that mercury monitoring was continuing. Finally, **J. O'Hop** reported that Florida has not seen any major red tides this year.

Alabama - **S. Heath** reported on Hurricane Ivan impacts to coastal Alabama. He stated that 80% of Alabama's public oyster reefs were destroyed during the storm. The newly completed saltwater pipeline at Alabama's mariculture facility was also destroyed. The Orange Beach charter boat fishery has been severely impacted due to dock damage and lack of tourists. **S. Heath** stated that Alabama has requested a 30-day TED exemption due to debris in the water. **S. Heath** stated that Alabama has done some surveying of artificial reefs to determine damage to them. He reported that both inshore and offshore reefs were largely unaffected by the storm. Concerning shrimp, **S. Heath** stated that Alabama had a very good brown shrimp season with high yields of large shrimp, but prices were depressed due to imports. Finally, **S. Heath** stated that the forecast for the white shrimp season looks promising.

Mississippi - **K. Cuevas** stated oyster season opened on October 11. Some of Mississippi's oyster reefs did not open due to rain from Tropical Storm Matthew. **K. Cuevas** reported that two tugboats were being cleaned for use in their artificial reef

program. The program was also looking to use concrete rubble. Mississippi was examining damage to their artificial reefs due to this season's tropical activity. **K. Cuevas** reported that the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources was examining lowering the minimum size of spotted seatrout from 14 to 12 inches. From the recorded public testimony, it appears that approximately half the fishermen were for the decreased size while the other half feels the minimum size should remain at 14 inches. **K. Cuevas** stated that three fly fishing records were broken over the summer, and eleven regular fishing records were also broken. Mississippi participated in AMRAT during late August. The rapid assessment sought to establish a baseline study for invasive species in Mississippi. Finally, **K. Cuevas** reported that Mississippi requested a TED exemption due to debris in the water due to Hurricane Ivan.

Louisiana - **J. Roussel** stated FIN data collection was running smoothly. The only snag was collecting flounder otoliths due to a lack of dealers selling flounder. **J. Roussel** reported that 2003 shrimp landings were above average. **J. Roussel** stated that the governor formed a Louisiana Wild Caught Shrimp Trade Action Advisory Council that was tasked with developing and recommending ways of funding the ongoing shrimp trade actions. Louisiana was applying for a TED exemption for areas east of the Mississippi River. Louisiana recently passed a one-year moratorium on crab licenses to examine limited entry in the fishery. **J. Roussel** reported that Louisiana's derelict trap clean up removed a total of 7,000 traps this year. Four additional clean ups have been scheduled for next year. **J. Roussel** stated that 55,000 cubic yards of oyster cultch were planted this year and initial indications were that spat set has been very good. Hurricane Ivan killed approximately 30% of the oysters on some reefs east of the Mississippi River. During the 2004 legislative session, the Legislature formed the Louisiana Mariculture Task Force that will examine using offshore oil and gas platforms for mariculture purposes. **J. Roussel** stated that a report was due in January 2005. **J. Roussel** reported that Hurricane Ivan damaged some oil and gas platforms and also damaged some pipelines that have been leaking over the past few weeks. The Louisiana Artificial Reef Program gained eleven more platform donations this year. The donations totaled about \$1.3 million. One of the eleven reefs was a deepwater reef. Previously, Louisiana had not expressed interest in reefs that were installed in waters over 400 feet, but Louisiana recently reexamined this issue. The deepwater reef donation was a partial removal with only the top portion being removed. Officials felt that enough structure was high enough in the water column to support fish biomass.

Texas - **J. Mambretti** stated that in July, the American Fisheries Society began a review of TPWD's fisheries division's science practices. In May, Coastal Fisheries celebrated its 30-year anniversary of its fishery dependent recreational harvest monitoring program. He reported that the last spring gill net season that ended in June, found Texas red drum and spotted sea trout populations in the best condition in 28 years. **J. Mambretti** stated that Coastal Fisheries continued data collection for a comprehensive biological and water quality study of tidal streams and continued its work with regional water planning groups to implement freshwater inflow recommendations in regional water plans. He reported that the final genetic research reports on bonnethead and blacktip sharks and shoal grass were submitted to USFWS. He stated that 152 concrete power poles were deployed as artificial reefs east of Corpus Christi. During this summer's bay shrimp season, TPWD

counted 293 shrimp boats on opening day, which is down 27% from last year. Finally, J. Mambretti stated that in June four Texas mariculture facilities were quarantined after tests confirmed Taura virus was present. Quarantines were lifted after the threat to native shrimp had passed.

NMFS – **B. Hogarth** stated that \$9 million were available for oyster rehabilitation in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida due to hurricanes and tropical storms. He stated that he would try to get Ellie Roche to contact all affected states in the near future.

USFWS – **D. Frugé** stated that Mitch King, the former Deputy Regional Director for the USFWS in the Southeast Region moved to Washington, DC in June as the new Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration. This was formerly known as the Division of Federal Assistance. Cindy Dohner, who was formerly the Southeast Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services, replaced Mitch in August as Deputy Regional Director. **D. Frugé** stated that the new Assistant Regional Director for Law Enforcement in the Southeast was Jim Gale. **D. Frugé** reported on the Rancho Nuevo sea turtle nesting project in Mexico. He stated earlier in the year, the project had lost its funding due to budget shortages in the Southwest Region's Endangered Species Program. However, following a strong show of support for the project from outside groups the FWS Washington Office did come up with the \$200,000 for funding the project this year. Funding for projects such as this could get a boost in future years through recent passage and signing of the Marine Turtle Conservation Act. Under the new law sea turtles will be added to the list of species eligible for funding under the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, and up to \$5 million were authorized to be spent annually for sea turtle conservation from the fund through 2009. **D. Frugé** stated that the current preliminary total number of Kemp's Ridley sea turtle nests recorded from Mexico beaches this year was 7,147. A total of 8,288 nests were reported for the entire season last year. There were also 42 nests recorded in Texas this year and possibly four in northwest Florida. **D. Frugé** reported that the FWS continues active participation in and coordination of the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP). The SARP Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator formally started duty this summer. The SARP Aquatic Habitat Conservation Work Group held a meeting in Atlanta on September 14-15 to discuss alternative approaches to developing an Aquatic Habitat Plan for the Southeast. **D. Frugé** stated that he began serving as the SARP interim coordinator in mid-March this year, and will continue in that role through the end of the calendar year.

Large Marine Ecosystem Management

P. Sandifer stated that the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy recently released a report on the oceans surrounding the U.S. The report found that the oceans and coasts were major contributors to the U.S. economy, ocean and coastal resources and ecosystems were in trouble, and the existing management structure was incompatible with the complexity of ecosystems. The report recommends ecosystem management as a better way to manage fisheries and other ocean inhabitants. **P. Sandifer** stated that an ecosystem-based management approach considers the complex relationships among air, land, water, humans, and other species and transcends jurisdictional boundaries. The report states that because of the connection between land-based activities and ocean

conditions, an appropriate geographic boundary for ecosystem-based management of ocean areas would combine large marine ecosystems with the watersheds that drain into them. **P. Sandifer** next reported on a recent workshop that was held to help define ecosystems and link coastal watersheds and large marine ecosystems across the United States into a system of ecosystem-based “eco-regions.” The workshop considered establishment of 10 large regional ecosystems based on large marine ecosystem delineation as a starting point for the offshore areas. **P. Sandifer** stated that within each of the 10 large regional ecosystems workshops would be held to help delineate sub-ecoregions within each regional ecosystem, review the inland boundary beyond the coastal watersheds, and develop ecosystem health and productivity indicators.

Presentation of the Striped Bass FMP

D. Frugé updated the TCC on the status of the Striped Bass FMP. He stated that progress has been slow, but all major sections were now drafted except for the summary, riverine impacts, and the genetic diversity section. He reported that the references, appendix, glossary, and figures were being cleaned up for the final edit later this year. **D. Frugé** stated that he hoped to present the FMP to the TCC prior to the Spring 2005 meeting. He reported that notable features of the update were an extensive geographic distribution section; the native range defined more restrictively than in the original FMP; extensive introductions outside native range; the concept of Gulf Race treated more extensively; a population structure and dynamics section added; extensive section on stock status and stocking added; and a section extensively describing Gulf river systems where striped bass occur.

Subcommittee Reports

Crab – **T. Floyd** reported that the Subcommittee discussed future derelict trap clean ups. Florida will hold their first blue crab trap removal November 20 in Tampa Bay. She stated that in 2005, Mississippi and Alabama are going to recommend no clean ups. However, state agencies would continue to monitor derelict trap numbers during low tides. In 2005, Louisiana and Texas will hold removal days from February 18 – 27. The Subcommittee discussed the use of fluorescent eyestalk pigments to age blue crabs verses carapace width correlations previously used. Florida was initiating this project based on University of Maryland protocols. The Crab Subcommittee also discussed the NOAA Cooperative Research Program and characterizing the Gulf commercial blue crab catch with respect to size, sex, and location. T. Floyd stated that this was a research need identified in the Blue Crab FMP. Another subject the Subcommittee discussed was the interaction of crab traps with diamondback terrapins. The Subcommittee will invite members of the diamondback terrapin workgroup to their next meeting to further explore the subject.

SEAMAP – **J. Rester** reported that that since the last meeting, the Spring and Fall Plankton surveys and the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish survey took place. He reported that it appears SEAMAP would be level funded in 2005. The Subcommittee reviewed a first draft of an ArcIMS web site being developed with the National Coastal Data Development Center. The interactive mapping site allows users to plot SEAMAP catch

rates of 17 selected species along with environmental data from 1982 to 2003. Revisions will be made to the site and it should be released to the public in the near future. The Subcommittee discussed protocols for fishery independent sampling. Finally the Subcommittee discussed problems with the SEAMAP database and possible ways to fix them. Jim Hanifen was again elected Chairman with Steve Heath serving as Vice-chairman.

Data Management – **P. Campbell** reported that FIN has collected 18,000 otoliths this year during their biological sampling. She stated that the Subcommittee decided to move forward with the registration tracking module. The Subcommittee discussed headboat sampling and decided to write a white paper on changes to the TIP program since the implementation of trip ticket programs. She also stated that the Subcommittee discussed the recent storms and their affect on sampling.

Artificial Reef – **R. Lukens** reported that that the Subcommittee met jointly with the ASMFC Artificial Reef Committee in May 2004. He stated that the second edition of the Guidelines for Artificial Reef Materials was now available in printed format and online. The regional artificial reef data entry program has been completed. The program was available online for the state artificial reef coordinators to enter their data directly into the system. The EPA has released their best management practices for preparing ships for artificial reef use. The state programs reviewed the document and concluded that the BMPs were workable. Each ship would have to be assessed individually for PCBs and bottom paint, but the guidelines give prospective ship cleaners a better idea of what has to be done to prepare a ship for artificial reef use. Ron Lukens stated that Jon Dodrill was elected Chairman of the Subcommittee.

Habitat – **D. Frugé** stated that Mark LaSalle was again elected Chairman. He stated that the Subcommittee received a presentation on different FWS programs that provided money for habitat related work. The Subcommittee received a presentation on video production where the Subcommittee learned the intricacies of producing a concise, targeted video. The Habitat Subcommittee was still interested in producing a habitat video discussing the importance of habitat. The Subcommittee also discussed the Gulf of Mexico bottom-mapping project that the Subcommittee has been developing. The objective of this project was to create and distribute a digital spatial database of bottom habitats in the Gulf of Mexico. The database would be created from the recovery, interpretation, and integration of existing data. A proposal was submitted for MARFIN funding. The Subcommittee also worked on a habitat web site that discusses innovative projects dealing with storm water retention, coastal restoration, wastewater treatment, erosion control, oyster reef restoration, and stream buffers.

Election of Chairman

S. Heath nominated C. Perret to serve as Chairman of the Technical Coordinating Committee. **J. Roussel** seconded this nomination and it passed unanimously.

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE
Minutes – 55th Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 12, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Vice Chairman J.T. Jenkins (Alabama) called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following lists attendance:

Members

Bruce Buckson, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Walter Chatagner, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Stephen Clark, USFWS OLE, Slidell, LA (*Proxy for J. Gale*)
Ronald Dearmin, NOAA OLE, Stennis Space Center, MS (*Proxy for H. Robbins, Jr.*)
John Thomas Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Karen Raine, NOAA/GCEL/SE, St. Petersburg, FL
G.W. "Bill" Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX

Members Absent

John Sherlock, USCG 8th District, New Orleans, LA

Staff

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

Others

Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Rob Beaton, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Larry McKinney, TPWD, Austin, TX
Joe O'Hop, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Ed Swindell, Daybrook Fisheries, Empire, LA

J.T. Jenkins expressed his gratitude to B. Buckson for his assistance during the recent hurricanes. The entire Committee also joined him in congratulating J. Mayne on the recent birth of his first child, a son.

Adoption of Agenda

J. Mayne moved to revise the agenda to allow item 7 *Presentation of Strategic Plan & Operations Plans to Commission* to be discussed prior to item 6 *Joint Enforcement Agreements*. B. Robinson seconded the motion, which passed.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the March 16, 2004 meeting held in New Orleans, Louisiana. **K. Raine** noted one correction on the first page (NOAA GEBL to NOAA GCEL). **B. Robinson** moved adopt the minutes as corrected, and **K. Raine** seconded the motion, which passed.

IJF Program Activity

Striped Bass FMP - **J.T. Jenkins** reported that the striped bass plan is wrapping up, and the final editing session has been scheduled for December 13-17, 2004 in Empire, Louisiana.

Sheepshead FMP - **J. Mayne** reported that the task force is progressing on the document quickly. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 7, 2004 in Texas.

Presentation of Strategic & Operations Plans to Commission

J.T. Jenkins noted that since their work session in July, C. Yocom has worked via e-mail with the group on formatting and slight editorial changes to the document. The document was included in the Commissioner's Briefing Book, and he will ask for their approval during his regular report to the Commission.

J. Mayne worked with Louisiana's public information department to develop a 12-minute video on cooperative enforcement efforts outlined within the Strategic Plan. The video was received positively, and the Committee then asked C. Yocom if it could be shown during their report to the Commission. Staff concurred and agreed to make the necessary arrangements. **W. Chatagner** moved that the Committee write thank you letters to the Louisiana's public information staff and supervisor for their efforts in producing the video. **B. Robinson** seconded the motion, which passed by acclamation.

W. Chatagner moved to approve both the *Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan – 2005-2010* and the *Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan: Operations Plan for 2005-2006*, dated July 2004, along with the video presentation to the Commission Business Meeting on Wednesday, October 13, 2004. **J. Mayne** seconded the motion, which passed.

National Criminal Identification Center/Homeland Security

At the July 2004 work session, the Committee discussed the inability of fisheries enforcement to fully utilize the NCIC computer system. Marine civil and administrative offenders along with vessel identification information should be tracked within this database, and marine enforcement officers should have access to that data. **J. Mayne** brought this problem to the attention of the Under Secretary of Border and Transportation Security, Asa Hutchinson, and explained the role of the combined authorities and jurisdictions represented on the LEAP/LEC. In performing their job duties, Mayne

explained that marine law enforcement patrols in the Gulf frequently board vessels and encounter persons violating marine resource regulations. Boarded vessels may have persons who attempt to disguise their identity often because of criminal backgrounds and/or illegal immigration. Some of the fisheries violations uncovered can be crimes and many are civil offenses and collectively reflect an ongoing pattern of miscreant behavior. For example, a person can board a fishing vessel in Maine and depart in Texas without any proper identification. Use of fictitious social security numbers and dates of birth are common. There is no law requiring persons offshore, especially in the fishing industry, to carry proper identification and produce it upon demand. The LEAP/LEC is concerned that the Gulf of Mexico is vulnerable to infiltration simply because current law enforcement tools such as NCIC have not been adapted to fight terrorism on this front. The ability to quickly identify an individual in remote settings (e.g., offshore fishing and shipping) is vitally necessary to protect officers offshore and is an equally important front line effort in homeland defense.

Mayne learned that the U.S. Department of Justice and FBI exercise jurisdiction over the NCIC, including the information maintained within the database and who has access to the data. Further, the FBI maintains an advisory policy board (APB) on criminal justice information services (CJIS) to advise the FBI. The current chairman of the CJIS APB is William M. Casey. **J. Mayne moved that a letter from the GSMFC be sent directly to these agencies and explain the need to maintain this information within NCIC and request marine enforcement officers have access to the data. Further, Mayne requested that the Commission extend an invitation to the CJIS APB to address this issue with the LEC at their March 2005 meeting. W. Chatagner seconded the motion, which passed by consensus.**

S. Clark noted that the USFWS recently mandated that all FWS violation cases must be accompanied by a full documentation report from the NCIC. **B. Buckson stated that this is a good option for shared information and moved that copies of NCIC related correspondence be sent to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Law Enforcement Committee and the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council's Law Enforcement Advisory Panel chairmen. J. Mayne seconded the motion, which passed.**

Joint Enforcement Agreements

J.T. Jenkins polled the group and found that all states have received their 2004 JEA funding, except Florida. **J. Mayne** noted that he requested a list of awarded JEAs with budgets. He will pass this information to the group upon receipt. **Jenkins** asserted that proposals for 2005 should be prepared now in order to get through the award process in a timely manner. **R. Dearmin** indicated that NOAA OLE does not expect a budget until March 2005.

The Committee discussed the upcoming reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. State committee members agreed to continue to work to obtain multi-year funding for the JEA Program within reauthorization language. The Committee also discussed their inability to enforce offshore litter violations. **J. Mayne moved that letters be sent to**

Senators Hollings and Stevens to add the appropriate language within the reauthorization to allow state enforcement officers the authority to enforce offshore litter violations. Please copy the southern legislative delegation. B. Robinson seconded the motion, and the motion passed by a majority of the membership (Mayne, Robinson, Chatagner, Buckson, Jenkins). As federal employees, K. Raine, R. Dearmin, and S. Clark abstained.

W. Chatagner noted that the volume of JEA cases handled by the states is not well known and is not easily accessible. B. Buckson asserted that state cases made during JEA patrols need a centralized database. If this information is not readily available, the status of success cannot be determined. Without hard statistics, Congress may be dissuaded from continued support of the program.

K. Raine agreed that sharing the data is helpful and requested the opportunity to report these issues to the new Southeast Region's Special Agent in Charge, Hal Robbins. B. Hogarth interjected that D. Jones, Chief NOAA OLE, is aware of the problem because questions are being asked about state cases. B. Buckson reiterated that a consistent method to track JEA efforts is needed; the program needs effective administration. The Committee may want to consider an administrative liaison between the states and NOAA. B. Hogarth stated that discretionary funds might be available to assist in solving these issues. The Committee agreed that field data collection in the Gulf should be uniform and will continue to work toward that goal and the establishment of a central database. All agreed that there is no doubt that JEAs are good for resource management, and once the administrative problems are solved, the program will be improved.

The Committee agreed to do further brainstorming during an informal session this afternoon. D. Donaldson will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's recently acquired scanning technology and database capabilities.

J. Mayne reported there is no funding for JEAs within the House mark; however, the House usually relies upon the Senate mark, which has \$17.1 million earmarked for the JEAs. The program has many positive selling points when working with Congress including its regional aspect and impacts on Homeland Security.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - B. Buckson reported that hurricanes in Florida have changed their mission considerably and presented a brief video showing his officers performing search missions using ATVs in affected disaster areas. Officers spent 40,000 hours (2,500 overtime) working during Hurricane Charlie. They continue to work with industry to develop a consistent methodology to measure nets. Once complete, codification of the process will begin. In Florida, the stone, blue crab, and lobster trap fisheries all use trap pullers, and it was recommended that recreational fishermen should not be allowed to possess trap pullers. Florida allows black seabass traps. Traps were being soaked and tagged as seabass traps, which resulted in early harvest of stone crabs. Black seabass traps are now prohibited during stone crab season. Florida is developing a blue crab management plan. The grouper rule is being rewritten to coincide with federal rules.

Alabama - **J.T. Jenkins** reported that hurricanes have also affected their work. Hurricane Ivan affected Baldwin County the hardest. About 48 houses were destroyed on Dauphin Island, and 110 homes were severely damaged on the island. More than 80% was lost on oyster reefs, which cancelled the pilot dredge program indefinitely on Portersville Bay. Their hurricane plan worked, and he was extremely pleased with his personnel. Officers distributed water and ice then provided assistance with cleanup. Alabama is working on a legislative package that may increase recreational license fees and clarify laws. Several areas within Mobile and Grand Bays were designated shrimp nursery.

Mississippi - **W. Chatagner** was thankful that hurricanes missed Mississippi and several agencies traveled to neighboring states to provide assistance. Unattended gill nets have become a problem in the state. The Commission is addressing a speckled trout size change. Three public hearing were held. There is a move to change the size limit from 14 inches to 12 inches. Oyster season is off to a good start, but there were several openings and closings due to rain. No wake buoys are being placed where appropriate. They are at full staffing for the first time in quite some time. Two bids were sent out for 23' vessels.

Louisiana - **J. Mayne** reported that Lt. Colonel Charlie Clark will retire on October 31, 2004. Two Lt. Colonel positions were created. Academy begins before the end of the year; they have 21 openings. The commercial mullet season begins Monday, October 18, 2004. Louisiana has experienced residency cases recently. A commercial finfish possession statute was passed in which all commercial requirements must be met. Several hundred seafood dealers were given educational materials. The Seafood Advisory Board has suggested routine drug testing for commercial fishermen. The Derelict Crab Trap Program will begin early in the year. Public oyster grounds have opened.

Texas - **B. Robinson** reported that 18 different recreational licenses were implemented this year. A \$5.00 fee is earmarked toward the Fisheries Center. Seniors will still enjoy a reciprocal agreement with Louisiana. Statewide contacts include:

Hunting & Fishing Contacts	834,771
Fishing Field Contacts	55,939
Issued Fishing Citations	11,692
Issued Warnings	2,473
Compliance Rate Rules & Regs	95.75%
Fish & Wildlife Events	1,336
People Reached	293,713

The Texas Game Warden Training Academy graduated 36 game warden cadets in June 2004. A game warden academy will begin in January 2005 with 40 applicants out of 750 applications processed. The total goal is to have 510 game wardens. Cadets receive onboard training on TED devices. The License Management Program (Limited Entry) instituted shrimp, bay, and bait licenses in 1995. TPWD provides an opportunity for holders of commercial licenses to apply to have their licenses purchased by the Department. In FY2004/2005 there were 915 bay and 915 bait licenses. The buy-back

program purchased 1,258 licenses (646 bay and 612 bait). With the \$3.00 surcharge on the saltwater stamp, the number of licenses is projected to be reduced to 734 by the end of 2007. The Texas JEA went into effect August 20, 2004. TEDs and BRDs are checked on a regular basis. State waters extend out to 9 miles and federal waters extend 200 miles out. Air patrol is conducted by two fixed-wing aircraft and one Jet Ranger helicopter. Two 65' patrol boats are used to deter and apprehend violators. A major problem encountered in Texas recently is the use of undersized trout as bait to catch shark on long lines.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – **S. Clark** reported that refuge officers were sent to Alabama and Florida to assist in the hurricane disaster areas. A FWS Academy class graduates October 22, 2004. Mislabeling is occurring in the shrimp fishery; imports come into the country and are relabeled as U.S. product. If the U.S. banned antibiotic chloramphenicol is present, Customs has the federal authority to declare the product unclean.

U.S. Coast Guard – No report.

NOAA General Counsel – **K. Raine** distributed NOAA GCEL Southeast NOVA quarterly reports from January 2004 through September 2004. She reported that NOAA is proposing amendments and technical refinements to its Civil Procedures, found in the *Federal Register* at 15 C.F.R., Part 904. These regulations, which govern NOAA's administrative proceedings for assessment of civil penalties; suspension, revocation, modification, or denial of permits; issuance and use of written warnings; and release forfeiture of seized property, have not changed since 1987. The proposed changes intend to: (1) conform the civil procedure rules to changes in applicable federal laws and regulations; (2) improve the efficiency and fairness of administrative proceedings; (3) clarify any ambiguities or inconsistencies in the existing civil procedure rules; (4) eliminate redundant language and correct language errors; and (5) conform the civil procedure rules to current agency practice.

Many of the changes are purely technical; however, some reflect significant changes in procedures: For example, under the proposed amendments:

- ♦ The regulations pertaining to notice of seizure will be amended to comport with the Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act of 2000 (CAFRA).
- ♦ Any attorney or other person will be required to enter a written notice of appearance when representing a person in an Agency enforcement matter or civil administrative hearing.
- ♦ The process by which appeals from ALJ decisions can be made to the Administrator of NOAA will be removed. Under the new regulations, all appeals will be made to Federal District Court.
- ♦ The ALJ will be authorized to enter a default judgment for failure to appear at an administrative hearing.
- ♦ The ALJ will be authorized to impose sanctions for failure to comply with the civil procedure regulations or any order issued there under.

- ♦ Respondents will be required to list all defenses, along with a summary of all facts and law supporting those defenses, in their Preliminary Position on Issues and Procedures.

NOAA invited comments from all interested parties. Submit comments on or before December 3, 2004 in writing to Meggan Engelke-Ros, Enforcement Attorney, Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation, 8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400, Silver Spring, MD 20910. For full information, see the *Federal Register*/Vol. 69, No. 196/Tuesday, October 12, 2004, pages 60569-60592.

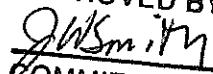
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement – **R. Dearmin** stated that the partnership between NOAA OLE and the states is critical. The government continues to downsize and contract with the states to handle resource enforcement responsibilities through the JEA Program. At this time, there are only 100 patrol officers in NOAA OLE. The cooperative efforts are readily apparent when viewing GCEL's quarterly reports. At this time, highly migratory species are a main focus of joint enforcement.

Other Business

The next election of officers will be October 2005.

There being no further business, W. Chatagner moved to adjourn and use the rest of the day to meet informally to discuss data collection technology (scanning, PDAs), centralized database, man-hour formulas, shift differential pay, and enforcement cost estimates. B. Robinson seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 55th Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 12, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

B. Wallace, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m., with the following in attendance:

Members

Rick Schillaci, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Steve Heath, AMRD/ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
David Kemmerly, Menhaden Advisory Council, Baton Rouge, LA

Others

Ed Swindell, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Jack Simpson, ABC Bait, Amelia, LA
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Johnathan Davis, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Cynthia Sarthou, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Judy Jamison, GSAFDC, Tampa, FL
Bill Hogarth, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions and Membership Review

B. Wallace led the introductions of the MAC and the audience.

Adoption of Agenda

C. Perret moved to accept the agenda as written, **S. Heath** seconded the motion, and with no opposition, the agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes (March 15, 2004)

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. R. Schillaci moved to accept the minutes as written, J. Mambretti seconded and the minutes were approved.

Status of 2004 Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishing Season

J. Smith of the Beaufort NOAA lab delivered his summary of the 2004 Gulf Menhaden season. At present, through September 2004, 429,399 metric tons or 1,412 million standard fish have been landed in the Gulf. This is down 7% from 2003 (462,422 mt) and down 18% from the previous 5-yr average (524,278 mt). April landings were a little slow due to windy weather with 13,500 mt menhaden reported. May and June were better but still windy with 63,000 and 71,400 mt of menhaden landed respectively. July saw fair weather and excellent fishing bringing in 104,200 mt which was the peak for landings for the season. August and September began to see the tropical cycle which plagued the Gulf for the remainder of the season with landings at 97,400 and 79,800 mt of menhaden. Looking at the 11-yr mean of 51,294 mt in the extended October season and discounting tropical storm Matthew which has obviously reduced fishing, it is predicted that the most the industry will land is in the neighborhood of ~481,000 mt which would be down 7% from 2003 landings (517,079 mt) and down 16% from 5-yr mean (575,000 mt). In 2004, 41 vessels operated in the Gulf with 38 regular steamers, 2 run boats, and 1 bait boat and although effort initially appears to be up substantially over last year, many of the boats only fished one day out of the week for most of September and October due to the tropical activity.

Atlantic Coast Update

J. Smith also reported briefly on the Atlantic menhaden season for 2004. Initial estimates place the landings somewhere in the range of 126,000 mt, which would be a 12% increase over last year. Fishing started very early and very strong by mid-May due to unseasonably warm and dry conditions. May catches were 400% higher than the 5-yr average, although this trend did not hold. 11 vessels fished in the Atlantic this year with 2 Gulf boats heading to North Carolina for the fall fishery. The stock status in the Atlantic indicates that fecundity biomass is well above targets and thresholds, mortality is near target and below threshold, but recruitment continues to be poor. The fecundity biomass benchmark is new for the Atlantic and the review of the stock assessment approved of its use. It is anticipated that Doug Vaughan may begin to use this measure of biomass in the Gulf assessment as well in the future.

Modifications to CDFR Forms

J. Smith provided the newly revised Captain's Daily Fishing Report or CDFR form that will include lat and long coordinates from GPS since the technology is now widespread in the fleet. In addition, some of the less useful fields have been eliminated or streamlined for simpler data entry and eventual scanning technology. It is hoped that next year, the new forms will be in place.

Update on Gulf Menhaden Stock Assessment

J. Smith gave a brief overview and status of Doug Vaughan's Gulf Menhaden stock assessment using data through 2002. The Gulf assessment was completed in conjunction with the Atlantic assessment and will recommend using similar benchmarks and targets as are used in the Atlantic. Triggers would include mortality and fecundity to begin to re-examine the fishery should they fall below certain targets and limits. Vaughan plans to submit the assessment this fall to the journal *Fisheries Research*.

LNG Facilities in the Gulf

J. Rester related information on the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants proposed throughout the Gulf. Several applications have been submitted for development. Four terminals currently exist in the US but the amendment of the 1974 Deep Water Port Act has resulted in a fast track for development of these facilities. Two types of processing exist to warm LNG back into a gas form. The super cooled liquid must be warmed after transport using ambient water resulting in outfall temperatures of -13 to -30 degrees F below normal. The Closed System Plant recycles the cooled outfall water back up to ambient temperatures using heat from the burning of natural gas. The system does not require the release of the cooled water back into the environment. The other type of LNG systems that are proposed, the Open System, continuously pumps new water into the plant and releases the chilled water back into the environment. It is estimated that 100 million gallons of water will be pumped through the open system each year, which would result in billions of fish eggs and larvae of recreational and commercial species becoming impinged annually. In addition, the super-cooled outfall water would significantly impact the temperatures of the surrounding waters or estuary and create a thermal shock situation. The GMFMC is supporting the closed loop system. NOAA and NMFS want better estimates of fish mortality and better EISs. The Coast Guard has been given the permitting authority for the offshore facilities and have created a one-year 'fast-track' response on all applications, state water/inshore facilities are still authorized by FERC and are a little slower in their response. However, the ability of these open systems to negatively impact all marine zooplankton, ichthyoplankton, and juvenile fishes and invertebrates is significant. No one has estimated the total impact to the estuaries yet from impingement and thermal shock. In addition to these biological and environment issues, the security issues surrounding these facilities are significant as well. Homeland security requires a no vessel buffer zone around these vessels when they approach port and entire harbors have been shut down elsewhere in the country to allow unloading. The economics of these activities shutting down all water commerce at various times have also not been considered well.

Therefore, the MAC formally requests the SFFMC take the appropriate action to address this issue either as a committee or by passing the concern of the Federal, State, and industry representatives on the MAC to the full Commission for their consideration and action. In light of the information provided, a closed system seems to be the only logical choice and the MAC supports any action that would convey this to the Coast Guard and the FERC before any further proposals are approved.

Pearl River Reservoir Status

J. Rester also updated the MAC on the status of the proposed Le Fleur Lakes/Reservoir project south of Jackson Mississippi. The Corp of Engineers is developing an EIS for the project which is not expected to be completed until 2005. **Rester** indicated that he would have ample time to notify the MAC and the Commission when the EIS is available for public comment.

Status of CDFR Data Entry

S. VanderKooy updated the group on the Commission's activities to enter data from the historical CDFRs housed at Beaufort. The Commission offered to assist NMFS to preserve this data and **VanderKooy** has worked with J. Smith on this for the last 5 years. The MAC was pleased to see that this substantial and valuable data resource was now available to managers and scientists and looks forward to its release to the public in the future.

Election of Chair

The MAC elected J. Smith to serve as Chairman this coming year as the rotation fell once again to the federal agency.

Other Business

With no further business, the MAC adjourned at 10:30 am.

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 55th Annual Meeting
Wednesday, October 13, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**

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

Members

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS (*Proxy for C. Brown*)
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for V. Minton*)
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Virginia Vail, 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

Jonathan Davis, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Gary Graham, W. Columbia, TX
Judy Jamison, GASAF, Tampa, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Wendell Lorio, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Ralph Rayburn, College Station, TX
James Weaver, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on March 17, 2004 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as amended. The minutes of the meeting held on August 24, 2004 will be presented for approval at the March 2005 meeting of the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

Borden Wallace, Chairman of the Menhaden Advisory Committee reported that J. Smith of the NMFS Beaufort Lab gave a summary of the 2004 Gulf menhaden season. Through September 2004, over 429,000 metric tons of menhaden were landed in the Gulf. This figure is down 7% from 2003 and down 18% from the previous five-year average. With the season ending November 1, it is estimated that the reduction industry will land approximately 481,000 metric tons of menhaden. In 2004, 41 vessels operated in the Gulf consisting of 38 regular steamers, two run boats, and one bait boat. Due to tropical weather activity many of the boats fished only one day out of the week during September and October. **Wallace** also reported briefly on Atlantic menhaden stating that landings would be somewhere in the range of 126,000 metric tons which is an increase of 12% over last year. Eleven vessels fished in the Atlantic this year with two Gulf boats heading to North Carolina for the fall fishery. **Wallace** also noted that the revised Captain's Daily Fishing Report (CDFR) will include latitude and longitude coordinates from GPS since the technology is now widespread in the fleet. Some of the less useful fields have been eliminated for simpler data entry and a look to eventual scanning technology.

Wallace reported that J. Smith gave an overview of the Gulf menhaden stock assessment using data through 2002. The Gulf assessment was completed in conjunction with the Atlantic assessment and will recommend using benchmarks and targets similar to the Atlantic. D. Vaughn of NMFS Beaufort Lab plans to submit the assessment this fall to the journal *Fisheries Research*.

Wallace reported that J. Rester spoke to the Advisory Committee on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants proposed throughout the Gulf. Rester explained the processes used to transform LNG back into a gas form. Several applications have been submitted for development. Based on discussion held during the Menhaden Advisory Committee meeting the following motion was passed: **The MAC formally requests the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee take the appropriate action to address this issue either as a Committee or by passing the concern of the federal, state and industry representatives on the MAC to the full Commission for their consideration and action. In light of the information provided, a closed system seems to be the only logical choice and the MAC supports any action which would convey this to the Coast Guard and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) before any further proposals are approved.**

Wallace reported that J. Rester updated the MAC on the status of the proposed LeFleur Lakes Reservoir project south of Jackson, Mississippi. The Corps of Engineers is developing an EIS for the project which is not expected to be completed until 2005. Rester indicated that he would have ample time to notify the MAC and the Commission when the EIS is available for public comment.

Wallace reported that S. VanderKooy updated the group on the data entry project of CDFR's. The Commission has provided temporary staff to complete this project in conjunction with NMFS. This data is now available to managers and scientists and will be released to the public in the future.

Wallace reported that J. Smith was elected Chairman for next year.

L. Simpson noted that J. Rester, acting on behalf of the GSMFC and the GMFMC, will continue to keep the S/FFMC apprised of the LNG situation.

M. Ray moved to accept the Menhaden Advisory Committee report and to send their request concerning LNG in the Gulf of Mexico on to the full Commission for their discussion and action. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel Report

S. VanderKooy reported that K. Cuevas of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) demonstrated side scan sonar and gave several examples of how this technology is being utilized by the MDMR. VanderKooy reported that Drs. Thomas and Julia Lytle of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory gave a presentation on the value of warm-water marine fish to human health by consumption of Omega 3 fatty acids. They also presented information on species that are regularly consumed in other parts of the world, however not in North America. If Americans accepted these species, the pressure on popular species could be reduced. The Lytles offered to conduct a taste test with a few of these species at the spring meeting of the C/RFAP.

VanderKooy reported that R. Lukens of the GSMFC discussed aquatic invasive species and the status of activities of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel. This Panel is one of several which make up an advisory committee to the National Aquatic Nuisance Task Force. All five Gulf states are in some phase of developing a state plan to address invasive species. The Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel has completed the first draft of a five-year strategic plan which outlines a variety of activities to be addressed by the Panel over the next five years. VanderKooy also reported that Lukens presented an overview of the contents of the second edition of the Artificial Reef Materials Guideline document. Lukens also updated the Advisory Panel on the availability of decommissioned military ships from MARAD and the Navy.

VanderKooy stated that J. Rester gave a report to the Advisory Panel on the status of the LNG plants in the Gulf of Mexico. As with the Menhaden Advisory Committee, the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel would like to be kept informed as these facilities progress. Both the Recreational and Commercial groups are concerned regarding the impacts these LNG facilities would have on fish populations in the Gulf.

VanderKooy reported that D. Donaldson discussed the issue of possible double counting from federal log books and state trip tickets. This question was raised by members of the Advisory Panel because of concern for possible overestimates in landings. P. Barber would like to see a flow chart to trace the landings through both systems to see if and how the numbers are reconciled.

VanderKooy updated the C/RFAP on the activities in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries program noting that two FMP's are in final stages of development. The Otolith Manual

is being revised by the Work Group, which now includes members from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The C/RFAP requested that the next meeting include information on the log book/trip ticket issue, as well as Marine Protected Areas. Staff will also arrange to have a presentation on "truth in labeling" for seafood products at the spring meeting. Grey Cane was re-elected as Chair of the Recreational Panel and Phillip Horn was re-elected Chair of the Commercial Panel.

M. Ray moved to accept the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FIN Data Program Update

The S/FFMC members were provided with a list of proposed activities for 2005 for the Fisheries Information Network (FIN), as well as a list of current activities for 2004. D. Donaldson reported that there would be a new activity for 2005, trip tickets in Texas. Other recurring activities are recreational data collection, headboat and menhaden sampling, data management system, biological sampling, and pilot at-sea headboat sampling in Alabama. Donaldson reported that the Senate mark proposed an increase in the GulFIN line item of \$1 million to \$4.5 million. The S/FFMC discussed ways to utilize these funds if they are made available, however the Committee agreed to wait before making a decision until Congress has acted. The Committee also discussed head boat sampling in Alabama and biological sampling. L. Simpson suggested that after Congress takes action the S/FFMC will meet either via conference call, during the Billfish meeting on November 30, or at a called meeting of the S/FFMC. J. Roussel requested that dollar amounts for biological sampling by species by state be provided at the next meeting.

Donaldson reported on using recreational licenses as a sampling frame. This method is much more efficient than random dialing which would translate into better estimates. Donaldson reviewed the marine recreational fishing license matrix that was developed by FIN and noted that all the Gulf states collect the critical elements, with the exception of Florida which does not require fishing licenses for Florida residents fishing from shore. FIN has decided to begin compiling data from the state recreational fishing licenses and will begin checking for completeness. Donaldson will report to the S/FFMC at the spring meeting on the progress of this activity. Donaldson also noted that preliminary studies on the West coast have indicated that three times the number of samples can be realized for the same amount of money, as well as better precision for effort estimates.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy reported that there were two Technical Task Forces (TTF) currently active, the Sheepshead TTF and the Striped Bass TTF. VanderKooy reported that the Sheepshead Task Force would meet again in the near future. A number of sections are complete for the Sheepshead Profile. Once the profile is reviewed by the S/FFMC the determination will be made whether a stock assessment is in order and management

recommendations for the fishery in a full FMP. VanderKooy reported that the Striped Bass TTF has been working on the revision of the original Striped Bass FMP. The TTF is reviewing the final draft of the FMP and plans to meet later this fall to finalize the Plan.

VanderKooy reported that the Crab Subcommittee and staff continue to work with the Office of Protected Resources and Sea Grant to provide outreach to commercial crab fishermen regarding gear interactions with dolphins. The crab pot fishery was in jeopardy of being reclassified from a NOAA Category III to Category II based on interactions with marine mammals. The fishery was not re-classified under the condition that the states, Sea Grant, and GSMFC work with NOAA to educate fishery participants. VanderKooy reported that these outreach materials would be made available to the public in early 2004, however delays and personnel changes in the NOAA office have slowed the development process. The Crab Subcommittee is also going to begin revision of the blue crab stock assessment.

VanderKooy reported that the Otolith Manual was presented at the Third International Symposium on Fish Otolith Research and Application in July 2004. Two hundred fifty CD copies and twenty hard copies of the manual were distributed to meeting participants. VanderKooy reported that there is interest at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to incorporate the Gulf standards outlined in the manual with their own. The Otolith Work Group is being reactivated to begin adding new species and techniques to the Manual. When the Work Group meets there will be a representative of the ASMFC present to begin coordination with the Atlantic states.

VanderKooy reported that the Law Enforcement Committee continues to meet monthly via conference calls with staff providing administrative support. The Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel continues to meet twice a year and provides input and review to FMPs in development.

VanderKooy reported that 80,000 Captains Daily Fishing Reports (CDFR) have been entered into the database. All this data is housed on the Commission's Oracle system and will be available to the public next year on the GSMFC website. **VanderKooy** reported that temporary employees have also scanned historical publications for the GSMFC and these are available as PDF files on the GSMFC website.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) and NMFS sponsored a meeting in April to discuss the impacts of LNG facilities on fish stocks in the Gulf of Mexico. NMFS will sponsor a national meeting in July since these facilities may be installed in other parts of the country.

Rester reported that he attended the 11th meeting of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force. It was reported at this meeting that the hypoxic zone is now covering 5,800 square miles. A major objective of the Task Force is to reduce the hypoxic zone to 2,000 square miles by 2015.

Rester reported that the GMFMC is in the process of drafting a public hearing draft of their EFH Amendment. A meeting will be held in November to finalize a public hearing draft of the EFH Amendment and after it is finalized it will go out for public review in early December.

Rester reported that the Habitat Subcommittee submitted a MARFIN proposal to gather data from various sources in order to map bottom habitat in the Gulf of Mexico. The objective of the project is to create and distribute a digital database of bottom habitats on the continental shelf and slope of the Gulf of Mexico.

Rester reported that the GSMFC and Gulf states Derelict Trap Program won a 2nd place Gulf Guardian Award. The Gulf of Mexico Program sponsors this award.

Other Business

D. Frugé of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) distributed information from the Federal Assistance Division. This literature is a general overview of the Sportfish and Wildlife Restoration Program.

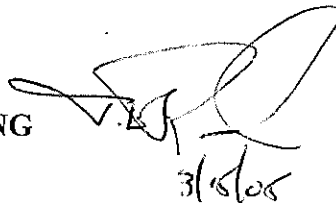
L. Simpson requested names for possible membership on the C/RFAP. **M. Ray** stated that Texas hopes to have candidates names soon.

Election of Chairman/Facilitator

J. Roussel was re-elected Chairman. L. Simpson was re-elected Facilitator.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 55th Annual Meeting
Wednesday, October 13, 2004
Biloxi, Mississippi**



3/1/05

Chairman Billy Hewes called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. **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

Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Barnett Lawley*)
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Robert L. Cook*)
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)
Billy Hewes, Mississippi Senate, Gulfport, MS
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for Dwight Landreneau*)
Ginny Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Administrative Officer, 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
Gayle Jones, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

James E. Weaver, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Anne Lange, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Mike Payne NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
G. W. "Bill" Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX
J. T. Jenkins, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Dale A. Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Dennis Klemm, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Ralph Rayburn, TX Sea Grant, College Station, TX
Judy Jamison, G&SAFF, Tampa, FL
Wendell Lorio, MSU, Stennis Space Center, MS
Therese Conant, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Springs, MD

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held March 17, 2004 were reviewed. **C. Perret moved to approve the minutes. M. Ray seconded. The minutes were approved as presented.**

GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – **J. T. Jenkins, AMRD**, reported that the LEC met On Tuesday, October 12, 2004. All agencies were represented except the U.S. Coast Guard.

He presented a video that Jeff Mayne and the Louisiana Public Information Department developed on cooperative enforcement efforts outlined within the LEC Strategic Plan. The Committee was very pleased with the result and requested C. Yocom write thank you letters to the development staff and supervisor.

He provided copies of the recently updated *Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan for 2005-2010* along with the *Operations Plan for 2005-2006* which was also updated. They requested the Commission's approval of these documents. **C. Perret moved to approve the documents. G. Vail seconded. The documents were approved as presented.**

At their July 2004 enforcement work session, the Committee discussed the inability of all members of fisheries enforcement to fully utilize the National Criminal Identification's Center (NCIC) computer system. Marine civil and administrative offenders along with vessel identification information should be tracked within this database, and marine enforcement should have access to that data. The U.S. Department of Justice and FBI exercise jurisdiction over the NCIC. The Committee asked the Commission to write a letter to these agencies and explain the need to maintain this information within NCIC and request marine enforcement officers have access to the data. Copies of the letter should go to the Atlantic States Law Enforcement Committee and the South Atlantic Council's Law Enforcement Advisory Panel.

The LEC will invite the appropriate individuals from the Department of Justice and FBI to the next Committee meeting to further discuss this issue.

The LEC discussed the upcoming reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Committee members are working to obtain multi-year funding for Joint Enforcement Agreements within the reauthorization. They also discussed their inability to enforce offshore litter violations. The LEC asked the Commission to write letters to Senators Hollings and Stevens to add appropriate language within the reauthorization to allow state enforcement officers the authority to enforce offshore litter violations. C. Perret and L. Simpson did not think the Magnuson Stevens Act was the appropriate

vehicle to address this issue. L. Simpson will research other legislation to see if other legislation may be a more appropriate legislation to enforce offshore litter violations.

The LEC continues to struggle to maintain a central database to house JEA activity reports from the states. State cases made during JEA patrols are sent to NOAA. The volume of cases that the states are handling is not well known and cannot be easily accessed. B. Hogarth noted that discretionary funds might be available to assist in solving these issues. All agreed the program is beneficial to resource management. The committee agreed that field data collection in the Gulf should be uniform and will continue to work toward that goal and the establishment of a central database.

C. Perret moved to approve the report and to write the requested letters. M. Ray seconded. The motion was approved.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report - C. Perret reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, October 12, 2004. The TCC received status reports from the various states, NMFS and FWS. The following subcommittees reported to the TCC: Crab; SEAMAP; Data Management; Artificial Reef; and, Habitat. He briefed the Commissioner's on their activities and stated that the subcommittees requested no action at this time.

Other presentations to the TCC included reports from the various states; and, a report on large marine ecosystem management.

Without objection, the TCC report was approved.

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report – L. Simpson reported that the S-FFMC met earlier in the day. The Committee received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC); Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel (CRFAP); and updates on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program, Fisheries Information Network Programs, and Habitat Programs.

Joe Smith presented the annual review and upcoming season forecast for the menhaden industry to the MAC. Landings as of September 2004 were 429,399 metric tons, which is down 7% from 2003, and down 18% from the previous 5-year average. Vessel participation included 41 vessels. He predicted that in 2004 there should be 4 factories operating in the Gulf with 43 vessels. J. Rester reported on Liquefied Natural Gas plants in the Gulf of Mexico. The MAC formally requested that the S-FFMC request the appropriate action from the full Commission regarding this issue. In light of the information provided, a closed system seems to be the best choice and the MAC supports any action which would convey this to the USCG and the Federal Regulatory Commission (FERC) before further proposals are approved. **C. Perret moved to direct staff to write a letter documenting concerns on open loop systems from a fishery, water quality, and habitat standpoint on proposed LNG facilities. M. Ray seconded. J. Roussel amended the motion to include language that would site LNG facilities in order to minimize impacts on any fishery activities including port operations.** The staff of the Commission should use their judgment as to who should get the letter, but at

the least it should go to the USCG and FERC, with copies to Congressional delegations. This letter could go out everytime a new LNG facility is permitted.

The Commissioners were concerned that the LNG facilities using open loop systems will adversely affect commercial and recreational fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore the Commission opposes the use of open loop systems and recommends the use of closed loop systems in all LNG facilities. In addition, facilities should be sited so that they are unlikely to have operational impacts on port facilities. **The motion passed unanimously.**

NMFS Southeast Regional Office (NMFS/SERO) Report

J. Weaver reported on behalf of the NMFS/SERO. He extended regards on behalf of Roy Crabtree who was unable to attend due to a meeting conflict with the Gulf Council.

He reported that due to Hurricane Ivan, NMFS had filed a *Federal Register* notice to provide a TED exemption due to debris in the water for state waters in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana east of Grand Isle. The exemption provides a 55-minute tow time from October 12 –31, and a 75-minute tow time from November 1 – 11. The exemption will end at 11:59 am, November 11.

In regards to NOAA Fisheries budget for FY05, he stated that NMFS, as well as other federal agencies, are operating under a continuing resolution.

In regards to personnel issues, he reported that Protected Resources now has a full staff. Dave Bernhart has been appointed as Assistant Regional Administrator; Bob Hoffman will serve as Branch Leader for Endangered Species; and, Vicki Cornish will be Branch Leader for Marine Mammals.

J. Weaver stated that he has assumed the position of Assistant Regional Director of Operations Management and Information Technology (OMI). OMI consolidates several diverse functions with the region under one division. Of particular interest to the Commission are Federal Permits and Federal Grants, among other items.

Other personnel changes include a new Branch Leader for Constituent Services, Carolyn Sramek. She will be dealing with fishery permits information management systems.

Ann Lange reported on behalf of the Habitat Conservation office located in NMFS headquarters. She took the opportunity to express their appreciation for the cooperative work the Commission has been doing relative to habitat issues and, in particular, the work of Jeff Rester.

C. Perret stated that he was appreciative of NMFS efforts in responding to the current natural disaster issues that have created problems for the states and fishermen alike. He stated that it was the fastest and most efficient response he has ever seen from NMFS.

USFWS (FWS) Region 4 Office Report

Doug Frugé reported on behalf of FWS Region 4. He reported on several personnel issues. Mitch King, the former Deputy Regional Director for the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in the Southeast Region moved to Washington, DC in June as the new Assistant Director for Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration. Mitch was replaced in August as Deputy Regional Director by Cindy Dohner, who was formerly the Southeast Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services. Bob Cooke, the former Chief of the Federal Assistance Division in the Southeast Region, retired at the end of May. Mike Piccirilli has taken Bob's place in that position. The new Assistant Regional Director for Law Enforcement in the Southeast is Jim Gale. Mr. Gale has been with the Fish and Wildlife Service for 12 years.

He reported that the FWS was going to have to cut the funding for the Rancho Nuevo sea turtle nesting project in Mexico earlier this year due to budget shortages in the Southwest Region's Endangered Species Program. However, following a strong show of support for the project from outside groups the FWS Washington Office did come up with the \$200,000 for funding the project this year. Funding for projects such as this could get a boost in future years through recent passage and signing of the Marine Turtle Conservation Act. Under the new law sea turtles will be added to the list of species eligible for funding under the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, and up to \$5 million were authorized to be spent annually for sea turtle conservation from the fund through 2009. That fund was specifically set up to support projects such as the one at Rancho Nuevo. About \$25 million in federal funds have been provided to date in the fund, and these have been matched by over \$80 million in contributions from cooperating entities. While passage of the Sea Turtle Conservation Act doesn't guarantee the Rancho Nuevo project will continue to be funded, it should offer a good potential source of funding for it.

The current preliminary total number of Kemp's Ridley sea turtle nests recorded from Mexico beaches this year is 7,147. A final report on the nest counts is due by the end of the month but the final total is not expected to be much different from this figure. A total of 8,288 nests were reported for the entire season last year. There were also 42 nests recorded in Texas this year and possibly four in northwest Florida.

The FWS continues active participation in and coordination of the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP). All signatures of current partners were secured on the Memorandum of Understanding this summer. The SARP Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator formally entered duty this summer. The SARP Aquatic Habitat Conservation Work Group held a meeting in Atlanta on September 14-15 to discuss alternative approaches to developing an Aquatic Habitat Plan for the Southeast. The SARP is currently seeking funding to hire a full-time coordinator. **D. Frugé** stated that he has been serving as the SARP interim coordinator since mid-March this year, and will continue in that role through the end of this calendar year.

G. Vail moved to request Commission staff to write a letter to FWS Director with copies to the Southwest Regional Director showing support of the Marine Turtle Conservation

Act, and particularly support of continued FWS support of the Rancho Nuevo program. M. Ray seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

FY 2005 NMFS Budget

L. Simpson provided the Commissioners with the Senate report on the NMFS FY2005 budget. He stated that every budget year is unique. This year the House came out early with a total amount mark, not a line item mark. The Senate came out with their mark for marine fish activities on September 15. He pointed out items of interest to the states and the Commission. Some of the items of interest were Anadromous Grants at \$2.1 million; Fisheries Statistics; Gulf Fisheries Information Network at \$4.5 million (up \$1 million over last year); Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants at \$2,590,000 to the states and \$750,000 to the three Commissions; RecFin at \$3,455,000; red snapper monitoring and research at \$5 million; Regional Councils at \$15,547,000; Law Enforcement cooperative agreements at \$17,383,000; and, SEAMAP at \$1,750,000. He also pointed out that laboratories and joint institutes of the Great Lakes were marked at \$19,510,000; National Sea Grant College Program at \$66.675 million; Aquaculture education program at Cedar Point, MS at \$2 million; and NOAA marine aquaculture program at \$1 million.

L. Simpson reported on other programs of interest that included NOAA Planning, and Program Integration (PPI), which has been recommended for \$4 million, \$2 million above FY2004 funding; Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund which has been recommended for \$99 million, \$9,948,000 above last year; and, the Fishermen Contingency Fund which is recommended at the level funding of \$956,000.

He will continue to keep the Commissioners informed on budget issues.

FY 2005 USFWS Budget

Doug Frugé presented budget information that showed trends in FWS budgets for the period FY2001 through FY2005. The four major categories are: resources management; construction; land acquisition; and grant programs. He provided detailed budget information for each category that was recommended by the President. He pointed out that under resource management, fisheries experienced slight increases up to FY2004, but in FY2005 there is a decrease.

He briefed the Commissioners on funding under the grants program. The Multi-National Species Conservation Fund could potentially be used to fund sea turtle research in Mexico. It has continued to increase over the last four years.

He discussed fisheries funding in detail over the last ten years. It has increased somewhat, although the President's request for this year is down. He pointed out the total percentage that the Southeast Region gets has dropped. Some of the decrease is due in part to hatchery closures. Although the total Hatchery Operations have increased over the last 10 years, the total percentage that the Southeast Region gets has dropped.

He reported that the total budget for FWS Fishery Resource and Coordination has steadily increased over the last ten years. Again, he pointed out that the total percent that the Southeast Region gets continues to drop.

C. Perret expressed concern over the continued decreases in fishery funding for the Southeast. He asked which region gets the most? D. Frugé replied that it was the Northwest Region.

Invasive Species Program

R. Lukens updated the Commissioners on his activities related to invasive and non-indigenous species. He provided the Commissioners with copies of a *Draft Strategic Plan for the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species – 2005-2009*; and copies of a *Draft Rapid Response Plan for the Gulf of Mexico Region* for their review. He summarized activities of the Gulf of Mexico Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. One of the top priorities of the Panel are to assist the states in developing aquatic nuisance species plans. Currently all five Gulf States have some activity under way.

The *Draft Strategic Plan for the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species – 2005-2009*, will be reviewed and considered at an upcoming Panel meeting to be held November 8-10, 2005. R. Lukens goal is to have the plan finalized at that time.

Sea Grant funded the Draft Rapid Response Plan for the Gulf of Mexico Region. He is hopeful that this plan will be finalized by the end of December 2004. It outlines roles and responsibilities for different agencies and organizations in the event that some kind of rapid response is needed to the siting or collection of a non-native species that may prove to be a problem. He identified the various state personnel involved in this project.

One of the outcomes of the rapid response project was the formulation of the Alabama-Mississippi Rapid Assessment Team (AMRAT). Within the last year, AMRAT sponsored a rapid assessment project in the Mobile Bay area that was very productive. This past September another project was conducted in the Mississippi Sound. There was in excess of 500 samples taken and over 125 scientists involved.

He reported that the National Aquatic Nuisance Task Force, of which he is a member, will meet November 16-17, 2004. In addition, all Regional Panel coordinators will meet at that time.

Status of Billfish Project

R. Lukens briefed the Commissioners on the Atlantic Billfish Research Program that will support research and data collection on billfish, as these activities enhance billfish conservation, management, and rebuilding efforts, and provide updated information for stock assessments. NMFS had been unable to get these funds distributed and the Commission agreed to assist NMFS with administration, coordination and distribution of

funds. A portion of the \$1,888,000 will be used to administer the program, with the major portion, \$1.8 million going toward research sub awards.

The Commission sent notification of the availability of these funds out to a large distribution list. It is also posted on the Commission's website. We have received a lot of hits on our website and several phone calls of interest. As of yet, we have not received any proposals. The deadline is Friday, October 15, 2004. He briefly described the process involved in reviewing the proposals after they are received in the Commission office.

The proposals will be sent to the NMFS/SEFC in Miami for technical review. Following that review they will be sent back to our office for review by our panel on November 30, 2004. At that time they will be reviewed, the technical reviews will be presented and the panel will make decisions about which proposals will be funded. Sub awards should be ready to send out of the Commission office by January 1, 2005.

NMFS Sea Turtle Conservation Strategy

Therese Conant, NOAA Fisheries, Office of Protected Resources presented strategy for sea turtle conservation and recovery in relation to Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico fisheries. Her presentation covered a new approach to address sea turtle bycatch across similar gear types rather than fishery by fishery. Key elements include evaluating the significance of bycatch by gear type; developing solutions to reduce sea turtle bycatch; and, implementing and evaluating solutions. This strategy is needed to conserve and recover sea turtles.

This type of strategy would increase knowledge about where, when and how best to reduce sea turtle bycatch. NOAA fisheries hopes to gather information and review fishery characterizations and other information on fisheries, sea turtles, and gear to help fill in "information gaps". This will help with the development of alternatives for reducing sea turtle bycatch and implement effective management.

Status Report on U. S. Commission on Ocean Policy

L. Simpson stated that he continues to follow this issue because it has the potential to shape fisheries in the future. He provided copies of the *Summary of Changes to the Preliminary Report as Approved by the Full Commission*. This report includes significant changes proposed by the Governor's comments. He also provided copies of the various Gulf States Governors' comments and the Commission's comments. This will officially be presented to Congress on or about November 30.

The general changes in the report emphasize the important role of states; clarifies the Commission's intent to embrace all coastal areas; addresses the issue of climate change; recognizes and addresses cultural heritage; and, discusses the funding needed to implement recommendations that have been consolidated into an expanded Chapter 30. He pointed out how several of these changes interact and relate to ongoing issues and efforts in the various Gulf states and the Commission.

Status Report of Commission's Cooperative Data Collection Program

D. Donaldson reviewed 2004 activities. He provided a summarized report in the briefing material. The Commission has submitted an application for federal funding for FY2005, in the amount of \$4.2 million, which includes all of the summarized activities. He briefed the Commissioners on the scanning technology the Commission will be using to enter data. Scanning data will not only free up personnel, it will also provide the information in more timely fashion. He gave an overview of all ongoing activities.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program Update

S. VanderKooy provided a written report on FY2004 Interjurisdictional Fisheries activities in the briefing material. He stated that in addition to the two FMPs being worked on, discussion with the S-FFMB will continue to decide what the next FMP or revision will be. Based on recent comments, it appears that the Oyster FMP needs to be revised.

Report on Habitat Program and Joint GSMFC/GMFMC Program

J. Rester stated that the earlier discussion regarding Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plants originated due to several meetings held earlier this year by the GMFMC and NMFS to discuss the impacts of these facilities on fish stocks in the Gulf of Mexico. He pointed out that this would be a national issue since these facilities will be built in areas other than the Gulf of Mexico.

He reported that he attended a meeting of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force. The 2004 hypoxic zone was around 5,800 square miles. This is above the 5-year average. The Council is in the process of drafting their EFH Amendment; final action should be taken at the November meeting. Post hearings on this amendment will take place in late November or early December.

The Habitat Subcommittee submitted a proposal to the MARFIN Program to map hard bottom within the Gulf of Mexico. The objective for this proposal is to create and distribute a digital spatial database of bottom habitat on the Continental Shelf and slope of the Gulf of Mexico.

J. Rester congratulated the various Gulf states that were involved in the Derelict Trap Program for receiving a second place *Gulf Guardian Award* for their efforts. The Gulf Of Mexico Program sponsors this award.

Executive Committee Report

B. Hewes reported that the Executive Committee met this morning. On behalf of the Executive Committee, he recommended a 4% across the board increase for all personnel. In addition, the Committee recommended merit increases for the following personnel: Oracle Data Base Manager - \$1,000; RecFin Analyst - \$1,000; RecFin Staff Assistant -

\$500; SM Staff Assistant - \$1,000; IJF Coordinator - \$500; SM/Habitat Coordinator - \$500; Data Program Manager - \$500; Assistant Director - \$500; and, Executive Director - \$1,000. C. Perret moved to approve the recommendations. J. Roussel seconded. The recommendations were approved unanimously.

B. Hewes further recommended on behalf of the Executive Committee that the proposed FY2005 budget in the amount of \$6,894,030 be approved. **M. Ray moved to approve the recommendation. J. Roussel seconded. The budget was approved.**

State Directors' Reports

Florida - **V. Vail** reported on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The entire state was impacted by 4 major storms within a two-month period. All aspects of fisheries were affected. In response to the damage and economic impact of the storms, the FWC enacted several provisions. One related to licenses that were due to renew no later than September 30. The renewal date was extended to June 30, 2005. For stone crab and lobster fishermen who did not have trap tags or who may have lost them due to the storms, the agency will ship them the tags but not charge them the fee until next year. On the plus side, the storms in Southeast Florida cleared the growth off of the reefs and they are currently looking good, and there are reports that grouper fishing and shrimping have been great. They are currently compiling information on how artificial reefs fared during the storms.

On July 1, 2004 the FWC reorganized to focus on areas critical to the agency mission, which would be habitat and resource protection. As far as marine fisheries within the agency, the Division of Marine Fisheries is now the Division of Marine Fisheries Management. It is basically regulatory and a liaison with commercial and recreational fishermen. Commercial licenses were transferred to the new Office of License and Permitting. The Marine Research Institute was renamed the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

The FWC instituted a dive permit in the spiny lobster fishery in order to control effort in that fishery. They have also proposed a permit for marine life. These permits will be non-transferable. Bycatch quantities taken as an indirect harvest from another targeted species will be limited

Alabama - **S. Heath** reported on behalf of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR). The Department was successful in their efforts to get portions of the Upper Mobile Bay closed to all trawling. The area closed was smaller than requested but the shallow areas and prime nursery areas are being protected. It will remain closed for 3 years and then be re-evaluated.

The Department's agreement with the Orange Beach Fishing Association regarding its red snapper tournament was extremely successful. The ADCNR received \$50,000 from the Association to use for offshore artificial reefs. All of them survived well during the storms. Additionally, the tournaments provided important data from red snapper.

S. Heath reported on the impacts to coastal Alabama from Hurricane Ivan. He stated that 80% of the state's public oyster reefs were destroyed during the storm. Alabama did request and receive a 30-day TED exemption due to the amount of debris in the water. The newly completed saltwater pipeline at Alabama's mariculture facility was destroyed. The ADCNR office buildings fared well during the storms. The seafood industry was impacted severely. The Orange Beach charter boat fishery was devastated, and of course the hotel and tourist industry are shut down. Residents will be dislocated for a long time.

He reported that both inshore and offshore reefs were largely unaffected by the storm and there is ongoing surveying of artificial reefs to determine damage to them, if any.

Mississippi - **C. Perret** reported on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR). He stated that the oyster season opened on October 11. Due to rain from Tropical Storm Mathew not all reefs were opened. Reports reflect that on opening day there were 41 boats, 60 the following day, and 80 today. Water samples have come back good so other reefs will be opening soon. **C. Perret** stated that the industry is doing well in part to the environment and water quality but also due to increased flexibility in regulating in various coastal counties thanks to assistance from the Legislature and the MDMR Commission. Additionally, there is a severance on every sack of oysters. These funds are earmarked for improvement on the oyster reefs.

He reported that two tugboats were being environmentally secured for use in the Department's artificial reef program. They are also looking at using two petroleum jackets. The Department is using side scan sonar to examine damage to their artificial reefs that may have occurred due to this season's tropical activity.

The MDMR Commission is currently examining lowering the minimum size of spotted seatrout from 14 to 12 inches. Public testimony has been received and the Commission will make their decision on this issue next week.

He reported that there were 3 fly-fishing records broken in the state this year, and 11 traditional fishing records were broken.

He took the opportunity to thank NMFS for the rapid response to the State's request for a TED exemption due to debris in the water following Hurricane Ivan.

Louisiana - **J. Roussel** reported on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). He reported that the Governor had formed Louisiana Wild Caught Shrimp Trade Action Advisory Council to look at ways to raise revenues to fund the existing shrimp trade actions. They made a recommendation that was enacted by the Legislature that provided for additional fees for the next 2 years on the industry. The fees will be on those persons who purchase shrimp.

J. Roussel was also complimentary of NMFS for their rapid response to the TED exemption requested by the Department for areas east of the Mississippi River. The Department has heard of industry problems in other areas, and has already contacted Bob Hoffman to request the exemption be extended to the EEZ.

Louisiana's derelict crab trap program received an award from a non-profit organization called Louisiana Beautiful, Inc. It was a 1st place award in a waste reduction category for the LDWF trap clean-up efforts.

The Louisiana Legislature has established the Aquatic Invasive Species Council. It was preceded by a task force that was set-up by the former Governor. They have developed a comprehensive plan for invasive aquatics that is currently undergoing review by the various agencies. It is scheduled to be presented to the Louisiana Governor before being sent to the National Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force in the upcoming months.

Hurricane Ivan killed approximately 30% of the oysters on reefs east of the Mississippi River. There has been extensive flooding in the past several weeks from tropical storms. Hunting season has even been closed in some areas due to flooding. Approximately 55,000 cubic yards of oyster cultch were planted this year and initial indications are that the spat set has been good. Because of Tropical Storm Mitch the majority of their oyster grounds are under precautionary health closure. This issue will be addressed by all agencies involved tomorrow.

During 2004, the Legislature established the Louisiana Mariculture Task Force that will examine using offshore oil and gas platforms for mariculture purposes. The Task Force will complete a report by January 2005.

In regards to artificial reefs, the Department has added 11 oil and gas structures in their program. They now have 134 platforms in the Louisiana artificial reef program. One of the new platforms will be installed in waters over 400 feet, this previously was done, but recent research shows that significant fish habitat can be accomplished at that deeper level.

J. Roussel stated that there were approximately 4,000 offshore platforms off of the Louisiana coastline. Few structures were damaged by Hurricane Ivan but of more importance were damage to the 3,000 miles of pipeline that connect the platforms. There were 13 leaks and most were small and concentrated off of the mouth of the Mississippi River where there is about 11 separate spill sites, with about 25,000 barrels of oil from one of those leaks. The companies are on site making repairs but this has been a recurring problem in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan.

Texas - **M. Ray** reported on behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). In July, the American Fisheries Society began a six-month review of TPWD's fisheries divisions' science practices, with the objective of reviewing and evaluating all activities and methodologies used in collecting and analyzing scientific information as related to making fishery management decisions. Additionally, the National Academy of Sciences is reviewing methodologies used by TPWD and other Texas agencies in making river instream flow and bay inflow recommendations. Funding for this voluntary review is coming from federal State Wildlife Grants. The fisheries study will cost about \$55,000.

Coastal Fisheries continued data collection efforts as part of a comprehensive biological and water quality study of tidal streams and continued its work with regional water planning groups and with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to implement freshwater inflow recommendations in regional water plans.

Coastal Fisheries staff is working with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to discuss implementing a Cooling Water Intake Structures rule. The focus is on 55 Texas power plants that will be submitting study plans in the next year or so, to determine the biological effect of impingement at these facilities and to help characterize the water bodies being used.

TPWD continues to explore potential impacts of several proposed LNG facilities and their associated issues, such as channels, pipelines, and cold-water discharges.

Coastal Fisheries Aquaculture Outreach and Inspection Program continue its oversight of the aquaculture industry in Texas. Over 1,400 shrimp pond inspections were performed by the aquaculture team to insure shrimp were free of disease before pond effluent could be discharged into public water. In June, four South Texas mariculture facilities were quarantined and prevented from discharging wastewater after tests confirmed that the exotic shrimp illness Taura Syndrome Virus (TSV) had killed shrimp at some facilities. Quarantines were lifted after the threat to native shrimp had passed. All farm operators are in full compliance with shrimp farm disease regulations.

In July, dozens of concrete power line poles were deployed in the Gulf of Mexico; about 36 nautical miles east of Corpus Christi, marking the first time concrete poles have been used to create an artificial reef near Texas. American Electric Power donated 152 hollow concrete power poles to the Texas Artificial Reef Program. The poles range in length from 10-40 feet.

Planned additions to the Artificial Reef Program include a 474-ft ship, the *Texas Clipper*, which is planned be reefed off the south Texas coast in 2005 near Brownsville and a 2-year project to reef the remnant concrete from the 600-ft long Humble Channel Bridge, somewhere off Corpus Christi.

In regard to the TPWD License Management Program, the final round for shrimp, there were 104 inshore shrimp licenses bought back, of which 51 were bait and 53 were bay. They have now retired about 37% of all the licenses that were in place when the program started.

In crabs, 2 crab licenses were purchased back, they have now retired about 8% of all licenses and crabs are doing well now.

In the commercial finfish fishery they have purchased 15 licenses this last round, which means about 20% of those licenses have been retired.

The \$3 saltwater stamp surcharge, which is dedicated for the shrimp, crabs, and finfish license buyback programs was extended in August. It generates about \$1.3 million per year.

Oyster industry representatives are meeting with TPWD staff to discuss the idea of developing a shell recovery program for building or enhancing oyster reefs in Texas bays, but funding such a program is still in question. Several industry participants have agreed to provide a portion of their shucked shell to the program for use in building or enhancing oyster reefs in Galveston Bay.

TPWD's Oyster Advisory Committee has requested Coastal Fisheries to develop a plan for a license moratorium for the Texas oyster industry. A proposed plan is scheduled to be presented to the Oyster Advisory Committee in late October 2004. Industry members are in support of the industry going to a "limited" limited entry program, favoring a moratorium being placed on the number of licenses sold.

Approximately 13 million red drum and 1 million spotted seatrout fingerlings have been stocked in Texas bays so far this year. Sea Center Texas has been out of production this year due to ongoing construction projects.

Kemp's Ridley turtles had a record number of nests on the Texas coast this summer with 42 nests. The nests are found from the Bolivar Peninsula (Near Galveston) down to Boca Chica (in the valley), with the majority on Padre Island.

In August, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission State-Federal Committee's FIN group voted to fund the initiation of the Texas Trip Ticket Program (for \$220,000) beginning January 2005. Currently, TPWD staff is meeting with select commercial fish house dealers as part of organizing and initiating the Texas Trip Ticket Program. We greatly appreciate the support of the Commission and its state and federal members for sacrificing important ongoing projects to fund this program.

Future Meetings

G. Herring reported the March 14-17, 2005 meeting will be held at the Marriott Grand Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama.

She will look into holding the October 17-20, 2005 meeting in Tampa or Orlando, Florida.

Publication List

A current list was provided for information purposes.

Election of Officers

C. Perret nominated J. Roussel for Chairman of the Commission, G. Vail for Vice Chairman, and Chris Nelson for 2nd Vice Chairman. M. Ray seconded. J.Roussel, G. Vail and C. Nelson were unanimously elected Chairmen for 2004-2005.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES
MINUTES**

Monday, November 8-10, 2004

Biloxi, Mississippi

CALL TO ORDER

Ron Lukens called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm. The meeting began with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

Members

Diane Altsman, EPA, GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS (*Proxy for Bryon Griffon*)
Marilyn Barrett O'Leary, Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA
Phil Bass, Mississippi DEQ, Jackson, MS
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Pam Fuller, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL
Scott Hardin, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Leslie Hartman, AL Marine Resources Division, Dauphin Island, AL
Tom Herrington, FDA, Stennis Space Center, MS
Peter Hoar, NOAA/NCDDC, Stennis Space Center, MS
Tom Jackson, NOAA-NMFS-SEFSC, Miami, FL
Jim Kruse, Texas A&M Sea Grant, Houston, TX
Herb Kumpf, Member at Large, Panama City, FL
Jim Lester, HARC, The Woodlands, TX
Ronald R. Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Roberto Mendoza, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico
John E. Meyers, US Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Pitman, U.S. FWS, Albuquerque, NM
George Ramseur, Jr., The Nature Conservancy, Ocean Springs, MS
Cynthia Sarthou, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL
Jay Troxel, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

Staff

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Richard Campanella, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
Chad Case, NBII/National Wetlands Research Center, Lafayette, LA
Vincent F. Cottone, Chevron Texaco, New Orleans, LA

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Ted Hendrickx, Georgia DNR, Social Circle, GA
Steven de Kozlowski, Columbia, SC
Alysia R. Kravitz, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
Marshall Meyers, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, Washington, DC
Doug Nygren, Mississippi River Basin Panel, Bettendorf, IA
Glenn Rhett, Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg, MS
Todd Slack, MS Natural History Museum, Jackson, MS
Jay Troxel, FWS, Atlanta, GA
Bill Zattau, Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville, FL

Lukens provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The following changes were offered for the agenda.

Tuesday:

Remove 8:40 am agenda item "North Carolina State Report". Scott Van Horn was unable to attend.

9:20 am "Work Group Reports" - Harriet Perry was unable to attend so a full report of the Research and Development Work Group will not be given.

2:30 pm "Species Updates" - Harry Blanchet will give black carp update. John Teem and Herb Kumpf will give a *Caulerpa* update.

Wednesday:

11:05 am "Other Business" - add Election of Officers.

A motion was made by Herb Kumpf to adopt the agenda with the additions/changes noted. Dale Diaz seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES *(March 31 - April 1, 2004, Mobile, AL)*

It was noted that on Page 11, Ad Hoc Work Group for Symposium, the reference to Hart Association should read Harte Institute.

With that change noted, Phil Bass made a motion to approve the Minutes of the March 31-April 1, 2004 meeting held in Mobile, Alabama. Marilyn O'Leary seconded the motion, and without objection the minutes were approved.

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US PET INDUSTRY PRESENTATION

Marshall Meyers from the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) in Washington, DC, gave a presentation on the United States pet industry.

Pet Ownership

- Pets Are an Integral Part of American Society
- 64% US Households
- More Pets Than People > 300 Million
- Multi-billion Dollar Industry
 - 2002 \$28.5 billion
 - 2003 \$31 billion
 - 2005 \$34 billion (estimate)

Market Share

- Mass Merchandisers = 27%
- Superstores/Chains = 26%
- Supermarkets = 19%
- Independents = 14%

Retail Channels (Live Organisms)

Independent Pet Stores	Mass Merchandisers
Multi-store Pet Chains (3+)	Discount
Pet Superstores	Farm/Feed Stores
Garden Centers	Warehouse Clubs
Home Improvement/ Hardware	Mail Order/Catalogue Internet

Historical Perspective

- Fish Keeping – 3,000 Years
- 1611 First Dragon/Porcelain Bowls Imported Americas
- 1849 First West Coast Pet Store
- 1910 Importers and Growers
- 2002 Importers and Farmers
 - 800+ Species Farmed in Florida
 - 2,500+ Freshwater/marine Species in Trade
- Global Industry

Where Fish are Acquired

- Fish/Aquarium store 35%
- Pet Stores 35%
- Discount Stores 22%

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- Pet Superstore 22%
- Friend/relative 11%
- Bred at Home 8%
- Gift 8%

Fish Owners Length of Time

- < 1 year 10%
- 1- 5 years 48%
- 6 years + 41%

Average years 6.7

Aquarium/Pond Ownership

13-14% of US Households (14 million households)

Pond Market

- 16% Freshwater Fish Households Also Have Garden Ponds
- 70% Pond Owners < 500 Gallons
- > 2 Million Ponds
- One of the Fastest-growing Categories

Pathways

Import/Export	Breeder
Wholesale	Retail Outlets
Hobby Shows	Swap Meets
Flea Markets	Internet
Public	

Industry and Regulation

- 1970s Lacey Act Proposed Clean List
- Funded Research Early 70s
- Federal vs. State Regulation
- Federal Regulations
- State Regulation
 - Facility Standards
 - Health Standards
 - Species Lists
- Codes of Conduct
- Best Management Practices

Industry Involvement

- Screening/Risk Assessments
- Science-based Dirty Lists
- Codes of Conduct/Best Management Practices

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- Industry/Public Awareness
- Emergency Response Network
- Invasive Species Advisory Committee
- ISAC/ANSTF Prevention Committee
- ANSTF Western Regional Panel
- ANSTF New England Regional Panel
- ANSTF Mississippi River Basin Panel
- State Councils/Panels
- CBD
- CITES
- EU
- IUCN
- GISP

Industry Concerns

- Poorly Crafted Laws and Regulations
- Regional Differences - One Size Does Not Fit All
- Screening/Risk Assessments
- Data Gaps
- Junk Science
- Ill-trained Enforcement Officers
- Acronyms and Jargon Create Confusion
- Lack of Standard Terminology
 - Aliens, Invasive Aliens, Invasive, Non-Native, Non-Indigenous, Exotic, Foreign, Nuisance
- Misinformation/disinformation
- Endangered Species Passé - Invasive Species in Vogue

Surrender Centers - Unwanted Exotics (Under Discussion)

- PIJAC - Member Pet Stores
- Resell/Place in Breeding Program/Humanely Euthanize
- Illegal Specimens
 - Receive for FWS or State Pick-up
 - Amnesty Program
 - FWS/State Acknowledge Relinquishment

Public Awareness from Industry Standpoint

- Educational Outreach
- Programs That:
 - Clearly Articulate Issue
 - Explain Risks and How to Minimize
 - Provide User Friendly Identification Aids
 - Provide Guidance on What to Do

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- Aquarium/Pond Magazines
 - Consumer
 - Hobby
- Pet Stores
 - Flyers/Fact Sheets
 - Posters
 - POP Handouts
- Pet Consumer Shows
- Aquarium Societies/Clubs
- Internet

Codes of Conduct/Best Management Practices

- Marine Aquarium Council
- National Reptile Improvement Plan
- National Avian Welfare Alliance
- National Pet Improvement Plan (under development)

For additional information, Meyers can be reached at mmeyers@pijac.org.

“DO YOU HAVE A HABITATTITUDE™”

Marshall Meyers, Washington, DC, gave a presentation entitled “Habitattitude™ - Protect our Environment - Do Not Release Fish and Aquatic Plants.” Habitattitude™ is a national campaign to prevent releases of fish and aquatic plants. It was presented on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Sea Grant Partnership, and the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council.

Aquarists Abound!

- Pets are an important part of our culture
- Independent retail sales ~ \$1.4B
- Over 13M household aquaria with thousands more in offices, etc.
- Various specialties contribute to a strong industry

Water Gardens are Blooming!

- Water garden popularity rising rapidly
- Fastest growing segment
- “Parade of Ponds” - Community outings similar to parade of homes are growing substantially in many metro areas

Benefits Create Challenges

- Keeping live species requires financial investment, specialized knowledge, effort, time for care, and responsibility
- Owners create a connection with the environment
- Situations occur where..

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- Owners are faced with disposing of unwanted aquatic plants or fish
- They inadequately contain fish and aquatic plants and escape occurs.

Other Challenges...

- Increasing frequency of aquatic plants, fish and other animals associated with pet industry being found in the environment
- Potential to cause negative environmental, economic and human health impacts
- Translates into increased scrutiny and negative public perceptions about hobbies
- Potential for increased regulation
- Disconnected players in private and public sectors
- Long-standing adversarial relationships
- No unifying agenda
- Confusing, competing and incorrect messages conveyed to consumers

So What?!

- Complex problems require innovative solutions
- Situational analysis:
 - Think systems change!
 - We all need to think differently about aquatic invasive species and their relationship to the issue
 - With higher priorities and scarce resources, unifying agendas need to be set and collaboration needs to become standard

Meeting the Challenges...

- Habitattitude™ is a proactive solution! A unique partnership - industry, academia, and government joining forces to address these challenges
- Focus -
 - Raise public awareness
 - Engage people
 - Promote unified environmental messages with corresponding beneficial action
- All segments of industry are part of the solution.

What is Habitattitude™?

- Nationally branded campaign targeting aquarists and water gardeners
- Links environmental messages with beneficial actions
- Designed to reach targeted audiences

Habitattitude™ Advisory Panel - (Under the leadership of the National ANS Task Force)

- Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- NOAA Great Lakes Sea Grant Network Partners

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Habitattitude™ Partners

- PIJAC
 - Represents 90% of U.S. aquarium industry
 - Council and its members committed > \$1.1+ million
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - Lead federal agency addressing fish and wildlife
 - Contributed > \$100,000
- NOAA/National Sea Grant College Program
 - Research, outreach, and communication expertise in 31 states
 - Awarded a \$300,000 2-year grant
- State and Local Pet Owner Organizations
 - Beginning to spread the word
- This is only the beginning...

Habitattitude™

- Educational outreach
- Programs that
 - Clearly articulate issue
 - Explain risks and how to minimize
 - Provide user friendly identification aids
 - Provide guidance on what to do

How is Habitattitude™ Different?

- Moves “beyond brochures”
- Seeks to raise awareness, engage people, and change behaviors!
- Unifies government, industry, academia, and consumers to expand ownership and promote solutions
- Uses built-in evaluation to assess measurable impacts (e.g., behavioral change)

Habitattitude™ - What You Get!

- Access to:
 - Brand and campaign materials
 - Web site (*www.habitattitude.net*) as a central resource
 - Other campaign resources available to interested partners
- Support for:
 - National promotion of campaign through partner networks
 - Experienced partners ready to help you connect with aquarists and water gardeners
 - Marketing evaluation to measure behavior change at state levels

Habitattitude™ - Components

- Web site (*www.habitattitude.net*)
- Campaign partnership packets

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- Brand and brand standards manual
- Guidelines providing alternatives to release
- Floor, table top displays and banners
- In-store partnership certificates
- Ad placement in trade/hobby magazines
- CD with camera ready artwork (in prep)
- Industry sponsored products (in prep)
- PowerPoint presentations
- Evaluation surveys in progress

Habitattitude™ - Industry Promotion

- Aquarium Magazines
 - Hobby
 - Consumer
- Pet Stores
 - Flyers/Fact Sheets
 - Posters
 - POP Handouts
 - Fish Bags
- Trade/Pet Consumer Shows
- Aquarium Societies/Clubs
- Internet

Habitattitude™ - Industry Activities

- Trade/Hobby press
 - Free ads
 - Cover stories
 - Periodic articles
- Company Newsletters, Alerts, etc.
- Brand on aquarium product labels
- Trade Shows
- Florida's "Dive-In" Campaign
- Pennsylvania Farm Show

Habitattitude™ - Industry Promotion - 2004/2005

- Materials appear in > 2,000 retail stores
 - Care sheets
 - In-store signage
 - Door decals
 - Partner certificates
- Direct mail - 20+ million US homes (30% of US pet owning households)
- Brand on > 20 million fish bags, > 4 million fish boxes
- Starter kits being designed for small, independent retailers/nurseries

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What Can You Do? Become a Habitattitude™ Partner

- Industry:
 - Integrate campaign into marketing materials
 - Provide link to campaign Web site
- Agencies and Academia:
 - Integrate into educational programming
 - Provide link to campaign Web site
- Societies and Consumers:
 - Learn how to be a responsible hobbyist and the potential consequences of your actions
 - Model and promote responsible consumer behaviors
 - Become involved in the campaign

Habitattitude™ Benefits

- Unifies industry, government, and academia with consumers
- Promotes simple and consistent environmental messages and beneficial actions
- Provides credibility and accountability
- Leverages communication through diverse networks
- Helps to promote local action to address a global challenge
- Benefits you, us, and our clientele

For more information, visit www.habitattitude.net.

STATUS OF STATE PLANS

Florida - Don Schmitz reported that Florida's state plan has been finished, but it still needs to be reviewed by the federal agencies. There is some confusion on how they are going to send it to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, and Lukens indicated that he would assist with that procedure. They are currently in the process of implementing the 22 action items in the state plan. They recently updated their web site incorporating a link to the Panel. Florida is currently determining how much money is spent each year dealing with invasive organisms by state agencies. They are developing a standardized reporting form. Once it is finalized, he will make it available to the Panel, because it is something other states may want to do. Schmitz added that they now have 3 sub-working groups: *Caulerpa taxifolia*, Risk Assessments, and Outreach. The Outreach Sub-working Group is planning to hold an educational summit in Gainesville, Florida sometime in 2005. As more information on the summit becomes available, he will forward that information to the Panel.

Scott Hardin reported on the Risk Assessment Sub-working group. Once all agencies signed on to the MOU which formalized the invasive species working group, they worked at their most recent meeting toward identifying risk assessments that are needed. They approved a group of 10 individuals who will be reviewing the literature for plants and animals and see if they can come up with some recommended procedures for consideration by the full group. At that point they will begin to run species through the process as they are petitioned. The topic of terminology came up

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and there was a difference of opinion on what constitutes an invasive species. The definition that they came up with was somewhat similar to that in the National Plan with the addition that it needed to be defined based on a accepted science based risk assessment.

The *Caulerpa* working group reviewed the situation in California and the fact that Florida is a potential site for an invasion of a Mediterranean strain of *Caulerpa*. Florida has no plan in place to deal with such an invasion. A serious issue is there is no clarification of what agency is responsible for the management and control of marine plants in Florida.

John Teem added that Linda Walters has been looking at different sources of *Caulerpa taxifolia* that could be obtained commercially. She tries to buy it on the Internet and then sends it to a collaborator in Europe who does DNA analysis. Thus far they have not found any *Caulerpa taxifolia* in her efforts. She is also looking in some selected places locally in Florida. Plans are to do a more extensive survey over time with public participation. Any persons interested in participating in the survey can check the website www.Florida.aquaticspecies.com for more information.

Alabama - Leslie Hartman reported that the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources asked the Governor to be named the lead agency for invasive species issues and this was granted. Hartman has been making agency contacts with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Transportation, and a variety of other agencies and now have a number of biologists on board. However, they are missing two things - a sense of urgency from anybody in the cabinet, and the absence of any viable legislation and regulation that allows ADCNR to act. Since a lot of agencies are on board, plans are to push for a greater sense of urgency from the Cabinet to get an MOU among the agencies in the event of an emergency. Even though it has been a little slow, there is now a lot of internal momentum.

Mississippi - Phil Bass reported that Mississippi has made some progress since the last meeting. A new Governor was elected, and based on consensus with Governor's staff, the cabinet agencies, and other agencies that make up the Task Force, DEQ remains lead agency to develop a state plan. Plans are to take Louisiana's plan and adapt it for Mississippi, which will be beneficial due to the limited resources they have been given to complete this task. Like ADEM, DEQ does not have legislation that authorizes actions regarding invasive species, other than the environmental best management practices. The goal is to have the plan completed one year from June 2005. The first meeting under the new administration was held in September 2004. Assignments from that meeting are to be turned in early December, and plans are to meet again in late January 2005.

Louisiana - Alysia Kravitz reported that the Louisiana effort started in the Summer/Fall 2002. They have held 5 or 6 Task Force meetings since then. The previous Governor Foster issued an Executive Order in early summer of 2002 which created an Louisiana Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force charged with creating a management plan. That is the entity that has been working on the plan over the last two and a half years. The last meeting was held in early March of this year. Louisiana chose to define the problems in the state into 3 sections: Pathways and media; Species or Groups of

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Species; and, Exacerbating Circumstances. A copy of the nearly final plan was available at the meeting.

Regarding the Louisiana Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, there is an interest in passing legislation to create a permanent entity which would not be subject to changes by subsequent administrations. A Bill was introduced and passed called the Louisiana Aquatic Invasive Species Council Act. It created a Council and Advisory Task Force. The Council is composed of various state agencies and the Governor's office. The Advisory Task Force is comprised of federal agencies, stakeholder groups, industry, and people that could bring additional expertise to the table. The Bill passed without a single vote against it in both the House and Senate and was signed into law by the Governor in July 2004.

GEORGIA STATE REPORT

Ted Hendrickx, Senior Fisheries Biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, gave a presentation entitled, "Status of ANS in Georgia." He indicated that Georgia was not a member of a regional panel. They would like to begin developing a state plan. The state is divided into 7 regions, with only one port in the state.

Georgia Facts

- 250+ species of fish have been collected
- 20+ species of "exotic" and non-indigenous fish species reported in Georgia
 - Rainbow trout to Pacu...
- 10+ species of "exotic" or nuisance aquatic plants found in Georgia waters
- Other ANS (mussels, invertebrates, etc.)

Fish

- Pacu
- Oscar
- Grass carp
- Red shiner
- Asian rice/swamp eel
- Tilapia (blue & Mozambique)
- Bighead carp
- Arowana

Invertebrates and Others

- Asian clam (*Corbicula*)
- Green mussel
- Freshwater jellyfish
- Crawfish sp.
- Lionfish (saltwater)

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Aquatic Plants

- Hydrilla
- Eurasian watermilfoil
- Brazilian elodea
- Water Hyacinth
- Giant Salvinia
- Common Salvinia
- Alligator Weed
- Parrot Feather

State Authority

- Georgia DNR (WRD)
 - Aquaculture registration
 - “Domestic species”
 - Wild animal licensing
 - Exotic species
 - Commercial (no pets)
 - Fish dealer licensing
 - Certain exotic
 - Native
- State Department of Agriculture
 - Pet trade
 - Food fish sales (dead or processed)
 - Pesticide licensing
 - State veterinarian
 - Processing facilities
 - Plant sales (retail & nurseries)

Georgia Issues

- Illegal releases
 - Intentional and deliberate establishment
 - “Kind-hearted” dumping
- Angler-related movement
- Escaped ornamentals/exotics
- Commercial transportation
 - Ballast water
- Aquaculture and research
- “Hitchhikers”

Intentional Illegal Releases?

- Spotted bass (compete with largemouth bass)
 - Native to some Georgia Gulf drainages in NW Georgia

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- Flathead catfish (predation on other species)
 - Native to extreme NW Georgia
- Blueback herring (competition & predation)
 - Native to Atlantic slope drainages in Georgia
- Tilapia
 - Culture? Forage stocking?

“Kind-hearted” Dumping?

- Pacu
 - 25+ locations around the state since 1980s
- Oscar
- Silver arowana

Escapes?

- Salvinia (water gardens?)
- Hyacinth (ornamental?)
- Grass carp (flood events)
- Tilapia (research)

Challenges Ahead

- Develop ANS/AIS plan
- Funding
- Limited plant regulations/laws
- Coordination with other agencies
- Eradication and control activities
- Education

Visit the WRD website: www.georgiawildlife.com.

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE REPORT

Steve de Kozlowski from South Carolina gave an overview of the state’s aquatic nuisance species program. Hydrilla is the state’s number one problem, followed closely by water hyacinth and Phragmites. Giant Salvinia is not currently a problem but of great concern due to its occurrence in Georgia and North Carolina. The state has a rapid response capability when it comes to aquatic plants. They do not have zebra mussels, but are still concerned about them.

Marine Species

- Rapana whelk
- Green mussel
- Aquarium pets (Lionfish)
- Fish, shellfish, and shrimp diseases
- Invasive aquaculture species
 - Oysters and shrimp

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Pathways

- Recreational boaters
- Intentional introduction

State Legislation

- State Noxious Weed Act (Title 46, Chapter 23)
- State Crop Pest Act (Title 46, Chapter 9)
- Aquatic Plant Management Act (Title 49, Chapter 6)
- 50-13-1415 Importation, possession, or placing of hydrilla and water hyacinth
- 50-13-1630 Importation, possession or selling certain fish in unlawful

Aquatic Plant Management Act

- APM Program
 - Prevent, investigate, monitor, manage aquatic plant problems in public waters
 - Identifies lead agency
- APM Council
 - Multiagency board
 - Coordinates activities, approves plans
- APM Trust Fund
 - Provides funding flexibility

Illegal Aquatic Plants

Alligatorweed	African oxygen weed
Brazilian elodea	Lymnophila
Common reed	Giant salvinia
Eurasian watermilfoil	Water lettuce
Hydrilla	Purple loosestrife
Slender naiad	Water spinach
Water chestnut	Water primrose
Water hyacinth	Exotic bur reed

Illegal Freshwater Fishes

Freshwater electric eel	Stickleback
Candiru catfish	Mexican banded tetra
Diploid grass carp	Sea lamprey
Walking catfish	Rudd
Piranha	Northern snakehead

State Agencies with ANS Interests

- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council
- South Carolina Department of Agriculture
- Clemson University Department of Plant Industry

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- Clemson University Extension Program
- South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium

South Carolina Aquatic Nuisance Species Communications Project

South Carolina was selected as a pilot state for IAFWA's communications project. This is a three year project and they are currently completing the first year.

- Objectives
 - Reduce the spread of ANS caused by:
 - Recreational boating, fishing, and hunting
 - Seafood consumers and industry
 - Achieve contact with 25% of the target audience by June 2006
 - Test the effectiveness of direct and indirect contact with key audiences
- Target Audience
 - Freshwater - recreational boaters, anglers, and waterfowl hunters
 - Marine - seafood consumers and industry
- Freshwater Strategies
 - Enhance and test delivery of information through a combination of sport shows and agency web sites
 - Conduct surveys before and after education
 - Enhance and track ANS outreach
 - Add SAH logo to DNR material, share web links
 - Put message in new sites e.g. TV shows, Rules and Regs, magazine
- Marine Strategies
 - Expand existing outreach to encourage shell recycling
 - Oyster shell recycling
 - Proper disposal of shrimp parts
 - Develop voluntary partnerships with the seafood industry
- Statewide Strategies
 - Increase institutional capacity
 - Formalize multi-agency ANS Task Force
 - Pursue partnerships with industry and NGO
 - Develop and implement SC ANS Management Plan

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lukens again provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

The meeting on Monday recessed at 5:00 pm and reconvened on Tuesday at 8:30 am.

At the beginning of Tuesday's session, Lukens provided an opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

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ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Resolutions - For informational purposes, Lukens provided the Panel with copies of two resolutions. The first was the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Resolution "State Wildlife Agency Leadership for Aquatic Nuisance Species." The second was IAFWA Resolution #4, "Supporting Development of a Multi-National Screening Process for Invasive Species Introductions into North America."

Additional State Agency Membership - At the last meeting, the Panel voted to add a membership seat from the Alabama Freshwater Division. That recommendation will go before the ANS Task Force at their meeting next week. Steve Rider from Alabama will be that representative if the Task Force approves. There was also a recommendation from the Panel to the ANS Task Force that the States of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina be added to the Panel. Due to lack of communication and misunderstanding that recommendation was dropped. At this meeting, the Panel received presentations from Georgia and South Carolina. There was a request from Georgia to be added to the Panel. **Paul Carangelo made a motion to invite the State of Georgia to become a member of the Panel and to then change the name of the Panel to the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. The motion was seconded by Marilyn O'Leary. With no objection, the motion passed.**

The Panel indicated that they are still receptive to the States of South Carolina and North Carolina also becoming members of the Panel.

A motion was made by Marilyn O'Leary and seconded by Pam Fuller that the Panel extend an invitation to both North and South Carolina to join as Panel members. There was no objection to the motion.

These actions will be reported to the ANS Task Force at their next meeting.

ANSTF Update - Lukens provided an ANSTF update. The ANS Task Force held its Spring Meeting in May in Columbia, Missouri. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Mississippi River Basin Panel Meeting and included some great presentations on Mississippi River aquatic nuisance species issues. The meeting included a commitment by the Task Force members to review the ANSTF Strategic Plan and begin to focus more on implementing the various parts of the plan.

The Fall ANS Task Force meeting was scheduled for November 16 and 17, in Crystal City, Virginia. A few things that were tentatively scheduled to be on the agenda include: a presentation of the *Caulerpa* Draft Management Plan; a presentation on the new Habitattitude Public Awareness campaign; and an update from ITAP, the new taxonomically-based Invasive Terrestrial Animals and Pathogens Committee.

Regarding the ANSTF Executive Secretary, the Service had still not advertised for the position. When Sharon Gross left the Service for USGS, it was the intention of the Assistant Director of

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Fisheries and Habitat Conservation to split her position into two positions - a Branch Chief and the Executive Secretary of the ANS Task Force. They are still working on getting it advertised. In the meantime, Everett Wilson, the Chief of the Division of Environmental Quality, serves as the Acting Executive Secretary. The Service is looking for someone who might be interested in coming in on detail to act as the Executive Secretary for a minimum of 2 weeks and, depending on availability, up to 4 months. Anyone interested in coming in and doing a detail should contact Kari Duncan, Chief of the Branch of Invasive Species at (703) 358-2464.

NISC/ISAC Update - Chris Dionigi, National Invasive Species Council staff, provided an update to Lukens on the ISAC Meeting held October 13-15, 2004 at Shepherdstown, West Virginia. At that meeting, ISAC recommended that NISC accept the Draft Guidelines for Ranking Invasive Species Projects in Natural Areas, Version 1, August 2004. ISAC recommended that NISC amend the ISAC Charter in order to provide for the more efficient and effective operation of ISAC (Charter amendments are being reviewed by NISC staff). ISAC recommended that NISC implement an "invasive species early detection and rapid response fund" (this corresponds to Plan action item #24). ISAC also recommended to NISC the interim appointment of ISAC officers as follows: E. Shippen Bright, Chair; George Beck, Vice-Chair; and Dianne Cooper, Secretary. The NISC Policy Liaison met November 4, 2004. NISC Co-Chair Principals are working to schedule a Fall 2004 meeting. ISAC will be working with Definitions of Invasive Species. The timing of the next NISC meeting is being discussed.

Legislative Update - A spreadsheet of invasive species bills as of 9/09/2004 was provided for the Panel.

WORK GROUP REPORTS

Information Management Work Group- Lukens indicated that a conference call was held to discuss the item of the disposition of the GSMFC data base. It was a database that was inherited from the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory along with the website. It became increasingly apparent that there was no effective way to feed new data into the database. It is either one that is dynamic and continually gets updated or it is a static database. The expectation was that it was going to be dynamic; however, the Commission does not have the staff to keep it current. Lukens went to Commission Director and expressed concerns that if the Commission were to really manage this database, extra staff would be needed as well as an infrastructure of people to provide information to feed the database. Before a decision was made, the Commission Director instructed Lukens to present the issue to the Information Management Work Group to discuss alternatives. The result of those discussions and the recommendation from the Work Group to the Panel, is that the GSMFC maintain the current database as a static database; recognizing that the Commission does not intend to continue to add new collection records of invasive species. But from this point forward, new records would be referred to the USGS database as the national database. The Commission will keep the records that it currently has, and the USGS program will continue to function as the national database to support Panel activities. The Commission intends to maintain the species summaries database and continue to develop additional species summaries which would be available on the website. Lukens also intends to continue to work with the distributed query program that USGS and

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SERC have developed. The only difference is the acknowledgment that the GSMFC database is a static database and new updates for invasive species records will be managed by the USGS program. On behalf of the Work Group, Lukens submitted that recommendation to the Panel.

Herb Kumpf asked why not turn it all over to USGS rather than have 2 databases. Was there a purpose to hold on to the older database? Lukens indicated that the databases each had different fields. Kumpf suggested that efforts be made to transfer all the data to the larger USGS database.

Marilyn O'Leary stressed the importance of keeping the older database because it contained museum records. Staff may be added to maintain the database in the future.

Lukens replied that no information would be lost. No new information has been added to the system in 6 years.

A motion on was made on behalf of the Information Management Work Group to make the GSMFC database on invasive species a static database and refer any new records to the USGS database. The motion was seconded by Scott Hardin. Marilyn O'Leary re-emphasized that nothing be lost from that database.

The motion was amended to send back to the Information Management Work Group during this interim process the USGS will try to incorporate the old database into one. At some time in the future, the static database will be eliminated. The amendment was seconded by Tom Herrington.

John Teem added that some notation be put on the old system that all new information will be reported to the USGS.

There was no objection to motion.

Early Detection and Rapid Response - Lukens explained that NOAA, through Sea Grant, provided each of the Regional Panels with \$20,000 to develop regional rapid response contingency plans through their panels. The Panel has received that \$20,000 and is in the second year of development. The Early Detection and Rapid Response Work Group was convened to begin to work on this. The work group relied heavily on the Great Lakes draft guidelines for rapid response plans. A copy of the draft Rapid Response Plan for the Gulf of Mexico Region prepared for the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force was distributed for informational purposes. No action was required at the time of the meeting. Lukens asked that the Panel provide comments on the document by early December. The grant period ends December 31, 2004.

Research and Development Work Group - Harriet Perry reported that Work Group has been busy compiling lists of research priorities in each state. They are looking for funding to develop rapid assessment guidebooks for use by rapid assessment teams. The last scheduled Work Group meeting

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was cancelled due to Hurricane Ivan. John Teem volunteered to assume the position of work group leader for the Research and Development Work Group.

Marilyn O'Leary indicated that she has also been trying to find a replacement to serve as leader of the Education and Outreach Work Group. She announced that Chuck Jacoby from Florida Sea Grant offered to accept that role.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Lukens reported that one of the discussion items at the Panel Heads meeting held after the ANS Task Force meeting, was development of strategic plans by the Regional Panels. Facilitation was provided at the last meeting to initiate work on a strategic plan. A Steering Committee meeting was held in Jacksonville, Florida, the day before Hurricane Ivan. The Steering Committee was charged with taking the follow up steps to further develop the strategic plan. Members present were Lukens, Pam Fuller, and Marilyn O'Leary. A copy of the document developed by the steering committee was distributed to the Panel. There was much discussion on how to effectively review the draft and provide comments.

Due to the enormous task of reviewing the plan, a motion was made to generically approve the plan, subject to comments from the Panel by a deadline of December 15. The Plan will be revisited by a sub-group, and based on comments received, have a final plan approved by January 2005. The motion was seconded by Cynthia Sarthou. The motion was tabled pending more discussion.

The next day the Panel agreed to adopt the plan's goals and objectives and allow Lukens to present the Panel's progress at the upcoming ANS Task Force meeting.

MRBP REPORT TO THE GULF REGIONAL PANEL

Doug Nygren gave an overview of the Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP). The MRBP is a fairly new Panel, having only been existence for approximately one year.

Meetings in 2005

- Fourth meeting in January/February - undetermined (looking for southern host)
- Fifth meeting is proposed for September with Western Regional Panel - Kansas

Members

- Membership at 46 plus alternates
- 21 interested parties
- Total of 71 in coordination directory
- Others interested

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Panel Participation at Events

- Western Panel - Tom Mosher (KS) attended and reported
- Gulf Panel - Doug Nygren (MICRA) planned
- ANSTF - Mike Hoff (Vice Chair) attending
- Midwest ANS Workshop - Jay Rendall (Chair) participating

Issue Priorities

- Developing state plans is a priority in many states
- Increasing federal funding to implement plans is a priority of the states with existing plans and those preparing plans

Panel Progress and Direction

- Committees are working on their responsibilities and work plans
- Examples of Prevention and Control Committee projects:
 - List of priority species/matrix status
 - Position Statement on barriers and fish passage
 - ANS harvest issue paper
 - Position Statement supporting national screening process for intentional importation into US
 - Request clarification on Lacey Act from USFWS
- Examples of I&E Committee projects:
 - Identify products, messages, audiences
 - Began inventory of I&E products on ANS
 - Purchased and distributed new *Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers* brochure
 - Developing a *Field Guide to Aquatic Invasive Plants and Animals* for Mississippi River Basin for 2005
- Examples of Research Committee projects:
 - Database of experts and current research
 - Risk assessment workshop at next MRBP meeting
 - Research priority list
 - Sponsor a symposium on ANS research at 2005 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference

Recommendations

- The Panel recommends that the Task Force place a high priority and strong focus on prevention - especially on introductions into the country, as well as interstate, interbasin, and intrabasin spread of ANS
 - States are limited in their responses to international and interstate commerce as well as funding projects outside of their borders, so federal leadership and funding is needed in several areas
- National prohibitions on transport of aquatic plants and priority ANS on public roads would be helpful
- MRBP recommends establishment of a national contingency fund for rapid response.

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BROWN TREE SNAKE UPDATE

Marc Hall, a graduate student from Texas A&M at Kingsville, gave a presentation entitled, "Development of a Rapid Response Initiative for Brown Tree Snakes."

Summary of the Brown Tree Snake

- Arboreal, nocturnal, rear-fanged snake - mildly venomous
- Habitat is thick arboreal habitat, adaptable to less dense habitat
- Diet: wide and varied. The snake will eat anything it can.
- Juveniles - ectothermic prey
- Adults - endothermic prey

Distribution

- Native range is north and eastern Australia through New Guinea and surrounding islands
 - Density is extremely low
 - Malaita, Solomon Islands 0.10/ha
- Expanded range includes Guam, with sightings on several other islands
 - Density on Guam 24-120/ha

Environmental Issue

- The brown tree snake has contributed to the loss of native avian, and reptilian species on Guam

Economic Issue

- Snakes in search of prey cause electrical outages on power lines. The added cost of control is a burden on the economy

Human Issue

- The snake poses a limited threat to humans. The bite of the snake can cause some minor irritation. The old and the young are most at risk.

Rapid Response Team

- What is it?
 - Part of three pronged approach to prevent the spread of the BTS
 - Prevention
 - Interdiction
 - Rapid Response
- New Program (2002)
 - Limited to Pacific region
 - Primary goal: find reported snake
 - Detect incipient populations
- How it works:
 - Sightings outside of Guam

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- Call is made to a hotline
- An investigator conducts and interview
- Search area defined, a search is conducted
- Secondary Benefits
 - Develops a database of potential prey for future monitoring
 - Education of local population

Rapid Response in Texas

- Major points of entry
 - Ports
 - Corpus Christi
 - Houston
 - Major Airports (2)
 - Military bases (18)

Rapid Response on Gulf Coast

(The Gulf Coast region is likely to support brown tree snakes)

- Temperature
- Humidity
- Rainfall
- Entry points - ports (several hundred, only a few receiving traffic from Guam)
- Nothing elaborate
 - Need to ensure any snake sighting is investigated as best as possible
- A Communication Network
 - To respond to and quickly deal with the information

Similar Programs - Existing Programs that Show Success

- Zebra Mussels
- Salvinia
- Established groups that monitor certain areas, conduct information/prevention programs

Contact information: www.nabtsct.org.

If anyone has any pictures of native snakes, please send them to Scott Henke - kfseh00@tamuk.edu or Marc Hall - ksmah00@tamuk.edu, so they can add them to their website.

STATE PROHIBITED SPECIES LISTS AND THE LACEY ACT

Bob Pitman briefed the Panel on injurious wildlife, The Lacey Act: 18 USC 42, 50 CFR 16. Injurious wildlife are defined as those species and offspring and eggs that are injurious to the interests of human beings, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, wildlife, or wildlife resources of the United States. Wild mammals, wild birds, fish, mollusks, crustaceans, amphibians, and reptiles are the only organisms that can be added to the injurious wildlife list. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife

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Service (Service) does not have the authority to regulate plants or other organisms under the Lacey Act. Species listed as injurious may not be imported or transported across state lines without a permit issued by the Service. Permits may be granted for the importation or transportation of live specimens of injurious wildlife and their offspring or eggs for bona fide scientific, medical, educational, or zoological purposes.

The Lacey Act: 16 USC 3371-3378

Two Step Violation Process

1. That the wildlife was *taken, possessed, transported, or sold* in violation of a state, federal, foreign, or tribal law or regulation, **and**
2. That, in addition to the above violation of underlying law, the wildlife was *imported, exported, transported, sold, received, acquired, or purchased*.

Coordination Opportunity

- Identify contact person(s) within each state that can assist in identifying state prohibited species list or website location
- Relay persons contact information to Erin Williams at *Erin_Williams@fws.gov* or (703) 358-2034
- Erin will work to develop centralized website for linking these webpages.

Pitman wanted to emphasize how important the species list in the individual states are and how the Lacey Act can be used. Lukens added that the Lacey Act could be mentioned in the state plans as a potential enforcement tool.

For more information: *www.HACCP-NRM.org*.

SPECIES UPDATES

Asian Carp - Harry Blanchet reported that Louisiana has had records of 3 species of Asian carp in the state for some time. Louisiana now has records of 4 species. Thanks to cooperation with commercial hoop net fishermen, they have collected 5 specimens of black carp. They tried to draw blood from them, but the blood was too degraded to analyze and find out if they were triploid or not. However, eye balls were collected and analyzed by the USGS lab in Lafayette, who found that 3 out of the 5 were triploid. Asian carp can occur in very large numbers in any of the major rivers in Louisiana (large numbers being several hundred pounds in a hoop net).

Pam Fuller reported that she went through their Alert System and pulled the various reports that have come across as being new in the past few months:

Snakeheads - Confirmed as reproducing in the Potomac; they have caught juveniles. They are also reproducing in a location in Philadelphia where they have been collected. They have been found in Massachusetts, and, although reproduction has not been confirmed so far, the person who originally

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found them said that there were two snakeheads rounding up a school of minnows. There was a single specimen collected off Chicago, and a lot of effort was spent trying to find if there were any others; they did not find any others. There was a reporter from the New York Times who was looking into snakeheads in prayer release, an Asian cultural practice. In the Buddhist religion it is common for people to buy live animals and then release them. They found there were Buddhist temples located very closely to the primary site in the Potomac and to the location in Philadelphia. They may be investigating to see if those are actually prayer release animals. There is also one other location in the country that appears somebody has been breeding them in a pond.

Swamp Eels - They are out of the ponds in the Nature Center and into the Chattahoochee River in Georgia. There is some work going on to find out exactly what the extent of the population is in that area.

White Perch - Are now moving down the Arkansas River. They were accidentally stocked in an Oklahoma reservoir and escaped. They were a contaminant in an intentional striped bass stocking. They are now moving downstream into Kansas and have been confirmed in 2 reservoirs in Kansas.

Cuban Tree Frogs - Moving northward and have been found in Duvall County in the Jacksonville area of Florida, and more recently in Savannah, Georgia. They are looking around Savannah to see if the one frog they found was just a lone hitchhiker or if there is actually a population there.

Charu Mussel - Has been found in Cape Canaveral. It is a species that was found off St. Augustine about 20 years ago and disappeared. This is the first sighting since then. No word yet if that is a population or a single individual.

Jaguar Guapote - Found in eastern Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They shocked a pond and determined it was just a single individual.

Pacu - A couple found in coastal Mississippi.

Rud - Recently found that Rud are reproducing in Falcon Reservoir, Texas.

Fuller also mentioned that she recently attended a Canadian carp risk assessment meeting in Toronto, Canada. The Canadians are looking at whether they want to ban all importation and possession of silver, big head, grass, and black carp. The Canadian government is under persuasion to do that because of all the money that the U.S. is spending on the electric barrier in the ship canal. If the U.S. can be invaded, especially through the Great Lakes region from the north, then they are essentially throwing money away on this barrier to prevent invasion from the south. They also spent quite a bit of time touring the Asian live fish markets, and found lots of grass carp and at least one location with both silver and big head carp live in tanks. That is the first documented occurrence of silver carp in the food fish trade. She also noted that these silver and big head carp were obviously caught from the wild in the U.S. and then taken to Canada because of the marks from the fish nets.

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Caulerpa - Herb Kumpf reported that the National Management Plan for the Genus *Caulerpa* which was prepared by the *Caulerpa* Working Group will be submitted to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force next week. The purpose of this National Management Plan is to guide the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force and other interested parties in managing *Caulerpa* species already present in U.S. waters as well as species of the genus *Caulerpa* that may become introduced to U.S. waters to which they are not native.

Status of Texas Plan

Earl Chilton reported that Texas still does not have a completed plan. Two letters were sent to Governor's office over the past year to get started on a plan, but no response has been received. If no reply is received in the next couple of weeks another letter will be drafted and signed by the TPWD Executive Director. They do have a framework plan and are currently forming a TPWD invasive species committee.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT SYSTEM

Pam Fuller reported that the USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Program has launched an alert system that allows users to register to receive e-mails of new aquatic introductions in the United States. Users can sign up for "State Watches", "Group Watches", and/or "Species Watches". Detailed explanations of each of these can be found on the registration page. The system also allows users who are not registered to review and query archives of alerts that are sent. A demonstration of the program was shown to the group.

To register to receive e-mail alerts: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/AlertSystem/register.asp>.

To view alert archives: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/AlertSystem/>.

The program was launched in July and at the current time approximately 250 individuals have signed up for alerts.

NILE TILAPIA IN THE PASCAGOULA RIVER

Todd Slack with the University of Southern Mississippi presented on overview of his project "Non-indigenous Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) in coastal watersheds of southern Mississippi." Other investigators on the project include Mark S. Peterson, Christa Woodley, Mark A. Dugo, Nancy Brown-Peterson, Ches Vervaeke, Gretchen Waggy, Jennifer McDonald, and Jeremy Finley. The project is funded through MDWFP.

Phase I - Distribution

Objective 1: Examine spatial and temporal distribution of tilapiine fishes in coastal watersheds of Mississippi.

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Objective 2: Examine the influence of tilapiine fishes on the structure of the native fish assemblages.

Objective 3: Quantify the degree of trophic interaction among tilapiine fishes and native freshwater fishes (e.g., sunfishes, black basses).

- Database contains 97 records for aquaculture facilities
- 61 facilities permitted for tilapia (including 5 out-of-state)
- 27 of the 61 noted as “active producers”
- Fixed monthly stations: 2 - Robinson Bayou 4 - Simmons Bayou
- Semi-random monthly sampling (seines, hook and line, trammel nets, modified crab traps)
- Year-round spawning at low levels
- Peaks in March-May and August-September
- Multiple broods
- Smallest female w/mature oocytes is 79.9 mm TL: 50% maturity in females is 113 mm TL
- BF correlated w/TL and EBW

Phase II - Dispersion and Habitat Association

Objective 1: Examine movement patterns through telemetry - Plant Daniels (Year 1)

Objective 2: Field verification - Biotelemetry of cichlids in the wild within the Pascagoula system to identify movement patterns (i.e., population contraction/expansion on a seasonal basis) and the use of thermal refugia in a natural setting (Year 2).

Phase III - Management Implications

- Advocate a plan that promotes an integrated committee composed of representatives from those agencies charged with protecting, maintaining, and regulating the state’s aquatic natural resources (i.e., MDEQ, MDWFP, MDAC). Members of this advisory committee should not function in an adversarial manner, but rather members should strive to work together on developing mutually agreeable strategies, protocols, and procedures to promote responsible use of the resources based on a long-term vision.
- Adapt and enforce regulatory plans that prevent release and establishment of non-indigenous taxa. Incorporated within this strategy is to promote an open line of communication among state and federal agencies, the general public, and industry regarding the issue of release of non-indigenous taxa and potential problems that may result following their establishment.
- Promote the development of a management plan that incorporates an emergency protocol for flood prone areas (coastal counties). What can be done at facilities that will minimize release from culture facilities when faced with natural disaster?

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- Develop monitoring programs that may lead to early detection and, if possible, elimination of incipient invaders should be instituted, particularly if the population can be prevented from increasing in number of total individuals.
- Do nothing. Initially the least costly of all options but potentially could manifest as the most costly because of the potential loss of resources through direct elimination, reduced growth, and change in community structure, and/or loss of ecological services attributed to the loss of native taxa. Essentially, the cost of doing nothing results in the loss of ecological services gained by maintaining the biological integrity of our landscapes which in turn, results in natural, functioning ecosystems.

SARP UPDATE

Marilyn O'Leary reported that she is one month into a 3 year project to help all of the states in the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership develop invasive species management plans. Those states include all of the Gulf states, Arkansas, Georgia, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky and North and South Carolina. She will work with both coastal and interior states. The whole idea of working on management plans is not an exercise in writing. It is an exercise in approaching and thinking about managing resources in a broader way with consideration to habitat, the human aspect involved, and neighbors. O'Leary distributed a paper "How to Produce a Management Plan" which contains the major things for states to think about when developing management plans.

PUBLIC COMMENT

While discussing strategic plans and management plans, Steve de Kozlowski from South Carolina mentioned that this should be a part of the planning process of all state's comprehensive wildlife conservation plans.

Don Schmitz mentioned that they wanted to put together a "Florida Invasive Species Day." Biologists and agricultural scientists who work with invasive species could go into the public school systems and give presentations, particularly to elementary school students. It is something that could be addressed on a national level.

The meeting recessed at 4:50 pm and reconvened Wednesday, November 10, 2004 at 8:30 am.

ALABAMA - MISSISSIPPI RAPID ASSESSMENT TEAM

Dale Diaz reported on the 2004 Mississippi Sound rapid assessment. Goals were to provide a "snapshot" inventory of organisms present in Mississippi Sound and adjacent marine waters in order to identify non-native or exotic species; to provide information on the distribution and abundance of invasive species that have already established populations in local waters; and, to gather information useful for developing management strategies and for planning needed research.

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Assessment originators were Harriet Perry from the Center for Fisheries Research and Development, GCRL-USM and David Yeager from the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program. Funding was provided by NOAA Fisheries - Mississippi Research Consortium, Coastal Impact Assistance Program, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. Twenty-eight agencies participated with 115 personnel. Over 500 samples were collected and over 400 species identified. Two invasive animal species were identified, as well as 17 invasive plant species. AMRAT united scientists from diverse agencies, disciplines, and experiences in a common cause - tracking aliens in coastal waters.

NEXT MEETING PLACE AND TIME

Don Schmitz suggested that the Panel coordinate their meeting with the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council's 20th Annual Symposium to be held May 9 -11, 2005, at the Wyndham Casa Marina Resort in Key West, Florida. Many of the Panel members will be attending the Symposium and Lukens was asked to make a presentation on the Regional Panel at that meeting. The Panel agreed to look at the possibility of coordinating the Panel meeting with the Symposium. Texas in April was selected as a secondary location and timeframe.

The agenda for the Symposium can be reviewed at: www.fleppc.org.

ISAC PATHWAYS RISK ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Pam Fuller distributed a report to the Panel entitled "Invasive Species Pathways Team - Final Report." The Pathways Task Team was established at the ISAC meeting at Chico Hot Springs, Montana in June 2002. This team was expected to work in close coordination with the Screening Task Team, which was formed at the same time. The Pathways Task Team's primary goal was to reduce the risk of unintentional introductions by examining pathways. It was to assist in the delivery of action items 16, 17, and 20 in the National Invasive Species Management Plan related to unintentional introductions and prevention. Its jurisdiction included both introductions from outside the U.S. and movement of species between ecosystems with the U.S. Intentional imports of plants and animals appear to be among the most likely pathways for introduction of associated but unintended organisms, including insects, other invertebrates, aquatic animals, terrestrial vertebrates, disease pathogens, and plant seeds and propagules. Therefore, the Pathways Task Team coordinated with the Screening Task Team, to address these overlapping concerns. The necessary coordination was to be provided through an overarching Subcommittee on Prevention.

In practice, the Pathways Task Team focused on a portion of Plan Action Item 20: Developing a system for evaluating the significance of invasive species pathways. They believe the system developed can be used to identify "significant" pathways and to assign them to a broad, five-tiered ranking category (ranging between "high, medium, or low" risk).

Panel members participated in an exercise to rank 3 different pathways using the Draft Questionnaire for Determining the Priority of an Invasive Species Pathway. The first pathway they ranked was

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ballast water. The second was a pathway of their choice of interest to their state. The last was to pick a pathway they knew nothing about.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Harriet Perry made the nomination to re-elect Ron Lukens as Panel Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Dale Diaz. With no objection Lukens was re-elected Chairman.

Cynthia Sarthou made the nomination to re-elect David Yeager as Panel Vice-Chairman. The motion was seconded by Leslie Hartman. With no objection Yeager was re-elected Vice-Chairman.

OTHER BUSINESS

Dale Diaz announced that he had organized a field trip for all Panel members. A boat has been chartered to conduct an eco-tour of the Pascagoula River System. The trip was sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.

Lukens again offer the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.

**Otolith Work Group
Meeting Summary
November 17, 2004
Panama City, Florida**

S. VanderKooy opened the meeting at 12:59 p.m. He asked all participants to sign in and provide complete contact information. Email addresses are critical. The following attended and introduced themselves:

Laura Crabtree, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Ken Edds, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Aimee Eschete, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Gary Fitzhugh, NOAA/NMFS, Panama City, FL
John R. Foster, GDNR, Brunswick, GA
Gabe Gaddis, GDNR, Brunswick, GA
Gary Gray, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Patrick Kilduff, ASMFC, Washington, D.C.
Linda Lombardi-Carlson, NOAA/NMFS, Panama City, FL
John Mareska, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Donna McDowell, GDNR, Brunswick, GA
G. Erick Porche, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Janet Tunnell, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
James "Tut" Warren, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Steven J. VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cynthia B. Yocom, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

S. VanderKooy explained that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission published *A Practical Handbook for Determining the Age of Gulf of Mexico Fishes* (The Otolith Manual) in May 2003. Initially, copies were distributed to Gulf agencies and libraries. Nationwide requests were received and filled. The document was recently presented during the International Age and Growth Conference and worldwide requests were received. Hardcopies were mailed when possible, but CDs were much more economical.

Members of the GSMFC's Stock Assessment Team originally began development of the initial document. After the manual was roughly outlined, participants from the five Gulf States marine agencies were assigned to the Otolith Work Group to further draft and develop the techniques and species accounts. In addition to the work group, numerous experts from academic institutions and federal agencies contributed to the final product. During development and completion of the manual, interest was voiced by organizations and agencies outside the Gulf region to participate in any continued efforts. Therefore, this meeting opened that dialog to begin revision of the manual. Georgia and Florida developed training CDs for processing and ageing. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission expressed an interest in the revision, and the NMFS has pertinent information to include on several species.

S. VanderKooy distributed the table of contents; discussion will follow this outline. Sections will be reviewed independently to determine if changes are needed. After the meeting, the effort will be conducted via email, mail, telephone, and telephone conference calls.

One thing learned from putting together the original document, WordPerfect is not the ideal software to design and layout a document with numerous graphics files. PageMaker software will assimilate the revision.

Section 2 – Otolith Structure and Function. While at the age and growth symposium this summer, Dr. Art Popper reviewed the document and provided comments and recent literature. He suggested flipping the Figures 2.1 A and B to have the fish pointing up. More information exists on the chemistry of the endolymph on either side of the otolith and its contribution to function in the inner ear.

K. Edds realized that after the document was finished that more pictures of otoliths are needed including better images with more labeling showing orientation (Figure 2.2). Different examples of otoliths could be shown – king mackerel has a more pronounced rostrum and other species have a more blocked otolith. VanderKooy inquired whether this section should include more detail on larval fish and daily growth increments? G. Fitzhugh concluded that that type of detail is outside the scope of this document. J. Foster noted that from a practical standpoint, this document should limit peripheral topics. VanderKooy agreed that since the manual was developed more for state-level fisheries management, larval fish ageing was probably not necessary. K. Edds asked that recent literature on larval fish be cited as a reference source for readers however.

Section 3 – Processing Techniques. In the first section, methods to remove otoliths are described, and basic graphics show removal methods. J. Warren noted that removing otoliths by species is detailed in the back. This section describes general techniques. J. Foster indicated that otoliths are removed two ways in Georgia: from the top of the head as described in this section or going through the gills (but not in such a fine manner), severing the head from the back and using bone snips to pop open the capsule. K. Edds noted that from time to time otoliths are received a little wet, with a few drops of water in the vial. Is it true that the water can degrade the otolith? The group noted that oils and glycerin could damage the otolith. G. Fitzhugh noted that one paper deals with genetics from dried otoliths. There could be a real value in these archived collections from different geographic locations. This document should note the basic premise to clean and dry the otoliths before sectioning. S. VanderKooy stated that storage might become problematic. Vials protect otoliths better than coin envelopes but do take up more critical storage space.

Embedding processes in this section appear to be up to date. Florida has a different mounting technique and multiple blades on the low-speed saw. J. Tunnel agreed to provide the protocol with images. Florida uses old blades and spacers. J. Foster reported that GDNR and VIMS have a similar process using laminate instead of cardstock. Hot glue is used to mount the otolith and easily pops off so the laminate can be reused. Images of Georgia's modified mounting chuck will be provided (aluminum block spacer that slide in and out). A groove was machined on the

second generation of these machines to save the chuck. That protocol is written and will be provided by the Georgia DNR.

J. Mareska noted an addition to Section 3.3.3 (page 3-7), greater amberjack and king mackerel must be marked anterior to the core with a mechanical pencil. On page 3-8, K. Edds noted that they dot (with a sharpie) the whole otolith before embedding, slightly interior to core as a point of reference.

A. Aschete noted that their lab uses slides are frosted on one end but manually frost the opposite end as well by lightly grinding on the thin sectioning machine so both ends of their mounting slides can be marked and labeled. Regular sharpie ink can come off, especially with alcohol, therefore Sureline® markers are better to mark samples permanently. She will provide an addition to 3.4.3, fourth paragraph.

J. Mareska asked S. VanderKooy to check Figure 3.2.5 (spine core); it looks extremely similar to Figure 5.4.1. VanderKooy agreed it appears to be the same image and must be fixed.

G. Fitzhugh noted that this part of the document is basically complete. There will always be updates to methodology. Interpretation needs expansion. There are different people in different locations reading the same species and getting different age structures. The question becomes – are the age structures different or are the interpretations different?

S. VanderKooy noted that as far as greater amberjack and king mackerel, most of the people at the state level never processed those otoliths before being told to (through FIN) and as such, the learning curve is very low. However, if everyone in this room were given a seatrout or red drum otolith, the interpretation would very likely be the same. Once the validation is developed for these more difficult species, it might be more likely that a group could come to consensus.

G. Fitzhugh noted that there are three steps within the ageing process. The third step is a reference collection or how everyone obtains the ageing estimates; the second step is training, have someone new coming and attaining a level of precision, and the first step is orientation, a series of patterns to look for. The orientation portion can be included within this document for each species.

L. Lombardi-Carlson reported that in the experience of red snapper, there were problems with edge interpretations from the different states. This manual states that all the states should be using these same methods, yet none were. She noted that after evaluating the training set, different edge codes are being used, and the states are attempting to “fit” their codes within the system rather than providing the accepted codes. VanderKooy noted that at the last training workshop, he asked and found the same situation at that time.

G. Fitzhugh noted that ACCSP recently agreed to work further on interpretation. Reference collections are necessary for each species. All agreed that only the individual species orientations should be within this document. If an interactive web site is eventually developed, it would be more practical to have training and reference sets downloadable from the web rather than to try to include them within the manual itself.

Section 4 – Age Determination. S. VanderKooy explained this portion briefly instructs the reader how to interpret an otolith using a black drum otolith as the example. There were some questions from Charles Piston, NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center. He questioned whether the use of “opaque” and “translucent” were reversed. The glossary is consistent with the use of these terms on page 2-2. G. Fitzhugh noted that there are differences in boreal and tropical growth patterns. In northern climates, translucent zones are thin, more distinct, and counted. In the tropics, opaque zones are thin, more distinct, and counted. Fast versus slow growth is perceived differently. In the tropics, the opaque formation is a spring/summer event, but it initiates in the winter. The translucent growth pattern (the fast growth pattern) is found in late summer and early fall. In the northern climates, there is a shorter growing season and different biological process. There is recent literature on this to cite. These interpretations can be resolved.

J. Warren stated the Gulf of Mexico should develop an orientation set for speckled trout within this document. This is where consensus and consistency is developed. G. Fitzhugh stated the document should contain validation for every species. The group agreed to add orientation sets and validation within the individual species section. Minimal validation was included within the original document. Under Section 4.4.1, add the method of validation (e.g., chemical marking, C14 method, margin increment). S. VanderKooy will contact Melissa Bahnick-Cook at the NMFS Pascagoula Lab and Scott Baker at North Carolina Sea Grant for more information on C14 validation.

Section 5 – Species Accounts. Discussion began to determine what species to add to the revision. The group agreed to attempt the following:

Cobia – S. VanderKooy will lead effort and contact Jim Franks at the Gulf Coast Research Lab.

Gag – G. Fitzhugh & C. Lombardi-Carlson will lead effort.

Red grouper – G. Fitzhugh & C. Lombardi-Carlson will lead effort.

Tripletail – S. VanderKooy will lead effort with Jim Franks.

Dolphin – S. VanderKooy will lead effort and contact D. Arnold and R. McBride at Beaufort Lab.

Wahoo – (possibly) S. VanderKooy will lead effort and contact J. Franks.

Gulf Menhaden – Has been completed by the Beaufort NMFS Lab.

Vermilion snapper – J. Tunnell will lead effort and contact R. Allman (NMFS) and perhaps K. Burns (Mote Marine Lab).

Ground mullet – J. Warren will lead effort and coordinate with J. Mareska.

Future submissions of Atlantic species were discussed, including black seabass, whiting, and Atlantic Menhaden.

G. Fitzhugh provided a narrative and orientation set for gag; C. Lombardi-Carlson provided the same for red grouper. These may act as the boilerplates for the revision since orientation and validations are included. VanderKooy will evaluate and return with comments to the Panama City Lab.

The existing species within the manual will go back to their original author (or replacement) for revision. Orientation sets and validation information will be added.

G. Fitzhugh asked what the group thought about Ageing Centers based on species specialty. For example, the states outside of Florida may collect a few hundred gag otoliths. The Panama City Laboratory already ages thousands of gag otoliths a year. Would it be more efficient to send those samples to their lab for ageing rather than having several labs do a few each? Everyone agreed it seemed inefficient for everyone to be doing every species. Likewise, other species may be more appropriately handled by other labs which may already be "specializing" in them. VanderKooy noted that the Pacific Northwest has a federal laboratory in Newport which is staffed by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. Ageing centers are also in Seattle and Alaska. Increasingly, the South Atlantic and Gulf will coordinate any key species reviews.

P. Kilduff will report to his office and get back to S. VanderKooy on their status in development of the revision. J. Foster could not commit to another project at present, but will provide the information requested at this meeting.

There being no further business, S. VanderKooy thanked the group for their participation and closed the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

**Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
November 18 and 19, 2004
Panama City, Florida**

David Donaldson of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the Port Sampler meeting to order on November 18, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

Pete Antosh, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chuck Armstrong, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Debbie Batiste, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Josh Bennett, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Jay Boulet, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Steve Brown, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Lew Bullock, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Graham Cole, FFWRI, Jacksonville, FL
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Claudia Dennis, NOAA Fisheries, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Kit Doncaster, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX
Aimee Eschete, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Pamela Eyo, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Debbie Fable, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Gary Fitzhugh, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Ted Flowers, NOAA Fisheries, Mobile, AL
Michelle Gamby, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL
Dave Gluckner, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Linda Guidry, NOAA Fisheries, New Iberia, LA
Gary Haddle, FFWRI, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Lisa Hallock, FFWRI, Port Charlotte, FL
Brett Hano, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Kathleen Hebert, NOAA Fisheries, Houma, LA
Tom Herbert, NOAA Fisheries, Fort Myers, FL
Jessica Hornbeck, FFWRI, Marathon, FL
Rene Labadens, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Jude LeDoux, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Albert Lefort, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Linda Lombardi-Carlson, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Edie Lopez, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX
Pamela Machuga, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Anthony MacWhinnie, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL
Stephanie McGrath, FFWRI, Panama City Beach, FL
Terri Menzel, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL
Gary Moore, FFWRI, Cedar Key, FL

Lloyd Muccio, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Michelle Padgett, NOAA Fisheries, Freeport, TX
Chris Palmer, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Keith Roberts, NOAA Fisheries, Galveston, TX
Renee Roman, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Rouse, NOAA Fisheries, Cut Off, LA
Bill Samuels, FFWRI, Tequesta, FL
Jimmy Sanders, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Charlie Schaefer, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL
Laura Baird Sebastian, FFWRI, Melbourne, FL
Pete Sheridan, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Roy Spears, NOAA Fisheries, Aransas Pass, TX
June Weeks, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL
Joe West, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Maggie Bourgeois Williams, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA

Staff

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended.

Status of Commercial Fisheries Information Network

D. Donaldson of Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) stated that the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) is a cooperative state-federal program to collect, manage, and disseminate information on recreational and commercial fisheries. Donaldson reported on several FIN activities currently taking place, including collection of recreational data, implementation of trip tickets, biological sampling, and implementation of the data management system. Donaldson reported that Texas would begin implementing a trip ticket program in 2005 with approximately 60 dealers. All the other Gulf states, with the exception of Mississippi, have fully operational trip ticket systems. FIN has been working with dealers across the Gulf introducing electronic trip ticket reporting. Currently there are about 250 dealers on-line and these dealers are responsible for almost one-half of the landings in the Gulf.

Donaldson then reported that over 20,000 otoliths for more than 80 species had been

collected from both commercial and recreational sampling. Unfortunately due to Hurricane Ivan biological sampling activities have decreased considerably. Donaldson reported that due to funding shortfalls red snapper would not be targeted in 2005.

Donaldson reported that the FIN Data Management System now houses commercial (trip ticket), recreational, biological, fishery independent, SEAMAP, menhaden, and historical data. The FIN DMS has been online since July 2002.

Donaldson reported on future activities of FIN noting that head boat sampling is an important issue. Bycatch data collection is being tested in Alabama via at-sea sampling. Another future activity to be implemented is detailed effort. These activities are contingent on additional funding.

Discussion of Otolith Issues

Gary Fitzhugh of NMFS Panama City Lab gave an update on the otolith program at the Lab. Fitzhugh reported that the Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) is a new process, which includes a data workshop, follow up workshops on assessments, and a review. The SEDAR process takes about a year to complete. Fitzhugh noted that the Magnuson-Stevens Act has new standards which require definition of overfished and overfishing thresholds. Therefore port samplers are being asked to supply more otoliths. Fitzhugh reported that the species most often aged at the Panama City Lab are the mackerels as well as gag, red grouper, red snapper, and vermilion snapper. Fitzhugh presented a list of priority species requiring aging for federal assessments in the Gulf of Mexico and noted that the need for aging is increasing. In the future it will be necessary to divide the work of aging otoliths among other federal and/or state facilities. Fitzhugh suggested that since there are so many species it would be beneficial to have certain laboratories process particular species and get away from having several laboratories aging the same species.

Fitzhugh noted that with the SEDAR process stock assessments for various species are planned a number of years in advance. This allows managers to begin compiling the necessary data to ensure a successful assessment. Fitzhugh reported that the sources of samples to the Panama City Lab over the last five years are primarily from the TIP program (76%), with others

from MRFSS, charterboat, headboat, and scientific surveys. Over 160,000 hard parts from more than 100 species collected from the 1980's to present are archived at the Panama City Lab.

Following Fitzhugh's presentation, there was a question and answer session with the port samplers.

Discussion of Hurricane Impacts on Commercial Fishing

Anthony MacWhinnie of FFWRI in Pensacola gave a photo presentation of impacts to commercial fishing due to hurricanes in the Pensacola area. Mac Whinnie's photographs ranged from residential neighborhoods, transportation issues, and the five major fish houses in Escambia County, Florida. Hurricane Ivan made landfall on September 15 at Gulf Shores, Alabama with winds of 130 mph and affected a large portion of the Gulf coast. MacWhinnie reported that insured losses are estimated at 6 to 12 billion dollars for the four hurricanes that hit Florida in 2004. MacWhinnie's photographs depicted the devastation in the Pensacola area. Photos of homes destroyed, the Interstate-10 bridge washed out, and the seafood houses and commercial fishing piers destroyed. Most of the commercial fishing boats were moved upriver before Hurricane Ivan struck, so most of them survived with little or no damage. However, most of the commercial docks and icehouses were destroyed. The owners of these seafood businesses suffered catastrophic losses to their homes as well, as MacWhinnie's photos graphically illustrated. MacWhinnie also stressed the emotional toll an event like Ivan can take.

Discussion of TIP Online Data Entry Program

Josh Bennett of NOAA Southeast Science Center in Miami gave a presentation on the TIP online data entry program. Bennett introduced Lloyd Muccio who is the head programmer for the TIP online application. Bennett thanked the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission for hosting the meeting, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program for funding the TIP online development process, and all agency partners in attendance at the meeting. Bennett also specifically thanked the port samplers.

Bennett gave a brief history of the TIP program, the development of TIP online, review of the improvements added so far, and what to expect in the future. Bennett gave live

demonstrations of various scenarios of the TIP online program. A question and answer session followed with Bennett and Muccio answering questions from the port samplers. The following comments and suggestions were discussed:

- Update dealer tables and names
- Instruct agents to call if unable to find dealer
- Conflicts between multiple trips and trip dates
- Look at error check for days out and multiple trips
- A range of lat-longs instead of one lat-long
- Make a note in HELP – how to handle Gulf quadrants
- Look into a carry or default for random sample checkbox
- Summary reports
- Edit browser does not keep place when a record is edited and saved. Next record needs to be resorted. Lock the browser in blocks of ten.
- How to enter more than one record at a time.
- Develop a message that goes out automatically for unplanned outages of the server.
- Create a flat file download

Other Business

D. Donaldson asked the port samplers for suggestions on the location of the 2005 meeting. After discussion several suggestions were made including, Key West, New Orleans, Brownsville, or Galveston. The meeting will be held during the first week of November 2005.

The meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting resumed on Friday, November 19, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

The port agent meeting continued at the NMFS Panama City Laboratory with a tour of the Lab and an otolith training workshop. Each port sampler visited various stations set up at the Lab. These stations covered otolith removal, the age structuring process, reproduction, and otolith analysis.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon

**BILLFISH PROPOSAL REVIEW MEETING
SUMMARY**

Tuesday, November 30, 2004

New Orleans, Louisiana

Attendees

David Cupka, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Karen Foote, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for John Roussel*)
Corky Perret, MDWF, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Nancy Thompson, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Virginia Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Alabama Not Represented

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ronald R. Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Administrative Officer, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jason Keenum, Accountant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS 39564

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) sent out a request for proposals to fund an Atlantic Billfish Research Program. The GSMFC, through cooperation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, requested proposals to participate in (1) ecological and biological research; (2) fishery and socio-economic research; and (3) the development of innovative analytical methods and research tools addressing management needs for Atlantic billfish, primarily blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*), white marlin (*Tetrapturus albidus*) and sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*) – all of which are members of the family Istiophoridae; however, other Istiophorid species would also be considered. Total funding available for research is \$1.8 million, with individual projects ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000. Projects could be funded below or above the range, if deemed necessary. Proposals selected for funding will be implemented through sub-awards.

The group discussed technical reviews received for each proposal as well as their own comments and ranked them for funding consideration.

Proposal 1

The Value of Billfish to Recreational Anglers

\$125,893

Vote: Yes – 0

No - 6

Proposal 2

Ecology and Stock Structure of Billfishes in the Gulf of Mexico

\$719,920

Vote: Yes – 0

No – 1

Maybe - 5

Proposal 3

Eye Lens Oxidation as an Effective Age Marker for Atlantic Billfish

\$133,827

Vote: Yes – 0

No - 6

Proposal 4

Species-specific Enzyme Immunoassays for Determining Billfish Gender and Maturity

Stage: Development and Application of Methods Suitable for Live and Dead Specimens

\$217,923

Vote: Yes – 0

No - 6

Proposal 5

A Comprehensive Statistical Modeling Effort to Use Historical Tagging Data to

Elucidate Growth Characteristics of Atlantic Billfish

\$120,583

Vote: Yes – 5

No – 0

Maybe – 1

Proposal 6

Age/Growth, Movements, Post Release Survival, and Habitat Identification of Blue Marlin and White Marlin in the Gulf of Mexico

\$198,010

Vote: Yes – 0

No – 6

Proposal 7

Age Growth, Reproduction and Genetics of Billfish in Gulf of Mexico Waters off Texas

\$83,376

Vote: Yes – 2

No – 1

Maybe – 2

Proposal 8

Development of Portable, Universal Assay for Determination of Gender and Reproductive Status of Istiophorid Billfish

\$110,976

Vote: Yes – 6

No – 0

Proposal 9

Use of Pop-up Satellite Archival Tags to Estimate Post-release Survival and Habitat Preferences of Sailfish from Commercial Pelagic Longline Gear in the Southern Gulf of Mexico

\$128,090

Vote: Yes – 6

No – 0

Proposal 10

Development of Molecular Markers for the Discrimination of Atlantic and Indopacific Populations of Istiophorid Billfishes

\$107,349

Vote: Yes – 0

No – 6

Proposal 11

Analysis of the Effect of Offset Circle Hooks on Post-Release Survival and an Estimation of the Relative Hooking Efficiency of Circle Hooks and Standard J-Hooks in the Recreational Fishery for White Marlin

\$286,003

Vote: Yes – 6

No – 0

Proposal 12

Atlantic Billfish Research on white Marlin Essential Fish Habitat and Possible Resident Populations in the Desoto Canyon Area of the Northern Gulf of Mexico – Assessment of Residence, Movements and Migration

\$188,675

Vote: Yes – 6

No – 0

Proposal 13

Constituent Tag/Recapture and Fishing Effort Monitoring Enhancement Project

\$162,800

Vote: Yes – 4

No – 2

Proposal 14

An Atlantic-wide Study of Age and Growth of Atlantic Marlins

\$128,087

Vote: Yes – 6

No – 0

Proposal 15

Potential for Billfish Conservation and Economic Impacts Due to Hook Type Change in the North Carolina Charter Troll Fishery

\$199,579

Vote: Yes – 0

No – 6

Proposal 16

Survey of U.S. Virgin Islands Recreational Fishing Boats that Target Billfish and Other Pelagic Species

\$231,795

Vote: Yes - 4 (if budget is reworked regarding issue of indirect and direct costs)

No – 0

Maybe – 2

Proposal 17

Evaluating the Contribution of Spawning and Nursery Habitats Within the Straits of Florida to the EFH of Atlantic Billfish

\$195,384

Vote: Yes – 5

No - 0

Maybe - 1

Proposal 18

Reproductive Biology, Potential Spawning and Nursery Areas and Larval Identification of Blue Marlin in the North Central Gulf of Mexico

\$215,080

Vote: Yes – 4

No - 0

Maybe – 2

The group had concerns about direct and indirect charges in the budget for Project 16, *Survey of U.S. Virgin Islands Recreational Fishing Boats that target Billfish and Other Pelagic Species*. Those charges, \$44,593, were removed from that budget leaving a total project cost of \$187,202.

Corky Perret made a motion to include project number 7, *Age Growth, Reproduction and Genetics of Billfish in Gulf of Mexico Waters off Texas*, for funding. The motion was seconded by Nancy Thompson. The motion passed with 4 votes.

With the addition of project number 7, the total number of projects recommended was 11, with proposed funding at \$1,806,256.

A motion was made by Karen Foote to negotiate reducing \$6,256 from project number 11, *Analysis of the Effect of Offset Circle Hooks on Post-Release Survival and Estimation of the Relative Hooking Efficiency of Circle Hooks and Standard J-Hooks in the Recreational Fishery for White Marlin*. This would bring the total of all projects to \$1,800,000. The motion was seconded by David Cupka, and passed with 6 votes.

Perret suggested that, should additional funds become available, project number 12, *Atlantic Billfish Research on white Marlin Essential Fish Habitat and Possible Resident Populations in the Desoto Canyon Area of the Northern Gulf of Mexico – Assessment of Residence, Movements and Migration*, should receive additional funds to purchase more tags. There was no objection to his suggestion.

Should funds become available due to non-completion or other circumstances, they will revert to the Commission. These funds could be used to pay travel for the review panel to attend a MARFIN conference for Principal Investigator presentations.

A copy of the final rankings and budget figures is attached to this summary as Attachment 1. As a final note, the group added that if requested, reviewers' comments could be made available to the PIs if all names/affiliations were removed.

SARP Funding

Larry Simpson asked the group to approve a one time contribution of \$5,000 to assist in hiring a full time coordinator for the SARP Program. All signatories are being asked to make this contribution.

Corky Perret made a motion to give SARP a one time contribution of \$5,000 to hire a full time coordinator. The motion was seconded by Mike Ray, and the motion carried.

Ron Lukens emphasized that each of the signatories was being asked to donate \$5,000. He asked that each state representative check on the status of their contribution. He will send an email to the group with a list of those who have already committed funds.

FIN Funding

Dave Donaldson reported that the FIN program had received an increase of \$750K for 2005, and the group needed to decide how to allocate those funds. Donaldson presented several handouts with different scenarios. After considerable discussion, specifically regarding head boat logbook sampling and the Texas trip ticket program, a motion was made regarding the additional FIN funding.

Corky Perret made a motion to reinstate headboat port sampling in Texas and Florida; to reinstate full funding for biological sampling; and to conduct at sea sampling in the amount of \$200K for Florida and \$36K for Louisiana. The motion was seconded by Karen Foote and passed by unanimous vote. The final distribution of funds is shown in Attachment 2.

Donaldson noted that these revisions would have to be handled quickly in order to send the entire package to Grants Management by the December 10 deadline.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Attachment 1

Proposal #		Cost		
5		\$120,583	Y	\$120,583
7		\$83,376	Y	\$83,376
8		\$110,976	Y	\$110,976
9		\$128,090	Y	\$128,090
11		\$279,747	Y	\$279,747
12		\$188,675	Y	\$188,675
13		\$162,800	Y	\$162,800
14		\$128,087	Y	\$128,087
16		\$187,202	Y	\$187,202
17		\$195,384	Y	\$195,384
18		\$215,080	Y	\$215,080
1		\$125,893	N	
2		\$719,920	N	
3		\$133,827	N	
4		\$217,923	N	
6		\$198,010	N	
10		\$107,349	N	
15		\$199,579	N	
Total		\$3,502,501		\$1,800,000

Attachment 2

PROPOSED-2005

ACTIVITY	2005	
		COST
Admin and coordination of FIN (Job1)		\$395,107
Recreational data collection (Job 2)		
Texas	\$84,289	
Louisiana	\$383,280	
Mississippi	\$203,992	
Alabama	\$142,141	
Florida	\$1,348,642	
GSMFC	\$201,176	
Rec survey subtotal		\$2,363,520
Head boat sampling (Job 3.1)		
Florida	\$80,913	
Contractual - TX sampler	\$38,211	
Head boat subtotal		\$119,124
At-sea sampling (Job 3.2)		
Louisiana	\$36,721	
Alabama	\$25,331	
Florida	\$200,203	
At-sea subtotal		\$262,255
Menhaden sampling (Job 4)		\$38,115
FIN DMS (Job 5)		\$213,134
Trip ticket programs (Job 6)		
Texas	\$220,073	
Louisiana	\$417,625	
Mississippi	\$72,173	
Alabama	\$118,419	
Contractual - SCBI	\$81,970	
Trip ticket subtotal		\$910,260
Biological sampling collection (Job 7)		
Contractual - TX samplers	\$86,848	
Texas	\$18,788	
Louisiana	\$164,793	
Mississippi	\$58,424	
Alabama	\$100,781	
Florida	\$161,351	
Biol sampling subtotal		\$590,985
GRAND TOTAL		\$4,892,500

GulfFIN line item	\$4,037,500
Gulf portion of RecFIN line item	\$855,000
TOTAL AVAILABLE	\$4,892,500
Difference-proposed vs. available	\$0
Percent change	0.0%

**SHEEPSHEAD TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
December 7, 2004
Fulton, Texas**

Chairman Chuck Adams called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 7, 2004, at the Inn at Fulton Harbor. Attendance was:

Members Attending:

Chuck Adams, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Jason Adriance, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Mike Brackin, Breakaway Fishing, Gulfport, MS
Paul Cook, LDWF, New Iberia, LA
Perry Trial, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX

Members Absent:

John Mareska, ADMR, Dauphin Island, AL
Jeff Mayne, LDWF Enforcement Division, Baton Rouge, LA
Jessica McCawley, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Harlon Pearce, Commercial Representative, Kenner, LA
Erick Porche, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff:

Steven J. VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cynthia B. Yocom, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The group adopted the agenda with the addition of Section 5 discussion.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held June 22-23, 2004, in Marathon, Florida, were reviewed and approved as written.

Comments/Assignments

Using the computer and projection screen, the document was revised in-group discussion. The following items need attention:

Cover

Soften halo around fish
Rename as Fishery Profile not FMP yet

Section 4

Need state specific information for Alabama and Mississippi
Dredge and fill, amount of marsh present
Update references in 4.3.2

4.6 – add transition sentence regarding eggs collected in Louisiana in lower salinity waters
4.8 & 4.9 – mercury data needed for each state
C. Adams distributed EPA Gulf of Mexico table on mercury occurrences
Clear Lake/Galveston 1999
C. Adams check with Mote Marine Lab for red tide occurrences
Check habitat numbers for updates

Section 5

Need Alabama's regulation history

Section 6

Graphs and figures should be more user-friendly, SJV needs the coinciding excel spreadsheets
Update fishery-independent data, bycatch studies, trawl bycatch in the offshore fishery
Update figures with new files provided by J. Adriance
Property format citation for figures from the MRFSS web site
Fix format – remove headings and move to figure legend
J. Adriance to check average weight, kilos to grams?
6.3 – J. Adriance to add incidental catch, derelict trap bycatch, trawl bycatch
Delete figure 6.32
Check recreational gill netting in Alabama
Add license sales per state
6.5 – remove
6.6 – significant meteorological events – add good meta data (freezes, hurricanes) only if documented. Freezes and red tide have a measured affect on the population.
Figure 6.17 need 2003 data
Figure 6.18 P.Trial send update to J. Adriance
Figure 6.19 update through 2003
Figure 6.21 connect freeze information to 1988-1989 point on figure within text
Figure 6.22 start y axis at 300
Metric conversions needed
Figure 6.26 change to table format

Section 7

C. Adams update through 2003 – changes tables, discussion, averages
All – read over summarized survey findings
Include survey within the appendix
All – send any consumption studies to C. Adams

Section 8

8.5 – SJV application to sheepshead? Enough information for the other states?
Summarize section with information specific to sheepshead.
C. Adams will discuss with M. Jepson

Bibliography

SJV – update

Timeline

SJV will provide a copy of the profile to the Stock Assessment Team, who will determine if data are available to perform a regional stock assessment for the fishery. These findings and the profile will be presented to the S-FFMC in March. Sea Grant is meeting in conjunction with the GSMFC, and C. Adams plans to attend and will present the document to the committee. Based on the committee's decision whether to develop the profile into an FMP, a meeting could be held as early as April or May 2005. Cedar Key and Apalachicola were recommended meeting sites.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.