

APPROVED BY:   
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

10/24/06

**COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL  
MEETING SUMMARY – 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Monday, March 13, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

**P. Horn** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. without a quorum for either panel. The following were in attendance:

**Members**

- Bob Fairbanks, Gulfport, MS
- Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS
- John Rawlings, Colorado River Seafood, Matagorda, TX
- Ronnie Luster, Texas CCA, Houston, TX

**Staff**

- Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
- David Donaldson, Data Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
- Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

- Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
- Michael Bailey, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
- Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
- Jimmy Gibson, San Antonio, TX
- Chris Smiser, San Antonio, TX
- Walter Zimmerman, San Antonio, TX
- Joe O’Hop, FWC, St Petersburg, FL
- Jim Smarr, TX Rec Fish Alliance, Stonewall, TX
- Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

The following is a brief summary of the meeting since there was not a quorum and no official business was conducted.

The panel had not met in October due to the number of members impacted by the storm therefore most of the discussions centered on the hurricanes and their aftermath.


At a previous meeting Dave Donaldson had been asked to present information on the Federal Recreational license and the resolving of ComFIN data with the federal log books. Donaldson provided additional information on that topic. Donaldson also provided data comparing the commercial and recreational landings for ten key species over the last ten year at the request of the Panel. Donaldson agreed to revisit this item

next fall with a little more historical data, teasing out any changes in the average size of these species over time. Finally, Donaldson provided a short presentation on state recreational fishing licenses and the concept of a Federal recreational license. He identified the problem with being able to land fish in several of the Gulf states without any recreational license when only fishing in the EEZ. There was discussion regarding the closing of this loophole to ensure all fishermen returning to shore were licensed somewhere.

Lukens updated the Panel on the invasive species activities in the region and nation while VanderKooy gave a quick overview of the IJF program activities. Finally, Rester updated the Panel on the events of the last 12 months related to the LNG proposals in the Gulf.

*With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 am.*

SEAMAP Subcommittee Meeting  
MINUTES  
March 13, 2006  
San Antonio, TX

APPROVED BY:   
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

### Call to Order

Chairman Jim Hanifen called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. The following members and others were present:

#### Members:

Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Steve Heath, *Vice Chairman*, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Mark Leiby, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

#### Staff:

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

### Adoption of Agenda

**M. Leiby said he wished to discuss starting a central photo library of fish and invertebrates under other business. With this addition, the agenda was adopted.**

### Approval of Minutes

**M. Leiby moved to approve the October 17, 2005 minutes as submitted. S. Heath seconded and the motion passed.**

### Administrative Report

J. Rester reported he thinks the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Cruise took place last year but he only received cruise reports from Louisiana and Texas. J. Rester asked the Subcommittee to please send the cruise reports to him as soon as possible after each cruise. B. Pellegrin said they did sample all of their stations, but they were late getting the cruise reports to J. Rester.

J. Rester stated that the Commission's Fishery Independent Database project with USGS was continuing and should be finished shortly. The project was delayed due to state personnel being busy with Hurricane Katrina related activities. He said he was still working on normalizing the SEAMAP trawl database for use in the SEAMAP ArcIMS site. Because the data was offline after

Katrina, he was not able to download the data last year. He requested a copy of the data which he received in February but it was not the correct copy. He received the correct copy on February 15<sup>th</sup> and will work on normalizing it as soon as possible. After the data is normalized, he will contact NCDDC to see if they are still willing to host the ArcIMS site. He will keep the Subcommittee informed of the project's progress.

He said the Subcommittee decided to complete the 2002 Atlas in the old format but nothing has been done. The Atlas is on hold until NMFS has time to format the data. Hopefully, that will be soon. He said he hopes to run the 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 Atlases sometime this year. It will be a large task but the Atlases are four years behind and they need to get back up and running. M. McDuff said they are trying to update their program so that it will run with windows instead of DOS. J. Hanifen said that because the atlases are so far behind and the goal is to get more towards online data access, the Subcommittee should discuss the new atlas format again at the August meeting. He said to do the 2002 Atlas if the data comes in before then, but if not they will discuss using the new format for all the atlases in August.

J. Rester said several letters have been mailed since last fall requesting additional SEAMAP funding. The Gulf state directors signed a joint letter that was sent to all members of the House and Senate appropriations committees and the Gulf Congressional delegation. The South Atlantic state directors did not want to sign the letter. Another letter was sent to Bill Hogarth signed by all three chairmen requesting that NMFS request additional funds for SEAMAP within their budget request each year. In the past they have not done this. He said he hopes that if SEAMAP receives an increase this year, NMFS will increase their appropriations also and that way Congress is not looking at two different amounts for the same program.

J. Rester asked if all the states and NMFS will be able to complete their survey portions this summer. Everyone responded that they will be able to complete their routine sampling. J. Rester said real time data will be distributed again this summer, and they are still working on a way to add length frequencies.

### **Possible SEAMAP 2007 Funding Increase, Planning for the Future**

J. Hanifen restated that several letters were mailed asking for more funding for SEAMAP. The President's budget has 3.8 million dollars more for SEAMAP. Bill Hogarth wrote a letter to the Chairmen of SEAMAP stating what NMFS envisions for the additional funding. L. Simpson stated this has been an accumulative effort over the years and that one letter did not do this. He said that when requesting the additional funding, they emphasized the utility of SEAMAP for LNG facilities, shrimp management, stock assessments, etc. He said if extra funding is acquired, the program has to produce relevant information in a timely fashion and distribute the information in a user friendly format. He said he believes SEAMAP will receive an increase although he does not know what that amount will be, but the participants need to continue doing good work and produce viable and relevant information. He said to keep in mind the ongoing changes in shrimp management such as limited entry, general ecological trends, benchmark indices for relative health of some species, and LNG when planning for the future of SEAMAP. The Subcommittee asked that since B. Hogarth only mentioned SEAMAP-Gulf activities in the letter, will the Gulf be able to keep all of the funding. L. Simpson said no, the Gulf should receive the lion's share but all three components will

receive some of the extra funding. The Subcommittee discussed asking for the same percentage, if not more, of the funding that they received the last time SEAMAP had an increase.

The Subcommittee then discussed their priorities and justifications for the new funding. The Subcommittee agreed they could not submit the final priorities today because they will have to discuss new or expanded projects with their personnel to insure the extra work can be done. J. Hanifen asked the Subcommittee to reevaluate their priorities and submit a final list to J. Rester before April 29<sup>th</sup>. C. Noble will send a reminder to the Subcommittee every week until the due date. Some of the projects and/or new priorities discussed were: restoring and expanding the historical/core surveys; seasonal sampling; sampling to provide data for the LNG issue; providing data on aquaculture, sand mining, wind farms, etc.; the accessibility and distribution of the SEAMAP data; start new surveys; and sampling with different gears in addition to the gears already being used.

#### **Update on Fishery Independent Database**

D. Donaldson asked the Subcommittee to provide the necessary information to Cheryl Solomon, the NBII Metadata specialist who is working to create the metadata records for the database. He said he will keep the Subcommittee informed on the progress of the Fishery Independent Database.

#### **SEAMAP External Review**

P. Choucair said that in the handouts are the questions asked for the TPWD external review through AFS. He said he and J. Rester discussed asking AFS to do the SEAMAP external review because they already have a process in place to do scientific external reviews. The Subcommittee discussed this and B. Pellegrin stated he thought the SEAMAP Committee had already decided on NMFS to do the review. This was discussed at the joint meeting but the Subcommittee agreed if NMFS does the review, it should be by personnel outside the Southeast region. J. Rester said the Commission has approximately \$8,000 left over in SEAMAP from last year to pay for the review. The South Atlantic transferred \$2,000 for the review also. He said he mailed the Subcommittee and the other components a list of questions and objectives that resulted from the 1987 review and asked if these were still viable and if anything should be added. After discussion on database questions, the Subcommittee asked J. Rester to revise the list and combine the South Atlantic's and Caribbean's input and then send the new list to the Subcommittee and the other components for their final approval. The Subcommittee asked J. Rester that after the review questions list was final, to start the process to have an external review.

#### **Other Business**

M. Leiby said he has been trying for a number of years to get the FWRI species photo collections on the web in a searchable format so that researchers and teachers will know what they have available. He said he would like to collect as many photos as possible to put on the website for researchers to view online and if the photos were available online with enough information, they may not have to borrow the specimen from FWRI. He said that after further discussions with other people interested in this idea, he would like for other states to get involved and develop a central photo library for researchers, teachers and the general public to access. J. Hanifen said LDWF has also been

discussing doing a similar project through LSU's Sea Grant Program. M. Leiby said he has talked to the legal department as to how they can give the proper credit to the contributors and to be able to prosecute if any of the photos were used for commercial purposes or any other purpose other than what is intended. He said he was told that FWRI has the server space to house this (for the time being) and that he would like to take the lead on the project. He then asked the Subcommittee if they would like to pursue this project. After discussion and more input on ideas on how to develop the central photo library, the Subcommittee agreed that SEAMAP should do this. M. Leiby asked the Subcommittee to email him stating they are in favor of starting a central photo library of fish species and are willing to contribute to the project. He said he would take this written support to the proper personnel at FWRI and ask for their approval to start. He said if FWRI approved the project he would add this to his SEAMAP budget. J. Hanifen said he would ask Chuck Wilson, the LSU Sea Grant Director to contact M. Leiby also.

J. Rester stated the Atlantic States has a new coordinator, Peter Mooreside. He said the management plan has not been completed but he will keep contacting P. Mooreside and ask him to please finish this. He said he also does not have the joint meeting information yet but will inform the Subcommittee when it is given to him.

B. Pellegrin asked how each state was collecting dissolved oxygen. He said NMFS was thinking of switching from Winkler titration to a newer method. He said he will send information to the Subcommittee and the Environmental Work Group on this new method. They will do comparisons with the old system before they make any permanent change.

***With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.***

APPROVED BY:  
Traci Floyd  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, March 13, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Chairman T. Floyd** called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. The following attended:

**Members**

Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA  
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Harriet Perry, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Gilmore “Butch” Pellegrin, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Glen Sutton, TPWD, Dickenson, TX

**Approval of Minutes**

The Subcommittee reviewed the minutes of the meeting held March 14, 2005 in Point Clear, Alabama since there was not a quorum at the last meeting and the workgroup summary from October 17, 2005, in Orlando, Florida. Minor changes were recommended. **A. Jackson moved to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by V. Guillory and the minutes were approved.**

**Adoption of Agenda**

**The agenda was rearranged slightly to allow B. Pellegrin to hear the Lipofuscin discussion. With no objection the modified agenda was accepted.**

**Derelict Trap Guidelines Document Revision**

**VanderKooy** reported on the current status of the guidelines document. The meeting which had been scheduled for September to work on the revision had been cancelled due to the hurricanes. At this time, **VanderKooy** has the material that had been sent in prior to the storms but wanted each of the state representatives to provide electronic versions for their respective sections. A meeting location and time was discussed. The revision meeting would again coincide with the stock assessment workshop and all agreed that

Naples would be a good location. It was agreed that some discussion of terrapins should be included in the document partly for education purposes.

### Upcoming Derelict Trap Cleanups

**Louisiana** – **V. Guillory** reported on their trap recovery efforts. One crab trap cleanup was held in southwest Terrebonne Parish from March 4-12, 2006. A total of 2,869 traps were collected and 22 total boat days. There are a tremendous number of traps still out there however. There was a lot of effort near the disposal areas but noticeably less effort further out from these locations. In three years, 14,369 crab traps have been recovered. A bounty might provide a little more interest in removal. FEMA has actually given money to other states for the removal of 'debris' especially when related to human health risks. Florida has had some success with getting assistance for debris removal. FEMA does require some match however. Last year the removal program secured a permanent source of funding. A fee of \$5 on both commercial and recreational trap license holders has been assessed and based on the recent sales, should generate about \$35,000 for recovery efforts. This legislation was sponsored by the Crab Task Force.

**Mississippi** – **T. Floyd** estimated the total loss of traps from the hurricane to be around 44,000. Many fishermen removed their traps in preparation for the storm but they were stacked shoreside and ended up in the water with the surge. No cleanup was possible this past winter due in part to the extensive damage to the MDMR and GCRL facilities, however, a major cleanup is planned for the 06-07 winter as several 'problem' areas have been identified for directed efforts. A trap cleanup proposal has been submitted to NOAA for funding to help with this effort. Prior to the storm, a total of over 6,000 traps had been removed from Mississippi waters.

**Alabama** – **L. Hartman** was unable to attend the meeting but provided a written report. Alabama had another Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program on Saturday, March 11, 2006. Despite three days of steady, strong southerly winds which kept water levels unusually high, 306 traps were collected from Mobile Bay and northern Mississippi Sound. Approximately 24 boats participated as well as 3 airboats. As usual, the majority of traps were collected from the northern end of Mobile Bay.

**Florida** – **A. Jackson** and **V. Vail** reported that in 2006 not much has been done related to derelict traps because funding has been put on hold. Last July's funding couldn't be used until this coming May and it is already obligated to match the FEMA grant leaving no trap retrieval. There are possible financial awards that can be bid out to contractors in several regions for trap retrieval. In addition, there may be legislative action to add a \$25 fee to all trap endorsements to help cover the costs of trap programs. Locally in Tampa Bay there have been cleanups but it's been very limited. The Florida debris cleanup is the analogous program to the other states trap recovery programs and is focused on inshore areas.

**Texas** – **T. Wagner** provided a brief overview of the 2006 Texas cleanup which ran from March 17-27, 2006. The first three days of the closure were hampered by bad weather.



A total of 1,678 traps were removed during the week long cleanup with the majority of the traps, 1,035 coming from Galveston Bay. Some of the commercial fishermen still left traps in the water during the closure for whatever reason and when they were declared liter, other crabbers pulled the traps and recycled them back into their own gear. This year's budget for TPWD was probably around \$15K to provide dumpsters and a few man hours to pull some gear whereas last year around \$45K was spent on the cleanup.

### Blue Crab Aging Project/Biochemical Lipofuscin

**A. Jackson** provided a short PowerPoint presentation on the lipofuscin project which she will be presenting to the TCC as background before their review of the proposal. Obviously some of the details have changed from last year to this year since the hurricanes but the review will allow the Commission to provide input prior to submission to the NOAA Cooperative Research Program later this summer. The details of the proposal were discussed for incorporation into both the presentation and the proposal.

### Dynamic Surplus Production Model for Analyzing the Texas Commercial Blue Crab Fishery

**G. Sutton**, TPWD, presented a model that he and **T. Wagner** have been putting together at the Coastal Fisheries Division. The study was prompted by declining yields in commercial fishery. Since 1982 there has been a steady decline in the fishery independent monitoring bay trawl catch rates conducted by the TPWD. A similar trend is found in the gill net catch rates although there is a lot more variability overall and because effort in the fishery has increased gradually, it can be estimated that MSY is approximately 8 million pounds. Since 1997, limited entry in the fishery has reduced effort by almost half with around 200 fishermen participating. **Sutton** used the Schaefer equation to model the fishery which is essentially a basic exponential growth function. The equation was regressed over yearly steps and integrated into a time series model. Using this technique **Sutton** believes that the Texas blue crab stocks are in the process of rebuilding and that *cpue* will increase due in part to the reduction of effort. Blue crab MSY is estimated at 7,700,000 lbs per year and *fMSY* is around 185 fishermen.

This model may actually be able to blend with the work **Pellegrin** has been doing. When the subcommittee originally used a Surplus Production approach to assess the Gulf fishery, the Stock Assessment Team did not like the assumptions that were being used. The models have limitations but can use data that is otherwise not included in more traditional models. Sutton will attend the stock assessment meeting along with **Pellegrin** to see how this model might be included in his work.

### Gulf Stock Assessment Data Set Progress

**B. Pellegrin** reported that all data have been received for each state. Most of the states had provided data through 2004. If there is more current data, **Pellegrin** would like it as recent as possible. There were some minor format issues but **Pellegrin** should have something to look at before the work session. The data resides in **Pellegrin's** laptop

which he had with him in the storm, only his literature collection was lost. The stock assessment needs to be discussed among the whole subcommittee along with **Sutton** and **Ralf Riedel**. **H. Perry** may try to get **Dr. Richard Fulford** from GCRL who works on fish population dynamics to participate. A meeting will be scheduled for sometime in Mid-May in Naples, FL. **S. VanderKooy** will set a date and make the arrangements.

### State Reports

**Florida** – **A. Jackson** reported that the 2005 landings were slightly lower than the 2004 but continuing to rise since the poor season back in 2001. There was a lot of trap loss late last season due to the storms in south Florida and the reports from fishermen indicated that right now there are a lot of crabs along the west coast. The total landings of hard crabs in 2005 are around 11.1 million lbs and soft-shell crabs at just under 310,000 lbs. The increase in soft-shells was 200% over 2004 numbers.

The fishery strategic plan is scheduled to go into effect July 1 and an appeals board has heard from a number of fishermen who didn't qualify for the endorsement. Prior to this year the endorsement was free with over 1,700 participants. Since the landing requirements have been introduced for qualification, over 1,000 individuals are now ineligible leaving around 700 individuals or corporations actually holding the new endorsements. An additional endorsement has been developed in Florida for the incidental take of blue crabs from shrimp and stone crab gear.

A blue crab health study has been funded which will be a more formal survey to look at crabs harvested from Tampa Bay. The study will look at distribution and seasonality of various blue crab parasites and disease states in the bay. Crab health will also be checked by commercial crabbers and the public in the field when the issue arises. The \$54K will fund the study in the Tampa Bay watershed but it is hoped that the program will eventually expand statewide.

**Alabama** – **L. Hartman** provided a couple of graphs prior to the meeting that include the 2005 license sales, landings, and values. License sales have been declining since 2000 with a total of 157 resident and 7 nonresident sold in 2005. The value of the crabs landed was significantly below the ten-year mean although the typical pattern of values increasing in the summer. However, the values fell to near zero at the end of August concurrent with Hurricane Katrina. Likewise, there was a decline to zero in the total landings at the end of August which was a fall from 220,000 lbs at the peak in July. Since several of the crab processing plants were impacted by the storm, it's hard to tell what the effect will be on the 2006 season.

**Mississippi** – **T. Floyd** reported on the 2005 season. The impacts of the hurricane continue to be the focus of attention. MSU is completing an economic impact assessment for the storms affects on the commercial fleet, the seafood processors, and the dealers in Mississippi. Fishermen communication has been difficult since so many people have been displaced temporarily or permanently. Preliminary trap loss estimates are around 75-85% and the industry losses of physical plants and facilities is upwards of \$2.6 million

with a loss of \$1.3 million in product. Since most crabbers trailer their vessels it is hard to determine their total operational losses. It is estimated that over 1,300 acres of marsh and seagrasses were lost due to the storm. This long term impact on habitat may not be fully appreciated in the crab fishery for some time.

The Fisherman's Relief Fund and Marine Fishermen's Association have made some contributions to about 50 commercial fishermen to help after the storm. In addition, the ACOE is providing financial incentives to fishermen helping with their debris cleanup efforts. The commercial fishing infrastructure remains in need of rebuilding but it is hoped that an industrial park type setup in Biloxi could provide a new commercial harbor as well as ice facilities and fuel docks. Finally, there is a plan being developed to restore the barrier islands and marshes in Mississippi for future storm protection. It is anticipated that these efforts will first attempt to restore those areas to pre-Katrina levels and eventually pre-Camille levels.

License sales for blue crabs are down by almost 100 fishermen as are the recreational crabbing licenses. Landings for 2005 are estimated to be around 403,000 lbs which is half the 2004 landings and valued at \$430K which is less of a decline from the \$658K total value in 2004.

**H. Perry** reported that the GCRL will be hosting a Terrapin meeting in April. GCRL has agreed to develop a Terrapin brochure in lieu of a marine debris brochure to satisfy their CIAP funding from last year. In addition, **Perry** discussed the two fishery dependent studies that GCRL was working on which included looking at incidental catch of blue crabs in other fisheries. They have spent some time on a commercial shrimp trawler examining their catches and determining the impact of the trawl fishery on crabs. The second project looked at determining cpue in the commercial crab fishery. Unfortunately, the storm hit after only two months of data collection. **Perry** hopes that both projects will get funded for a second year. **Perry** is working with Dr Fulford to do some ecosystem modeling of blue crabs in Mississippi.

**Louisiana** – **V. Guillory** indicated that landings in 2005 totaled 37.9 million lbs worth \$37.9 million at dockside. The landings in 2005 declined 14.7% from the 2004 landings which totaled 44.4 million lbs. As a result of the two hurricanes, the landings from September to December declined 25.3% compared to the same time period in 2004 and although the trip ticket data showed that while total harvest declined, the catch per trip increased substantially with less fishermen able to fish. The one year commercial crab trap gear license moratorium expired in November of 2005. The Crab Task Force had originally intended to introduce a limited entry program but sort of lost interest so at this time there is nothing planned for limiting the commercial blue crab fishery. **Guillory** further discussed the impacts from both Katrina and Rita. The LDWF has looked at potential production losses are estimated to be at \$2.6 million just for blue crabs. Debris continues to be a problem. Even fishermen that have boats and functional gear cannot get out to fish because of their canals being plugged up by debris. Long term impacts of the coastal marsh loss from this storm is unknown at this time but the two storms contributed four years of loss in a single month (100 sq miles).

**Texas** – **T. Wagner** provided the Texas report. Landings for 2005 were still not available but it appears that they are decreasing and will likely be below the 3.4 million lbs in 2004. Texas is in transition from dealer reported landings to a trip ticket system. There are about 50 dealers currently on the new system. The TPWD hopes to have all the dealers on-line by October of this year. In the license buy-back program, 220 have been purchased to date, 2 this year. There are no new crab regulations in Texas although several have been introduced for other species. Texas is finally collecting sex stage and maturity codes on blue crabs in the fishery independent sampling program. Finally, the traditionally “Blue Crab” golf team took first place in the GSMFC annual golf tournament although **Wagner** was the only true crab member to play.

### **Election of Chair**

Since there was not a quorum at the last subcommittee meeting in October, election of chair had been tabled. **Floyd opened the floor for nominations and Perry moved that Floyd continue in that position. Wagner seconded and Floyd was unanimously elected chair of the Crab Subcommittee for another term.**

### **Other Business**

The question was raised regarding the current status of the official crab scepter. **Perry** indicated that it survived the storm but she is unsure of its current location. She would try to remember it for the next subcommittee meeting.

*There being no further business, Perry moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned at 11:35 am.*

APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Monday, March 13, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Vice Chairman Guy Davenport** 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  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

**Staff**

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Terry Cody, Rockport, TX

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as written.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the meeting held on October 17, 2005 in Orlando, Florida were approved as written.

**Status of Biological Sampling Activities**

**D. Donaldson** distributed a summary of otolith collections for the recreational and commercial fisheries in 2005. 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. It was difficult to obtain samples in the northern Gulf of Mexico later in the year because of the devastation from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

**D. Donaldson** stated that the biological data being collected under FIN is becoming more and more

important in the stock assessment process. Initially, the quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) measures for these data were fairly lax so the data could be loaded and available. However, since these data are being scrutinized more and more, these measures need to be tightened and states need to following the standardized formats more closely. Staff will be implementing more of these measures and rejecting data that do not meet the formats. One of the issues identified concerns otolith sectioned date. **D. Donaldson** stated that if the otolith is whole, should a date be included. The group discussed this issue and determined that the pertinent date is when the otolith was read, not necessarily when it was sectioned. **After some discussion, the group agreed that the critical element should be otolith read date.** There was concern about compatibility with the NMFS-Panama City Laboratory. **D. Donaldson** stated that he would contact Linda Lombardi regarding this issue. Another topic regarding more QA/QC measures that was discussed concerned the possibility of conducting a biological samplers meeting, similar to the commercial port samplers and otolith processors meetings. **The group believed this was a good idea and recommended that such a meeting be conducted in 2006, if funds were available.** It was suggested that this session could be piggybacked with the commercial port samplers meeting since some of the same personnel would be attending both meetings. This recommendation will be presented to FIN at the June 2006 meeting.

**D. Donaldson** reviewed the status of the analysis of the otoliths. It was noted that ageing data (2002-2004) from all states has been received and loaded into the FIN DMS with the exception of Louisiana and Florida. It was noted that 2002-2004 data from Louisiana has been received but 2004 data has not yet been loaded into the system but it should be loaded in the near future. **J. O'Hop** noted that the majority of the otoliths have been aged but the data have not been put into the appropriate FIN formats for loading into the FIN system. His staff is working on this issue and should send the data in the near future. **D. Donaldson** stated that this has been an issue for a number of years and still has not been addressed. This could potentially jeopardize funding for the entire FIN program and attention to the issue needs to given immediately. **J. O'Hop** understood the seriousness of this issue and stated that the data will be delivered in the very near future. It was noted that due to the recent hurricanes, Mississippi has lost all of the otoliths collected in 2005 and Louisiana lost some of the otoliths collected in August and September 2005. Therefore, there will be no ageing data for these otoliths.

#### **Status of Compilation of Vessel Information for Registration Tracking Module**

**D. Bellais** noted there has not been any change since the October 2005 meeting. Staff has received data dumps from Texas and Florida although there are not in the agreed upon formats. Nothing has been received from Louisiana, Mississippi or Alabama. **D. Donaldson** stated that is very important that the states provide this information. It is necessary to test the registration tracking module and without it, FIN cannot proceed with this task. **J. O'Hop** stated that when Florida requested this information, they received it as well as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If Florida signs this MOU, it will prevent them from distributing it to anybody else. Florida is currently working on this issue with the other agency and attempting to resolve this issue. **D. Donaldson** stated that Alabama is facing a similar situation and is working on obtaining the vessel data. This issue is complicated by involving various agencies within a state. **M. Kasprzak** stated that Louisiana is also facing issues dealing with confidentiality and the issue will probably have to be addressed by their legal department. This would apply to vessels as well as recreational fishing licenses.

## **Status of Compilation of Recreational Fishing Licenses**

**D. Donaldson** stated while the group has been discussing this issue for a number of years, it has been elevated because of the federal registration provision in the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization. The proposed federal registration provision would require recreational anglers fishing in the EEZ to enroll in some type of registration system. For those states that have recreational fishing licenses, these permits could be used in place of the federal registration as long as the licenses met various criteria. Since all of the Gulf States have recreational fishing licenses and most require licenses for all types of fishing, a federal registration system would probably not be required in the Gulf. This could be a good opportunity to close the loopholes in the existing licenses (FL shore exemption, AL EEZ exemption, etc.) and move the Gulf towards implementing a license-based sampling frame survey for recreational fishing effort. As a first step, FIN is compiling the various state license data bases and has developed a standardized format for these data bases. **D. Bellais** reported that she has received information from Texas and Mississippi. It is important that staff receive data bases from all states so an analysis can be conducted to determine the completeness of the frame.

The group reviewed that matrix that outlines where the gaps are in the existing licensing systems. **D. Donaldson** noted that the major gaps in the systems were the shore exemption in Florida and EEZ exemption in Alabama. **K. Cuevas** stated that he believed that the same EEZ exemption (if an angler fishes in the EEZ, they do not need a saltwater fishing license to land their fish) exists in Mississippi. **P. Campbell** stated that same may be true for Texas as well. If these exemptions exist, it could potentially jeopardize utilizing state fishing licenses in lieu of the federal registration system.

**K. Cuevas** and **P. Campbell** stated they would check with the appropriate personnel to determine if these exemptions are in place. **D. Donaldson** stated that he would check with Law Enforcement personnel regarding this issue.

## **Review of White Paper regarding Changes in TIP**

**D. Donaldson** stated that at the August 2004 State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) meeting, the group asked that FIN develop a white paper regarding the changes in TIP since the implementation of trip tickets. There have been several iterations of the paper based on feedback from the S/FFMC. **The group reviewed the latest version of the document and agreed that it addressed the pertinent issues and should be presented to the S/FFMC for their consideration.** Based on comments received from the S/FFMC, the appropriate actions will be taken.

## **Discussion of Price/Pound Issue**

**D. Donaldson** stated that this issue concerned extremely high price per pound values for shrimp that were identified in the FIN DMS. After some exploring, it was determined that these high values were due to catches of bait shrimp (very low weights and fairly high prices). The issue for the Subcommittee is to determine if there is an alternative method for calculating price per pound for these types of situations. After some discussion, **the group decided that this issue was not a problem as long as it was clearly identified and no further action should be taken.**

## Development of Multi-year Cooperative Agreement for FIN

**D. Donaldson** stated that at the last meeting, Cynthia Binkley discussed the concept of multi-year grants for FIN. At that meeting, the Subcommittee decided to pursue this issue and submit a multi-year grant in 2007. In order to accomplish this activity, the Subcommittee needs to identify potential activities for the future and develop statements of work and rough budgets for those activities. To facilitate the discussion, the activities that have been considered for funding in the FIN cooperative agreements for the past 4 years were provided to the group. After some discussion, **it was recommended that the following activities be presented to the S/FFMC for their consideration:**

- **For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida**
- **Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana**
- **Pilot Study for Recreational Fishing Effort using Fishing Licenses as Sampling Frame**
- **Biological Sampling for Additional Species**

## Review of FIN Confidential User ID Request Form

**D. Donaldson** stated in response to the unauthorized release of confidential data, this group recommended that the confidential user form be strengthened to minimize the chances that this would happen again. Staff has revised the form and distributed to the group for review. After some discussion, **P. Campbell moved to approved the FIN Confidential User ID Request Form and present it to the FIN Committee for their consideration.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. **R. Lukens** asked if there had been any sanctions against the organization that released the confidential data. **G. Davenport** stated that the issue as presented to NOAA General Counsel, however, nothing has been done to address this unauthorized release. It was suggested that FIN should develop some type of administrative policy to respond to these violations. After some discussion, **the group tasked staff to develop administrative recommendations for violating the FIN confidentiality policies and present these recommendations to the FIN Committee at their June 2006 meeting.**

## State/Federal Reports

### Florida

**J. O'Hop** reported that the collection and processing of marine fisheries trip tickets is operating normally. Florida is currently editing trip tickets received during February of 2006. Currently, Florida has processed and edited trip tickets submitted by January 22, 2006, including nearly all trip tickets for 2005 submitted by seafood dealers.

Angler catch and effort data collected by staff for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS), Head Boat At-Sea Sampling, Biological Sampling, MRFSS Economic add-on, and Project



Tampa Bay (monitoring releases of hatchery-reared red drum) are proceeding normally in 2006. The At-Sea Sampling project is on track with achieving sampling targets each month. **O'Hop** reported that quota targets in all modes of all waves during 2005 (except for the shortfall caused by the re-specification of our quota targets in one mode during Wave 1) despite the hurricanes and red tides off the Gulf Coast of Florida. The At-Sea Sampling project in 2005 resulted in completing almost 90% of the half- to full-day vessel trip assignments (282 vessel trips) and conducting 5,928 interviews with discard forms. Sampling shortfalls occurred in the Florida Keys (payment difficulties) and in the first two waves on Florida's Atlantic Coast due primarily to hiring and training therefore personnel attempted to compensate for shortfalls during succeeding months. Twenty of the 53 targeted multi-day trips were completed, providing an additional 284 interviews with discard forms. The distribution of multi-day trips was not well-known, and we're still trying to cope with the practicalities associated with sampling these trips. Even though multi-day trips occur from the Florida Keys through the Florida Panhandle, most of these trips originate from Naples and Fort Myers (Tortugas trips) through Tarpon Springs (Middle Grounds trips). This distribution of where trips originate has made staffing for these trips more difficult, and there is a low number of these types of trips available for sampling. In addition, we had planned to send only one sampler on these trips but this staffing level reduced the number of interviews obtained from these types of trips. Once we recognized these problems in mid-2005, we scheduled two samplers for these trips to compensate for the low number of trips that we were able to make and to increase the number of interviews obtained on these trips.

**O'Hop** reported that they have scheduled our training session for our field staff on May 8-9, 2006. Nearly all of our MRFSS, Tampa Bay Red Drum Angler Survey, TIP port samplers, and Head Boat Survey biologists will be able to attend this training in fish identification and to discuss operational details of the sampling programs in which they participate.

Some planning continues on the conversion of Oracle application from version 9.1 to 10g, and converting current forms (in Oracle Forms 6) to web-based forms. Also FWC is working with the Portal Team on a report design to serve the FWC commercial data through a data portal to internal users within the FWC and externally to the public (non-confidential summaries) and commercial fishermen (confidential summaries of their own information).

### Mississippi

**K. Cuevas** reported that the rebuilding the Mississippi seafood industry after Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast is underway. Despite extensive property damages to Mississippi's seafood processing industry, five major shrimp processors, one oyster shucker packer and one crab processor are back into production operations while the others are engaged in major facility clean-up and/or demolition of building facilities. Out of 76 pre-Katrina certified seafood dealers, 26 have been recertified.

Interviews for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey, biological sampling, stock assessment and stock monitoring activities are continuing for fisheries management activities. The Special Management Zone Task Force has reviewed petitions for SMZ status for Mississippi reefs. Sanitary survey for oyster reef management is on-going. Oyster reef monitoring and oyster transplantation has been done for Biloxi Bay and the Pass dredging and tonging reefs. The staff has

created oyster reef maps and sampled 8 potential sites for oyster cultch plantings. Real-time Hydrological Monitoring sites are being reestablished jointly with US Geological Survey. Four of the original seven sites are up and transmitting data (which is available at [www.dmr.state.ms.us](http://www.dmr.state.ms.us)).

New post-storm TED exemption was extended through January 22, 2006 and staff has applied for a continuance of the TED exemption as directed cleanup of Mississippi waters is not expected until April.

The staff is continuing on the side scan projects of all public ports and harbors in Hancock and Harrison counties as part of the preliminary work for debris cleanup. The information is being provided to county, city and port authority officials. Side scan has also been conducted on 4 of the 11 offshore artificial reefs. The preliminary data collected show extensive damage on the deployed material in all of the fish havens.

Mississippi is also involved in derelict crab trap cleanup. Over 100 derelict crab traps have been retrieved to date. The staff is also continuing to help with cleaning up debris on the DMR Oak Street property and beach debris removal. The Mississippi Hurricane Katrina and Rita economic impact study has been completed and submitted for review. The report is separated into four different sectors of the Mississippi seafood industry affected by the Hurricane Katrina. These are: 1) seafood processing plants, dealer houses and land-based support facilities; 2) commercial fishing fleet; 3) Live bait dealers and marinas; and 4) Charter boats for hire and recreational boats.

#### Louisiana

**M. Kasprzak** reported that Hurricane Katrina directly impacted 8 parishes while Hurricane Rita directly impacted 6 parishes. There were a total of 133 commercial sites located within these parishes. As of February 2006, 95 sites were operating at some capacity and 38 were still closed. This has led to a large decrease in the number of trip tickets received by the Department. LDWF personnel have been actively contacting 2005 license holders who have not reported post-Katrina and have been re-supplying those who are trying to do business with the proper reporting forms. The flow to trip tickets in early 2006 is still down, but people are asking to be re-supplied with forms everyday. The Department has reviewed its confidentiality requirements on trip ticket data and it has decided to release the data back to the license holder. The license holder must submit a formal request for their data. So, far there have been 26 requests made to the Department. Seventeen requests have been turned over to commercial fishermen with 9 requests still outstanding.

Post-Katrina/Rita MRFSS sampling is getting back on track in Louisiana. LDWF personnel have been actively evaluating the recovery of MRFSS sites on a weekly basis and the site register is being updated to reflect site status and the shift in fishing pressures. As of February 2006, over 50 percent of the recreational sites in the impacted parishes were fully operational. The fishing has been good and the anglers are coming back. For Wave 6 in 2005, quota was exceeded in charter and private mode. LA had a shortfall of 32 in shore mode. For Wave 1 in 2006, quota was exceeded in all modes. Tracking charter boat captains has been a major task. Many of those actively operating have shifted to new ports until their home port is repaired. Some may never go back. Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes have taken in the majority of these operations. A large number of those who are inactive expect to be actively chartering again come April and May 2006. Overall, Charter activity

has been picking up. It is tuna time in Louisiana and Red Snapper season is around the corner.

FIN otolith collection has been down since Hurricanes Katrina/Rita. Our sampling effort is there, but we are being limited by the availability of sampling sites and fishermen. Many of our major sampling sites are down especially on the commercial side. Quotas in Wave 5 2005 were not met for any species in any mode. While in Wave 6 2006, it was pretty much the same story except for red snapper. Quota for snapper was exceeded in commercial mode. In Wave 1 2006, collection fell short on quotas for southern flounder and amberjack while quota was met for commercial red snapper.

Trip ticket data through December 2005 (scan month of January 2006) have been transferred to the FIN system. Final error checks are being run on the January 2006 data (scan month of February 2006). Variables for the vessel tracking system were reviewed. Discussions were held with staff on program development and implementation of data transfer. All activities on the transfer of vessel information have currently been suspended pending analysis of Hurricane Katrina/Rita impacts.

TIP sampling in the eastern and western parts of the state is still very limited due to impacts to infrastructure and vessels. With the 2006 snapper season open we should see some increased sampling for TIPS. After Katrina/Rita, LDWF personnel were trained by NMFS on the collection of shrimp interviews due to the decrease in TIPS sampling. LDWF has been collecting shrimp interviews in the eastern part of the state.

### Texas

**P. Campbell** reported that TPWD is working on a nearshore reefing strategy to allow the public to reef materials. This plan calls for a series of nearshore reefs, permitted by TPWD, where the public submits an application that is reviewed by TPWD, and materials would be inspected and certified by TPWD's Artificial Reef staff. Once approved, the materials would be reefed by public organizations or individuals at their own costs. TPWD would maintain the sites and any buoy requirements, and also the liability associated with the sites.

Currently 1,450 bay and bait licenses have been purchased for \$9.1 million resulting in a 45% reduction in shrimp licenses. Other license buybacks are as follows: 26 crabbing licenses (9% reduction) at \$123,000, and 143 finfish licenses (26% reduction) at \$684,000.

Currently, Coastal Fisheries has 5 proposed regulation changes that have gone to public hearings. They are: 1) prohibiting the take of largemouth sawfish; 2) removing the requirement for the tarpon tag and implement a bag limit of one tarpon with a minimum size limit that corresponds to the state record; 3) allowing one black drum over the maximum size limit (set at the state record) per day; 4) reducing the possession limit for flounder to the daily bag limit which is currently 10-fish per trip; and 5) naming tripletail a game fish and setting a minimum size of 17 inches and daily bag limit of 3 fish.

TPWD conducted its 5th annual Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program during mid-February. A total of 1,678 crab traps were collected and disposed of – with over a thousand (1,004) traps being removed from Galveston Bay. During the first four years of this project, more than

18,000 crab traps were hauled from Texas bays for a total of 19,686 traps removed since 2002. This year's efforts were marred by poor weather conditions, the worst weather conditions we've experienced since the program began, and limited facilitated sites.

Texas will continue billfish sampling for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year with a grant from NOAA Fisheries. Last year, tissue samples were obtained from 27 billfish: 15 sailfish, 7 blue marlin, and 5 white marlin during July, August and September. Spine, otolith, and gonad samples are available from 10 billfish.

The recreational "for hire" survey of Texas Gulf charter boats and biological sampling continues. The charter boat survey will continue in 2006 with an increase in sample size for the intercept survey during the high use summer waves. Otolith samples have continued to meet targets except for recreational southern flounder and commercial king mackerel. Texas will also continue biological sampling in 2006.

Texas continues with its pilot Trip Ticket Program. Texas currently has 50 dealers signed up, with 64% of them using electronic reporting. They have begun the transition to all dealers reporting through trip tickets and eliminating the Monthly Aquatic Product Reports. It is hoped to have all the dealers reporting with trip tickets by the end of this year.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission authorized seagrass conservation measures to protect seagrass beds in the Redfish Bay State Scientific Area, near Rockport. The new rules will take effect on May 1, 2006. In January 2005, the department acted to continue the Redfish Bay State Scientific Area through 2010. The new rules define "seagrass" as five marine flowering plant species: clover grass, manatee grass, shoalgrass, turtle grass, and widgeon grass. The rules make it illegal to uproot seagrass anywhere within the state scientific area. Violations would be a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

Six months after Hurricane Rita, Sabine Lake's commercial fishing infrastructure remains in various stages of recovery. The storm destroyed about 50% of the local shrimp houses. Although trailers and freezer units were dispersed to other areas and several gulf shrimp boats were removed from the fishery, progress is being made to reestablish local shrimping operations. TPWD staff continues to work with Jefferson County in identifying needed recreational infrastructure needs and repairs.

#### NMFS

**G. Davenport** reported that there is a new version of Tip online as of February 25, 2006. It utilizes the latest version of the Oracle database (10G) and should be faster and more reliable. The status of Florida trip ticket reviews is that NMFS is receiving trip ticket data to a FTP site on a regular basis. NMFS is hoping by the end of the year to be using Florida trip ticket data for the shrimp landings. Regarding Louisiana trip tickets, the shrimp data are being translated and submitted to NMFS Galveston Lab. The landings are being summarized and updated to the ALS (NMFS commercial landings warehouse). Edits are ongoing and procedures are basically become routine. There were delays due to storms and data communications problems but these issues have been resolved. Regarding Alabama trip tickets, reviews have been regenerated starting with June 2003.

The Quota Online system now incorporates red snapper along with groupers and tilefish. For king

mackerel, Western Gulf Group closed on 11/17/2005 (1,010K). The Eastern Group West Coast Florida Northern hook and line (168K) is still open (only 17% taken). The Eastern Group West Coast Southern Zone hook and line (520K) closed 3/10/2006. The Eastern Group West Coast Southern Zone Gillnet (520K) closed 3/6/2006. And East Coast hook and line (1,040K) opens Nov 1. For red snapper, the season opened Feb 1-10 for the 3.1 million spring quota (12% taken). For red grouper, 5.310M pounds (gutted) have been harvested representing 9.3% of the quota. For deep water grouper, 1.020M pounds (gutted) have been harvested representing 20% of the quota. And for shallow water grouper, 8.8M pounds (gutted) have been harvested representing 8.7% of the quota.

He then discussed SEDAR activities. For SEDAR 10, the GAG Grouper Data workshop for both South Atlantic and Gulf was held January 23-27, 2006 in Charleston, South Carolina. The assessment work shop is scheduled for May 1-5, 2006 in Miami, Florida. And the Assessment Review is scheduled for June 26-30, 2006 in Atlanta, Georgia. For SEDAR 11, the Data Workshop was held 31 Oct - 4 Nov 2005 in Panama City, Florida. The Assessment Workshop will be conducted Feb 6 - 10, 2006 in Miami, Florida and the Reveiw Workshop will be held at in Panama City, Florida June 5 - 9, 2006. And for SEDAR 12, the Red Grouper Data Workshop is scheduled for July 24 - 28, 2006 in the Tampa-St. Pete area. The Assessment Workshop will be October 16 - 20, 2006 in Miami, Florida. And the Review Workshop will be January 29 - February 2, 2007 in Atlanta Georgia.

#### GSMFC

**D. Donaldson** reported that the recreational activities are getting back to normal from the hurricane damages. FIN continues to collect head boat data for AL and FL vessels. There is an issue with multi-day trips in FL and this topic was discussed at recent wave meeting. The economic add-on began in January 2006 and will continue through December. The commercial aspects (trip tickets) also continue to run smoothly. Currently there are over 310 dealers (constitute about 33% of landings) utilizing the electronic trip ticket reporting option. To meet congressional rescission, each agency had to further reduce their budget by 1.38 percent. Those cuts included reductions in travel/software maintenance, equipment, supplies, personnel for recreational sampling, otolith processing and sampling, and trip tickets

*Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.*


TCC Data Management Subcommittee  
March 13, 2006  
State/Federal Reports – Florida (J.O’Hop)

The collection and processing of marine fisheries trip tickets is operating normally. We are currently editing trip tickets that we received during February of 2006. Currently, we have processed and edited trip tickets submitted by January 22, 2006, including nearly all trip tickets for 2005 submitted by seafood dealers.

Angler catch and effort data collected by our staff for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS), Head Boat At-Sea Sampling, Biological Sampling, MRFSS Economic add-on, and Project Tampa Bay (monitoring releases of hatchery-reared red drum) are proceeding normally in 2006. The At-Sea Sampling project is on track with achieving sampling targets each month. We exceeded our quota targets in all modes of all waves during 2005 (except for the shortfall caused by the re-specification of our quota targets in one mode during Wave 1) despite the hurricanes and red tides off the Gulf Coast of Florida. The At-Sea Sampling project in 2005 resulted in completing almost 90% of the half- to full-day vessel trip assignments (282 vessel trips) and conducting 5,928 interviews with discard forms. Sampling shortfalls occurred in the Florida Keys (payment difficulties) and in the first two waves on Florida’s Atlantic Coast due primarily to hiring and training. We attempted to compensate for shortfalls during succeeding months. Twenty of the 53 targeted multi-day trips were completed, providing an additional 284 interviews with discard forms. The distribution of multi-day trips was not well-known, and we’re still trying to cope with the practicalities associated with sampling these trips. Even though multi-day trips occur from the Florida Keys through the Florida Panhandle, most of these trips originate from Naples and Fort Myers (Tortugas trips) through Tarpon Springs (Middle Grounds trips). This distribution of where trips originate has made staffing for these trips more difficult, and there is a low number of these types of trips available for sampling. In addition, we had planned to send only one sampler on these trips but this staffing level reduced the number of interviews obtained from these types of trips. Once we recognized these problems in mid-2005, we scheduled two samplers for these trips to compensate for the low number of trips that we were able to make and to increase the number of interviews obtained on these trips.

We have scheduled our training session for our field staff on May 8-9, 2006. Nearly all of our MRFSS, Tampa Bay Red Drum Angler Survey, TIP port samplers, and Head Boat Survey biologists will be able to attend this training in fish identification and to discuss operational details of the sampling programs in which they participate.

Some planning continues on the conversion of our Oracle application from version 9.1 to 10g, and converting our current forms (in Oracle Forms 6) to web-based forms. And, we are working with our FWC Portal Team on report design to serve the FWC commercial data through a data portal to internal users within the FWC and externally to the public (non-confidential summaries) and commercial fishermen (confidential summaries of their own information).

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Monday, March 13, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Chairman Doug Frugé** 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  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX  
Paul Cook, LDWF, New Iberia, LA  
Heather Warner-Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Rusty Swafford, NMFS, Galveston, TX  
Jill Bockenstette, MDMR, Biloxi, 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  
Butch Gautreaux, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Morgan City, LA  
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the October 17, 2005 meeting were adopted as written.

**Administrative Report**

**J. Rester** stated that the Commission's Gulf of Mexico bottom mapping project was now back on track after a brief delay. The Commission hired the University of Colorado and the University of New Orleans to complete the data gathering portion of the project. They started gathering data on January 1, 2006. Chris Jenkins from the University of

Colorado made site visits to several agencies and organizations throughout the Gulf in early January. **J. Rester** stated that the National Fish Habitat Initiative's Action Plan had been submitted for adoption by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at their March meeting. The Action Plan was presented to most state's fish chiefs at a meeting in late February. **J. Rester** stated that he organized and attended a meeting of the Council's Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel last December. At the meeting the AP discussed an update on the Sabine Neches waterway deepening project, a comprehensive restoration plan for west Galveston Island, the status of beneficial use sites in Galveston Bay, changes to 316b of the Clean Water Act rules, potential fishery impacts of LNG facilities, and impacts of the 2005 hurricane season. **J. Rester** stated that he also attended the January Council meeting where Gulf Landing presented their ideas on developing a monitoring, mitigation, and prevention plan for their LNG facility off Louisiana. Gulf Landing stated that they would like to develop the plan this year with sampling to begin in January 2007 and the facility becoming operational in 2010.

### **Impact of Freshwater Reduction Data Search Results**

**D. Frugé** stated that the purpose of this project was to develop a strategy to assess and evaluate the impact of freshwater reduction in the coastal environments of the Gulf of Mexico region of the U.S. and develop a strategy to seek mitigation of those impacts, primarily resulting from federal projects, through federal legislation. Originally, the Subcommittee was charged with gathering papers or reports on the effects of reduced freshwater inflow in downstream estuaries. The Subcommittee agreed that this task was too broad in scope. **R. Lukens** stated that he would like to be able to look at historical flow levels and be able to identify downstream impacts attributable to upstream dams or reservoirs. He stated that people do not tend to notice small changes over long periods of time, but substantial changes to flora and fauna can take place if the historical flow regime has changed. **P. Cook** stated that Louisiana did not have any fishery independent sampling sites on their two most altered rivers, the Sabine and Pearl. He also asked how to determine what the pre levee system was like when the pre condition data does not exist. **R. Lukens** stated that he knew that we would not be able to do this for every altered system in the Gulf of Mexico, but he wanted to try and identify a system where this may be possible. **S. Heath** stated that the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program may have information that may help in this effort. He did state that Mobile Bay may not be the best system since they have very few sampling sites in the northern section of the bay. **C. O'Brien** stated that Texas has very extensive historical flow records and also water boards that have recommended minimum flows based on historical flow regimes. **H. Finley** stated that Calcasieu Lake saw a 50% reduction in shrimp landings after the Cameron-Creole project was implemented. **D. Frugé** stated that it might be a good idea to synthesis this information in the form of a white paper that examined the impacts of dams and reservoirs on downstream estuaries. **K. Madley** stated that there were huge confounding variables associated with reduced freshwater inflow. These mainly related to increased urbanization. **R. Swafford** stated that return water from Houston could change the circulation patterns in Galveston Bay in the next several years. Currently the Trinity River has the dominate flow on the east side of Galveston Bay, but the return water from Houston in the San Jacinto River could alter the hydrology of the system. **R.**



**Lukens** stated that it might be too complicated to look back into time to determine impacts. **D. Frugé** suggested that since it might not be feasible to look back at data, the Subcommittee should concentrate on completed studies that point to conclusions that we could summarize in a white paper. The focus would be on dams and upstream reservoirs. The Subcommittee agreed that this would be the focus of the project and that they would provide **J. Rester** with completed studies looking at the effects of dams and reservoirs on downstream estuaries.

### **Siting Criteria for Offshore Aquaculture Facilities in the Gulf of Mexico**

**J. Rester** presented a project he was working on for the Commission that dealt with using GIS for helping site offshore aquaculture facilities. He stated that he used water depth, currents, water quality, and sediment distribution in his site selection criteria. He developed considerations that he wanted Subcommittee input on. They were that the facility could not be located within 1 mile of any shipping fairway or artificial reef or within 5 miles of a marine protected area, coral reef, hardbottom area, seagrass area, or habitat area of particular concern defined by the Council. He stated other considerations included that the facility site should not conflict with traditional highly fished areas or other uses of the outer continental shelf. **J. Rester** stated that this was a demonstration project only, but wanted to know if he was missing any considerations that might be important siting criteria. **R. Adami** stated that the Gulf Marine Institute of Technology was trying to install an offshore facility on several connected oil platforms off Port O'Conner, Texas. He stated they may be worth contacting for information concerning how they chose their location. **P. Cook** stated that the depth criteria might change as cage technology changes. **C. O'Brien** stated that aquaculture species could influence the location. She also questioned why the buffer zone around coral reefs and hardbottom areas was five miles, but for artificial reefs it was only one mile. She suggested that these areas are the same functionally, so the buffers should be the same. **S. Heath** stated that you need to have good rationale for why the buffers were the size they were.

### **Update on LNG Facilities in the Gulf of Mexico**

The Subcommittee discussed the current status of LNG facilities in the Gulf of Mexico. **J. Rester** stated that the draft environmental impact statement for the Beacon Port facility was released in early March and that the final environmental impact statement for the Main Pass facility was released last week. He stated that the final environmental impact statement for the Compass Port facility should be released soon. TORP Technology submitted their license application for a facility south of Dauphin Island to the Coast Guard in January. **J. Rester** stated that the next few months should be busy when it comes to LNG issues. The Subcommittee requested that **J. Rester** send them the draft LNG comment letters for their review when they were available.

### **Habitat Issues of Interest From Each State**

Texas – **R. Adami** stated that shrimp aquaculture facilities in Texas did not see any diseases this year. Texas held a crab trap cleanup in February and removed 1,678 derelict

traps. Approximately 19,000 derelict traps have been removed since the cleanup's inception. **R. Adami** stated that TPWD was trying to acquire the Texas clipper for sinking as an artificial reef. TPWD was also investigating allowing the public to create artificial reefs with TPWD oversight. **R. Adami** reported that TPWD was developing a seagrass plan that includes public outreach about the importance of seagrass and the creation of no propeller zones that make it illegal to uproot seagrass.

Louisiana – **H. Finley** discussed hurricane impact updates. She stated that oyster mortalities approached 64% across the state. **H. Finley** reported that infrastructure damage was extensive in coastal areas. **P. Cook** stated that Congress directed the Army Corps of Engineers to study protecting Louisiana from a category 5 hurricane. A preliminary report would be drafted in the next six months. A programmatic environmental impact statement would then be developed. Four alternatives were being developed with various uses of levees, flood gates, and coastal restoration. **H. Finley** stated that Louisiana held their third derelict trap cleanup and removed approximately 2,800 traps.

Mississippi – **J. Bockenstette** stated that MDMR was reviewing the Compass Port LNG project and would be providing comments. She also stated that MDMR was involved in the development of the two Bayou Casotte inland LNG terminals. **J. Bockenstette** reported that MDMR was heavily involved in debris cleanup throughout south Mississippi.

Alabama – **S. Heath** stated that Alabama was involved in reviewing potential LNG impacts to fisheries. **S. Heath** reported that the artificial reef program had plenty of material from Hurricane Ivan debris.

Florida – **K. Madley** stated that the Gulfstream natural gas facility would build a pipeline extension from Port Manatee to the other side of Tampa Bay. Problems have been encountered in trying to run the pipeline under the shipping channel. **F. Courtney** stated that Florida was currently experiencing a red tide that has not abated since January 2005.

NMFS – **R. Swafford** stated that NMFS was actively involved in reviewing LNG projects around the Gulf of Mexico. He also reported that NMFS was reviewing dredging plans for channels and ports around the Gulf.

#### Other Business

*With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.*

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 14, 2006**  
**San Antonio, Texas**

**Chairman J.T. Jenkins (Alabama)** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members and others were present:

**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  
Karen Raine, NOAA/GCEL/SE, St. Petersburg, FL  
Hal Robbins, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL  
G.W. "Bill" Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX

**Staff**

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joseph Ferrer, GSMFC, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Rob Beaton, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Richard Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Dave McKinney, NOAA, Austin, TX  
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Gary Young, USFWS, San Antonio, TX  
Larry Young, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX

**Adoption of Agenda**

**J. Jenkins** suggested changing the order of the agenda and adding a presentation by J. Mayne under Other Business. The Committee approved this change and the Agenda was adopted.

**Approval of Minutes**

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the October 18, 2005 meeting held in Orlando, Florida. **W. Chataginer** moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## Universal Communications

The issue of communications during disasters was discussed at length by the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC). **J. Mayne** reported that this year the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant process required the states to address eight federal priorities. One of these priorities was inoperability/operability in communications. **Mayne** stated that a large portion of the DHS grant for Louisiana involves communication equipment. Several systems are being purchased, including the 800/700 hybrid system and the MCU 1000, which identifies different frequencies, and can be programmed for use on the ground. **W. Chatagner** reported that Mississippi is looking at a new communication system which is based on the 911 system and can link the three Coastal counties. It has the capability of using CAD to scan. **J. Jenkins** reported that Alabama is using their EMA system for all Homeland Defense issues on a statewide basis. **D. McKinney** reported that NOAA is considering satellite phones, but no decisions have been made at this time. **B. Buckson** noted that Florida has formed a joint task force to address state wide communications. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of a variety of communication equipment and agreed that this situation needs to be continually monitored.

## IFQ Development in the Reef Fish Complex Training Opportunities

**D. McKinney** stated that some components of the red snapper IFQ program will require training classes, and he suggested that this training be conducted on a regional basis. **McKinney** reported that four law enforcement agents will be going to Alaska for training and will be able to train agents locally. Hopefully this training will be finished by November. **McKinney** requested that members contact him to arrange training after July and noted that the training sessions should last for about four hours. The LEC agreed that the program should be presented to LEAP prior to being utilized in the field.

**Mc Kinney** then gave an overview of the IFQ program, noting that it is one of the best management plans with the highest rate of compliance. Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is an element of the IFQ program, as well as internal checks and balances. Both the fisher and the dealer are tracked in the program with transaction approval codes. With this system vessel profiles will be created so enforcement can focus on specific vessels. Vessels call in three hours prior to landing and give their estimate of catch and landing location. VMS will be able to indicate if the vessel deviates from its course. Fish can be tracked from vessel to dealer, and NOAA will work with the states to determine a method of notification.

**McKinney** noted that John Reed of NOAA will keep the states informed. (john.reed@noaa.gov); (727) 551-5750.

### Presentation of 2006 Operations Plan to Commission

The LEC reviewed the draft 2006 Operations Plan. **W. Chatagner** moved to forward the 2006 Operations Plan to the Commission for approval. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### Katrina Response and Disaster Preparedness

**J. Mayne** gave a very moving presentation on some of the results of Hurricane Katrina and Rita in Louisiana. The LEC discussed various issues associated with Katrina and Rita, including response and preparedness for natural disasters, as well as ways to utilize volunteers, procurement and logistics, etc.

### Discussion on State/Federal Fishing Licenses

**R. Lukens** addressed the LEC on the subject of federal recreational fishing licenses in conjunction with the re-authorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. At this time Louisiana is the only Gulf state that meets the license requirements for fishing in both state and federal waters. Federal registration will be required for EEZ fishing if a state license does not cover this activity. **Lukens** noted that the Commission will address this issue and will keep the LEC informed.

### Summer Work Session Agenda Items

The LEC discussed the upcoming summer work session and proposed meeting in Tallahassee or Louisiana in the timeframe between July 10<sup>th</sup> and July 21<sup>st</sup>. Final decision for the time and place of this work session will be accomplished during the upcoming Conference Call in April.

Proposed agenda items are as follows: universal communications, operations plan review, disaster preparedness document review, JEA follow-up discussion, IFQ implementation and training.

### JEA Discussion

**J. Jenkins** led the LEC in a discussion on five year landings and averages for funding distribution. Due to Hurricane Katrina, landings for most states will be down. **W. Chatagner** stated that landings may not be the best way to distribute funds since his officers deal with recreational vessels twenty times more often than commercial vessels. **D. McKinney** noted that three or four years ago there were two components to the baseline. Commercial landings were supposed to be a temporary indicator, not a complete indicator, but the only published indicator. Additional adjustments were made to the baseline. **McKinney** noted that there may be room for other modifications to the baseline, which could be discussed at the Chiefs meeting. **B. Robinson** noted that Texas has been very proactive with TED enforcement, and turtle mortality has gone down in Texas waters. He suggested looking at other Federal species when evaluating funding

criteria. Several other suggestions were made, including the amount of species sold and the number of vessels boarded in each state. **J. Mayne** suggested looking at the Gulf states as a system and consider distributing funds appropriately to each state. It was suggested that the members of the LEC forward their questions, concerns, and frustrations to NOAA/OLE in order to prepare for the Chiefs meeting. **H. Robbins** noted that there will also be a presentation on the data base issue at the Chiefs meeting.

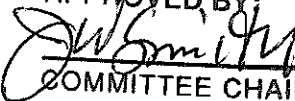
### **Other Business**

**L. Simpson** discussed Section 306 (A3) of the Magnuson Act relating to the licensure of fishing vessels in the EEZ. **Simpson** understands that section gives the states authority to require a state license in EEZ waters. **J. Mayne** noted that Louisiana legal department is currently working on this issue. **B. Buckson** stated that in Florida a license is a tax and not intended to be part of a management plan. There was also Committee discussion on fishing and landing fish in adjacent states and the difference, if any, in registering and licensing vessels.

**J. Jenkins** recommended that the monthly conference call be changed from April 3, 2006 to April 10, 2006. The Committee agreed. Staff will schedule conference call for April 10.

*There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 pm.*

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, March 14, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**S. VanderKooy** called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. on behalf of Chairman **Smith** who was participating via teleconference, with the following in attendance:

**Members**

Toby Gascon, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA  
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA  
Rick Schillachi, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS  
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA  
Vernon Minton, AMRD/ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX

Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC – *via teleconference*

**Others**

John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA – SERO, St Petersburg, FL

**Staff**

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Introductions**

**VanderKooy** led the introductions of the MAC for **Smith**.

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed and **B. Wallace** moved to approve the agenda seconded by **R. Schillachi** and the agenda was approved.

**Approval of Minutes (10/18/05)**

The minutes from the October meeting were reviewed and **V. Minton** moved to approve, **C. Perret** seconded and the minutes were accepted as written.

### **Forecast for 2006 Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishing Season**

**Smith** reported that landings in 2005 were down 7% mainly due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. All the plants were hit hard and several boats were impacted. The season started out relatively strong with good landings in May and June. Weather in July resulted in a slight decrease in landings with August looking good until the end of the month. September and October landings fell off significantly with almost no menhaden being landed for the first several weeks after the storms until Moss Point and Abbeville reopened in mid-October with limited production. The factories at Empire and Cameron remained closed for the rest of the season. A total of 43 vessels operated in the Gulf in 2005, 40 regular steamers, 2 run boats, and 1 bait boat. The ages of the 2005 catch saw 1-year olds at Cameron, 2-year olds at Abbeville, and a split between 1s and 2s at Empire and Moss Point suggesting that the 2004 year class which was strong should yield more 2s next season. Based on limited information for effort next year, number of plants, and number of boats, the forecast for the 2006 landings is estimated to be around 459,000mt and 350,000 vessel/ton/wks. Again, if the 2004 year class shows up strong in the landings in 2006 the catch could be higher.

### **Status of Recent NMFS Gulf Menhaden Stock Assessment**

**Smith** also briefly updated the committee on the final results of the recent NMFS stock assessment for Gulf menhaden. The assessment was held up an extra year to include the 2004 data in the analysis. The model used is the same as the one used on the Atlantic which consists of forward projections and includes targets and limits for both fishing mortality and fecundity. The results including the 2004 data indicate that the stock while not overfished should be watched as mortality appears to be increasing slightly and fecundity is decreasing slightly yet not exceeding either limit. This in no way indicates a problem in the fishery only annual variation between landings and recruitment. Data from the 2005 storm season and reduced effort in 2006 should skew the data back toward both targets. There was considerable discussion regarding the model and the reasons for switching from the old VPA type model used prior. Questions were raised regarding the model and it was asked if the Population Dynamics team could revisit the same data set using the VPA model. Two items were identified specifically as being in need of update which could improve the stock assessments using either technique; the index of recruitment currently being provided by the states, and the fecundity and maturity schedule estimates which dated back to the late 1960s and late 1980s. In addition, the SERSC would have to redirect Vaughan and his cohorts to devote time to Gulf menhaden since they are currently locked up with the SEDAR process for reef fish.

**After much debate B. Wallace moved that the MAC to recommend to the SFFMC to seek to fund the proper gear and sampling protocols to improve the estimates of juvenile abundance and recruitment for Gulf menhaden at the state level and to seek to fund a study which would update the Lewis and Roithmyer (1981) fecundity estimates for Gulf menhaden for the purpose of stock assessment. In addition, the MAC recommends to the SFFMC that a recommendation should be made to the SEFSC and Dr Nancy Thompson to continue with the VPA analysis of Gulf**



menhaden until such time as the forward projection model has been sufficiently reviewed and compared with the previous methodology. V. Guillory seconded and the motion passed.

### Update on Atlantic Menhaden

Smith gave a brief update on the Atlantic as well in 2005. The total landings were around 147,000 mt which was 18% less than in 2004. However, this could be directly attributed to the factory in Beaufort, NC not operating last year. While weather was a factor early in the season and late, catches were average for the year through August. Hurricane Ophelia in September and Wilma in late October had minor effects on fishing effort. Poor weather conditions during November and December tended to keep the fleet near the mouth of the Bay; little fishing occur off North Carolina in fall. The forecast for 2006 on the Atlantic is for landings around 176,000 mt.

Smith also provided an update to the activities on the Atlantic regarding the ASMFC and regulatory actions in the reduction fishery. The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board met in February 05 and approved the development of Addendum II to Amendment 1 of the Atlantic Menhaden FMP due to concerns of localized depletion of forage base and the Chesapeake Bay menhaden population. It was ultimately decided to impose a 105.8mt cap on reduction landings despite protest and alternatives offered by industry. In August 2005, the cap carried and since then there has been debate over how to monitor and manage the cap. In November, Virginia's Attorney General pronounced that Virginia did not have to follow the established cap citing procedural problems on the part of the ASMFC in imposing the cap. Now the question is whether Virginia will be found "out-of-compliance" by the AMMB and the issue may be sent to the Secretary of Commerce for consideration.

### Louisiana Forecast

V. Guillory provided the LDWF's annual forecast for Louisiana waters. Guillory agreed with Smith's assessment of the 2004 year class and suggested that this may be a good year for age 2 menhaden in the Louisiana catch. Guillory reported that the 2004-2005 winter was above average for temperature and rainfall, but was below average on salinity and river discharge which typically indicates a poor recruitment year. However, despite the environmental assessment, the juvenile menhaden indices were above average indicating a good age-1 year class in 2006 as well. Based on the 2004 fishing effort, discounting the 2005 storm season, the landings are forecasted to be around 430,000mt in Louisiana.

### Reduction Fishery Post-Hurricane Status; 2006 Projections

The MAC discussed the rebuilding and future plans for the industry following the storms of 2005. Both the Omega and Daybrook representatives indicated that at this time there was no plan to move any vessels outside of the Gulf. Daybrook was hardest hit with its

Empire facility completely flooded. Two of its steamer vessels ended up on the highway after Katrina but have since been put back in the water.

Omega anticipates that Cameron will be the only facility that won't open right away at the start of the season. They noted that a lot of the shoreside infrastructure is virtually gone and a lot of Omega's losses were uninsured losses. Employees were displaced following the storm and there is some concern that people are not getting back into the fishery since construction and hurricane related jobs pay a lot more than the reduction industry right now. It is likely that a few additional run boats will be used from Moss Point to make up for the Abbeville plant being closed.

It is a difficult time for everyone in the reduction fishery but with help, the industry can return.

### **Other Business**

**Smith** noted that the new CDFR forms seemed to be working very well and the captains have been very good at filling out the GPS coordinates. The 2006 forms have been printed and Smith will provide those whenever the industry is ready for them.

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

APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

10/24/06

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, March 14, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Chairman Corky Perret** called the meeting to order at 2:00 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, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Kerwin Cueves, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA  
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Roy Crabtree, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL

**Staff**

Jeff Rester, Habitat/SEAMAP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX  
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Josh Harper, TPWD, Palacios, TX

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on October 18, 2005 were approved as written.

## State/Federal Reports

Florida - **V. Vail** stated that four major hurricanes (Dennis, Katrina, Rita, and Wilma) affected Florida during 2005. As a result, a one time waiver for stone crab and lobster trap tags has been implemented. Fees will be waived for 2006 and 2007 only. **V. Vail** stated that Volunteer Florida was seeking donations to help fishermen replace lost fishing gear. **V. Vail** stated that trap losses were estimated at 400,000 lobster traps and 800,000 stone crab traps. **V. Vail** reported that commercial fishermen were being contracted to remove debris. All blue crab endorsement holders were recently contacted as part of a blue crab effort management plan. Six hundred seventy-seven fishermen qualified while 143 fishermen qualified for soft shell endorsements. Three hundred fishermen who did not qualify appealed. Qualified fishermen can use 600 inshore and 400 offshore traps. **V. Vail** stated that a lobster and red drum advisory board has been established. The Oriskeny will soon be sunk as an artificial reef off Pensacola. **J. O'Hop** stated that Florida has experienced persistent red tides since January 2005. Dozens of manatees, sea turtles, and dolphins have died as a result. **J. O'Hop** stated that Mote Marine Laboratory and FWRI were collecting water samples. **J. O'Hop** stated that as a result of the hurricanes landings were down 50%. **J. O'Hop** reported that a new head boat sampling project was starting that would involve sampling at sea to measure head boat discards at sea.

Alabama - **S. Heath** reported that a derelict crab trap cleanup occurred Saturday March 11. This effort was reduced from previous years due to reduced funding. Seven dumpster sites were placed around Mobile Bay with particular attention paid to upper Mobile Bay. Approximately 100 volunteers and staff picked up 308 derelict traps. **S. Heath** stated that members of the biological staff continue to participate in the development of an Invasive Nuisance Species plan for Alabama. Biological staff were also participating in the newly formed Baldwin County Schools Technical Advisory Board that was compiling materials for county teachers to assist them in bringing more conservation education into their classrooms. **S. Heath** reported Alabama was granted an additional TED exemption as part of a larger exemption that covers the area from the Alabama/Florida state line to the Louisiana/Texas state line and extending out 10 nautical miles. This exemption is to allow the shrimp fishermen to more effectively deal with the problems encountered with debris remaining from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Marine Resources Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Dr. Semoon Chang, University of South Alabama, conducted a study of the economic impact of Hurricane Katrina on Alabama's seafood industry. Primary participants included Alabama resident seafood dealers, commercial fishermen, and charter boat owners/operators. The findings of this report estimate an uninsured loss of \$112,250,000 for losses covering vessel and facility damages, vessel removal, lost inventories, unpaid wages and invoices, and lost revenues and future sales. The report additionally estimates \$61,135,000 in potential loss from SBA and private loans held by

primary participants. Secondary participants, such as ice plants, net and tackle shops, fuel docks, boat yards, and recreational fishing losses were not included in the study. Oyster dredgers working as part of a program initiated to test the potential for oyster dredge use on Alabama's public reefs harvested slightly more than 9,600 sacks from Portersville bay during December 2005 and January 2006.

Mississippi – **K. Cueves** stated rebuilding the Mississippi seafood industry was underway. Despite extensive property damage to Mississippi's seafood processing industry, five major shrimp processors, one oyster processor and one crab processor were back in operation while the others were engaged in major facility cleanup and/or demolition of building facilities. **K. Cueves** stated that 26 of 76 pre Katrina certified seafood dealers have been recertified. **K. Cueves** reported that interviews for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey, biological sampling, stock assessment and stock monitoring activities were continuing for fisheries management activities. Staff have created oyster reef maps and sampled 8 potential sites for oyster cultch plantings. **K. Cueves** stated that real-time hydrological monitoring sites were being reestablished jointly with the U.S. Geological Survey. New post-storm TED exemptions were extended through January 22, 2006 and staff have applied for a continuance of the TED exemption as directed cleanup of Mississippi waters was not expected until April. **K. Cueves** stated the DMR staff was continuing side scan projects of all public ports and harbors in Hancock and Harrison counties as part of the preliminary work for debris cleanup. Side scan has also been conducted on 4 of the 11 offshore artificial reefs. The preliminary data collected show extensive damage on the deployed material in the fish havens. **K. Cueves** stated the Mississippi Hurricane Katrina and Rita economic impact study has been completed and submitted for review. **C. Perret** stated that plans for a seafood industrial park off the water in Harrison County were continuing, but proceeding with caution since funding was an issue.

Louisiana – **V. Guillory** stated that fishery independent and fishery dependent sampling programs were suspended or reduced in the hurricane impacted areas. Fishery independent sampling has been reinstated in all major bay systems at accessible stations. **V. Guillory** stated shrimp, crab, finfish and oyster data were available from across the coast and were being used in fisheries management decisions. MRFSS sampling also now occurs statewide and over 50% of the recreational sites in the impact area were now fully operational. **V. Guillory** reported TIPS and otolith sampling in southeast and southwest Louisiana were still very limited due to impacts to dealer infrastructure and vessels. After the hurricanes, LDWF personnel began collecting shrimp interviews in southeast Louisiana. The Marine Fisheries Division has been monitoring fishing infrastructure losses and has developed a method to provide commercial fishermen their trip ticket information to help them document their losses. The Marine Fisheries Division was assisting USDA in developing a statewide recovery program for public and private oyster grounds using Energy Conservation Program funds. The Office of Fisheries has provided detailed information to state and federal agencies regarding status of resources and the fishing industry for use in recovery planning. **V. Guillory** stated the LDWF established a new web site that would enable boat owners to search for boats that were lost as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Shrimp

landings for the September through December 2005 period declined 28% from 2004 and the number of trips declined by 58%. The majority of the harvest came from the least impacted portion of the coast, primarily between Bayou Lafourche and the Atchafalaya River. Blue crab landings for the September through December 2005 period declined 25.3% from 2004. As with shrimp, fishing effort as measured by trips declined. The one-year commercial crab trap gear license moratorium that was implemented effective November 15, 2004 expired on November 15, 2005. There was one derelict crab trap cleanup in Louisiana in 2006. The closure area was in southwest Terrebonne Parish and the closure dates were from March 4 through March 12. A total of 2,869 traps were collected. The cumulative total for the three years is 14,369 crab traps. Oyster landings for the September through December 2005 period were 824,000 pounds from the public reefs and 581,828 pounds from private reefs. These values represented declines of 67.2% and 69.3%, respectively. V. Guillory stated that although mortalities varied across the state, post-hurricane mortalities on the public oyster reefs averaged 74.2% for seed oysters and 53% for sack oysters. The highest mortalities occurred east of the Mississippi River, especially in Lake Borgne. The LDWF coordinated a federally funded project where St. Bernard Parish and Plaquemines Parish licensed commercial oyster harvesters were contracted for bottom assessment survey work on public oyster reefs in those parishes. The mapping information will help identify suitable areas for the development of new oyster reefs. Overall finfish commercial landings in 2005 declined 24.2% from 2004.

Texas – **J. Mambretti** stated that TPWDs' Life History Research team was processing sand seatrout samples for a life history study. **J. Mambretti** stated that genetic research was continuing on sheepshead, spotted seatrout, and menhaden. TPWD has submitted an application to the US Maritime Administration to acquire the Texas Clipper. **J. Mambretti** reported that TPWD was working on a nearshore reefing strategy to allow the public to reef materials. This plan calls for a series of nearshore reefs, permitted by TPWD, where the public submits an application that was reviewed by TPWD, and materials would be inspected and certified by TPWD's Artificial Reef staff. Once approved, the materials would be reefed by public organizations or individuals at their own costs. TPWD would maintain the sites and any buoy requirements, and also the liability associated with the sites. As part of the Inshore Shrimp License Management Program, 110 licenses were bought for a total purchase cost of \$849,037. During the latest Crab License Management Program buyback, two licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$10,600. During the Commercial Finfish License Management Program buyback, fourteen licenses were purchased for a total cost of \$76,694. **J. Mambretti** stated that a report was received from the University of Delaware indicating that *Haplosporidium nelsoni* (MSX) had been identified from oysters collected throughout the Gulf of Mexico, including Aransas Bay, Texas. Currently, Coastal Fisheries has 5 proposed regulation changes that have gone to public hearings. **J. Mambretti** stated they were prohibiting the take of largemouth sawfish, removing the requirement for the tarpon tag and implement a bag limit of one tarpon with a minimum size limit that corresponds to the state record, allowing one black drum over the maximum size limit per day, reducing the possession limit for flounder to the daily bag limit which is currently 10-fish per trip, and naming tripletail a game fish and setting a minimum size of 17 inches and daily bag limit of 3 fish. **J. Mambretti** stated that TPWD conducted its 5th annual Texas

Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program during mid-February. A total of 1,678 crab traps were collected with over a thousand (1,004) traps being removed from Galveston Bay. During the first four years of this project, more than 18,000 crab traps were hauled from Texas bays for a total of 19,686 traps removed since 2002. Six months after Hurricane Rita, Sabine Lake's commercial fishing infrastructure remains in various stages of recovery. The storm destroyed about 50% of the local shrimp houses. Although trailers and freezer units were dispersed to other areas and several gulf shrimp boats were removed from the fishery, progress was being made to reestablish local shrimping operations.

NOAA Fisheries – **R. Crabtree** stated the Council submitted Shrimp Amendment 13 that included a 10 year moratorium on federal shrimp permits and fishermen to carry logbooks. R. Crabtree stated that the Council would soon submit a second referendum on red snapper individual fishing quotas. Review workshops would be held this year for greater triggerfish, greater amberjack, vermillion snapper, and gag. R. Crabtree stated goliath grouper was no longer on the candidate list for endangered or threatened species. R. Crabtree stated that a national marine state directors meeting would be held in late March 2006. Finally, R. Crabtree stated that \$1 million has been allocated for new bycatch reduction device research.

USFWS – **D. Frugé** stated that Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced last Friday that she would be leaving her position on the President's Cabinet at the end of March. The White House has not yet nominated a replacement for Ms Norton. D. Frugé stated the status review on whether the American eel should be proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act was continuing. The FWS and NOAA Fisheries would jointly make a recommendation later this year on whether the species should be proposed for listing. Staff of the FWS Panama City, Florida Ecological Services Field Office met with Walton County, Florida staff in February to discuss the county's emergency coastal armoring program and its impacts on sea turtles. As a result of the meeting the Walton County Commission decided to begin work on preparing a habitat conservation plan in order to obtain incidental take permits from the FWS. The HCP will provide for mitigation of the program's impacts in accordance with Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. The FWS announced in December 2006 that it was awarding more than \$15 million under the Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. In the Gulf, Alabama and Texas were the only states receiving funding this year under this program. In Alabama the funding will help purchase the Point Caddy Wetlands, on Grand Bay in the Mississippi Sound. In Texas the funds will be used for Phase II of the North Deer Island Protection and Restoration project in Galveston Bay. In November the FWS announced that it was awarding an additional \$4 million in the competitive Boating Infrastructure Grant grant program. The grants will be used to provide additional facilities for recreational boaters. The only Gulf state receiving funding under the additional funding was Texas. Money for the grant program comes from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund.

### **Blue Crab Aging Proposal**

**A. Jackson** stated that stock assessments for blue crabs were difficult because age structured models were preferred over whole population models. Age structured models consider the biological characteristics (animal size) of individual cohorts and better reflect the effects of natural and anthropogenic processes on the population. Age structured models were difficult to apply due to a lack of data on blue crab age structure and maximum age. **A. Jackson** stated that the relationship between crab age and size was complicated because the time period between molts increases over time, while the proportional increase in size per molt decreases. **A. Jackson** stated that lipofuscin was a fluorescent pigment that accumulates in neural tissues over time. Lipofuscin has been used successfully to determine age in numerous decapod species, including lobsters, crayfish, crabs, and shrimp. **A. Jackson** stated that unfortunately histological analysis was time and labor intensive, precluding the analysis of large sample sizes. The Crab Subcommittee proposed a study to evaluate lipofuscin methodology to determine age of blue crabs in the Gulf of Mexico. The objectives of the study were to initiate regional calibrations of lipofuscin levels in blue crabs in the Gulf of Mexico using blue crabs of known ages, determine lipofuscin levels for blue crabs collected from selected locations throughout the Gulf of Mexico, conduct a preliminary age-based stock assessment of blue crabs in the Gulf of Mexico for comparison to a size-based model. **S. VanderKooy** stated that he would like the TCC to review the Crab Subcommittee's proposal and send comments to him within the next 40 days.

### **Status of the National Artificial Reef Plan**

**R. Lukens** stated that the three Commissions jointly submitted the National Artificial Reef Plan to NMFS eight years ago. The Plan went out for public review, but since then no action has been taken. **R. Lukens** stated that Bill Hogarth stated in October 2005 that NMFS would take action soon. Since then, NMFS published the Plan as a guidelines document and not a plan. **R. Lukens** reported that NMFS has discussed a possible joint meeting with the Commissions' artificial reef committees and NMFS personnel to discuss the future of the Plan.

### **Update on Special Management Zones for Artificial Reefs**

**R. Lukens** stated that a framework provision exists for special management zones (SMZ) around artificial reefs where gear restrictions can vary from areas outside the zone. SMZs were not designed to allocate resources. SMZs can only regulate gear. **R. Lukens** stated that the Council has formed a SMZ group that was mainly composed of the Commission's Artificial Reef Subcommittee. The Council SMZ group met for the first time in February. The SMZ group developed a report for the Council that did not recommend SMZs one way or the other. Alabama and Mississippi have petitioned the Council for SMZs off their respective coasts. Alabama petitioned to only allow hook and line gear with three hooks or less while Mississippi petitioned for the same measures with an additional ban on power heads. Public information and fact finding workshops were set up after the initial meeting, but the Council chairman decided to cancel these



workshops. R. Lukens stated that the Council's reefish management committee would discuss the issue at their next meeting.

#### **Update on LNG Facilities in the Gulf of Mexico**

**J. Rester** gave a brief update on the status of LNG facility licensing in the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that the Main Pass and Compass Port facilities would receive word on whether they were granted licenses by July. He stated that he was actively reviewing two environmental impact statements with one more due out any day.

#### **Update on 2005 Hurricane Damage**

**V. Vail** stated that Florida's first priority was on assessing damage to determine hurricane impacts. She stated that resources have not been available to go back and study hurricane impacts. **S. Heath** stated that he did not have any additional information to report that was not in his state report. **C. Perret** stated that a current bill specifies \$199.8 million for poultry, nurseries, and oysters with \$20 million dedicated strictly for poultry. The money would be distributed through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and their regulations do not allow more than \$200 thousand per recipient. C. Perret stated that the Department of Agriculture was treating the affected states as a recipient. He also stated that the Department of Agriculture was not handling distributing the money as an emergency. **V. Guillory** stated that LDWF coastal facilities were heavily damaged by the storms. He stated that 70% of the vessels in Plaquemines Parish were sunk. Seventeen percent became debris with the rest being repairable. Estimates were that 100 square miles of land were lost due to the storms. **V. Guillory** stated that debris was still a problem in many waterways restricting water flow and vessel traffic. **J. Mambretti** stated it would cost \$3 million to repair TPWD facilities due to Hurricane Rita. He stated that oil companies were providing grants for debris removal. J. Mambretti reported that breached levees around the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway were allowing tidal exchange in freshwater marsh areas.

#### **Subcommittee Reports**

**Crab** – **T. Floyd** reported that the Crab Subcommittee reviewed the details of the lipofuscin study and tried to outline any changes that had to be made to the Cooperative Research Program proposal. The Crab Subcommittee plans to submit the proposal to NOAA later this year. The Subcommittee discussed a surplus production model for crabs in Texas waters to help assess blue crab stocks. The Subcommittee had previously looked at this type of model as a possible avenue for examining the Gulf stock but could not resolve some of the assumptions of the model. The Subcommittee was provided an update on the data gathering portion of the blue crab stock assessment review. Each state representative gave a brief overview on the derelict trap cleanup activities in their state. Mississippi did not conduct a cleanup this year following the hurricanes but indicated a real need since estimates are that as many as 45,000 traps may have been lost last year. Texas reported that they removed 1,678 traps. Alabama's cleanup took place this past Saturday and despite high tides and poor visibility, volunteers removed 304 traps from

the upper part of Mobile Bay. Louisiana held their third trap cleanup and removed 2,859 traps this year for a total of 14,369 traps removed over the last three years. Finally, the states provided landings reports for the past year. Florida landings were down from the 1990-2000 average but remain on an upward trend for the last five years with 2005 landings coming in at approximately 11.1 million pounds. Alabama landings were down substantially in the 2005 season mostly due to the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. Mississippi primarily reported on the effects of Hurricane Katrina. Preliminary estimates of trap loss are at 75 to 85%. The industry losses are estimated at \$2.6 million and a product loss of \$1.3 million. Louisiana's landings were negatively affected by both Hurricane Katrina and Rita with total landings for 2005 estimated somewhere around 37.9 million pounds, a 14.7% decline from 2004. Texas landings for 2005 were not available yet, but look to be less than previous years.

SEAMAP – **J. Rester** stated that the SEAMAP program would undergo an external review this year. It has been almost 20 years since the last SEAMAP external review. Therefore, the Subcommittee discussed questions that needed to be answered by the review. The questions related to program structure, operations, documentation and evaluation, and database management. The next step would be contacting the American Fisheries Society about having them start the external review process. J. Rester stated that when the President's proposed 2007 budget was released earlier this year, SEAMAP received a pleasant surprise. Instead of level funding, the President has proposed an increase of \$3.75 million for SEAMAP. The total budget request for SEAMAP was \$5.09 million. After 24 years of almost level funding, this was welcomed news. The Subcommittee discussed increased data needs and what sampling programs could be developed and undertaken by SEAMAP to answer these data needs. The Subcommittee decided that restoration of current surveys, seasonal sampling, and data management were the first priorities for the increased funding.

Data Management – **D. Donaldson** reported that the Subcommittee discussed FIN biological sampling activities. They reviewed 2005 and 2006 target and collection activities and reviewed the status of analysis activities. All otolith aging has been completed for 2002 through 2004. The Subcommittee reviewed a white paper regarding changes in the TIP program. The paper reviews how collection of commercial data has changed since the implementation of trip tickets. The Subcommittee also discussed data collection activities for inclusion into a multi-year cooperative agreement.

Artificial Reef – **R. Lukens** reported that the Subcommittee had not met since the last TCC meeting, but he did attend the ASMFC Artificial Reef Committee meeting last November. The November meeting reviewed two major issues. The first was the status of the national artificial reef plan that the ASMFC and GSMFC committees submitted to NMFS almost eight years ago. The committees were still concerned that the plan has not been published yet. The second issue at the meeting was the development of a cooperative agreement with the Maritime Administration and the Department of Defense to allow transfer of old vessels to state artificial reef programs. Some delays have occurred due to legislative authority to transfer the vessels and trying to make the process

fair to state's whose artificial reef programs do not have sufficient funds to allow transfer and siting of vessels.

Habitat – **D. Frugé** stated that the Subcommittee discussed the results from the impact of freshwater reduction data search, siting criteria for offshore aquaculture facilities, and an update on LNG facilities in the Gulf of Mexico. The impact of freshwater reduction in coastal environments data search was an attempt to develop a strategy to assess and evaluate the impact of freshwater reduction in the coastal environments of the Gulf of Mexico and to develop a strategy to seek mitigation of those impacts. The Subcommittee is creating a data inventory of databases and reports that deal with the downstream impacts of reduced freshwater inflow on estuaries. Due to the broad nature of this topic, the Subcommittee decided to focus their efforts on completed studies that have examined the impacts of reduced freshwater inflow on estuaries due to dams or reservoirs. The conclusions from these studies would then be summarized in a white paper. Next, the Subcommittee discussed siting criteria for offshore aquaculture facilities. The Subcommittee then discussed the current status of LNG facilities in the Gulf of Mexico.

#### **Other Business**

**S. VanderKooy** stated that he would like the TCC to begin review of the Sheepshead profile. He stated that he would like to receive all comments by June 1, 2006.

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

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Wednesday, March 15, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

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

**Members**

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Vernon Minton, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
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**

Gregg Bray, RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, FIN Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Bryan Arroyo, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Wilson Gaidry, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LA  
Joe Gill, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MS  
Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Joe O'Hop, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Scott Robinson, SARP, GA

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted as presented.

### Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 19, 2005 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida were approved with one editorial change.

### Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

**S. VanderKooy** reported that Chairman J. Smith was unable to attend due to flight cancellations, however he participated via conference call.

**VanderKooy** reported that menhaden landings were down 7% due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. All the processing plants were hit hard and several boats were impacted. A total of 43 vessels operated in the Gulf in 2005. Based on limited information for effort next year the forecast for landings for 2006 is approximately 459,000mt. VanderKooy gave a brief update on the Atlantic with 147,000mt which was down about 18% from 2004. The forecast for 2006 for landings in the Atlantic is 176,000mt.

**VanderKooy** reported that Smith gave an update on the final results of the recent NMFS stock assessment for Gulf menhaden. The results indicate that the stock while not overfished, should be watched as mortality appears to be increasing slightly and fecundity is decreasing slightly yet not achieving values close to either threshold. VanderKooy reported that there was lengthy Committee discussion regarding the model and the reasons for changing from the old VPA model used previously.

As a result of these discussions the **MAC** moved to recommend to the **S/FFMC** to seek to fund the *proper* gear and sampling protocols to improve the estimates of juvenile abundance and recruitment for Gulf menhaden at the state level and to seek to fund a study which would update the Lewis and Rothmeyer 1968 fecundity estimates for Gulf menhaden for the purpose of stock assessment. **J. Roussel** of the **S/FFMC** moved to accept the recommendation of the **MAC** but change the word "proper" to "improved". The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

In addition, the **MAC** recommended to the **S/FFMC** that a recommendation should be made to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Nancy Thompson to continue with the VPA analysis of Gulf menhaden until such time as the forward projection model has been sufficiently reviewed and compared with the previous methodology. **J. Roussel** of the **S/FFMC** moved to accept the recommendation of the **MAC**. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**S. VanderKooy** suggested inviting Doug Vaughan of NMFS Beaufort Lab to give a presentation on the above issue at the October meeting.

**V. Vail** moved to accept the Menhaden Advisory Committee report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel Report**

**S. VanderKooy** reported that the Commercial/Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel met without having a quorum for either the Commercial or Recreational sector, therefore there are no action items at this time. **VanderKooy** reported that D. Donaldson gave a presentation on the issue of federal recreational fishing licenses and ComFIN data and federal log books. Donaldson also gave a presentation comparing commercial and recreational landings for ten species over the last ten years as requested by the C/RFAP. Donaldson will revisit this subject at the October meeting with more historical data and the average sizes of these species.

**VanderKooy** reported that R. Lukens updated the Panel on invasive species activities and J. Rester reported on LNG proposals in the Gulf of Mexico over the last 12 months.

**D. Frugé** moved to accept the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **SARP Activities**

**S. Robinson**, SARP Coordinator addressed the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee noting that he has been the SARP Coordinator since September 2005. He formerly was with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as a freshwater fisheries biologist. Robinson stated that SARP has most recently been concentrating on habitat work. He has been to Washington, D.C. giving his presentation to Congressional staff and members of the Appropriations Committee seeking funds for the program. Robinson gave this presentation to the S/FFMC and explained that SARP is being run on grants and partner contributions at this time with Georgia and Tennessee providing administrative support and staff time. Robinson reported that SARP has requested federal funds and are asking their state partners to contact Congressional representatives for support. **J. Roussel** requested that Robinson forward to members of this Committee information on the funding for \$3 million so they can familiarize themselves with this request.

## **FIN Program Update**

**D. Donaldson** reported to the S/FFMC on the status of the FIN Program and discussed ongoing activities as well as funding in the amount of \$4.8 million. Ongoing activities for FIN include coordination and administration of FIN, recreational data collection, headboat port sampling and at-sea sampling, Gulf menhaden, data management system, trip tickets, and biological sampling.

Committee members were provided with a recreational fishing license matrix of critical data elements required for use as a sampling frame. This will improve effort for recreational fishing. **Donaldson** reported that during the Data Management Subcommittee meeting held on Monday, a problem came to light. The states of Alabama, Mississippi and Texas do not require a fishing license when landing fish in those states that were caught in the EEZ. Donaldson noted that the Magnuson Act may

require a federal fishing permit if the situation is not rectified on the state level, which in some cases may require legislative action. Committee members discussed this issue and will check to determine what steps are necessary.

**Donaldson** reported on the White Paper, Changes in the Cooperative Statistics Program following the implementation of Trip Tickets. The draft of this White Paper was presented at the last meeting of this Committee and a request was made at that time for more detailed information. Donaldson then asked the Committee for any comments or concerns on this draft of the White Paper. **J. Roussel** requested that the White Paper be bulleted with events in chronological order.

**Donaldson** reported that the FIN Program was considering having three year cooperative agreements with NOAA. The first year of the agreement a statement of work and budgets would be submitted and unless there are significant changes in activities, budgets only would be required in the following years. Donaldson reported that the following five activities have been identified for inclusion in the three year cooperative agreement, and he would like to get approval from this Committee:

- For-Hire Telephone survey (effort) and at-sea sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Louisiana
- Collection of detailed effort for the blue crab fishery in Louisiana
- For-Hire Telephone survey (effort) and at-sea sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas
- Pilot study for recreational fishing effort using fishing licenses as sampling frame
- Biological sampling for additional species

The Committee discussed and agreed on the multi year cooperative agreement and the above listed activities for inclusion. **V. Minton moved to accept the FIN Program report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### **USFWS/NMFS Kemp's Ridley Stakeholder Meeting Report**

**B. Arroyo** of the USFWS in Albuquerque, New Mexico thanked the GSMFC for their longstanding support for recovery of the Kemp's Ridley turtle in the Gulf of Mexico. Arroyo reported that the Stakeholders effort is unique since it is a bi-national (Mexico/United States) effort. There is a recovery team which is composed of Mexican and American managers, biologists, and stakeholders.

**Arroyo** noted that this species is under federal protection in Mexico, and they have set aside protected areas of beach where there are now 10,000 nesting females. Arroyo also gave an overview of the funding process and noted that support is received from NOAA, GSMFC, and partners. The preferred form of support at this time is in fuel, trucks, ATV's, and refrigeration.

### **Fisheries Disaster Funding**

**L. Simpson** led a discussion by the S/FFMC on the issue of Fisheries Disaster Funding. Simpson reported that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has a program that has been funded for \$200 million, some of which will go to oyster reef restoration. \$11.8 million has been allocated for repair of the NMFS Pascagoula Lab. **J. Roussel** reported that Congressman Melancon introduced an amendment to include direct assistance for both farmers and fishermen, however it appears that his attempt failed before the Rules Committee. **V. Minton** reported that Alabama has received approximately \$20 million for marine debris cleanup. Minton also noted that Saudi Arabia had made a donation of \$1.2 million for the shrimp fishery for purchasing fuel, and the Clinton/Bush fund has provided \$2 million for removal of shrimp vessels. **J. Roussel** reported that a fishing port in Alaska has donated a Travelift to Louisiana. It is located in Empire, Louisiana and will be used to help salvage thousands of boats.

### **Interstate Shrimp Management Plan**

**C. Perret** reported that Shrimp Amendment 13 was submitted for approval, has been approved, and is currently under review in the Office of Management and Budget, and hopefully will be done by mid-summer. Perret noted that the main item of interest in this Amendment is the bycatch reporting methodologies. The Council preferred method is to select a list of vessel permit holders to develop a statistically valid sample of shrimp vessels operating in the EEZ. They will be participating in an electronic logbook program, and NMFS will pay for these electronic logbooks. Another option recommended by the Council is a better method of bycatch reporting which will involve a selected list of vessels, a random sample would be developed by NMFS, and vessels would be required to carry observers. Perret reported that the Council recommended and the Secretary has approved establishing a ten year moratorium on issuance of commercial shrimp vessel permits. To be eligible for a permit under the moratorium the vessel must have been issued a valid shrimp vessel permit prior to and including December 6, 2003. There are 2,613 vessels that are eligible to apply for the permit. All owners or operators of the permitted commercial shrimp vessels must report landings to NMFS.

### **Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities**

**S. VanderKooy** updated the S/FFMC on the FMP and Profile currently in review. The Striped Bass FMP will be discussed and hopefully approved later this week, and the Sheepshead profile has been given to the Technical Coordinating Committee for their review.

**VanderKooy** reported the Crab Subcommittee continues work on the derelict trap recovery program and is working with NOAA on the reclassification of the Gulf of Mexico crab pot fishery due to reports of interactions with dolphins. The Subcommittee is revisiting the stock assessment for Gulf blue crabs and is developing a proposal to submit to the Cooperative Research Program with NOAA to investigate ageing blue crabs



using techniques developed in Chesapeake Bay. **C. Brown moved to accept the IJF report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

**VanderKooy** provided the Committee with a list of FMPs, as well as a prioritized list of species. VanderKooy stated that he would recommend oyster as the next species for FMP revision since it was last done in 1991. **C. Perret moved that Eastern Oyster be the next species for revision. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

### **Habitat Program Report**

**J. Rester** reported that the Gulf of Mexico bottom mapping program is on schedule and running smoothly with a contractor who began on January 1, 2006. Rester reported the National Fish Habitat Initiative Action Plan will be to IAFWA later this month. Rester stated that he attended a meeting of the Council's Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel. The AP discussed the Sabine/Neches waterway deepening project, a comprehensive restoration plan for west Galveston Island, and the changes to 316b of the Clean Water Act rules, LNG facilities, and the 2005 hurricane season. Rester reported that he also attended the January Council meeting where Gulf Landing presented their ideas on monitoring and mitigation for their LNG facility off Louisiana.

*There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.*

*Virginia Vail*

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES - 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Wednesday, March 15, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Chairman Virginia Vail** called the meeting to order at 1:03 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**

R. Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Barnett Lawley*)  
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL  
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)  
Hayden Dempsey, Tallahassee, FL  
Butch Gautreaux, Louisiana Senate, Morgan City, LA  
Wilson Gaidry, Houma, LA  
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for Dwight Landreneau*)  
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Robert L. Cook*)  
Ralph Rayburn, College Station, TX  
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)  
Joe Gill, Jr., Ocean Springs, MS

**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  
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gayle Jones, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, System Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL

### **Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted with the following changes: Item 6 was moved up to Item 4, to allow **C. Brown** to catch a 3:00 pm flight.

### **Approval of Minutes**

John Roussel made a technical correction to the Commission Business Meeting minutes on page 49 of the October 19, 2005 minutes. In the third paragraph "J. Roussel moved" was changed to "C. Perret moved". **J. Gill moved to approve the minutes. Minton seconded. The minutes were approved as corrected.**

### **FY 2007 USFWS Budget.**

**C. Brown** reported on the FWS FY2007 budget. There is increased funding going towards partnership and to the States. Unfortunately in regards to the fisheries programs, which funds offices like Doug Frugé's, funding continues to decrease.

He briefed the Commissioners on some of the Highlights of the FY2007. He reported that under resource management there was a \$2.3 million increase for refuge challenge cost share grants; a \$3.1 million increase for migratory bird management; and, \$1.4 million increase for refuge programs. There was a \$5.2 million increase for fisheries programs which includes \$1.87 million for hatchery operations, \$1.35 million for fish passage improvements, and \$2.0 million for the National Fish Habitat initiative. He pointed out that these increases refer to the base as opposed to the actual budget that passed last year.

Overall in resource management, especially in regards to fisheries, there was a \$3.3 million decrease. Additional highlights include a \$25.4 million decrease in construction; a \$2.2 million increase in the North American Waterfowl Conservation Fund; and, a \$2.1 million increase to private stewardship grant programs to support greater involvements of individuals and groups in imperiled species conservation efforts.

He discussed trends in FWS over the last five years. He provided figures for resource management; construction; land acquisition; and, grant programs. Overall the budget amounts are down. He pointed out items of interest to the Commission under resource management: ecological services; refuge systems; law enforcement; fisheries; and, administration. There were decreases in ecological services, which includes invasive species, and in fisheries. All other areas showed moderate increases.

### **GSMFC Standing Committee Reports**

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – **J. T. Thomas** reported that the LEC met on Tuesday, March 14, 2006.

The LEC discussed issues relating to communications during disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina. The various members discussed efforts in their respective States. The committee will continue to monitor this issue. Other items discussed were IFQ implementation and training, Hurricane Katrina response, and disaster preparedness and Federal fishing registration.

On behalf of the LEC, **J. T. Thomas** made two requests. The first was for Commission approval and acceptance of the 2006 Operation Plan. **J. Gill moved to approve the 2006 Operation Plan. V. Minton seconded. The motion passed.** The second was for approval and partial funding of a summer work session to further discuss universal communication, disaster preparedness, IFQ implementation process and training and an Operations plan review. The GMFMC would pay for half of the cost, and the Commission would pay for half of the cost. **V. Minton moved to approve and pay half of the cost for a LEC work session. J. Gill seconded. The motion passed.**

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report - **C. Perret** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, March 14, 2006. They 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 Commissioners on their activities.

The TCC also received presentations on a Blue Crab Aging Proposal, a status report on the National Artificial Reef Plan, an update on Special Management Zones for Artificial Reefs, an update on LNG Facilities in the Gulf of Mexico, and an update on 2005 hurricane damage.

**J. Gill moved to approve the TCC report. H. Dempsey seconded. The motion was approved.**

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report – **L. Simpson** reported that the S-FFMC met earlier in the day. The S-FFMC Committee received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) and the Commercial Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel (CRFAP). They also heard updates on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program, Fisheries Information Network Program, and Habitat Program.

Other topics discussed included a presentation by **B. Arroy** on the Kemp's Ridley turtle program in Mexico. Americans and Mexicans are working together on a Draft Recovery Plan. Other reports included an update on SARP activities by **S. Robinson**, discussions on Fisheries Disaster Funding, and an Interstate Shrimp Management Plan.

**L. Simpson** requested action on the following S-FFMC recommendations: **The SFFMC recommends to the Commission to seek funding to identify and develop improved gear and sampling protocols to improve the estimates of juvenile abundance and recruitment for Gulf menhaden at the state level and to seek to fund a study which would update the Lewis and Rothmeyer 1968 fecundity estimates for Gulf**

menhaden for the purpose of stock assessment. J. Roussel moved to approve and accept the recommendation. Minton seconded. The motion passed.

The S-FFMC recommends to the Commission that a recommendation should be made to the SERSC and Dr. Nancy Thompson to continue with the VPA analysis of Gulf menhaden until such time as the forward projection model has been sufficiently reviewed and compared with the previous methodology. C. Perret moved to approve and accept the recommendation. J. Roussel seconded. The motion passed.

#### NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office

R. Crabtree reported that in February a second referendum was completed. That referendum is required before the Gulf Council can submit the IFQ red snapper program to the Secretary of Commerce. The review was overwhelmingly in favor of the IFQ program. Over 80% of the votes were in favor of the IFQ.

He reported that there was another TED exemption that went into effect in February off the coast of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana out to ten miles. This expires on March 18. He reported that on several meetings that were coming up. NOAA leadership and the NMFS directors will meet March 28-30, 2006 in Washington, D.C. Members of the recreational fishing industry will be invited and the National Research Council will provide preliminary recommendations on how to improve recreational data collection programs. A meeting with the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Management Foundation is scheduled for April 5 – 6, 2006 in Tampa. The purpose of this meeting is to bring representatives from the shrimp industry together to talk about bycatch reduction device performance. On May 16-18, 2006 a Southeast Bycatch Workshop will be held by the SERO in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Due to budgetary concerns in the Regional Office, there have been changes made in the Habitat Conservation Division. Four persons have been reassigned to other areas. This will reduce essential fish habitat consultations and other habitat effort in the SERO.

A video on monofilament and monofilament recycling programs has been completed, and copies are available from M. Bailey. M. Bailey begins an 18 month DOC Leadership Program next week. He will continue to be involved with the Commission. The Commissioners expressed congratulations and good wishes for Bailey.

V. Minton moved to have the Commission send a letter of appreciation to Dr. Hogarth and Dr. Crabtree for their efforts and assistance to the shrimp industry in each of the states affected by the hurricanes by helping get the TED exemptions in place. They acted quickly and it meant a lot to the people impacted by these storms. C. Perret seconded. The motion passed.

#### USFWS Region 4 Office Comments

**D. Frugé** reported on behalf of the FWS Region 4. He stated that the Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced last Friday that she would be leaving her position on the President's Cabinet at the end of March. Ms. Norton is the 48<sup>th</sup> Secretary of the Interior and the first woman to serve in that role, which she has served in since January 31, 2001. The White House has not yet nominated a replacement for Ms. Norton.

The status review on whether the American eel should be proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act is continuing. A workshop was held in late November last year to exchange information among biologists studying the issue. A second workshop was planned for early this year. The FWS and NOAA Fisheries will jointly make a recommendation later this year on whether the species should be proposed for listing.

Staff of the FWS Panama City, Florida Ecological Services Field Office met with Walton County, Florida staff in February to discuss the county's emergency coastal armoring program and its impacts on sea turtles. As a result of the meeting the Walton County Commission decided to begin work on preparing a habitat conservation plan in order to obtain incidental take permits from the FWS. The HCP will provide for mitigation of the program's impacts in accordance with Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. Under the plan the individual property owners would be the applicants for the incidental take permits.

The FWS announced in December 2006 that it was awarding more than \$15 million under the Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. In the Gulf, Alabama and Texas are the only states receiving funding this year under this program. In Alabama the funding (\$928,000) will help purchase wetlands habitat in the Grand Bay area along Mississippi Sound. In Texas the funds (\$653,300) will be used for Phase II of the North Deer Island Protection and Restoration project in Galveston Bay. The grants are used to acquire, restore or enhance coastal wetlands. The grants are awarded through a competitive process and funded under provisions of the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act, with money generated from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels.

In November the FWS announced that it was awarding an additional \$4 million in the competitive Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) grant program. The grants will be used to provide additional facilities for recreational boaters. So far the only Gulf state receiving funding under the additional award has been Texas. However, a second tier of funding will be awarded later in the year. The additional funding was provided because Congress made more money available this fiscal year. The new funding builds upon BIG grants awarded earlier in 2005. Money for the BIG grants comes from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, which is supported by excise taxes paid on certain fishing and boating equipment.

## **FY 2007 NOAA Fisheries Budget**

**L. Simpson** reported on some of the highlights of the President's 2007 NOAA budget. Two items of interest to the Commission were a \$2.1 million increase to the Fisheries Information Network (FIN). He pointed out that this was only a \$250K increase to the Gulf. The other item was a \$3.8M increase to the Southeast Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP). These funds will go to all three components of SEAMAP - Gulf, Atlantic & Caribbean, with the lions share going to the Gulf. Simpson pointed out that this was a very important program that enhances monitoring of key larval fishery species in the Gulf of Mexico and supports environmental impact assessments related to new oil and natural gas facilities and is needed to understand hurricane related damage. He reviewed other items of interest, including funding in the amount of \$347,000 to the Rancho Nuevo Sea Turtle Program. He will continue to keep the Commissioners informed on budget issues of concern to the Gulf of Mexico and the Nations fisheries.

**R. Crabtree** reported that NOAA Fisheries Headquarters is setting up an artificial reef group to deal with concerns in the Gulf of Mexico regarding the Artificial Reef Plan. They will be meeting soon and have already begun to contact persons in the Gulf, including R. Lukens. He also noted that the American oysters have been listed under the Endangered Species Act. The petition to have the American oysters added to the list was subsequently withdrawn, NOAA did, however, go forward with the status report which should be completed within the next month. They do not have plans to place the American oyster on the list at this time.

## **FY 2006 Supplemental Fisheries Disaster Funding**

**L. Simpson** briefed the Commissioners on H.R. 2863, which provided approximately \$200 million towards emergency conservation. This will allow public and private oyster reefs damaged by hurricanes to seek up to 90 percent of the cost of emergency measures to rehabilitate. The State Directors of AL, MS and LA met in Washington, D. C. with the Department of Agriculture and Farm Services. They presented a draft estimate of oyster disaster funds needed in the amount of \$159.55 million. The Supplemental Fisheries Disaster Funding was passed, but subsequently there has been some differing interpretation of what will be considered public grounds. They may limit oyster disaster money to the States to address public grounds to only \$200,000.

He further discussed a recent telephone conference with **Dr. Hogarth** and **Dr. Crabtree** regarding additional funding in the amount of \$21 million: \$8 million for debris mapping and oyster recovery; \$4 million for Seafood Safety Monitoring; \$8 million for a market based mechanism to deal with shrimp, red snapper and grouper limited entry; and, \$1 million to do storm surge modeling.

**L. Simpson** noted that to date, no one has received any money for disaster funding of any kind for fisheries.

### **Saltwater Angler Registration (MSCMA Amendments)**

**D. Donaldson** updated the Commissioners on Saltwater Angler Registration. He pointed out that if a state has a recreational fishing license then that license will be used as a federal registration system, assuming that it meets specific criteria of collecting information from all fishermen in the jurisdiction. All Gulf states currently have a fishing license, but there are some differences. How they will be coordinated to serve in the Federal registration system has not yet resolved.

There was a lot of discussion regarding statements in the package provided in the briefing material. But the key points concerning the need for this license is that it will provide a more accurate count of saltwater anglers; more reliable data angler catch and participation; greater precision, and increased activities for fisheries better management.

### **U. S. Ocean Policy Report Card**

**L. Simpson** reported that although initial responses to the U. S. Ocean Policy were good, the Policy's current standing is very poor. He reported that it turned out to be nothing but a turmoil of wind. He stated that this will be his last report.

### **Using GIS for Offshore Aquaculture Site Selection in the Gulf of Mexico**

**J. Rester** stated that Geographical information Systems (GIS) are integrated computer based systems which allow for the input of digital geo-referenced data to produce maps plus other textual, graphical and tabular output. The essential usefulness of GIS lies in its ability to manipulate data in a large number of ways and to perform various analytical functions so as to produce output which makes for more efficient decision making.

**Rester** discussed various ways GIS can be used to explore relationships by querying data in different ways combining relevant data and exploring possible relationships using overlaying functions and more complex modeling structures.

Site selection criteria include water depth; currents; water quality; and, sediment distribution. He briefed the Commissioners on site selection considerations.

He concluded that a GIS can be used to help develop appropriate permit areas for aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico, but the GIS are only as good as the data in it. Experts need to develop siting criteria guidelines to determine where aquaculture facilities should and should not be located. Siting criteria can then be used in the GIS to help map areas suitable for offshore aquaculture.

### **Habitat Program Report**

**J. Rester** reported on the National Fish Habitat Initiative's Action Plan that has been submitted for adoption by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The Action Plan's basic elements are based on part on the highly successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan. It is a voluntary program designed to encourage



a variety of diverse partners and stakeholders to more effectively utilize existing and new resources to successfully execute conservation efforts to protect, restore, and enhance marine and freshwater fish habitats across North America. He discussed the Partner's Coalition, which is a group of organizations and agencies that have looked over the Action Plan and agree with its principles and goals and support the ideals that have been set forth in the Action Plan. He stated that although there were several hundred partners that have already signed up, there were only a handful of marine agencies involved. He recommended that the Commission become a Partner and support the Action Plan. There will be a presentation at the National State Directors meeting later this month. After the meeting **Rester** will provide copies of the Action Plan; a questionnaire; and, the website link – [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org) (by mail), and that he attach a ballot for approval or no approval. The Commissioners agreed.

He reported that the Commission's Gulf of Mexico bottom mapping project is now back on track after a brief delay due to Hurricane Katrina. The Commission hired the University of Colorado and the University of New Orleans to complete the data gathering portion of the project. They started gathering data on January 1, 2006. Personnel from both universities are now following up on data requests, entering data into the database, and creating metadata. The data gathering portion of the project should be completed by the end of the year.

He briefly updated the Commissioners on LNG, natural gases that have been cooled down to below minus 260° Fahrenheit and condensed into a liquid. There are two main types of vaporizations systems used in LNG facilities. The first an open rack vaporizer that will use sea water as the heat source. The second is a submerged combustion vaporizer that uses natural gas as a heat source to vaporize LNG back into a gas. He discussed existing and proposed LNG terminals and detailed information on facilities in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Rester** further reported that The Center for LNG Studies had released a report that evaluated the scientific approaches used to predict potential fishery impact from open loop systems. The study concluded that data inputs, assumptions, and modeling approaches used in the EISs substantially overestimate the potential for adverse impacts of LNG facilities. There are several problems associated with the report's assumption, and the U.S. Coast Guard will continue to use the current methodology for determining fishery impacts. An Interim Final EIS for the Compass Port facility identified a submerged combustion vaporizer as the environmentally preferred vaporization system. A ConocoPhillips letter questioning this choice stated "there will be substantial benefit to federal and state marine resource management and policy decisions accompanying the use of data supplied from a comprehensive aquatic monitoring (and mitigation, if required) program associated only with an ORV-based terminal. The Final EIS might not contain an environmentally preferred alternative.

#### **Charles H. Lyles Award Recipient Selection**

**R. Rayburn** nominated **Robert Phillip "Bob" Jones**, Executive Director of the Southeastern Fisheries Association. **C. Nelson** seconded. **R. Rayburn** distributed copies

of Bob's resume. He has been the Executive Director of the Southeastern Fisheries Association for 42 years. His fishery activities, experience and reputation certainly warrants this nomination for the *2007 Charles H. Lyles Recipient*. **Rayburn** stated that **Bob** has been a good friend to the fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico, a close friend of **Mr. Lyles**, and would be a good choice for this prestigious award. **J. Gill** moved to close nomination. **Mr. Jones** was nominated by acclamation.

*The meeting adjourned for the evening at 5:08 pm.*

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES - 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Thursday, March 16, 2006  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Chairman V. Vail** called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

**Commissioners**

R. Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Barnett Lawley*)  
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)  
Hayden Dempsey, Tallahassee, FL  
Wilson Gaidry, Houma, LA  
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for Dwight Landreneau*)  
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Robert L. Cook*)  
Ralph Rayburn, College Station, TX  
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)  
Joe Gill, Jr., Ocean Springs, MS

**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  
Joe Ferrer, System Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gayle Jones, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Marilyn Lawal, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

**Hurricane Katrina Fisheries Disaster and Related Issues**

**L. Simpson** stated that this portion of the meeting was to provide a forum to any hurricane related issues. He noted that funds have been allocated to begin to rebuild the NMFS Pascagoula Lab. **R. Crabtree** discussed some personnel changes in NOAA fisheries. **Jim Balsinger** will be staying on as the Deputy Director for Regulations. **Joe Powers** retired and is now working at LSU. **Pat Moran** has been hired as the head of

Habitat to replace **Rollie Schmitten**. **Steve Murawski's** position of Head Science and Technology has not been filled. **Steve** replaced **Mike Sissenwine**.

**R. Rayburn** asked if anyone had reviewed the administration document entitled *Lessons Learned*. **Crabtree** has seen the NMFS's document but has not had time to review it and is not sure when it will be available.

**J. Roussel** stated that in his past experience he has been impressed by the financial assistance provided the States following a disaster. He expressed frustration following Hurricane Katrina because they have not received any assistance. He stated that the industry in Louisiana is in great need of assistance, and it has not been forthcoming. **V. Minton** also expressed concern for the economic impact of Katrina in Alabama. If disaster assistance is not forthcoming, the economic loss will be catastrophic. Initial reports show that Alabama has suffered an \$87 million loss – it is now up to a \$112.5 million.

**C. Perret** stated he feels that the magnitude of the damage alone has been the reason that fisheries have not yet received financial assistance to date. Assistance has been approved, it just is not getting to the people who need it. Fisheries are not the only area that has been impacted. Unfortunately even hospitals and individuals are not getting help.

**D. Frugé** updated the Commissioners on FWS refuge areas that were affected by Hurricane Katrina. No major rebuilding has been done to date.

**R. Rayburn** discussed provisions that have been included in the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Management and Conservation Act (MSFMCA) that provide some authority for NOAA Fisheries to act on fisheries disasters. He stated that they seemed reasonable and that the Commission should consider supporting them when the Act goes before the Senate.

#### **Concept Paper NOAA Fisheries Service Preparation for 2006 Atlantic Hurricane Season**

**R. Rayburn** presented a concept plan for NOAA Fisheries Service preparation for the 2006 Atlantic Hurricane Season that can be a starting document to consider in setting up a process. He stated that he prepared this concept paper following conversations at a recent MAFAC meeting with **Crabtree** and **Murawski**, and comments from **Hogarth** at the October Commission meeting dealing with concerns about getting a more timely assessment of impacts of storms. To date he has not received any comments on the concept paper.

Basically the paper sets up mechanisms between the resources, NOAA Fisheries Service in conjunction with the state fisheries agencies that have the resources on the Coast to have some methodology set up for a quicker time response to assess damage. Sea Grant was included. He discussed Sea Grant response and recommendations to the paper. **J.**

**Roussel** commended **Rayburn** for his efforts. He likes the concept and would like to see the Commission revisit the issue and develop a plan that would help alleviate the current state of frustration in the fishery community. If this cannot be done within the Commission, it should be done within some other viable venue. **L. Simpson** discussed his impressions following recent Congressional visits. He felt a chronological approach was appropriate. **C. Perret** stated that in the past when receiving assistance, damages were well documented. Unfortunately the damage has been so massive that at first, Congressional action was over the top, and even though damage has been well documented in the fishery, it will take time to trickle down.

### **Invasive Species Program**

**R. Lukens** reported that the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) on Aquatic Invasive Species held their most recent meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas. He reported that State comprehensive invasive species plans continue to be a high priority issue. He reviewed the status of the various states. Due to the success of the GSARP's risk assessment training workshop, another one will be planned by the Mississippi River Basin Regional Panel sometime during 2006.

The USGS Invasive Species Program in Gainesville, Florida conducted an analysis of data from the Non-indigenous Aquatic Species Database to determine associations between taxa and pathways. This report is available from the Commission office.

Other topics discussed were the development of a taxonomic experts database and education and outreach materials. The next meeting of the panel will be in April 2006.

### **Status of Billfish Project**

**R. Lukens** reported that the Commission's Billfish Project began in 2004. He provided a list of the recipients of the various awards. Dr. Nancy Thomas, NOAA Fisheries, is the technical monitor of this project. Semi-annual reports have been approved, and payments for the first semi-annual reporting period have been distributed.

### **Status of Commission's Cooperative Data Collection Programs**

**D. Donaldson** updated the Commissioners on current program activity. He reported that FY2007 funding is \$4.8 million, the same as 2006. He gave a brief overview of FY2006 activities. Despite reduced efforts and delays due to Hurricane Katrina, all activities have met or exceeded expectations.

### **Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program**

**S. VanderKooy** reported on the IJF Program. He focused on developments in IJF FMPs. A profile on Sheephead has been approved by the Task Force and was reviewed by the TCC at this meeting to begin their review. The Striped Bass FMP is ready for final

action by the Commission. The S-FFMC approved the Oyster FMP to officially begin revision.

**Doug Frugé**, presented the Striped Bass Management Plan for considered approval by the Commission. He gave a chronological order of progress and status. Major changes to the FMP include expanded possible range of native striped bass in the Gulf and changed characterization of goals for some river systems. He discussed native geographic distribution and river specific goals.

**C. Perret moved to approve the Striped Bass FMP. J. Gill seconded. The FMP was approved. R. Rayburn requested that the Commission staff send a letter to Mr. Frugé and other members of the Task Force commending them for their efforts on this FMP and to send copies to Frugé's boss. All Commissioners agreed.**

### State Director's Reports

Florida – **G. Vail** reported on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

She reported that the U.S.S. Oriskany was leaving Beaumont, Texas heading for Pensacola, Florida. It is estimated that she will be deployed as an artificial reef on May 16, 2006.

The FWC has coordinated with State, local, interstate and federal entities in an effort to secure some kind of hurricane relief assistance for some of the fishermen impacted by Hurricanes that took place from July into October. Some of the things the FWC were able to do were to waive requirements for lobster and stone crab traps to bear tags for the rest of the season. Initially fees were deferred. She noted that these fees had already been paid for the original tags and that the replacement fee was waived. They are currently seeking to do a one time transfer of general revenues funds into their license and grants trust fund. Additionally they are seeking authority to waive the tag fees for lobster, stone crab and blue crab for one fishing season. Unless the transfer of funds (\$1.2 million) is approved, they will be unable to afford to waive the tag fees.

The FWC is working with the Volunteer Florida Office under Governor Bush to seek and receive donations from local business to aid the trap fishers in the Florida Keys and to replace their lost or damaged trap. A voucher system will be used to make these purchases. Almost all of the lobster traps are in the Keys, around 400,000. There are about 800,000 stone crab traps in the Keys and surrounding counties.

They are in the process of providing funds to Monroe County for debris clean-up in near shore and onshore waters. These damaged traps have become a human health and safety issue.

The American Fisheries Society selected the FWC's kids fishing clinic , (a Sport Fish Restoration Project) as the 2005 outstanding project in the Aquatic Education category.

There will be a formal presentation and recognition of the award at the April Commission meeting.

Alabama – **V. Minton** reported on behalf of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR).

He reported that a Derelict Crab Trap Clean-up Program had been held on March 11. This effort was reduced from previous years, due in part to reduced funding. Also, areas that were cleaned up as part of the post Katrina debris removal were considered lower priority. Seven dumpster sites were placed around the Bay, with particular attention paid to the upper Mobile Bay. This resulted in 306 traps collected by approximately 100 volunteers. The efforts concentrated on Upper Mobile Bay and Upper Mississippi Sound. A south wind increased water depths and reduced visibility. The clean-up was considered a success.

Members of the biological staff continue to participate in the development of an Invasive Nuisance Species plan for Alabama. They are participating in the newly formed Baldwin County Schools Technical Advisory Board that is compiling materials for county teachers to assist them in bringing more conservation education into their classrooms.

Thanks to efforts by NOAA Fisheries, Alabama was granted an additional TED exemption as part of a larger exemption that covers the area from Alabama/Florida State line to the Louisiana/Texas State line and extending out 10 nautical miles. This exemption is to allow the shrimp fishermen to more effectively deal with the problems encountered with debris remaining from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Using TEDs that become clogged with debris is more hazardous to sea turtles than pulling nets for limited tow times and no TEDs.

The Marine Resources Division (MRD) of the ADCNR and Dr. Semoon Chang, University of South Alabama, conducted a study of the economic impact of Hurricane Katrina on Alabama's seafood industry. Primary participants included Alabama resident seafood dealers, commercial fishermen, and charterboat owners/operators. The findings of the this report estimate an uninsured loss of \$112,250,000 for losses covering vessel and facility damages, vessel removal, lost inventories, unpaid wages and invoices, lost revenues and future sales. The report additionally estimates \$61,135,000 in potential loss from SBA and private loans held by primary participants. Secondary participants, such as ice plants, net and tackle shops, fuel docks, boat yards, etc., and recreational fishing losses were not included in this study.

Oyster dredgers, working as part of a program initiated to test the potential for oyster dredge use on Alabama's public reefs, harvested slightly more than 9,600 sacks from Portersville Bay during December 2005 and January 2006 and the CPUE on Cedar Point, Alabama's primary tonging reef remained respectable (1.4-1.6 sacks/hour generally). Because of Katrina's impact on Gulf-wide supply, price to the oyster fishermen remained higher than normal for the period.

The MRD Enforcement Division will be hiring one additional officer.

**V. Minton** took the opportunity to express appreciation to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources for their assistance involving an unfortunate incidence of three missing fishermen. After extensive searches **Minton** contacted **Perret** on a Saturday evening, and by Sunday morning MDMR staff (Kerwin Cueves) was onsite with side scan sonar. While the search was not successful, the assistance was greatly appreciated.

Mississippi – **C. Perret** reported on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR).

He reported that the main office building took water up to the second floor, causing extensive damage resulting in a complete loss of the Fishery Offices. They lost 20 plus vehicles. Two oyster check stations were totally demolished; the one in Jackson County is damaged, and the Oak Street Marine Patrol Agent Office was severely damaged. They estimated the damages at approximately \$4 million. He reported that the DMR Financial Officer is currently working with the fourth FEMA representative assigned to the case. He is working diligently to assist before he too is reassigned. This has created frustration, and to date, the DMR has received no funds. Dr. Ben Pasadas of Mississippi State University is currently working on an economic survey for the DMR.

He reported that sales of recreational licenses are off by 40% and effort is off by 50%. Of the 100 Mississippi charterboats, only 10 are working very sporadically. Through February, commercial shrimp licenses sales are off 86%; commercial crab license sales are off 78%; and oyster licenses are off by 10%.

Dr. Glen Parsons, a professor of biology at the University of Mississippi, has recently published a book entitled "*Sharks, Skates and Rays of the Gulf of Mexico*". The DMR assisted with the project and publication costs and has several copies for distribution.

A small number of seafood processors are back in operation. Prior to Hurricane Katrina there were 76 certified seafood dealers. To date, 26 have been recertified. They cannot handle the volume of products they were handling before Hurricane Katrina.

There is a small area in the Mississippi Sound that appears to have a sufficient quantity of oysters for the DMR to have a one to two week oyster season with a very small bag limit. To date, water quality has not allowed the Department to open the reef. If the water samples come back good, it will be opened, even if it is for just a week.

He reported that the DMR lost all seven of their hydrological monitoring stations due to the storm. Four are back in operation.

**Perret** also took the opportunity to thank NOAA Fisheries for their assistance with the TED exemption, particularly **Dr. Crabtree**.



Louisiana – **J. Roussel** reported on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

He reported that Louisiana has completed their Invasive Species Plan and the Task Force has submitted to the Governors office. Related to invasive species, **Roussel** reported that a giant salvinia had been identified in a freshwater lake near Shreveport. This is the northern most occurrence in the state. They are in the process of mapping the extent and developing a plan to eradicate it. Salvinia has been a problem in Coastal Louisiana and may be more or less of a problem following Katrina. Salvinia may be killed by saltwater, but it may move and re-establish in other locations.

The Louisiana Legislature will be in session next week. They have held two special sessions since last October dealing with hurricane issues. The only fishery issue addressed during those sessions was to grant an extension on renewal and rental payments for oyster leases.

The LDWF lost two coastal facilities below New Orleans. No progress has been made yet. The New Orleans office is still shut down. The Marine Lab is severely damaged, but safety engineers have given authorization to go back into one building. The other buildings will be condemned. All sampling programs were suspended but they are now back up. Because of a tremendous amount of vessel losses, the Department has set up a website to assist owners in finding their vessels. They are also assisting with insurance claims. They have reprogrammed disaster funds from Hurricane Ivan to implement oyster bed clean-up programs in St. Plaquemine and St. Bernard Parishes. Fishermen were employed to handle these clean-ups, and approximately \$1 million was spent, which pumped money back into the local economy at the fishermen level. There have been numerous season adjustments in direct response to the hurricane. They have worked with the Louisiana Fishing Coalition to develop a recovery plan. It has been preliminarily presented to the Governors Committee on Louisiana Recovery. Funds are not yet available. He reported that 166 damaged or destroyed oil and gas platforms are off the coast. LDWF is looking at incorporating these structures into their artificial reef program. Oil and gas representatives want to rebuild at these locations, so this may not work.

**Roussel** is updating his previous report on the impact on the Louisiana fishery for the September-December period (following Hurricane Katrina). In the Blue Crab fishery, vessel participation is down 51%; trips are down 58%; landings down 25%; and dockside revenues are down 32%. In the Menhaden: vessel participation down 35%; trips down 70%; landings down 78%; and dockside revenue 81%. He described other fisheries. All Commissioners want a copy of this updated report.

LSU Extension Center, working with some of this information, has tried to indirectly quantify the actual infrastructure loss. On the recreational side their estimate was \$121 million to \$358 million. Commercial infrastructure was \$271 million - \$585 million.

**Ray** asked the status of the LDWF financial situation and if any assistance had been received. **Roussel** stated that they are a totally self-funded agency and revenues are quite depressed. Recreational and commercial license sales are down about 20% at this time, but he anticipates additional decreases. The fiscal situation is stable due to a surplus being carried over from the previous year. They are not hiring and may have to lay off. The State is self-insured, so there is a problem replacing vehicles and vessels, etc. There have been major cut-backs immediately following the storm.

Texas – **M. Ray** reported on behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

**Life History and Genetics Research** - Sand seatrout samples are being processed for a life history study. Wet lab tests will be conducted to measure temperature tolerances for spotted seatrout.

Genetic research continues on sheepshead and spotted seatrout. Work has begun with collecting data from six microsatellite primers for the analysis of genetic variation in sheepshead. Data analysis for a study on spotted seatrout temporal and geographic variation has been completed. Data analysis for the menhaden SFR genetics project is complete, and a final report for the project is complete and will be available soon.

**Artificial Reef Project** - TPWD submitted an application to MARAD to reef the Texas Clipper. MARAD is evaluating the application and should respond within 30 days.

TPWD is working on a nearshore reefing strategy that involves using the public to reef materials. The plan calls for a series of nearshore reefs permitted by TPWD. The public would submit an application to be reviewed by TPWD, and materials would be inspected and certified by Artificial Reef staff. Once approved, the materials would be reefed by public organizations or individuals at their costs. TPWD would maintain the sites and any buoy requirements and also the liability associated with those sites.

### **Inshore Shrimp License Management Program**

Buyback round – 17

- Application period closed November 11, 2005
- 268 individual bids were received
- Purchased a total of 110 (59 bay and 51 bait)
- Total purchase price was \$849,037
- Avg. purchase price was \$7,719 (actual range \$5,500 to \$9,800)

Shrimp - Overall Totals:

- 1,450 licenses
- 746 Bay and 704 Bait licenses
- 45% reduction.
- Total spent = \$9.1 million.

## **Crab License Management Program**

### Round 6

- 4 applications received
- 2 licenses purchased at a total cost of \$10,600.
- Average cost was \$5,300.

### Crab - Overall Totals

- 26 licenses purchased
- Total spent = \$122,749
- Average price = \$4,721
- 9% reduction.

## **Commercial Finfish License Management Program**

### Round 8

- 30 applications received
- 14 licenses purchased
- Total cost \$76,694 at an average of \$5,478

### Finfish - Overall Totals

- 143 licenses purchased for a total cost of \$684,464
- Avg. price paid - \$4,787
- 26% reduction.

**Oysters** - At certain times this last fall, the only bays opened for oyster harvest along the Gulf were in Texas, with unusually large number of oyster boats crowding into Aransas Bay, located on the mid-Texas coast. Texas oystermen intensely worked bays just north of Aransas Bay, diminishing the number of oysters on those reefs.

TPWD, Texas Department of State Health Services, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries and Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals are discussing the possibility of opening the Sabine Lake's Louisiana waters to the commercial harvest of oysters. The Louisiana Oyster Task Force (commercial oyster industry) has put together a recovery plan for oysters in Louisiana that includes the utilization of more public resources. Louisiana is conducting water quality and tissue monitoring of oysters in Sabine Lake for a possible oyster season that would run from May - October. No commercial harvest has occurred on oyster reefs in the Sabine Lake ecosystem since 1966.

**TPWD REGULATION CHANGES** – Currently Coastal Fisheries have five proposed regulation changes that have gone to public hearings:

- 1) prohibiting the take of largemouth sawfish ;
- 2) removing the requirement for the tarpon tag and implement a bag limit of one tarpon with a minimum size limit that corresponds to the state record;
- 3) allowing one black drum over the maximum size limit (set at the state record) per day;
- 4) reducing the possession limit for flounder to the daily bag limit (10-fish per trip);

5) naming tripletail a game fish and setting a minimum size of 17 inches and daily bag limit of 3 fish.

#### **SPECIAL EFFORTS, STUDIES, AND TOPICS –**

**Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program** - TPWD conducted its 5th annual Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program during February 2006, when 1,567 crab traps were collected and disposed of – with over a thousand (1,004) being removed from Galveston Bay. During the first four years of this project, more than 18,000 crab traps have been hauled from Texas bays, for a total of 19,575 removed traps since 2002. This year's effort was marred by weather conditions and limited facilitated sites.

**Billfish Sampling** - Texas will continue billfish sumping for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year with a grant from NOAA Fisheries. Tissue samples were obtained from 27 billfish: 15 sailfish, 7 blue marlin, and 5 white marlin during July, August and September 2005. Total tissue sample inventory is 33 billfish, which includes 4 fish samples collected in June, 2005 and 2 fish sampled in June, 2004.

**Charterboat Survey and Biological Sampling** - The recreational “for hire” survey of Texas Gulf charter boats and biological sampling continues. The charter boat survey will continue in 2006 with increases in sample size for the intercept survey. Otolith samples remain close to targets, except for recreational southern flounder and commercial king mackerel. Texas will also continue biological sampling in the 2006 sampling year.

**Texas Trip Ticket Program** - Texas continues with its pilot trip ticket program. We currently have 50 dealers signed up, with 64% of them using electronic reporting. We have now begun to transition to reporting trip tickets and eliminating the Monthly Aquatic Product Report. We hope to have all the dealers onboard by the end of this year.

**Seagrass** - The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission authorized seagrass conservation measures to protect ecologically important seagrass beds in the Redfish Bay State Scientific Area, near Rockport. The new rules will take effect May 1, 2006. The rules make it illegal to uproot seagrass anywhere within the state scientific area. Violations would be a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$500. Alongside the new rules, department staff intends to continue and expand a concerted public education campaign, including extensive efforts to identify and mark access points into the area to minimize seagrass loss.

**Post Rita Information** - The preliminary estimated cost to clean up and repair state parks, wildlife management areas and other TPWD sites and facilities damaged by Hurricane Rita is more than \$3 million. This figure does not include staff time associated with Rita responses.

Despite all of the major rivers and tributaries in Orange and Jefferson counties experiencing substantial fish kills as a result of Hurricane Rita, TPWD fall gill nets produced at or near-normal catch rates for most recreationally important species.

Six months after Hurricane Rita, Sabine Lake's commercial fishing infrastructure remains in various stages of recovery. The storm destroyed about 50% of the local shrimp houses. Although trailers and freezer units were dispersed to other areas, and several gulf shrimp boats were removed from the fishery, progress is being made to reestablish local shrimping operations.

#### **Future Meetings**

**G. Herring** stated that she is in the process of soliciting proposals from New Orleans for the October 16 – 19, 2006 meeting. Venues in Mississippi are limited, but she will seek a location in or near Biloxi for the March 12 - 5, 2007 meeting.

#### **Publications List**

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.*

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 5 - Thursday, April 6, 2006  
Atlanta, Georgia**

Chairman David Yeager 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**

Diane Altsman, EPA/GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS  
Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary, Louisiana Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA  
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX  
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Walter R. Courtenay, USGS, Gainesville, FL  
Steven de Kozlowski, SCDNR, Columbia, SC  
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  
Ted Hendrickx, Georgia DNR, Social Circle, GA  
Tom Jackson, NOAA/NMFS/SEFSC, Miami, FL  
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL  
Herb Kumpf, Banner Elk, NC  
Jim Long, National Park Service, Atlanta, GA  
Ronald R. Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Roberto Mendoza, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico  
John E. Meyers, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA  
Harriet Perry, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bob Pitman, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM  
George Ramseur, Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dennis Riecke, MDWFP, Jackson, MS  
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL  
Bruce Thompson, LSU Coastal Fisheries Institute, Baton Rouge, LA  
Jay Troxel, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
David W. Yeager, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile, AL

**Staff**

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Noel Burkead, USGS, Gainesville, FL  
Nicole Cass, Port of Houston Authority, Houston, TX  
Chuck Coomer, Social Circle, GA  
Bud Freeman, Georgia Museum of Natural History, Athens, GA

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -2-

Linda Kelsey, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Jonathan Moczygomba, Texas A&M University, Kingston, TX  
Scott Newsham, ANSTF/USFWS, Arlington, VA  
Pamela J. Schofield, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL  
Susan Wilde, USC/SCDNR, Charleston, SC

**Public Comment**

Yeager provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

**Review and Adoption of Agenda**

Jim Lester was unable to attend the meeting due to illness, and his report "Galveston Bay Activities" was removed from the agenda. Lukens also asked that Scott Newsham be added to provide a report on Task Force activities in lieu of the Administrative Report scheduled for 11:00 am on Thursday. **Bruce Thompson made a motion to adopt the agenda with those changes. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.**

**Review and Approval of Minutes (11/30 - 12/1/05)**

Lukens mentioned that he had received some comments via email and incorporated them into the minutes. **Marilyn O'Leary made a motion to approve the minutes from the 11/30 - 12/1/05 meeting held in Corpus Christi, Texas. Harriet Perry seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.**

**Test of Rotenone as a Potential Control for Nonindigenous Swamp Eels**

Pam Schofield of the U.S. Geological Survey in Gainesville, Florida, gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Test of rotenone as a potential control for nonindigenous Asian swamp eels." Results of this research project, which is funded by the U.S. Geological Survey, are pending publication. Copies will be made available at a later date.

**Swamp Eel Activities in Georgia**

Bud Freeman from the Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia and the Georgia Museum of Natural History, provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "An Update: Status of Asian Swamp Eels in Georgia."

**Summary**

- Mid-level predator
  - Primarily feeding on invertebrates in ponds

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -3-

- New food item for wading birds and others
  - Observed herons feeding on eels
- Breeding in 3 ponds and possibly marsh
  - Young-of-year eels captured in all areas

Chattahoochee Nature Center

- Discovered 1994
- Introduced c. 1990
- Breeding population in 3 ponds
- Direct access to marsh
- UGA studies began in 1998
- Current study objectives:
  - Assess population status
  - Assess potential impacts to native fauna
  - Evaluate control/eradication options

Control Options

Swamp eels are highly adaptable to a diverse number of environments - burrowing, air breathing, travel on land

- Pesticides (rotenone, antimycin)
- Trapping (removal)
- Dredging/Draining
- Electric barriers
- Modified outflows

Lab Studies

- Effects of Antimycin-A
  - Tested young eels ( $3.53 \pm 0.98$  cm SVL)
  - Positive controls: golden shiner (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*)
  - 0, 2, 5, 10, 15, 100 ppb (nL/L) Fintrol®
  - 44 h observation
- Aquabiotics, Inc. recommends:
  - 5 ppb for control of scaled fishes
  - 15 ppb for hardier fishes
- Conclusions
  - Young eels unaffected by Antimycin
  - Effective on positive controls
  - Chemical control may not be option

Containment Options

- Eliminate access to marsh
  - Reconfigure Kingfisher outflow
    - close current outflow



**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -4-

- install deep-water screened standpipe
- Redirect Frog Pond Outflow
  - elevate pond berm
  - direct outflow into Kingfisher
- Erect silt fences
- Reduce total numbers
  - Spring-time electrofishing
    - removes spawning adults
  - Summer leaf-litter traps
    - removes spawned juveniles

Conclusions

- Eels resistant to standard chemical control
- Eels susceptible to trapping
  - Adults: electrofishing
  - Juveniles: leaf-litter traps
- Ponds can be reconfigured
  - Eliminates access to marsh
  - Greatly reduces immigration potential

Funding and support were provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Chattahoochee Nature Center, and the National Park Service.

Taxonomic Experts Database

Pam Fuller indicated that one of the topics the Panel was interested in was creating a database of taxonomic experts. After traveling to other Panel meetings, Fuller found they wanted to do the same thing. The Task Force agreed to fund a cooperative project to develop this database, which will ensure that the Panels will not be duplicating effort. A conference call with interested parties will be held next week. The USGS database programmer in Fuller's office is currently building the database. It is designed to be a two stage program. The general public will have access to the first stage and will be directed to the individual state programs. The state program will serve as the first filter. If the state person cannot identify a species, the state person will have access to the next stage, which is the taxonomic experts.

The initial project is to build a taxonomic experts database. There may be an opportunity to expand on the initial project to include other invasive species experts. Fuller asked if any Panel members would like to be involved in this group and participate in the conference call to notify her. Fuller added that the Research Committee of each Panel will discuss how to populate the database.

Lukens added that this is an opportunity for all states and Panels to participate. Each state or Panel will make the decision whether or not to participate.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -5-

**Status of State Plans/Program Updates**

Florida - Scott Hardin reported that Florida has had a plan since 2003 dealing with both terrestrial and aquatic species. They are in the process of implementing the plan. Lukens noted that to be eligible for ANS funding the plan must be formally submitted to the Task Force with a transmittal letter signed by Florida's Governor. Of the 18 actions items in the plan, they have made progress on approximately 10 of them.

Some items they are working on include: a pilot surveillance network; a photo guide on egg masses of channel apple snails; reinfestation from private lands; reexamination of all rules and regulations looking for duplications and gaps; standardized reporting format on money spent on invasives in the state; and legislation proposed in Florida to regulate certain reptiles in the state. Finally, Hardin gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Gambian Pouch Rat in the Florida Keys.

Alabama - Leslie Hartman reported that they are in the process of developing their state plan. They have an Executive Order signed by the Governor to accomplish the task. They have held three meetings and prioritized their species of interest and identified relevant regulatory agencies. They are in the process of writing and reviewing the species profiles. Another meeting will be held next week. They hope to complete the plan under the current administration (end of 2006).

Mississippi - Dale Diaz informed the Panel that a key person in their plan development, Phil Bass, has retired from Mississippi DEQ and is now working for the Gulf of Mexico Program. They continue to work on their plan. A meeting is scheduled for June and the goal is to have a rough draft to review. They hope to have the plan completed by the end of 2006.

Diaz added that Hurricane Katrina created lot of disturbed habitat which is conducive to invasive species. Debris removal is also creating a lot of damaged habitat, since contractors are paid on volume of debris removed. They have recently received funding for a project on post-Hurricane Katrina giant salvinia distribution. Plans are to start that project by mid-April.

Louisiana - Harry Blanchet reported that the Louisiana plan has been developed. Last month their Governor signed and forwarded it to the National ANS Task Force. The Task Force will be meeting in May, and approval of the Louisiana plan is on the agenda. Their group continues to meet regularly. Some topics of discussion include: distribution of formosan termites since Hurricane Katrina; presentation on redistribution of the Rio Grande cichlid; new information on black carp; and an LSU project to slice silver carp to make crawfish bait. They also have legislation introduced dealing with private ownership of constrictors. This will provide some control over large snake ownership. They were recently involved in a rapid response action involving giant salvinia in one of their local lakes. On March 11, while fishing, a biologist spotted some giant salvinia. It was positively identified on Monday and they started surveying on Tuesday. The following Monday, 6 plant control crews began treatment. It is an ongoing problem and management options are currently being reviewed.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -6-

Texas - Earl Chilton reported that the Texas plan is incomplete. It was submitted for preliminary review last fall, and they have received comments. They were hoping to have those comments incorporated into the plan before the May meeting of the Task Force, but it appears doubtful. The comments should be incorporated before the next meeting of the Task Force, following the May meeting. To be eligible for certain funding, they are in the process of putting together a Texas State Invasive Species Council. Chilton also gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Lake Austin Hydrilla."

Georgia - Ted Hendrickx reported that their plan is gaining momentum, and interest is building. They have begun the writing phase and are in the process of developing an internal briefing paper. The Georgia Invasive Species Task Force is complete. It was formed from a preexisting organization. A division coordination meeting is planned for next week, and they will brief the Director and Assistant Director on what they plan to bring before Governor. Hopes are to have a first state agency coordination meeting this summer to get consensus on species and pathways.

As part of a \$10,000 grant, Georgia developed an outreach display on invasive species. Hendrickx brought the display to the meeting and received many favorable comments. They also hope to print more of the brochure "Aquatic Pests Introduced from Aquariums and Water Gardens." They did a TV show in January on invasive species and are also doing a Georgia Outdoors show.

South Carolina - Steve de Kozłowski distributed copies of a publication identifying aquatic plants with illustrations. The IAFWA communications project is almost complete. This project is designed to distribute information on aquatic invasive species with boat ramp signs and the Agency's rules and regulations publication. After getting prices for a consultant to do their state plan, they have decided to take on the task themselves. The target date is Spring 2007.

Other state activities included completion of the annual aquatic management plan, targeting 28 bodies of water around the state. De Kozłowski was recently informed of new hydrilla pond in South Carolina. They have had increased numbers of these small ponds with hydrilla. They are in the process of investigating the extent of infestation of phragmites and focusing on controlling this species. They are also addressing ways to address invasives species on private property. With phragmites, they have established a cost sharing program with the landowner to control the species. Another area of interest is beach vitex - vines - impacting the ability for sea turtles to nest. They have added a link on their website to the GSMFC website.

**HACCP Workshop - Mexico**

Roberto Mendoza provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Utilización de HACCP, Para El Manejo de Riesgos de Especies Invasoras - MEXICO, D.F., Febrero 22-23, 2006." The presentation reviewed the HACCP training program which had been translated to Spanish. Bob Pitman assisted in coordinating the HACCP workshop. Mendoza indicated that the training workshop was considered very successful. More information on this workshop can be found at <http://haccp-nrm.org>.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -7-

**Species Update**

Pam Fuller provided a species update PowerPoint presentation.

**Southeast**

- Red Sea bannerfish (*Heniochus intermedius*)
  - Marine waters off Palm Beach County
- Pirapatinga, red-bellied pacu (*Piaractus brachypomus*)
  - Lay Lake, Coosa River, AL
  - Red River near Acme, LA
  - Guntersville Lake, AL
  - Caney Lake, LA

**Florida**

- 2 “new” established species
- Both in South Florida
  - Eastern happy (*Haplochromis callipterus; Astatotilapia calliptera*)
    - African Cichlid; aquarium species
    - First collected 1997
  - Bristle-nosed catfish (*Ancistrus* sp.)
    - First collected 2001

**Elsewhere**

- A Parasitic Copepod (*Neoergasilus japonicus*) - Great Lakes
- Giant Snakehead (*Channa micropeltes*) - Tennessee
- American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) - New York, California, and Iowa
- Northern Snakehead (*Channa argus*) - Lower Delaware, Pennsylvania
- Chinese Mitten Crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*) - Lake Superior

**Hawaii**

- 122 fish species
- 7 new species to our database
- At least 8 species expanded to new islands

**Miscellaneous Comments**

First place Gulf Guardian Partnership Awards were presented to Pam Fuller and Jim Long for their participation in AMRAT.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -8-

George Ramseur informed the Panel that as of mid-March he is no longer employed by The Nature Conservancy. He has taken a position with Land Trust for the Coastal Plain, which focuses on the six coastal counties in Mississippi. He will continue his affiliation with the Panel as a member from a non-profit organization.

The meeting recessed at 4:50 pm.

The meeting reconvened at 9:00 am.

**Public Comment**

Yeager provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

**Hybridization Between Red Shiners and Native Shiners**

Noel Burkhead of the U.S. Geological Survey in Gainesville, Florida, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the hybridization between red shiners and native shiners. Results of this research project are pending publication. Copies will be made available at a later date.

**Update from the North American Brown Tree Snake Control Team**

Jonathan Moczygemba, a graduate student from Texas A&M, Kingston, gave a PowerPoint presentation updating the Panel on activities of the North American Brown Tree Snake Control Team (NABTSCT).

The mission of the NABTSCT is to prevent the invasion of brown tree snakes into continental North America through education and awareness and rapid response assessments of potential sightings via a partnership of stakeholders.

The NABTSCT was formed in 2002:

- To compliment group of Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, and
- To inspire and facilitate communication, cooperation, and understanding within and between agencies and organizations and to provide coordination of efforts between agencies concerning brown tree snake issues.

The following items can be found on the NABTSCT web site, [www.NABTSCT.net](http://www.NABTSCT.net):

- Directory
- Mission Statement

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -9-

- Partners
- Annotated Bibliography
- Educational Presentations

Coming soon to the web site:

- BTS ID and Native Look-a-likes
- Rapid Response
- Potential Pathways and Maps

Team activities for 2006:

- New Watch Cards
- Working on Rapid Response Number (24 hour toll free number)
- Web I.D.

Moczygamba noted two areas where he would like assistance from panel members. The first is the need for photos, both close-ups of native snake species for web I.D. and brown tree snake photos. The second is the need for contact information for invasive species coordinators for state and federal agencies for the rapid response plan.

**Avian Vacular Myelinopathy**

Susan Wilde, SCDNR, gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Linking Invasive Aquatic Plants, a Novel Cyanobacterial Species and Avian Vacular Myelinopathy in Southeastern Reservoirs."

The primary birds affected are American coots (1,000s) and bald eagles (at least 100). Also affected are mallards, ring-necked ducks, buffleheads, American wigeon, Canada geese, great horned owls, and killdeer.

Emergent Eagle Disease (first documented occurrence - DeGray Lake, Arkansas - November 1994)

- 29 bald eagles were found dead or dying
- Eagles and coots neurologically impaired
  - Diagnosis
    - no consistent gross abnormalities in eagles or coots
    - lesions are present in the white matter of the brain tissue
- Deaths occur from October to March while birds overwinter on reservoirs
  - Extensive diagnostic examinations
    - no infectious disease agents
    - no known toxins that cause brain lesions
- Coots and other waterfowl contract disease on site within as few as 5 days
- AVM is not contagious

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -10-

- Eagles and other predatory birds contract disease by ingesting affected birds

**Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy**

Current working hypothesis - food chain linkage

- Stigonematales species that grows on aquatic plants produces the neurotoxic AVM agent
- Aquatic plants with toxic algal epiphytes are consumed by coots
- Sick coots are consumed by eagles

**Genetic Analysis and Culturing an Epiphytic Cyanobacterial Species Associated with AVM Bird Deaths**

Prime Suspect

- Abundant colonies of an undescribed epiphytic cyanobacterium
- Initially identified as *Hapalosiphon fontinalis*
- Now known to be a new closely related species in the order *Stigonematales*
- Submitted the 16S sequence to GenBank - AY785313
- Created a Real-Time PCR assay specific to the *Stigonematales* species

Culture Progress

- Field samples of the targeted cyanobacterium have been cultured
- Experimenting with several media to retain/induce toxin production
- BG-11<sub>0</sub> + hydrilla extract
- BG-11 results in rapid growth

Initial Feeding Trial

- Culture material was grown in BG-11<sub>0</sub> at 27C for six weeks
- Cold shocked before harvesting
- 6 coots were gavaged whole cell material followed by a rinse of BG-11<sub>0</sub> media
- Ducks were gavaged daily for 13 days at Clemson University
- None of the coots became symptomatic or had brain lesions

Cyanobacteria Research

- Culture strains lose toxicity
- Evidence of certain environmental triggers for toxin production
- Looking at environmental conditions when birds become positive
- Started new strains from 2005-2006 sampling season

Future Directions

- Improve the Real-Time PCR assay to yield quantitative results for suspect cyanobacterium
- Continue to investigate environmental conditions that induce toxin production
- Develop toxin positive laboratory cultures.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -11-

Funding for these projects was provided by US CDC, SCE&G/SCANA, Santee Cooper Power, APMS/AERF, and the US Army COE.

**Salinity Tolerance of Goldfish, *Carassius auratus*, A Widely Distributed Non-native Cyprinid in the USA**

Pam Schofield of the U.S. Geological Survey in Gainesville, Florida, gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Salinity tolerance of goldfish *Carassius auratus*, a widely-distributed non-native cyprinid in the U.S.A." Results of this research project, which is funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Region 4, are pending publication. Copies will be made available at a later date.

**ANS Task Force**

Scott Newsham reported that he is in his 7<sup>th</sup> month as Executive Secretary of the ANS Task Force. The next meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for the week of May22 in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Items to be discussed include a strategic path for the Task Force and state plans. Eighteen plans have been approved. They will discuss funding and how to decide how much each state gets. Funding for 2006 is consistent with past years. In order for funding to be increased, it will probably need congressional action. Newsham has been compiling a briefing book for the meeting. All items for the meeting, including a detailed agenda, will be on the Task Force web site for review.

At the last meeting they discussed developing a format for Regional Panel annual reports and sent that information to all Regional Panels. A standardized reporting format will make it easier to compile a report for distribution to Congress.

A Report to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force for (Year)

1. Summary - Summarize regional panel aquatic invasive species program focus areas and key strategies. Two to four paragraphs. Committee/work group reports and status of state management plan development since last report are requested as attachments.
2. Major Accomplishments - Describe (bullets/short paragraphs) top 10 major accomplishments or developments from the panel perspective and highlight any innovations. Attempt to assign a broad category (i.e. P, DM, CM, EO, R)
3. Program Expenditures - Expenditures are not requested for 2005. The need for and scope of fiscal data will be discussed at the Spring 2005 ANSTF meeting.
4. Programmatic Needs - Key outstanding regional AIS issues and recommended course of action. These would be considered as recommendations to the ANSTF.

A State ANS Expenditure Report, a spreadsheet template, will be discussed at the meeting in May.



**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -12-

Lukens indicated that he would send the format requirements to Panel members next week. The Panel members would then send their information to Lukens to summarize into one report.

Steve de Kozlowski made a motion that all non-federal Panel members provide a report of state activities to Lukens for the Panel's annual report. State fiscal information can also be provided, if available. Marilyn O'Leary seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Panel members also discussed the possibility of funding small projects that Panel wants to accomplish. Other panels use some of their Panel administrative money to fund projects. Interest from the Panel indicated that they would like to do this. Money available would be approximately \$5-8000 per year. Lukens noted that he would be hesitant about adding funds to another project that needs additional funding. Perhaps the Steering Committee could work out the details on how projects would be reviewed and approved.

**Work Group Reports**

Education/Outreach Work Group - Chuck Jacoby reported on activities of the Education/ Outreach Work Group. The following is a list of their current activities:

1. To provide advice to Intel, an organization responsible for science fairs. List of recommendations forwarded to ANS Task Force a while back.
2. Conference in Key Biscayne.
3. Poster from Oregon Sea Grant displaying classrooms as a pathway. Plans are to get a copy of the poster and brochure. Marilyn O'Leary did mini version of this and is making it available for teacher conferences, etc.
4. Bait bucket stickers are also available - "Don't dump your bait."
5. Having materials translated into Spanish. Also investigating the possibility of translating material into other languages.
6. Links to Panel members websites to Habitatitude and Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers websites.
7. Working with Master Naturalist Programs. The concept is to give them some training on invasive species and develop an initial materials package.
8. Inventories of educational materials. Portland is conducting a pilot study and plans are to investigate using their framework to develop a database of available education and outreach materials.
9. Priority setting - providing National Sea Grant Program with priority areas for outreach projects.

Pathways/Prevention Work Group - Pam Fuller reported on pathways analysis report, a 50 page report using the NAS database to examine pathways and species relationships. The Work Group reviewed the report and recommend adding plants to make the database more complete. The states agreed to help with this. They added an additional pathway: aquascaping. They conducted a test using a questionnaire and plans are for each state to go through all nine pathways. They will use

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -13-

report to assist in determining regional and state priorities. This report, once completed, will be submitted to the ANS Task Force.

Research/Development Work Group - John Teem reported that the Research/Development Work Group has been working to finish defining research priorities for the Regional Panel. One strategy was to ask researchers in various states what they thought were priorities. The best response was from Louisiana. That strategy did not produce much data. They then asked individuals by email to submit research priorities. Don Schmitz presented a list of priorities from Florida DEP and added that he got a list from most states. They are also putting together a species of concern list. There was question of how broad or specific a priority should be. They came up with the following list:

- Research Need - to do long term studies.
- Research Need - increased systematic work on nonnative species that are hard to identify.
- Research Need - encourage multi-state approaches to deal with species of concern.
- Conduct more rapid assessments in both marine and freshwater, and develop manual on how to conduct rapid assessments
- Identify normal chemical and physical habitat parameters for non-native species

It was pointed out that the Work Group did not address socio-economic impacts on dealing with invasive species. Teem indicated that they will address that issue via email.

In regards to populating the taxonomic database - states should assign representatives from each state to serve as a first and second tier person, and send that contact information to Teem.

**SEAFWA Invasive Species Committee Report**

Steve de Kozlowski reported on the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference to be held in Norfolk, Virginia, November 5-8. The SEAFWA conducts an annual conference each fall to provide a forum for presentation of information and exchange of ideas regarding the management and protection of fish and wildlife resources throughout the nation with emphasis on the southeast. SEAFWA has approved a special session on invasive species to be held at that conference. The session will consist of 3 or 4 presentations, but the speakers and topics have not yet been selected. After the presentations there will be a panel discussion on invasive species issues. One of the concurrent sessions will be on invasive species with a facilitator for discussion. Information is available on the SEAFWA website: [www.seafwa.org](http://www.seafwa.org).

**Next Meeting**

The Panel decided on the weeks of October 2 and October 30 for the next meeting. Locations selected were Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Georgia, and Tampa, Florida. Lukens will use these suggestions as guidance in scheduling the next Panel meeting.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -14-

**Public Comment**

Jay Troxel introduced Linda Kelsey of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

John Meyers indicated that this will be his last meeting as a Panel member because he is being reassigned. The U.S. Coast Guard will appoint his replacement.

No public comments were received.

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:19 pm.*

Crab Subcommittee  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
May 16 - 17, 2006  
Naples, FL

APPROVED BY:  
Traci Floyd  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman T Floyd called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. The following attended:

**Members Present**

Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Harriet Perry, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Leslie Hartman, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Sandy Shanks, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Glen Sutton, TPWD, Dickenson, TX  
Juli Dodson, FWC, Tallahassee, FL

**Derelict Trap Guidelines Document Revision**

S VanderKooy reported on the current format of the guidelines document, advising that the appendix has become too cumbersome and asked members to revise and update their subsequent sections. All members agreed and will do so. Based on the minor changes/rearrangements to the outline, the appendices should follow the same basic format. Each state would provide materials for inclusion in the revised sections. In addition, each state would draft a short synopsis of how their respective programs have developed over time in each of the appropriate appendices. A deadline of August 8, 2006 was agreed upon for each agency to submit their materials and drafts.

**FWC Derelict Trap Removal Program**

J Dodson, FWC, presented a slide show to the committee covering Florida's Derelict Trap Removal program. The presentation outlined the history of Florida's involvement in derelict trap removal programs, noting that Tampa Bay Watch were the pioneers in derelict trap removal. Topics covered in the presentation included statutes and regulations, historical time lines, organizational plans, zone information, funding resources, and coordination efforts. Also covered in the presentation were clean up plans, media coverage, and successful events. Dodson noted that a rule approved by the FWC allows groups (not individuals) to retrieve derelict traps. Dodson explained to the committee that each derelict trap is marked with a unique buoy before being removed, giving trap owners ample time to remove their traps before the cleanup event

begins. It was also noted that there were four groups in Florida that removed 1,253 traps during 16 events.

**McMillen-Jackson**, asked **Dodson** about violation guidelines for taking traps illegally, and **Dodson** agreed she would send her the current brochure outlining current regulations. **McMillen-Jackson** also suggested creating public displays of regulations at institutes related to FWC.

**Dodson** invited committee members to participate in an upcoming trap removal event that will take place during the week of July 10, 2006 in the Florida Keys. The exact date and location will be determined at a later time, and committee members will be advised. **Dodson** mentioned there is a need for knowledgeable individuals with a marine biology background to observe the trap removal process, which will be able to assist with accurate data retrieval at this event.

### Gulf Stock Assessment Data Set Progress

**B Pellegrin** presented several stock assessment models and varying methods of collecting data related to the blue crab fishery. **Pellegrin** objectively explained the advantages and disadvantages of the model, and these were discussed among members. Various methods of data collection and the types of gear used in collecting this data for each state were also discussed. **Pellegrin** showed that there was relative stability in the trends for each state over the last 20 years with no significant declines. **Pellegrin** demonstrated a spreadsheet he created that was populated with formulas for calculating MSY (maximum sustainable yield) and MSE (maximum sustainable effort) that can be used by the agencies to determine their data.

**G Sutton**, TPWD, demonstrated a model he had developed using the Schaefer Formula to calculate MSY, MSE and other data. **Sutton** also demonstrated several regression models which could utilize fishery independent data as well as the commercial effort data for Texas blue crabs yielding similar results.

**H Perry** suggested the subcommittee combine their current data to use with these models to point out where each individual state has problems and what they need in order to be able to use these new models and approaches. **Sutton** and **Pelligren** agreed to share the various fishery independent data with each other to incorporate into the models presented by **Sutton** to see if they can get a MSY calculation using 16 foot trawl data. It was suggested that other interested parties be invited to this meeting and will likely include Mike Murphy from Florida since he is currently working their blue crab stock assessment. The stock assessment work session is tentatively planned for Tuesday, September 19, 2006 and will be at GCRL in Ocean Springs. **Perry** also suggested that each state have a chance to go over **Sutton's** findings and help Sutton tweak the data when necessary. **VanderKooy** suggested the Crab Subcommittee have a full-day session at the October meeting in New Orleans, with the afternoon session dedicated to the results of the stock assessment models. It was agreed that **Sutton** and the Crab Subcommittee would put together a presentation for the TCC and present to them the scientific aspect of these assessment tools to see how receptive they are to this new approach. This will be presented at the TCC meeting in October.

## Preliminary Evaluation Of Lipofuscin Methodology To Determine Age Of Blue Crabs In The Gulf Of Mexico

**McMillan-Jackson** presented the Project Summary, and the committee evaluated and edited the document for grammatical errors and content changes, especially since the 2005 storms. The Project Summary outlined rolls for each agency involved in the usage of aqua culture techniques and several variation factors involved regarding the growth of the crabs for the study. It was determined that a back-up plan needs to be in place should a natural disaster occur that would potentially disturb the study. It was suggested by **Perry** to stagger the growth of crabs. It was emphasized that this is a pilot study, with the objective being the development of protocols. **McMillan-Jackson** will provide the committee with density figures for the juvenile grow out. Methods of tagging crabs and contingency plans were discussed by the committee. **VanderKooy** asked the participants to review their budgets. All states will be responsible for cooperating fishermen and acquiring crab samples for the study from their respective states. Wild-caught crabs will be used for comparison studies against pond-raised crabs. **Perry** voiced concerns that Louisiana is not included in the study the first year of the study. **VanderKooy** would check with **V Guillory** to determine the LDWF's preference. **Perry** also noted that DMR will be brought in to help monitor work with the commercial fishermen. Alabama and Florida will add paragraphs to the Project Summary. **McMillan-Jackson** must have all final changes prior to **August 4** so that the entire proposal including CVs of the PIs, detailed state budgets, letters of cooperation from fishermen, and any other pertinent forms and documentation can be submitted to the GSMFC for final formatting. The proposal deadline will likely be the same date as last year, which was **August 28**, to submit to NOAA.

### Other Business

**B Pellgren** mentioned that he had lost literature during Hurricane Katrina, and he also mentioned his appreciation to **VanderKooy** for supplying him with copies of some of those lost documents. **H Perry** noted that she directs people to the GSMFC web site periodically to download these documents in PDF format.

It has been determined that **Cindy Yocom** has possession of the official crab scepter and it would be brought by **VanderKooy** to the October meeting.

*There being no further business, Perry moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.*

APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)  
MINUTES  
June 14 and 15, 2006  
St. Petersburg Beach, Florida**

Chairman Page Campbell called the meeting to order on June 14, 2006 at 9:20 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  
Bob Dixon, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC  
John Galvez, USFWS, Vero Beach, FL (*proxy – D.Fruge*)  
Stephen Holiman, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Christine Johnson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Jim Long, NPS, Georgia (*proxy – T. Schmidt*)  
Ron Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Daniel Matos, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR  
Joe O'Hop, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL  
Maury Osborn, ACCSP, Washington, DC  
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Roger Uwate, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, VI

**Staff**

Donna Bellais, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bob Harris, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Ben Baron-Taltre, ACCSP, Washington, DC  
Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC  
Elaine Harrell, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jan Pappas, NMFS, Honolulu, HI  
John Reed, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Beverly Sauls, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL  
Montina Williams, ACCSP, Washington, DC

### **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) meeting held on June 7 and 8, 2005 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana were approved as presented.

### **Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program**

M. Osborn gave a presentation on the status of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). Osborn reported that they are experiencing some turnover recently, including outreach coordinator, program coordinator, assistant program coordinator, and director since M. Osborn will be retiring soon.

Osborn then reported on the status of Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). SAFIS is a web-based integrated state/federal system for collecting real time catch and effort data. SAFIS has been deployed for dealers and is in development for vessels and fishermen. SAFIS has flexible data input and is a collaborative effort among partners. SAFIS meets ACCSP, state, and federal data standards and agency interfaces can be customized. SAFIS also tracks multi-agency permits and licenses and has automatic post-entry auditing. At this time dealers from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Maryland are utilizing SAFIS to varying degrees. In the future SAFIS will collaborate with the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) group.

Osborn reported that the data warehouse is ready for routine uploads of data from Florida to Maryland. The plan is to populate the data warehouse with catch and effort data from 1981 to the present as well as biological data for lobster from the 1980's to 2003. Osborn also updated the Committee on the FIS metadata project for ACCSP and FIN, the change from Business Objects to Oracle Discoverer, external peer review, and funding for FY2007.

### **FIN Data Management System (DMS) Issues**

Review of list of personnel with access to confidential data - The FIN Committee reviewed the list of personnel with access to confidential data in the FIN DMS. G. Davenport also presented a list of those with access to NMFS confidential data. D. Donaldson requested that any deletions, additions, or corrections be reported.

Status of the FIN data management system - B. Harris of GSMFC reported on the status of the FIN DMS noting that he is currently upgrading to the latest version of Oracle Discoverer. Several new monthly reports are being created which will include, total landings by gear, total landings by area and total landings by grade. Harris reported that the recreational fishing license module, as well as the detailed vessel module is awaiting data from the states. Harris also noted that hardware and software are currently being reviewed for conversion to Oracle Clusters and then to Oracle GRID. This should be accomplished by spring of 2007. Harris reported that several years of biological data have been loaded for Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Harris also reported on MRFSS estimates, Menhaden data, and SEAMAP data.

Discussion of confidentiality user form portal - D. Donaldson stated the importance of confidential users filling out both the FIN confidentiality form as well as the NOAA form. G. Davenport reported that the forms are available on the NOAA website, however NOAA General Counsel did not approve of having the two systems mesh. **Davenport will follow-up and ask General Counsel to give a written explanation for clarification.**



Review and approval of confidentiality user form – Because of a confidentiality breach, it was decided to strengthen the confidentiality user form. The Committee was provided with copies of a new form for their approval. D. Donaldson explained the changes made to the form and Committee members made other suggestions for change. **K. Cuevas moved to approve the form with changes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### **Discussion of National Park Service Usage Issues**

J. Long of the National Park Service Southeast Regional Office gave a presentation on National Park Service involvement in marine fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Long gave an overview of the National Parks in the Southeast Region, including Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in Louisiana, Gulf Islands National Seashore in Mississippi and Florida, DeSoto National Memorial in Florida, Everglades National Park in Florida, Dry Tortugas National Park in Florida, and V.I National Park, V.I Coral Reef National Monument, Buck Island National Monument in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Long reported on the number of marine fish species harvested, number of anglers per day and per year at each of the parks, however he noted that the National Park Service does not have many biologists to assess fishing activity.

#### **Discussion of NRC Report regarding Marine Recreational Data Collection**

D. Donaldson stated that since one of the major tasks of FIN is recreational data collection, it would be appropriate to review the recommendations from National Research Council (NRC) report to evaluate the effectiveness of recreational data collection in the United States. The Committee was provided with a letter to W. Hogarth of NOAA Fisheries drafted by R. Lukens. Donaldson requested that Committee members review the draft letter and make suggestions. Committee discussion followed and several suggestions were put forth. M. Osborn will present a similar letter to the ACCSP Coordinating Council for their approval as well. After further discussion, **R. Lukens made a motion to send the letter as amended to Dr. Hogarth. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** Lukens will also work on sending a similar letter from the GSMFC.

#### **Discussion of Marine Recreational Fishing License Sampling Frame Pilot Survey**

D. Donaldson reported that the Gulf is moving forward with using recreational fishing licenses as a sampling frame in order to get a better estimate of fishing effort. A conference call was held to refine some of the details. Donaldson noted that no action is required at this time however, he wanted to keep the Committee informed. This pilot survey will begin in January 2007 for one year and about \$200,000 is available for this project.

#### **Discussion of Vessel Information for Registration Tracking Module**

D. Donaldson reported that the issue of compiling vessel information for registration tracking has been discussed for a number of years. The object is to create a unique identifier in order to identify and track all commercial vessels that operate within a fishery. Donaldson reported that in attempting to collect vessel information from the states, there are several problems to be resolved. Donaldson asked the Committee for suggestions to get this module started.

J. O'Hop reported that every year he receives a CD from the Dept. of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. This year O'Hop received the CD as well as a Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) stating that the contents of the CD were confidential. M. Kasprzak reported that there is a similar situation in Louisiana because of confidentiality issues. Louisiana also has an MOU with the Dept. of Motor Vehicles but it should not be a problem. K. Anson also reported that Alabama is having some problems collecting registration information. **Anson suggested that this issue be presented to the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC). R. Lukens stated that specific information on problems collecting this information should be requested of the State Directors.**

After Committee discussion, it was agreed that D. Donaldson will contact each state for detailed information on roadblocks. He will then present his findings to the S/FFMC at their October 2006 meeting.

### **Presentation of InPort Metadata Tool**

J. Pappas of NMFS in Honolulu gave a presentation on the Information Portal (InPort) Metadata tool which was developed using National Fisheries Information System (FIS) funds. Pappas noted that metadata is required to use data effectively. Metadata can include time period, geographic area, contact person, etc. InPort will allow fisheries partners to go to one place to find metadata.

Pappas explained that the metadata is not stored on InPort, but only information on how and where to access the data. InPort has a web-based searchable catalog of fisheries data which lists what data, where is it, who has it, why it was collected, etc. InPort also supports critical FIS activities. Pappas stated that at each organization there will be someone designated as librarian/steward of the metadata. InPort has a training site for those wanting to try the search feature: <http://iastrn.nmfs.hawaii.edu/inport>

M. Osborn stated that M. Williams conducted a training session at ACCSP on InPort in March. ACCSP decided that they and each of their state agencies will have their own libraries and publisher. FIN is also interested in utilizing the InPort Metadata tool and will begin training with one state partner. After Committee discussion, it was decided that M. Williams will work initially with Louisiana. D. Donaldson will coordinate with M. Williams and M. Cahall of ACCSP to coordinate schedules for training.

### **Presentation of Red Snapper IFQ**

J. Reed of NMFS in St. Petersburg gave a presentation on the red snapper Individual Fishery Quota (IFQ). Reed stated that this is the first attempt by the Southeast Regional Office to introduce this type of management. Beginning January 1 Class I and Class II license holders will become IFQ shareholders and there will be approximately 600 vessels in the IFQ. Based on fishing history, fishermen will share in the red snapper quota. Reed noted that for the first five years of the program a fisherman has to have a reef fish vessel permit. This permit, or any portion of it, can be sold with a notarized statement and application for transfer.

Reed then demonstrated the website that fishermen will use. This is real time data and since there will be no paper with this system, fishermen will need to have online access. Fishermen will be required to call law enforcement three hours prior to landing to report where he will be landing and which seafood company he will be doing business with. Vessels must land red snapper between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Reed then demonstrated dealer reporting requirements and noted that everyone that currently holds a commercial reef fish dealer permit will be given the opportunity to participate.

R. Lukens noted that fishermen will have a reporting burden as well as a potential for redundancy with the trip ticket system. The object of FIN is to have fisherman report only once in order to get all landings through the trip ticket system. Reed responded that the two systems can be integrated in the collection of data and he will be cooperative in order to find a solution. After discussion on this issue, the Committee agreed to form an Ad Hoc Work Group which would include the following members: J. Reed, M. Kasprzak, K. Anson, C. Denson, J. O'Hop, and C. Petersen of SCBI. D. Donaldson will arrange a meeting of this Work Group in the near future.

#### **Discussion of Conducting Separate Recreational Fishing Participation Survey**

D. Donaldson reported that the issue of conducting a separate survey for recreational participation was discussed at the recent Wave meeting. A separate survey would allow for more precise participation estimates to be calculated. T. Sminkey noted that there has been interest in getting the number of people who target a particular species, and also being able to get a regional number of people fishing. Sociologists, economists, and politicians are interested in these numbers but at this time the MRFSS is unable to compile these data.

M. Osborn noted that Georgia had done a study on participation, and D. Donaldson stated that Alabama had done one as well. Osborn requested that the ACCSP be kept apprised on this situation. D. Donaldson suggested tasking the Biological/Environmental Work Group (B/EWG) with examining this issue. **T. Sminkey made a motion to task the B/EWG to look into different methodologies for conducting a recreational fishing participation survey. The motion was seconded and passed with the GMFMC opposed.**

#### **Discussion of Head Boat Fishing Effort Collection Methods**

D. Donaldson reported that recently he and R. Lukens met with personnel at the Southeast Science Center to discuss a comparison of the at-sea sampling program in Alabama and Florida with the NMFS headboat logbook program. M. Osborn reported that the ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee is planning an evaluation of the new for-hire survey for head boats and she suggested combining efforts. Several members of the Committee suggested that this may not be the ideal time to begin this effort since the recreational data collection program is under evaluation at this time. Other members believed that this would be an opportune time to make suggestions in order to improve the survey. After lengthy discussion the Committee agreed to continue looking at the two programs. **M. Osborn will add D. Donaldson to the Recreational Technical Committee mailing list in order that he is kept informed of ACCSP for-hire/head boat activities.**

#### **Review and Approval of the 2005 FIN Annual Report**

Committee members were provided with a draft copy of the 2005 FIN Annual Report. D. Donaldson asked Committee members to review the Report and let him know of any editorial changes or comments by June 30, 2006. **S. Holiman moved to accept the 2005 FIN Annual Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### **Subcommittee and Work Group Reports**

Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers Meeting (Attachment A) - D. Donaldson noted that these meetings are held annually for state and federal commercial port samplers working in the Gulf of

Mexico. A new component has been added to these meetings, a training session on biological sampling collection activities. M. Osborn requested that B. Baron-Talre be added to the mailing list for this group. After reviewing the Work Group Report, **K. Anson moved to accept the Gulf of Mexico Port Samplers Meeting Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Administrative Subcommittee (Attachment B) – D. Donaldson reported that the Subcommittee met via conference call concerning an external program review which has to be completed in 2006. The Subcommittee identified various state natural resource agencies in order to select from a pool of reviewers. Donaldson reported that a contractor will help facilitate the review process. Donaldson, Chairman Campbell, the contractor, and others as determined by the FIN Committee will attend the review meeting. The Subcommittee agreed to have K. Anson and D. Matos attend the meeting with the program review team.

The Subcommittee also recommended that the FIN Committee develop a survey to poll its users and stakeholders regarding how well the program is meeting their needs. Donaldson noted that this survey would be done before the external review. **K. Cuevas moved to accept the Administrative Subcommittee Report. The motion was seconded and passed with GMFMC opposed.**

**The meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m. and reconvened at 8:30 a.m. on June 15, 2006.**

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee (Attachment C) – The Committee reviewed the Subcommittee report which included the draft Policy for Unauthorized Release of Confidential Data. The Subcommittee tasked staff to develop administrative recommendations for violating FIN confidentiality policies and present to the FIN Committee. After discussion and review of the Policy, **T. Sminkey moved to accept the Policy with editorial changes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Attachment D) – D. Donaldson explained that this training workshop is a QA/QC exercise for the otolith readers from various states and labs to assure they are reading otoliths in the same way. Donaldson reported that D. Murie from the University of Florida gave a presentation on greater amberjack and the problems of determining ages. She asked about the possibility of samplers collecting fin rays for greater amberjack. Donaldson asked FIN members if there would be any problems in collecting these. Murie also asked if any samplers encounter a spawning female that she be notified of location, time, date, etc. Donaldson will e-mail members regarding this request and include appropriate information for collection.

Donaldson reported that the workshop also included a discussion on coordination of ageing centers. Both state and federal ageing labs have various methods of work and the group is looking for a way to make things more consistent. Since FIN has developed minimum data elements, a comparison of similarities and contrasts in each lab will be prepared by staff. **K. Cuevas made a motion to accept the Otolith Processors Training Workshop report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Biological/Environmental Work Group (Attachment E) – Donaldson reported that the B/EWG met to discuss Highly Migratory Species (HMS) sampling prompted by a request by the

GMFMC. The B/EWG recommended that two separate surveys be used to collect the data. The B/EWG recommended that a survey be conducted to characterize the private boat HMS fishery to allow the group to determine the best method for data collection of this sector. The B/EWG agreed that effort data could be collected by modifying the existing for-hire telephone survey however there was no consensus on how to survey private boat anglers. The FIN Committee discussed various methods of developing a sampling frame including using HMS permit holders. T. Sminkey suggested developing several options to present to the GMFMC. The Committee agreed to have the B/EWG begin working on various options for collection of HMS data. R. Lukens suggested communicating with the GMFMC to keep them informed of progress on their request. **K. Anson moved to accept the Biological/Environmental Work Group report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Plan Work Group (Attachment F) – D. Donaldson reported that the Data Collection Plan Work Group has been looking at alternative methods for determining targets. Initially, .05% of total landings were used to come up with targets. The Work Group identified 17 primary and 10 secondary species, then identified gears and regions for each of these species. The FIN Committee reviewed the list of species, number of otoliths for each species, and whether it was for FIN or NMFS.

Donaldson reviewed the FIN otolith targets for 2007. **R. Lukens made a motion to forward the 2007 proposed targets to the S/FFMC for their consideration. Since there is not enough funding to cover sampling of all species a decision must be made by the S/FFMC regarding which species to include. The motion was seconded and passed with Alabama opposed.**

**M. Kasprzak moved to accept the Data Collection Plan Work Group report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

### **Operations Plan**

The FIN Committee reviewed the status of 2006 activities under the Operations Plan. D. Donaldson reported that several tasks need to be discussed. Task B6 - Development of Bycatch Module - the Work Group has developed this module, the FIN Committee has approved it and identified fisheries. Donaldson asked the Committee how they wanted to proceed. The Committee discussed various options and R. Lukens suggested removing Task B6 from the Operations Plan and instruct the Work Group to continue to monitor developments with the NMFS and ACCSP and take appropriate action when necessary. The Committee agreed and this will be reflected in the 2007 Operations Plan.

Task B7 - Implementation of the Social/Economic Module and Task B14 - Methods for Collecting Recreational Data from Private Access Sites are addressed in the NRC report and workshops are being held to address these issues. A suggestion was made to develop a detailed paper on what is currently being done and if additional resources are needed to improve or complete work.

The Committee reviewed the draft 2007 FIN Operations Plan. Several modifications and editorial changes were made. The Committee agreed to submit any other changes to D. Donaldson by June 30, 2006. **K. Cuevas made a motion to accept the 2007 FIN Operations Plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

### Discussion of 2007 FIN Priorities

Committee members were provided with guidelines on the decision process for FIN priorities and a list of items for funding consideration in 2007. D. Donaldson reported that the list was generated from activities conducted last year as well as discussions in work group meetings.

The final prioritized list will be forwarded to the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) in August 2006 and they will decide which items will be included in the 2007 FIN cooperative agreement. Donaldson noted that all items listed as High or Medium priority will require budgets and statements-of-work by July 10, 2006.

The Committee agreed to list as high priority all ongoing activities. The prioritized list of activities in 2007 is as follows:

#### High Priority

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)

Survey to characterize private boat HMS fishery utilizing HMS permit frame

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

Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)

Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)

Operation 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 (ongoing)

Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling (ongoing)

For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Alabama and Florida (ongoing)

Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana (new)

#### Medium Priority

Pilot Study for Collection of Catch (catch cards/dock-side) and Effort (telephone survey) Data for Highly Migratory Species (new)

#### Low Priority

For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Louisiana (new)

For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas (new)

Biological Sampling for Additional (secondary) Species (new)

**K. Cuevas made a motion to accept the 2007 FIN priority list. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** D. Donaldson asked FIN members to send budgets and draft statements of work by July 10, 2006.

### **Time and Location of Next Meeting**

D. Donaldson noted that the FIN Committee meets every third year in the Caribbean. Therefore, the next FIN meeting will be held the first week or second week in June in St. Croix, USVI.

### **Other Business**

S. Holiman stated that in the Southeast Regional Office there were many requests for "before" and "after" hurricane data. The Regional Office is trying to prepare and assemble "before" hurricane data. Holiman asked if partner agencies are attempting to do the same. D. Donaldson suggested Holiman could query the FIN database and several members made other suggestions.

D. Donaldson distributed a letter which had been sent to John Carmichael in response to the SEDAR recommendations document. The Ad Hoc Work Group identified several recommendations developed by SEDAR that the FIN is also addressing; bycatch program, at-sea sampling, biological sampling, private access sites, fishing licenses as sampling frame, etc. When other SEDAR recommendations documents are released in the future, the Work Group will review them. R. Lukens noted that this is part of the FIN effort to integrate FIN in the stock assessment process.

The Committee reviewed the FIN Committee List and will report to Donaldson any additions, deletions, or changes.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.**

**Port Sampler Meeting  
Meeting Summary  
November 8-9, 2005  
St. Petersburg, Florida**

David Donaldson called the Port Sampler meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

Shannon Bettridge, ACCSP, Washington, DC  
Pete Antosh, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Noel Estes, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Melanie Rhodes, FFWRI, Apalachicola, FL  
Gary Moore, FFWRI, Cedar Key, FL  
Stacey Anderson, FFWRI, Charlotte Harbor, FL  
Joe DeRosa, FFWRI, Charlotte Harbor, FL  
Bryan Olson, FFWRI, Charlotte Harbor, FL  
Mark Koryak, FFWRI, Jacksonville, FL  
Matt Watkins, FFWRI, Jacksonville, FL  
Jessica Hornbeck, FFWRI, Marathon, FL  
Jason Kerr, FFWRI, Melbourne, FL  
Kim Kaufeld, FFWRI, Melbourne, FL  
Joe Ciolli, FFWRI, Melbourne, FL  
Gerry Carr, FFWRI, Miami, FL  
Eric Sander, FFWRI, New Smyrna Beach, FL  
Annji Greenwood, FFWRI, New Smyrna Beach, FL  
Stephanie McGrath, FFWRI, Panama City Beach, FL  
Carlos Llull, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL  
Nathan Malb, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL  
Chris Snow, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL  
Terri Menzel, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL  
Ariele Baker, FFWRI, Port Charlotte, FL  
Steve Brown, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Lew Bullock, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Richard Cody, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Beverly Sauls, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Steve Candileri, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Insley Haciski, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Charlie Gardner, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Matt Umholtz, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Katie Toth, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jon Wolfson, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kelley Kowal, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Bill Samuels, FFWRI, Tequesta, FL  
Dave McGowan, FFWRI, Tequesta, FL



Heather Jewell, FFWRI, Tequesta, FL  
Cassie Martin, FFWRI, Tequesta, FL  
Adam Purdy, FFWRI, Tequesta, FL  
Ted Flowers, NOAA Fisheries, Mobile, AL  
Tom Herbert, NOAA Fisheries, Fort Myers, FL  
Ed Little, NOAA Fisheries, Key West, FL  
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
Pamela Eyo, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
Lloyd Muccio, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
Steve Turner, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
Ching Ping Chih, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
Claudia Dennis, NOAA Fisheries, New Smyrna Beach, FL  
Gary Haddle, NOAA Fisheries, New Smyrna Beach, FL  
Debbie Fable, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL  
Linda Lombardi-Carlson, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL  
June Weeks, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL  
Pamela Machuga, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Renee Roman, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Michelle Gamby, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL  
Charlie Schaefer, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL  
Gary Rouse, NOAA Fisheries, Cut Off, LA  
Beth Bourgeois, NOAA Fisheries, Lafayette, LA  
Linda Guidry, NOAA Fisheries, New Iberia, LA  
Debbie Batiste, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA  
Jay Boulet, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA  
Maggie Williams, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA  
Chuck Armstrong, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Dave Gloeckner, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC  
Kit Doncaster, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX  
Edie Lopez, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX  
Michelle Padgett, NOAA Fisheries, Freeport, TX  
Keith Roberts, NOAA Fisheries, Galveston, TX  
Cindy Bohannon, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX

**Staff**

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Doug Snyder, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as written.

**NMFS SERO Discussion of Federal Management**

P. Steele talked with the group about the recent hurricanes and their impacts. He stated that NMFS had declared a fishery disaster because of the storms. The Magnuson-Stevens Act makes funds available to fishermen to alleviate harm from a natural disaster. NOAA is currently

waiting for Congress to appropriate funds. NOAA also issued TED exemptions because of the storms which restricted tow times since increased debris causes less efficient TED operation. These rules were issued shortly after Katrina and Rita and have been extended through November 23, 2005. NOAA tested for contaminants by sampled marine waters, sediment, fish, shrimp, and crabs. The results showed that the levels of hydrocarbon, E. coli as well as PCBs and DDTs were not elevated due to hurricanes. NOAA is working with the states to assess damage to major fishing ports and seafood processing facilities to determine economic effects on the commercial fishing industry.

P. Steele discussed the various management activities of NOAA Fisheries Service. The main purpose of NOAA is to protect and preserve our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, fisheries management, enforcement, and habitat conservation. The fisheries management activities at the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) include participation in the development and implementation of regulations for fisheries in federal waters. SERO is responsible for federal fisheries in Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean and works with 3 regional fishery management councils and 2 interstate marine fisheries commissions.

He then provided an overview of the current and proposed management measures. Secretarial Amendment 1 for grouper was implemented July 2004. It reduced red grouper bag limit to 2 fish/angler and established red grouper rebuilding plan. It also set a total allowable catch (TAC) of 6.56 mp 2003-2005; 5.31 mp commercial quota; and 1.25 mp recreational target catch level. It also reduced commercial quotas for shallow- and deep-water grouper. In August 2005, NOAA implemented some interim recreational regulations because the 2004 recreational landings were too high. These rules allowed anglers to keep 1 red grouper in 3 grouper aggregate and established a November/December closure for all shallow water grouper species (red grouper, black grouper, gag). These regulations applied only to Federal waters and Florida did not adopt comparable measures. Several groups sued NOAA because of these rules. The judge ruled in October 2005 and upheld red grouper November-December closure; however overturned the November-December closure for other grouper species. The bag limit was changed to 1 red grouper in 5 grouper aggregate per angler. On the commercial side, there are quotas in place that when met, the entire fishery closes. These quotas are based on stock assessments. The deep water grouper fishery closed in June 2005 and both shallow water grouper (SWG) and red grouper fisheries close when either quota is met. The red grouper quota was met, so the SWG and red grouper fisheries closed in October 2005. Commercial trip limits for grouper were implemented in March 2005 through emergency rule. A proposed 6,000 pound aggregate grouper trip limit is targeted for implementation in January 2006. This rule replaces the temporary trip limits and is intended to prolong season and reduce derby fishing. Amendment 23 for vermilion snapper established a vermilion snapper rebuilding plan. It creates an 11-inch minimum size recreational and commercial fishing and established a 10 fish bag limit within 20 fish reef aggregate. It also sets up a closed commercial season from April 22- May 31 and these rules were effective July 2005. Amendment 17 and 25 establishes limited access charter/head boat permits. It outlines an indefinite moratorium on issuance of new charter/head boat permits for the coastal migratory pelagic and reef fish fisheries. This is an administrative change and has no effect on fishermen. Amendment 24 creates limited access for commercial permits by establishing an indefinite moratorium on issuance of new commercial permits for the Reef Fish fishery. Again, this is an administrative change and has no effect on fishermen. Shrimp Amendment 13 will establish an indefinite moratorium on the issuance of new commercial permits for the Shrimp fishery. This rule will be effective in summer 2006. Amendment 18A of

the Reef Fish FMP will prohibit commercial vessels from retaining bag limit of reef fish. It also prohibits the use of reef fish for bait in reef fish fishery and will required vessel monitoring systems (VMS) on all commercially permitted vessels. All vessels must also have turtle release gear and protocols for turtle and smalltooth sawfish on board. These rules will be effective in late 2006. Amendment 22 for red snapper established a red snapper rebuilding plan and provides for regulatory authority for observer program. It also establishes a Gulf Red Snapper individual fishing quota (IFQ). An IFQ is a form of limited access as well as a method to distribute TAC. Permittees have maximum flexibility to decide when and how to use quota shares; however, they do not own the resource itself and cannot decide how much of the resource may be harvested. IFQs were first implemented abroad in 1980s and in 1990 in the U.S. There are several U.S. fisheries that currently utilized IFQs: East Coast Surf Clam/Ocean Quahog; South Atlantic Wreckfish; Alaskan Halibut; Alaskan Sablefish; and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crabs. Some of the benefits of IFQ programs include reduces overcapacity in fishery; eliminates "derby" fishing; improves safety; better quality product; stronger market; better product availability; and reduces bycatch. Some potential drawbacks of IFQ programs include excessive consolidation; unfair initial allocation; creates "winners" and "losers"; expense of administration, enforcement, and monitoring. The reasons to implement IFQs for Gulf red snapper fishery are that the fishery is overcapitalized and current management measures create derby fishing. Some of the details of the red snapper IFQ are that it will be of indefinite duration; a single fisherman can own up to 8% of the shares; initial shares will be distributed to current participants only based on proportion historic landings; increases or decreases in quota distributed proportionally; and it will be paid for by industry. Currently, there are public hearing being held regarding this program and it is targeted to be implemented by January 2007.

### **Presentation of Shark Identification**

E. Sander talked to the group regarding a field guide to the sharks landed by recreational anglers of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. The reason for creating another Field guide is because some of the available field guides for sharks are difficult to use for recreational fishery work. These guides tend to be too bulky for fast field work; omit important recreational species; include too many species for recreational fishery work; contain poor illustrations or photographs; use obscure features or highly technical language for species comparisons; and are not organized in an easy to follow manner. He then went there the guide, step-by-step, to show the characteristics used to identify the various sharks found in the recreational fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.

### **Discussion of Collection of Tilefish Otoliths**

L. Lombardi presented some information about deep-water snappers, grouper, and tilefish. She outlined the various snapper, grouper and tilefish species that require ageing for federal assessments in the Gulf of Mexico and discussed the sampling numbers for each of these species over the last five years. She talked about the validation of annual band deposition for golden tilefish. There are four methods used for validation: mark-recapture and captive rearing, marginal increment, bomb radiocarbon ( $C^{14}$ ), and radiometric ageing ( $^{210}Pb/^{226}Ra$ ). In order to utilize these methods, more otoliths need to be collection. She requested that the state and federal port samplers attempt to collect the golden tilefish otoliths in 2006. For this exercise, both sagittal otoliths need to be collected. One will be used for routine ageing and the other for

radiometric ageing. In addition to otoliths, gonads should be collected, if possible. Samplers need to collect the entire (or at least 90%) of the gonad. The reason for this information is that the reproductive season for golden tilefish is unknown in Gulf of Mexico. The gonadal samples need to be collected throughout the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic (evenly distribution from both sexes and size classes) and NMFS needs about 2000 total samples. She also requested that samplers continue to collect hydrated gonads from both the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic for king mackerel.

### **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. He 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. Regarding biological sampling, over 20,000 otoliths for more than 80 species had been collected from both commercial and recreational sampling. Unfortunately due to Hurricane Katrina and Rita biological sampling activities have decreased considerably. 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. Bycatch data collection is being conducted in Alabama and Florida via at-sea sampling. Another future activity to be implemented is detailed effort. This activity is contingent on additional funding.

### **Regional Office Tour**

The port agent meeting continued at the NMFS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) with a tour of new facility. Several SERO personnel including Roy Crabtree- Regional Administrator; David Keys- NEPA Coordinator; Mike Henderson- NOAA Regional Coordinator; Tim Ward- Financial Services; Rod Dalton- Fisheries Policy Branch; David Bernhart- Protected Resources Division; David Dale- Habitat Conservation Division; and Kim Amendola- Media Relations, provided brief overviews of the various branches in the regional office.

### **The meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m.**

**The meeting resumed on Wednesday, November 9, 2005 at 8:30 a.m.**

### **Status of TIP Online Program**

L. Muccio wanted to talk with the group about TIP online and discuss any issues or problems that are still present. There were several issues identified by the group that needed to be discussed. It was noted that the preview not working properly. The group discussed how to set up the edit screen and the various options under this section. It was suggested that the ability to edit more than 50 records be added as well as build in more flexibility into the program. When

selecting an item, it should allow a user to select like Windows (using shift or control keys). When looking at menu options, allow for scrolling instead of paging. And for the sampling method codes, use abbreviations instead of numbers. The group then went through an overview of the export section of the program. For the interview screen, it was noted that the vessel information was not up-to-date and when a user tries to record the vessel data, he/she gets an error for the vessel ID. For the vessel look-up table, it was suggested that the owner and captain name, home port, city, vessel length and hull material be added. And for the search function, it was suggested that vessel name or vessel ID be added in addition to the date and interview number. The last screen the group examined was the landings section and it was noted that there appears to be an inappropriate carrying over (from one record to the next) some of the variables. L. Muccio stated that he would look into these issues and update the program, where appropriate.

### **Presentation of Gag and Black Grouper Assessment Concerns**

S. Turner talked to the group regarding estimating the percentage of gag groupers being misidentified as black groupers in the Gulf of Mexico. The methods used to estimate the misidentification were to compare Trip Interview Program (TIP) samples with Accumulating Landings Survey (ALS) landings and then use TIP samples to calculate the rate of misidentification. It has been stated that historically gag landings were often reported as black grouper. The inclusion or exclusion of those fish from the assessment could have substantial impact on estimates of the status of the stock. The question that arises is "Is the TIP species composition samples sufficiently reliable for estimating the fraction of black grouper landings which are actually gag?" Nearly all Gulf of Mexico landings of gag and black grouper are landed in West Florida. To compare the TIP and ALS, one needs to look at the ratio of numbers of black and gag grouper (from TIP) and the weight of black and gag grouper (from ALS). It is expected that the TIP and landings ratios would be similar but not necessarily the same. The comparisons showed that the largest differences were found in the early years and he presented various tables to the outlines these differences. The summary from TIP and ALS comparisons showed substantially higher ratios in ALS than in TIP in late 1980s and early 1990s. By mid 1990s, the differences were reduced but still relatively high. He then presented a variety of tables that showed the misidentification rates estimated from TIP samples. There were high misidentification rates in early the years which suggest that differences between landings and TIP ratios was due to misreporting of landings. The group then discussed why the early landings ratios were much higher than TIP ratios in some counties.

### **Other Business**

D. Donaldson asked the port samplers for suggestions on the location of the 2006 meeting. After discussion, the group decided that the next meeting should be held in Miami, Florida during the first or second week of November 2006. One possible topic would be a presentation of the electronic trip ticket reporting system developed by Southwest Computer Bureau. As the meeting nears, D. Donaldson will develop a full agenda and distribute it to the group for their review.

**The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.**

FIN Administrative Subcommittee  
Conference Call Summary  
April 6, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. and the following people were present:

Tom Sminkey, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD  
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Paul Anninos, ICF Consulting, Fairfax, VA  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Discussion of Program Review Process

**D. Donaldson** stated that the purpose of the call is to work out the details of the upcoming external program review for FIN. The overall purpose of the review is to measure how FIN is meeting its goals and objectives. The review panel will consist of three people. These people should have some background in fisheries. It was also suggested that one of the panelist might have some background in program management since one of the major goals of FIN is coordination and administration of the program. In the past, the review team came from the world of academia. Because this has not been very successful, **it was recommended that the team be selected from various state natural resource agencies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and other pertinent organizations.** To assist in the selection of this team, it was suggested that profiles be developed that would outline to type of person needed for the review team. **P. Anninos** stated that he would draft these profiles and distribute it to the group for their review and consideration.

The Subcommittee then discussed the outline of the actual review. It was noted that in past reviews, documentation was distributed to the team prior to the review meeting to familiarize the team with the program. At the meeting, a presentation was given to the group that outlined the various modules (catch/effort, biological sampling, etc.) and associated accomplishments. **P. Anninos suggested that the Subcommittee develop some trigger questions that would address specific issues and topics that the review panel should examine.** These questions would help focus the group and ensure they address the topics that should be tackled. **P. Anninos** stated that he would develop some draft questions for the Subcommittee to consider. It was noted that it is important for the Subcommittee to be thinking about the types of questions that need to be asked of the review team to help in the development of these trigger questions. **Regarding the presentation, it was recommended that it should be developed around the goals and objectives of the program instead of the modules.** This will give the review team the right perspective and help them examine the program based on the goals and objectives. **D. Donaldson** stated that he would develop a draft presentation and distribute it to the group for review.

The Subcommittee also discussed who would attend the program review meeting and the time frame of the meeting. In the past, staff, the FIN Chairman and representatives for the various fishing sectors attending the meeting. After some discussion, **it was recommended that D. Donaldson (staff), P. Campbell (FIN Chairman), P. Anninos (facilitator) as well as others to be determined by the FIN Committee will attend the meeting.** Initially, it was

envisioned that the program review would be conducted prior to the FIN meeting and the report would be presented to the FIN Committee at their June meeting. While the program review could still be scheduled and conducted prior to the FIN meeting, it would have to be done in a short time frame and leave very little room for any contingencies. Also, it was noted that the requirement is that the program review be conducted any time in 2006. Therefore, **the Subcommittee recommended that the program review be conducted in the July/August time frame to ensure that the necessary materials are developed and all of the details have been completely fleshed out. By scheduling the review later in the year, it will ensure the program review is not rushed and will meet the needs of the program.**

The last issue discussed by the Subcommittee was examining how well the FIN program is meeting the stakeholders' needs. **P. Anninos** asked if the data users and stakeholders of FIN have ever been surveyed regarding the utility of information produced by the program. **D. Donaldson** stated that while FIN has discussed this topic, no activities have been implemented to measure this issue. After some discussion, **the Subcommittee recommended that the FIN Committee consider developing a survey to poll its users and stakeholders regarding how well the program is meeting their needs.**

**There being no further business, the call was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.**

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE** (GULF OF MEXICO GEOGRAPHIC SUBCOMMITTEE)  
**MINUTES**

Monday, October 17, 2005

Orlando, Florida

**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  
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL

**Staff**

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ronald Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Cynthia Binkley, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted with the addition of *Impacts of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina* which will be discussed under Other Business.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on March 14, 2005 in Point Clear, Alabama were approved with one minor editorial change.

**Status of Biological Sampling Activities**

**D. Donaldson** distributed a summary of otolith collections from January through July 2005. The summary presents the number of otoliths that have been collected as well as the targets, by species, mode, and state. Donaldson noted that a different method of calculating targets may be implemented by next year.

**Donaldson** asked the Subcommittee for input on collecting weights as well as lengths and



otoliths. Since most commercial catch is gutted and some recreational catch is filleted it will be difficult to get all weights, but after discussion the group agreed to make an effort to collect weight data when possible.

**Donaldson** reported on the status of the analysis of otoliths and distributed a matrix covering 2002 through 2004. Subcommittee members reviewed this information and missing data will be forthcoming.

### **Status of Compilation of Vessel Information for Registration Tracking Module**

D. Bellais of GSMFC addressed the Subcommittee on the issue of compiling commercial vessel information for the registration tracking module. J. O'Hop noted that the Florida vessel information was in the ACCSP database, therefore Bellais can coordinate with M. Cahall and obtain this information from ACCSP. Bellais reported that Texas has sent data, but Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama have not. V. Swann noted the difficulty in obtaining the required information in Texas. Bellais noted that all states must send data in the same format. Donaldson stated that is very important that the states provide this information. It is necessary to test the registration tracking module and without it, FIN cannot proceed with this task.

### **Status of Compilation of Recreational Fishing Licenses**

The Subcommittee was provided with copies of a draft recreational license format. This information will be used as a sampling frame to get a better estimate of fishing effort. **Bellais** asked members to review this handout and make suggestions for additions or deletions. **Donaldson** noted that this information is needed for all licenses that would allow fin fishing in saltwater. The Subcommittee discussed various issues including license exemptions, fishing in the EEZ, expiration dates, etc.

### **Discussion of Involving CCA in Outreach for MRFSS**

**Donaldson** reported that the CCA has come out in support of MRFSS. R. Lukens suggested that since this is the case FIN should utilize this situation. S. Atran noted that there had been an article on MRFSS in the GMFMC newsletter. **P. Campbell** suggested that FIN submit an article for publication in *Gulf Tide*. **R. Lukens** reported that last April at the Recreational Summit Meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida, the CCA representative D. Brame stated that they fully support the MRFSS and believe that the fix would be to put more money in the survey to increase sampling. **Lukens** suggested that CCA may be willing to do some educational outreach in their state chapters. **Donaldson** suggested that he and MRFSS staff could contact Brame and try to have an article written for their magazine and ask for input on this matter.

### **Further Development of White Paper Regarding Changes in TIP**

**Donaldson** stated that at the August 2004 State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee meeting, that group asked FIN to develop a white paper regarding the changes in TIP since the implementation of trip tickets. Staff developed a draft paper which was distributed to FIN and

reviewed. The document was presented to the S/FFMC for their consideration and J. Roussel requested more detail. **Donaldson** will contact state partners in order to add number of interviews, number of samplers involved, duties, etc. to the white paper.

### Discussion of Multi-year Agreement for FIN

**C. Binkley** of NOAA Fisheries Grants Office in St. Petersburg, Florida reported that the GulFIN grant is being moved to the Southeast Region and she will be the administrator. **Binkley** discussed having the FIN program under a multi-year agreement beginning in 2007. **Donaldson** explained the current funding process for FIN noting that high priority activities are submitted to the S/FFMC and the final decision is made as to which activities will be included in the cooperative agreement for the following year. **Binkley** explained the advantages of grants being handled on a multi-year basis including a 30 day turnaround for funding. The Subcommittee then discussed the advantages and disadvantages of producing annual, semi-annual, or quarterly reports. **Binkley** noted that if semi-annual reports are used for a three year grant then the sixth report would be considered the final report.

The Subcommittee discussed a three year cooperative agreement and concluded that planning for that period of time should not be a problem. **Donaldson** stated that he will have the list of activities for prioritization for the three year proposal prepared for the Data Management Subcommittee meeting in March 2006. That list will be provided to the S/FFMC for approval at the March meeting and will be finalized at the FIN meeting in June 2006.

### Discussion of Granting Access to FIN DMS

**Donaldson** reported that an issue of access to the FIN DMS arose recently. A contractor with NOAA Fisheries generated a report on the effects of hurricane Katrina on fishing communities along the Gulf Coast. The contractor included commercial landings broken down by species. They used "the rule of three" for the fishing communities but not for fishing communities and species. Therefore there was some confidential data released. The document produced by the contractor will be used in-house only and the public document will include all commercial landings in a particular community assuming there are at least three fishermen in that community.

**Donaldson** reported that this issue generated discussion on the existing process for granting access and what can be done to assure that this is not repeated. Even though a form must be signed to be granted access, the Subcommittee agreed that this wasn't sufficient. **G. Davenport** stressed the importance of resolving this problem. Penalties were discussed, as well as notifying the states' or NOAA General Counsel or law enforcement. **K. Anson** suggested that the final document produced by utilizing this confidential data should be reviewed by state partners and GSMFC staff before being released. Discussion followed concerning responsibility for release of data, penalties, notification, etc. **Donaldson** suggested that the confidentiality form include wording requiring the form be submitted to GSMFC. It would then be distributed to the appropriate state personnel. Since FIN has no law enforcement capability **Davenport** will contact NOAA General Counsel and ask advice on what procedure should be followed in this type of case.

### **Other Business**

**Donaldson** reported that L. Simpson has asked each of the Subcommittees to develop a list of short-term, mid-term, and long-term impacts from the hurricanes. This is being done to prepare for disaster relief money for fishermen. **Donaldson** requested that each Subcommittee member think about impacts to their agencies caused by the hurricanes and assess costs for those impacts. Members will send to Donaldson when complete.

### **Election of Chairman**

C. Denson was elected Chairman and G. Davenport was elected Vice Chairman.

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

**DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE (GULF OF MEXICO GEOGRAPHIC SUBCOMMITTEE)  
MINUTES**

**Monday, March 13, 2006**

**San Antonio, Texas**

**Vice Chairman Guy Davenport** 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  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

**Staff**

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Terry Cody, Rockport, TX

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as written.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the meeting held on October 17, 2005 in Orlando, Florida were approved as written.

**Status of Biological Sampling Activities**

**D. Donaldson** distributed a summary of otolith collections for the recreational and commercial fisheries in 2005. 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. It was difficult to obtain samples in the northern Gulf of Mexico later in the year because of the devastation from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

D. Donaldson stated that the biological data being collected under FIN is becoming more and more important in the stock assessment process. Initially, the quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) measures for these data were fairly lax so the data could be loaded and available. However, since these data are being scrutinized more and more, these measures need to be tightened and states need to following the standardized formats more closely. Staff will be implementing more of these measures and rejecting data that do not meet the formats. One of the issues identified concerns otolith sectioned date. D. Donaldson stated that if the otolith is whole, should a date be included. The group discussed this issue and determined that the pertinent date is when the otolith was read, not necessarily when it was sectioned. After some discussion, the group agreed that the critical element should be otolith read date. There was concern about compatibility with the NMFS-Panama City Laboratory. D. Donaldson stated that he would contact Linda Lombardi regarding this issue. Another topic regarding more QA/QC measures that was discussed concerned the possibility of conducting a biological samplers meeting, similar to the commercial port samplers and otolith processors meetings. The group believed this was a good idea and recommended that such a meeting be conducted in 2006, if funds were available. It was suggested that this session could be piggybacked with the commercial port samplers meeting since some of the same personnel would be attending both meetings. This recommendation will be presented to FIN at the June 2006 meeting.

D. Donaldson reviewed the status of the analysis of the otoliths. It was noted that ageing data (2002-2004) from all states has been received and loaded into the FIN DMS with the exception of Louisiana and Florida. It was noted that 2002-2004 data from Louisiana has been received but 2004 data has not yet been loaded into the system but it should be loaded in the near future. J. O'Hop noted that the majority of the otoliths have been aged but the data have not been put into the appropriate FIN formats for loading into the FIN system. His staff is working on this issue and should send the data in the near future. D. Donaldson stated that this has been an issue for a number of years and still has not been addressed. This could potentially jeopardize funding for the entire FIN program and attention to the issue needs to given immediately. J. O'Hop understood the seriousness of this issue and stated that the data will be delivered in the very near future. It was noted that due to the recent hurricanes, Mississippi has lost all of the otoliths collected in 2005 and Louisiana lost some of the otoliths collected in August and September 2005. Therefore, there will be no ageing data for these otoliths.

#### Status of Compilation of Vessel Information for Registration Tracking Module

D. Bellais noted there has not been any change since the October 2005 meeting. Staff has received data dumps from Texas and Florida although there are not in the agreed upon formats. Nothing has been received from Louisiana, Mississippi or Alabama. D. Donaldson stated that is very important that the states provide this information. It is necessary to test the registration tracking module and without it, FIN cannot proceed with this task. J. O'Hop stated that when Florida requested this information, they received it as well as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If Florida signs this MOU, it will prevent them from distributing it to anybody else. Florida is currently working on this issue with the

**other agency and attempting to resolve this issue. D. Donaldson stated that Alabama is facing a similar situation and is working on obtaining the vessel data. This issue is complicated by involving various agencies within a state. M. Kasprzak stated that Louisiana is also facing issues dealing with confidentiality and the issue will probably have to be addressed by their legal department. This would apply to vessels as well as recreational fishing licenses.**

#### Status of Compilation of Recreational Fishing Licenses

**D. Donaldson** stated while the group has been discussing this issue for a number of years, it has been elevated because of the federal registration provision in the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization. The proposed federal registration provision would require recreational anglers fishing in the EEZ to enroll in some type of registration system. For those states that have recreational fishing licenses, these permits could be used in place of the federal registration as long as the licenses met various criteria. Since all of the Gulf States have recreational fishing licenses and most require licenses for all types of fishing, a federal registration system would probably not be required in the Gulf. This could be a good opportunity to close the loopholes in the existing licenses (FL shore exemption, AL EEZ exemption, etc.) and move the Gulf towards implementing a license-based sampling frame survey for recreational fishing effort. As a first step, FIN is compiling the various state license data bases and has developed a standardized format for these data bases. **D. Bellais** reported that she has received information from Texas and Mississippi. It is important that staff receive data bases from all states so an analysis can be conducted to determine the completeness of the frame.

The group reviewed that matrix that outlines where the gaps are in the existing licensing systems. **D. Donaldson** noted that the major gaps in the systems were the shore exemption in Florida and EEZ exemption in Alabama. **K. Cuevas** stated that he believed that the same EEZ exemption (if an angler fishes in the EEZ, they do not need a saltwater fishing license to land their fish) exists in Mississippi. **P. Campbell** stated that same may be true for Texas as well. If these exemptions exist, it could potentially jeopardize utilizing state fishing licenses in lieu of the federal registration system. **K. Cuevas** and **P. Campbell** stated they would check with the appropriate personnel to determine if these exemptions are in place. **D. Donaldson** stated that he would check with Law Enforcement personnel regarding this issue.

#### Review of White Paper regarding Changes in TIP

**D. Donaldson** stated that at the August 2004 State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) meeting, the group asked that FIN develop a white paper regarding the changes in TIP since the implementation of trip tickets. There have been several iterations of the paper based on feedback from the S/FFMC. **The group reviewed the latest version of the document and agreed that it addressed the pertinent issues and should be presented to the S/FFMC for their consideration.** Based on comments received from the S/FFMC, the appropriate actions will be taken.

### Discussion of Price/Pound Issue

**D. Donaldson** stated that this issue concerned extremely high price per pound values for shrimp that were identified in the FIN DMS. After some exploring, it was determined that these high values were due to catches of bait shrimp (very low weights and fairly high prices). The issue for the Subcommittee is to determine if there is an alternative method for calculating price per pound for these types of situations. After some discussion, **the group decided that this issue was not a problem as long as it was clearly identified and no further action should be taken.**

### Development of Multi-year Cooperative Agreement for FIN

**D. Donaldson** stated that at the last meeting, Cynthia Binkley discussed the concept of multi-year grants for FIN. At that meeting, the Subcommittee decided to pursue this issue and submit a multi-year grant in 2007. In order to accomplish this activity, the Subcommittee needs to identify potential activities for the future and develop statements of work and rough budgets for those activities. To facilitate the discussion, the activities that have been considered for funding in the FIN cooperative agreements for the past 4 years were provided to the group. After some discussion, **it was recommended that the following activities be presented to the S/FFMC for their consideration:**

- **For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida**
- **Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana**
- **Pilot Study for Recreational Fishing Effort using Fishing Licenses as Sampling Frame**
- **Biological Sampling for Additional Species**

### Review of FIN Confidential User ID Request Form

**D. Donaldson** stated in response to the unauthorized release of confidential data, this group recommended that the confidential user form be strengthened to minimize the chances that this would happen again. Staff has revised the form and distributed to the group for review. After some discussion, **P. Campbell moved to approved the FIN Confidential User ID Request Form and present it to the FIN Committee for their consideration.** The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. **R. Lukens** asked if there had been any sanctions against the organization that released the confidential data. **G. Davenport** stated that the issue as presented to NOAA General Counsel, however, nothing has been done to address this unauthorized release. It was suggested that FIN should develop some type of administrative policy to respond to these violations. After some discussion, **the group tasked staff to develop administrative recommendations for violating the FIN confidentiality policies and present these recommendations to the FIN Committee at their June 2006 meeting.**

*Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.*

## **DRAFT POLICY FOR UNAUTHORIZED RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL DATA**

The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) has developed goals and objectives regarding confidential data. The goal of the FIN for disclosure of or access to confidential fishery statistics is that an authorized user is any person, that is employed by or affiliated with (i.e., Regional Fishery Management Council members, and contractors/consultants employed by FIN partners) a FIN partner and has been designated by the respective partner to require confidential data as a means to fulfill their job and their job is related to fisheries management and conservation. The confidentiality policies and protocols adopted by the FIN are consistent with state and federal statutes. All authorized users must consent to comply with state and federal non-disclosure policies and written statements. Confidential data can be disclosed to or accessed by authorized users only.

If confidential data are released to non-authorized persons (either accidentally or on purpose), the FIN has developed a policy that outlines the steps that must be taken to address the release. The steps include:

- FIN will write a letter to the individual(s) notifying them that they disclosed confidential data to non-authorized persons. The letter will state:
  - They will immediately lose access to the FIN Data Management System;
  - The appropriate state and/or federal agency(s) will be notified of their unauthorized release; and
  - They are subject to the applicable state and federal penalties for violating the confidentiality rules and regulations of the identified agency(s);
- A copy of the letter will also be forward to the proper state and/or federal agency(s) about the breach of confidentiality for the appropriate legal actions.



FIN Otolith Processors Training Workshop  
Meeting Summary  
May 9-10, 2006  
St. Petersburg, Florida

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. and the following people were present:

Janet Tunnell, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Adam Richardson, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Laura Crabtree, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Chris Campbell, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jessica Carroll, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jamie Miller, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Jerome Little AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Wes Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Ken Edds, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Isis Longo, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Prince Robinson, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Tonie Saylor, TPWD, Palacios, TX  
Mandy Barnes, TPWD, Palacios, TX  
Laura Goetz, NMFS, Panama City, FL  
Chris Palmer, NMFS, Panama City, FL  
Andrew Fischer, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA  
Teresa DeBruler, MML, Sarasota, FL  
Debra Murie, UF, Gainesville, FL  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Conducting Otolith Reading Activities for Red Snapper, King Mackerel, Flounders and Greater Amberjack

The first part of the meeting consisted of a reading exercise where the groups read otoliths. The group split into three sections and conducted readings of 5 sets of otoliths for red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder and greater amberjack. Each group read the otoliths, counted annuli, and determined edge type for each fish. This information was recorded and provided to the moderator for compilation.

**The meeting was recessed at 4:00 p.m.**

**May 10, 2006**

**The meeting was reconvened at 9:05 a.m.**

Review and Comparison of Reading Exercise by Groups

After each group determined the age of the various fish, the information was entered into a spreadsheet and J. Tunnell calculated APEs for all species. For the flounders, the overall APE was 1.1%; for red snapper, the overall APE was 3.3%; for king mackerel, the overall APE was

2.4%; and for greater amberjack, the overall APE was 8.9%. For the flounders, red snapper, and king mackerel the APEs were all below the standard 5%. And although the APE for greater amberjack was higher than the rest, this is a very difficult fish to age and the APE was not far from the standard (5%). D. Donaldson noted that there has been a steady decrease in APEs for all species since these workshops were started. The following table outlines the APEs over time:

	Red Snapper	Greater Amberjack	Flounders	King Mackerel
2003	16.0%	25.0%	--	--
2004	4.9%	--	22.2%	--
2005	5.6%	16.7%	9.5%	13.6%
2006	3.3%	8.9%	1.1%	2.4%

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 Red Snapper Reference Set

The group discussed the reference set which contains 500 otoliths taken from all months as well as 100 annotated otolith images and an excel file with ring counts and edge types. The otoliths were from the NMFS collections as well as 50 otoliths from each state. This set is utilized to test reader precision among all the personnel reading red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. B. Allman provided the APEs for the labs and all were well under the standard 5%. Mississippi and Texas have not provided reading from the reference set. Texas has finished reading the set but just has not sent them. And due to the hurricane, Mississippi is currently unable to read otoliths. Since everyone has read them, it is time to distribute the set again. D. Donaldson stated he would contact B. Allman and begin the process again. It was noted that new readers must look at the entire reference set and existing readers should examine a subset of the set. The group agreed that once all of the agencies have read the set, the primary contact would compile the ages and calculate an APE among the agencies. This information would be presented at the annual otolith processors training workshop.

#### Discussion of Flounder Reference Set

A. Fischer and I. Longo have developed the flounder reference set which contains 200 otoliths. The reference set has been circulated to all labs and their readings have been received and compiled by LDWF and LSU. However, before APEs could be calculated, A. Fischer and I. Longo wanted the group to discuss the issue of age advancement. A. Fischer stated that he has developed a SAS program that calculates APE, however, this method adjusts the ages based on the edge conditions. The program identifies outliers and then automatically adjusts the ages accordingly. They also calculated the APEs using the NMFS-Panama City spreadsheet and the Otolith Processors workshop spreadsheet. All three methods provided different APEs. It was noted that there must be a glitch in the Otolith Processors workshop spreadsheet since the APE is so high. D. Donaldson stated that he would provide I. Longo with the spreadsheet from this meeting. The group discussed the merits of each program and after some discussion, the group decided to continue using the spreadsheet method for calculating APE. The group believed this

method was adequate for determining APE. It would be useful when presenting the APEs for the flounder set, that both methods (SAS and spreadsheet) be presented. The group agreed that once all of the agencies have read the set, the primary contact would compile the ages and calculate an APE among the agencies. This information would be presented at the annual otolith processors training workshop.

#### Discussion of King Mackerel Reference Set

C. Palmer stated that unfortunately the reference set was lost during Hurricane Katrina. He noted that they are attempting to develop another set but it will be some time before it is complete. After some discussion, C. Palmer stated that he would attempt to have a new set by the May 2007 workshop. The set would contain a fixed file of 100 whole and 100 sectioned otoliths. In the interim, there is a PowerPoint presentation (which he distributed to the group) that outlines some of the reading issues with king mackerel and people should use this as a guide.

#### Discussion of Developing Reference Sets for Other Species

D. Donaldson stated that FIN is looking at a new method for determining the sampling targets and this could potentially mean the FIN would focus on more species such as red drum, red grouper, vermilion snapper, spotted seatrout, etc. Because this process is still ongoing, it would be premature to select species for additional reference sets. J. Tunnell stated that Florida would be interested in beginning the development of a red drum set. She will work with the other states and report to the group about any progress at the next meeting. D. Murie noted that it could be possible to develop a reference set for greater amberjack by 2008 and she will keep the group posted on any progress regarding the development of such a set.

#### Discussion of FIN Biological Sampling Activities

D. Donaldson presented an overview of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) to the group. The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) consists of two major components: ComFIN and RecFIN(SE). Each has its own mission, goals, and objectives and address specific issues related to area of emphasis. The constituencies served by FIN include the state and federal agencies responsible for the management of fisheries in the region, Federal Fishery Management Councils, Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, and the commercial and recreational fishermen and the associated fishing industries. The mission of FIN is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial, anadromous and recreational fishery data and information for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Region and to support the development of a national program. There are four goals of FIN: 1) Plan, manage, and evaluate commercial and recreational fishery data collection activities; 2) Implement a marine commercial and recreational fishery data collection program; 3) Establish and maintain a commercial and recreational fishery data management system; and 4) Support the establishment of a national program. He then presented and explained the program organization of ComFIN and RecFIN(SE). The purpose of the Biological Sampling Module is to collect otoliths, spines, scales, etc. to determine age of fish. These data are used by stock assessment scientists to assess status of stocks. Sampling is conducted in both commercial and recreational fisheries. FIN is currently targeting 5 species – red snapper, king mackerel, greater amberjack and gulf and southern flounder. In 2005, FIN partners collected almost 60,000 otoliths from over 95 species. The data elements that are routinely collected include date, species, state and county landed, gear and area fished, market category, length and weight, and sex. Currently FIN is examining new

method for determining sampling targets. This new method focuses on age proportions (multinomial distribution). The literature cites 500 samples per key strata are adequate to determine the status and size of the stock. Key strata are defined as areas where one would expect to have differences in age of fish between strata. The key strata are year, gear and region. FIN is in the process of determining key strata for various species. Once the key strata have been identified, then the samples can be distributed by administrative strata (waves, modes, states, etc.) This method will allow for sampling of more species and thus provide better data to stock assessments.

#### Status of Greater Amberjack Processing and Analysis Issues

D. Murie stated that at the recent SEDAR, several different stock assessment methods were discussed for greater amberjack. They ended up using the surplus production model. There are still problems with the ageing of amberjack. She is getting samples from Louisiana, Alabama and others and if states collect any samples, please send them to her and do not process them. They are recording the readability of otoliths throughout this process and those reading range from good to very bad. They are also attempting to collect young of the year mainly from the trawl fisheries. The purpose of this task is to identify the 1<sup>st</sup> annulus. Another potential way for determining ages of these fish is to collect and read fin rays. **It appears that the pectoral and pelvic rays work best and D. Murie wondered about the feasibility of states to collect the fin rays. This issue will be presented to the FIN Committee in June.** They are also collecting information regarding sexual maturity. It appears that greater amberjack are spawning later in the year in the northern Gulf of Mexico and in March/April/May in the Florida Keys. **If samplers encounter females close to spawning, she asked to be notified where and when these events occurred. Again, this will be presented to the FIN Committee in June.**

#### Discussion of Coordination of Ageing Centers

D. Donaldson stated that the issue of coordinating the ageing center was raised at a recent meeting. Since each lab seems to operate a bit differently, it was believed to be a good idea to see if FIN could standardize (to some level) those elements that each lab or center is recording. **After some discussion, the group recommended that FIN further explore this issue and discuss it at their upcoming meeting in June.**

#### Status of Otolith Manual Revision

S. VanderKooy stated November 2004 meeting may have been a bit premature. In March 2005, the group discussed the manual and data collection but the issue has somewhat stalled. He believes it is time to restart this process. Some of the topics the manual group needs to discuss include beefing up the validation section of the manual as well as adding the reference and training sets. K Edds stated that he spoke with Gary Fitzhugh regarding the purpose of the reference and training sets which is to ensure that processors are being trained correctly. He agreed that these sets need to be included in the manual.

#### Status of Otoliths Processing 2002-2005

D. Donaldson stated that the group needed to discuss the status of the otolith processing. In Florida, J. Tunnell stated that the red snapper otoliths collected in 2005 have been processed and there are 300 otoliths that need to be read. She did not know the status of flounder otoliths. For Alabama, J. Little stated that the otoliths for all species collected in 2005 have been processed,

read and send to the FIN DMS. W. Devers noted that all of the otoliths collected in 2005 have been lost due to Hurricane Katrina. For Louisiana, K. Edds stated that all otoliths for the priority species collected in 2005 have been processed, read and send to the FIN DMS. And T. Saylor noted that for 2005, there are 800 otoliths that still need to processed and 1,500 otoliths that need to be read. This is for all species.

#### Discussion of Future Training Meeting

The group decided that the next meeting should be held at Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FMRI) during the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of May 2007. It was noted that Gulf Coast Research Laboratory and NMFS-Beaufort laboratory personnel should be invited to participant in future meetings. 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 2:00 p.m.**

RecFIN (SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group  
Conference Call Meeting Summary  
February 21, 2006

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

Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Ken Brennan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Beverly Sauls, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Richard Cody, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Joe O'Hop, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Rob Andrews, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD  
Erick Porche, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Jason Duet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Roger Uwate, USVIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI  
David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Discussion of Highly Migratory Species Sampling Protocols

D. Donaldson stated that the Gulf Council requested that FIN explore the issue of collecting data from high migratory species (HMS). FIN tasked this group to develop sampling protocols for these species. The work group met last year and developed some draft protocols, using a combination of telephone survey for effort data and catch catch/dockside sampling for catch data. This recommendation was presented to FIN Committee last year and the Committee was in general agreement with the protocols but asked the work group to continue working on the protocols and flesh out more of the details. Therefore, the work group reviewed the draft protocols and began discussing them. There was agreement that the effort data could be easily collected via the existing for-hire telephone survey. For the charter and head boat fishery, effort would be collected via a modification of the existing survey while data for the private boat fishery will be collected through a separate survey. For the catch data, there was extensive discussion but no consensus was reached.

The group discussed utilizing a catch card program similar to one operating in North Carolina. One of the requirements for this program would be that the states would have to implement rules and regulations that required anglers to have a landing tag on the fish to be able to remove it from the vessel. In order to get a landing tag, the angler would have to turn in a catch card to an appropriate location. As in North Carolina, the bait shops and marina would serve as the distribution sites for these catch cards. B. Sauls suggested that instead of having a physical card, a system could be developed to report the information via the Internet. Once the data was entered, a confirmation number or ID number could be issued to the angler. In addition to the catch card, there would also be dockside sampling. The dockside sampling would provide validation of the catch reported via the cards as well as provide a way to develop a correction factor for underreporting. The species to be included on the catch card would be bluefin tuna, yellowfin tuna, and billfish. There was concern that with the inclusion of yellowfin tuna, the catch card program would not be effective in collecting the needed data because of the large number of yellowfin tuna landed. B. Dixon suggested that a monthly (or bimonthly) mailing to the HMS permit holders asking them to report their catch (or no catch) might be a more effective method for collected these data. There were concerns that it would be very difficult to validate

the data collected via this method. Also, the administrative burden of running such a program would be very high and might be prohibitive. A lengthy discussion ensued and as stated earlier, there was no consensus reached regarding the catch portion of this protocol. The group decided to consider the various options and convene another conference call in the March/April time frame to continue their discussions.

**Being no further business, the call was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.**

RecFIN (SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group  
Conference Call Meeting Summary  
March 24, 2006

The call was convened at 1:05 p.m. The following people were present:

Bob Dixon, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Ken Brennan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Beverly Sauls, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Richard Cody, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Joe O'Hop, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Ron Salz, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Jason Duet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Craig Lileystrom, PRDNER, Puerta de Tierra, PR  
Roger Uwate, USVIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI  
David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

#### Discussion of Highly Migratory Species Sampling Protocols

**D. Donaldson** stated that the group needs to continue its discussion regarding collecting data for high migratory species (HMS). During the last call, the group considered two options: 1) a combination of a catch card program and dockside sampling (for validation) and 2) monthly (or bimonthly) mailing to the HMS permit holders asking them to report their catch (or no catch). The group could not reach consensus and decided to consider the various options and convene another conference call in the March/April time frame to continue their discussions. **B. Sauls** stated that the issue of HMS is becoming more important in the state of Florida and they are very interested in the methodologies that FIN developed. The group then discussed the option where catch cards and dockside sampling will be utilized. After some discussion, the group decided that this option would not be viable in Florida since there are many access sites where anglers can leave and return and for this method to be successful there needs to be a limited number of sites. **It was then recommended that two separate surveys be conducted to collect these data. One survey would collect data from the for-hire fishery. This method would utilize a dockside survey (separate from the MRFSS) and use the existing methods of the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS). This method would work for this sector because there are known sites where charter and head boats are targeting HMS and could adequately be sampled to obtain precise catch estimates.** The other survey would focus on the private boat anglers. The type of survey could not be determined by the group because there was not a clear understanding of the fishery. **After some discussion, the group recommended that a pilot survey be conducted to characterize the private boat HMS fishery. This would allow the group to determine the best method for collection data from this sector.** It was suggested that collecting some information from fishing clubs (description of fishing activities, number of anglers participating, etc.) could be useful in determining the best collection method. It was also noted that it would be useful to know the number of HMS permit holders, by state, by mode



(private boat, for-hire). The group tasked staff with compiling this information. The number of HMS permit holders, by state, by mode, is attached.

**Being no further business, the call was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.**

HMS Permits by State and Category

Through August 2005

The FREQ Procedure

Table of ppstate by cat

ppstate(ppstate)	cat		
Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct	CH/HB	PR	Total
AL	72	291	363
	1.33	5.37	6.70
	19.83	80.17	
	8.04	6.44	
FL	569	2969	3538
	10.50	54.80	65.30
	16.08	83.92	
	63.50	65.66	
LA	86	627	713
	1.59	11.57	13.16
	12.06	87.94	
	9.60	13.87	
MS	31	153	184
	0.57	2.82	3.40
	16.85	83.15	
	3.46	3.38	
TX	138	482	620
	2.55	8.90	11.44
	22.26	77.74	
	15.40	10.66	
Total	896	4522	5418
	16.54	83.46	100.00

FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group  
Meeting Summary  
May 16, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. The following people were present:

Joe O'Hop, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Britt Bumguardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX  
John Mareska, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL  
Clay Porche, NMFS, Miami, FL  
Gary Fitzhugh, NMFS, Panama City, FL  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Review of 2005 and 2006 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 group reviewed the 2005 (Jan-Dec) and 2006 (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 although there were some holes in the sampling. This could be due in part to the hurricane activities as well as the artificially large targets. It was noted that Florida's totals did not appear to be correct. After some investigation, D. Donaldson stated that the wrong sheet was provided to the group and that Florida collected significantly more than 17 otoliths in 2005. G. Fitzhugh noted that totals presented by FIN differ somewhat from the totals compiled at NMFS-Panama City. After some discussion, H. Blanchet recommended

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 the commercial side, the sampling appeared to be fairly representative; however, for the recreational side, the sampling did not reflect the landings. There were several major hurricanes in the Gulf and this could have caused some problems. The group agreed that this issue needs to be closely monitored and appropriate action implemented to ensure representative sampling. It was noted that the flounder landings appear to be incorrect and D. Donaldson stated that he would look into the situation.

Development of Targets for Biological Sampling using New Methodology

D. Donaldson stated that main purpose of this meeting was to develop the key gears and regions for each of the identified species so a total number of otoliths could be determined. **The group identified primary (17) and secondary (10) species. These species need to be reviewed and approved by the FIN Committee.** The group then proceeded to identify the critical gears and regions for each of these species. There was concern regarding red drum about the potential for non-representative sampling due to the targeting of smaller fish and current regulations. For king mackerel, it was noted that there are two season, winter and summer as well as different growth rates between the males and females. It is important that the sample size

for this species is adequate to take into account these issues. It was also noted that tournament sampling could have a large impact on this species. It was noted that by lowering the red snapper target, there could be potential negative impacts since some of the snapper sampling is associated with funding and this is something that needs to be considered. H. Blanchet noted that gray snapper harvest has been increasing over the years and sampling for this species needs to be a higher priority. The list of species (both primary and secondary) and number of otoliths for each species is outlined in Attachment A. Also in the attachment is if the collection of a particular species will be the responsibility of FIN, NMFS or shared.

The group then discussed the necessary lengths and otoliths for FIN priority species in 2007.

D. Donaldson stated that each agency needs to provide him with the average number of otolith (per identified species) that has been collected over the past several years. From that, D. Donaldson will be able to divide the total number of otoliths (from Attachment A) into recreational and commercial FIN, State and Federal targets. This information will be presented to the FIN Committee at the June 2006 meeting for their consideration. The FIN Committee will need to determine the species that will be targeted in 2007 and determine the otolith and length goals.

#### **Development of 2007 FIN Data Collection Plan Document**

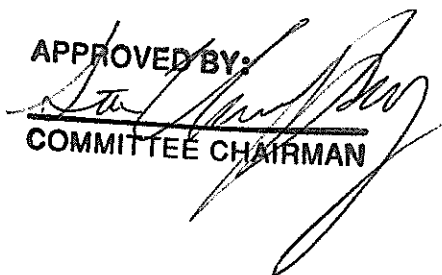
D. Donaldson stated that the FIN Committee needs to review and approve the recommendations regarding species and sampling targets. Once the species and targets have been agreed upon, he would develop the 2007 Data Collection Plan and distribute the document to the group for review.

**Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.**

SPECIES	#GEAR	#REGIONS	#OTOLITHS	GEARS	REGIONS
<i>Primary species</i>					
Black Drum	3	2	3,000	rec HL, com HL, com TRAWLS	N GOMEX, FL
Gag	3	1	1,500	rec HL, com HL, com LL	GOMEX
Golden Tilefish	2	1	1,000	com HL, com LL	GOMEX
Gray Snapper	2	2	2,000	rec HL, com HL	E/W GOMEX
Gray Triggerfish	3	2	3,000	rec HL (PR) rec HL (CH), com HL	E/W GOMEX
Greater Amberjack	2	2	2,000	rec HL, com HL	E/W GOMEX
Gulf Flounder	1	1	500	com HL	GOMEX
King Mackerel	2	3	3,000	rec HL, com HL	E/W GOMEX, S. ATL
Red Drum	1	3	1,500	rec HL	TX, LA, MS/AL/FL
Red Grouper	3	1	1,500	rec HL, com HL, com LL	GOMEX
Red Snapper	3	2	3,000	rec HL, com HL, com LL	E/W GOMEX
Sheepshead	3	2	3,000	rec HL, com HL, com TRAWL	E/W GOMEX
Southern Flounder	2	2	2,000	rec HL/GIG, com HL/GIG	E/W GOMEX
Spotted Seatrout	2	3	3,000	rec HL (PR) rec HL (CH)	TX, LA, MS/AL/FL
Striped Mullet	2	3	3,000	rec CAST, com CAST, com STRIKE	LA, MS/AL, FL
Vermilion Snapper	2	2	2,000	rec HL, com HL	E/W GOMEX

Yellowedge Grouper	2	1	1,000	com HL, com LL	GOMEX
<b>Secondary species</b>					
Spanish Mackerel	3	2	3,000	rec HL, com CAST, com GILL	GOMEX, ATL
Scamp	3	1	1,500	rec HL, com HL, com LL	GOMEX
Yellowtail Snapper	2	1	1,000	rec HL, com HL	E GOMEX
Cobia	1	2	1,000	rec HL	E/W GOMEX
Black Grouper	1	1	500	rec/com	GOMEX
Black Sea Bass	3	1	1,500	rec HL, com HL, com POTS	E GOMEX
Red Porgy	3	1	1,500	rec HL, com HL, com LL	GOMEX
Snowy Grouper	1	1	500	rec/com	GOMEX
Speckled Hind	1	1	500	rec/com	GOMEX
Warsaw Grouper	1	1	500	rec/com	GOMEX
TOTAL			47,500		

SPECIES	GEAR	REGIONS	OTOLITHS		FIN	NMFS
Black Drum	3	2	3,000	F	3,000	
Gag	3	1	1,500	N		1,500
Golden Tilefish	2	1	1,000	N		1,000
Gray Snapper	2	2	2,000	S	1,000	1,000
Gray Triggerfish	3	2	3,000	S	1,500	1,500
Greater Amberjack	2	2	2,000	S	1,000	1,000
Gulf Flounder	1	1	500	F	500	
King Mackerel	2	3	3,000	S	1,500	1,500
Red Drum	1	3	1,500	F	1,500	
Red Grouper	3	1	1,500	N		1,500
Red Snapper	3	2	3,000	S	1,500	1,500
Sheepshead	3	2	3,000	F	3,000	
Southern Flounder	2	2	2,000	F	2,000	
Spotted Seatrout	2	3	3,000	F	3,000	
Striped Mullet	2	3	3,000	F	3,000	
Vermilion Snapper	2	2	2,000	S	1,000	1,000
Yellowedge Grouper	2	1	1,000	N		1,000
TOTAL			36,000		23,500	12,500

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Oyster Technical Task Force  
MINUTES  
June 27, 2006  
Pensacola, FL**

**Steve Vanderkooy** called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. The following attended:

**Members Present**

Mark Van Hoose, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Brian Lezina, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Bill Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL  
Scott Gordon, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

**Others**

Bradley Randall, DMR, Biloxi, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Sandy Shanks, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**VanderKooy** opened the meeting, asking each participant to introduce them self. The Technical Task Force (TTF) membership is made up of a scientific representative from each Gulf state (Berrigan, Gordon, Lezina, Robinson, and Van Hoose); a habitat representative (O'Brien); and a law enforcement representative (Robinson).

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed, and another item was added. **Berrigan** requested that a status report from all participating states be given regarding hurricanes Ivan, Katrina, Rita and Wilma and also requested a brain-storming session be added covering hurricane impacts. The revised agenda was approved unanimously.

**IJF Program Overview and FMP Process**

**VanderKooy** presented an overview of the IJF program regarding its authority, and relationship to the Oyster TTF. **VanderKooy** also explained the FMP process; including critical components of the process, the 10 national standards, and guidelines to follow while developing the plan, as well as explaining some of the mechanics of creating the actual document. The members asked about the use of a 'Wiki-type' website for development and drafting of the document. **VanderKooy** promised to look into the software and offered to create a website for TTF members to post and share information.



understood the oyster industry. He requested that any member with an individual to recommend for the sociology section should be encouraged to do so.

**VanderKooy** discussed the main difference between the Profile, which was provided as boilerplate, and the FMP is the inclusion of very specific management recommendations and a formal stock assessment. As the biology, habitat, enforcement, and fishery data is assembled, the TTF should pay close attention to those issues which seem to be in need of addressing such as standardized reporting, harvest limits, etc. Included in this section is the stock assessment for the fishery and management scenarios based on changes to the assessment.

**VanderKooy** discussed Section 9 which covers research priorities and data requirements. It is the "laundry list" for future research and needed data elements. This section should cover topics such as research funding, values of oysters, etc. If there is a topic that the committee feels should be added, it should be included in the list.

**VanderKooy** spoke about the appendices and the possibility of adding various items as appendices, such as a resource list of where to find cultch materials and options which would support the management activities in each state. **VanderKooy** explained that unlike the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's approach, the Commission revises entire FMPs, not just sections as amendments. This makes it easier for interested parties to locate the most current information and not have to search through multiple documents. The Commission's FMPs are considered 'source' documents, and as such, incorporate all the information relevant for management. There was a general consensus among the TTF that there needs to be a component of the FMP which provides guidelines and advisories regarding disaster and recovery management specific to the oyster fishery.

Finally, **VanderKooy** suggested to the committee that Joe Jewell (MDMR) has expressed a strong interest in doing the artwork for the cover of the publication, but alternative artists would be considered and welcomed.

### **TTF Membership**

The TTF discussed the other expertise issue and opened the floor for discussion. **VanderKooy** explained the difference between 'others' and 'members' on a TTF: 'others' are individuals that have indicated an interest in the FMP's development and are welcomed to attend any TTF meetings and receive periodic updates on progress. Since all GSMFC meetings are public meetings, anyone may attend at their own expense. Members of the TTF have a clearly identified roll in the writing and development of the FMP and as such, the Commission pays for their travel and per diem to attend task force meetings.

**VanderKooy** addressed the issue of commercial and recreational representation on the TTF. One question that he raised was for the commercial sector, which type of individual would be better to serve, a fisherman or a processor? Processors are a key element in this industry, and they are also knowledgeable of fishing practices typically. It was recommended that **VanderKooy** contact the Gulf Oyster Industry Council (GOIC) and request their suggestion for a knowledgeable participant. **VanderKooy** also brought up the issue of distinguishing

### **Other Business**

**VanderKooy** inquired about the next meeting and tentatively scheduled it for the week of August 21, 2006 at a location yet to be determined. If there were problems with that week an alternative would be determined. *There being no further business, Lezina moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.*

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Bottom Mapping Committee Meeting  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Attendees

Jeff Rester  
Matt Bethel  
Mark Kulp  
Stan Locker  
Kevin Madley  
Nelson May  
Jimmy Johnston  
Steve Rohmann  
Marta Ribera  
James Sinclair  
Greg Boland  
Heather Warner-Finley  
Chris Jenkins

Organization

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission  
University of New Orleans  
University of New Orleans  
University of South Florida  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
United States Geologic Survey  
National Ocean Service  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Minerals Management Service  
Minerals Management Service  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries  
University of Colorado

J. Rester welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stated that he appreciated everyone attending the meeting and participating on the committee. He stated that the purpose of the bottom mapping project was to gather and compile data sets detailing bottom type throughout the Gulf of Mexico, focused mainly on identifying hardbottom and coral reef areas. He stated that the project was delayed last year due to Hurricane Katrina, but the University of Colorado and University of New Orleans were hired January 1, 2006 to begin the data collection portion of the project. J. Rester reported that the purpose of the meeting was to review the progress of the project so far and help answer questions that the contractors had regarding the project.

M. Bethel next stated that C. Jenkins was the principal investigator for the project, but he would be unable to make the presentation on the current status of the bottom mapping project since he was in Australia. M. Bethel started his discussion with an overview of dbSEABED, the database structure that was being used for the Commission bottom mapping project. The goal of dbSEABED was to bring decades of seabed information from various sources into one seabed database. M. Bethel reported that dbSEABED was designed by C. Jenkins to create a unified, detailed mapping of the materials that compose the seafloor floor, by integrating hundreds of individual data sets. He stated that all data gathered for the Commission's bottom mapping project would be formatted to fit within the dbSEABED structure. M. Bethel reported that the dbSEABED structure allowed users to make very powerful queries. It also allowed users to generate probability of error maps which researchers could use to decide for themselves how accurate interpolation maps were since dbSEABED contained a vast amount of data with varying qualities. M. Bethel reported that some data sets were not included in dbSEABED due to their uncertain quality.

M. Bethel demonstrated a query that he built to exhibit the ability of the database. The demonstration included data within the Gulf of Mexico displaying locations of rock. G. Boland asked how rock was defined. M. Bethel stated that the definition was determined by the original researcher and you would need to go back to the original study to obtain that information. M. Bethel stated that his current demonstration did not contain that information. The current file could be linked to the original source data table so interested individuals could examine the original data source and see how they defined their study parameters.

J. Sinclair asked how error probability maps were generated. Via a conference call, C. Jenkins stated that ArcGIS could not produce error probability maps for the grids generated with the data. C. Jenkins stated that separate interpolator software was written to generate the uncertainty maps. The error probability maps were based on the statistics for variance versus distance away from the sample. C. Jenkins stated that he would send a PowerPoint slide detailing this. M. Bethel asked about the rock shapefile that he had displayed and people had questioned. C. Jenkins stated that many different researchers had used a variety of techniques to describe the bottom type. He stated that he had created a data dictionary that assigns values to different categories within dbSEABED. One of the problems was that terms like hardbottom had different meanings to different researchers. Members felt that the data dictionary was very important and access to the dictionary should be included through a metadata link. C. Jenkins stated that rock was more of a geotechnical term for hardness of the bottom rather than whether it was an igneous, metamorphic or sedimentary rock. J. Johnston asked about going into the metadata and breaking the terminology down further into a hierarchical classification. C. Jenkins stated there were thousands of data sets within dbSEABED. He stated that the task of presenting the original data would be huge. He stated they were developing a URL link that would take you to the original data as an html file.

J. Sinclair asked about separate categories within areas like rock. C. Jenkins stated that if the committee defined different classes that they wanted, the software can then be used to map those separate facies. Query operations can be set up to show anything the committee wants. C. Jenkins stated that he would like to know how committee members envisioned using the database. This would allow him to design queries that would make the database more user friendly. S. Rohmann stated that NOAA was currently trying to map habitat throughout the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean for *Acropora* coral that had recently been classified as threatened. He asked whether the dbSEABED database structure would help in this type of mapping effort. C. Jenkins stated that the database could be used to do this. G. Boland stated that MMS was very interested in hardbottom areas on the continental slope. G. Boland reported that these hardbottom areas were actually authigenic carbonate that provided habitat for deep sea corals and chemosynthetic communities. J. Sinclair asked if the database would allow you pull all locations of rock within the Gulf of Mexico and then find all of the source documents and data sets through a URL link. He then would want to pull out all formations that were between certain heights. C. Jenkins stated that in theory yes, but it would depend on how or if the original study included the height information. The height might be recorded as

roughness and not height. C. Jenkins stated that what he was hearing from the committee was that they wanted to be able to drill down into the data to further define categories such as rock.

C. Jenkins stated that they would like the committee to send them any additional data sets they know of that might be used in the bottom mapping project. C. Jenkins stated that he would like to have representative geographic coverage or uniform data density across the Gulf. He stated that some data sets were strictly data points while others were polygons that had classified bottom type. He stated that clouds of points were generated over the polygons to work with the point data. Both data types were available for use within the geodatabase. K. Madley asked about the polygons off the Florida Keys and if the cloud of points were only over the hardbottom areas or over all areas. K. Madley stated that he was concerned about the Florida Bay area being classified as hardbottom. C. Jenkins stated that some of the data still needed verification, and he would be checking into this shortly.

C. Jenkins stated that dbSEABED already had coverage in the Gulf of Mexico. He reported that over 13,000 points had been added for the Commission bottom mapping project. He stated that he did not have good coverage west of the Florida Middle Grounds. M. Ribera stated that NMFS had some coverage that might fill in the gaps for this area. S. Locker stated that USGS has work for areas around the Florida Keys and that David Naar had mapped areas on the west Florida shelf. S. Locker asked how journal articles or grey literature were being searched. C. Jenkins stated that he would soon be using academic search engines to systematically find journal articles of interest. He stated that he would have to rely on committee members for grey literature sources.

J. Rester stated that he would send out a data listing from the usSEABED data CD that USGS had recently produced along with the listing that C. Jenkins had produced for the Commission bottom mapping project. J. Rester stated that he would try to send out a copy of the usSEABED CD also. C. Jenkins stated that he would prefer to have data sent to him that were relevant and quick to enter into the database unless he did not have coverage for that particular area.

K. Madley asked about the end product and if the data would be presented as an ArcIMS site that would allow users to manipulate the data. C. Jenkins stated that this was an issue that needed to be discussed. He stated that he would like an ArcIMS site that at least provided a set of grids. K. Madley stated that some researchers might want to download the entire data set in order to use it with other types of physical and biological data. C. Jenkins recommended that the committee stage the release of the data since the data was so large. He stated that we might want to hold back the point data until later. C. Jenkins also stated that the data were not totally validated yet. That was why releasing grids may be better at first. He also suggested releasing some type of publication that provided a firm benchmark for the release. J. Rester requested that C. Jenkins write up a few short sentences with his recommendations for releasing the data along with the justification for releasing it that way.

J. Rester asked about metadata creation and how that was progressing. C. Jenkins stated that he originally asked USGS to create the metadata for the project, but they did not say whether they would be able to complete it or not. He did state that if USGS were to publish the data as an update to the usSEABED project, they would then have to create metadata for all of the records. He stated that he was keeping records on the data that were being entered. J. Rester stated that he felt FGDC compliant metadata needed to be completed. C. Jenkins suggested creating once FGDC compliant metadata record for the entire project and then list how the data were obtained and entered. J. Johnston stated that a request for proposals through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance was currently out that might be an opportunity to fund metadata creation. C. Jenkins stated that the html file that was linked in the database contains comments on how the data were brought into the database. That would form the basis of producing the FGDC compliant metadata later.

N. May asked if the project would include artificial reefs. J. Rester stated that he had not planned to include artificial reef locations, but that it would be easy to add if desired. M. Bethel then demonstrated how to query the database again and how the queries can be used to produce grids. J. Rester asked how the database could be used to produce a bottom type map showing the location of sand, silt, mud, hardbottoms, etc. on one map. Since you do not have full Gulf of Mexico sample coverage, K. Madley suggested that it might be better to break the Gulf into grids and then state whether the grid cell contained hardbottom or not. J. Rester stated that the South Atlantic bottom mapping project used grid cells classified as hardbottom, possible hardbottom, or not hardbottom. J. Rester stated that this might be something to consider. K. Madley stated that the MMS cadastre might be a good choice for the grid cell size. K. Madley stated that MMS was still developing the cadastre, but adopting their cell size might be beneficial.

S. Rohmann next discussed southern Florida's shallow-water coral ecosystems mapping implementation plan (MIP). He reported that the MIP discussed the need to produce shallow-water (0 to 40 m) benthic habitat and bathymetric maps of critical areas in southern Florida. The 0 to 40 m depth zone generally represents where most hermatypic coral species were found and where most direct impacts from pollution and coastal development occurred. The plan was developed with extensive input from over 90 representatives of state regulatory and management agencies, federal agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations involved in the conservation and management of Florida's coral ecosystems. Based on geographic priorities and costs, the MIP recommends developing maps of approximately 13,000 km<sup>2</sup> of southern Florida's shallow-water coral ecosystems. The estimated cost to generate a detailed shallow-water benthic habitat map using high-resolution satellite or similar imagery was approximately \$4.35 million. This cost estimate included purchasing commercial high-resolution satellite imagery, producing the actual benthic habitat map from the imagery, and completing an independent thematic accuracy assessment of the map. S. Rohmann stated that since March 2005, the National Ocean Service (NOS) had purchased approximately 9,000 km<sup>2</sup> of color, high resolution, commercial satellite imagery. This imagery would be used as a basis for delineating benthic habitats. S. Rohmann stated that NOS was also working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute and the South Florida

Water Management District to have LIDAR data collected for the western Sambos Ecological Reserve near Key West.

J. Johnston discussed the Gulf of Mexico Alliance's goal to identify and characterize Gulf of Mexico habitats. J. Johnston stated that as part of this goal, the Priority Habitat Information System (PHINS) was being developed by USGS, NOAA and the Corps of Engineers. He reported that PHINS was a state/federal partnership intended to provide users with habitat information and foundation geospatial data supporting implementation of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Action Plan. The objectives of PHINS were to improve state, local, and federal resource management decision making through increased access and use of spatial data, maximize use of existing data and information by integrating activities and reducing duplication, link federal, state and local project info, reports, and spatial data into a Gulf wide information access and delivery system, and promote collaboration among local, state, and federal agencies' GIS groups, and identify and promote technology development partnership efforts. J. Johnston stated that USGS would produce a prototype web portal to provide access to current and historic local, state, and federal habitat data, with an initial focus on wetlands and seagrass beds. The portal would allow users to search, view, and download spatial and non-spatial datasets at various levels of resolution for the entire Gulf of Mexico. The Spatial Data Viewer would generate online maps from data stored at participating agencies. The Viewer would include tools for navigating data, viewing and querying data attributes, overlaying layers, and printing maps. J. Johnston stated that the Gulf of Mexico Alliance would be holding meetings July 17-19, 2006 and he hoped that J. Rester or C. Jenkins would be able to attend to discuss the role that the Commission's bottom mapping project could provide in identifying offshore habitats.

K. Madley next discussed the Florida Geospatial Assessment of Marine Ecosystems (GAME) project. K. Madley stated that GAME's ultimate goal was to define ecoregions to support decisions concerning coastal waters, commercial and recreational uses, conservation areas, and monitoring programs, all based on and guiding scientific research. The GAME project would lay the groundwork for ecosystem-based management of Florida's estuaries and marine waters, including the West Florida Shelf and the Gulf of Mexico. K. Madley stated that the aim of the first phase was to identify spatial frameworks based on ecological characteristics for coastal and marine assessment and management in Florida. In particular, this initial phase would detect and locate, collate and synthesize existing data and information to assess marine. This would include nearshore coastal areas. The project would assemble the many sources of physical, geomorphological, biological, chemical, and ecological data in a GIS format. This effort would form the prototype for constructing the ecosystem framework. The GIS synthesis effort would enable overlays of diverse information in a way that permits transparent and intuitive visualization and management planning of living marine resources on the West Florida Shelf. Following the initial phase, information gaps would be identified and maps would be produced. K. Madley reported that initial funding for the GAME project was cut this year, but GAME was currently seeking funding to begin the initial phase of work. K. Madley stated that since the GAME project was delayed, the Commission's bottom mapping project could help by listing all data sets identified but not included in

the database because they were not easily digitized. This would save time since these data sets would not need to be identified and recovered by GAME.

J. Rester asked if M. Bethel had any questions for the group. M. Bethel responded that he felt the contractor had enough information to move forward with the data gathering and that if he had any additional questions he would ask the committee. J. Rester asked the committee whether they felt that the contractor had fulfilled their duties during the first six months of their contract. The committee agreed that the contractor was fulfilling their obligations and should proceed with gathering data. J. Rester stated that he would send out data listings from the usSEABED and Commission bottom mapping project to everyone. He then requested that committee members look over the listings and provide any data sets that were not currently identified on the lists.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.



APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Joint LEC/LEAP Work Session  
MINUTES  
July 11-12, 2006  
Tallahassee, FL**

**John Jenkins "JT"** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following attended:

**Members Present**

Bill Robinson, Major, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Walter "Tiny" Chataginer, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS  
John "JT" Jenkins, Major, AMR, Dauphin Island, AL  
Bruce Buckson, Major Florida FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Hal Robbins, SAC, NOAA, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
David McKinney, NMFS, Austin Texas  
Karen Raine, GCEL/SE, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL

**Others**

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Sandy Shanks, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed by the LEC and approved unanimously.

**Operations/Strategic Plan Overview**

**Jenkins** addressed the Committee regarding the Strategic Plan and the Operations Plan. The Tasks were reviewed by the Committee, and updates were made to the 2007-2008 Operations Plan. It had been agreed previously that the Operations Plan would become a two-year plan. **VanderKooy** noted the changes from the 2006 Plan in the text and would provide the Committee an annotated version to present to both the Commission and the Council later in the fall.

A copy of the NOAA Strategic Plan was reviewed by the LEC and distributed by **Buckson** for FY 2006 – FY 2011. It was agreed that Rod Dalton, SERO, would be invited to the LEAP meeting in New Orleans in October.

**Community Outreach**

The committee discussed the need for different methods of community outreach in the Operations Plan, including web site information and access, telephone information access, and other ad campaigns. It was noted that the Strategic Plan contains strong proposals for public education and community outreach. It was suggested that an inventory be taken on the current outreach activities in the Gulf and evaluate any new avenues for outreach.

## Illegal Fish Sales

**Buckson** presented a short video of an undercover operation to bust recreational fishermen who are selling fisheries products illegally to restaurants. Several individuals were caught on tape making the backdoor sales and were charged by the undercover officers.

## JEA Progress Reports

The LEC and LEAP would like to get the progress reports from NOAA Enforcement, however, the person who normally accesses the case reports is having trouble accessing them. When the Council staff gets their quarterly report, the LEC will get copies electronically also, which is a different report from what **Raine** sends out. **McKinney** will include them in the future. The states are reporting differently to the Feds but the JEA software is designed to work out the differences and produce a standardized format.

## Red Snapper – IFQ

**McKinney** offered a timeline of where the program was. January 1, 2006 the communications component was implemented requiring fishermen to provide notification 3 hours prior to offloading fish at the dock, not when they are 3 hours out from the dock. There is still a question regarding the actual mechanism to pass on the notification. A permitted red snapper fisherman will get an ID number and a toll-free phone number to call an interactive voice recorder or IVR. The IVR will provide a series of questions which can be answered by punching keys or voice on a phone. This specific ID number and call will allow landed fish to be tracked back to a specific boat or fisherman and be added to their IFQ. The addition of VMS will also allow tracking of where fishermen are or have been and then can be identified for inspection if they are under suspicion. Using an 800-type phone number, the fisherman will be prompted by the phone recording which will capture their IVR number and information and, through a phone routing, notify an officer via a cell phone or pager of an inbound fisherman. The officer could then call in to get the data on the vessel and where the boat intends to dock. The officer will require a PIN# to access the data and location of landing, etc. The officer can then choose to intercept the boat or not. At this time, IVR is only required to participate in the red snapper fishery. Whenever other fish in the reef fish complex get added to IFQs, those IVR numbers and the VMS will be essential in enforcing the quotas.

**McKinney** reported that several NMFS staff had been sent to Alaska to see how the Pacific's IFQ system worked. Now they are being trained in the Gulf's system so they can provide training for state trainers. Workshops will be held until the states are completely comfortable with the Gulf's IFQ. Several individuals from NMFS will be coming to the states to help with the training well into January, when the program actually starts. The course will be developed and provided to the states for updating and retraining. It will likely be a CD with a PowerPoint presentation. Each state's LEC representative will be able to review the material along the way and modify the training to fit each states needs. The LEC will be meeting August 31 with NOAA in Houston, Texas to see the training materials and go through the workshop. NOAA is providing all the support for this meeting. State training is expected to begin in September getting ready for the January start date for the red snapper IFQ program.

*The LEC adjourned for the evening at 4:50 pm and planned to discuss disaster preparedness and tour the Florida EOC in the morning.*

### **Hurricane Preparedness Discussion**

The LEC met briefly at 8:00 AM and went over the state-of-affairs for each state and the on-going recovery efforts. **Buckson** arranged for the group to tour the Florida Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee. The facility is state-of-the-art and centralizes all the response agencies into one location. The EOC provided support to Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana after hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The Committee met with Colonel Julie Jones and Major Calvin Adams from the FWC Division of Law Enforcement. Colonel Jones gave a complete rundown of the operations center and provided suggestions for the other states when dealing with large scale disaster responses.

### **Other Business**

*There being no further business, **Jenkins** moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.*

**SEAMAP - GULF, SOUTH ATLANTIC  
AND CARIBBEAN SUBCOMMITTEES  
JOINT MINUTES**  
Charleston, SC  
August 3-4, 2006

APPROVED BY  
  
8/2/07  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Chairman A. Rosario** called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. The following members and others were present:

**Members:**

Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Mark Leiby, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jessica Stephen, SCDNR, Charleston, SC  
Jeanne Boylan, SCDNR, Charleston, SC  
Elizabeth Wenner, SCDNR, Charleston, SC  
Henry Ansley, GADNR, Brunswick, GA  
Nilda Jiménez, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR  
Aida Rosario, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR  
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
James Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Bob Beal, ASMFC, Washington, DC  
Doug Vaughan, NMFS/SEFSC, Beaufort, NC  
Wilson Laney, USFWS, Raleigh, NC  
Katy West, NCDMF, Washington, NC  
Tina Udouj, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Larry DeLancey, SCDNR, Charleston, SC  
Roger Pugliese, SAFMC, Charleston, SC  
Mark McDuff, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS

**Others:**

Ellie F. Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

**Staff:**

Scott Nichols, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Karen Mitchell, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Melissa Paine, ASMFC, Washington, DC  
Edgardo Ojeda, UPR Sea Grant, Mayaguez, PR  
Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Cheryl Noble, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

**The agenda was adopted as submitted.**

## Approval of Minutes

On page 9, item “*Planning for 2005 Joint Annual Meeting,*” change 2005 to 2006. The August 3, 2005 minutes were approved with this change.

## Overview of SEAMAP-Gulf

**J. Hanifen** reported the 2005 Fall Plankton survey was cancelled due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted last fall from off Mobile, Alabama to the U.S.-Mexican border. Vessels sampled waters out to 60 fm with trawls and plankton nets in addition to environmental sampling. The objectives of the survey were to sample the northern Gulf of Mexico to determine abundance and distribution of demersal organisms from inshore waters to 60 fm, obtain length-frequency measurements for major finfish and shrimp species to determine population size structures, collect environmental data to investigate potential relationships between abundance and distribution of organisms and environmental parameters, and collect ichthyoplankton samples to determine relative abundance and distribution of eggs and larvae of commercially and recreationally important fish species.

The Spring Plankton Survey took place from April 22 to May 29, 2006. Gulf waters were sampled from the west Florida shelf to the Louisiana/Texas border. One hundred and sixty-four stations were sampled and this was the twenty-fifth year for the survey. The objectives of the survey were to collect ichthyoplankton samples for estimates of the abundance and distribution of Atlantic bluefin tuna larvae and collect environmental data at all ichthyoplankton stations.

The SEAMAP Reef Fish Survey was conducted from April 11 to May 10, 2006 and June 1 until July 7. Video cameras were deployed at 154 sites and the chevron trap at 28 sites. The primary purpose of this survey was to assess relative abundance and compute population estimates of reef fishes found on natural reef fish habitat in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted from June 1 to July 16, 2006 and 332 trawl stations were sampled during the survey. This was the twenty-fifth year for the survey. Objectives of the survey were to monitor size and distribution of penaeid shrimp during or prior to migration of brown shrimp from bays to the open Gulf, aid in evaluating the “Texas Closure” management measure of the Gulf Council's Shrimp Fishery Management Plan, and provide information on shrimp and groundfish stocks across the northern Gulf of Mexico from inshore waters to 50 fm. The overall sampling strategy was to work from the eastern Gulf to the Texas/Mexico border, in order to sample during or prior to migration of brown shrimp from bays to the open Gulf area. Real-time shrimp data were again produced from the survey. Catches of shrimp and finfish were reported weekly from the survey and plots and catch rates were distributed to interested individuals. NMFS and Louisiana vessels collected ichthyoplankton data also. Fifty-five stations were sampled with bongo and/or neuston nets.

## Overview of SEAMAP-South Atlantic

**R. Pugliese** reported the largest component of the South Atlantic SEAMAP is the Shallow Water Trawl survey which is continuing and conducted by SCDNR. The overall goal of the survey is to obtain a long-term database to assist in the management of stock in the South Atlantic Bight. The objectives of the survey are to collect data on size, abundance, distribution, and seasonality of select species of fish and crustaceans, to record species composition, biomass, abundance, length frequencies, and size, sex and gonadal conditions of white, pink and brown shrimp and other target species. The spring and summer cruises have been completed and the fall cruise will take place in late October or early November of this year. He stated the Shallow Water Trawl Survey is the foundation for SEAMAP-SA activities.

The Bottom Mapping Project is now in Phase 3 which began in 2004 using the protocols developed in Phase 1 to obtain and standardize the data identified in Phase 2. The first project of Phase 3 was to digitize and translate existing bottom character maps for deepwater marine habitat off the southeastern United States. The maps include coral formations and base geology for a large area off the coasts of northern Florida, Georgia and South Carolina. Another project for Phase 3 has started and it will be the creation of a deepwater bottom type spatial database. The FWRI is participating with the Bottom Mapping Workgroup to create a GIS of deepwater bottom habitats from off North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida coasts. The GIS database will be available via the ASMFC and other websites.

Other activities of the SEAMAP-SA include the ongoing winter survey for striped bass, the Pamlico Sound Survey, work group meetings, and preparing reports in support of all the activities. Additional tasks included fulfilling data requests, preparation of annual program reports and State/Federal Cooperative Agreements, and distribution of publications.

The SEAMAP Crustacean Work Group and Shallow Water Trawl Work Group both met on June 14-15, 2006, and discussed analyses of Shallow Water Trawl Survey sample allocation and recent trends in crustacean fisheries.

The SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Offshore Tagging Cruise was conducted from January 19-28, 2006 aboard the NOAA R/V Oregon II. Personnel from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, East Carolina University, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources participated in the cruise. This was the nineteenth year of the cooperative project, initiated in 1988 at the request of SEAMAP-South Atlantic. Adult striped bass over-wintering in the area between False Cape, Virginia and Cape Lookout, North Carolina, were tagged for assessment of the population structure and exploitation rates. Other species tagged included Atlantic sturgeon, horseshoe crab, and spiny dogfish. Numerous species including summer flounder, weakfish, bay anchovies, spotted hake, and Atlantic croaker were retained for diet studies.

**R. Pugliese** reported the South Atlantic Board did not approve the management plan. There was a question about having an external review before approving the management plan. A revised copy

has been sent to the Board which meets in two weeks and it should be approved. If it is approved by the South Atlantic Board, they will send a copy to the Gulf for approval at the October Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's Commission Business Meeting.

### **Overview of SEAMAP-Caribbean**

**A. Rosario** reported that all goals proposed for the Whelk Survey were achieved. A partial report has been submitted to the SERO Program Manager and results will be presented at the next Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute meeting that will be held in Belize in November, 2006. The survey results identified the need for a study on the reproduction and size relationship for the whelk population in Puerto Rico to verify and validate proposed harvesting regulations. A total of 86 surveys were completed covering 17 stations for the Fisheries Independent Monitoring of Shallow Water Reef Fish. This yielded general information on 55 species, but only detailed information on 3 species. A six month extension was requested and approved to complete improvements on one of the research vessels used for the study. The data was entered in the SEAMAP format and a final report will be completed in September.

The five year SEAMAP-PR proposals for 2006-2011 were approved in March. The Queen Conch Survey was the first to start. Fishermen interviews to collect information on harvesting sites were completed. Based on the information collected from the fishermen, the amount of survey sites for the east side was increased. All survey stations have been selected. The surveys were started in mid-July on the West coast of Puerto Rico. The surveys are expected to be completed by the end of the queen conch closure season in September.

**A. Rosario** reported that a new research vessel will be purchased for the USVI. Eighty-thousand dollars have been secured from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Sport Fish Restoration Program funds and \$41,000 from SEAMAP-C Division of Fish and Wildlife. The trap and hook and line survey has been on hold pending the purchase of the research vessel. The DPNR-DFW requested a 12-month extension for the reef fish surveys. A consultant was hired to analyze the entire historic SEAMAP-C USVI trap and hook and line database. This analysis was forwarded to SEAMAP-C and NOAA Fisheries. A review report of this analysis was completed. She said that about 5 years ago, as part of a separate habitat study, conch data were collected in the St. Croix Embayment but were not analyzed. These data have been analyzed and a final report was completed. Copies of the final report were provided to the SEAMAP-C Committee. DPNR/DFW has received approval for the conch survey grant from NOAA Fisheries. DFW has also acquired two underwater scooters for field work through the administrative portion of the SEAMAP-C grant.

Historically, St. Croix and Puerto Rico have done drift hook and line fishing while St. Thomas/St. John have done anchor fishing. An index between drift and anchor hook and line fishing is needed so that results can be compared. This must be done concurrently with the St. Thomas/St. John drift fishing that is on hold for the new vessel.

### **Status of FY2007 Funds**

**S. Nichols** said SEAMAP may receive a windfall. The exact amount SEAMAP will receive is uncertain but the President's budget has \$5 million, the Senate has \$7 million and the House \$0. He suggests that if SEAMAP does receive more funding to make restoration the priority, and then prioritize other projects. He feels the restoration target will be around \$3.2 million.

### **Proposed Activities and Budget Needs for FY 2007**

Each component distributed their proposed budgets with figures for receiving twice the amount of funding, \$5 million, and \$7.2 million. Below are the summaries for the figures.

**Gulf - J. Hanifen** said the Gulf has met on numerous occasions by telephone and at this morning's meeting to discuss proposed activities if SEAMAP receives more funding. He said they wish to restore current projects to full utilization and they also identified new surveys to conduct if additional funds are received. The Gulf has also identified the need to enhance data management, put additional funds into the spring plankton survey, summer shrimp/groundfish survey, increase costs of operation of vessels, and purchase new equipment. More funding also needs to be put back into the reef fish survey, the fall plankton survey, the fall shrimp/groundfish survey, the Texas longlining project, the ichthyoplankton archiving center, the Polish Sorting Center, and the SEAMAP Archiving Center. In addition to restoring historical projects, the Gulf would like to have a new trawl survey off Florida so that there will be complete coverage of the gulf for shrimp/groundfish work. They would like to initiate a winter plankton survey across the gulf, address nearshore sampling needs primarily off Louisiana and Alabama; start a winter shrimp groundfish survey in Alabama and inshore shark longlining survey, a deepwater reef fish survey, and a vertical habitat reef fish survey. The Gulf needs an expansion of data management capabilities and improvements. To restore current projects they request \$1,605,931 for the surveys and \$170,800 for equipment. For new surveys they request \$899,500 and \$446,000 for equipment. The total request is \$2,287,120 million for surveys and \$526,800 for equipment. The full breakdown was distributed and is available at the GSMFC office. These figures also include NMFS. The total request for the \$5 million budget is \$3.1 million.

If SEAMAP receives the \$7.4 million dollar figure, they request \$1.228 million for NMFS and \$3.3 million for the Gulf. This will be in keeping with the current percentages with the Gulf at 45% and NMFS 17%. Current funding is \$612,429.

**R. Pugliese** stated the components will discuss percentage allocations later. He said the South Atlantic feels they should receive the same share as the Gulf.

**South Atlantic - R. Pugliese** discussed the proposed SEAMAP-SA allocations which support a South Atlantic coast survey, bottom mapping and fish habitat characterization and assessment, Pamlico Sound survey, data management, and the ASMFC administrative budget. He said the budget is broken down into two different levels. They used the President's budget of \$5.09 as the expansion and restoration portion, and used an intermediate number of \$3.29 million dollars.



To restore the shallow water trawl (south Atlantic coast survey) it would cost \$440,414, with equipment costs of \$93,100, and processing life history data would cost \$56,000.

To restore the bottom mapping and fish habitat characterization and assessment survey would be \$60,000 for early life history sampling; \$50,000 for equipment; \$56,000 for life history; \$175,000 for nearshore sampling; \$120,000 for the MARMAP Station Supplement; and \$30,000 for processing and cooperative sampling support. To expand each of these components would be \$60,000; \$65,000; \$84,000; \$500,000; \$120,000 and \$50,000.

To restore the Pamlico Sound Survey it would cost \$45,000 and to expand would be \$45,000. The Data Management portion for restoration would be \$167,000 and expansion would be \$202,000. The ASMFC Administrative budget restoration would be \$65,000 and expansion would be \$85,000.

The total amount for SEAMAP-SA to restore at the \$3.2 million level would be \$1,357,514 and to expand at the \$5 million level would be \$2,075,000 (detailed breakdown available at the GSMFC office).

**R. Pugliese** stated they also discussed that if SEAMAP does receive more funding, future funding allocations should be 40% SA, 40% Gulf, and 20% Caribbean. With these allocations, total restoration would be \$3,290,243 and expansion would be \$5,090,000. He also stated that if more than \$5 million is received, allocations should be made at the above mentioned percentages. If level funding is received, the chairs need to meet to renegotiate as the South Atlantic is in a real bind.

**Caribbean – A. Rosario** said the Puerto Rico 2007 funding priorities include restoring current projects to full utilization, increase sampling to ensure sufficient data for stock assessments/management, and a new whelk project. Total requested is \$606,000.00. For the USVI the 2007 funding priorities include restoring current projects to full utilization, increase sampling to ensure sufficient data for stock assessments/management, new equipment, and new larval dispersion/recruitment modeling and mutton snapper spawning aggregation assessment projects. Total funding would be \$606,000.00.

**NMFS – S. Nichols** said everyone defines restoration differently. The numbers submitted so far has left the Caribbean light. He suggested looking at restoration numbers for each component on one page, and then prioritize each project that needs to be restored or added.

**The budget discussion was tabled and Items 7, 8, and 9 were discussed and finalized. The components met separately and the joint meeting continued on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Items 7, 8, and 9 were covered and the meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 9:00 a.m. on August 4, 2006 and the budget discussion was continued and finalized.**

#### **Status of the SEAMAP Management Plan**

**R. Pugliese** reported the South Atlantic Board did not approve the management plan. They felt the restoration portion needed to be tweaked and there was a question about not having an external

review before approving the management plan. Changes will be made after this meeting and a revised copy will be sent to the Board which meets in two weeks and it should be approved. If it is approved by the South Atlantic Board, they will send a copy to the Gulf for approval at the October Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's Commission Business Meeting.

**S. Nichols** stated the reason the external review was postponed was because he did not think it was appropriate to have an external review while increased funding was being discussed and/or a possibility. Once increased funding is secured, an external review can be planned.

### **GSMFC Proposal for SEAMAP Data Management**

The Gulf component submitted a proposal to take over the responsibilities of SEAMAP data management for all three SEAMAP components. **J. Rester** said that the Commission held a meeting with the SEAMAP Data Manager and the SEAMAP Program Manager and that NMFS has agreed to allow the Gulf to assume the SEAMAP data management responsibilities. He said the main objective will be having a person dedicated to SEAMAP Data Management housed at the GSMFC office. He stressed the Gulf will not be able to do this without increased funding. The South Atlantic said they would like to continue doing their own data management because they have a system that is sufficient, but the Caribbean said they would be interested in the Gulf taking over the responsibilities, but cannot make a firm commitment at this time. They will have to discuss it with the appropriate personnel and will contact **J. Rester** if it is approved. The components agreed that the Gulf should continue to develop a system to improve the SEAMAP Data Management and dissemination processes. A copy of the proposal can be obtained at the GSMFC office.

### **Planning for 2007 Joint Annual Meeting**

**A. Rosario** stated that because they do not know what will happen in the Virgin Islands with the Director retiring, she is not sure where to plan the meeting but it will probably be in Puerto Rico. The Committee agreed to have the meeting in the same time frame and Aida will inform them of where it will be several months before the meeting. If she has information before, she will let the Coordinators know.

**The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.**

### **Friday, August 4, 2006**

The SEAMAP Committee reconvened at 9:00 a.m. and continued discussion on the SEAMAP FY 2007 budget.

### **Joint Discussion of SEAMAP Budget for FY 2007**

Extensive discussion ensued on each component's proposed budgets, changing the percentages for future allocations, and the letters written to Dr. Hogarth and Senators from states that have a

SEAMAP Subcommittee Meeting  
MINUTES  
Charleston, SC  
August 3, 2006

APPROVED BY:   
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**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  
Mark Leiby, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

**Others:**

Karen Mitchell, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Mark McDuff, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

**Staff:**

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**

**S. Heath moved to approve the March 14, 2006 minutes as submitted. P. Choucair seconded and the motion passed.**

## **Administrative Report**

J. Rester reported the Spring Plankton Survey was conducted from April 22 to May 29, 2006. A total of 164 stations were sampled during the survey. This was the twenty-fifth year for the survey. The SEAMAP Reefish Survey was conducted from April 11 to May 10, 2006. A total of 154 video stations and 28 fish traps were completed during the survey. The SEAMAP Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted this summer from June 1 to July 16, 2006. This was the twenty-fifth year for the survey and 331 trawl stations were sampled.

Real time data were produced during the shrimp/groundfish survey. One hundred-fifty copies were mailed and 66 copies were emailed each week. Real time plots were also available on the GSMFC web site. An end of survey report was emailed and posted on the web site.

J. Rester stated that the fishery independent database project was progressing although slowly. Oregon State is developing the fishery independent database structure. They have received everything they need from the states to complete the project. Oregon State should have the finalized structure available for review before the October meeting.

J. Rester said he used the SEAMAP trawl data to explore potential juvenile red snapper hot spots in the Gulf of Mexico. He presented the information to the Council at the June Council meeting where they discussed potential time/area shrimping closures to protect juvenile red snapper as part of Shrimp Amendment 15. Sandra Diamond from Texas Tech used SEAMAP data to model red snapper and shrimp concentrations in the Gulf of Mexico. She only used NMFS data so some of the areas she had as hot spots did not correspond to what he had as hot spots. J. Rester discussed this with her and sent her all of the SEAMAP data. She will incorporate all of the data and should have a very interesting technical paper in the near future. J. Hanifen asked J. Rester to ask her to present this information at the October meeting if her work was completed by then. He will discuss this with her and inform the Subcommittee of her response.

## **Activities and Budget Needs for FY2007/Status of FY2007 Budget**

J. Rester stated the House budget mark for SEAMAP is zero, the President's budget is \$5.09 million, and the Senate's budget is \$7.4 million. He said level funding would be \$1.385 million so these are the figures to use to plan the 2007 budget. He said they should plan for each scenario. If the higher funding comes through, the Gulf has to be prepared to justify the percentage they ask for at the joint meeting. J. Rester said historically the Gulf's and NMFS's share combined is 45% and at the \$5.09 million mark the total would be close to \$3 million. He suggested the Subcommittee prioritize needs along with associated costs. Another thing that needs to be discussed is making sure that they will be able to perform the work. The Subcommittee then discussed if personnel and vessels would be available, if plankton surveys were expanded would they be able to sort and store new samples, and should they add new gear, such as Tucker trawls. It was also suggested to use additional funding to supplement funding some of the vessels in the Gulf that may be going offline due to funding cuts. When the discussion was complete, the Subcommittee decided to ask for 45% of whichever budget passed. The Subcommittee also decided to ask the Plankton Work Group to meet as soon as possible to discuss how to expand the surveys and address the ship time, lab capabilities, gear, etc. J. Hanifen asked J. Rester to calculate the numbers and have them available for the joint meeting. If level

funding is received, the Subcommittee agreed to stay at \$612,000. The Subcommittee will have a conference call after they are informed of the final figure and plan how to begin new/expanded surveys.

### **GSMFC Proposal for SEAMAP Data Management**

J. Rester said a meeting was held at NMFS with M. McDuff, B. Pellegrin, S. Nichols and himself to discuss the possibility of the Commission assuming the data management responsibilities for all SEAMAP participants, including NMFS. He then reviewed each item of the proposal. He said the only way the Commission would be able to do this is if SEAMAP receives increased funding. He said they plan to hire a data manager who would be 100% dedicated to SEAMAP data management. The Subcommittee approved the proposal and asked him to present this at the Joint meeting for their approval.

R. Waller asked M. McDuff the status of developing the smaller electronic measuring boards. M. McDuff said NOAA contracted with the University of Maryland to develop a new board but the technique they have at this point is not satisfactory. He will keep the Subcommittee informed of any progress. M. Leiby asked the status of entering the ichthyoplankton data online. M. McDuff said they were still working on that and J. Rester reminded everyone to send in their metadata so they can continue working on getting these things complete. M. McDuff said he still has not received the proper guidance on how to show the SEAMAP data online. The Subcommittee discussed again exactly how they want to display the data online, how to track who is using the data, what documentation is needed with the data, and what queries need to be set up for users to get the information they need. It was suggested to have users put in their name, address, and email to receive a password to access the data. It was also suggested to have basic information displayed at the very beginning such as the number of stations sampled over the years, seasons, numbers of trawls, etc., and then the user could do a more detailed search if necessary. The Subcommittee asked J. Rester to continue contacting each Subcommittee via email to compile a list on exactly what needs to be done and how to accomplish each task listed above. This would be discussed and hopefully finalized at the next meeting.

### **SEAMAP ArcIMS Website**

J. Rester said two years ago he demonstrated an ArcIMS site hosted by NCDDC using SEAMAP data. He has standardized the database again and proposes to do basically the same thing using the summer and fall data from 1987 to 2004. He displayed the brown shrimp distributions and asked the Subcommittee which species distributions they would like to see displayed. He currently has gray trigger fish, Atlantic bumper, sand and silver sea trout, spot, red snapper, lane snapper, croaker, butterfly, vermilion snapper, red drum, king and Spanish mackerel, long spine porgy, brown, pink and white shrimp, long fin squid and arrow squid. He said these are the species that were discussed a couple of years ago except he added long spine porgy at J. Hanifen's request. He then demonstrated what can be displayed and how. He then asked how they want to do the symbology and classification. After discussion, the Subcommittee asked J. Rester to send them several different examples on how the data can be displayed and the links to NCDDC and they will make a final decision via email. He will present this again at the next meeting.

### 2002 SEAMAP Atlas

J. Rester said the 2002 Atlas was still on hold and asked M. McDuff the status. He said this was a low priority for NMFS but once they get the programs back up and running they should be able to get the 2002 and all the other atlases out very quickly.

### Photo Library Update

M. Leiby said no progress has been made since the last meeting. He was still contacting people who were interested and working on the legal aspects regarding photograph copyrights. Once he drafted an outline on the disclaimer that will be on the webpage, he will send it to the Subcommittee for their approval before moving forward. J. Rester will send him information on registering photographs in bulk with the Copyright Office.

### Extra SEAMAP Money in the Commission Budget

Funding for the photo library, Plankton Work Group meeting, and purchasing YSI meters for Texas were suggested for using the extra funding that was supposed to be used for the external review. M. Leiby said they are not ready for funding for the photo library and J. Rester said there were funds in the budget for work group meetings. **M. Leiby moved to use the funding to purchase YSI meters for Texas. S. Heath seconded the motion and it passed.** P. Choucair will send all information to J. Rester on the meters.

**With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Thursday, August 10, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana

Facilitator Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Ginny Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL  
Vernon Minton (via phone), ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Holly Bamford (proxy for R. Crabtree), NMFS, Miami, FL  
Doug Fruge (proxy for C. Brown), USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Dave Van Voorhees, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD  
Bonnie Ponwith, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

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 2007

**L. Simpson** provided a brief overview regarding the status of 2007 funding for data collection and management activities. He stated that there is a very general NMFS budget from the House but does not provide any detail for the specific line items. The preliminary numbers from the Senate show increases in both the GulfFIN (from \$4.25M to \$4.5M) and RecFIN (from (\$3.445M to \$4.5M) line items. There are three scenarios: 1) status quo (level funding for both GulfFIN and RecFIN line items) which would result in a shortfall of \$472K between proposed vs. available; 2) increase in GulfFIN and level funding in RecFIN which would result in a shortfall of \$235K between proposed vs. available; and 3) increases in both the GulfFIN and RecFIN line items which would result in a surplus of \$116K between proposed vs. available. The Committee discussed the various options regarding the available funds. **D. Donaldson** noted that due to the loss of the FIN Data Base Manager, GSMFC could potentially fund the detailed effort pilot survey with this year's funds which would reduce the proposed amount for 2007. **G. Vail** noted that the FIN budget should be developed

on the potential increased amount of funding. By submitting for level funding, it sends the wrong message to Congress. After some discussion, **G. Vail moved to use scenario #2 (increases in both the GulfFIN and RecFIN line items) as the funding level for the development of the 2007 FIN cooperative agreement. The amount included in the GulfFIN line item (less the tax) is \$4,275,000 and the Gulf's portion of the Recreational Fisheries Harvesting (RecFIN) line item is \$1,211,507, for a possible total of \$5,486,507.** The motion was seconded and passed.

**D. Donaldson** provided an overview of the documents that were distributed to the group. He then discussed the summary of the activities for potential funding in 2007 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 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. It was noted that there is one new activity proposed under this task for 2007: a mail survey (utilizing a contractor) to characterize the private boat highly migratory species fishery in Gulf of Mexico. The results of this survey will allow FIN to determine the best method for collecting data from this sector. Job 2 pertains to the collection, management and dissemination of marine recreational fisheries data. This job will 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. Job 3.2 refers to the collection of catch and effort data for head boats operating in the Gulf of Mexico via the Telephone For-Hire Survey; states will conduct weekly telephone calls to a 25% random sample of the Alabama and Florida head boat captains to obtain estimates of head boat fishing effort. The catch and bycatch data will 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. 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 operations of the FIN Data Management System (DMS) which will provide for operations of the data management system for the FIN including routine loading of Texas, 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 using the data elements and standards developed by the ComFIN. It also provides funding for Texas, 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. A new method for calculating sample size was developed by FIN this year and will allow for an increase in the number of species sampled. And Job 8 refers to



the collection of detailed effort (multiple 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.

The group discussed the new method for determining sampling targets for biological sampling. **S. Heath** stated that Alabama is concerned with the drastic reduction in the number of necessary otoliths for each species. He suggested that since this issue is technical in nature, it should be addressed by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) instead of the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee. An exercise could be conducted to reduce the number of samples (for a particular species) until those reductions results in the change in outcome of the stock assessment. **J. Roussel** stated that Louisiana has conducted such an exercise for flounder and found that they were oversampling this species and have made the appropriate reductions. Also, he noted that during the recent red snapper SEDAR process, the SEDAR group did not utilize all of the available red snapper otoliths and recommended only 3,000 otoliths were needed to conduct the stock assessment. **D. Donaldson** noted that when this task was first implemented, the design for developing the target sample sizes was based on an undocumented methodology. It was believed by the personnel involved that the sampling level was probably too high but it was just a starting point. Because of this fact, the FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group continued to explore alternative methods for determining sampling targets and have been discussing the proposed approach (using 500 otoliths per key strata) for a couple of years. The proposed approach appears to provide more realistic sampling targets and will also allow for more species to be sampled. **S. Heath** stated that he still has concerns about the proposed method. It was suggested that the new method could be applied to the existing targets. It was pointed out that would not be viable since you would be combining two dissimilar methods. **V. Minton** stated that there is an issue regarding cells with a small number of samples. It was asked if there are protocols to handle this situation. **D. Donaldson** stated that the biological sampling protocols generally address this issue by stating that sampling should be distributed throughout the year and modes. It was noted that while that is viable with a large sample size, it could be potentially problematic with smaller samples and additional exploration might be needed regarding this issue. **J. Roussel** noted that this issue is not specific to the new methodology. This issue was present with the existing methods as well. It was suggested that the Data Collection Plan Work Group examine this issue at their next work group meeting. Because of concerns with the new methodology, **S. Heath moved to return to the status quo (using existing sampling targets for red snapper, greater amberjack, king mackerel, and gulf and southern flounder) for 2007 and ask the TCC to further examine the proposed methodology.** The motion was seconded and failed with Texas, Louisiana, Florida NMFS, and USFWS voting against and Mississippi and Alabama voting for the motion.

After some discussion, **J. Roussel** moved to fund the following activities:

- **Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (including a survey to characterize private boat HMS fishery utilizing HMS permit frame);**
- **Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (including TX);**
- **Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida;**
- **Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling;**
- **Operation of FIN Data Management System;**
- **Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi;**
- **Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas;**
- **Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling (using the new methodology);**
- **For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Alabama and Florida; and**
- **Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana**

The motion was seconded. **D. Donaldson** noted that the Detailed Effort pilot survey will be funded using 2006 funds to ensure this project will be implemented. **C. Perret** suggested that FIN continue examining sampling methods for collecting data on highly migratory species in the Gulf of Mexico. It was noted that FIN has developed some draft methodology and a pilot project could be presented for funding in 2008. **S. Heath** stated that cost of collecting and processing otoliths in Alabama had significantly increased since the start of this task. Currently, Alabama is charging about \$26 per otolith while the actual cost is over \$50 per otolith. In order to minimize increased costs, Alabama is willing to charge approximately \$38 per otolith for 2007. After some discussion, the motion passed unanimously. **D. Donaldson** stated that Alabama needs to provide a revised budget for biological sampling with some justification for the higher costs of collection and processing. The final allocation of funds for the 2007 FIN cooperative agreement is attached (Attachment B). **M. Ray** stated that Texas is proposing to examine night fishing activities by using cameras to record the number of trailers at boat ramps during non-sampling periods. He stated the cost of this task would be approximately \$10,000 and asked the Committee to consider it for future funding.

The Committee then discussed a contingency plan if full funding is not realized. If there is only level funding, it was suggested that the number of species for biological sampling be reduced to the original five species (red snapper, greater amberjack, king mackerel, and gulf and southern flounder). **G. Vail** noted that Florida might not be able to adequately conduct biological sampling for any species at this reduced funding level and would reserve the option to reassess how to conduct this specific activity within the constraints of an overall budget reduction. **L. Simpson** noted that that final amount appropriated by Congress should be known by November/December of this year.

#### Development of Recreational Data Needs for the Gulf of Mexico

**D. Donaldson** stated that in response to the NRC report regarding recreational data collection, NOAA Fisheries is convening a national Recreational Data Requirements Workshop the first week of September. NOAA Fisheries has asked each region to identify the recreational data needs for their area. A list developed by the FIN and its various subcommittees and work groups was presented to the group for their consideration and review. **B. Ponwith** stated that the workshop

will examine statistical issues, management impacts and communication and outreach. It will allow the stakeholders to identify all of pertinent issues related to recreational data collection. The Committee reviewed the list and the revised list of recreational data needs in the Gulf of Mexico is attached (Attachment C).

#### Other Business

The Committee discussed the date and location of the next State Directors meeting. After some discussion, it was decided that the State Directors will be during the 1<sup>st</sup> week of April 2007 in the area of West Texas.

**L. Simpson** noted that the disaster cooperative agreement has gone through both legal and technical review. The agreement should be awarded soon and could be announced as early as next week. The Committee discussed the disaster workshop planned in October 2006. The workshop will be held in conjunction with the GSMFC Annual meeting in New Orleans and is scheduled for half a day. NOAA Grants personnel as well as state and GSMFC financial people will be attending the workshop.

**Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.**

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN 2007**

***HIGH PRIORITY***

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)

Survey to characterize private boat HMS fishery utilizing HMS permit frame (new)

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

Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)

Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)

Operation 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 (ongoing)

Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling (ongoing)

For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Alabama and Florida (ongoing)

Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana (new)

***MEDIUM PRIORITY***

Pilot Study for Collection of Catch (catch cards/dock-side) and Effort (telephone survey) Data for Highly Migratory Species (new)

***LOW PRIORITY***

For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Louisiana (new)

For-Hire Telephone Survey (effort) and At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas (new)

Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)

## ATTACHMENT B

ACTIVITY	2007	
HIGH PRIORITY		COST
Admin and coordination of FIN (Job1)		\$401,376
Recreational data collection (Job 2)		
Texas	\$95,789	
Louisiana	\$440,741	
Mississippi	\$205,775	
Alabama	\$148,513	
Florida	\$1,425,676	
GSMFC	\$207,043	
Recreational survey subtotal		\$2,523,537
Head boat sampling (Job 3.1)		
Florida	\$120,891	
Contractual - TX sampler	\$38,119	
Head boat subtotal		\$159,010
At-sea sampling (Job 3.2)		
Alabama	\$21,725	
Florida	\$242,849	
At-sea subtotal		\$264,574
Menhaden sampling (Job 4)		\$47,701
FIN DMS (Job 5)		\$195,659
Trip ticket programs (Job 6)		
Texas	\$127,634	
Louisiana	\$425,835	
Mississippi	\$74,813	
Alabama	\$129,072	
Contractual - SCBI	\$81,970	
Trip ticket subtotal		\$839,324
Biological sampling collection (Job 7)		
Contractual - TX samplers	\$99,564	
Texas	\$14,698	
Louisiana	\$326,451	
Mississippi	\$66,623	
Alabama	\$108,317	
Florida	\$247,098	
Biological sampling subtotal		\$862,751
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$5,293,932</b>

**IDENTIFIED RECREATIONAL DATA ISSUES FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO**

- Develop sampling protocol to collect data from fishermen utilizing private access sites;
- Develop sampling protocol to collect data from fishermen utilizing non-hook and line gears (including finfish, shellfish, crustacean, etc.);
- Investigate the feasibility of using the for-hire telephone survey and at-sea sampling protocols for collection of data from head boats;
- Identify species that are not adequately sampled under the current sampling regimen and implement specific surveys that target these species;
- Investigate methods for improving recreational sampling coverage of inshore tidal areas;
- Explore the feasibility of developing more detailed area fished codes;
- Implement a recreational fishing effort survey that utilizes marine fishing license as the sampling frame;
- Determine the magnitude of live market activities and implement a survey to collect data these activities;
- Increase recreational sampling levels by identifying geographic regions of interest for recreational sampling and investigate feasibility of sampling these regions;
- Optimize sampling allocations to improve precision for identified key species;
- Develop methods to accurately collect catch and effort data for highly migratory species (HMS);
- Explore methods to accurately estimate recreational fishing participation;
- Determine where and how to split the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico for the Florida Keys region;
- Determine the magnitude of use and pressure of artificial reefs for recreational fishing; and
- Develop methods to collect catch and effort data for recreational diving activities.

Oyster Technical Task Force  
MINUTES  
August 15, 2006  
New Orleans, LA

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Steve VanderKooy, called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. The following attended:

Members Present

Mark Van Hoose, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Brian Lezina, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Bill Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL  
Bradley Randall, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Walter Keithly, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA

Others

Kimberly Damon-Randall, NMFS/NERO, Gloucester, MA  
Jennifer Moore, NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

VanderKooy opened the meeting and welcomed the new members and the guests from the NMFS who would be presenting the information from the Eastern Oyster ESA Petition and Technical Review.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed. *B Robinson moved to accept the agenda as written. B Randall seconded and the agenda was approved.*

Approval of Minutes (June 27, 2006)

The minutes from the first meeting in Pensacola were reviewed. Hearing no changes, *Randall moved to approve as written. B Robinson seconded and the minutes were accepted.*

Review of Technical Task Force Roster

Minor changes to addresses and phone numbers were noted and VanderKooy will send out a revised roster following the meeting. VanderKooy did note the new members to the TTF, some of whom were unable to attend. The only remaining vacancy on the TTF was the FDA/ISSC expert who has yet to be named. VanderKooy will continue to pursue having that slot filled.

## NOAA's Eastern Oyster ESA Review

**Kimberly Damon-Randall** (NMFS/NERO) and **Jennifer Moore** (NMFS/SERO) attended the meeting to go over the petition and review process. The document is currently being reviewed by the Center for Independent Experts in Miami and it is anticipated that completion of the review will be mid-October. The results of the review indicate that the eastern oyster is widely distributed and harvested throughout its range. Twenty resource managers and independent experts responded to the review panel's request for data with information that covered 72 estuaries throughout the species range and reported that oysters are currently present in all but one, the Upper Laguna Madre. The survey also indicated that the available fisheries dependent and independent data were insufficient to assess stability of populations. It was strongly suggested that current recruitment is sufficient to maintain the viability of the population throughout its range except in a portion of the mid-Atlantic.

One of the biggest points of contention by the experts on the review panel was that there may be a genetic component to the eastern oyster that could separate the south Atlantic and Gulf populations from the rest of the Atlantic coast. **Damon-Randall** indicated that while some genetic evidence suggests that a subspecies may exist south of South Carolina; taxonomists have yet to identify/establish eastern oyster subspecies.

**Damon-Randall** reported that restoration and enhancement efforts for fisheries and conservation are occurring throughout the oysters range, but are more common in the north and mid-Atlantic where the population is having problems. In the north Atlantic (specifically, Connecticut and Rhode Island) and the Gulf of Mexico, restoration and enhancement efforts are not necessary to sustain biologically viable populations but are considered important to maintaining a fishery and conserving ecosystem services.

Some of the conclusions noted in the review were summarized by **Damon-Randall**. Threats to oyster populations are many, but none of those identified are overwhelmingly dominant or advancing at a rate that would threaten the viability of the species throughout its full range. However, there may be some significant threats at the regional or local level in the mid-Atlantic. Fishery harvest declines are widely recognized as unreliable indicators of population trends. Most restoration efforts for oysters are motivated by interest in reclaiming ecosystem services and/or sustaining fisheries, not by a perceived need to protect the species itself. Finally, it is expected that domestication and farming are expanding to satisfy market demand.

**Damon-Randall** entertained questions from the TTF and indicated that the materials in the review are public documents and therefore available for use in our revision process. Since several members of the TTF participated in the drafting of the document, they are considered the authors and therefore free to use the data summarized in the review as well. **Moore** will continue to be in communication with the TTF as the revision process moves forward. The TTF was very appreciative to both **Damon-Randall** and **Moore** for traveling all the way to New Orleans to support the GSMFC's revision efforts.

## Drafting Assignments



**VanderKooy** led the discussion using the revised table of contents (Attached). The original FMP contents were blended with the accepted GSMFC format and sections were assigned. **VanderKooy** will provide the WordPerfect files from the 1991 FMP to the TTF as well as the Word version of the ESA document following the meeting. It is anticipated that many of the sections could be updated by the next TTF meeting sometime in November or December.

### Electronic Reference Set

**VanderKooy** reminded the TTF that any publications or citations included in the drafting of the FMP should be copied and provided to **VanderKooy** at the GSMFC office. All the pertinent references would be scanned and provided electronically back to all the TTF members. In addition, **VanderKooy** noted that the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's Gunter Library was an excellent resource available to the TTF should they be unable to locate materials or not want to pay for publications through interlibrary loans.

### Discussion of Moderator/Chair

Following a brief discussion it was agreed unanimously that **VanderKooy** should remain as moderator until such time the TTF got tired of his ramblings.

### Next Meeting

**VanderKooy** suggested that the next TTF meeting be held on the Florida coast to ease the travel for the NMFS participants from St. Petersburg. Naples has an excellent hotel that is small but goes overboard to make the GSMFC comfortable. With no objections, **VanderKooy** will begin to look at dates for availability and get the information out to the TTF along with travel authorizations.

### Other Business

With no further business, **B Robinson** moved to adjourn. **L Robinson** seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

*The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.*

APPROVED BY:  
*Traci Floyd*  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Blue Crab Stock Assessment Workshop**  
**Meeting Summary**  
September 21, 2006  
Gulf Coast Research Laboratory  
Ocean Springs, MS

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by **VanderKooy**, moderator. Those in attendance were:

Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Glen Sutton, TPWD, Dickenson, TX  
Brandon Puckett, NC State University, Raleigh, NC  
Mike Murphy, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL  
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralf Riedel, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Rich Fulford, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Butch Pellegrin, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Leslie Hartman, ADCNT/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Teri Freitas, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Introductions**

**VanderKooy** began the introductions and announced that **Dr. Rich Fulford's** statistics class would be attending the afternoon session. **VanderKooy** and **Perry** reported briefly on the GSMFC's lipofuscin proposal and its current status in the Cooperative Research Program's review process. **VanderKooy** indicated that no news was probably good news related to making the first cut of the review. Hopefully there would be more information available soon.

**Chesapeake Bay Crab Assessment – Brandon Puckett, NCSU**

**Brandon Puckett** provided a PowerPoint Presentation on the "Validation and application of lipofuscin-based age determination for blue crabs" based on his Master's Thesis from the University of Maryland Center of Environmental Science, Chesapeake Biological Laboratory. **Puckett's** work mirrors the proposal submitted by the crab subcommittee to use the lipofuscin methodology in the Gulf. The conclusions of **Puckett's** study were as follows:

Lipofuscin was correlated with chronological age  
Lipofuscin-based age estimates increased in accuracy with increasing age  
Lipofuscin may provide an alternative means of age determination independent of traditional size-based approaches  
Lipofuscin-based age estimates indicated that fishery recruits primarily comprised of individuals less than 1.5 years of age in the Chesapeake's commercial fishery

After the presentation the group toured the Crab Facility at the Gulf Coast Research Lab.

### Application of TPWD Blue Crab Model – Glen Sutton, TPWD

**Glen Sutton**, TPWD, demonstrated a dynamic surplus production model which he had borrowed from Mike Prager, NMFS Beaufort NC Population Dynamics Group. The model utilized equations like the Schaefer Formula, that calculated MSY, MSE and other values but was able to use commercial landings data.

### Overview of Florida Stock Assessment – Mike Murphy, FWC

**Mike Murphy** offered a brief review of the 2000 the Florida blue crab stock assessment which relied on the Collie-Sissenwine Method formulas evaluated by Mesnil 2003 (The Catch-Survey Analysis (CSA) method of fish stock assessment: an evaluation using simulated data. Fishery Research 63:193-212). The model enabled the user to generate fishing mortality estimates between cohorts using fishery independent data.

### Review of State Data and Anticipated Lipofuscin Results

**VanderKooy** started the discussion by first reviewing the attempt by the crab subcommittee and **Pellegrin** to use a surplus production model in the last revision to the Blue Crab FMP. **Pellegrin** reported that he had the states current data to update the trend analysis that was ultimately used in the FMP and he would have his presentation ready for the subcommittee to review at the October meeting. It was suggested that **Sutton's** model would be included at the end as an example of what the subcommittee was exploring as alternatives. At the March meeting, **Sutton** would provide an expanded presentation of the surplus production model he is investigating with additional states data and would include the approach used by **Murphy** with the Florida data.

Concern was again raised by the subcommittee members that accurate effort data was still not available for commercial fishery and eventually, it would have to be addressed. **VanderKooy** mentioned the possibility of using VMS (Vessel Monitoring Systems) to begin to address effort by the crab fishermen. By randomly examining the GPS tracks the fishermen took, they would easily be able to identify the number of lines and traps run on a single day and by combining this information with the trip ticket data, true catch and effort values could be determined and applied to the whole fishery when appropriate. The addition of VMS to the crab fishery may need to be explored further in future meetings.

With no further business, the workshop adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES  
Wednesday, October 4 - Thursday, October 5, 2006  
Charleston, South Carolina**

Vice-Chairman Earl Chilton 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**

Diane Altzman, EPA/GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS  
Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary, Louisiana Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA  
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX  
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Steven de Kozlowski, SCDNR, Columbia, SC  
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  
Ted Hendrickx, Georgia DNR, Social Circle, GA  
Tom Jackson, NOAA/NMFS, Miami, FL  
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL  
Jim Lester, HARC, The Woodlands, TX  
Jim Long, National Park Service, Atlanta, GA  
Ronald R. Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Roberto Mendoza, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico  
Bob Pitman, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM  
George Ramseur, Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve Rider, Alabama Wildlife and Fisheries, Montgomery, AL  
Dennis Riecke, MDWFP, Jackson, MS  
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL  
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL  
Bruce Thompson, LSU Coastal Fisheries Institute, Baton Rouge, LA  
Jay Troxel, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
David W. Yeager, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile, AL

**Staff**

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Charles E. Ashton, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Middleburg, FL  
Jim Bean, BASF Corporation, Collierville, TN  
Thomas H. Bliss, University of Georgia, Marine Extension Service, Savannah, GA  
Susan M. Hennington, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans, LA  
David Knott, SCDNR, Marine Resources Division, Charleston, SC

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -2-

James A. Morris, Jr., NOAA/National Ocean Service, Beaufort, NC  
Alan Power, University of Georgia, Marine Extension Service, Savannah, GA  
Pamela J. Schofield, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL  
Jack Whetstone, Clemson University Baruch Institute  
Susan B. Wilde, University of South Carolina/SCDNR

Welcoming comments were made by Mike McShane, Chairman of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Board of Commissioners.

**Public Comment**

Chilton provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

**Review and Adoption of Agenda**

Due to logistical issues, Lukens asked that Wednesday 9:30 am agenda item "Directed Extinction of Exotic Fish Populations in the Wild Using a Fish Bearing Multiple Y Chromosomes - Teem" be swapped with Thursday 2:30 pm agenda item "Strategies for Improving Industry Involvement in Aquatic Invasive Species - Jim Bean, BASF". **Paul Carangelo made a motion to adopt the agenda with that change. Steve de Kozlowski seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.**

**Review and Approval of Minutes (4/5-6/06)**

**Bruce Thompson made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 5-6, 2006 meeting held in Atlanta, Georgia. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.**

**Strategies for Expanding Industry Involvement in Aquatic Invasive Species Management Initiatives**

Jim Bean, Environmental Resource Specialist with BASF Corporation in Collierville, Tennessee, gave a PowerPoint presentation.

His current involvement includes:

Vice Chairman, Mid-Atlantic Regional Panel

Board of Directors: Midwest Invasive Plant Network and Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council

National Invasive Weed Awareness Week planning and participation.

Why Partner with BASF?

- Growing market for BASF products
- Only manufacturer who sees the value of invasive species specialists

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -3-

- Strong investment in service offerings
- Building landscape-level vision of the future of IS control
- Good corporate citizen

AIS: Today

- Good things are happening on the ground
- Lots of new research is being disseminated
- Animals get more attention than plants in many cases
- Lack of funding-level understanding of aquatic vs. terrestrial differentiation
- Congress does not necessarily fully understand and support AIS control initiatives
- Groups do not have a clear message and an attainable goal

What Can We Do?

- Need to build understanding of special aquatic species needs at funding level
- Need to build Congressional understanding and support
- Need to find a mechanism to gain non-agency participation in initiatives
- Increasing funding should be a top priority

Preparation: Audience

- Prior to planning, identify your audiences
  - Who are the people you need to engage?
  - What moves/influences them?
  - What do you want them to do?
- Then match messages
- Then plan your tactics

Preparation: Work the Plan

- Develop a top-down strategic plan based on identified audiences and your goals
- Design a few key initiatives and do them well, from start to finish
- Measure your results
- Expect to adapt as your measured results inform your process

Communications Points to Consider

- Use the Web wisely
- Keep your messages as simple and clear as possible
- Fewer words are often better
- Balance science communications against audience expertise (don't expect a Congressman to know what a rhizome is)

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -4-

As You Succeed:

- Move past awareness campaigns to demonstration of your management methods
- Use the media to your advantage
- See communication of success as a way to influence your audiences
- Share your roadmap with other stakeholders
- Focus on coordination
- Serve as a facilitator of relationships and informational exchange
- Don't re-invent the wheel with your program or your communications
- Learn from others as you share with them

Building the Bridge to Industry:

- See them as an audience
  - Same analysis as any stakeholder
- Understand their motivation
  - They have to protect their bottom line
- Identify key players and approach the best fit first
  - Avoid creating conflict between competitors

Finding the Right Partner

- Understand who is already involved
  - Who can give you what you need and see a benefit on their end?
  - Who often partners with agency personnel?
  - Don't try to force something into existence
- Seek the most strategic partners
  - Chemical, biological, technical, service, research
  - Partners without excess "baggage"

Who is this Potential Partner?

- Understand their motivation before you start building the bridge
- Direct benefits to industry:
  - Sales, profit
  - Relationships with potential customers
  - Industry leadership
  - Corporate reputation

How Do I Meet Their Needs?

- Design projects to produce tangible, measurable results
- Open doors to new approaches for them
- Take as much risk as they take in the partnership

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -5-

- Measure activities in ways that are meaningful to both of you
- Create clear opportunities for engagement
- Start small if possible to build trust
- Gear activities toward building a long-term relationship
- Go for what they know (i.e. don't ask a chemical manufacturer for a GPS demonstration)

**Picking the Right Partner**

- Develop your criteria before initial contact
- Apply criteria consistently throughout
- Eliminate candidates that are a poor match based on your evaluation
- Be realistic in your assessment
- Choose industry leaders when possible

**Articulating Your Needs**

- What do you want from your new partner?
  - Insight?
  - Funding?
  - On-the-ground support?
- Communicate it in a way that is meaningful to them
  - Keep their goals and motivations in mind
- Be honest and timely
- Seek areas of mutual interest and point them out
- Ask for input on the benefit to your potential partner
- Ask for real answers on their limitations up front (understand what it costs them)

**Keep It Building**

- Ask for comments
  - Gauge satisfaction
  - Find ways to increase involvement
  - Ideas of partners should be respected and evaluated
- Learn from interactions
- Move on if it doesn't work

**Building the Bridge to Industry: Keep These In Mind**

- Invite them to participate in a win-win
- Be up-front about your needs and goals
- Engage in activities that inspire and reward your new partners
- Give credit where credit is due
- Don't be afraid to get creative (i.e. taking training or in-kind contributions)



**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -6-

- Treat it as you would any stakeholder relationship
- Good communication throughout the process is absolutely necessary
- Evaluate progress constantly
- Measure results for both sides
- Find ways to grow and adapt

For more information: [james.bean@basf.com](mailto:james.bean@basf.com) or [www.vmanswers.com](http://www.vmanswers.com).

**Monitoring Nonindigenous Species in Southeastern Ports: Why, How, and the Lessons Learned**

Alan Power from the University of Georgia Marine Extension Service in Savannah, Georgia gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Panel.

“Over two-thirds of recent, non-native species introductions in marine and coastal areas are likely due to ship-borne vectors.”

Why?

- 21 billion gallons of foreign ballast water discharged in US waters each year (Globalballast)
- 7000 different species being carried in ballast tanks worldwide (Globalballast)
- Many hitchhikers are also transported on the hulls of these vessels
- Most marine nonindigenous introductions in SAB have been attributed to shipping activities
- Commercial ports represent a main entry point for many species introductions
- Estuarine nonindigenous species knowledge base behind those from terrestrial and freshwater systems
- Early detection important for effective response
- Knowledge of species distribution helps predict future spread
- Provide reference data for future assessments of change

How?

- Review literature of biotic surveys for mollusks, crustaceans, and polychaetes in the SAB region
- Integrate this data with GIS

A total of 74 survey publications were consulted to construct a GIS database detailing 36,502 mapping points for 1,738 species

- Describe Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, and Jacksonville ports in terms of their history, geology, hydrography, and shipping movements  
American Association of Port Authorities 2005 Port Rankings (TEUs):  
Wilmington, NC 32<sup>nd</sup>

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -7-

Charleston, SC       7<sup>th</sup>  
Savannah, GA       9<sup>th</sup>  
Jacksonville, FL     18<sup>th</sup>

- Comprehensive searches for molluscan, polychaete, and crustacean species in each port

Hewitt, C.L. and R.B. Martin. 2001. Revised protocols for baseline port surveys for introduced marine species: survey design, sampling protocols and specimen handling. Centre for Research on Introduced Marine Pests. Technical Report No. 22. CSIRO Marine Research, Hobart. 46 pp.

- August-September 2003
  - Sampling in three zones in each port
  - Sampled various habitats with diverse array of sampling techniques
  - 13 replicates/gear type/zone/port
- Provide baseline information on native biodiversity, and on the presence, distribution, relative abundance, and trophic status of identified nonindigenous species

**Molluscs:** 36 species - 27 bivalve, 8 gastropod, 1 cephalopod, totaling 10,793 specimens

**Crustaceans:** 122 species - 51 decapod, 30 amphipod, 18 isopod, 12 barnacle, 3 mysid, 3 tanaid, 2 stomatopod, 1 copepod, 1 mysidacean, and 1 ostracod species totaling 42,583 specimens

**Polychaetes:** 63 species totaling 2,640 specimens

221 species, 56,016 specimens: Georgia Museum of Natural History and SERTC in Charleston.

- Determine community structure, sediment size, and water quality at ports
  - Wilmington - lowest diversity & evenness
  - Diversity indices higher below ports
  - Cluster analysis - 2 groupings - marine and brackish water - with brackish sites further split into mesohaline & tidal fresh
  - Annual water temperatures in the ports range from 8 to 30°C
  - Predominantly poorly sorted fine-medium sand substrates with low-intermediate organic matter
  - Varying distances port facilities are from open sea (5.5 to 26 miles) present a range in salinity regimes (0 ppt to 35.45 ppt)

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -8-

Lessons Learned

- **Coordination & Permitting:** Marine Patrol, Coast Guard, port authorities, Department of Natural Resources, and Corps of Engineers. This was sometimes difficult, particularly out of state. Different states had different requirements. Security concerns. Convincing ports that project was beneficial was sometimes difficult. South Carolina required Coast Guard to be present for all sampling activities. Florida sampling permit had special conditions and required additional time to acquire.

- Lots of communication necessary
- Submit application for all permits at beginning of project
- Get partners for each state being surveyed
- Get port authorities on board

- Sampling Conditions:

**Weather:** August and September hot, humid, thunderstorms - sampling difficult

**Tides:** Very large tidal range - strong currents which may have contributed to lost fouling plates, and also made taking scraping samples difficult from a small boat. We were also dependent upon low tides during daylight hours to collect intertidal scraping and core samples.

**Sediment:** Soft muds difficult to move in, made hand coring difficult

- Collect scrapings at slack water
- Do as much as possible in early morning
- Schedule coring to begin while tide going out to allow time
- Replace hand cores with grab sampler from boat

- Sampling Techniques:

**Trawling:** Large quantities of bottom debris in port areas resulted in numerous net snags slowing down the sampling process and causing extensive net damage. Different regulations in Florida meant our nets there had to be pulled equipped with a Turtle Excluder Device which was not consistent with other locations. Trawling during the day will miss all those that bury up.

**Fouling Plates:** Difficult to always find suitable site to hang plates. Lost several. No permission in Jacksonville and Charleston ports. Lost many of those we anchored and floated. Distance from sites prevented routine checking. Plates may have been lost due to currents, lines being cut by oyster shells, or may have been interfered with.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -9-

- Have many back up trawl nets
- Ask locals and use maps to ID heavy debris areas
- Deploy more plates than needed and use local partners to monitor
- Conduct one set of 13 trawls during day and another at night

**Scrapings:** Strong currents made it difficult to safely approach and remain at pilings by boat. Dense oyster growth on the pilings required the use of hammers as opposed to scrapers to collect the samples, often resulting in damaged specimens. It was also difficult to scrape a consistently sized area.

- Instead of scraping exact area fill a bucket to a set level
- If surface unavailable take oyster reef clumps from shore
- Sample at slack water
- Tie off or have few hold boat steady while others collect
- Have something obvious that identifies your boat as research
- Method does not sample subtidal fouling communities
- Floating dock would be ideal for subtidal communities

#### Sampling Adequacy

Our surveys only detected a fraction of the species we know are in the region from literature review. However, these are diverse systems and sample processing is labor and time intensive.

- Bump up number of replicate samples to 15 per zone per gear
- Ports with terminals spread out need more samples in this zone
- Place sufficient plates out to allow for significant losses
- Include shallow water seining and trawling
- Conduct seasonally
- Conduct annually
- Tie into other monitoring programs
- Redesign as rapid assessment type survey if have experts and resources available
- Need better taxonomic keys for region
- Need access to global list of experts for different phyla

We did not include several taxonomic groups that were collected, specifically fish, echinoderms, cnidarians, oligochaetes and other arthropod subphyla. Given the effort involved in collection it was wasteful that we did not have the resources to include them. These specimens were however retained and we are currently identifying them as part of another funded project. We are also targeting shallow water environments using seine nets and a small otter trawl.

- Preserve all specimens, may get opportunity to ID later
- Careful of metal debris, stingrays, alligators, catfish, etc.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -10-

- Have plenty of back up nets when tear on snags

Public awareness is critical. Use volunteers to monitor spread or watch for likely invaders. For more information: <http://www.shellfish.uga.edu/researchinvasiveport.htm>.

**Members's Forum**

Florida - D. Schmitz and S. Hardin reported that Florida held a Pet Amnesty Day on May 6, 2006. This was to give another option other than to turn pets loose into the wild. For this first event, they received very few animals. Plans are to follow up with a second event in March 2007. This event is tied into their outreach and education.

Schmitz also reported that Florida's strategic plan is being updated. Copies are being sent to Ron and Marilyn to look at next week.

Hardin added that they are also conducting a pilot program on risk assessment of triploid grass carp.

Alabama - Leslie Hartman reported that a commercial shrimper recently caught a non-native species of shrimp, *Penaeus monodon* or black tiger prawn, in Alabama's portion of Mississippi Sound. This shrimp is native to the West Pacific and if they become established here they could pose a threat to our native shrimp species. The species has distinct dark and white stripes along its back. Notices are being distributed to seafood shops instructing that if these shrimp are caught to please record the location, save the specimen and contact Leslie Hartman or Mark Van Hoose at the Alabama Marine Resources Division at (251) 861-2882. They are also instructed to ice the shrimp for future examination by biologists.

They have done research on the species and have not found any culturing in Mississippi or Louisiana. At this time they do not have any guaranteed source.

S. Rider added that the freshwater division is moving forward with their management plan. He has been told they will see a draft copy in the next two weeks. There are some things in the plan that his agency has already tried to adopt.

Mississippi - Dale Diaz outlined the following Mississippi activities:

- Grand Bay NERR holding workshops for city and county employees
- Work on state plan continues (90% complete)
- Seeking funding for a statewide coordinator (CIAP)
- MDMR hired 2 part-time employees to work on invasive species issues
- MDWF&P/USGS/USM working eradication and control of tilapia in south Mississippi
- Completed initial field work on MDMR/USGS giant salvinia project in the Pascagoula River

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -11-

**Status of Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) in Southern Mississippi**

Pamela J. Schofield from the U.S. Geological Survey in Gainesville, Florida, gave a PowerPoint presentation on Nile tilapia. This work was funded by the U.S. Geological Survey.

- Nile tilapia, *Oreochromis niloticus* (sometimes *Tilapia nilotica*)
- Native range: widely distributed in tropical Africa, Middle East
- Used extensively in aquaculture world-wide
- Arizona: 1970s, no recent reports
- Pennsylvania: Monongahela, 2006, collected
- Florida/Georgia: Apalachicola basin (Lake Seminole)
- Alabama: Tallapoosa drainage, 1986, collected
- Illinois: 1999, 2005 Chicago S & S Canal, locally established, power plant
- Puerto Rico: non-specific reports
- Mississippi: established in Pascagoula and Biloxi Bay

**Species Update**

Pam Fuller provided the June-October 2006 species update.

In the Southeast

- Spotted jellyfish (*Phyllorhiza punctata*)
  - Galveston Bay (June)
  - Lake Ponte Vedra St. Johns Co., Florida (July)
- Nile tilapia
  - Crane Creek in Melbourne, Florida (April)
- Tiger shrimp (*Penaeus monodon*)
  - Mississippi Sound (September)

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -12-

In Other Areas (major jumps)

- Amur goby - new to US
  - Lower Columbia River
- Nile tilapia - new to Pennsylvania
  - Monongahela River near Pittsburg
- Chinese mitten crab - new to East Coast
  - Chesapeake Bay (2)
- Dungeness Crab - new to East Coast
  - Coastal Massachusetts

In Other Areas (minor)

- Pacu - all over (IN, MI, WI, MN, WY, UT, AZ)
- Ruffe - MI
- Silver Carp - Lower Kansas River, Kansas
- Atlantic salmon - Kenai Peninsula, AK
- Fathead minnow - Willamette River, OR

In Other Areas (expansions)

- Siberian prawn (*Exopalaemon modestus*)
  - Snake River, WA
- New Zealand mudsnail - MT, OR, MN
- Zebra mussel - OK, KS, MI, MO, IA
- Quagga mussel - Hudson River and Saratoga drainages, NY
- Nutria - WA

**Public Comment**

No public comments were received.

**The meeting reconvened on Thursday, October 5, 2006.**

**Public Comment**

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

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -13-

**AVM Updates - October 2006**

Susan B. Wilde from the University of South Carolina provided a PowerPoint presentation on AVM updates.

**Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy: Model Estimating Potential Distribution**

Susan B. Wilde, University of South Carolina/SCDNR and A. Townsend Peterson, University of Kansas

- Potentially toxic cyanobacterial colonies on hydrilla and other aquatic plants in AVM sites
- Aquatic plants and epiphytic algae are primary food source for coots
- Sick waterfowl are consumed by Bald Eagles

Supposed Structure of Transmission:

Cyanobacterium → Hydrilla → Coot → Eagle

All connections are assumed to be obligate (i.e., all are necessary)

Two Simulations:

1. Cyanobacterium → Hydrilla → Coot → Eagle  
Include cyanobacterium: Advantages include that the cyanobacterium may not have the same ecological potential as Hydrilla, more precise (conservative) estimate of distributional potential
2. Hydrilla → Coot → Eagle  
Exclude cyanobacterium: Advantages include that the cyanobacterium may not yet be at distributional equilibrium; as such, including information from its present distributional area may be overly conservative; more of a “worst case” estimate of potential distribution

Three invasive aquatic species dominate AVM reservoirs:

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*)

Brazilian elodea (*Egeria densa*)

Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Fall 2006-2007 Research

- More accurate AVM mortality assessment in waterfowl
- Refine cell line bioassay screening tool for toxic material

Rebecca S. Haynie, Tom Murphy, Charlotte Hope, Sarah Williams, Faith Wiley, Bill Bowerman, and Susan B. Wilde



**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -14-

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
University of South Carolina  
Clemson Institute of Environmental Toxicology

Where are they going? Atlantic fly-way midwinter coot numbers decreased from 869,124 in 1988 to 96,297 in 2004.

Is AVM contributing significantly to the apparent decline? Collections during winter months confirmed 50-95% of the coot populations residing in J. Strom Thurmond Reservoir show characteristic AVM lesions (*Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study*).

Proposed Study Outline:

- J. Strom Thurmond Reservoir: Neck band 200 coots upon arrival in respective treatment, control areas
- Half of each group will be wing-clipped and have contrasting neck band color
- Throughout season:
  - Conduct carcasses recovery, analyze for AVM
  - Validate cyanobacterium is present on vegetation using genetic probe
  - Validate cyanobacterium is producing toxin with mallard feeding trial and cell line bioassay

Other questions to be answered:

What portion of symptomatic coots die during the season?

How does AVM effect future migration success?

**Successful Extraction of the Toxin Responsible for Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy (AVM)**

Faith Wiley, Michael Twiner, Fran Van Dolah, Susan Wilde, William Bowerman, Tod Leighfield

Avian Bioassay

- Hydrilla collected weekly during trial; ½ frozen, ½ fresh (kept at room temp)
- 4 week trial (19 November - 17 December)
  - All birds sacrificed at end of 4 weeks
  - 2 birds developed signs of neurological impairment
- Experimental Groups (3 birds per group)

<u>AVM(+)</u>	<u>AVM(-)</u>
Hexane	Hexane
Acetone	Acetone
Methanol	Methanol

  - Extracts exchanged to non-toxic carriers

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -15-

- Mallards dosed by oral gavage  
3x/week for 4 weeks

Avian Bioassay - Results

- No clinical signs of disease
- Regurgitation in methanol groups
- One bird in AVM methanol group broke wing on Day 14, euthanized
- Brain analysis results:
  - AVM Hexane - no apparent lesions
  - AVM Acetone - 1 with possible mild lesions, 2 no apparent lesions
  - AVM Methanol - all 3 with definite, moderately severe lesions

Control Hexane - no apparent lesions  
Control Acetone - no apparent lesions  
Control Methanol - no apparent lesions

Cell Bioassays

- Conduct cytotoxicity tests on established cell lines
- High-throughput 96-well format: Essential for testing of samples/fractions
- Mitochondrial dye (MTT) - colorimetric endpoint
- Total toxicity response

Cytotoxicity Results

- Methanol Fraction

Current Research

- Methanol Extract Fractionation
  - Avian Bioassay
  - Cell Bioassay
- Mammalian Susceptibility
  - Tested mice using same material from mallard assay
  - Suspect lesions, artifact?
  - Repeat experiment with new fixative

**Administrative Issues**

Lukens reported that the 2007 grant application has been submitted. He added that the Panel is supported by two grant programs. One area of focus for 2007 will be an early detection and rapid response activity which will include South Carolina.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -16-

Lukens also discussed several membership issues. The Corps of Engineers office where Al Confrenco is assigned is undergoing some reorganization. The Corps membership will be settled when this is completed. Tom Herrington from FDA has retired. Lukens contacted Tom's supervisor and asked if FDA had plans to replace him. At this time there are no plan for replacement so FDA's seat will remain unoccupied. Phil Bass, with Mississippi DEQ, has also retired. There has been no communication on whether DEQ will fill that seat. Lukens plans to follow up on that. Jim Kruse, a member at-large, has been unable to attend meetings due to scheduling issues. Lukens intends to pursue the issue of the at-large membership seat being unused.

Lukens indicated that he had received approval to order Panel t-shirts and hats to use as an outreach tool. He is currently trying to locate artwork for the t-shirt design. Don Schmitz volunteered to contact his graphics department and check on the possibility of designing the artwork for the shirts.

**Member's Forum (Continued)**

Georgia - T. Hendrickx reported that apple snails continue to be tracked in the state. They have an apple snail task force within the agency. Concerns are about the potential in Okefenoke Swamp. Swamp eels are another species of concern. They have wrapped up some initial research and are trying to come up with a plan to look at control and eradication. Due to budget cuts, on July 1 the aquatic plant control program was cut. Partial funding for the flathead catfish program was received.

Georgia is working on their plan and are exploring the Louisiana model. Hendrickx added that Marilyn has been instrumental in developing a white paper. Plan completion is a division goal for 2007.

South Carolina - S. de Kozlowski reported on South Carolina activities:

2006 Aquatic Plant Control Operations

- 25 water bodies treated
- 3,377 acres at cost of \$589,135
  - Phragmites 1,945 ac, \$352,058
  - Water hyacinth 305 ac, \$27,214
  - Water lettuce 200 ac, \$18,739
  - Hydrilla 105 ac, \$27,815

New AIS Developments

- Monoecious hydrilla found in Lake Greenwood, Spartanburg Co. lakes, and in NC side of Lake Wylie in 2006
- Water lettuce overwintering in Charleston area
- *Salvinia molesta* limited to one site in Jasper Co.; may be eradicated
- Sterile grass carp continue to control hydrilla in Santee Cooper Lakes system for tenth year.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -17-

**Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan**

- State AIS Task Force formed in July 2006
  - 34 members; represent 10 state agencies, 8 federal agencies, 4 private entities, 4 nonprofit
- One-year planning process; task force meets every other month
  - Met July 28 and September 29
  - Website established, meeting schedule, minutes, etc.
- Approved detailed plan outline last week
- Hope to complete problem review, species of concern, pathway discussion, and agency jurisdiction sections by November 30 meeting

**Phragmites Control Management Strategy**

- Initially focus control on public properties (DNR, FWS, COE)
- Refine survey techniques to measure problem and control (aerial, hyperspectral)
- Work with partners on public awareness and cost-share programs on private property
- Coordinate with all agencies and local entities to ensure success.

Texas - E. Chilton reported that Texas is working to finish their comprehensive management plan. November 30 will be the deadline for comments after it appears in the Texas Register. They are also trying to establish a Texas Invasive Species Task Force. They are experiencing some problems, so plans are to wait until after the election and then contact agencies wanting to be involved.

Chilton added that Texas continues to have Salvinia problems on the border with Louisiana. The Rio Grande is also having difficulties with watermilfoil, water hyacinth, and hydrilla.

**HACCP and Brown Tree Snake Update**

Bob Pitman reported that a new message system, the Aquatic Nuisance Species Hotline, is now available. This toll-free number (1-800-673-4313) is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week by live, professional staff who are trained to collect all pertinent information and immediately dispatch this information to federal and state invasive species biologists. The potential of this system allows for a proactive response in a manner of minutes when necessary and appropriate. Additionally, callers receive immediate feedback from a live representative, assuring them that information has been recorded and acknowledged.

He also reported that Scott Henke is still working on a web-based identification system for the brown tree snake. He is making a presentation at Southeastern to encourage incorporating the HACCP type concept to remove species that may hitchhike into their state.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -18-

**Cooperative Phragmites Control Programming in the Winyah Bay Focus Area, South Carolina**

Jack Whetstone from Clemson University Baruch Institute provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

**Winyah Bay Focus Area**

- Third largest east coast estuary
- 525,000 acres total
- 123,000 acres of forested wetlands
- 23,000 acres of tidal freshwater
- 50,000 acres of wetland impoundments
- 20,000 acres still impounded

**Invasive Species Subcommittee**

- Clemson University
- The Nature Conservancy
- South Carolina DNR
- Winyah Bay Task Force
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USC - NERR
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Historic Ricefields Association
- Ducks Unlimited

**Why?**

- Aquatic Invasives are a PROBLEM
- Prioritize Concerns
- Documentation of What Works
- Demonstrate to Landowners
- Cost-share Program for Private Landowners

**Priorities**

- Phragmites
- Water Hyacinth
- Alligatorweed
- Chinese Tallow
- Giant Reed
- Beach Vitex

**Phragmites Control Demonstrations**

- Mansfield and Rosemont Plantations
- Glyphosate and Imazapyr
- Aerial and Backpack

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -19-

Phragmites Control Cooperators

- Mansfield and Rosemont Plantations
- Summit Helicopters Inc.
- The Nature Conservancy
- SC DNR
- BASF
- Clemson University

Cost-share Program - Phragmites

- Ranking - Acres, Additional Acres, Easement, Proximity to Protected Area
- SC DNR Application Recommendations
- Licensed Applicators with GPS Recording
- Imazapyr or Glyphosate
- \$100 per acre - Imazapyr
- \$40 per acre - Glyphosate
- \$10,000 Max
- Follow-up Treatments
- Cost-share Payments after Application

Cost-share Technical Committee

- The Nature Conservancy
- SC DNR
- USDA - NRCS
- Ducks Unlimited
- Clemson University

Cost-share Funds

- \$30K - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- \$50K - SC DNR
- \$30.5K - USDA NRCS WIP
- \$10K - Historic Ricefields Association
- \$10K - The Nature Conservancy
- \$130.5K - Total

Project Obligations

- \$97.9K Obligated
- 18 Tracts
- 988 Acres

Private Landowners 2005

- 834 Acres

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -20-

Clearcast - Phragmites - Edges

- Phragmites on treed edges - Post Habitat
- 32 oz. Clearcast + .5% MSO in 15 Gallons
- 64 oz. Clearcast + .5% MSO in 15 Gallons
- 10 August 2006
- 11 DAT

Clearcast - Phragmites

- 64 oz. Clearcast + 1% MSO - 10 Gallons
- 22 June 2006
- Adjacent to Tree Canopy
- Summit Helicopter
- 44 DAT Rating
- Excellent Control
- Faster Efficacy than Habitat

Future Work

- Continue Phragmites Cost-share
- Annual Sampling - Phragmites
- Burn Plots - Fall &/or Summer

For More Information

- [www.dnr.sc.gov/water/envaff/aquatic/phragmites.html](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/water/envaff/aquatic/phragmites.html)
- [www.dnr.sc.gov/water/envaff/aquatic/winyahphragmiteshare.html](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/water/envaff/aquatic/winyahphragmiteshare.html)

**Aquatic Nuisance Species Initiatives of the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed**

Jim Lester provided a PowerPoint presentation for the Panel.

Galveston Bay

- Largest estuary in Texas
- Population of 4 million people
- 3 ports with 15,000 vessels per year
- 600 square miles of open water
- 1,500 miles of shoreline
- 6-8 feet average depth

Invasives and the Galveston Bay Plan

- Number 2 priority problem for Species Population Protection
  - Goal #1: Eradicate or reduce populations of invasives that threaten native species, habitats, and ecological relationships.
  - Goal #2: Prevent the introduction of additional exotic, invasive species.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -21-

Regional Network

- GBEP Invasive Species Working Group
  - Facilitates communication and coordination among stakeholders:
    - Federal and state agencies
    - Local government
    - Port authority
    - Universities
    - NGO's

Comparative Risk Assessment

- Prioritize funding
- Literature and database review
- 296 species - current or potential invaders
- 4 expert workshops to rank species
- 84 species ranked according to risk criteria
  - Likelihood of impact at ecosystem level
  - Severity of impact, loss of biodiversity
  - Location of invasive relative to region
  - Immediacy of invasion
  - Irreversibility of damage
  - Impacts to human uses

High Risk Aquatic Animal Species

<i>Carcinus aestuarii</i>	Mediterranean green crab
<i>Carcinus maenas</i>	European green crab
<i>Channa argus</i>	Northern snakehead
<i>Ctenopharyngodon idella</i>	Grass carp *
<i>Dreissena polymorpha</i>	Zebra mussel
<i>Eriocheir sinensis</i>	Chinese mitten crab
<i>Limnoperna fortunei</i>	Golden mussel
<i>Monopterus albus</i>	Asian swamp eel
<i>Myocastor coypus</i>	Nutria *
<i>Oreochromis sp.</i>	Hybrid tilapia *
<i>Perna viridis</i>	Asian green mussel
<i>Phyllorhiza punctata</i>	Australian spotted jellyfish **
<i>Pomacea insularum</i>	Apple snail ***
<i>Zoobotryon verticillatum</i>	Sauerkraut grass *

\* Established population in Galveston Bay Estuary

\*\* Species reported in Galveston Bay in 2006

\*\*\* Established population present; originally thought to be *P. canaliculatum*



**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES**

**MINUTES**

Page -22-

High Risk Aquatic Plant Species

<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>	Common water hyacinth *
<i>Gymnodinium sp.</i>	Exotic red tide **
<i>Hydrilla verticillata</i>	Hydrilla *
<i>Ipomoea aquatica</i>	Water spinach *
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple loosestrife
<i>Myriophyllum spicatum</i>	Eurasian watermilfoil
<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>	Water lettuce *
<i>Salvinia minima</i>	Common Salvinia *
<i>Salvinia molesta</i>	Giant Salvinia *

\* Established Population in Galveston Bay Estuary

\*\* Reported in Texas

Research Activities

- Poorly understood, emerging species
  - Deep-rooted sedge
  - Applesnail
- Various Habitats
  - Bayous/riparian
  - Wetlands
  - Coastal prairie
- Introduction pathways (planned)
  - Analyze ballast discharge practices and locations
  - Risk assessment of vessel origins and trade routes
- Partners
  - Local universities
  - Federal and state agencies

Management: Eradication & Restoration

- Conservation lands and adjacent waters
  - Wetlands
  - Coastal prairie
  - Barrier island
- Target species
  - Giant Salvinia
  - Hydrilla
  - Water hyacinth
  - Chinese tallow
  - Brazilian pepper
- Partners
  - Local governments
  - Local Council of Government

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -23-

- State and federal agencies
- Nonprofits and conservation organizations

**Invasives Monitoring**

- TPWD Houston Urban Bayous Study
  - Snow pleco, tilapia, grass carp, Rio Grande cichlid
  - 3 local bayous (Greens, Brays, Buffalo)
- TPWD Fisheries Independent Monitoring
  - Grass Carp
  - Sauerkraut grass
- Invaders of Texas: Citizen Scientist Invasive Species Monitoring Program
  - Phase 1 - Aquatic and terrestrial plants
  - Phase 2 - Animals
  - Citizen volunteers: Master naturalists, Master Gardeners, nature centers
  - Online data entry and mapping application
  - [www.texasinvasives.org](http://www.texasinvasives.org)

**Education and Outreach**

- TPWD and GBEP working with citizen groups and anglers to prevent additional introductions of aquatic plant species (hyacinth, hydrilla, salvinia)
- TPWD Dirty Dozen poster and brochure
  - Prohibited species in the seafood market
- The Quiet Invasion: A Guide to Invasive Plants in the Galveston Bay Area
  - 3000 copies printed; 2000 distributed
  - Interactive field guide [www.galvbayinvasives.org](http://www.galvbayinvasives.org)
  - New guide planned to include animals

**Conclusions**

- Accomplishments
  - Multifaceted approach
  - Strong stakeholder coordination
  - Species prioritization
  - Control and restoration projects established
  - Public outreach and education started
- Challenges
  - Population and development increasing
  - Shipping traffic increasing
  - Regional land use planning lacking
- Additional needs
  - Additional monitoring - EDRR
  - Research emerging species - bay waters
  - Identify new ways to engage the public
  - \$\$

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -24-

For More Information:

Houston Advanced Research Center

Jim Lester  
Director, Environment Group  
(281) 364-6041 [jlester@harc.edu](mailto:jlester@harc.edu)

Lisa Gonzalez  
Research Scientist  
(281) 364-6044 [lgonzalez@harc.edu](mailto:lgonzalez@harc.edu)

TCEQ Galveston Bay Estuary Program

Jeff DallaRosa  
Natural Resource Uses Coordinator  
(281) 486-1242 [jdallaro@tceq.state.tx.us](mailto:jdallaro@tceq.state.tx.us)

**Hypoxia Tolerance of Native Sunfish (warmouth, dollar sunfish) and Non-native African Jewelfish in the Rocky Glades**

Pamela J. Schofield from the U.S. Geological Survey presented a PowerPoint presentation. She indicated that this study was funded by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- Solution holes experience periods of extreme temperatures, periodic low oxygen.
- Ability of fishes to survive dry season in solution holes allows them to repopulate marsh in wet season when water covers marsh.
- During wet season, fishes feed on marsh surface, reproduce and can expand ranges.
- Native fishes that inhabit marsh are tough.
- How do recent invaders compare with natives?
- Will they be able to colonize Rocky Glades?

Focus of this study: hypoxia tolerance

African jewelfish in South Florida

- Aggressive
  - Compete with natives for food
  - Prey on native fishes
- First documented in Miami canals in 1965
- Until mid-1970s, only found in canals near Miami
- First found in Everglades National Park in 2000
- Begun to expand through Everglades

# GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

## MINUTES

Page -25-

### Questions for this Study

- What is hypoxia tolerance of African jewelfish?
- How does it compare to native sunfishes?
- Is aggressive behavior attenuated by hypoxia?

### Methods

- Progressively lowered hypoxia by bubbling N<sup>2</sup> gas into aquarium - each trial 4-6 hrs

#### Two types of trials:

- Single species (3 fish of same species per trial)
- Mixed species (one of each species <3 total> per trial)

#### Every 15-min, took the following data:

- Number of fish performing ASR (10 x 10 sec each)
- Gill ventilation rate (2 x per fish for 15 sec each)
- Number of fish showing aggression (10 x 10 each)

### Aquatic Surface Respiration - A Widespread Adaption to Hypoxia

- Not air breathing - in ASR, fish use uppermost layer of water that is high in oxygen
- By determining ASR threshold, gives information on relative ability to withstand hypoxia.  
ASR 10, 50, 90
- Comparison of gill ventilation rates gives information on how well fish can use ASR to extract oxygen from surface layer.

### Aggression

- All three species known to be aggressive.
- When recording data, included biting, chasing, gill flaring, etc. For each data point (every 15-min), averaged number of times fish were aggressive over 10 10-sec intervals.
- Expect attenuation of aggression with decreased oxygen - trade off fighting for breathing.
- Comparison on single-species trials to mixed-species trials.

### Conclusions

- African jewelfish is able to tolerate extreme low-oxygen conditions
  - ARS thresholds of jewelfish lower than native sunfishes
  - ARS thresholds of jewelfish, warmouth lower than swamp-adapted African cichlids

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -26-

- Gill ventilation rates of native sunfishes decrease at ASR onset, signaling efficient use of ASR
- For jewelfish, no decrease in gill vent rate with onset of ASR, but does not use ASR until dissolved oxygen is very low ( $ASR_{90} = >0.2 \text{ mg/L}$ )
- Jewelfish more aggressive than native sunfish
  - Warmouth also aggressive, more than dollar sunfish but less than African jewelfish
- Hypoxia not likely to limit spread of jewelfish through Everglades (low temp?)

**Taxonomic Experts Database Update**

Pam Fuller reported that the taxonomic experts database is in its final location and is ready to be populated. Fuller gave a demonstration of the database. Fuller indicated that a small working group should be appointed to populate that database. It was the consensus of the Panel to use the Research and Development Work Group to populate this database.

**The Southeastern Regional Taxonomic Center (SERTC)**

David Knott, Marine Resources Research Institute, SCDNR

Taxonomy is a branch of science that discovers and describes living things.

- There is a serious lack of trained taxonomists and also of data and knowledge about marine biodiversity, especially in the South Atlantic Bight region
- A decline in taxonomists threatens our ability to understand our marine biodiversity

The SERTC began operating in 2001 at the Marine Resources Research Institute, SCDNR, with funding administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The primary goal of the SERTC: *To serve as a focused regional taxonomic resource for individuals and institutions that are interested in the biodiversity of the marine and estuarine environments of the southeastern United States.*

The SERTC Invertebrate Database: Invertebrates of the Southeastern United States

The SERTC provides services as a taxonomic resource to students, educators, and scientists working on the marine and coastal invertebrates of the South Atlantic Bight (SAB) Region. A regionally focused and data based voucher collection of preserved animals is held at the center (including material preserved specifically for future molecular work), as well as a digital image library and an extensive invertebrate taxonomic literature collection relating to the SAB region. SERTC also provides the resources for the computerization of the fish collection catalog of the Grice Marine

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -27-

Laboratory (College of Charleston). The SERTC Invertebrate Database aims to provide OBIS with much needed distributional information on the regional invertebrate fauna.

Website: [www.dnr.state.scc.us/marine/sertc](http://www.dnr.state.scc.us/marine/sertc).

**Directed Extinction of Exotic Fish Populations in the Wild Using a Fish Bearing Multiple Y Chromosomes**

John Teem, Division of Aquaculture, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Approaches to the Eradication of Exotic Fish

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Chemical   | - Rotenone<br>(nonspecific)  |
| Biological | - Specific disease or parasites<br>(unavailable)   |
|            | - Sterile males<br>(specific, but requires overwhelming numbers of sterile males to compete with normal males) |
|            | - Altered sex ratio<br>(specific, requires that one sex is reduced to zero over time)                          |

Coho Salmon Sex-reversed females (Fxy) in the Columbia River

- XY sex-determination
- Females with a Y chromosome produce more male progeny, some of which are Myy
- Myy males are viable and produce only male offspring
- If sufficient numbers of YY fish are added to a normal population, will normal females (Fxx) ultimately decline to zero?
- Hormone manipulation can be used to generate male fish with two Y chromosomes
- Hormone manipulation can also be used to generate female fish with two Y chromosomes (Fyy)
- Females with two Y chromosomes produce only male progeny, half of which are Myy
- Four different matings are possible, leading to increased male production

Conclusions

- For a target fish utilizing a simple XY sex-determination system, the addition of YY female sex-reversed fish (Fyy) to a normal population of exotic fish can cause extinction by reducing the numbers of normal females Fxx to zero over time.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -28-

- Fyy fish must be added in an amount that represents at least 1.07% of the total population, and the addition must be continuous over time.
- The shift in the sex ratio of the population requires many generations, thus extinction may require decades. However, the time required to attain extinction can be shortened by increasing the influx of Fyy fish ( $\mu$ ).

**Education/Outreach Work Group** - Chuck Jacoby

Jacoby updated the Panel on the development of the science fair guidelines and submission to INTEL. He also reported that he and Marilyn O'Leary had submitted a proposal to Sea Grant to research what kind of educational materials worked better than others. This will help to develop a priority setting process.

**Pathways/Prevention Work Group** - Pam Fuller

Fuller reviewed a presentation she gave last year on pathway analysis and how to rank pathways. She reported that ISAC has developed a pathways ranking tool. The work group held a meeting 2 weeks ago in Gainesville, Florida, and spent a lot of time reviewing the ISAC ranking tool. As a result of that they decided to part ways with ISAC and move on. The states decided the type of analysis started so far would work for them. When completed, this will be the first report of this type in the nation.

**Research/Development Work Group** - John Teem

GSARP Regional Priorities

- Long term studies on established nonnative species to understand their effects on other species (or lack of effects), with a particular focus on understanding why a species is invasive in one state and not in another.
- Increased systematic work on nonnative species that are difficult to identify, with particular emphasis on catfish and channeled apples snails.
- Multi-state approaches to address current species of concern including *Caulerpa*, hydrilla, Giant Salvinia, green mussels, channeled apples snails, Asian carp, Asian swamp eels, crayfish, and Nutria.
- Rapid assessments in both marine and fresh water systems, to provide a current snapshot of the ecosystem that can be used (1.) as a baseline for the detection of nonnative species, (2.) for monitoring the movement of species after a extreme meteorological events (such as hurricanes), and (3.) to assess the effect of land development on the spread of invasive species.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

Page -29-

- Novel chemical, biological and mechanical control methods for the control of nonnative species.

It was the general consensus of the Panel to go forward and present this list of regional priorities to the National Task Force. John Teem will refine these in the next couple of weeks and get with Lukens for submission.

**GSARP Regional Priorities by State**

- State research needs could use additions and updates
- Still need input from Mississippi
- Will circulate the present list of state research priorities by email to get more input from the panel
- (please keep regional research priorities in mind when adding state research priorities)

**Taxonomic Expert Database**

- Have a partial list of taxonomic experts from FL, GA, SC
- Still need input from TX, LA, MS, AL
- Will circulate the present list of taxonomic experts by email to get more input from panel
- (present list is tier 1, need more input on tier 2)

**Next Meeting - Time & Place**

The Panel agreed that the next meeting should be held during the first weeks of April 2007 in Orange Beach, Alabama. Texas was selected as an alternative site.

**Public Comment**

No public comments were received.

***There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:25 pm.***



**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 57<sup>TH</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, October 23, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY   
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Chairman Jim Hanifen** called the meeting to order at 1:02 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  
Mark Leiby, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

**Others**

Karen Mitchell, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Mark McDuff, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Betsy Gardner, NOAA/NCDDC, SSC, MS  
Ralf Riedel, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ken Edds, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Cara Hoar, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Randy Pausina, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Sandra Diamond, TTU, Lubbock, TX  
Tomas Jamir, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
James Sinclair, MMS, New Orleans, LA  
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX

**Staff**

Larry Simpson, *Executive Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, *FIN 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  
Bob Harris, *FIN Database Manager*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Donna Bellais, *ComFIN Survey Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Doug Snyder, *RecFIN(SE) Survey Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, *RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS



### Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as submitted.

### Approval of Minutes

**R. Waller** moved to approve the August 3, 2006 minutes as submitted. **P. Choucair** seconded and the motion passed.

### Administrative Report

**J. Rester** reported the Fall Plankton Survey was conducted from August 28, 2006 through September 29, 2006. NMFS and Alabama sampled 127 stations on the west Florida shelf and northern Gulf of Mexico. The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey is currently taking place and **J. Rester** asked the Subcommittee to please submit the cruise reports to him as soon as possible after the cruise was over.

**J. Rester** also reported the SEAMAP-SA presented the new proposed funding allocations to the South Atlantic Board in August and the board was very supportive. ASMFC would like to include the new allocations in the SEAMAP 2006-2010 Management Plan. The Management Plan will then be presented to the South Atlantic Board for their final approval. After their approval, **J. Rester** will again send it to the Gulf-Subcommittee for a quick review before submitting it to the TCC for their approval.

**J. Hanifen** stated that Louisiana was bumped from the PELICAN for the October Fall/Shrimp Groundfish Survey. It will be done in December. He said it is becoming more difficult to get ship time onboard the PELICAN. He said no other vessels were available; the TOMMY MUNRO was also booked. **P. Choucair** said the LONGHORN in Texas will be decommissioned starting this week. He again suggested using SEAMAP funds to keep it online. The Subcommittee decided there is not enough SEAMAP funding available to do this.

### Review of SEAMAP ArcIMS Site

**J. Rester** introduced Betsy Gardner from NCDDC and said she will answer any technical questions about the online capabilities of the SEAMAP ArcIMS Site. He said he sent a link to the website to the Subcommittee for review but he did not receive any response. He said the GSMFC Director and Assistant Director reviewed the site and were able to navigate quite well. He then demonstrated the site capabilities and asked the Subcommittee if this was acceptable and if they have any suggestions to display more or less. It was suggested to move the station locations to the top of the maps. **J. Rester** asked if they would like to display only the western part of the Gulf of Mexico but the Subcommittee said to leave the full map. The Subcommittee asked how much can be displayed on the one site. **B. Gardner** said there are no limitations because it is done dynamically. There can be several pop up windows and different tools on one side. **P. Choucair** said he would like to see a zero catch category. **J. Rester** reminded the Subcommittee that the raw data is not available on this site but they will have a link from the site to GSMFC's site so it can be requested. The intent behind this site is to show the average public

not only the species' hot spots but areas where nothing occurred. **J. Rester** said there will also be an introductory page about SEAMAP when you go to the site.

**J. Rester** asked B. Gardner what the options to download the data are. **B. Gardner** said because of NOAA policy that there has to be metadata associated with any data downloads; the data cannot be downloaded at this time. **J. Rester** asked the Subcommittee if they want the data to be available for download. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided that this site is a view of summarized data and if someone wants to download the raw data, they need to click on the link to GSMFC and request the data. The Subcommittee asked B. Gardner to lock in the pop up window that is there now so it is not floating around the screen. The Table of Contents will pop up briefly and then be hidden so the display area will be larger. **B. Gardner** said when the user signs on there will also be a window stating pop up blocker needs to be disabled in order to fully view all information available with the maps. **B. Gardner** asked the Subcommittee when they will want this site to be available to the general public. The Subcommittee will review the site after changes are made and then ask for TCC approval before it can be available. The Subcommittee thanked Betsy Gardner for attending the meeting and for her efforts in developing the site.

#### **Location of Bycatch "Hotspots" in the Gulf of Mexico**

**Sandra Diamond** from Texas Tech gave a presentation on using SEAMAP data to help locate potential "hotspots" of red snapper shrimp trawl bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico. The goal of the project is to explore the possibility of using closed areas to reduce bycatch of red snapper. She showed maps of the different "hot" and "very hot" areas. She said the data shows there is a potential for closed areas to minimize red snapper bycatch and the impact on shrimp catch. The complete presentation is available through the GSMFC office. After the presentation, the Subcommittee decided to change the SEAMAP sampling protocol to measure each red snapper caught instead of limiting it to twenty. The manual will have to be updated and J. Rester will send a reminder to the Subcommittee and contact all appropriate personnel that were not at the meeting.

#### **Online Access to SEAMAP DATA**

**J. Rester** said that after discussion on the online access to SEAMAP data at the August meeting, four questions needed to be answered at this meeting. The questions are: how to display the data online; how to track who is using the data; what documentation was needed with the data; and what queries need to be set up for users to get the information they need? The Subcommittee decided that users need to sign in to receive a password. Their name, address, affiliation and email would have to be submitted to receive a password to access the data. After the user enters their password, basic information will be displayed at the very beginning including the number of stations and samples each year, seasons, number of trawls, etc. The user will then be able to do a more detailed search if necessary. **M. McDuff** said that at the beginning he will limit the data to trawl effort only. There will be multiple subsets of the data showing the station, season, species and occurrences. These will be in downloadable datasets and if they want full effort they can click on that link and download it to a PDF file. The documentation will be there for each dataset so the information will make sense. M. McDuff will set up

different sample queries and send the Subcommittee a password for their review. When the website is set up for public access, an automatic survey will be sent out to all users requesting the purpose for using the SEAMAP data. It will be explained that this information will help the Subcommittee decide how the data is being used and help justify future funding. The Subcommittee will also ask that if any reports or presentations are done using the SEAMAP data, to please send a copy to the GSMFC office.

### **Review of Fishery Independent Database Structure**

**D. Donaldson** reminded the Subcommittee that a number of years ago the TCC requested the SEAMAP Subcommittee develop coordinated fishery independent data activities in the Gulf. The Subcommittee asked the South Atlantic and Caribbean to join the effort and they agreed. The South Atlantic and Caribbean are no longer interested in pursuing the matter, but the Gulf will continue on their own. The GSMFC contracted with a group from Oregon State University to develop a database structure and they have just recently received it and are currently reviewing. **D. Donaldson** said they are not sure the database structure will be usable; they may have to start from scratch. He will inform the Subcommittee after they are finished reviewing the database structure.

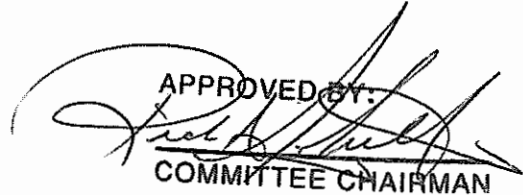
### **SEAMAP 2007 Funding Discussion**

**J. Rester** stated they still have not been informed as to what SEAMAP funding will be. The range is between 0 and \$7.4 million. Level funding will be \$1.385 million. He said they will probably know after the November elections and are hoping to know before the New Year or it will likely be a continuing resolution, which would mean level funding. He said they will still plan for a Plankton Work Group meeting in December. **M. Leiby** said he would like to discuss the possibility of using new gear at the work group meeting.

**E. Roche** stated they are not operating on level funding but are operating under the House budget and that means no grants can be forwarded to NOAA Grants. She said the House cannot proceed with any grants until they receive a budget. She said they are operating as usual so everyone should submit their budgets as usual so they will be ready to go when and if they receive a budget. SEAMAP started the 5 year multi-grant so no budgets will have to be submitted.

***With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.***

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, October 23, 2006  
New Orleans, LA**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**J. Smith** called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. with the following in attendance:

**Members**

Toby Gascon, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA  
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA  
Rick Schillaci, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS  
Ed Swindell, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA  
Keith Ibos (*proxy for Vince Guillory*), LDWF, Bourg, LA  
Stevens Heath, AMRD/ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX  
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Doug Vaughan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC – *via teleconference*

**Others**

Kyle Shertzer, NMFS Beaufort, NC - *via teleconference*  
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA  
Richard Fulford, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Aaron Viles, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA  
Glen Sutton, TPWD, Dickinson, TX

**Staff**

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

**Introductions**

**Smith** led the introductions of the MAC and explained that while **D. Vaughan** had intended to be at the meeting, travel restrictions within NMFS prevented him from attending. He would be available via teleconference for any questions related to the stock assessment.

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed and without objection, the agenda was approved.

### Approval of Minutes (3/14/06)

*The minutes from the March meeting were reviewed and B. Wallace moved to approve, R. Schillaci seconded and the minutes were accepted.*

### Status of 2006 Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishing Season

**J. Smith** reviewed the 2006 season. He reported that at this time, the 2006 landings were at 440,000MT which is up 7% from the same period last year but still 4% below the 5-yr mean. While all the factories sustained heavy damage from the two hurricanes in 2005, all 4 were in operation by June of 2006 and processed fish at almost the 2005, pre-storm levels. After a near drought following the storms until early summer, landings were fair but fishing was hampered by windy and wet weather which greatly reduced the ability to spot menhaden mid to late summer. In addition, a very dry winter resulted in low oil yields during most of 2006. It is estimated that under current fishing, the season should end around 490,000MT.

**Smith** reported that the 2005 year class appears to have been relatively strong as age-1 fish in the catch this year; anecdotal reports suggest that there are large numbers of 'peanut' menhaden (age-0's) in the nearshore waters of the Gulf as the menhaden season comes to an end in October. Coast-wide, abundance of age-1s are nearly equal to the age-2s. A total of 41 boats fished for reduction in 2006, 38 steamers, 2 run boats, and 1 bait boat. Nominal effort was down 4-5% in 2006 from recent years. The forecast in March was for landings to reach 459,000MT and is roughly 7% below the projected final total.

**Smith** also provided a preliminary forecast for 2007 per the industry's request. Based on 2006 numbers of vessels and effort, Smith projects the landings could be around 467,000MT but the March forecast will be more precise with the completed 2006 totals.

Industry reported that many of their boats had experienced down time due, in part, to storm debris problems. There were many incidents of vessels sustaining damage in shallow waters and in channels. With fewer shipyards to make repairs, the effort was likely lower than normal. In addition, the rookie crews may have contributed to breakdowns as they were less seasoned than the crews who may have left the area after the storm. A lot of factors seem to be contributing this year.

### Atlantic Coast Update

**Smith** provided an update on the Atlantic menhaden season and management. Landings through September were down 7% from 2005 and down 10% from the 5-yr mean. Omega Reedville was the only plant in operation with 11 vessels, although there were 10-11 bait boats in Virginia, New Jersey, and New England. Historically, bait made up 10% of the total menhaden catch however in recent years it has made up 15-17% of the total. There were reports of lots of menhaden in the New England states as well as south from Beaufort to Florida which presumes that as the coastal population increases, they are expanding both north and south. Finally, it appears that 2003, 2004, and 2005 have been years with good recruitment of Atlantic menhaden.

**Smith** also reported on the ASMFC activities and focused specifically on the Virginia issue of 'non-compliance' with Addendum II. After much positioning and posturing, the state of Virginia and Omega Protein reached a compromise on the 'Chesapeake Bay cap' (105,800MT) , that is, menhaden for reduction removals from the Bay. The governor of Virginia offered a compromise in August of 109,000MT, effective 2006 through 2010, for the reduction fishery, with overages subtracted from the next year, and underages credited to the next year up to 122,000MT. In addition, Omega Protein, Inc. would cooperate with researchers to study issues of localized depletion and relative abundance. The governor of Maryland agreed with the compromise cap, along with several NGOs and other recreational fishing groups. Final approval of the compromise cap by the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board is expected on October 25.

### **Gulf Menhaden Stock Assessment**

**D. Vaughan** was unable to attend the meeting to deliver his Gulf menhaden stock assessment but **Smith** presented it to the MAC with **Vaughan** on conference call to answer any questions. Overall the assessment looked good with results indicating there was no overfishing of Gulf menhaden. The biological reference points used on the Atlantic were applied to the Gulf setting targets and limits to both fishing mortality and population fecundity. Several runs of the model were completed varying certain parameters in an effort to tune the model. The final results indicate that since 2001 fishing mortality has increased slightly, population fecundity has declined slightly, and the # of recruits may be declining since 1998. The bottom line is that the fishery is operating well within the limits and only slightly above the targets through 2004; the stock is not overfished nor is overfishing occurring. With reduced effort in 2005 and 2006 due hurricanes Katrina and Rita and good recruitment in those years, recent year benchmarks should continue towards or below the targets as fishing mortality decreases and fecundity presumably increases.

**Vaughan** provided a short exercise comparing the VPA model with the Statistical Catch at Age model. In general, the new catch at age model is much better at determining all the necessary variables and is more statistically sound than the old VPA model. It provided better estimates of recruitment to age-1 and total stock biomass.

### **Update on New CDFR Forms**

**Smith** showed some of the detailed results of areas fished in 2005 using the new and improved Captain Daily Fishing Reports (CDFR) with the GPS coordinates added in. The detail is much more refined and easily showed trends over the season and between years. Some of the CDFRs from Daybrook were lost in the storm so the 2005 CDFR dataset is incomplete, but 2006 is looking promising. **Smith** will continue to update the group on its use and the application of the additional data.

### **State and Industry Reports Post-Hurricanes**

The states and industry briefly went over hurricane recovery and reported on progress being made since 2005.

- MDMR was still waiting on FEMA but were back in their building. They have begun to use the Fishery Disaster Funds but at this time, there were no programs for menhaden.
- LDWF was still not in their New Orleans office; the menhaden samplers for the Empire plant were housed in a temporary storage building in Baton Rouge. They hoped to get back to New Orleans soon.
- TPWD indicated that their small fish dealers were hurt the worst; half had not returned since the storm. Texas crabbers were still not back yet and the market channel for crabs being shipped to North Carolina had stopped.
- Daybrook was proud to be able to finish the season out. The problems with the floodgate at Empire made it difficult for the Empire fleet to easily reach the western LA fishing grounds. They often could see the plant from west of the fish factory, but it required 7-8 hours transit to get there. They lost a large portion of their labor pool, and had issues with rookie crews. The 2006 season would be forever dotted with asterisks and footnotes. Empire was still a mess with few people or infrastructure, and the Daybrook plant ran half the season on diesel generators.
- Omega reported similar problems. Cameron had been completely wiped out by Rita; Abbeville and Moss Point were also inundated by flood waters. It was messy, dirty work to dig out, but Omega wanted to acknowledge those who remained and helped them get back to work. Lots of Omega's employees left after the storm and didn't return so they had the same rookie problems. In addition, supply costs to support the laborers they did have rose by 50% after the storm.
- The TPWD took the opportunity to thank Omega for responding positively following a request to not fish near the Texas beaches due to high numbers of large gamefish during summer 2006.
- Finally, Omega has developed a spill recovery vessel to prevent menhaden net spills from reaching the beaches. The new system can be deployed to skim and pump fish off the surface of the water before they reach shore.

### **Update on LNG Facilities in the Gulf**

Jeff Rester updated the MAC on the situation with the proposed LNG facilities and all were glad to hear the reversal of plans for the Freeport facility and its use of the closed loop system after all. Beacon Port should be releasing final EIS shortly and Bienville Offshore Terminal will be releasing its draft EIS soon.

### **Election of Chairman**

**B. Wallace** reported that despite having lost the 'official parchment' in the storm, he knew that the chair position should return to the industry. *C. Perret nominated Rick Schillaci (Omega) as chair and he was elected by unanimous consent.*




### **Other Business**

**J. Mambretti** reported that the US Coast Guard had notified the TPWD regarding their intent to conduct 'live-fire' games in the Texas Point area. The industry was grateful for the information and would warn their vessels.

*With no further business, Mambretti moved to adjourn, Perret seconded and the meeting ended at 4:06 p.m.*

**TCC ANADROMOUS FISH SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, October 23, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Chairman D. Frugé** called the first meeting of the Anadromous Fish Subcommittee in five years to order at 1:10 p.m. The following members and others were in attendance:

**Members**

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Nicholson, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Howard Rogillio, LDWF, Lacombe, LA  
John Mareska, DCNR, Dauphin Island, AL  
Norman Boyd, TPWD, Port O'Connor, TX  
Rick Long, FFWCC, Midway, FL

**Staff**

Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Teri Freitas, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steven VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Laura Jenkins, USFWS, Panama City, FL  
Karen Herrington, USFWS, Panama City, FL  
Frank Courtney, FWL/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX

**Adoption of Agenda**

*H. Rogillio made a motion to accept the agenda. The motion was seconded by L. Nicholson.*

**Approval of Minutes (March 13, 2001)**

*H. Rogillio made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by L. Nicholson.*

**Handout of the Striped Bass FMP**

**S. VanderKooy** passed out the Striped Bass FMP to the Subcommittee and thanked the Committee/Task Force for their help over the last five years. Additional copies are available

upon request. **D. Frugé** thanked the Commission for a job well done in getting this FMP pulled together and printed and also the Technical Taskforce for all their hard work.

### **Agency Reports**

**AMRD – J. Mareska** reported that Heron Bay, FL collected its 1<sup>st</sup> Alabama shad in marine waters since the 1960's, from an AMRD Fishery independent sampling, and 2-3 were collected in the Conecuh River in 2006. Populations were found in the Apalachicola and Choctawhatchee rivers. The Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division is considering more restrictions to protect stocks and is interested in a range wide FMP. Perdido Bay, FL had its 1<sup>st</sup> sturgeon documented as collected in the Perdido system, from an AMRD fishery independent sampling, and the Geological Survey of Alabama captured one in the Perdido River. Sturgeon were caught by a Corps of Engineers trawl in front of the hopper dredge in Mobile Ship Channel and during post Ivan clean up, 4 sturgeon were caught in debris trawls by a private firm along the coastline south of Perdido Bay. Gulf sturgeon were also caught by hook and line on the Dixie bar outside of Mobile Bay. GSA captured and tagged sturgeon in the NE quadrant of Mobile Bay is currently working on a three year project (2 years left) in the coastal rivers and bays of Alabama to attempt to locate spawning sites and designate critical habitat. There is a push to decommission & remove Claiborne Lock & Dam from the Alabama River, but there are issues of liability and logistics. No activity at all on requests to open lock several times a day to allow fish passage. Millers Ferry is in the same situation and removal would open access to the Cahaba, the last known location of spawning activity. Dr. Ben Rizzo evaluated Claiborne Lock & Dam for a fish ladder and the cost is estimated at \$12 million. Striped bass hybrid stockings are declining. In February 2004 AMRD began stocking only Gulf strain striped bass. Lewis Smith and Lake Martin are being used as a reserve for Gulf strain.

**FWC – R. Long** reported that the Corps of Engineers dredged out the mouths of several of the tributary streams to create pockets of cool water. They were designed to work a year or two, but most of them filled back in rapidly, due to the extended drought conditions in 2006. Striped Bass stocked in broodfish repository lakes were all marked with OTC. FFWC is trying to do genetic reconstruction. Phase II fish were double marked. YOY and eligible broodfish are checked to the extent possible, based on mtDNA and nDNA. Striped bass stocked into Smith Lake, Martin Lake (AL), West Point and Talquin are stocked with "most Gulf-like" crosses. Family sizes are reduced and equalized and numbers of families stocked are being increased. Georgia DMR contacted the South Carolina Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to do some work on the ongoing passage study at Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam on Alabama shad. They marked 45 fish with sonic tags and released them inside the lock in 2005 (first year of their study). Alabama shad 2005 population was estimated at 23,600. They missed 3 weeks of sampling due to flooding. They repeated in 2006, and had a weak run. The population estimate was 900 fish. 1 was released with a tag but the fish was not released inside the lock. This is not a comparable estimate and they will try tagging 50-100 again next year. Genetics work at the University of Southern Mississippi using mtDNA and nDNA indicates that river systems investigated are individual management units. The Apalachicola-Choctawhatchee-Flint rivers shad Plan is nearly complete.

**LDWF – H. Rogillio** gave a PowerPoint presentation covering both striped bass and the recent legislative actions regarding Gulf sturgeon in Lake Pontchartrain Rivers. Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery will arrive today to stock the Phase II striped bass. In the last two (2) years LDWF has been trying to put in Gulf strain fish to try to get another source of broodfish in Toledo Bend. **Rogillio** continued with the situation with entanglement gear and Gulf sturgeon interactions and then gave a brief review of the life history of the Gulf sturgeon and a timeline of actions by the USFWS, NMFS, and the LDWF listing the species. The LDWF had proposed a ban on entanglement nets in certain rivers to reduce mortality impacts on native Gulf sturgeon. The predominate commercial fish species harvested in these areas by seines, gill nets and trammel nets are garfish which only a few individuals participate in this fishery. The recommendation proposed by the LDWF was to prohibit the use of gill nets, trammel nets, and seines for a ten year period in the previously described portions of Southeast Louisiana including the following rivers: Blind River, Tangipahoa River, Amite River, Pearl River, Tickfaw River, and Little Lake (Mud Lake). The original proposal was modified, due to legislative concerns, to instead offer a seasonal ban which was presented at the October meeting, allowing the use of entanglement gear during only the months of December, January and February in those areas. The substitute proposal was a compromise reached between a representative from commercial fishing interests, a representative from environmental interests and Inland Fish personnel. No action was taken, however, and the motion to accept the substitute died due to lack of a second. This item was tabled for further discussion by the subcommittee later in the meeting.

**GCRL – L. Nicholson** reported that they are basically, starting over again trying to rebuild the striped bass restoration project. They lost their buildings, equipment and everything in between to Hurricane Katrina and they are trying to get the monies together to re-building the program. So far they have a shocking boat and trailer. Prior to Katrina they stocked in late June early July, had a wonderful crop of Phase II fish; Katrina stocked all of those for them. Hopefully some of them made it. They have been getting some tag returns and some fish catch reports but not getting a lot. In the interim they purchased sonic tagging, tracking gear and a receiver that records the tags. You download it to your computer and it will tell how many times the fish went by. They are looking at doing some habitat studies, rebuilding the hatchery systems, and finding the monies to do it, which is hard to come by. They are getting back slowly, very slowly but they are making progress. They found out that the Pascagoula River system had a very extensive fishkill. It is estimated that 60-80 billion fish were killed due to Hurricane Katrina.

**TPWD – N. Boyd** reported that TPWD has a great many projects ongoing and special studies. There is not a hot bed of anadromous fish activity. They have not dealt with striped bass on the coast in 15 years though they do still have an active inland striped bass stocking program. On the coast they primarily deal with red drum and spotted seatrout. Some of the other high profile projects they are involved in or are investigating include the possibility of managing speckled trout on a regional basis. Until now it's been pretty much on a coast-wide basis. All their recreational fisheries have the same regulations for the whole coast. Seagrass protection efforts are on-going on the mid-coast. They are in the midst of trying to protect areas, educate the public and gather data. It has been interesting, time consuming and frustrating all at the same time. Water planning still dominates their landscape as far as environmental concerns and occupies a good part of their time and energy. It has spawned a lot of special projects on the marine environment and they are looking at oysters to help quantify and qualify the effects of

freshwater inflows. There are ongoing projects on salinity and they are looking at environmental impacts and cost of energy. They are still involved in the crab trap removal program. It was scaled back last year. They intended to scale back to an every other year collection system in February. The public wants an every year plan and it is coordinated by volunteer efforts so they will probably continue with that.

**USFWS – D. Frugé** reported that he had been working primarily on the Striped Bass FMP during the last year. The Regional office continues to issue contracts for broodstock genetics work for striped bass production that occurs every spring. The Baton Rouge office has been continuing to work in cooperation with LDWF folks in the Gulf sturgeon sampling that occurs in those rivers, tributaries and Lake Pontchartrain, including the Pearl River, over the last year.

**Karen Herrington** reported that the USFWS in Panama City is currently working on sturgeon population estimates for the Escambia River. To date, they have collected 65 fish and work will continue into November. The USFWS conducted a study on the beach re-nourishment program at Panama City Beach, Destin, and Gulf Shores requiring trawl fishermen to be permitted to fish around the dredge in hopes of collecting information on seaturtles and sturgeon in the work area. PIT tags, readers, Floy T-bar tags, and telemetry tags were provided to permitted fishermen. A total of 20 Gulf sturgeon were collected from mid-December 2005 through early April 2006. In addition, 14 Gulf sturgeon from 5 rivers (Escambia, Blackwater, Yellow, Choctawatchee and Brothers) were equipped with internal sonic tags and were located 40 times from January through March between Gulf Shores, Alabama and St. George Island, Florida.

**Herrington** also reported that 311 Gulf sturgeon were collected in five Florida panhandle Rivers and Pensacola Bay this year with the majority (186) in the Brothers River. All fish were marked with PIT and Floy tags and 50 fish were implanted with sonic telemetry tags as part of a study that was being conducted by NOAA to determine Gulf sturgeon movements post Hurricane Ivan.

**Herrington** informed the subcommittee that some landowners in the Choctawatchee River watershed who had been identified as posing a threat to Gulf sturgeon spawning habitats, were approached and provided information through state and federal costs sharing partner programs on habitat restoration. Most of the identified threat areas were a result of poor land practices that contributed to heavy sediment load in the river system. One landowner so far has applied for habitat restoration funding under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Escambia River Logjam Passage - Remote receivers were placed above and below a log jam on the Escambia River to determine if the log jam would prevent Gulf sturgeon passage upriver to spawning habitat. The logjam did not prevent Gulf sturgeon movement up river as 6 telemetry fish were recorded at both the lower and upper receivers in the spring. Also at Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam, USFWS assisted Clemson and Georgia Department of Natural Resources in collecting Gulf sturgeon for a project to monitor movement in and around the dam in the Apalachicola River to determine if an attraction flow in the lock might influence fish passage through the lock and above the dam. 20 fish will be tagged and the project is slated to start in the spring of 2007.

University of Florida researchers collected over 200 Gulf sturgeon eggs in the Apalachicola River from spawning pads placed at six sites previously identified as potential Gulf sturgeon spawning habitat. The eggs were collected at two hardbottom, limestone sites located below the dam and about 8 miles downstream. USFWS personnel collected over 100 fertilized Gulf sturgeon eggs at the upper site in 2005.

Striped bass - Working on Phase the II study, mainly focusing on the broodfish now to see how many have been coded-wire tagged and get an idea how many were stocked as Phase I and Phase II. There were 9 broodfish collected from the Apalachicola and 1 had a coded-wire tag, and that fish is still alive in the hatchery.

### **Gulf Striped Bass Production and Distribution**

**K. Herrington** reported that 30% of the stocking goals were met in 2006; 607,311 were stocked out of 2,101,750 requested. Stocking took place in the following lakes: Talquin, West Point, Lewis Smith and Martin. It was a real bad year; hard time getting broodfish. The broodfish they did get, didn't do well. Hopefully it will be better next year. Definitely the worst stocking and distribution year ever. The speculated that reasons for such a bad year were drought and hurricanes, and a reasonably warm winter. On a good year stocking distribution is 80-90% of goal. Additionally there were problems at the hatchery including: swim bladder problems, some females didn't produce eggs and high temperatures.

### **Gulf Sturgeon Incidental Catch Reduction in Lake Pontchartrain Rivers**

**H. Rogillio** –The Chairman reopened this agenda item for discussion. The subcommittee asked if the Louisiana Commission totally understands that the sturgeon is a threatened species; it was reported that they do understand. Letters had already been sent by USFWS, NMFS, Audubon Society, and Nature Conservancy in favor of the resolution. The subcommittee discussed if it might be appropriate to reiterate a recommendation that had already been made through the Gulf sturgeon recovery plan which is also an FMP promulgated by the GSMFC, with regard to incidental take. They also discussed how prevalent this issue is across the Gulf and whether this was only a Louisiana issue. Florida currently restricts most entanglement nets while Mississippi and Alabama have net limitations and restrictions. No action was taken by the Subcommittee.

### **Alabama Shad Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Rivers System**

**R. Long** and **K. Herrington** reported that for about a year now Florida has been working with Alabama and Georgia, as an adhoc group working on an Alabama Shad Fishery Management Plan for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Rivers System. It started as a 10-page document and it is now 100+ page draft that is almost complete. There are about a half dozen small items that still need to be addressed. There is not too much in the plan that would be considered controversial. They are still looking for any information anyone has on the Alabama shad population. Alabama shad was taken off endangered species candidate list and is now just a species of concern. There is a 10 fish per day bag limit in Florida. In Alabama a special permit is required. The range for Alabama shad is from the Suwannee to the Mississippi rivers. The

original goal was to establish anadromous fish status on the Alabama shad in the state of Georgia. The draft FMP has not been circulated among the agencies for comment as of yet and no target date for distribution for comment has been set. **D. Frugé** offered the Anadromous Fish Subcommittee as a source for review and comment on this FMP.

### Potential for Developing a Range-Wide Alabama Shad FMP

**R. Lukens** went through the Commission's FMP process. The subcommittee then discussed the potential for developing a range-wide Alabama shad FMP. *After much discussion J. Mareska made the motion to recommend that the TCC forward to the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee a request to proceed with development of an interjurisdictional fishery management plan for Alabama shad within the historic range of the species in Gulf Of Mexico Rivers. H. Rogillio seconded the motion. No one was opposed. Motion was passed.*

### American Eels in Gulf Rivers

**D. Frugé** reported that there was a petition to the USFWS and to NOAA Fisheries jointly, a couple of years ago, to list American eels under the Endangered Species Act because of some pretty significant documented declines noted in populations entering some of the rivers on the Atlantic coast. They are in the process of completing a status review in response to that petition. The purpose for bringing this up was to see whether there is any additional information on American eels. **H. Rogillio** recalled a report done in the 1980's (possibly 1984) and believes he has a copy of the report in his office that he will get to **D. Frugé**. Others on the subcommittee reported seeing American eels, in very low numbers. **R. Lukens** recalled that there was a big push in the early to mid 1980's by David Veal at the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Sea Grant Office, but it never took off, and nobody is really fishing for them. He suggested calling David Borage to see if he has any historical information. **G. Bray** queried the Marine Recreational Statistical Survey database for American eels in the database from 1981 to 2006. As an example, in Mississippi the numbers were high in 1981 and have dropped off significantly. **Bray** said it could not be assumed that the species has declined, because anglers are now probably doing better job identifying the type of eel (i.e. moray or spotted). **G. Bray** will pull the data together and get it to **D. Frugé**. Anyone with any other data was asked to please send the information to **Frugé** within the next month.

### Update of Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan

**D. Frugé** reported that one of the high priority action items SARP has taken up is to complete a comprehensive Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan which includes parts of Texas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. They developed a 4-page skeleton draft plan and held a workshop in Alabama this month to review the draft. The plan is being designed to cover all aquatic habitats from headwaters out to coastal waters. Based on input that was developed at the workshop, the SARP coordinator is going to be developing another revision of this skeleton version of the plan and sending that out for another round of review with a subsequent follow up workshop being scheduled in January. They will expand it to a larger focus group. **D. Frugé** will forward the next revision to Anadromous Fish Subcommittee for input. Target date for having the plan finalized is summer of next year.

## Implementation Strategy for Striped Bass FMP

**D. Frugé** went through the recommendations scorecard for the Striped Bass FMP in the handout provided by **S. VanderKooy**. It shows how well each of the states is doing in implementing the recommendations that are contained in the FMP. It was discussed whether the subcommittee would like to do an anadromous subcommittee report card to the TCC on a yearly or periodic basis, keeping in mind that the table may need to be modified slightly for subcommittee use. It was suggested to use it on a river specific basis. It was also suggested this could be added to the Morone Workshop agenda.

**D. Frugé** asked about funding source ideas. Several ideas were discussed including habitat-based projects, either local or range-wide, involving multiple states. Conceivably some future funding may come about as a result of developing the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan; that could be a source of funding for doing projects to benefit anadromous fish. The subcommittee should be thinking in terms of trying to develop proposals for some of this habitat funding. The More Fish Campaign with Bass Pro Shops as a major sponsor was also suggested. Multi-state State Wildlife Grants could be applied for if striped bass are listed in states comprehensive wildlife strategies. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation could be another potential source, although they require a substantial match. The obvious way to do it would be with Sportfish Restoration Funds, but most of that money is already committed and priorities are not likely to get shifted. **D. Frugé** will get with Jeff Rester to explore the possibility trying to get a proposal using striped bass for a NOAA Fisheries Cooperative Research Program grant. Bottom line is if someone can come up with a good proposal for a project that they would like to try to get funded, get with **D. Frugé** and he will work with you on.

## Other Business

There was no other business.

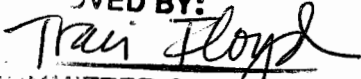
## Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

**L. Nicholson** gave **D. Frugé** special thanks, for all his work on the Striped Bass FMP. An outstanding job! *Nicholson moved to re-elect D. Frugé as chair of the Anadromous Fish Subcommittee which was seconded by H. Rogillio and a motion to re-elect L. Nicholson as Vice Chairman was made by H. Rogillio and seconded by J. Mareska. Both motions passed without any objection.*

*There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.*



**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, October 23, 2006  
New Orleans, LA**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Chairman T. Floyd** called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. The following attended:

**Members**

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

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Teri Freitas, Administrative Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Glen Sutton, TPWD, Dickenson, TX  
Catalina Brown, FWC/FWRI, St Petersburg, FL  
Richard Fulford, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bill Richardson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

**S. VanderKooy** reminded the Subcommittee that they would have an extended informal session in the afternoon to go over any items they need more time for including the assessment and the ageing proposal. **T. Wagner moved to accept the agenda as written, L. Hartman seconded and the agenda was approved.**

**Approval of Minutes**

The Subcommittee reviewed several sets of minutes; March 13, 2006 in San Antonio, Texas, May 16-17, 2006 in Naples, Florida, and September 21, 2006 in Ocean Springs. Minor changes were recommended and each set was approved.

**Blue Crab Aging Project**

**VanderKooy** gave brief update on status of funding approval he is expecting to hear about approval of funding of grant in December/January timeframe. One of the original concerns

voiced by the SFFMC was that there had been no contingency plans in the proposal for catastrophic loss of a cohort or a facility. **VanderKooy** asked that if all three crab facilities were lost in one hurricane season, could the study be saved? **H. Perry** indicated that it would take about a month to start new crabs and get back on line if there was minor damage and the facility was not destroyed. **A. Jackson** reported an individual interested in trying to hatch and rear young crabs but doesn't have a pond to grow them out, if the Subcommittee was interested. **VanderKooy** suggested that if **Jackson** had a pond, this individual might be willing to try to give us a 6 month head start. **Jackson** agreed to talk to him about it.

### **Gulf Stock Assessment Data Set Progress**

**B. Pellegrin** gave brief PowerPoint presentation on the Stock Status in each state based on fishery-independent data. **Pellegrin** asked each state to look at their landings and see if they can provide him interpretation of the landings vs. the CPUE. **Pellegrin** will be making a short presentation to the TCC to introduce the three models the Subcommittee is looking at; Yield-effort curve, the Surplus production model, and the Collie-Sissenwine approach.

The lack of quality effort data was addressed. Several states reported that fishermen and dealers simply would not fill out the trip ticket information correctly when it came to specifics on effort. It would require a lot more educating to show them the importance of accurate information. **VanderKooy** mentioned the VMS possibility discussed at other meetings. The VMS system is probably cost prohibitive at this point, \$35 a data point to look a where fishermen are fishing in real-time. Most of the agencies planning to use the VMS system will likely spot check fishermen on an hourly basis at the most. There are other systems out there now which utilize cell phone technology and simple GPS for tracking. The crab fishery does not require real-time data but needs very small scale resolution to determine the number of stops an individual crab fisherman makes on a single day. Most of the systems could be used as a data logger and downloaded weekly or bi-weekly by a biologist. **Richard Fulford** (GCRL) suggested the Trimble system which works very well for near-shore fisheries. **VanderKooy** suggested that perhaps GCRL could try a cheap system on their own research boats as a test.

### **Derelict Trap Guidelines Document Revision**

The Derelict Trap Guidelines Document has been undergoing revision. Following a meeting earlier this summer to work on it, each state has provided new or additional information to the GSMFC for inclusion. **VanderKooy** now has all the components and will begin formatting it into the revised document.

### **Derelict Trap Cleanups**

Each state provided a short report on their respective state's recent and future derelict trap cleanups.

- Louisiana is planning its 4<sup>th</sup> year in 2007 focusing on Barataria Bay and part of Lake Pontchartrain. To date, the LDWF has removed 14,452 traps from its waters. The next cleanup is scheduled for February 24 – March 5, 2007.

- Mississippi had no cleanup in 2005 due to success in prior years and no cleanup in 2006 due to Hurricane recovery. Currently they plan to have another cleanup in January 2007 which will be partly supported by the Disaster Funding coming into the state. MDMR plans to contract commercial fishermen and offer bounties on derelict traps recovered during the closure.
- Alabama has gone to an every-other-year cleanup. They completed their last in March 2006 but only removed about 340 traps due to unusually high tides. In addition, there were some issues with reporting. They plan to schedule another cleanup in 2008.
- Florida continues to remove derelict stone crab and lobster traps from the Keys. In 2006 they removed 3,000 using volunteers and the Coast Guard contributed another 30,000 traps, some of which were FWC research traps unfortunately.
- Texas will host its 6<sup>th</sup> cleanup this coming February 16-25, 2007. This is a milestone event in that they should remove their # 20,000 trap in 2007. While there is less of a TPWD presence during the cleanups, they still man the dump sites and collect data using TPWD biologists. They are entertaining going to alternating years as the number of traps recovered goes down along with volunteer interest.

### **State Reports**

**A. Jackson** reported that Florida had good winter catches in early 2006 which fishermen speculated may have been due to red tide providing additional food to the crabs in the form of dead finfish. Tampa Bay recruitment was absent in November 2005, which may be in part to the crabs not really getting up into the Bay. This was partially supported by the crab health survey which indicated that most of the blue crabs sampled were loaded down with saltwater parasites. The crabs landed this past summer were suffering high mortalities (50-60%) according to fishermen. Landings in the first half of 2006 appear to be slightly below the 2005 landings for the same time period but only by a little. There continues to be a decrease in license sales but consistent landings. Prices, however, were still inverse to landings although the overall value of the product was high. Effort appears to be skewed with a number of 'latent' licenses. The FWC proposed an effort management plan to the its Commission last December which passed but it has been held up by the legislature due to discussion about the proposed fees and implementation of individual trap tags. Finally, the aquatic health section of FWC is beginning to survey sick crabs in hopes of provided detailed information to FIN samplers to know how to report specific crab symptoms when encountered. Currently, only finfish symptoms are identified by samplers.

**L. Hartman** reported that the Alabama 2006 landings were low but it noted license sales were also down in 2006. This can be attributed to the 'Forrest Gump' affect; fishermen are indicating that it has been a great year. Based on their reports, CPUE is way up. Values remain relatively low for processed crab products but this is simple supply and demand economics, imports continue to drive the supply up and so the demand for local product is down. Processors are still having trouble finding laborers since the storm. Fishermen basically stopped going out because they could not find processors. In addition, many are switching fisheries with oysters seeing a large influx of crab fishermen into the fishery.

**T. Floyd** reported that Mississippi license sales continue to drop. In 2005, 137 commercial trap licenses were sold and in 2006, only 60 were sold. Conversely, the 2006 landings are way up with only half the fishermen participating. **Floyd** noted that Mississippi had received over \$37 million in the Disaster Recover Grant for fisheries recovery and there are two programs focusing on the crab industry, the recovery monitoring and the derelict trap bounty.

**V. Guillory** reported that the 2006 landings in Louisiana were down from 2005 due to both hurricanes Rita and Katrina. The catch in 2006 has been good over the summer however; dealers had trouble getting rid of the huge number of crabs in August and September and ended up putting fishermen on a quota system. Looking at LDWF trip tickets from September 2005 - August 2006, landings were up 2% from the 5-year mean but crab vessels had declined 49%, and trips had declined by 41%.

**T. Wagner** reported that there were no new crab regulations in Texas, recreational or commercial, in 2006. **Wagner** was unable to report on the 2006 landings at this time; however, it looks like the landings will be low. Only two commercial crab licenses were bought back in 2005 and due to legislative budget cuts, most of the cuts for the TPWD will be in the buy-back program. **Glen Sutton** reported that he had received a Texas State Wildlife Grant to begin to model freshwater inflow to specifically look at changes to crab biomass over time using the ECOPATH model. TPWD may be heading towards ecosystem management.

### **Election of Chairman**

*T. Wagner nominated T. Floyd for chair, V. Guillory seconded and Floyd was re-elected chair of the Subcommittee with an overwhelming show of support.*

*There being no further business the Subcommittee adjourned at 11:40 a.m.*

### **Informal Session**

The Subcommittee reconvened in the afternoon for a work session that included discussion on the lipofuscin ageing proposal, stock assessment, and discussion of unresolved issues with the states fishery-independent sampling for blue crabs and the lacking effort data.

The Subcommittee spent some time working on Terrapins, discussing critical locations, numbers, and excluders. It was agreed that Terrapins are more likely to be caught by recreational crabbers, than commercial just based on their preferred habitats.

The Subcommittee discussed the use of disaster recovery money to buy waterfront property to support processors and allow for boat docking access. The consensus was that the states should discourage and in some cases prevent sale of land to developers to allow some areas to develop for fishery use.

Finally, there was concern by the Subcommittee that several of the data-type recommendations in the last Blue Crab FMP were being overlooked. **VanderKooy** had previously offered to get a copy of the Commission's IJF Compliance Matrix to the Subcommittee for their review. The matrix is a kind of report card of how states are implementing recommendations of GSMFC fishery management plans. **Wagner** indicated he would go back and list all the recommendations from the original Blue Crab FMP and the Revision and provide them all to the Subcommittee following the meeting.

*The Subcommittee adjourned at 4:05 p.m.*

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, October 23, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

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

**Members**

Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Joe O’Hop, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Gary Rouse, NMFS, Miami, FL (*proxy – G. Davenport*)  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

**Staff**

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ronald Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bob Harris, FIN Database Manager, Ocean Springs, MS  
Doug Snyder, RecFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort Lab, N.C.  
Paul Choucair, TPWD, Rockport, TX

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on March 13, 2006 in San Antonio, Texas were approved as written.

**Status of Biological Sampling Activities**

**D. Donaldson** distributed handouts with a summary for all species collected and the number of otoliths, as well as a summary for the five FIN target species. **Donaldson** noted that FIN is

working on getting TIP biological sampling included in the FIN system. **J. O'Hop** stated that some of the TIP data is collected by Florida port samplers. There was some discussion on avoiding duplication by including TIP data. It was noted during discussion that it is also important to know what area the samples are from, and the funding sources used for the collection of these samples.

Donaldson reported that the benefit in collecting otoliths is the processing so they can be utilized. The Committee reviewed a table identifying what is currently in the system and it shows that almost everyone is up to date, and Florida will be current within the next month.

**Donaldson** then reviewed the FIN targets for 2007. The targets are listed by state and have new recreational and commercial totals. **Donaldson** noted that a different protocol has been adopted for determining targets which is identifying cells of significance. These cells are significant regions and gears where you would expect to see a difference in the age structure. Each cell of significance is allocated 500 otoliths which will allow FIN to collect otoliths from 15 species instead of 5 as in the past. **Donaldson** also explained that otoliths collected should be distributed throughout the year. Also, **G. Bray** presented some draft tracking documents that will be used with the new collection methodology. The group reviewed the documents and will provide comments to **Bray**

The Committee then discussed including fishery independent samples in the FIN database. It was suggested that fishery independent data be kept in a separate database. One problem is that each state has different protocols for collection of these data. **R. Leard** stated that in the SEDAR process requests are frequently made for more fishery independent data. **Donaldson** asked state members to send him fishery independent sampling protocols for biological sampling. He will look for commonality and the Committee will discuss the results at the March 2007 meeting.

**Donaldson** then reported that the biological data entry program is moving forward. FIN had been working with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) on this issue however FIN may need to move forward without them to ensure that Gulf of Mexico's needs are met. Staff will develop a draft data entry program which will be demonstrated at the March 2007 meeting.

### **Review of Compilation of Issues regarding Vessel Information**

**Donaldson** gave a brief overview of the issues involved in getting commercial vessel data as part of a registration tracking system. He noted that this was discussed at the last FIN meeting and it was suggested that perhaps this issue is not one for the FIN Committee because of problems dealing with confidentiality, merging data sets, etc. After identifying specific problems the Committee agreed to ask the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee) S/FFMC for input. In Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana there are no legal barriers to setting up the registration tracking system, however in Florida there is a confidentiality MOU, and in Texas there are two different databases which would need to be merged. **Donaldson** noted that he will present this information to the S/FFMC later this week.

## **Status of Compilation of Recreational Fishing Licenses and License Frame Pilot Survey**

**Donaldson** reported that the License Frame Pilot Survey is scheduled to begin in January and NMFS will let the telephone contract by mid-December 2006. Since there is incomplete data in the phone number category for recreational fishing licenses, more work needs to be done. There was lengthy Committee discussion on improving the collection of phone numbers, including outreach to let the fishing public know the importance of collecting phone numbers on fishing licenses. **M. Kasprzak** suggested contacting fishing groups and asking them to stress the importance of providing all information when purchasing fishing licenses. The Committee agreed to have staff draft a letter to state licensing agencies, as well as the appropriate recreational fishing groups. The draft letter will be sent to Committee members for their approval and they will provide a distribution list to staff. Also, the group agreed that the S/FFMC should discuss the feasibility of making the collection of phone number on the recreational fishing licenses a mandatory field. **J. O'Hop** commented on recreational fishing license exemptions noting that there are a substantial number of fishermen in Florida that are unknown. The Committee also discussed additional questions that could be added to the survey for participation estimates.

## **Discussion of Red Snapper IFQ/Trip Ticket Issues**

**Donaldson** reported that NMFS will be implementing the IFQ for red snapper in January 2007. The issue of duplication with the trip ticket system came to light in March 2006 however **Donaldson** assured the Committee that he is working with NMFS and this will be resolved. This item is on the agenda in order to keep the FIN Committee apprised of the situation and it will also be on the agenda at the March 2007 meeting.

## **Discussion of InPort Metadata Project**

**Donaldson** reported that Montina Williams, a contractor with FIS, has been to the GSMFC office as well as the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources to begin the compilation of metadata (via the InPort too) for the Gulf of Mexico. Williams will be in Baton Rouge in November 2006 and will visit Texas and Alabama in early 2007 to compile their metadata. In order to provide links to referenced documents and manual, they need to be accessible via the Internet. These documents can be either put on the state sites or **Donaldson** stated that the GSMFC has the capability to add them to the GSMFC website. **Donaldson** reported that Florida is utilizing a different system for the entry of metadata. This does not present any problems as long as links to this system can be added into InPort. **O'Hop** stated that the system is accessible to the public and can be linked to InPort.

## **Discussion of 2007 – 2009 FIN Cooperative Agreement**

**Donaldson** reported that the FIN had submitted its first multi-year cooperative agreement with NMFS for approximately \$5.3 million. Because of the continuing resolution the final outcome is unknown at this time. In the event that funding is cut, adjustments will have to be made to FIN activities. **Donaldson** reported that detailed effort has been funded with 2006 year end money



and M. Kasprzak will give a report to the Committee on the status of detailed effort work in March 2007.

### **Discussion of Monitoring of Non-Native Species**

**R. Lukens** noted that he manages a regional panel for aquatic invasive species and one of their main issues is being able to detect non-native species early in order to interrupt or eradicate them before distribution occurs. Monitoring in the field is essential for this to be successful and much of the early detection has been from the general public.

**Lukens** suggested that the commercial and recreational sampling conducted under FIN may be a good vehicle to implementing an alert process. Lukens would like to give a formal presentation to port samplers and recreational interviewers to solicit their help in the reporting of non-native species. **Lukens** noted that he would like to work with FIN member agencies to have an opportunity to talk to their samplers during 2007. **Donaldson** stated that commercial port samplers will meet in May 2007 and that would be opportune time to present. **M. Kasprzak** will provide Lukens with a schedule of Louisiana recreational sampler meetings.

### **State/Federal Reports**

Florida – **J. O’Hop** reported that the collection and processing of marine fisheries trip tickets is operating normally. Florida is currently editing trip tickets received during October of 2006 for the first time ever have no backlog of unedited trip tickets.

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 September of 2006. Sampling during Wave 5 is on track to exceed the quota targets. **O’Hop** reported that they have been able to complete assignments for at-sea trips on head boats and collect information on kept and released fish, and are meeting the number of assigned trips each month in almost all regions. They are still experiencing some problems with trips in the Keys and in making multi-day trips in the Keys and the Florida Panhandle.

Commercial catch and effort data collected for the Trip Interview Program (TIP) by Florida state port samplers continues, and samplers have been reminded recently to collect tilefish and mullet otoliths. Biological sampling is going well, and work on providing the FIN program with the otolith age data matched to the specimen collection records is nearing completion.

Nearly all of our MRFSS, Tampa Bay Red Drum Angler Survey, TIP port samplers, and Head Boat Survey biologists were able to attend a training session held in May, 2006. Activities included fish identification and discussion of operational details of the sampling programs in which they participate.

Work continues on the conversion of Oracle from version 9.1 to 10g, and converting current forms (in Oracle Forms 6) to web-based forms. Much of the programming has been completed on the Data Portal project.

O'Hop reported that the supervisory structure of the Fisheries Dependent Monitoring subsection has been changed as of October 6, 2006, with the assignment of Dr. Richard Cody as the Research Administrator II of this group. Ms. Beverly Sauls has been assigned the tasks related to the operation of the recreational survey activities (MRFSS and at-sea sampling), and Mr. Steve Brown retains the tasks related to the commercial trip ticket reporting system, Trip Interview Program, and Head Boat Log Book Program.

Alabama – **C. Denson** reported the Alabama Marine Resources (AMRD) has recently submitted commercial trip ticket data to FIN through July 2006 and August should be submitted within the next couple of weeks. An Alabama shrimper recently harvested a *Penaeus monodon* (black tiger prawn) from Alabama's portion of Mississippi Sound. Posters have been distributed by AMRD to seafood dealers. Although several claims have been made, there has only been one confirmed identification of the shrimp.

**Denson** reported that MRFSS quotas were met by AMRD in all modes for Wave 3 and in PC mode for Wave 4 however, quota for Shore and Private/Rental modes were not met in Wave 4. A training session has been scheduled in November for AMRD MRFSS samplers. Field data through September has been sent to GSMFC. Meeting private/rental mode targets for primary species continues to be a problem for AMRD staff.

AMRD staff will attempt to implement a data collection program within the for-hire fishery as part of the Emergency Supplemental Funding awarded to Alabama. This program will pay qualified owners/operators for data collected during their for-hire fishing trips. Data requested by AMRD will include information such as area fished, species composition and disposition and lengths of discarded fish. The target date for starting this survey is January 2007.

Denson noted that through September AMRD staff have sampled 33 head boat trips and interviewed 834 anglers. The trip total is slightly more than what was completed at the same time last year.

Mississippi – **K. Cuevas** reported that the Mississippi Office of Fisheries has conducted public hearings to get input from fishermen on helping the DMR collect fisheries recovery data.

The shrimp and crab bureau and the Gulf coast Research Lab completed the initial CPUE study in cooperation with commercial crab fishermen. This project will continue as part of the GSMFC/NMFS Fishery Disaster Recovery Monitoring Program. The Mississippi Crab Task Force meeting was held in September and the attending representatives supported the disaster grant proposals. Derelict crab trap removal is scheduled for December.

Finfish staff is collecting side scan data to assess damage to artificial reefs caused by hurricane Katrina. MRFSS personnel are reaching quota for shore, private rental and charter boat sectors. **Cuevas** noted that with their lab back up and running Mississippi is now processing otoliths.

**Cuevas** reported that it is questionable if Mississippi will have an oyster season this year, possibly a short season. The shell fish bureau conducted a 140 acre shell plant in September. This shell plant was funded by the Hurricane Katrina Disaster Fund.

Louisiana – **M. Kasprzak** reported that through the MRFSS it appears that recreational fishing is returning to pre-storm levels. There have been no problems meeting quota. There are still 30 marinas or ramps out of 132 on the site register that are still closed as a result of Katrina.

Trip tickets for the period of January to July comparing 2005 to 2006 there are 55% less trip tickets in 2006. The greatest impact has been in oysters, finfish, and menhaden.

**Kasprzak** reported the pilot crab survey has started based on 2004. Sampling began the week of October 9 with great cooperation from dealers and fishermen. **Kasprzak** hopes to have a report at the March 2007 meeting.

Louisiana has been having outreach meetings concerning emergency relief money with various fishing groups, including shrimpers, oystermen, finfish, the for-hire sector and crab fishermen to obtain their recommendations on debris removal and cooperative research opportunities.

Texas – **P. Campbell** reported that Texas will continue doing the charterboat survey in 2007. The trip ticket program in Texas began on September 1, 2006 with about 260 dealers. Now Texas has approximately 300 dealers involved. 43% of these are reporting electronically.

Texas is working with other agencies to implement a state salt water fishing license and stamp for recreational anglers to land fish in Texas. **Campbell** reported that TPWD is considering a regional management plan for spotted seatrout in the Lower Laguna Madre with a different regulation for this part of the state.

A 210.7 pound tarpon was caught off the Galveston pier and this is a new state record.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council – **R. Leard** reported that their Scientific Statistical Committee will meet in November. The Council has directed them to review the NRC report and make some recommendations.

**Leard** reported that the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils are going to draw a line between the two Councils in terms of managing king and Spanish mackerel, and cobia. There will be some fish on the east coast of Florida that will be mixed and used for stock assessment purposes. The GMFMC is working on possibly changing the commercial allocations on grouper, with a grouper IFQ system.

The GMFMC has a group of scientists working on managing shrimping effort to reduce bycatch so red snapper can recover.

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission – **D. Donaldson** reported on the recreational side it has been reported that things are running smoothly and getting back to normal. Headboat data

continues to be collected in Alabama and Florida. At a recent red grouper SEDAR the were very interested in that data and hopefully in the future this will expand to Louisiana and Texas.

**Donaldson** reported a meeting is planned next year with collection and stock assessment personnel to compare current logbook program to at-sea sampling to insure similar data is being collected. One concern has been that not enough biological data will be collected.

The recreational economic add-on continues and is scheduled through the end of this year. The "gifts and souvenirs" category was inadvertently omitted on the original survey form. However this was corrected and in September new forms were distributed.

Trip tickets continue to run smoothly. There are over 460 dealers from Texas to Florida reporting with 1/3 of all landings being reported. Committee members were provided with an article from CCA Magazine about recreational data and how additional funds are needed to adequately address this issue.

### **Other Business**

**J. O'Hop** reported that in August the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission hosted a meeting of stock assessment personnel, fishery management staff, and fishermen. An explanation of the current MRFSS design was given and what it was designed to do. Attendees were asked to provide input and there were many questions relating to logbooks. Information from the Wave meeting in June was used to show how logbook information on discards compared to what was seen from at-sea sampling for the same period. A follow-up meeting will be held in early 2007.

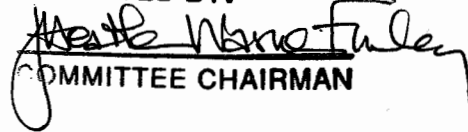
### **Election of Chairman**

Michelle Kasprzak was elected Chairman, and Kerwin Cuevas was elected Vice-Chairman.

*There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.*

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, October 23, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Chairman Doug Frugé** 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, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL  
Ron Mezich, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX  
Paul Cook, LDWF, New Iberia, LA  
Heather Warner-Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jill Bockenstette, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Richard Hartman, NMFS, Baton Rouge, LA

**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  
Joe Ferrer, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Tomas Jamir, NMFS, Miami, FL  
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
James Sinclair, MMS, New Orleans, LA

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the March 13, 2006 meeting were adopted as written.

**Administrative Report**

**J. Rester** stated that the National Fish Habitat Action Plan was launched in April. **J. Rester** reported that the Plan supported many existing Fish Habitat Partnerships, and fostered new national and local grassroots efforts to address, measure and communicate the status and needs

of aquatic habitats. He stated that twenty prominent conservation officials were selected to serve on the first National Fish Habitat Action Plan Board. The Board met for the first time in September. He reported that the Council's Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel met in September. The AP discussed the status of the Sabine-Neches Waterway Deepening Project, the Texas Artificial Reef Program's public reefing initiative, deepening of the Matagorda Ship Channel, dredging associated with the Calhoun LNG facility in Lavaca Bay, the Bahia Grande restoration, the Beacon Port LNG facility, and the Council's Ecosystem Management Plan. The Council's Louisiana/Mississippi Habitat Protection Advisory Panel met earlier this month. The AP discussed the Port of Iberia channel deepening project, deauthorization of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Plan, the Coastal Impact Assessment Program, status of the Port of Pascagoula dredged material management plan, the Mississippi Coastal Improvements Plan, the Donaldsonville to the Gulf hurricane protection project, the proposed deepening of the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel, the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection project, and the Council's Ecosystem Management Plan. **J. Rester** reported that he worked on a juvenile red snapper EFH project for the Council over the summer. He conducted a literature search and also an exploration of SEAMAP data. The Council was looking to identify potential high concentration areas of juvenile red snapper for time/area closures from shrimp trawling. Identified areas included Freeport Rocks and Sabine Bank off Texas and areas off the mouth of Mobile Bay. He stated that this option to reduce red snapper bycatch would be examined under Shrimp Amendment 15.

#### **Impact of Freshwater Reduction Project**

**D. Frugé** stated that the purpose of this project was to develop a strategy to assess and evaluate the impact of freshwater reduction on downstream estuaries in the Gulf of Mexico and develop a white paper that examined impacts resulting from dams and reservoirs. The white paper would be used to develop a strategy to address mitigation for those impacts. **J. Rester** stated that a list of reports and publications that could be used for developing the white paper had been compiled. **R. Lukens** stated that during the summer, he learned of a project that was proposed to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance for holding a workshop to develop a strategy for better dealing with freshwater inflow issues across the Gulf. The Commission sent a letter of support for the project and a decision on whether to fund the project should be made in November. Pending approval of funding for this proposed project, the Subcommittee decided to hold off further development of the white paper. The Subcommittee hoped that if the project was funded the Subcommittee could partner or support the project since freshwater inflow issues continue to be of concern.

#### **Review of the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP) Habitat Plan**

The Habitat Subcommittee next reviewed the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership's (SARP) Habitat Plan. **D. Frugé** stated that a workshop was held the previous week to solicit input on the Habitat Plan from representatives of various groups throughout the southeastern U.S. He reported that another workshop would be held in January to solicit additional input. The Plan contains objectives and targets for habitat protection and restoration in the southeastern United States. **J. Rester** stated that he wanted the Subcommittee to review the Habitat Plan to ensure that marine and estuarine issues were addressed. He stated that he would like to provide comments to SARP for inclusion in the next draft of the document. **D. Frugé** stated that SARP

plans to release the Habitat Plan to the public in the summer of 2007. He also stated that a writing team would be charged with incorporating all comments from the two workshops and drafting the final version.

**H. Finley** stated that there should be a greater effort to discuss estuarine areas within the Habitat Plan. **D. Frugé** stated that SARP was planning to try and solicit more input from marine and estuarine people. **R. Hartman** stated that Heather Young from the NMFS Galveston Laboratory was the NMFS representative to SARP and was trying to bring coastal issues to the forefront. **P. Cook** asked about the intent of the Habitat Plan. **D. Frugé** stated that the Habitat Plan would be non-regulatory in nature although the Habitat Plan would have specific goals for certain targets such as freshwater inflow. **S. Heath** stated that he was confused on the use of the word riparian. He stated that in coastal Alabama riparian dealt with water bottom rights. He questioned why the words buffer zone was not used. **D. Frugé** stated that throughout the country riparian refers to the area immediately adjacent to the stream and riparian buffers were important for protecting streams from forestry practices. The Subcommittee felt that it would be better to review the Habitat Plan and send their comments directly to J. Rester. **R. Hartman** stated that he would forward the comments that Heather Young had on the draft Habitat Plan. **J. Rester** asked everyone to send him their comments by Friday, November 17, 2006.

#### **Review of the Commission's Bottom Mapping Project**

**J. Rester** stated that work on the bottom mapping project was progressing. He reported that the contractor continued to gather data for inclusion in the database. Two related ways of database development were being developed. The first was an ESRI based geodatabase. He stated that a geodatabase represented geographic features and attributes as objects and was hosted inside a relational database management system. The second was a web based Google Earth URL based data discovery system. **J. Rester** then demonstrated the Google Earth system to the Subcommittee. **J. Rester** also reported that the Bottom Mapping Committee met on June 27, 2006. Agenda items included a status report on the project from the contractor, demonstrating the database querying capability, prioritizing identified and potential data sources, identifying other potential data sources, and discussing other current Gulf of Mexico habitat characterization projects and potential chances to partner with them (i.e. the Gulf of Mexico Alliance). He stated that the project should be completed by the end of 2007.

#### **Habitat Video Discussion**

**J. Rester** discussed the development of a Gulf of Mexico educational video. **J. Rester** stated that the Commission submitted a \$50,000 proposal to the Gulf of Mexico Program in August for work to support the Gulf of Mexico Alliance's education and outreach component. He stated a decision on whether it would be funded should be made in November. He stated that if anyone knew of any additional funding sources the proposal would not take long to modify and submit. **D. Frugé** stated that a proposal was also submitted to the FWS for video development through the Fisheries Program's internal operational funding process.

## Habitat Issues of Interest From Each State

Texas – **R. Adami** stated that TPWD stocked 20 million red drum and 400,000 spotted sea trout this year. They hoped to release southern flounder this winter. **R. Adami** stated that TPWD was examining offshore aquaculture and modifying their regulations to accommodate offshore aquaculture. He reported that TPWD was initiating a public reefing initiative that would allow the public to reef material in predetermined areas along the coast. The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) has proposed the Texas Great Barrier Reef project that would build an artificial reef from Port Isabel to Sabine Pass in state waters. **R. Adami** stated that the RFA anticipates \$5 million per year to build the reef. He reported that the Texas Clipper was due to be reefed in March 2007 off Brownsville. **R. Adami** reported that a red tide had been occurring around Aransas Pass and Port Mansfield. He stated that Texas would hold its sixth crab trap removal next year with a raffle for the person removing the twenty-thousandth trap. He stated that TPWD was currently writing a report on the effects of ghost fishing. **C. O'Brien** stated that TPWD has worked on two land acquisition projects on Galveston Island. She stated that TPWD has been reviewing the impacts of the Sabine-Neches waterway deepening project and the Matagorda Ship Channel deepening project. She reported that the dredged material management plan needs work since most of the beneficial use projects have been cut due to cost. The Corps has proposed open bay disposal for most of the dredged material. *Nav District*

Louisiana – **H. Finley** stated that several coast wide restoration efforts were being proposed for coastal Louisiana. Several efforts would combine levees with coastal restoration for flood protection. **H. Finley** reported that the Louisiana Coastal Area Comprehensive Coastwide Ecosystem Restoration Study was still ongoing. She stated that the Port of Iberia channel deepening project initially contained a very good beneficial use plan which was subsequently changed by the Corps and the Senate. The Corps wanted to change the depth of the channel to 16 feet which reduced the marsh creation from beneficial use from 4,000 to 1,000 acres. The Senate wanted to use all dredged material to create a spoil bank on the side of the channels. This would impact hundreds of acres of marsh. **H. Finley** reported that the Department of Natural Resources had developed draft guidelines on prop washing that would soon be released for review. She stated that the Corps was examining closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet for deep draft navigation. She reported that LDWF was lifting the oyster lease moratorium and would allow lease buyout if the lease would be affected by a coastal restoration project. **P. Cook** stated that Louisiana was receiving \$53 million for fisheries disaster recovery. **P. Cook** reported that the money would be used on debris cleaning on oyster reefs, possibly providing cultch material, and side scan sonar mapping of public oyster reefs. The money would also be used for debris removal on shrimping grounds along with cooperative research to document recovery. He stated that Louisiana would be holding a crab trap clean up next year. He stated that two artificial reefs had been created in Vermilion Bay. CCA built a limestone reef and the other reef involved transporting live oysters to a historic oyster reef site. **R. Hartman** stated that the official number for coastal land loss caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was 217 square miles. He stated that Louisiana would be receiving \$540 million through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program with the money to go towards coastal restoration. **R. Hartman** stated that he was having deal with pipelines associated with new LNG facilities across the coast. He reported that thousands of acres of wetlands could be impacted and fishery access limited by the



Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Plan that would build levees for hurricane protection.

Mississippi – **J. Bockenstette** stated that the Commission on Marine Resources approved the Gulf and Casotte Landing LNG facilities near Pascagoula. She reported that the Corps of Engineers was examining restoring the barrier islands to pre-Camille conditions. The Corps of Engineers was also examining the using beneficial use of dredged material from marinas and local waterways. Finally, **J. Bockenstette** stated that the U.S. Coast Guard was cleaning debris from local waterways and canals.

Alabama – **S. Heath** stated that Alabama was creating and restoring inshore artificial reefs. The demolition of the Gulf state park fishing pier was going to be used as reefing material. He reported that oyster dredging would continue for the second year in Portersville Bay. Five to nine boats used dredges on the oyster reef last year. **S. Heath** reported that the reef was still holding up, but boats were limited to 16 sacks of oysters per day. He stated that most boats quit working the reef after harvest dropped. **S. Heath** stated that Alabama was using disaster relief money for habitat mapping and other restoration projects.

Florida – **F. Courtney** stated that a draft environmental impact statement has been released for the natural gas pipeline across Tampa Bay. He stated that directional drilling would be used to avoid impacts to sensitive habitats such as seagrass areas. **R. Mezich** stated that Florida was in early discussions with a company that had proposed a LNG facility off of Tampa. He also reported that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has down listed the Florida manatee from endangered to threatened. **R. Mezich** reported that FWC was expediting calculating minimum flow levels for coastal rivers and springs in relation to the down listing of the manatee.

USFWS – **D. Frugé** stated that the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory was planning in FY 2007 to update the National Wetland Inventory data for thirty-seven 15 minute quadrangles along the Mississippi coast. An additional \$15,000 would allow an expansion of the update to some of the area east and north of New Orleans. **D. Frugé** reported that the USFWS was providing \$32,000 to the Land Trust for the Mississippi Gulf Coastal Plain for tidal marsh restoration in the vicinity of Bennett Bayou, located along the Pascagoula River just north of Moss Point. This funding was part of a \$1 million appropriation in FY 2006 to begin implementing the National Fish Habitat Initiative. The allocation of funding in the Southeast was made in cooperation with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership. An additional \$3 million in this funding had been requested for FY 2007 in the President's budget. **D. Frugé** stated that Sabine National Wildlife Refuge remains closed to public use after being severely impacted by Hurricane Rita. The storm surge deposited about seven million cubic meters of debris, much of it considered hazardous, on almost one-fourth of the refuge. The major clean up effort should be finished by December.

### Election of Chairman

**R. Hartman** nominated Heather Finley for Chairman. **S. Heath** seconded the nomination and it passed unanimously. The Subcommittee elected D. Frugé to serve as vice-chairman.

## **Other Business**

The Subcommittee next discussed a proposal by the Corps of Engineers Mobile District to change a general permit for the six coastal counties of Mississippi that would allow activities which were substantially similar in nature to impact wetlands that were less than 5 acres in size without going out on public notice for public review. This was an increase in size from the 0.5 acre that was the current limit. While tidal wetlands were excluded, the Subcommittee expressed concern over this proposed change and its potential impacts on water quality and potential secondary impacts on estuarine areas.

**J. Rester** provided an update on liquid natural gas (LNG) facilities offshore in the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that plans for the proposed Main Pass LNG facility off of Southeast Louisiana have been amended to provide for a closed loop system following objections expressed by Louisiana Governor Blanco, and an amended environmental assessment has been released. He reported that the Commission drafted a letter expressing their appreciation for switching to a closed loop system. **J. Rester** stated that the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Beacon Port facility to be located off the southeast Texas coast would be released soon, and he would be drafting comments. He stated that the Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal was in the process of developing a draft environmental impact that would be released next year.

*With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.*

**COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL  
MEETING SUMMARY – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Tuesday, October 24, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

G. Cane called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with a quorum for either panel. The following were in attendance:

**Members**

- Bob Fairbanks, MS Power, Gulfport, Mississippi
- ✓ John Rawlings, Colorado River Seafood, Matagorda, Texas
- ✓ Ronnie Luster, Texas CCA, Houston, TX
- Grey Cane, CCA, Daphne, Alabama
- Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Coden, AL
- ✓ Bob Zales, Panama City Boatman's Association, Panama City, Florida
- Randy Gros, Marrero, LA

**Staff**

- David Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
- Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
- Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

- Bob Jones, *Charles H. Lyles Award Recipient - October 2006*, Tallahassee, FL
- John O'Connell, Texas Sea Grant, Port Lavaca, TX
- John Mareska, ADNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
- Joe Gill, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Ocean Springs, MS
- James Sinclair, MMS, New Orleans, LA
- Greg Boland, MMS, New Orleans, LA

**Adoption of Agenda**

P. Barber indicated that he would like to add an agenda item to discuss the potential for duplicative reporting through the red snapper IFQ reporting system and the state Trip Ticket Program. B. Fairbank asked that there be a general discussion of the pending red snapper interim regulations. *With these additions, Barber made a motion to adopt the amended agenda. The motion was seconded and passed without objection.*

**Approval of Minutes**

There was no quorum at the March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006 meeting. A meeting summary was distributed to the members prior to the meeting. There was no discussion of the summary.

## **Hurricane Recovery Discussion**

Lukens indicated that this item was for general discussion. In addition, a representative of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) was in attendance to provide a discussion of the debris cleanup effort. The members opted to begin by hearing the USCG presentation. The USCG representative indicated that this was the first time that the USCG had ever participated in wet debris cleanup under the authority of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) following a natural disaster. The presentation depicted the final site survey by providing before and after pictures of cleanup activities in Harrison County, Mississippi. She showed maps indicating where side scan sonar had been conducted to locate submerged debris. Some concern was expressed that the USCG needs to work closely with state agencies and the National Ocean Service (NOS) to ensure that there is no duplication of effort regarding survey work and debris removal. She emphasized that they are working closely with the states and NOS. Finally, she indicated that deliberations are underway to determine if the USCG should continue conducting wet debris cleanup.

## **Recreational Data Collection Improvements**

D. Donaldson provided a discussion regarding possible improvements to the collection of recreational fisheries data. He discussed the recent workshop hosted by NOAA Fisheries to examine ways to improve the data and to be more responsive to management needs. A follow-up series of workshops will take place beginning early in 2007.

## **Potential Duplication of Reporting**

P. Barber brought up the potential for duplication of reporting through the pending red snapper IFQ reporting system and the state Trip Ticket Program. D. Donaldson indicated that he is working closely with the NOAA Fisheries technical staff to ensure that reporting is not duplicative. Currently, NOAA Fisheries personnel are working to meet the deadline for the IFQ reporting process, and will begin to rectify the possibility of duplication of effort soon thereafter. It was pointed out that other species will likely fall under IFQ programs, and this effort will pave the way for reporting for those species as well.

## **Invasive Species Update**

R. Lukens provided the Panel with an update of aquatic invasive species activities in the Southeast Region. Lukens reported that the GSMFC provides administrative support to a regional panel of the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. There are six such panels across the nation, and every state in the contiguous US is a member of at least one panel. He indicated that the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel, administered by the GSMFC, had just recently met in Charleston, SC. He encouraged the Panel members to view that Panel's web site hosted by the GSMFC at [www.gsmfc.org](http://www.gsmfc.org) then click Invasive Species. Some discussion ensued regarding red clawed crayfish and aquaculture activities in Alabama.

## **Fisheries Disaster Funding Overview**

**R. Lukens** provided the Panel with an overview of the GSMF Emergency Disaster Recovery Program and identified the general categories of work to be accomplished, including the distribution of funds. Effort will be expended by each state to restore oyster growing beds and to provide new cultch material to get historical oyster growing grounds restarted. In addition, work will be implemented to restore other fisheries and their historical fishing grounds. **Lukens** indicated that the program is slated for a five year period, and that a new staff person, Ralph Hode, had been hired to coordinate all the recovery efforts.

## **LNG Update**

**J. Rester** provided the Panel with an update on liquefied natural gas (LNG) activities in the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that plans for the proposed Main Pass facility offshore Southeast Louisiana have been amended to install a closed loop system following objection by Louisiana Governor Blanco to the earlier proposed open loop system. He also stated that the final environmental impact statement for the Beacon Port facility off Southeast Texas will be released soon and he will be drafting comments for consideration by the GSMFC. **Rester** indicated that he will continue to update the Panel on LNG activities.

## **IJF Update**

**S. VanderKooy** provided the Panel with an update on the activities of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program of the GSMFC. He indicated that the Striped Bass FMP revision is now published and available. He also briefed the Panel on the current status of otolith collection, processing, and reading being coordinated by the IJF Program. This briefing was in response to concern by Panel members regarding variability in interpretation of otoliths and the resulting ages for red grouper.

## **Other Business**

The Panel held an extensive discussion regarding the pending interim rules proposed by NOAA Fisheries for management of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. There was concern by Panel members that proposed actions by NOAA Fisheries will have such a devastating impact on both recreational and commercial fisheries that those fishing activities may be severely disrupted. The Panel members agreed that all should review the proposed interim rules and provide extensive comments to NOAA Fisheries.

**John O'Connell**, Texas Sea Grant, briefed the Panel members on a program in Texas to collect and recycle monofilament fishing line. The program is based on activities currently underway in Florida. He indicated that he is trying to muster interest in other state to implement a Gulf-wide program to collect and recycle monofilament fishing line.

**Election of Officers**

By unanimous consent, Philip Horn and Grey Cane were elected co-chairs for another year.

*With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.*

**DRAFT**

**EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRC)  
MINUTES-57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Tuesday, October 24, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Executive Director, **Larry Simpson**, called the meeting to order. The following state representatives, staff and other attendees were present.

**States**

Virginia Vail, FWCC, GSMFC Commissioner, Tallahassee, Florida  
Mark Berrigan, FL DOACS, Tallahassee, Florida  
Bill Arnold, FWCC/FWC, St Petersburg, Florida  
Rick Long, FWCC, Midway, Florida  
Alton Waldrep, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, Alabama  
Jim Duffy, ADCNR, Dolphin Island, Alabama  
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, Alabama  
Leslie Hartman, ADCNR, Dolphin Island, Alabama  
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi  
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi  
Joe Jewell, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi  
Kara Vesa, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi  
Karen Foote, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Marine Fisheries Division, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Butch Gautreaux, Senator, LA Senate, GSMFC Commissioner, Morgan City, Louisiana  
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, Louisiana  
Patrick Banks, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
David Lavergne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Randy Pausina, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Heather Warner-Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Martin Bourgeois, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Barbara Gregg, TPWD, Austin, Texas  
Mike Ray, GSMFC Commissioner, Austin, Texas  
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, Texas  
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, Texas  
Ralph Rayburn, Texas Sea Grant, GSMFC Commissioner, College Station, Texas

**Staff**

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, Mississippi  
Wendy Garner, GSMFC - Accountant, Ocean Springs, Mississippi  
Greg Bray, GSMFC - RFIN Program Analyst, Ocean Springs, Mississippi  
Jeff Rester, GSMFC - SEAMAP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, Mississippi  
Ginny Herring, GSMFC - Administrative Officer, Ocean Springs, Mississippi  
Ralph Hode, GSMFC - EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, Mississippi

## Others

Brendan Bray, NOAA Marine Debris Program, Silver Springs, Maryland  
Tomas Jamir, NOAA NMF, Miami, Florida  
Gary Graham, TX Sea Grant Program, West Columbia, Texas  
Columbus Brown, US FWS, Atlanta, Georgia  
Judy Jamison, Gulf South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, Florida  
Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin, NMFS, Pascagoula, Mississippi  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA, St Petersburg, Florida  
Ellie Roche, NOAA, St Petersburg, Florida  
Sandy Rogers, Hancock Bank, Gulfport, Mississippi

## Agenda

**L. Simpson** opened the meeting indicating that this was an Emergency Disaster Recovery Program "Work Session" and that the agenda was informal, requiring no formal agenda approval.

## Introduction and Purpose

**L. Simpson** introduced guests, recognized visitors and gave an overview of the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program. Special recognition was given to Ellie Roche, John Oliver, Gary Reisner, Roy Crabtree and Bill Hogarth of NOAA for their assistance in expediting the grant application review. It was noted that initial requests for the special assistance funding exceeded one billion dollars but that following committee review of both the House and Senate versions, a final bill was approved appropriating 128 million dollars. Of this 38 million came from the US Department of Agriculture and was earmarked for Oyster Recovery. The remaining 90 million was to come through NOAA to be used for oyster, shrimp and other shellfish and finfish recovery with not less than 7 million earmarked for cooperative research. One million was earmarked for administrative purposes by NOAA, leaving 127 million for recovery purposes in the Gulf States.

**Ellie Roche**, NOAA, reiterated that the 128 million special appropriation was the largest that NOAA had ever received and thanked the States and GSMFC for their expeditious preparation of Statements of Work for review and approval. It was noted that GSMFC was the grantee and that the States were sub-grant recipients. As such timely reporting from the States was necessary in order for the GSMFC to meet their report requirements. **Ms. Roche** also indicated that changes in the statements of work could be accomplished and that they needed to be coordinated through the Commission.

## Overview of Program Administration

An overview of the GSMFC General Procedures for Subawards was provided emphasizing sound management practices, quarterly progress reporting, invoicing and reimbursement.



Wendy Garner provided a power point presentation on internal control for accounting and documentation. An EDRP workbook was provided to each State in which were included sample invoice, subaward check list, and progress report formats, and examples of how invoices and progress reports should be prepared. Emphasis was placed on assuring that quarterly invoice totals equal quarterly expenditure totals in the quarterly report.

It was determined, following initial individual meetings with three of the member States, that there was merit in each state having copies of the SOWs of sister States in order to compare projects and to foster coordination. As a result, copies of the SOWs were included with each workbook as well as a preliminary key contacts list which indicated areas of responsibility.

With reference to financial matters, reporting and contracts, a number of questions arose.

Question: Can financial reports be included separately from the quarterly progress report but on a quarterly basis.

Answer: Ms. Herring, GSMFC, emphasized the need to have a financial report with the quarterly progress report.

Question: As sub-grant recipients, are states bound by the same requirements for contract approval for individual fishermen contracts, as grant recipients; and if so are they subject to approval by GSMFC.

Answer: Clearly defined sub contracts are required, however, they do not have to be approved by GSMFC.

Question: To whom will major equipment purchased under the terms of the EDRP grant belong once the grant is closed out.

Answer: All major equipment purchased under the grant will belong to the States once the grant for the state is satisfactorily closed out.

Question: How long should detailed records pertaining to the grant be kept.

Answer: Recommended a minimum of three years.

Question: Is there any reason to believe that accounting and reporting procedures for the EDRP grant will be different than those for other NOAA grants of the past.

Answer: No. However, because this grant is so large it is highly visible and requires quarterly reports vs. annual or semi annual reports.

Question: The State of Louisiana indicated that it intended to utilize a State contracted audit firm to oversee audit requirements relative to the EDRP grant – especially with reference to numerous small sub contracts to fishermen. Question was - Have other states had experience with this type of audit.

Answer: Florida indicated that they had used a similar program in the past where the firm let the contract and hired the sub contractors, audited work performed, and required an individual audit of each fisherman before contract close out.

### **Overview of Projects**

TEXAS - An overview of work expected to be completed in Texas over the next five years under the EDRP grant was presented by Mike Ray. Habitat mapping was expected to take up the majority of the funds amounting to approximately \$1.8 million in the Galveston Bay and Sabine Lake areas, while an estimated \$900,000 were dedicated to refurbishment and further studies of the impacts to nursery grounds in Keith Lake and Sabine Lake. Four hundred thousand (\$400,000) dollars were going to remove debris in navigational channels and fishing grounds and in sensitive habitat areas.

LOUISIANA - **Jim Hanifen** provided an overview of the Louisiana Statement of Work over the next five years under the EDRP grant. Of the \$52.9 million appropriated to Louisiana, the LDWF expected to make expenditures as follows:

\$22.9 million towards oyster recovery; of which 60% would be used to restore private leases; while 40% would be used for restoration of public leases. Assistance to lease holders would include recovery of costs for re-surveying leases, debris removal and relay of cultch material and seed oysters. Additionally funds would be utilized to assist the Louisiana Hospital system in its water quality sampling program, in the upgrade of lease records, in monitoring of private lease work, and in providing the largest cultch plant in the history of the State.

\$25 million would be used in the restoration of shrimp and other shellfish and finfish fishing grounds. Work would include debris removal, a habitat restoration demonstration project, and fisheries independent data management.

Approximately \$5 million would be used in cooperative research working with local fishermen to develop data to estimate the economic impact of recent hurricanes. Meetings had already begun with commercial fishermen in an effort to solicit participation in the research program. Note was made that recent USGS analysis indicated that nearly 217 square miles of previous tidal marsh was now open water; and, that the State of Louisiana had lost, with hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as much habitat as it had expected to lose through the year 2050.

MISSISSIPPI - **Corky Perret**, MDMR, presented an overview of the impact of Katrina on the fisheries industry in the State of Mississippi, citing damages to the timber industry along the path of the storm, damages to the MDMR Fisheries offices, and relocated or silted over artificial reefs and oyster reefs. He noted prompt monitoring by NOAA and the State of Mississippi of the seafood available immediately following the storm and findings that, in spite of rumors, harvested seafood remained healthy for consumptive purposes.

The report contained comments regarding invasive vegetation, *Salvinia*, which existed in known locations prior to the storm and the fact that after the storm the vegetation was gone. Concerns

were expressed over the possibility that the disbursement of the species could cause future unwanted growth in other locations.

Mississippi, like some of the other Gulf States, began immediately, utilizing recovery funds from Hurricane Ivan, to restore damaged reefs via small cultch plants and relaying of seed oysters from Back Bay Biloxi.

Impacts to the industry were shown as declines in the number of licenses issued following Katrina, and a drop in certain landings. Initial estimates indicated as much as an 82% drop in oyster landings which was not unexpected since an estimated 90% of the oyster grounds were destroyed. **Perret** indicated that Mississippi had no oyster season in 2005 and that it would likely see a very minimal season, if any at all, in 2006.

He noted also, a drop in the commercial hook and line industry, a drop from 100 down to 52 charter boats available for service, and a 50% decrease in the number of saltwater fishing licenses issued since the storm. Of interest was the finding that spotted sea trout landings were up; but, the effort appeared to be down.

Reference was made to a post Katrina economic impact study conducted by Dr. Benjamin Posadas, of the University of Southern Mississippi, which confirmed negative impacts on the commercial fleet, processing plants, charter boat services and recreational finfish landings.

With reference to efforts to restore fishing grounds, **Perret** indicated that six public hearings had already been held in the three coastal counties of Mississippi. The purpose of the hearings was to apprise local licensed commercial fishermen of the opportunities available through the EDRP grant to assist in the restoration effort for pay. To date a total of 272 fishermen had signed up to participate in the program. In addition to ongoing hearings, the MDMR expects to begin relays in November with seed oysters coming from existing undamaged reefs which were located in areas not suitable for commercial harvest.

Also discussed was a debit card program that Mississippi had instituted so as to expedite payment to contract fishermen. The program was explained by Kera Vesa, MDMR accountant, and Sandy Rogers, Hancock Bank, noting that use of the card overcame issues such as direct deposit requirements for checks, loss of or frequent changes in addresses and lack of checking accounts for displaced commercial fishermen. Emphasis was placed on the ability of the card holder to use the debit cards at any Visa acceptable ATM or point of sale; making access to funds user friendly while reducing the work load of accounting and financial personnel at the contracting office.

**Karen Foote** of LDWF used the opportunity to question **Perret** as to how the State of Mississippi was dealing with assistance contracts for out of state commercial license holders. **Perret** indicated that Mississippi funds would be used to benefit resident Mississippi licensed commercial fishermen only.

ALABAMA - **Jim Duffy, Steve Heath** and **Alton Waldrep** reported on the Alabama SOW, indicating that the Department expected to allocate approximately one million dollars per year in cultch plantings for oyster recovery. An estimated 20 percent of the total grant will be used for oyster grounds rehabilitation.

Additionally, funds would be used for GIS mapping purposes to develop current maps of water bottoms that had not been re-mapped in nearly forty years. Plans included use of local fishermen and vessels under the assistance portions of the EDRP grant to assist with the mapping project.

Cooperative research included investigations of the impacts to nursery grounds in the southwest portion of the state near the Alabama – Mississippi state lines and the development of a pilot program through the Lands Division of the Alabama DCNR to develop wave attenuation devices/mechanisms to reduce the effect of storm surges on these grounds. Additionally, research would include monitoring of fishery catches, efforts and by-catches, and a finfish egg and larval density and distribution study to assess the impacts of water depth, temperature and salinity changes in gulf waters as a result of natural disasters such as hurricane Katrina; the latter being complemented with additional studies at the Dolphin Island Sea Lab hatchery to aid in assessing these impacts.

FLORIDA - **Virginia Vail** and **Mark Berrigan** presented an overview of the Florida SOW; indicating that the majority of the approximately 4 million dollars provided to the State were slated for oyster recovery and restoration on approximately thirty reefs from Cedar Keys to Escambia Bay. Plans called for the implementation of a shell buy-back program to purchase shells from local processors and the use of fossil shell from quarries in Liberty County for cultch planting. It was noted that this program would benefit the local economy and provide some assistance to area businesses impacted by recent storms. An estimated \$800,000 would be programmed for lease grounds recovery utilizing policy established by USDA on other similar projects. It was expected that most of the work would be performed by FDACS staff since contract sources for deck barges and cranes were not readily available.

**Berrigan** indicated that because of recent disasters the impact on both processors and harvesters was such that many were not expected to return to business.

Cooperative researches under the EDRP grant are being conducted by Dr. Arnold in the area of larval and egg distribution modeling. It is expected that if a successful model can be developed it would generate criteria that would aid in the establishment of reef locations not only the Pensacola Bay area but also other areas throughout the Gulf States where new reefs are being considered. **Arnold** indicated that similar studies had been done in the Galveston Bay area by Eileen Hoffman and that it was his intention to work with her in developing the model for the Pensacola Bay area. The purpose of the modeling is to get a better understanding of how larvae operate in these bay areas.

Indications are that there appears to be larvae every where, but it is his belief that if the distribution were mapped spatially and temporally they should indicate differences that would be critical to the success of new reefs. Goals of the modeling program would be:

- Development of a model for Blackwater, Escambia and East Bays
- Validation of the model
- Identify locations best suited for reefs
- Conduct simulations under hydrodynamic and biological scenarios
- Monitor recruitment to the reefs to validate the model

The process would involve:

- Mapping the location of reefs, gathering data such as temperature and salinity and possibly developing a GIS data layer for them
- Developing the model for them
- Validating the model by sampling and cohort releases and tracking
- Identification of larval hot spots and larval deserts.

Challenges to the project were identified as the basic logistics of conducting the study of Pensacola Bay area from the St. Petersburg office, acquisition of pre-existing circulation models and establishing where present reefs exist and where future reefs can be located.

### **NOAA-NOS DEBRIS MAPPING PROGRAM**

**Brendan Bray**, NOAA-NOS Debris Mapping Program, briefed the States on a program currently funded under a 20 million dollar special appropriation to NOS designed to map debris on the fishing grounds and other non-navigation areas of the Gulf. The purpose of the effort was to make these areas safe from residual storm debris for commercial and recreation vessels; noting that the navigable water ways and shipping channels had already been surveyed and hazardous debris removed. The project will include:

- Hydrographic surveying and mapping of the impacted areas in the Gulf States
- Development of a publicly accessible GIS link that will identify location, type, size and depth of debris
- Develop risk assessment criteria and a priority list for use by State and/or other resources in assessing impact to vessels, environmental impacts, cost effectiveness and other decision making regarding removal

Meetings to solicit public feedback and recommendations are scheduled for November 14, 2006 at the MDMR facility in Biloxi, Mississippi, and at the LDWF facility in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on November 16, 2006.

**Karen Foote** of LDWF indicated a need for mapping/GIS updates as debris is removed and was advised that as debris is removed or debris sites cleaned and are reported to NOAA, the website was expected to be updated within two weeks. It was also noted that as dangers to navigation are identified, the US Coast Guard would be notified immediately for either marking or removal and that NOAA was charged with mapping only; marking, removal or other actions regarding disposition of identified debris would be the responsibility of other Federal or State agencies.

**Foot**e also indicated that only a small portion of Louisiana waters had been mapped to date; and that because the State contained such a vast fishing area it was their desire that additional mapping be conducted in and around State waters before the project was finalized.

### **QUESTIONS GENERAL**

The States were reminded that there should be no reason to leave funds un-expended at project end. They were also requested, when large invoices are anticipated, to give notification in advance to the GSMFC accounting and/or coordinating offices so that appropriate funding transfers could be accomplished in a timely manner.

### **Over the Water Insurance**

Several States indicated early in the program that there were concerns over contracting with local fishermen to assist in the fisheries recovery efforts because of the potential liability. It was noted that fishermen typically are insured for fishing only and are not covered for salvage operations. Concurrently, it was recognized that part of the reason for utilizing local fishermen was to make available to them a form of financial assistance while they were out of work because of fisheries damage. States also recognized that the cost of marine salvage or operations insurance would be prohibitive to the fishermen in that it would effectively negate any assistance they might receive under EDRP assistance provisions.

**Jim Duffy** advised that the Alabama DCNR was examining alternatives utilized by FEMA in their wet debris removal program wherein a prime contractor was utilized and in which insurance coverage was provided for all sub contractors who worked under the prime.

**Jim Hanifen** advised that the Louisiana DWF was examining an insurance program in effect at the State level addressing off shore oil and gas debris removal vendors. It was hoped that the same program could be utilized by contract fishermen working for the DWF in debris removal, cultch planting and oyster relaying efforts.

No actions were taken or firm positions established.

### **Vessel Monitoring Systems**

The question of utilizing EDRP cooperative research funds for the installation of VMS devices on commercial vessels for monitoring purposes was raised. It was noted that reef fishermen would likely not take advantage of the potential opportunity but that they (Louisiana) would consider it.

No actions were taken or firm positions established.

### **Contractor Payment Systems**

**L. Simpson** again iterated Mississippi's plan to utilize the debit card concept for payment of contract fishermen.

No actions were taken or firm positions established.

### **Side Scan Efforts**

Initial concerns regarding possible duplication in side-scan efforts by NOAA and States were answered when Brendon Bray explained the NOS program. State efforts were primarily in the near-shore/ in-shore waters while the NOS efforts were typically in outside waters.

No actions were taken or firm positions established.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**L. Simpson** noted that the EDRP Work Session appeared to be beneficial to all concerned in that it facilitated discussion among the States and GSMFC regarding ongoing plans and programs; and, highlighted issues of common concern that could be addressed to the advantage of all sub-grantees. It was recommended and agreed upon that a similar work session be held at the March meeting of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission in Biloxi and that the meeting would include break-out groups involving the various projects being addressed through the EDRP grant. Groups such as Finance, Oyster Recovery, Shrimp and other shell fish, Research, and Grant Coordinators would each meet independently to discuss common issues and to exchange ideas.

It was agreed that the Commission would provide a list of the key investigators or project managers from each state so as to facilitate better communication. Additionally, there came a question regarding the use of electronic transfer of funds from GSMFC to sub-grantees for invoices received. States were advised that due to concerns about security and accountability, E-transfers were doubtful at this time.

*There being no further discussion or business the meeting was adjourned until March, 2007 in Biloxi, Mississippi - time a location to be announced.*

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES - 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Tuesday, October 24, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Chairman J.T. Jenkins (Alabama)** called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. The following members and others were present:

**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  
Hal Robbins, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kris Bishop, TPWD, Austin, TX (*proxy for Bill Robinson*)  
Dave McKinney, NOAA, Austin, TX  
Karen Norcross, USCG, New Orleans, LA (*proxy for Elizabeth Keister*)

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Teri Freitas, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Bobbi Walker, GMFMC, Orange Beach, AL  
Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Cynthia Fenyk, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL  
Rod Dalton, NOAA, St Petersburg, FL  
Richard Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

**J. Jenkins** suggested adding a short update on the ISSC before the state reports. **J. Mayne** moved to accept the agenda as modified, **D. McKinney** seconded and the agenda was adopted.

**Approval of Minutes**

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the March 14, 2006 meeting held in San Antonio, Texas and the July 11, 2006 work-session held in Tallahassee, Florida. **D. McKinney** moved to approve both sets of minutes as written. The motion was seconded by **W. Chataginer** and passed unanimously.



## Review of Operations Plan Final Draft

**S. VanderKooy** provided the final draft prior to the meeting. The Committee discussed the Commission's pending approval of the document including the annotated version which had been provided in their briefing books several weeks ago. **J. Jenkins** would request approval of the plan during his report at the Commission Business Session on Wednesday afternoon. **VanderKooy** asked about the cover and requested photos be provided that related to hurricane rescue efforts by fish and wildlife enforcement officers from each state and that any new badge images be sent to the Commission office for updating the back cover. It was noted by the Committee that there were a few minor editorial items related to the cover and opening materials such as addresses, phone numbers, and ranks for a few LEC members. Staff would make those changes prior to going into press. ***J. Mayne moved for the LEC recommends to the GSMFC to accept the 2007-2008 operations plan with the appropriate minor changes for implementation next year. W. Chataginer seconded the motion with the noted changes and the motion passed.***

## Joint Enforcement Agreements

The LEC spent time discussion the funding issues related to the JEAs. **H. Robbins** and **D. McKinney** updated the group on NOAA Enforcement's situation with JEAs. At this time, the funding levels for the JEAs is uncertain due to the continuing resolution that NOAA was operating under. They noted that if a continuing resolution is left in effect, NOAA Enforcement may have some problems or delays to proceed on the JEA software and training for officers. They also reported that since the Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization was stalled, it wasn't likely that the JEA program would be included in that legislation any time soon.

There was some discussion regarding getting the information regarding the JEAs out to the public in several outreach options. The Committee agreed that a concerted effort needs to be made to present some of the higher profile JEA cases and a report on number of intercepts, inspections, and cases should be provided to both the GSMFC and the GMFMC on at least a quarterly basis. The new software has canned reporting options that will make generating these reports much easier. Keeping Commissioners and Council members informed on JEA activities is important to keep their support.

**McKinney** reported on the progress being made with the JEA software. Several help modules in the form of drop downs menus and a training manual are being developed and would likely be available sometime in late spring early summer. Despite funding concerns, it is anticipated that there will be a meeting in February to continue training in the new system. **McKinney** and **Robins** reported that the new software should be more user friendly and likely result in less clerical time. The Committee mentioned a few concerns regarding the software and the consistency of how data is entered from a regional perspective. They noted that certain classifications were not used in the Gulf and it would be nice to be able to modify or customize the options to eliminate some of the items. **Robbins** suggested that the Committee should start of list of those preferred classifications and that the software may be able to be customized for Gulf users. The Committee would like to see latitude and longitudes added to the form for better detail on where intercepts or inspections are taking place.

## **Discussion of New Tasks under the Operations Plan**

The LEC discussed the New Tasks under the 2007-2008 Operations Plan. The Committee discussed developing a list of each state's outreach activities. It was noted that several of the states have on-going expo-type programs associated with fishing days, boat shows, and other watersport related events. Some states have had sportswriters cover issues for magazines or newspapers related to the enforcement activities in a state. Several items were suggested as possible venues for additional outreach but the list should only include those that the states have used or are actively pursuing. In addition, the Committee discussed whether there might be funding available for more media based outreach such as short videos on issues or particular JEA cases for Gulfwide exposure. Initially, the Committee will simply catalogue those activities in each state which would be classified as outreach. Staff will compile the information.

## **IJF Program Activity**

**S. VanderKooy** reported on the recent IJF activities specific to the LEC representation on the two active task forces, Sheepshead and Oyster. A question was raised regarding the IJF Report Card used by the SFFMC to self-check the states based on the FMP recommendations. It was suggested that the LEC should see the matrix when it comes out and perhaps an Enforcement Matrix could be developed for the LEC to review periodically.

## **ISSC Issues**

**J. Jenkins** provided a brief update on the situation in the ISSC regarding the FDA's Patrol Evaluations and a lack of consistency between the states. Some of the LEC members had participated in drafting additional control criteria with the ISSC Evaluation Committee to address these but there has been a disconnect between the Patrol Committee's comments and concerns and the how the ISSC and FDA interpreted those comments. The document was provided to the Executive Committee of the ISSC and FDA for a one-year pilot despite the concerns of the Patrol Committee which were clearly voiced. The LEC continues to follow this and **Jenkins** is working with the Executive Director of ISSC to resolve the oversight.

## **State/Federal Reports**

**B. Buckson**, FWC, reported that Florida had added a change in statute penalties for fish and wildlife infraction. Fines and penalties have been increased and FWC has begun sharing information with other states on violations to begin to identify multi-state violators. Under the new legislation, repeat offenders get increased penalties and those identified as having violations in other states automatically see an increase in severity. Finally, laptops are being issued to roughly 80 additional FWC officers in hopes of improving safety when dealing with violators and to move to electronic submission when issuing citations.

**J. Jenkins** reported that Alabama has allowed experimental dredging in their oyster fishery and see it as a social-economical issue. Some are trying the dredges, some won't ever use them. Shrimpers are reporting landing well above average despite a 50% reduction in vessels participating in the fishery. It appears that gill netting will become a major issue again and

should be very high profile in the next couple of years. Finally, the ADCNR may be asking the legislature for a license cost increase.

**W. Chatagner** reported that since the last meeting there have been 555 violations issued in Mississippi. The MDMR is in the process of closing out a few grants and have made equipment purchases related to future first-responder disaster activities.

**J. Mayne**, Louisiana, indicated that the LDWF Academy class is looking for recruits to fill over thirty vacancies. Participation in the commercial mullet season is up over last year. This year is the highest baiting of doves that they've seen in years. They've made over 200 cases so far. The new acting secretary for LDWF is Janice Lansing. In November, LDWF plans to begin IFQ training and should be ready at the first of the year. There are some funding issues with department's current radio systems but are looking at about \$1.7M to replace all radios. Just wrapping up a few very high profile JEA cases from 2005 which were really nice cases.

**K. Bishop**, TWPD, reported on several big JEA cases in Texas. One boat had under sized red snapper in a hidden cargo hold. The captain was sentenced to 30 months and first mate got 21 months in Federal prison. The case highlighted just how well the system works and how the offenders hurt more than just themselves. New Academy year includes two Mexican Nationals with private funding. TPWD enforcement officers are participating along the border, mostly on water or 4 wheelers, and after one week get to see how the homeland security issues affect their own state. Texas is in the process of switching over to trip tickets and continuing their trip ticket reporting training. To date there have been 4,163 saltwater violation and 1,193 warnings and the civil restitution program has generated over \$2.5M has been collected over the last ten years.

**H. Robbins**, NOAA Enforcement, reported that NOAA is being sued over VMS. There were some time delays in testing out equipment and some confusion over what to purchase and many fishermen will be under a time constraint to get the equipment installed. It is still the intention of NOAA to reimburse for the purchase of VMS units. There is some money left from last year and NOAA might still try to reimburse to the vendors so there is no out-of-pocket for the fishermen. The only cost would be to have the equipment factory installed. This should alleviate some concerns by fishermen. Regardless of VMS outcome, NOAA still plans to implement the IFQ program. **D. McKinney** continues to train the trainers and get ready for the start of the program in January 2007. Training is in two segments, one stakeholder meetings getting the info out and instructing in the IFQ program and meetings with the state reps to train-the-trainer. Florida's portion will begin in November; all the other states have been introduced to it. Now the officers will be trained internally to get ready in each state. The next round of stakeholder meetings will be after Thanksgiving and focus on the Vietnamese community in a couple regions, Lake Charles, Louisiana, and Corpus Christi, Texas. There remains the possibility of having to return to Galveston for an additional meeting. A Vietnamese radio station in Houston will be interviewed with a translator to explain the IFQ program and get the word out to that segment.

**Other Business**

As the LEC has gone to a two year rotation, **J. Jenkins** remains chair until next October.

*There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:46 am.*

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Meeting  
Tuesday, October 24, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

3/13/07

**Chairman Corky Perret** called the meeting to order at 1:45 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, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Kerwin Cueves, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA  
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Roy Crabtree, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL

**Staff**

Jeff Rester, Habitat/SEAMAP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, IIF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Teri Freitas, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Glen Sutton, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Butch Pellegrin, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Don Johnson, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Karen Herrington, USFWS, Panama City, FL  
Tomas Jamir, NMFS, Miami, FL  
Leslie Hartman, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL

Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Chris Nelson, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Bon Secour, AL

### **Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the meeting held on March 14, 2006 were approved as written.

### **State/Federal Reports**

Florida - **V. Vail** stated that FWC staff assisted the Volunteer Florida Foundation and the Monroe County Commercial Fishermen organizations in developing and implementing a process to provide financial assistance to trap fishers who lost trap gear due to hurricanes in 2005. **V. Vail** stated that Volunteer Florida was a nonprofit foundation established to provide assistance after emergencies. Approximately \$500,000 was raised to assist these commercial fishers, who received a voucher redeemable for traps or trap materials at participating supply stores. She stated that 277 eligible fishers received vouchers worth approximately \$1000 or \$2000 each. **V. Vail** stated that the agency's proposal to standardize penalties for similar recreational violations was passed by the Legislature. The Legislature also approved FWC membership in The Wildlife Violator Compact, an interstate agreement that prohibits non-residents whose fishing or hunting privileges have been suspended or revoked in their home state from engaging in those activities in Florida, prohibits Florida residents with suspended/revoked license privileges from engaging in those activities in member states, and allows a Florida resident who commits a fisheries or wildlife violation in a member state to be treated as would a resident of that state. **V. Vail** reported that the aircraft carrier Oriskany was sunk off the coast of Pensacola on May 15, 2006. The FWC received a \$4.7 million 5-year grant from NOAA for an interdisciplinary study of red tide blooms. **V. Vail** stated that the trap retrieval program expanded to statewide coverage this year. A total of 4,641 traps were recovered, most from the Keys region. **V. Vail** stated that the Division of Marine Fisheries Management was working closely with the recreational, commercial and environmental sectors to evaluate various fisheries and identify management needs. These advisory groups play a significant role in management decisions made by the Commission. **J. O'Hop** stated that Florida's commercial harvest was approximately 18% lower in pounds landed and about 11% lower in dockside value in 2005 compared to 2004. Finfish harvest was down about 8% overall in pounds, but total value was about the same as in 2004. Commercial harvests of thread herring, Spanish sardines, and striped mullet were each about 1 million pounds lower than harvested in 2004. Red grouper, gag, yellowedge grouper, and red snapper harvests combined accounted for 1.2 million pounds less than in 2004. Most of the reduced fin fish harvests were from Florida's Gulf Coast. However, Spanish mackerel commercial harvests were about 1 million pounds higher, and golden tilefish were also notably higher in 2005 compared with 2004, with most of the increases observed from Florida's Gulf Coast. The harvest of lobsters, stone crab, blue crab, and some other invertebrates were about 6.5 million pounds lower in poundage and \$11.3 million dollars in 2005. Shrimp harvests were

down 9.4 million pounds and \$9.3 million dollars in 2005, mostly due to reductions in harvest of rock shrimp and brown shrimp on Florida's Atlantic Coast, and lower harvests of pink shrimp and rock shrimp on Florida's Gulf Coast. Bait shrimp harvests were comparable in 2005 to 2004, as were harvests of marine life for the aquarium trade. **J. O'Hop** stated that the collection and processing of marine fisheries trip tickets was operating normally. **J. O'Hop** stated that patchy occurrences of red tide in nearshore areas off of Florida's Gulf Coast have been reported, but they have not been as extensive or persistent as observed in the last two years.

Alabama - **S. Heath** reported that Alabama had completed planting 17,000 cubic yards of oyster shell material in waters less than 5 feet deep. Approximately 8,900 cubic yards have been planted in waters greater than 5 feet. **S. Heath** stated that only 124 vessels were shrimping on the opening of brown shrimp season this year. This effort was reduced from previous years. He reported that oyster dredging would continue for the second year in Portersville Bay. Five to nine boats used dredges on the oyster reef last year. **S. Heath** reported that the reef was still holding up, but boats were limited to 16 sacks of oysters per day. He stated that most boats quit working the reef after harvest dropped. **S. Heath** stated that the Alabama annual conservation exposition was recently held and approximately 7,000 people attended the event. **S. Heath** reported that they also participated in the south Alabama bird festival. **S. Heath** stated that they were seeking to increase license fees. Alabama was also seeking to make changes to cover other gears such as cast nets and also making their licenses required for possession of fish and not just take. Currently fishermen were not required to have Alabama licenses if they were fishing in Federal waters and not in Alabama waters.

Mississippi - **K. Cueves** stated that the Office of Fisheries conducted public hearings to get input from fishermen on helping the MDMR collect fisheries recovery data. The shrimp and crab bureau and Gulf Coast Research Lab completed the initial CPUE study in corporation with commercial crab fishermen. **K. Cueves** stated that the project would continue as part of the GSMFC/NMFS Fishery Disaster Recovery Monitoring Program. Contracts between MDMR and commercial shrimpers and crab fishermen were being executed to obtain fisheries recovery data. **K. Cueves** stated that on October 1, the finfish bureau started collecting recovery data from the charter sector. There have been 5 steel hull vessels, 6 barge loads of concrete culverts and 1 oil rig jacket deployed on Mississippi artificial reefs. **K. Cueves** stated that MRFSS personnel were reaching their quota for all three modes. The shell fish bureau conducted a 140 acre shell plant in September. The shell plant was funded by the Hurricane Katrina Disaster Fund. Contracts between MDMR and commercial oyster fishermen were being signed to conduct oyster relaying on public reefs. The relaying was slated to start in the middle of November. The Office of Marine Patrol recently received a \$297,000 grant from the Hurricane Katrina Law Enforcement relief fund. Through this grant they were able to purchase equipment that can be used in the event of other natural disasters, such as one 18'airboat, forty assault weapons, forty laptop computers, and one bobcat which would enable MDMR to clear boat ramps that were littered with debris.

Louisiana - **V. Guillory** stated Louisiana's invasive species plan was approved by the National Task Force. He reported that of the four coastal facilities where fisheries personnel were located, they have been able to partly reoccupy the Marine Lab on Grand Terre. Personnel from the St. Tammany facility were now located at the freshwater fish hatchery in Lacombe. The New

Orleans office personnel and personnel from the Plaquemine Parish facility were still working out of the Baton Rouge office. Despite these disruptions the LDWF have fully reestablished all field sampling programs. **V. Guillory** stated that LDWF would not reoccupy the former New Orleans office. The plans now were to relocate to Jackson Barracks, which was a National Guard facility near the French Quarter. **V. Guillory** stated that all managed resources appear to be healthy, with the exception of oysters. The availability of marketable oysters was very low. He reported that seed oysters availability was up. He stated that ice making capabilities have been reestablished in St. Bernard and Cameron Parish through a donation from Shell. The LDWF has been surveying all commercial facilities throughout the State as well as recreational facilities to determine their level of operations. To date, seventy-five percent of the commercial facilities were up and operating at some level, while 65% of the recreational facilities were operational. In regards to artificial reefs, he reported that LDWF has initiated the process of permitting 7 new special artificial reef sites. These are sites outside of their standard program, which were going to receive 21 hurricane damaged oil and gas structures. **V. Guillory** stated that one legislative action gave additional authority to the LDWF Commission in terms of management flexibility in respect to oysters. Another action authorized the process for purchasing oyster leases which were in the physical footprint of Coastal Restoration Projects.

Texas – **J. Mambretti** stated Texas received a \$3.2 million federal hurricane recovery grant, through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, to help restore oyster beds and shrimping grounds damaged by Hurricane Rita. **J. Mambretti** reported that TPWD would use these funds to produce detailed side-scan mosaics and interpretive maps of known oyster reefs and oyster habitats throughout Sabine Lake and Galveston Bay systems at the cost of \$1.8 million. In addition, about \$1 million would be spent on habitat restoration efforts, including purchasing suitable cultch material and placing it on existing reef sites in Sabine Lake and Galveston Bay. The TPWD Commission adopted 5 regulation changes that went into effect on September 1, 2006. They were prohibiting the take of largemouth sawfish, allowing one black drum over the maximum size limit of 52 inches per person per day, reducing the possession limit of flounder to the daily bag limit of 10 fish per trip, naming tripletail as a game fish and set a minimum size limit of 17 inches and a daily bag limit of 3 fish, and removing the requirement of a tarpon tag to land a tarpon and implementing a bag limit of one tarpon with a minimum size limit that corresponds to the state record, currently 80 inches. **J. Mambretti** stated that Coastal Fisheries was in the process of reviewing its current regulatory authority for offshore aquaculture facilities to assure TPWD was where it needed to be, from a regulatory perspective, if and when these facilities come to Texas waters. If the Commission takes action, an offshore aquaculture waiver would be required to allow fish grown in these facilities to be landed in Texas. **J. Mambretti** stated that the recreational for hire survey of Texas Gulf charter boats and biological sampling was continuing. The charter boat survey will continue through 2007. Texas will also continue biological sampling in the 2007 sampling year. **J. Mambretti** reported that beginning September 1, 2006, trip tickets replaced Monthly Aquatic Reports as the official reporting method for Texas commercial landings. All dealers have been contacted and were participating in trip ticket reporting. **J. Mambretti** stated that the 2006 sea turtle nesting season had a total of 101 Kemp's Ridley nests, up from 51 nests last year. During the last weekend in September, fish kills caused by red tide were found on San Jose and Matagorda Island beaches and in the Cedar Bayou fish pass that separates the 2 islands. In early October, a red tide event continued at Pass Cavallo, Matagorda Ship Channel jetty, Matagorda Island, and the Corpus Christi Ship Channel



at Port Aransas. Red tide was also found in Aransas Pass to Rockport with a fish kill in Redfish Bay. Reefing of the Texas Clipper ship continues. The projected reef date is March 2007 off Brownsville. **J. Mambretti** stated that the TPWD Commission approved the publication of the Public Reef Building Program in the Texas Register. This program would create a nearshore reefing strategy involving the public reefing materials at nearshore reef sites that are permitted by TPWD. A different reefing project was being proposed by the Recreational Fishing Alliance that was attempting to acquire permits to build the 'Texas Great Barrier Reef' which would be 7 to 8 miles offshore and 0.5 mile wide, extending from Sabine Pass to Mexico and broken only by anchorages and ship channels. Three petroleum platforms have been reefed off Texas since the March meeting, and there were 3 other platforms that may be reefed in the next few months.

**NOAA Fisheries** – **R. Crabtree** stated that the final rule for Shrimp Amendment 13 was recently published. The Amendment called for mandatory observers and a 10 year moratorium on shrimp permits. After March 2007, all shrimpers will be required to have a permit to fish in Federal waters. **R. Crabtree** stated that the permit database has been transferred to a new, modern system. He reported that red snapper IFQ comments were currently being compiled. He stated that on October 13, a draft environmental impact statement to reduce overfishing in the red snapper fishery went out for a 45 day public comment period. The proposed interim rule will be published in November for the 2007 season. **R. Crabtree** stated that NMFS was currently examining new criteria for BRD certification. **R. Crabtree** reported that Reefish Amendment 18a was recently approved by NMFS. **R. Crabtree** stated that NMFS was working under a continuing resolution that included a partial hiring freeze and no grants until the budget was passed.

**USFWS** – **C. Brown** stated that Dr. Benjamin Tuggle was named as the new Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region in September. In another personnel matter, Marshall Jones, a long-standing Deputy Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service will be retiring at the end of December. **C. Brown** stated that 12,060 Kemp's ridley sea turtle nests were documented on the Mexican beaches this year. This was another record-setting year. During 2005 there were 10,099 nests counted. The year 2000 was also a record year at 6,436, so there has been an almost 100% increase in the number of counted nests in six years. **C. Brown** stated that a recent USGS analysis showed that 217 square miles of Louisiana coastal wetlands were converted to open water following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. **C. Brown** stated it was still uncertain how much of this was a permanent conversion. These losses represent about 42% of what was predicted, before the storms, to occur between 2000 and 2050. **C. Brown** stated that the FWS was providing \$32,000 to the Land Trust for the Mississippi Gulf Coastal Plain for tidal marsh restoration in the vicinity of Bennett Bayou, located along the Pascagoula River just north of Moss Point. This funding was part of a \$1 million appropriation in FY 2006 to begin implementing the National Fish Habitat Initiative. The allocation of funding in the Southeast was made in cooperation with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership. An additional \$3 million in this funding has been requested for FY 2007 in the President's budget. The FWS National Wetlands Inventory was planning in FY 2007 to update the National Wetland Inventory data for thirty-seven 15' quadrangles along the Mississippi coast, pending funding available in the new fiscal year budget. An additional \$15,000 would allow an expansion of the update to some of the area east and north of New Orleans. **C. Brown** stated that the status review on whether the American eel should be proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act was

continuing. Results of the review were expected in August. **C. Brown** stated that the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge remains closed to public use a year after being severely impacted by Hurricane Rita. The storm surge deposited about 7 million cubic meters of debris, much of it considered hazardous, on almost one-fourth of the refuge. Although the Corps of Engineers and EPA were able to clean such debris from private property in Cameron Parish, the Stafford Act prevented them from working on federal property. In June, the FWS received about \$132 million in emergency supplemental funds for hurricane-related clean up and repair throughout the Southeast. A total of \$12 million is being used for clean up at Sabine. The FWS hopes to have portions of the refuge open again to the public by next summer.

### **Limiting Effects of Currents on Distribution of Red Snapper**

**D. Johnson** stated that red snapper were abundant in the northwest Gulf of Mexico and scarce in the northeast Gulf of Mexico. **D. Johnson** stated red snapper were not migratory, but larvae were planktonic for approximately 21 days. The purpose of his study was to determine if ambient currents could replenish stocks in the northeast by larval advection into depleted areas and if juvenile red snapper were stocked in depleted areas, would ambient currents maintain recruitment. **D. Johnson** stated that shelf currents were principally driven by wind stress in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Currents flowed westward most of year with light eastward flow in mid-summer. **D. Johnson** stated that he used SEAMAP plankton data to examine occurrences of larval red snapper in the samples and then use current data to determine where and how these larvae could be transported to different areas of the Gulf of Mexico. **D. Johnson** reported that ambient currents were not reliable for transporting red snapper larvae to the west Florida shelf from populated areas, but red snapper would be retained on the West Florida Shelf if more were spawned there.

### **Update on 2005 Hurricane Recovery Progress**

**C. Perret** stated that in order to save time, the TCC would not discuss hurricane recovery in depth since most of the hurricane related progress was covered in the State/Federal reports.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

**Crab** – **B. Pellegrin** stated that the Crab Subcommittee examined three different stock assessment models for an upcoming crab stock assessment. The models were surplus production yield models that should give a better indication of stock size using the limited data that was available from the states on crab populations. **T. Wagner** stated that the Subcommittee discussed the status of the NOAA CRP proposal to age crabs using the lipofuscin technique. He reported that the Derelict Trap Guidelines Document has been undergoing revision. Each state provided a short report on their respective state's recent and future derelict trap cleanups. **T. Wagner** reported that Louisiana was planning its 4th year in 2007 focusing on Barataria Bay and part of Lake Pontchartrain. Mississippi had no cleanup in 2005 due to success in prior years and no cleanup in 2006 due to Hurricane recovery. Currently they plan to have another cleanup in January 2007 which will be partly supported by disaster funding. Alabama has gone to an every other year cleanup. Florida continues to remove derelict stone crab and lobster traps from the Keys. In 2006 they removed 3,000 using volunteers and the Coast Guard contributed another 30,000 traps,

some of which were FWC research traps. T. Wagner reported that Texas would hold its 6th clean up in February 2007. T. Wagner reported that Florida had good winter catches in early 2006 which fishermen speculated may have been due to red tide providing additional food to the crabs in the form of dead finfish. Landings in the first half of 2006 appear to be slightly below the 2005 landings for the same time period but only by a little. There continues to be a decrease in license sales but consistent landings. T. Wagner reported that Alabama 2006 landings were low but license sales were also down in 2006. T. Wagner reported that Mississippi license sales continue to drop. In 2005, 137 commercial trap licenses were sold; in 2006 only 60 were sold. Conversely, the 2006 landings were way up with only half the fishermen participating. T. Wagner reported that Louisiana 2006 landings were down from 2005 due to both Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. T. Wagner reported that Texas 2006 landings would be low. Only 2 commercial crab licenses were bought back in 2005 and due to legislative budget cuts, most of the cuts for the TPWD will be in the buy-back program. T. Wagner reported that Traci Floyd was reelected chair of the Subcommittee.

SEAMAP – **J. Rester** stated that the Subcommittee reviewed a SEAMAP ArcIMS site that the Subcommittee has been working on with the National Coastal Data Development Center. The site uses SEAMAP data to examine the distribution of species caught during SEAMAP summer and fall trawl surveys. The Subcommittee also heard a presentation from Dr. Sandra Diamond on the location of bycatch ‘hotspots’ in the Gulf of Mexico. Dr. Diamond was using SEAMAP data to examine areas within the Gulf that consistently have high concentrations of red snapper. These areas could be used to further examine the possibility of time/area closures to reduce bycatch of red snapper in the shrimp fishery. The Subcommittee met in August with the South Atlantic and Caribbean components to discuss joint issues and the SEAMAP budget. The President’s budget had SEAMAP funded at \$5.1 million, the Senate mark was at \$7.4 million while the House mark was at \$0. The group discussed future SEAMAP activities at different funding levels. The Gulf component will increase plankton sampling and try to add a Winter Survey Plankton if they receive increased funding. The group also discussed future funding allocations. The Gulf component currently receives 44.8% of the total SEAMAP budget. Also, if SEAMAP received increased funding, the Commission has proposed to take over data management for all three SEAMAP components. This change would only take place if SEAMAP receives increased funding. **J. Rester** stated that Jim Hanifen was elected chairman with S. Heath serving as vice-chairman.

Data Management – **K. Cuevas** reported that the Data Management Subcommittee discussed the status of biological sampling activities. A new methodology will allow the states to sample more species for aging purposes. **K. Cuevas** reported that currently the states were sampling 5 species, but soon should be able to sample 15 species. The Subcommittee discussed a compilation of recreational fishing license and license frame pilot survey. This survey would supplement the current random digit dialing survey. The Subcommittee also discussed monitoring non-native species observations during routine survey work. Michelle Kasprzak was elected chair with K. Cuevas serving as vice-chair.

Artificial Reef – **R. Lukens** reported that the Subcommittee had not met since October 2005. **R. Lukens** reported that the Subcommittee continued to work with representatives from the Navy and MARAD to establish a national program for deployment of ships as artificial reefs. **R.**

**Lukens** reported that the Subcommittee wanted the federal government to bear all costs to prepare the vessels for sinking, tow the vessel to the deployment site, and place the vessel on the location provided by the state artificial reef program. **R. Lukens** stated that the Subcommittee also wanted the federal government to continue to assume all liability for the vessel until it was placed on the bottom. Neither the Navy nor MARAD were prepared to accept these conditions. The Oriskany has been sunk off Pensacola. **R. Lukens** reported that the Council's Special Management Zone Monitoring process was currently on hold. The Subcommittee's task was to review and provide recommendations regarding requests for SMZ status for artificial reefs off Mississippi and Alabama. **R. Lukens** reported that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee was scheduled to meet in November in conjunction with the ASMFC Artificial Reef Committee.

Habitat – **D. Frugé** stated that the meeting opened with an administrative report by J. Rester, who reported that since the last Subcommittee meeting he had attended meetings of the National Fish Habitat Initiative, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and two advisory panel meetings of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and that he was working on developing a characterization of juvenile red snapper habitat for the Gulf Council. The Subcommittee then discussed an effort that was initiated by the Subcommittee a year ago to assess the impacts to estuaries in the Gulf resulting from the loss of freshwater inflow to estuaries due to federal dams on Gulf rivers. This analysis was to be used to develop a strategy to address mitigation for those impacts. That effort was modified at the Spring 2006 meeting to developing a white paper on the documented impacts to estuaries resulting from the loss of freshwater inflow generally. A list of reports and publications that could be used for developing this white paper has been compiled. However, during the summer the Subcommittee learned of a project that has been proposed to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance for holding a workshop to develop a strategy for better dealing with this issue across the Gulf. **D. Frugé** stated that pending approval of funding for this proposed project, the Subcommittee was holding off on further development of the white paper and intends to support and participate as appropriate in this workshop. The Subcommittee then discussed the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan, which was being developed by the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership. Next the Subcommittee reviewed progress in completing the Gulf of Mexico Bottom Mapping project that was being pursued under contract by the Commission and funded through a MARFIN grant. The Subcommittee then discussed the development of a Gulf of Mexico educational video, which has been a stated intent of the Subcommittee for several years now. The Subcommittee has developed a draft script for the video, but funding was needed in order to further develop and produce the video. The Commission submitted a \$50,000 proposal to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in August for this purpose. The Subcommittee elected Heather Finley of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to be the new chair and D. Frugé as vice-chair.

Anadromous - **D. Frugé** stated that this was the first meeting of the Subcommittee since March 2001. During the intervening time the Subcommittee has been focused on completing the revision of the Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan as the core of the Striped Bass Technical Task Force. **D. Frugé** stated that members briefed the Subcommittee regarding current and recent activities of their respective organizations in anadromous fish management activities in Gulf rivers. Following this, Karen Herrington of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Panama City, Florida Fisheries Resource Office presented the results of striped bass fingerling production and stocking in Gulf rivers for 2006. This was one of the poorest years on record with only about

30% of stocking goals being reached. Drought conditions and perhaps the storms of 2005 may have been partially responsible for the poor production, which stemmed primarily from difficulty in collecting broodfish for fry production. The Subcommittee then discussed recent proposals by the LDWF to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission for instituting restrictions on use of entanglement nets in streams from the Pearl to the Amite Rivers in southeast Louisiana in order to prevent incidental catch and mortality of Gulf sturgeon. Recent data indicate that the mortality rate for the species in the Pearl River has increased significantly, possibly in part due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina. **D. Frugé** stated that the Subcommittee also discussed the status review for the American eel that was currently being pursued by FWS and NMFS in response to a petition to list the species under the Endangered Species Act. As there has not been much data on the species in Gulf of Mexico rivers provided to the team conducting the status review, the Subcommittee tentatively identified additional data that might be of use to the team in this status review. The Subcommittee next discussed implementation of the newly revised Gulf Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan. The "scorecard" that will be used by the State-Federal Fishery Management Committee for monitoring implementation of the regulatory and programmatic recommendations in the plan was reviewed. The Subcommittee also considered and agreed on the concept of using a similar scorecard to monitor implementation of non-regulatory management recommendations in the plan on a watershed basis. Information on a fishery management plan for Alabama shad in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint rivers system that was being developed jointly by the states of Georgia, Florida and Alabama with participation by the Fish and Wildlife Service, was presented by Rick Long and Karen Herrington. Following this presentation the Subcommittee discussed the merits of perhaps expanding this plan into a range-wide fishery management plan. Alabama shad was formerly a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act by NMFS. **D. Frugé** stated that it was currently considered a species of concern by NMFS. **D. Frugé** stated that the Subcommittee recommended development of an interjurisdictional fishery management plan for Alabama shad within the historic range of the species in Gulf of Mexico rivers. **S. Heath made a motion for the TCC to forward to the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee a request to proceed with development of an interjurisdictional fishery management plan for Alabama shad within the historic range of the species in Gulf of Mexico rivers.** **V. Vail seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.** **D. Frugé** stated that he was again elected chairman with Larry Nicholson serving as vice-chairman.

### **Other Business**

C. Nelson stated that he would like for the TCC to investigate past data collection after disasters like hurricanes. He stated that this would be in an effort to streamline the process and assure the public that seafood was safe to eat as soon as possible. C. Perret stated that he agreed with the sentiments and would forward the idea to the State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee.

***With no other business the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.***

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES – 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**  
**Wednesday, October, 25, 2006**  
**New Orleans, Louisiana**

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

**Members**

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Steve Heath, AMRD, 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**

Gregg Bray, RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst  
Dave Donaldson, Data Program Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Teri Freitas, IJF Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Wendy Garner, Accountant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, Disaster Program, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, FIN Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Greg Boland, MMS, New Orleans, LA  
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Sen. Butch Gautreaux, *Commissioner*, LA  
Joe Gill, *Commissioner*, MS  
Tomas Jamir, NMFS, Miami, FL  
Judy Jamison, G&SAFF  
J. T. Jenkins, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Chris Nelson, *Commissioner*, AL  
John O'Connell, Texas Sea Grant, TX  
Joe O'Hop, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Ralph Rayburn, *Commissioner*, TX

## **Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted with one addition.

## **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on March 15, 2006 in San Antonio, Texas and August 10, 2006 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as presented.

## **Menhaden Advisory Committee Report**

**S. VanderKooy** gave the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) report for Chairman J. Smith. At this time, the 2006 landings were at 440,000MT which is up 7% from the same period last year but still 4% below the 5-year mean. While all the factories sustained heavy damage from the two hurricanes in 2005, all four were in operation by June of 2006 and processed fish at almost the 2005, pre-storm levels. 41 boats fished for reduction in 2006, 38 steamers, 2 run boats, and 1 bait boat. The forecast in March was for landings to reach 459,000MT and is roughly 7% below the projected final total.

Industry reported that many of their boats had experienced down time due to storm debris. With fewer shipyards to make repairs, the effort was likely lower than normal. Rookie crews may have contributed to breakdowns as they were less seasoned than the crews who may have left the area after the storm.

**VanderKooy** provided an update on the Atlantic menhaden season. Landings through September were down 7% from 2005. Omega Reedville was the only plant in operation with 11 vessels, and 10 or 11 bait boats. The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board (AMMB) and the state of Virginia have reached a compromise on the 105,800MT cap placed on the Chesapeake under Amendment 2. The governor of Virginia offered a compromise in August. A final vote by the AMMB is expected today.

**VanderKooy** reported that the Gulf menhaden stock assessment looked good with results indicating there was no overfishing of Gulf menhaden. The final results indicate that since 2001 fishing mortality has increased slightly, population fecundity has declined slightly, and the number of recruits may be declining since 1998. The bottom line is that the fishery is operating well within the limits and only slightly above the targets through 2004. With reduced effort in 2005 and 2006 and excellent recruitment in those years, the assessment should look different as fishing mortality decreases and fecundity increases.

The states and industry briefly went over hurricane recovery and reported on progress being made since 2005. Jeff Rester updated the MAC on the situation with the proposed LNG facilities and all were glad to hear the reversal of plans for the Freeport facility and its use of the closed loop system.

Rick Schillaci was elected chair by unanimous consent.



## **Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel Report**

**R. Lukens** gave the report for the Panel. The U.S. Coast Guard provided a short presentation on the debris and vessel removal activities being conducted in Mississippi. Charts were used to demonstrate the use of side-scan sonar. This is a new mission for the Coast Guard having been tasked by FEMA. The Coast Guard is currently awaiting word from FEMA if they are to continue that effort or if contractors will be used.

**Lukens** reported that D. Donaldson led a discussion regarding possible improvements to the collection of recreational fisheries data. There was a recent workshop sponsored by NOAA Fisheries to look at this issue.

**Lukens** reported that Panel member P. Barber brought up the issue of duplication of effort specifically with state trip ticket programs and the upcoming red snapper IFQ reporting system. Donaldson told the Panel that the GSMFC is working with NOAA's IT personnel to address this. There have also been assurances from NOAA Fisheries that effort is not duplicated. **Lukens** noted that this is critical since there will be more species considered for IFQ's in the future.

**Lukens** updated the Panel on aquatic invasive species issues. The GSMFC provides administrative support for a regional panel of the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. The regional panel is designed to provide regional recommendations to the Task Force.

**Lukens** gave a brief overview of the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program and how the funds would be distributed. Panel members requested more detail on the proposed work to be done. Staff will provide them with an outline of the work to be done by the states.

**Lukens** reported that J. Rester provided an update on the status of LNG facilities in the Gulf, specifically that the Main Pass facility has been amended to include a closed loop system

**Lukens** reported that J. O'Connell of Texas Sea Grant briefed the Panel on a program to collect and recycle used monofilament fishing line. This program is based on one currently operating in Florida.

Phillip Horn – Commercial and Grey Cane – Recreational were re-elected as Co-Chairmen.

***M. Ray made a motion to accept the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.***

## **FIN Data Program Update**

**D. Donaldson** gave an overview of activities in the 2007 cooperative agreement. These include coordination and administration of the FIN Program, collecting, managing and disseminating marine recreational fisheries data, headboat port sampling, at-sea headboat sampling, Gulf menhaden port sampling, FIN Data Management System, trip ticket program implementation and operations, recreational and commercial biological sampling, detailed effort pilot survey for blue crab fishery in Louisiana. The total FIN budget is \$5.3 million.



**Donaldson** then reported on the recreational fishing license sampling frame project. In response to the National Research Council (NRC) report, FIN will conduct a pilot survey using fishing licenses as sampling frame. A dual frame will be used since the license frame not complete because of certain exemptions. Work is scheduled to begin in January 2007. FIN is working with NOAA Fisheries and they are providing funding for this project. There are various problems associated with trying to collect phone numbers for fishing licenses. After lengthy Committee discussion the S/FFMC agreed that the FIN should pursue all avenues, including legislation, to develop a database using phone numbers from fishing licenses as a sampling frame.

**Donaldson** reported on commercial vessel information for the Registration Tracking Module. The S/FFMC was provided a handout listing issues of concern in developing this module. The FIN Committee has been reviewing the problem of collecting a Gulf coast fleet database for commercial vessels registered in the five Gulf states using a hull identification number as a common identifier. There have been a number of issues identified during the discussion of this topic. Mississippi and Alabama are ready to provide data. Louisiana should be ready in the near future. In Texas there are compatibility issues with merging separate data bases. In Florida there is an issue with confidentiality and Florida's ability to share the data with FIN.

**R. Lukens** noted the importance of contacting the right person in each agency to attempt to fix the problems. In the instance of Florida's issues with confidential data, **Lukens** reminded the Committee that the FIN has a confidentiality agreement with the five Gulf states and the federal government. Committee members will look into this issue and it will be discussed at the March 2007 meeting.

*C. Perret made a motion to accept the FIN Data Program Update. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

### **Status of Billfish Grants**

**R. Lukens** gave a brief overview of the Billfish Grants. There are a total of 11 projects being administered by the GSMFC for a total of \$1.8 million. Reports are required on a semi-annual basis. The summary is current to June 30, 2006. Two projects have outstanding semi-annual reports. Both projects will not receive funding until their reports are received. **Lukens** noted that the hurricanes of 2005 had a significant impact on the availability of fish. Several other projects have been given a no-cost extension due to extenuating circumstances. No additional extensions will be given beyond December 31, 2007.

### **Trends in License Sales Post-Hurricane**

**C. Perret** addressed the S/FFMC and noted that he had asked the MDMR to keep track of both commercial and recreational fishing license sales in the wake of the hurricanes in the Gulf. GSMFC staff also collected this information from each of the five Gulf states, and NOAA Fisheries provided their numbers as well. This provided a rough overview of the license sales for 2004, 2005, and 2006 as well as the last 10-year average on those licenses.

### Trends in National License Sales

**C. Brown** of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave an overview of freshwater and saltwater license sales nationally (pre-hurricanes) showing that the Gulf region is generally following the same trends as the rest of the nation.

### Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

**S. VanderKooy** reported that the Sheepshead Profile is being presented today anticipating action from the Commission. The Striped Bass FMP is being delivered by the printer and will be available by request from the GSMFC office.

**VanderKooy** reported that a motion was made by the Anadromous Subcommittee to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) to consider beginning work on the Alabama Shad. The TCC moved to forward the request to the SFFMC for consideration in adding Alabama Shad to the list of species for FMP development. After some discussion, *V. Vail moved to add the Alabama Shad to the list of species for FMP development in the future. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.* The S/FFMC will look at the list for future development including the Alabama Shad and select a new species at their meeting in March.

### Habitat Program Report

**J. Rester** provided an overview of Habitat Program activities. In April, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan was launched. The Plan supports many existing fish habitat partnerships, and fosters new national and local grassroots efforts to address, measure and communicate the status and needs of aquatic habitats and is targeted toward fisheries protection, restoration and enhancement in key watersheds.

The GMFMC Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel met in September. The AP discussed the status of the Sabine-Neches Waterway Deepening Project, the Texas Artificial Reef Program public reefing initiative, deepening of the Matagorda Ship Channel, dredging associated with the Calhoun LNG facility in Lavaca Bay, the Bahia Grande restoration project, the Beacon Port LNG facility, and the reviewed the GMFMC Ecosystem Management Plan.

The GMFMC Louisiana/Mississippi Habitat Protection Advisory Panel met earlier this month. The AP discussed the Port of Iberia channel deepening project, de-authorization of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Plan, the Coastal Impact Assessment Program, status of the Port of Pascagoula dredged material management plan, the Mississippi Coastal Improvements Plan, the Donaldsonville to the Gulf hurricane protection project, the proposed deepening of the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel, the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection project, and the Council's Ecosystem Management Plan.

Over the summer Rester worked on a juvenile red snapper EFH project for the Council. He conducted a literature search and also an exploration of SEAMAP data. The Council is trying to identify potential high concentration areas of juvenile red snapper for time/area closures from shrimp trawling. Identified areas included Freeport Rocks and Sabine Bank off Texas and areas

off the mouth of Mobile Bay. This option to reduce red snapper bycatch will be examined under Shrimp Amendment 15.

***M. Ray made a motion to accept the Habitat Program Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.***

### **IJF Compliance Matrix**

**S. VanderKooy** presented the IJF matrix which is a way for the states to determine how well they are doing on implementing the recommendations put forth in the FMPs. A few changes were noted including the addition of several recommendations from the Striped Bass FMP. **VanderKooy** noted that when the original Oyster FMP was completed, the Louisiana/Mississippi shared reefs was a concern. Apparently today this is no longer an issue due to NSSP closure guidelines and may circumvent this issue. This issue will be addressed in the Oyster FMP Revision. **VanderKooy** reported that the Law Enforcement Committee indicated an interest in reviewing the recommendations related to enforcement and would like a matrix of these recommendations. It was the consensus of the S/FFMC that additional review should be encouraged. Staff will work to develop criteria which will be more useful than implemented/not implemented.

### **Other Business**

**C. Nelson** of Alabama requested a discussion on post-disaster biological sampling because of stormwater runoff and its affect on the safety of seafood. **Nelson** stressed the need for having a process in place to be used in the immediate aftermath of a hurricane. This process should be as efficient as possible and implemented as quickly as possible. The S/FFMC agreed that this issue should be discussed with state directors and other partners including DEQ, EPA, FDA, etc. Staff will determine a starting point for this process and will then task the appropriate Subcommittees with refining the process.

### **Election of Chairman/Facilitator**

J. Roussel was re-elected Chairman and L. Simpson was re-elected Facilitator.

***There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am***

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES - 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Wednesday, October 25, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

*Vernon Minton*  
3-14-2007

**Chairman Virginia Vail** called the meeting to order at 1:10 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 Vernon Minton*)  
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL  
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)  
Hayden Dempsey, Tallahassee, FL  
Butch Gautreaux, Louisiana Senate, Morgan City, LA  
Wilson Gaidry, Houma, LA  
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for Dwight Landreneau*)  
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Robert L. Cook*)  
Ralph Rayburn, College Station, TX  
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)  
Joe Gill, Jr., Ocean Springs, MS  
William Walker, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

**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  
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, System Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, EDRP Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gayle Jones, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Ann Jochens, GCOOS/Texas A & M University, College Station, TX  
Worth Nowlin, GCOOS/Texas A & M University, College Station, TX  
Sandy Rogers, Hancock Bank, Gulfport, MS  
Tomas Jamir, NOAA/NMFS/SEFSG, Miami, FL

## Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted with the following changes: We will adjourn at 3:20 p.m. to re-assemble in the hotel lobby at 3:30 p.m. We will leave as a group to walk to the Audubon Society's IMAX Theater for a viewing of *Hurricane on the Bayou*, compliments of the Audubon Society and Senator Butch Gautreaux. *C. Perret moved to adopt with changes. J. Gill seconded. The agenda was adopted with changes.*

## Approval of Minutes

**R. Rayburn** suggested two corrections to the Commission Business Meeting minutes. On page 53 of the March 15, 2006 minutes he deleted the word "Management" from the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation name. On page 55, second paragraph, he proposed changing the words "have been" to "were petitioned to be". *J. Roussel moved to approve the minutes as corrected. J. Gill seconded. The minutes were approved as corrected.*

## GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – **J. T. Thomas** reported that the LEC met on Tuesday, October 24, 2006.

The LEC discussed funding issues related to the Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs). Other discussions involving JEAs included progress being made with new software, and public outreach options. The LEC also discussed the new tasks under the 2007-2008 Operations Plan which include development of outreach activities inventory and funding for mass media outreach. **S. VanderKooy** reported to the committee on the Sheephead and Oyster Task Force activities.

**J. T. Thomas** provided the Commissioners with a final draft of the *2007-2008 Operations Plan*. On behalf of the LEC, **J. T. Thomas** requested that the Commission accept the *2007-2008 Operations Plan* with the appropriate minor changes for implementation next year. *C. Perret moved to accept the plan and the LEC report. J. Roussel seconded. The Plan and report were approved as presented.*

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report - **C. Perret** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, October 24, 2006. They received status reports from the various states, NMFS and FWS. The following subcommittees reported to the TCC, Crab, SEAMAP, Data Management, Artificial Reef, Habitat and Anadromous. He briefed the Commissioners on their activities.

During the Habitat Committee report, a discussion arose regarding the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. **C. Perret** suggested that the Commission should support the Alliance. General consensus was that there was not enough information available at this time to do so. There has not been open involvement between the Alliance and the various Gulf agencies. **W. Walker** stated that at the request of **Governor Barbour** he has become involved and is committed to finding a means to get the Commission and the Gulf States involved in supporting the Alliance and to streamlining

the Alliance goals. *R. Rayburn moved to have staff invite the appropriate persons to the next TCC meeting to discuss how to get the State agencies involved in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Program. C. Nelson seconded. The motion passed.*

Other actions included the TCC approval of the Anadromous Subcommittee's request to forward to the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee a request to proceed with the development of an interjurisdictional fishery management plan for Alabama shad within the historic range of species on the Gulf of Mexico Rivers.

*R. Rayburn moved to accept the TCC report. C. Nelson seconded. The motion was approved.*

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report – **L. Simpson** reported that the S-FFMC met earlier in the day. The S-FFMC Committee received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) and the Commercial Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel (CRFAP). They also heard updates on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program, Fisheries Information Network Program, Habitat Program, and Billfish Program.

Other topics discussed included trends in State license sales post Hurricane Katrina and a report from **C. Brown** regarding trends in National license sales. **C. Nelson** discussed post-disaster biological sampling because of storm water runoff and its affect on the safety of seafood.

*B. Gautreaux moved to have the Commission write a letter or resolution commending Governor Blanco for her efforts on the closed loop LNGs in Louisiana. He praised her courageous stand on this very important issue. J. Gill seconded. The motion passed.*

*R. Rayburn moved to accept the S-FFMC report. C. Nelson seconded. The motion passed.*

#### NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office

**R. Crabtree** reported on fisheries rule making in the SERO. Shrimp Amendment 13 was approved by the Council and the final rule implementing that amendment was published several weeks ago. Most noteworthy aspects of this amendment establish a 10 year moratorium on Federal shrimp permits. It is now in the implementation phase. Another Council action was Reef Fish Amendment 18(a). The most important aspect of this amendment was a requirement for vessel monitoring systems on all vessels in the reef fish fishery. This will be effective December 7, 2006.

He also reported on a number of actions going on with red snapper. NOAA Fisheries published a draft environmental impact statement. The comment period began 10/13/06 and will run for 45 days. The statement contains measures to reduce fishing mortality on red snapper in the directed commercial red snapper fishery, the directed recreational red snapper fishery and also to reduce bycatch of red snapper in the shrimp fishery. The agency intends to publish a proposed interim rule in mid November that will propose measures for the 2007 red snapper fishery. This will be a temporary rule under the authority of the Magnuson Act, which means it will be in place for 6 months and can then be extended one time.

The Council submitted a red snapper individual fishing quota program for Secretarial review. The comment period for both the amendments and the proposed rule have been completed and NOAA will be issuing a decision on those amendments next week.

At the August meeting the Gulf Council approved a regulatory amendment to make changes to the certification criteria for bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) allowed in shrimp trawls in the Gulf of Mexico. This is geared towards making it more flexible and make it easier to certify new BRDs.

He reported that the SERO completed stock assessments in the spring and summer. Based on the results, they have recently sent a letter to the Council notifying them that based on the recent stock assessments that gag, greater amberjack, and gray trigger fish are all being over fished. The Council needs to propose measures to address over fishing in those stocks.

**C. Nelson** discussed an interest in establishing menhaden as a sustainable fishery. **R. Crabtree** stated that menhaden is not a Federally managed species so it is not listed in NOAA's reports to Congress. He further stated that he did not know enough about the issue to discuss it. **C. Nelson** stated that we need to get out in front of this issue now. He suggested that the Commission support the fishery being classified sustainable. Due to ecological issues this label is necessary. **V. Vail** stated that the Commission should put this discussion on the next S-FFMC Meeting. We either need to take action or at the very least discuss it. **J. Roussel moved to put it on the upcoming S-FFMC Meeting Agenda. Seconded by C. Nelson. The motion passed.**

### **Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System Presentation**

**Ann E. Jochens** and **Worth D. Nowlin, Jr.**, Texas A & M University presented *Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System (GCOOS); Assessing Fisheries Requirements*. They discussed the ocean observing systems and the data and products provided by GCOOS in the Gulf of Mexico. They are working to identify observations and products needed by users; to estimate economic benefits of these needs; prioritize these needs; and plan initiate pilot projects to enable these needs to be met. They proposed that workshops or other forums were needed to identify priority observations, products, and services required by the fishery stakeholders. They sought the Commission's assistance in developing the best way to engage fishery stakeholders.

The Commissioners discussed the presentation but were unable to provide any specific advice or guidance at this time.

**The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m. to allow all of the Commissioners, staff and guest to walk over to the IMAX Theater to view *Hurricane on the Bayou* at the invitation of the Audubon Society and Senator Gautreaux.**

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES - 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Thursday, October 26, 2006  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

*B. Vernon Minton*  
3-14-2007

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

**Commissioners**

Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)  
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL  
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)  
Hayden Dempsey, Tallahassee, FL  
Butch Gautreaux, Louisiana Senate, Morgan City, LA  
Wilson Gaidry, Houma, LA  
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*Proxy for Dwight Landreneau*)  
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Robert L. Cook*)  
Ralph Rayburn, College Station, TX  
Corky Perret, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)  
Joe Gill, Jr., Ocean Springs, MS

**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  
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, System Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, EDRP Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gayle Jones, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS  
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA  
Roy Crabtree, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Ann Jochens, GCOOS/Texas A & M University, College Station, TX  
Worth Nowlin, GCOOS/Texas A & M University, College Station, TX  
Tomas Jamir, NOAA/NMFS/SEFSG, Miami, FL

**USFWS Region 4 Office Comments**

**C. Brown** reported on behalf of the FWS Region 4. He reported that Dr. Benjamin Tuggle has been named as the new Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Region



in September. The Southwest Region is headquartered in Albuquerque and encompasses Arizona, New Mexico and Oklahoma in addition to Texas. In other personnel matters, Marshall Jones, a long-standing Deputy Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service will be retiring at the end of December

A total of 12,060 Kemp's ridley sea turtle nests were documented on the Mexican beaches this year. This was another record-setting year. During 2005 there were 10,099 nests counted. The year 2000 was also a record year at 6,436, so there has been an almost 100% increase in the number of counted nests in six years.

A Recent USGC analysis shows that 217 square miles of Louisiana coastal wetlands were converted to open water following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It is still uncertain how much of this is a permanent conversion. These losses represent about 42% of what was predicted, before the storms, to occur between 2000 and 2050.

The FWS National Wetlands Inventory is planning to update the National Wetland Inventory data for thirty-seven 15' quadrangles along the Mississippi coast, pending available funding in the new fiscal year budget. An additional \$15,000 would allow an expansion of the update to some of the area east and north of New Orleans.

Sabine National Wildlife Refuge remains closed to public use a year after being severely impacted by Hurricane Rita. The storm surge deposited about 7-million cubic meters of debris, much of it considered hazardous, on almost one-fourth of the refuge. The debris includes everything from teddy bears to tanks the size of 18-wheelers and 1,400 containers potentially containing up to 350,000 gallons of hazardous liquids. Although the Corps of Engineers and EPA were able to clean such debris from private property in Cameron Parish, the Stafford Act prevented them from working on federal property. In June this year the FWS received about \$132 million in emergency supplemental funds for hurricane-related clean-up and repair throughout the Southeast. A total of \$12 million is being used for clean-up at Sabine. The major clean-up effort should be finished by December. In addition, roads, restrooms and other facilities still need to be re-constructed, as essentially all refuge facilities were considered to be beyond repair. Basic reconstruction could take an additional six months or longer. The FWS hopes to have portions of the refuge open again to the public by next summer.

### **FY 2007 NOAA Fisheries Budget**

**L. Simpson** provided copies of the House and Senate Committee reports on Appropriations. The House version was not detailed and was very austere. The Senate appropriations are more in line with fishery needs. He pointed out highlight of interest to the Commissioners. One point in the Senate Committee's version reaffirms its belief that NOAA would serve our country better if allowed to stand alone as an independent agency and out of the Department of Commerce's shadow of business and trade.

He briefed the Commissioners on specific line items identified in the NOAA Fisheries budget proposed by the Senate. The big surprise in this proposed budget is the SEAMAP program. After consistently seeking support for this important state-federal program which has provided

long-term statistical sampling and protocols as well as fishery independent data, it was increased to \$7.4 million. This is a sizable increase over the previous years' level funding of \$1.385 million that has been shared between the Gulf, South Atlantic and Caribbean.

### **FY 2007 USFWS Budget**

**C. Brown** reported on the FWS FY2007 budget. He noted that he would be reporting on the President's budget and that until after the elections, nothing was certain. He reported that there was a \$2.3 million increase for refuge challenge cost share grants; a \$5.2 million increase for the Fisheries Program; a \$3.1 million increase for migratory bird management; and, \$1.4 million increase for refuge programs. He pointed out several changes in FY2007. There will be an increase of \$1.873 million for hatchery operations, an increase of \$1.35 million for fish passage improvements, and \$2.0 million for the National Fish Habitat initiative. The budget includes decreases in whirling disease control, Montana Wildlife Health Center, Washington State mass marking, marine mammal's general program activities and fish and wildlife assistance general program activities.

He discussed trends in FWS over the last five years. He provided figures for resource management; construction; land acquisition; and, grant programs. Overall the budget amounts are down. He pointed out items of interest to the Commission under resource management: ecological services; refuge systems; law enforcement; fisheries; and, administration. There were decreases in ecological services, which includes invasive species, and in fisheries. All other areas showed moderate increases.

**D. Frugé** reviewed the funding history for the Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Programs. D. Frugé's office is funded under these program as well as another 12 operations across the region. There are 7 regions and if you were to divide our total budget for this funding equally, each region should get 14%. The projection for the Southeast Region this fiscal year is only 2.8%. He provided a copy a memo from the Southeast Regional Director, Sam Hamilton to Director Dale Hall that addresses the funding inequities in the Fisheries Program.

This memo points out that the resources of the Southeast are vast and valuable. Although field work capabilities are severely restrained, a significant percentage of the annual targets established for the National Performance Measures are being met. He proposes that funding allocations should not be made on a divide by seven basis, but rather they should be targeted to areas of highest resource needs with the ability to demonstrate program success. The FWS's FY2008 goal is to allocate 10 percent of the Washington Office program funding to the field program in the Southeast. This is a good start but current needs are so severe that additional methods of funding need to be considered. Addressing funding inequities would increase the Program's ability to meet all National Performance measure targets, prevent species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act, create new partnerships, leverage more partner resources, increase recreational fishing opportunities, improve customer service, and increase public funding support.

*C. Perret moved to write a letter to Director Dale Hall endorsing the memorandum from the Sam Hamilton, Regional Director and call for an end to inequities in the Fisheries Program. Seconded by J. Gill. The motion passed.*

### **Disaster Recovery Program**

**L. Simpson** reported that severe and significant damage had been caused to the fisheries infrastructure due to Hurricane Katrina and Rita. In response to these disasters the U. S. Congress passed an emergency disaster relief funding package that included \$128 million for fisheries restoration. The package includes funding to support restoration of oyster grounds, restoration of shrimp and other fisheries grounds, and cooperative research to restore fisheries. At least \$38 million must be spent to rehabilitate oyster fishery; at least \$7 million must be spent on cooperative research to restore Gulf of Mexico fisheries; and, the remaining amount is available to support restoration of shrimp and other fisheries grounds, additional oyster work, and additional cooperative research.

This package was signed by President Bush on June 15, 2006 and became P.L. 109-234. A decision was made to have the Commission administer these disaster funding packages to the States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas. The administrative funds are separate from the disaster funds. On July 11, 2006 the Commission submitted a Federal Application for Funding that included proposals from the five Gulf States for activities to be conducted within their jurisdictions over the next five years. The application was approved and awarded on August 25, 2006. The Award spans five years - September 1, 2006 through August 31, 2011.

The distribution of funds as determined by the U. S. Congress is as follows:

- Texas           \$ 3,175,000 (2.5%)
- Louisiana     \$52,916,667 (41%)
- Mississippi   \$37,041,667 (29%)
- Alabama       \$29,633,333 (23%)
- Florida        \$ 4,233,333 (3.5%)
- NOAA          \$ 1,000,000 (1%)

*C. Perret moved to write a letter of thank you to Congressional delegates who assisted in securing this funding. The letter should include President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and President Bush. The letter should also include information on what the funding will be used for and what results we expect. B. Gautreaux seconded. The motion passed.*

**R. Rayburn** asked if there were any plans in place for the future that would help alleviate the wait and inertia period that follows hurricanes and similar disaster when getting aid. **L. Simpson** responded that the States have looked at their hurricane readiness and there now exist programs that can get the information together in a faster more efficient manner.

**R. Crabtree** took the opportunity to read a letter from Dr. William T. Hogarth to Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director of the Commission dated October 20, 2006. The letter thanked the

Commission and the Gulf States for its partnership and dedication in addressing Gulf of Mexico fisheries issues. He was pleased that disaster relief funding in the amount of \$128 million has been provided in record time. He recognized that more funding is needed to address remaining issues not covered by the supplemental package, but pointed out that this is the largest single amount ever provided by Congress for fisheries aid.

**C. Perret** stated that NOAA Fisheries has been extremely helpful in dealing with the current disaster.

### **Habitat Program Report**

**J. Rester** provided the Commissioners with a written Report on the Joint Habitat Program. He briefed the Commissioners on several major habitat projects. He reported on a \$210,610.00, bottom mapping project that is being funded by MARFIN and administered through the Commission's Habitat Program. The main goal of the bottom mapping project is to develop a user friendly, interactive system that identifies, describes, and displays resources characterizing the seabed habitat of the Gulf of Mexico. A contractor is currently gathering data for inclusion in the database and the project should be completed in late 2007. He presented slides showing where the data is being gathered and what information it can provide.

He also reviewed the current application status for liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities in the Gulf of Mexico. Several applications have been withdrawn and one that is currently operating (Gulf Gateway). Three others are still being processed. He discussed several lawsuits. On May 5, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco used her power to veto the project based on the use of an open rack vaporizer for LNG re-gasification. Later that month, Freeport-McMoRan re-submitted an amended application proposing the use of a closed re-gasification system. A supplemental environmental assessment with the new system was released for public review on September 26. He provided a draft letter concerning the environmental assessment. The impact of this assessment to the marine environment should be reduced substantially with this closed loop system. The Commission thanked Freeport-McMoRan for switching over to a closed loop system. **B. Gautreaux moved to approve the letter for submittal to the U.S. Coast Guard and a copy to Freeport-McMoRan. J. Gill seconded. The motion passed. J. Rester** provided additional information on other LNG activities. He will continue to monitor LNG activity and keep the Commission updated.

**W. Gaidry** discussed a problem he is currently having in Louisiana. He serves on the Coastal Conservation Board and at a recent meeting attended by Federal, State and Local agencies, they discussed the immense problem of redistributing the waters of the Mississippi River in an effort to regain the Delta. This is an important problem to solve since a functional delta distributory system is important to fisheries, habitat and other species. **B. Gautreaux** agreed that this was indeed a problem. He feels like rebuilding levees may not solve the issue. Redesigning levees may be the way to go even if this causes some communities to relocate it may be for the better good. **C. Perret** stated that the Commission has in the past supported freshwater introduction and marsh formation.

**W. Gaidry** agreed with all comments but stated that the only way to find a solution would be a multi agency effort combining expertise and more importantly funds. Agencies working towards a solution separately on the same goal will not have the funds or expertise to fully impact the problem of sediment diversion. It will be a major undertaking for one agency. He asked the Commission how they could assist in getting a multi agency effort established.

**B. Gautreaux** agreed that this task needs to be accomplished the right way without wasting time and money. **V. Vail** suggested that the Habitat Subcommittee should address this issue. **R. Rayburn** suggested that **J. Rester** attend one of the Coastal Conservation Board meetings at their invitation.

### **Sport Fish Restoration Program and Invasive Species Program**

**R. Lukens** provided a written report on the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) on Aquatic Invasive Species. The Commission receives about \$50,000, to administer the operation of the regional panel. This program is supplemented by the Sport Fish Restoration Administrative Program.

He also provided a written report on the Sport Fish Restoration Program which provides administrative funds to the Commission to address coordination of artificial reef activities, supplementation of aquatic invasive species activities, and development of a regional geographic information system (GIS) capability.

### **Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program**

**S. VanderKooy** provided a written report on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF). The report provided information about IJF, its basic structure and scope, and how it operates. He provided a list of complete FMPs and a list of future FMPs which now includes Alabama shad.

He presented a final draft copy of the *Striped Bass Revision*. Prior to the meeting he had provided a final draft of the *Sheephead Fishery Profile*. He requested that the Commission take action on these documents. **C. Perret moved to approve publication of the Sheephead Fishery Profile. J. Gill seconded. The motion passed.**

### **Status of Billfish Project**

**R. Lukens** provided a brief summary of each subaward administered by the Commission under the Billfish Project. The original project period for this grant was 1/1/05 through 12/31/06, to address research and management information needs for the billfish fishery. There are a total of 11 projects funded at a total of \$1.8 million. Due to Hurricane Katrina some of the project periods have been extended. In some cases, the principal investigators have changed causing delays. NOAA Fisheries, is the technical monitor of this project.

## **SEAMAP Program Report**

**J. Rester** provided a written report on the SEAMAP Program. In the Gulf of Mexico, yearly SEAMAP sampling includes the spring plankton survey, reef fish survey, summer shrimp-groundfish survey, fall plankton survey and the fall shrimp-groundfish survey. Participants in the various surveys include the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Alabama Department of Natural Resources Marine Resources Division, University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

**J. Rester** brief the Commissioners on the history of this project. SEAMAP started sampling in 1982. In 1985, SEAMAP appropriations was \$1 million. Since that that time SEAMAP has expanded. It now includes not only the Gulf of Mexico, but also the Caribbean and South Atlantic and the current appropriations are \$1.385 million. Appropriations have not increased to keep up with inflation. Surveys and sampling have been cut back. He hopes that things will change with this year's budget.

## **Cooperative Data Collection Programs Report**

**D. Donaldson** provided written report on current program activity. NOAA Fisheries convened a 3 day workshop on Recreational Fishery Statistics Requirements. Specific objectives of the workshop were to identify and prioritize regional and national information requirements for successful stewardship of resources impacted by recreational fisheries, to review and prioritize possible improvements in the methods used to survey and monitor recreational fisheries catch and effort, including those recommended in a recent review by the National Research Council (NRC), and to identify better ways to coordinate and integrate regional and national statistical survey programs. The proceedings of this workshop are available on the National Marine Fisheries Service web site at:

[www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/recreational/Reveiw\\_Recreational\\_Survey\\_Methods/workshop/2006/Workshop\\_Report\\_final.pdf](http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/recreational/Reveiw_Recreational_Survey_Methods/workshop/2006/Workshop_Report_final.pdf).

**D. Donaldson** reviewed FY2006 activities and the FY2007 proposed activities.

## **State Director's Reports**

Florida – **G. Vail** reported on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Hurricane Relief Efforts:

FWC staff assisted the Volunteer Florida Foundation and the Monroe County Commercial Fishermen organization to develop and implement a process to provide financial assistance to trap fishers in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties who lost trap gear in Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. Volunteer Florida is a not-for profit foundation under the umbrella of the Governor's Office established to provide assistance after emergencies; funding is all from private sector donations. Approximately \$500,000 was raised to assist these commercial fishers, who received a voucher, not cash, redeemable for traps or trap materials at participating supply stores. There

were 277 eligible fishers who received vouchers were worth approximately \$1000 or \$2000 each.

The amount received by an individual was based on total fishers eligible to receive assistance and the number of traps fished by an individual. To be eligible you must be a resident of or have a business based in Monroe or Miami-Dade County; 51% of your income must be from fishing (submit tax return); you must have at least 300 lobster or stone crab trap certificates or 400 in combination; and landings in 2004/2005 season. And of course the application had to be submitted by deadline.

#### Legislative Update:

FWC's proposal to standardize penalties for similar recreational violations was passed by the Legislature, in most cases, the penalties are stricter. Under previous law, for example, the penalty for a "bag limit" violation might not have been the same for freshwater, saltwater or hunting. Also approved were stricter penalties for repeat and chronic violators – including steeper court assessed fines, possible jail time and loss of license privileges – within a three year and 10 year time frame [2<sup>nd</sup> violation in 3 yrs; 3<sup>rd</sup> violation in 10].

The Legislature also approved FWC membership in The Wildlife Violator Compact, an interstate agreement that: prohibits non-residents whose fishing or hunting privileges have been suspended or revoked in their home state from engaging in those activities in Florida; prohibits Florida residents with suspended/revoked license privileges from engaging in those activities in member states; and allows a Florida resident who commits a fisheries or wildlife violation in a member state to be treated as would a resident of that state.

The Legislature did not pass FWC legislation to establish fees and penalties for the blue crab effort management program. The program was to have gone into effect last July 1<sup>st</sup>, but the Commission extended a moratorium on new blue crab endorsements until next July. Concerns raised by Legislators during review of the bill were not related to the blue crab fishery, but were with whether or not the "due process" afforded citizens by the FWC was adequate and whether establishing an effort management program was under the authority of the Legislature or the constitutional authority of the Commission. These issues will be addressed during this year and next session [we hope to submit the blue crab bill again].

The aircraft carrier "Oriskany" was sunk off the coast of Pensacola on May 15, right on the amended revised schedule, with no problems. Preparation and deployment was the subject of a 1 hr documentary on the Discovery Channel a few weeks ago. Discussions are coming down to the wire for obtaining the Hoyt-Vandenberg for deployment as an artificial reef in the Keys. By the end of December we'll know if Monroe County has secured the funding necessary to undertake this project.

The FWC received a \$4.7 million 5-year grant from NOAA for an interdisciplinary study of red tide blooms (cause, nutrient relationships, behavior, and effect). Participants in the study include University of Miami, Mote, USF, Old Dominion University, and University of Maryland.



The American Fisheries Society recognized the DMFM Kids Fishing Clinic as the 2005 Sport Fish Restoration Outstanding Project in the Aquatic Education Category. The award was presented at our April Commission meeting.

The DMFM Angler Outreach staff have been very active in the Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program, which began in 1999 as a pilot project funded by a Game and Freshwater Fish Commission Environmental Education grant to Martin County. DMFM has become FWC's point for the program, which is a cooperative effort of local, state and federal agencies and organizations. Recycling bin networks have been established in all state parks and Aquatic Preserves and Freshwater Management Areas.

Advisory Boards – the DMFM is working more closely with the recreational, commercial and environmental sectors to evaluate various fisheries and identify management needs. To date, 6 advisory groups have been set up: Spiny Lobster, stone crab, marine life, red drum, blue crab, and snook. These advisory groups play a significant role in management decisions made by the Commission. For example, snook fishers were concerned that the change in the way “total length” was measured (pinch the tail) done for consistency so all total length measurements would be done same way would let smaller fish fall into the legal slot limit of 26”-34”. An advisory board was established and they requested the Commission adjust the minimum size upward to 27”, this was done. The lobster advisory board is currently looking at the trap reduction process in place, the number of traps in the fishery, the condition of the fishery, etc. Recommendations are expected next year. The red drum board is reviewing the results of the stock assessment and debating when or whether additional management actions are needed.

#### Regulation publications:

Recreational – new process; agency through our Community Relations Office has entered in to a contract for printing the recreational hunting and fishing regulations. The vendor sells advertising in the publication to cover cost of printing and eventually distribution. The first issue of the “new regs” came out over the summer.

Commercial – our commercial fisheries liaison office totally revamped our commercial regs publication and added illustrations. It has been well received.

Alabama – **S. Heath** reported on behalf of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR).

ADCNR/MRD has just completed the shell planting for 2006, with a total of 26,000 plus cubic yards of cultch. Procurement of cultch material is getting more and more costly and the department is still using disaster funds provided after Hurricane Ivan.

The brown shrimp season was successful. The white shrimp season is not doing as well. The effort was down, there were only about 124 vessels working the brown shrimp season as compared to about 300 in 2005.

The department participated in several Expos this year. He reported on a Conservation Expo being held in Oak Mountain State Park. It is very popular and the ADCNR/MRD takes touch



tanks with live animals for the children and display tables with specimens they have taken from commercial fishermen.

In the spring of 2005, the ADCNR/MRD agreed to allow one small area of oyster reefs in the Porterville Bay area to be harvested with the use of oyster dredges. There has been a group of people pushing for the use of dredges for many years. This was tried on an experimental basis where there has been very close monitoring by enforcement and biological personnel. Special tags were used to track exactly what is harvested from that area. It was shut down the end of January and monitored monthly to record the recovery. It was reopened the 1<sup>st</sup> of October with the prediction that it would probably only produce for about 5 weeks. It looks like the prediction will hold true. The ADCNR anticipates a descending spiral on recovery. They will continue to monitor the area.

**S. Heath** reported that the department is spending a great deal of their time and effort on the administration and use of the NOAA Fisheries disaster funding. Work has already begun. One of their main desires is to get as much of the money in to the hands of the fishermen by using them in the programs, both in oyster planting projects and in collecting additional data. A main issue that they are looking at is how to pay fishermen at this time.

Mississippi – **C. Perret** reported on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR).

His comments were centered on the disaster funding and the programs they plan to implement in Mississippi. The MDMR received approximately \$37 million that they plan on using in three programs. Oyster - \$15 million, Shrimp and Crab - \$13 million, and finfish and finfish related (artificial reef, etc.) – almost \$10 million.

Shellfish programs have already started. They are getting the most attention because Mississippi reefs which were primarily located in the Western part of the State were severely impacted with 90% damage. They have completed one planting so far at a cost of \$500,000. They are currently signing up individuals in all of the fisheries to participate in the various programs. This is an effort to get money into the pockets of the industry participant as quickly as possible so that they can assist in providing data to aid in the recovery of these fisheries.

He reported that the fish are in good shape with the exception of oyster. The fishermen and the infrastructure are the most severely impacted.

To date, the department has held 7 public hearings across the Mississippi Coast. They have received input from approximately 350 persons. They are currently signing up applicants. The basic requirements to participate in any of these programs are: you must be a Mississippi resident, with the appropriate license in one of the two years preceding the storm and a current license holders. This does not include oyster fishermen because the department does not have a commercial oyster season going on. It is uncertain at this time if they will have a season this year.

As of this week, the MDMR has signed up about 100 shrimp fishermen, 92 oyster fishermen, 46 charter boat operators, 22 commercial crabbers, 10 commercial finfish hook and line, and 2 saltwater commercial netters. The charter boat segment has gotten started. The oyster relay will begin by mid-November as well as the shrimp, crab and finfish program. Basically the fishermen will be paid so much per day to provide certain information to us on forms supplied by the MDMR.

The Marine Patrol is working very closely with these various programs. Rules and regulations have been established and if a participant violates any of them they will be terminated.

He briefly discussed the method the MDMR will use to pay the fishermen/independent contractor. They have set-up a payment card (debit card) with Hancock Bank.

Louisiana – **J. Roussel** reported on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Louisiana's invasive species plan has been approved by the National Task Force. Louisiana is the first Gulf State to have an approved plan.

He reported that of the 4 coastal facilities where fisheries personnel were located, they have been able to partly reoccupy only one of them, the Marine Lab on Grand Terre. Personnel from the St. Tammany facility are now located in one of the freshwater fish hatchery in Lacombe. The New Orleans office personnel and personnel from the Plaquemine Parish facility are still working out of the Baton Rouge office. Despite these disruptions the LDWF have fully re-established all field sampling programs. Indications are that they will not reoccupy the former New Orleans office. The plans now are to relocate to Jackson Barracks, which is a National Guard facility down river from the French Quarter. That area experienced extensive flooding and still does not have power so he is not sure when they will move into that facility.

All resources appear to be healthy, with the exception of oysters. The availability of marketable oysters is very low. The primary oyster grounds are located in the Eastern part of the State and was severely impacted. Even oysters that are available are poor. Hopefully cooler weather and freshwater from the rain will improve this situation. Seed oysters availability is up, so this is an indication that at least there is some recovery to anticipate. The industry is still in bad shape due to loss of infrastructure. Ice making capabilities have been reestablished in Bernard and Cameron Parish through a donation for Shell.

Vessel salvage is still a major issue in Louisiana. It has been a tremendous challenge. The USCG has documented over 300 non-missioned vessels stranded. These are only the vessels that they can identify why salvaging missioned vessels. The magnitude of this problem is not yet known. Many of the salvaged vessels have not been returned to the owners because they are required to reimburse the USCG for all cost of retrieval. The longer the vessels sit in storage it becomes less likely that they can be salvaged and restored.

The LDWF has been surveying all commercial facility throughout the State as well as recreational facility to determine their level of operations. To date the commercial facilities are 75% are up and operating at some level. The recreational facilities are at 65%.

In regards to artificial reefs, he reported that the department has initiated the process of permitting 7 new special artificial reef sites. These are sites outside of their standard program, which are going to receive 21 hurricane damaged oil and gas structures.

He reported that there were few fisheries related legislative actions since the last meeting. One legislative action gave additional authority to the LDWF Commission in terms of management flexibility in respect to oysters. Another action authorized the process for purchasing oyster leases which are in the physical footprint of Coastal Restoration Projects.

Louisiana has a Coastal Restoration Authority, a State Board that overlooks the State's efforts. There jurisdiction has now been broaden to include hurricane protection objectives.

He reported that LDWF's Secretary Dwight Landreau has resigned to take another position. The interim Secretary is the current Under Secretary, Ms. Janice Lansing.

Texas – **M. Ray** reported on behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

#### **Life History Research**

Sand seatrout samples were collected and processed for a life history study; billfish samples were collected for a project funded by the GSMFC, and temperature tolerance testing was conducted on captive-reared cobia. Spotted seatrout otoliths were collected as part of a sex ratios study and an age analysis study.

#### **Genetics Research**

Genetic work continues on sheepshead and spotted seatrout. Genetic variation studies are underway for southern flounder and alligator gar. Red drum otoliths and finclips are being collected for a genetics project being conducted at Texas A&M University.

#### **Artificial Reef Project**

Reefing of the Texas Clipper ship continues. All contract negotiations are completed and an official 'Notice to Proceed' has been given to Resolve Marine Services to begin moving the ship from Beaumont to Brownsville. It will take about 4-6 months to clean and modify the vessel, and the projected reef date is March 2007.

TPWD Commission approved the publication of the Public Reef Building Program in the Texas Register. This program will create a nearshore reefing strategy involving the public reefing materials at nearshore reef sites that are permitted by TPWD. Public groups or individuals will submit an application to TPWD and reefing materials would be inspected and certified by TPWD Artificial Reef staff. Once approved, the materials would be reefed by the public at their own costs. TPWD will maintain the sites and any buoy requirements, and the liability associated with the sites.

Three petroleum platforms have been reefed off Texas since our March meeting, and there are 3 other platforms that may be reefed in the next few months.

### **Inshore Shrimp License Management Program**

#### **Buyback Round # 18**

- Purchased a total of 87 shrimp licenses (45 bay and 42 bait)
- Total purchase price was \$700,198
- Avg. purchase price was \$8,048

#### **Overall Shrimp Buyback Totals since 1996:**

- 1,537 licenses purchased
- 48% reduction
- Total cost of \$9.8 million

### **Commercial Finfish License Management Program**

#### **Round # 9**

Application period closed March 31, 2006

- 12 licenses purchased
- Total cost \$77,340
- Average of \$6,445

#### **Overall Totals of Finfish License Buyback:**

- 155 licenses purchased for a total cost of \$761,804
- Avg. price paid = \$4,915
- 155/549 original licenses = 28% reduction

### **Enhancement Program**

#### **Production Update**

Red drum Total = 19,624,845

Spotted Seatrout Total = 457,680

### **Oysters**

Texas received a \$3.175 M federal hurricane recovery grant, through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, to help restore oyster beds and shrimping grounds damaged by Hurricane Rita last year. Coastal Fisheries will use these funds to produce detailed side-scan mosaics and interpretive maps of known oyster reefs and oyster habitats throughout Sabine Lake and Galveston Bay systems at the cost of \$1.8M. This mapping should allow Coastal Fisheries to further monitor future loss or changes of this habitat and assist in possible mitigation for future oyster habitat damage. In addition, about \$1M will be spent on habitat restoration efforts, including purchasing suitable cultch material and placing it on existing reef sites in Sabine Lake and Galveston Bay that have been identified through damage assessments, based on rehabilitation needs, or increased harvest pressure. We plan on partnering with the commercial oyster industry to re-establish or enhance oyster habitats. In addition, some of the grant will be used for water inflow modeling hydrodynamics to determine impacts of water flows to mitigate

future habitat damage. The grant will also be used for hurricane debris removal from navigation channels to allow vessel access to oyster beds and shrimping grounds.

For law enforcement purposes, TPWD is proposing a project to mark the Texas/Louisiana state line by installing ten 30-foot long pilings (1 every 0.5 miles) where the states line crosses over the large oyster reef area on the southern end of Sabine Lake. This oyster reef, about 3 miles<sup>2</sup>, represent a valuable natural habitat and plays critical roles in this ecosystem; including nursery habitat for estuarine fisheries and a wide spectrum of microhabitats for many different species. As such, this reef's ecological value is considered far more valuable than its economic value.

### **Shrimp**

The 2006 spring commercial bay shrimping season opened on 15 May 2006 with the lowest count of shrimp boats on record. Likewise, Coastal Fisheries fly-over count of bay shrimp boats working on 15 August totaled 213, a 27 percent decline from 293 boats counted in 2004 (no count was made last year).

### **TPWD Regulation Changes**

TPWD Commission adopted 5 regulation changes that went into effect on 1 September 2006: 1) Prohibiting the take of large tooth sawfish. 2) Allow one black drum over the maximum size limit of 52 inches per person per day; with maximum size set by the current state record. 3) Reduced the possession limit of flounder to the daily bag limit of 10-fish per trip. 4) Tripletail was named as a game fish and set a minimum size limit of 17 inches and a daily bag limit of 3 fish. 5) Removed the requirement of a tarpon tag to land a tarpon and implemented a bag limit of one tarpon with a minimum size limit that corresponds to the state record, currently 80 inches. Application materials were submitted on 5 October 2006 to set a new state record – a pending state record tarpon was caught off the Galveston Fishing Pier and weighed 210.7 pounds.

### **Coastal Fisheries Regulatory Issues for 2007:**

Spotted seatrout population trends in the Lower Laguna Madre continue to show a reduction in overall spawning stock biomass and a reduction in overall abundance. Currently, Coastal Fisheries is conducting coastwide scoping meetings to explore options aimed at reversing these trends. A viable option includes a regional management concept where a reduction in bag limit would be considered for the Lower Laguna Madre only.

Coastal Fisheries is evaluating the possibility of changing the sheepshead size limit from 12 inches to 15 inches to better protect breeding sheepshead.

Coastal Fisheries is considering precluding the take or retention of diamondback terrapin. Sales of these turtles are prohibited over much of its range, but a growing market suggests Texas should take similar protective measures.

Coastal Fisheries has proposed new off-shore aquaculture regulations and public comments are currently being received. The proposed regulations establish a regulatory framework and process for obtaining permits to operate an aquaculture facility in Texas waters.

## **LEGISLATURE – 80<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR SESSION (In 2007)**

TPWD is working with federal fisheries agencies to implement aspects of the currently proposed federal reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevenson Fisheries Management Act that would require a state saltwater fishing license and saltwater stamp for any recreational angler to land fish in Texas which were caught in federal waters. This may result in some additional license sales for Texas and will provide better data to manage recreational fisheries without unnecessary duplication of efforts.

TPWD will seek size and bag limit exemption authority for its Executive Director. This authority will exempt members of the public from select regulations while they are volunteering or involved in Department sponsored research, procurement, or propagation activities.

### **Texas Trip Ticket Program**

Beginning September 1, 2006, Trip Tickets replaced Monthly Aquatic Reports as the official reporting method for Texas commercial landings. All dealers have been contacted and are participating in trip ticket reporting. We currently have over 300 dealers and fishermen signed up, and approximately 43% of them are using electronic reporting. Due to staff diligence, almost every dealer was individually contacted and trained by TPWD personnel.

### **Sea Turtles**

The 2006 sea turtle nesting season on the Texas coast broke all records for the total number of nests left by Kemp's Ridley sea turtles. A total of 102 nests were verified in Texas this summer, compared to 50 nests found last year during 1 April to 1 August.

### **Red Tide**

During the last weekend in September, fish kills caused by red tide were found on San Jose and Matagorda Island beaches and in the Cedar Bayou fish pass that separates the 2 islands. Currently the most impacted areas are further south in Corpus Christi Bay, Upper Laguna Madre, and along the beach front on Padre Island.

### **New On-line Tool for Anglers**

Coastal Fisheries, in collaboration with TPWD's GIS Lab, developed an on-line application that allows the public access to long-term trend catch along the Texas coast. The application allows users to query by a fish species and years to see what bays have high, medium, and low catch rates. Alternatively, users can query for a particular bay and year to see what fish species they are likely to catch. Catch rates are classified into high, medium or low based on gill net samples conducted seasonally since 1981. In addition to displaying catch rate data, the application also allows users to zoom in to an area and see boat ramps and roads. Anglers can also click links to several fish species to get pictures and/or descriptions of fish habitat and distribution. The application was developed using State Wildlife Grants federal funds.

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/maps/gis/ris/catch\\_rate.phtml](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/maps/gis/ris/catch_rate.phtml)

### **Executive Committee Report**

V. Vail reported on behalf of the Executive Committee. The Committee recommended that the FY2005 Audit report that had previously been approved by mail ballot, be ratified by the

Commission at this meeting. *J. Gill moved to approve the audit. C. Perret seconded. The FY2005 audit was approved.*

**V. Vail** presented the FY2006 proposed budget in the amount of \$42,498,484. *J. Gill moved to approve the proposed budget. J. Roussel seconded. The budget was approved.* The Committee recommended that staff compensation be approved with a 4% increase across the board or at least \$1,000. J. Rester and D. Bellais would also receive an additional \$500. G. Jones and Madeleine Travis would also receive a one-time \$500 bonus. *J. Gill moved to approve the recommendations. C. Perret seconded. The staff compensation was approved as recommended.*

### **Future Meetings**

**G. Herring** reported that she had entered into a contract on behalf of the Commission to hold the March 12 – 16, 2007 meeting at the Beau Rivage Hotel & Casino, Biloxi, Mississippi. With the consent of the Alabama Commissioners, she plans on contracting with the Marriott Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Alabama for the October 15 – 19, 2007 meeting. Per discussion with Florida Commissioners, she will pursue holding the Florida March 2008 meeting in the Clearwater/St. Petersburg area.

### **Publications List**

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

### **Election of Officers**

*S. Heath nominated Vernon Minton for Chairman. Without opposition, Minton was named Chairman for FY2006-2007 by acclamation.*


*J. Roussel nominated R. Rayburn for 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman. Without opposition, Rayburn was named 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman by acclamation.*

*C. Perret nominated J. Gill 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman. Without opposition, J. Gill was named 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman by acclamation.*

**S. Heath** presented a token of appreciation to outgoing **Chairman Virginia Vail**.

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 am.*

APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Oyster Technical Task Force  
MINUTES  
November 30, 2006 and December 1, 2006  
Naples, FL**

Steve VanderKooy, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following attended:

**Members Present**

Mark Van Hoose, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL  
Bradley Randall, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Tom Herrington, ISSC/FDA Representative-Retired, Ocean Springs, MS  
Priscilla Weeks, Houston Advanced Research Center, Woodlands, TX  
John Supan, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA

**Others**

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Teri Freitas, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**S. VanderKooy** opened the meeting and began the introductions.

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed. *M. Van Hoose moved to accept the agenda as written. B. Randall seconded and the agenda was approved.*

**Approval of Minutes (August 15, 2006)**

The minutes from the meeting in New Orleans were reviewed. Hearing no changes, *B. Randall moved to approve as written. T. Herrington seconded and the minutes were accepted.*

**Overview of Progress**

A revised list of the Oyster TTF members will be sent out to all members with current contact and email information.

The Table of Contents dated (8-15-06) was reviewed for assignments and **VanderKooy** reminded all TTF members that this is only to be used as a guide and it is not set in stone. Authors should feel free to modify the organization of their section, as needed. Also keep in mind some sections were blended and they don't quite fit right now, that is why some sections are numbered the same. Once the sections are written there will be a reorganization of the Table of Contents.



Please send **VanderKooy** copies (paper or electronic) of all references cited. The citations can be faxed, mailed or emailed to him so that they can put in a PDF file for distribution to the whole group. There are some citation problems in the 1991 Oyster FMP, so keep that in mind and do not assume that everything is absolutely 100% correct.

**VanderKooy** briefly went over who the audience for this FMP would be, noting that a wide range and variety of people will use the Oyster FMP, but it would primarily be management agencies in the region, the scientific community, and academia as a teaching tool. FMP's are not a cover-to-cover read and a redundancy of information between sections is to be expected.

Photos, graphics and illustrations are welcome. But keep in mind we are not doing color.

This FMP is for management in the Gulf of Mexico only. It is okay to reference other regions like the Atlantic, especially when there is a great divergence in the biology, regional fisheries and in the case of the Chesapeake, the status of stock.

There will be regular meetings to review progress and when we getting further in the drafting process, you will have deadlines to submit your drafts to **VanderKooy**. In advance of each meeting **VanderKooy** will mail everyone all the working drafts for review prior to the next meeting. These drafts will not be sent as word files to prevent people from making electronic changes and to ensure that the correct revision is being worked on. Track changes may be used ultimately, but incomplete drafts will be locked.

### Review of Sections

#### **Section 1 – Summary**

**VanderKooy** stated that this section will not be written until the very end of the process and it will be essentially an abstract of the document.

#### **Section 2 – Introduction**

The Introduction is pretty straight forward and will be completed by Staff.

#### **Section 3 – Description of Stocks Comprising the Management Unit (MU) and Description of the Habitat**

**L. Robinson** discussed his outline and reported that he has about 1/3 completed and should have his 1<sup>st</sup> draft to **VanderKooy** by the first of the year for dissemination and comment. He is going to rely heavily on the ESA document (which currently in review) for the genetics information.

#### **Section 4 – Habitat**

**O'Brien** presented her outline and 1<sup>st</sup> draft and asked for comments on the level of detail in her draft. The following suggestions were made:

- (1) In the beginning paragraph explain how/why oysters successfully form reefs in these areas i.e. because of the wide range in temperature, salinity dissolved oxygen and water flow requirements to bring it back in and to separate it from the physiological statement.
- (2) Dissolved Oxygen Requirements section requires more detail.
- (3) Describe conditions that decide oyster habitat.

The Water Quality section is still being worked on. **O'Brien** found it easier to stick to a few basic references (basically three documents) due to contradictions in the references. She also broke down the sections more for a better flow of information. There was some discussion regarding terminology and defining certain terms such as the use of toe-head reef vs. fringe reef. The species profile on *Crassostrea virginica* has a lot of information on habitat and may be a good resource.

### **Section 5 – Threats to Survival**

**Lezina** reported that this section will primarily be a literature update and the structure will remain pretty much the same, but plans on including some references to the Atlantic region. The competition section and the disease section will be expanded considerably from the previous FMP especially on MSX and Dermo.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the recent dissertation which had questionable results for MSX in the Gulf. Samples were from archived collections done up to 10 years ago and may have contamination issues. In addition, some sample sources have yet to be identified, leaving more questions. **Supan** will email Sandra Shumway (and copy **VanderKooy**) at the Journal of Shellfish Research to check on status of the dissertation and to see if it has been submitted for publication or if nothing happened with it. Once the status is known, **VanderKooy** is willing to send a formal letter to the Journal on behalf of the TTF. It was suggested that the parasites section be pretty comprehensive.

**VanderKooy** to send **Lezina** the boilerplate information in Section 5 to let him determine what is useful as it relates to oysters. **Lezina** to approve as necessary, then it will be reviewed as a group. Some of the boilerplate information may not apply to oysters as it did with other species. It was mentioned that all types of weather including El Niño and La Niña, hurricanes, drought, rainy season and red tide have an effect on oyster survival and should be addressed in this section.

### **Section 6 – Fishery Management Jurisdiction, Laws and Policies Affecting the Stocks Throughout Their Range of Fishing For Such Stocks**

It was suggested that the history of the ISSC and the model ordinance need to be added in this section to show how we have gotten to the point that we are with oysters and **T. Herrington** will draft these two sections. The rest of the boilerplate section will be looked at to determine if they apply to oysters.

**VanderKooy** reported that the Law section would be one of the last sections to be completed by the **LEC and B. Robinson**. It will be up to the state representative to review for accuracy and completeness of their states laws and policies.

### **Section 7 – Description of Fishery Activities Affecting Stocks**

**Van Hoose** presented his outline and 1<sup>st</sup> draft, in which he did a lot of word-smithing and made editorial notes about the historical data. There was a lengthy discussion on how many years landings by state, historical effort and catch data should be shown; 15-20-25 years? Or should we pick where the last FMP left off. It was left up to Van Hoose to determine which time series gave the most information if there have been major changes in the fishery. It was suggested that reference to the “Louisiana oyster dredging industry” be changed to “Louisiana oyster dredging effort”. Louisiana and Mississippi numbers will need some special updates post Katrina.

Description of Leases section should be expanded here to include history, description and development of leases. It was suggested that the description of this section should be re-titled Description of Harvesting Activities.

**L. Robinson, Berrigan and Randall** – to provide data to **Van Hoose** on their individual state, all the data in the old FMP needs to be updated. Keep in mind that the data, especially on landings, is subject to interpretation so the states may need to supply an explanation for high and low landings i.e. closures, hurricanes, effort data that will explain the fluctuations. Mississippi reported they lost a lot of data in the hurricane.

### **Section 8 – Public Health Concerns Introduction and History**

In the previous FMP a conscious decision was made not to make Public Health a part of the big picture, but now it needs to be done very comprehensively because it affects every aspect of the oyster industry.

**Herrington** then presented an outline of section, an abstract of the risk management plan, shellstock temperature control with the time-temperature matrix. He will include in his draft, public education and the importance of no overboard discharge and the need for designation of “No Discharge Zones”. Primary harvesting areas like Apalachicola Bay, FL, Cedar Point Area in Mobile, AL, area two in MS, Black Bay, LA or Galveston Bay, TX should be designated no discharge zones. Nowhere is there a recommendation that has gone to management and this report should help this along. **Herrington** also discussed using M & M reports from CDC paraphrased or as an addendum/reference with a report of just one person becoming sick overboard from a harvest boat causing 400+ illnesses with hospitalization.

### **Section 9 – Description of Oyster Processing, Marketing/Distribution and Trade Organizations**

**W. Keithly** is also drafting this section and upon completion of the 1<sup>st</sup> draft, then a determination should be made whether this section belongs with the one above or should remain a stand-alone section.

## Section 10 – Description of Economic Characteristics

The group discussed moving the Public Health section before the Economics section since Public Health drives the Economics. It was also suggested that the Public Health section be re-named so that more readers would look at the section, due to its importance to the oyster industry. **VanderKooy** suggested that we wait until **W. Keithly** drafts the Economic section and then decide if the section needs to be moved.

**Herrington** said that the Gulf States with the exception of Mississippi is under mandatory *Vibrio vulnificus* management plan (an outbreak of two or more cases after 1995). That plan calls for certain things to happen as far as the reduction of illness associated with the consumption of oysters harvested from the Gulf of Mexico. If that plan is not met by the end of 2009 then the oyster industry is obligated to post-process. None of the other states in the United States are affected except the Gulf States. Post processing is an economic issue, a very strong economic issue because it is going to cost a lot of money to post-process or can cost a lot of money using hydrostatic pressure for example, each unit costs about \$1 million dollars. There is potential great impact after 2009 and there is also a good potential that the plan may change between now and 2009 and may be extended even further due to Katrina. So it is a very important component of this plan, but there was uncertainty on how to couch it.

After much discussion about the ramifications of Public Health, how it drives so much of the industry, affects every facet of the industry and is the trump card, it was suggested that maybe it should be re-titled something like “Public Health Considerations and Management” and move it further up in the FMP, possibly before the Economic section for example. Another suggestion was that the section not be moved until all the sections are written. It was also suggested that an introduction to Public Health be put in the very front, with a sentence that says something like “because oysters are a filter feeder there is a responsibility by management to make sure that the product is also harvested from clean water.” One sentence like this will set the tone and let the readers know that this is an important section to read, without vilifying the oyster.

**VanderKooy** recapped the discussion by stating that we will wait until **W. Keithly** drafts something, but that we will temporarily move Public Health ahead of Economics and Oyster Processing in the Table of Contents because it drives everything else.

## Section 11 – Social and Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen and Their Communities

**Weeks** presented her outline. In the original FMP a lot of the data was taken from academic literature and was general to all fisheries, not the Gulf States. The structure will remain pretty much the same, plus capturing any changes, getting more specific to the Gulf, and then challenges like *vibrio*, endangered species, public perception, user conflicts, hazards (having a product that may be perceived as polluted). The new NMFS social and cultural study has not been released (due out in January) that looks at the impact of the Hurricanes and should be a good resource. **Weeks** reported that she is having difficulty getting factual reports; she is getting a lot of stories, but is looking for factual reports. **VanderKooy** indicated that if there is no data

available, anecdotal information can be used, but it will still need to be qualified. **Weeks** will be sending the TTF an email data request titled "Consumer Survey" to be completed and returned to her along with any social and cultural information you may have to offer.

**L. Robinson** reported that in Texas the Pacific oyster has been prohibited in the shell for 15 years, but you can bring them in as a shucked product. Despite that, law enforcement was making cases for prohibited species for oysters and then law enforcement noticed that other exotic species of shellfish were being brought into Texas and they were being called whatever, so that led to a change in regulations in Texas that went from a prohibited (black) list for oysters to a white list which states now that the only legal oyster (in shell stock) that can be brought into Texas is the Eastern oyster or the Crested oyster; so by omission, everything else is illegal. When this happened, the State of Washington got a little concerned that Texas was prohibiting interstate commerce because of the regulation. That was not the reason the regulation got passed, it was done for biological reasons not for exclusionary shipping process. There is discussion that Texas was going to be censured by the ISSC over this. The whole reason for the NSSP national shellfish sanitation program was for free commerce between the states on oysters, clams and mussels, but they all agreed on these principals. This is an important issue and should be addressed in the marketing/distribution section.

### **Problems and Perceived Problems/Open Access and Closed Access Problems**

It appears that a lot of these items will be addressed under Management Considerations and Recommendations and other sections. It was suggested that "perceived problem" reference be removed from the title, because a problem is a problem. After discussion it was decided that this section should sit until the other sections are completed, then a decision will be made on what to do with this section, if anything.

### **Section 12 – Management Considerations**

After review and discussion of **Berrigan's** outline and 1<sup>st</sup> draft of sections 11 and 12 it was recognized that this is a very important section and each member of the TTF will have something to contribute. This section will be used when going to your legislature and writing grants, etc.

**Weeks** offered to provide **Berrigan** Cooperative Management updates.

### **Section 13 – Specific Management Recommendations**

The TTF asked that **VanderKooy** request that the Stock Assessment Team review the quality and quantity of data related to oysters to see whether a Gulf-wide or state-by-state stock assessment for this species is appropriate.

### **Section 14 – Research and Data Needs**

This section is a laundry list. **VanderKooy** reminded the TTF to keep it in mind as they progressed and found information lacking or in need of research.

## **Section 15 – Review and Monitoring of Plan**

This section pretty much boilerplate stuff.

## **Section 16 – References**

Again **VanderKooy** reminded everyone to be diligent with their references and be sure to mail, email or fax him a copy of all references cited. Also do not spend excessive time, money or energy on searching for literature through your libraries. GSMFC has a contact at GCRL (Cathy Schloss) who can get us most anything we need for free once other options have been exhausted or money spent to inter-library loan.

## **Section 17 – Appendix**

### **17.1 Glossary**

Everyone is encouraged to review the existing glossary and make additions and deletions where necessary and appropriate.

### **17.2 Fishery Disaster Criteria**

**Berrigan** is looking for any input from TTF members. **Leslie Craig** should be able to supply some data on this section.

### **17.3 Aquaculture/Mariculture**

**Supan** reviewed his outline and his plans to use the fact sheet he wrote on extensive culture in the Gulf region. The fact sheet includes boat descriptions, gear type, dredging design, leasing, site selection of leasing, how oysters are farmed and why they are farmed that way. **Supan** also reviewed his paper on Estuaries that describes sidescan sonar. **Supan** will write the sections on the sidescan sonar, research data needs and off bottom culture. **VanderKooy** will email the group both of the documents presented.

### **17.4 Cultch Materials**

**Randall** summarized his outline and discussed doing a history of what has been used for cultch material in the past by each state, general guidelines, how much material cultch material is put out each year, ongoing cultch planning programs, and including a list of discouraged items. It was suggested that the FDA and EPA should have a list of approved cultch materials. Cultch materials are driven by price and availability. As an example, Mississippi prefers clam shells, oyster shells and limestone, so it was suggested that it be explained the reasons why Mississippi prefers these materials and what each state currently uses and why.

## **17.5 Public Education**

**Herrington** proposed using the upcoming ISSC report summary as an outline to complete this section with the help of **Chris Nelson**. Some input from each state may be needed.

### **Assignments/Data Requests**

**VanderKooy** anticipates that the TTF should have a complete draft by year's end 2007. We will continue to have to meetings to provide accountability to make sure everyone is keeping the FMP in mind and to keep the momentum going.

### **Next Meeting**

**VanderKooy** suggested that the next TTF meeting be held at the beginning or end of March, 2007 in Rockport, TX (Inn at Fulton Harbor). With no objections, **VanderKooy** will begin to look at dates for availability and get the information out to the TTF along with travel authorizations.

### **Other Business**

Prior to adjourning, **VanderKooy** reviewed GSMFC travel guidelines and policies with the group.

**VanderKooy** will send out a revised Table of Contents.

### **Adjourn**

With no further business, **Randall** *moved to adjourn*. **L. Robinson** *seconded and the motion passed unanimously*.

*The meeting was adjourned on Friday, December 1, 2006 at 9:30 a.m.*

*Approved as part  
of March 09 Seamap  
minutes*

## Attachment I

### SEAMAP Plankton Work Group Meeting Summary Wednesday, December 6, 2006

#### Attendance

Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz  
Ken Edds  
Leslie Hartman  
Mark Leiby  
Kim Williams  
Sarah LeCroy  
Frank Hernandez  
Monty Graham  
Mark McDuff  
Jeff Rester

J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to develop recommendations for new or enhanced SEAMAP plankton activities. Other objectives for the meeting were to review SEAMAP plankton sampling efforts, review recent use of SEAMAP plankton data, discuss changes in sample/data collection on NMFS vessels, discuss changes to the SEAMAP plankton database, review recent plankton research at the Dauphin Island Sea Laboratory, discuss the Polish Sorting Center, receive updates on the SEAMAP Invertebrate and Ichthyoplankton Archiving Centers, and discuss the 2007 SEAMAP winter plankton survey. J. Lyczkowski-Shultz gave a brief overview of current SEAMAP plankton sampling including both temporal and spatial coverage. The SEAMAP plankton database contains approximately 7,000 bongo samples and 8,000 neuston samples. Most of these samples (64%) are from the Spring and Fall Plankton Surveys. J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that early life history data have become an increasingly important source of fishery-independent data on life history characteristics, stock abundance and recruitment. The SEAMAP plankton data are used in tuning age structured stock assessment models. Examples of stock assessments for which SEAMAP larval indices are used or being considered for use include Atlantic bluefin tuna, king mackerel, red snapper, vermilion snapper, and gray triggerfish.

Next, J. Lyczkowski-Shultz discussed how SEAMAP ichthyoplankton data were being used to determine the potential impact of liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities on marine fisheries. She stated that huge uncertainties are introduced into the impact assessments since SEAMAP does not provide year round or seasonal plankton sampling. Also, SEAMAP bongo tows lead to uncertainty to the vertical distribution of plankton in the water location since they integrate the water column. Additional sampling gear and surveys should help address some of these issues.



J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that NMFS had received a grant from the NOAA Northern Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Institute to work on the SEAMAP plankton database. The goal of the project would be to improve our ability to disseminate the best and most accurate ichthyoplankton data available in the Gulf of Mexico. The objectives of the project would be to provide consistent, accurate and up-to-date identifications of fish larvae from SEAMAP collections and establish a single, coherent, and taxonomically updatable SEAMAP ichthyoplankton database containing all associated collection, station and environmental data and observations. J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that the current plankton database and data entry system was antiquated and needed updating. Under the new design, all data would be stored in an Oracle database. All programs would be run against a master database. An Oracle portal to allow access to data at the correct level would be developed and new interfaces for updates, queries and reports would be developed. M. McDuff stated that NMFS had hired an Oracle programmer in August to help with the project. Project funding would be for two years. M. Graham stated that the new plankton database needed documented standards so that other plankton databases would be compatible. He feared that if changes were made the Dauphin Island Sea Lab plankton database might not be compatible with the SEAMAP database in the future.

F. Hernandez and M. Graham gave a presentation on the plankton sampling program that the Dauphin Island Sea Lab was conducting for Conoco-Phillips' Compass Port LNG facility located south of Dauphin Island. F. Hernandez stated that the purpose of the sampling was to characterize benthic habitat structure, develop a biological baseline database of plankton abundance and distribution, quantify egg/larval vertical distributions and patchiness of commercially important fishery species, and to use this baseline of information to develop an operational biological monitoring program. The sampling program included continuous water sampling, monthly plankton sampling to quantify plankton, along with quarterly benthic grabs and otter trawls to measure benthic macro fauna, fish and crustaceans. F. Hernandez stated that all gear was compatible with SEAMAP sampling gear and where different gears were used, comparisons were done. In order to determine plankton stratification, a mininess sampler was used that allowed nets to be opened and closed at discrete depths. Since Conoco-Phillips was currently examining alternatives for their LNG facility, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Marine Resources Division had funded a project to continue plankton sampling off Alabama. The Fisheries Oceanography of Coastal Alabama (FOCAL) project will sample plankton on an inshore to offshore transect as well as east and west of Dauphin Island and in Mobile Bay. The sampling protocol will include depth discrete sampling in ten sampling events per year. F. Hernandez stated that they hope to perform ichthyoplankton swimming speed studies and sheering studies to determine survival rates. The study is also performing extrusion rate comparisons between 202 and 333 micron mesh nets.

J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that NMFS had signed another one year contract with the Polish Sorting and Identification Center. During the last contract, the Polish Sorting and Identification Center processed 6,058 samples for NMFS. Of these processed samples, 1,075 were from SEAMAP and 568 were from the Dauphin Island Sea Laboratory's plankton sampling. The current contract runs from May 2006 to April 2007 with approximately 840 ichthyoplankton and 400 zooplankton samples to be processed for SEAMAP. This will mark

the first time that zooplankton samples will be processed. J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that zooplankton would only be roughly sorted and that samples would be archived so researchers could perform further identifications and counts if desired.

M. Leiby stated that SAC was running smoothly. He stated that the only delay was getting the stat-card and the ichthyoplankton-card data from NMFS. He reported that SAC would be buying a new microscope soon.

S. LeCroy stated that SIPAC had 9,010 plankton samples archived prior to Hurricane Katrina. Since the storm, 1,263 samples have been recovered, washed, relabeled, and shelved. Five hundred twenty-eight samples have been recovered and washed, but not relabeled, with approximately 100 samples recovered, but not washed yet. The total number of plankton samples recovered was 1,891 or 21% of the samples. S. LeCroy stated that one full time technician was needed to continue with recovery operations. She reported that they still had not removed the roof of the storage building and additional samples could possibly be found when the roof was removed. F. Hernandez stated that the Polish Sorting Center might be able to provide the unsorted plankton samples that they were currently storing after sorting the ichthyoplankton out. The cost of recovering the samples from Poland would cost approximately \$5,000 to \$10,000. M. Leiby stated that in the future, the archiving centers should examine scanning samples before they were aliquoted. He stated that this was a technology that needed to be watched since it was developing rapidly and could save a tremendous amount of space in his laboratory.

M. McDuff next discussed documenting current and historical SEAMAP plankton sampling. He stated that he was currently trying to document all of the SEAMAP trawl data and wanted to begin the process for the plankton data. Due to data quality act rules, all data that NMFS releases needs to have metadata associated with it. M. Leiby stated that Florida has created metadata for all of their plankton surveys. He stated that he would send the metadata to M. McDuff.

J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that NMFS had proposed a winter plankton survey to begin on February 14 and end on March 19, 2007. The objectives of the survey would be to assess the occurrence, abundance and geographical distribution of the early life stages of winter spawning fishes from mid continental shelf to deep Gulf waters; measure the vertical distribution of fish larvae by sampling at discrete depths in the water column using a 1 meter Multiple Opening and Closing Net Environmental Sensing System (MOCNESS); describe the pelagic habitat of fish larvae through measurements of various physical and biological parameters; detect and measure frontal features along the survey cruise track using data from the ship's fluoro-thermosalinograph flow-through system; sample the size fraction of fishes that are underrepresented in bongo and neuston samples using a juvenile (Methot) fish trawl; map the distribution of fish eggs along the cruise track using a continuous underway fish egg sampler (CUFES) to collect plankton samples at set intervals; and measure extrusion of the smallest size fraction of fish larvae through the standard SEAMAP bongo net by collecting samples at selected locations with a bongo frame fitted with a 335 micron net on one side and a 202 micron mesh net on the other side. J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that they were trying to borrow a MOCNESS sampler for the survey. M. Leiby suggested trying to use a manta

net instead of a neuston net so the plankton data could be standardized on something other than tow time. J. Rester asked about expansion of the survey into inshore waters. J. Lyczkowski-Shultz stated that she would like to expand the survey into shallower waters. She stated that if the inshore shark survey was funded, they might be able to conduct plankton sampling in conjunction with it. M. Graham asked if SEAMAP had any protocols for measuring jellyfish in plankton samples. J. Lyczkowski-Shultz responded that they currently did not. He stated that even crude measurements would be helpful.