


**ARENARIUS TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
September 25, 2007
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

The first meeting of the Arenarius Technical Task Force (TTF) was called to order on Tuesday, September 25, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. at the Maison DuPuy Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana. Attendance was as follows:

Members Attending

Chuck Adams, UF, Gainesville, FL
Mark Van Hoose, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Walter "Tiny" Chataginer, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Denise Kinsey, LDWF, Borg, LA
Erick Porche, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jessica McCawley, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Brenda Bowling, TPWD, Dickenson, TX

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

S. VanderKooy opened the meeting and asked each participant to introduce themselves. The task force is made up of a scientific representative from each Gulf State (**Van Hoose, Porche, Kinsey, McCawley, and Bowling**); a recreational fishery representative (TBD); a commercial fishery representative (TBD); an economist (**Adams**); a habitat representative (TBD); and a law enforcement representative (**Chataginer**).

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and one addition item (travel policy overview) was added under item 3.

Interjurisdictional Program Overview and FMP/Profile Process

VanderKooy presented an overview of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries (IJF) Program and Commission development process for FMPs. The IJF Program is authorized through the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-659, Title III). The purpose of the Act was to promote and encourage state activities in support of management of IJF resources identified in interstate FMPs. The Act also promotes and encourages management of IJF resources throughout their range.

Funding under the Act supports states' long-term monitoring and assessment programs and other research. The Act also provides funding for the three interstate marine commissions (Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific) to develop and revise management plans used by the states to enact appropriate management strategies to maintain harvestable stocks of commercial and recreational fish.

The Commission patterns its plans to those of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) to ensure compatibility in format and approach between regional and federal FMPs. Since the passage of the IJF Act in 1986, the Commission has produced eleven FMPs, seven revisions, several species Profiles and numerous other documents. Critical components of FMPs are determined by ten national standards:

1. Conservation and management measures shall prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery for the U.S. fishing industry;
2. Conservation and management measures shall be based on the best scientific information available;
3. To the extent practicable, an individual stock shall be managed as a unit throughout its range, and interrelated stocks of fish shall be managed as a unit or in close coordination;
4. Conservation and management measures shall not discriminate between residents of different states. If it becomes necessary to allocate or assign fishing privileges among various U.S. fishermen, such allocations shall be:
 1. fair and equitable to all such fishermen;
 2. reasonably calculated to promote conservation; and
 3. carried out in such a manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges.
5. Conservation and management measures shall, where practicable, consider efficiency in the utilization of the resources; except that no such measure shall have economic allocation as its sole purpose.
6. Conservation and management measures shall take into account and allow for variations among, and contingencies in, fisheries, fisheries resources, and catches.
7. Conservation and management measures shall, where practicable, minimize costs and avoid unnecessary duplication.
8. Conservation and management measures shall, where consistent with the conservation requirements of this Act (including the prevention of overfishing and rebuilding of overfished stocks), take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities in order to:
 1. provide for the sustained participation of such communities, and
 2. to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities.
9. Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable,
 1. minimize bycatch and
 2. to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such

bycatch.

10. Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, promote the safety of human life at sea.

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

1. The NMFS guidelines define EFH as “those waters and substrates necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity”.

2. NMFS requires the identification and designation of EFH for all federally-managed species, development of conservation and enhancement measures including those which address fishing gear impacts and required federal agency consultation regarding proposed adverse impacts to those habitats.

3. We use “essential habitat” to avoid confusion with the federal definition and the associated requirements.

Development Process

The development of Profile/FMPs begins with species prioritization. The State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) accomplishes this task and establishes a technical task force (TTF) to review all technical material, draft a document incorporating current biological, sociological, economic, and fishery information. The TTF shall also provide management scenarios based on this information.

The TTF is composed of a core group of scientists from each Gulf state and is appointed by the respective state directors that serve on the S-FFMC. Also, a TTF member from each of the following GSMFC committees or subcommittees (Law Enforcement, Habitat, Commercial Fisheries Advisory, and Recreational Fisheries Advisory) is appointed by the respective committee. In addition, the TTF may include other experts in economics, socio-anthropology, population dynamics, and other specialty areas when needed. The TTF is responsible for development of the Profile/FMP and receives input in the form of data and other information from the DMS and the SAT.

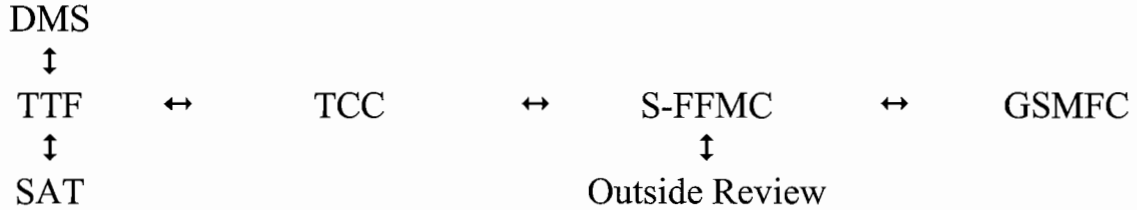
Once the profile is developed, the SFFMC determines whether the TTF should go on and implement a full FMP. A Profile and the FMP are the same, except that the FMP includes a regional stock assessment and management recommendations based on the biology, habitat and fishery participation.

Once the TTF completes the plan, it may be approved or modified by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) before being sent to the S-FFMC for review. The S-FFMC may also approve or modify the plan before releasing it for public review and comment. After public review and final approval by the S-FFMC, the plan is submitted to the GSMFC where it may be accepted or rejected. If rejected, the plan is returned to the S-FFMC for further review.

Once approved by the GSMFC, plans are submitted to the Gulf States for their consideration for adoption and implementation of management recommendations.

Review Process

The review process is outlined below:



DMS = Data Management Subcommittee
SAT = Stock Assessment Team
TTF = Technical Task Force
TCC = Technical Coordinating Committee

S-FFMC = State-Federal Fisheries Management Comm.
GSMFC = Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Outside Review = standing committees, trade associations, general public

GSMFC Travel Policy

VanderKooy provided the group with a brief overview of GSMFC travel policies. The authorization and reimbursement procedures were explained and the group was referred to the *GSMFC Travel Guidelines* for detailed information. Any questions regarding travel should be addressed to Gayle Jones, the Commission’s travel coordinator.

Technical Task Force Membership

VanderKooy reviewed the current TTF Membership asked members for suggestions to fill the following openings: Recreational, Commercial and Sociology. The Habitat vacancy will likely be filled by a GSMFC Habitat Committee person.

Table of Contents/Assignments

VanderKooy reminded TTF members that the table of contents is only a guide. Sections may be combined, modified, split, rearranged, or deleted. All reference material should be copied and mailed to GSMFC to be scanned to make available electronically in our database.

VanderKooy will send out the format of the Profile/FMP will follow the journal Transactions of the American Fisheries Society, “Guide for Authors” and a CD of the Sheepshead Profile and Seatrout FMP. **VanderKooy** will also set up an Arenarius Webpage for TTF Members. It is up to the TTF members how they want to proceed with drafting their sections.

A boilerplate table of contents was reviewed and changed as appropriate. The revised copy with assignments is appended to the minutes as **Attachment 1**.

Election of Chairman

The TTF tabled the election of chair until the next meeting, when the additional members are added.

Next Meeting

VanderKooy asked the group to please let him know in advance if they cannot attend a scheduled meeting. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for January/February in Florida (St. Petersburg or Naples). All assignments should be submitted to the Commission office by January so drafts can be assimilated and copied for review prior to the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.



**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 58th Annual Meeting
Wednesday, October 17, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

Chairman Vernon Minton called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. **L. Simpson** noted that a quorum was present and reviewed pertinent rules and regulations regarding voting procedures.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

Commissioners

Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Barnett Lawley*)
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)
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
Tommy Gollott, Mississippi Senate, Biloxi, MS
Joe Gill, Jr., Joe Gill Consulting, LLC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
William Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
William Walker MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Administrative Officer, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, 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
Ralph Hode, EDRP Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Wendy Garner, Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
David Rice, SFP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Buck Sutter, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Fred Cross, FFWC, Panama City, FL
Michael Jepson, GSAFD, Tampa, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented. **M. Ray moved to adopt the agenda. R. Rayburn seconded. The agenda was adopted.**

Approval of Minutes

R. Rayburn moved to approve the minutes with grammatical changes. C. Nelson seconded. The minutes were approved as corrected.

GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – **W. Chatagner** reported that the LEC met on Tuesday, October 16, 2007.

He briefly discussed several topics discussed by the LEC. He reported that full state access to real time Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) is technically available, but NMFS has not set a date for availability. In regards to Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) cases, there were 672 Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQ) calls, 489 IFQ inspections, 63 cases and 91% compliance. The LEC viewed a video on Operation Joint Action with FWC and USCG. They received a report on the IFQ pilot program using electronic Trip Declaration and Catch Reporting System, since the cell phone systems do not work. This cost the fishermen about 60 cents to send a report.

The USCG reported that the Guard is still being funded under a Continuing Resolution. NOAA weather radio is aging and will take millions of dollars to replace. NOAA is investigating its actual usage before committing to replacement.

Dave McKinney, NOAA Enforcement, has retired and will be replaced by Mark Kinsey, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Galveston, Texas. On behalf of the LEC, **W. Chatagner** asked the Commission to consider Dave McKinney as a future *Charles H. Lyles Recipient*.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report – **C. Perret** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, October 16, 2007. They received status reports from all of the Gulf 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. There was no action items presented.

C. Perret reported on the loss of several TCC and other subcommittee members during the past year. He, along with all the Commissioners, wished to memorialize them in some way. Members lost were Charlie Moss (Crab Subcommittee); Rick Kasprzak (Artificial Reef Subcommittee); and Randy Gros (Joint Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel).

C. Perret was elected Chairman.

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report – **L. Simpson** reported that the S-FFMC met earlier in the day. The S-FFMC received reports from the Menhaden Advisory

Committee (MAC) and the Joint Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel (CRFAP). They also heard updates on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program, Fisheries Information Network Program, Habitat Program, Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP), Sport Fish Program (SFP), and Invasive Species activities.

Other topics discussed were a request from the ASMFC for our Commission to participate in the development of a Joint Interstate Fishery Management Plan for sharks. The Commission staff will look into this request and report back to the State Directors and their biologists to discuss the Commission's options before making a final decision.

Bob Zales presented a short discussion paper on marine reserves. An unknown group has found a way to bypass the normal, approved procedure for declaring a Marine Reserve. Under the Antiquities Act, the U. S. President can designate a reserve without any outside review. Several areas in the Gulf are identified in the paper and the concern is that the President may declare a number of areas marine reserves as part of his legacy. **Zales** will continue to follow this issue and keep the Commissioners updated.

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office

B. Sutter reported on the activities of the SERO. He stated that **Roy Crabtree** was unable to attend this meeting due to travel restrictions. The federal government continues to operate under a continuing resolution, maintaining FY 2006 funding levels.

The deadline for obtaining a license under the shrimp limited access program is quickly approaching. To date 1,848 moratorium permits have been awarded out of a potential 2,200. In regards to the red snapper limited access program or IFQ, the SERO has been working on improving communication. Currently they have provided 867 VMS units but only 529 are actively reporting. This amounts to about 80 percent compliance. Overall the program is running smoothly.

He reported that Shepherd Grimes is returning to the SERO November 1 as a NOAA Legal Counsel.

USFWS Region 4 Office Comments

C. Brown reported on behalf of the USFWS Region 4 Office. The Region has two personnel announcements. Mr. Randall Luthi, who served briefly as a Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Deputy Director earlier this year, was named in July to head the Minerals Management Service. Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation, Dr. Mamie Parker, has announced that she will be leaving the FWS on November 3.

As the Senate has not yet passed the Interior Department's appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, the FWS is currently operating under a continuing resolution that carries forward the agency's FY 2007 spending level without any earmarks. The FY 2008 request for the Fisheries Program is about \$124.8 million, which includes a \$7.3 million increase over the FY 2007 request.

The FWS remains a key partner in the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI). The Southeast Aquatic Habitat Partnership (SARP), one of five "pilot" partnerships under the NFHI, was recently recognized as an official fish habitat partnership by the NFHI. Only recognized fish habitat partnerships are eligible to receive funding specifically appropriated to fund NFHI projects.

Funding to implement the NFHI this fiscal year is still uncertain pending final passage of the Interior Department's budget. Only \$1 million was available in FY 2007 nationwide due to the FWS being level funded that year. A little over \$5 million has been requested for FY 2008. In anticipation of that FY 2008 funding, the SARP recently sent out a request for project proposals.

The European eel was listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) at the 14th Conference of the Parties in late June at The Hague in the Netherlands. Although this listing does not apply to the American eel, it should help develop a clearer picture of international trade in this species due to similarity of appearance to the European eel.

The FWS and NOAA Fisheries Service announced in August a new partnership aimed at improving efforts to use genetic testing to identify shark species to help curtail illegal finning activities. The work is being performed by the NOAA Center for Coastal Environmental Health and Bio-molecular Research in Charleston, South Carolina and at the FWS's National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon.

In another partnership effort involving investigations by law enforcement officers of the FWS, NOAA and Canada, a Hialeah, Florida seafood dealer was charged last month with conspiracy to smuggle large quantities of queen conch taken in the Caribbean to customers throughout the United States and Canada in violation of the Lacey Act. The queen conch is an endangered species and also protected under the CITES. The conch shipments were initially discovered in shipments falsely labeled as whelk at the Canadian border, but confirmed as being queen conch through genetics testing by the FWS National Forensics Laboratory.

The draft Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle Recovery Plan is still under agency review by the FWS and NOAA Fisheries. Once the agency review is complete a public comment period will be announced through the *Federal Register*. In the meantime, 5-year status reviews for the loggerhead, hawksbill, leatherback, Kemp's Ridley and green sea turtles were completed in August, with recommendations for maintaining the current listing status of all five species.

Preliminary data from the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation have been available for several months now, indicating that more than 87 million Americans, or 38 percent of the population age 16 and older hunted, fished or observed wildlife that year, spending \$120 billion pursuing those activities. Of these, 30 million fished, 12.5 million hunted and 71 million participated in wildlife observation activities. The data also indicate that fishing participation has declined about 12% nationwide, with a 15% decline in saltwater fishing and a 23% decline in the Great Lakes. The National Survey has been conducted every 5 years since 1955. The data can be found online at <http://federalaid.fws.gov/surveys/surveys.html>. The final report should be available next month.

Finally, in a recently renewed controversy, an endangered mussel species, the fat three-ridge, and two threatened species, the Gulf sturgeon and another mussel, the purple bank-climber, are becoming the focus of the most recent front in the on-going controversy over water use in the Chattahoochee River system. Recent estimates indicate that Lake Sidney Lanier, the city of Atlanta's main water source on the Chattahoochee, has only about three months of storage left. Downstream flow needs for the species in the Chattahoochee River are part of the reason behind the Corps of Engineers water release rates from dams on the river. The Corps is currently releasing more water downstream than is currently flowing into the reservoirs, and both political and legal pressure are being brought to bear to reduce the water releases. Besides conservation of the listed species being potentially at stake if water releases are reduced, so is continued operation of a power plant on the lower river that is key to providing power in much of the Florida Panhandle as well as southwest Georgia and southeast Alabama. There has been an on-going 17-year legal battle involving the Corps and the States of Alabama, Georgia and Florida over water in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Rivers as well as in the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa rivers, which flow into the Mobile system.

On February 20 Randall Luthi entered on duty as the Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) new Deputy Director, succeeding Marshall Jones who retired at the end of December. Mr. Luthi most recently served as the Speaker of the Wyoming House of Representatives. He is a partner in the law firm of Luthi and Voyles in Thayne, Wyoming and has also served as a senior counselor for NOAA as well as in the Interior Department's Office of the Solicitor.

A new Deputy Regional Director has been appointed for the FWS's Southwest Region, headquartered in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Dr. Todd Jones comes to the position having most recently served as the Chief Learning Officer at the Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Prior to that Dr. Jones served in senior leadership positions in the U.S. Departments of Defense and Energy.

In a message to FWS employees on February 7, FWS Director Dale Hall outlined a new strategic vision and priorities resulting from a year-long process to determine the agency's direction for the coming years. The six priorities identified were: conserving lands and resources, primarily through the National Wildlife Refuge System; working with others in landscape conservation efforts; conservation and management of migratory birds; recovering and preventing extinction of threatened and endangered species; the National Fish Habitat Initiative and conservation of trust aquatic species; and ensuring the future of conservation through connecting people with nature.

The status review on whether the American eel should be proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act concluded that listing the species is not warranted at this time, despite significant population declines in some eastern U.S. rivers. The FWS and NOAA Fisheries made an announcement to that effect on January 30.

Since 2005 national fish hatcheries in the Southeast have produced and stocked more than 2.8 million fish into inland waters impacted by oxygen depletion and extensive fish kills following hurricanes Ivan, Katrina and Rita, primarily in Louisiana and Mississippi. Additionally, the FWS continues operations to remove debris, repair structures, assess impacts to trust species and

implement resource recovery projects, primarily on national wildlife refuges impacted by the storms in those states.

FY 2008 USFWS Budget

C. Brown reported on the FWS FY2008 budget with a PowerPoint presentation. There was a \$4.7 million increase for refuge wildlife and habitat management; a \$7.3 million increase for the Fisheries Program; and \$6 million increase for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. In the Fisheries Program there is an increase of \$10.1 million. He explained that the bulk of the increase went to the National Fish Passage Program and Fish Habitat Initiative Program. He discussed trends in FWS over the last five years. He pointed out items of interest to the Commission under resource management: ecological services; refuge systems; law enforcement; fisheries; and administration. He reported that most earmarks were removed from the 2008 Continuing Resolution (CR).

The Commission has written several letters to FWS regarding the disproportionate level of funding that the FWS management programs received in the Southeast. To date they still have not received a response.

V. Minton noted that this was **C. Brown's** last meeting. He took the opportunity on behalf of all Commissioners to thank him for his many efforts on behalf of fisheries in the region and wished him well.

Update on the Gulf of Mexico Governor's Alliance

B. Walker gave an overview of the Alliance. It is a 5 state partnership formed by the Governors of the Gulf states. There are also 6 Mexican states involved. Then Governor, Jeb Bush started the Alliance in 2002. The Alliance established a 3 year action plan that was signed by all 5 Governors and released in 2005. It contained 73 goals and objectives. To date 95 percent of these actions have been completed or have been substantially completed. The Alliance is now working on a future plan for goals and objectives. This is designed to be a dynamic document that all of the states could agree to.

The driving force behind the Alliance is to some extent money. Similar programs in the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay each receive \$40 million or more every year from the federal government to do this type work in their regions. The Gulf of Mexico, which drains some 38 of 48 the continental states, and produces most of the oil and most of the fisheries resources of the entire country, receives nothing.

The Pew Commission, the Ocean Commission, and the Joint Ocean Initiative (all federal panels established by Congress) came to the conclusion that the U. S. oceans were badly managed. They encouraged action to move forward towards regional ocean management.

The Alliance leadership transferred to Governor Haley Barbour in 2006. The Alliance is moving forward with a blueprint for the future. To date, they have 5 focus areas: nutrients/habitat identification, restoration, community resilience, water quality, and environmental education.

The next action plan will probably include a fishery/living aquatic resources component. It is currently being considered to be added to the 5 focus areas.

The Alliance is not structured to receive funding. Any funding that is received or expended by the Alliance is done by the partner states or through federal partners. The President's budget included \$5 million for NOAA to directly support the Alliance goals. **B. Walker** has met with Admiral Lautenbacher and with Bill Hogarth and others at their request to advise them how they might spend that money should it be appropriated. It looks like it will be approved. NOAA was satisfied with the funding plan presented by **B. Walker**. These funds would be spent to engage a full-time coordinator for each focus area within the Alliance, and to provide grants to states, and to provide meeting and travel funds for the states to continue to participate in the business and activities of the Alliance. Senator Trent Lott has introduced a bill in the Senate that authorizes funding to the Gulf Alliance and those funds, if appropriated, would be spent to fulfill the goals and objectives of the Gulf Alliance.

The Alliance is currently working to put a plan before Congress within the next 60 days. He hopes that this will bring support to the region for this well deserved program.

C. Nelson asked if the Alliance would join with the Gulf of Mexico Program or be separate. **B. Walker** stated that the Alliance has to be state driven if it is to be successful. A meeting will be held next month (November 13 in Tampa, Florida) with the states, federal government and Alliance to discuss ways to interact with the Alliance.

C. Perret reported that the Alliance may not appear to be marine fisheries oriented, but it does involve habitat, water quality and other important aspects of marine fisheries. He feels strongly that fisheries participation is important.

B. Walker stated that if anyone was interested in participating in next months meeting in Tampa, they should contact him or **C. Brown** for further information.

NOAA's Regional Program and the Gulf Alliance

B. Sutter reported that NOAA is looking at increased coordinating also on a regional basis – a regional collaboration. The goal of NOAA is to provide improved services for the benefit of NOAA's customers, increase value and productivity of partnerships, improve stakeholder relations and support, and improve internal communications.

The priority areas parallel the Gulf Alliance focus. These priorities are: hazard resilient coastal communities; integrated ecosystem assessments; integrated water resources services; and outreach and communication. These initial focus areas are driven by NOAA's strategic mission goals and build upon existing regional efforts.

He discussed the eight areas in this framework for NOAA Regional Collaboration and updated the location of NOAA and other federal offices involved in this collaboration in the Gulf of Mexico. He presented a draft plan on what NOAA could do with existing resources. One of the first things they looked at was what a Gulf of Mexico integrated ecosystem assessment looks

like; what are the components. He addressed initial problems and challenges in addressing all of these focus areas. NOAA can not address these areas with its limited resources and therefore it will be necessary to partner with state agencies, federal agencies, multi-entity organizations, academia, and laboratories. Cooperative efforts are imperative to move resource conservation forward. It will take time; feedback and communication are vital to the success of this collaboration.

B. Sutter stated that the Gulf Alliance provides an important forum to address regional concerns and that the Governor's action plan is a good starting point and he provided the status of the 73 action items. For additional information on NOAA Regional Collaboration he provided the following website: <http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/regionalcollaboration.htm>.

Federal Budget Update

L. Simpson updated the Commissioners on the NOAA Fisheries FY2008 budget. He provided the Commissioners with copies of the Senate budget marks. He reviewed areas of interest to the Commissioners. Rancho Nuevo Sea Turtle Ranch shows a slight increase in funding. He also pointed out a substantial increase of approximately \$8 million in expanded stock assessment and improved data collection. He reviewed other areas of interest in the 2008 funding marks including IJF, RecFIN and GulfFIN, which all show a slight increase.

R. Rayburn asked if anyone knew the status of Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K), especially in light of tariffs on imported seafood. These tariffs go into S-K and a certain percentage is used for competition. That should mean that the S-K monies are growing and that perhaps these monies should be targeted for fisheries activities. **L. Simpson** stated that the money generated from these tariffs is approximately \$100 million. Of that amount, about \$60 to \$70 million goes into an account to promote and develop commercial fisheries that is used to offset some of the NMFS line item work for that activity. Historically about \$10 million has been used for a grant program that goes to the foundations to administer certain types of projects. There are no funds marked for this type of use this year. **C. Perret** asked if staff could write a letter to find out the status of S-K funding (when the *Federal Register* notice will come out, what will the funds be used for, highlight the importance, etc.). It was agreed that staff would follow through on this request.

B. Sutter reported that the budget has received Congressional approval and it will now go to conference. He gave the Commissioners a brief overview of the budget as approved, which included an approximately \$80 million increase for fisheries.

Sport Fish Restoration Program Update

D. Rice provided a detailed update for the Commissioners. He reported that the Joint Artificial Reef Subcommittee met in September 2007 and current issues include drafting an Artificial Reef Monitoring document to highlight basic monitoring strategies and practices; creating and updating an Artificial Reef Program website, synthesize basic information from each state, and to include this information in a single webpage devoted to reporting basic data on artificial reefs for the Gulf States.

The next Joint Artificial Reef Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for September/October 2008.

Aquatic Invasive Species Program Report

D. Rice reported that the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species met in April 2007. Among topics discussed were revisions to the *Regional Rapid Response Plan*; contact information for the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force's Taxonomic Experts Database; funding contracts and proposals for research, outreach and education activities; development and maintenance of the non-indigenous aquatic species database hosted by the GSMFC website; and, updating and revising the invasive species website.

The next meeting is scheduled for the end of October 2007.

Emergency Disaster Recovery Program I (EDRP) Update

R. Hode updated the Commissioners on the EDRP I. He gave a brief overview of the program and explained that the Commission is now administering 2 EDRP projects, hence the terms EDRP I and EDRP II.

He provided a detailed written report that described administrative and sub-award activities. He discussed accomplishments by project and reported on reimbursement by project.

Emergency Disaster Recovery Program II (EDRP) Update

R. Hode reported that PL 110-28, entitled U.S. Troops Readiness, Veterans Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007 was approved in July 2007. This Act provides funding in the amount of \$110,000 to DOC for disaster relief to the shrimp and fishing industry devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Of these funds \$24,000,000 will go to NOAA's Office of Coastal Survey and Office of Response and Restoration for debris mapping, and \$85,000,000 will go to NMFS for assistance programs authorized under Section 115 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006. The Commission will administer the latter funds through a cooperative agreement with NOAA Fisheries. The total amount authorized to the states programs is around \$84,000,000.

In accordance with Section 115 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Act, 2 percent of these funds shall be retained by the state to be used for the distribution of additional payments to fishermen with a demonstrated record of compliance with turtle excluder and bycatch reduction device regulations. The remainder may be used for personal assistance to impacted commercial fishermen, assistance for small businesses, domestic product marketing and seafood promotion, state seafood testing programs, development of limited entry programs, incentives to ensure widespread and proper use of TEDs and BRDs, and voluntary capacity reduction programs.

R. Hode reported that the distribution of funds by the DOC is as follows:

Louisiana	\$41,000,000
Mississippi	\$25,000,000
Alabama	\$15,000,000
Florida	\$ 2,000,000
Texas	\$ 1,200,000
GSMFC	\$ 715,000

He will work with the states to develop sub-award agreements.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester reported on the Habitat Program. He stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel met in early October. The AP discussed Texas Senate Bill 3 and freshwater inflow issues in Texas, the Texas Great Barrier Reef Project, the cleaning of retired MARAD vessels before salvaging them, a beneficial use project using dredged material from a LNG facility, sea grass protection zones in Texas, and the reopening of Cedar Bayou.

The Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force is in the process of updating their 2001 Action Plan. A meeting of the Nutrient Task Force was held in June to solicit input from the public on the re-assessment of this plan. The Commission wrote letters to Congressional delegates in the states that composed the Task Force, stressing that hypoxia is still an important issue to the Gulf of Mexico fisheries and urging that financial resources be directed to reducing the nutrient loading into the Mississippi River that fuels the growth of hypoxia once it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. The Commission also sent a letter to the Task Force urging that the Action Plan not be weakened and urging them to take the opportunity to establish and actively pursue effective strategies to deal with the hypoxia problem. The Task Force will be meeting in late October to seek comment and concurrence on the draft Action Plan to be released for public comment and to seek a Task Force decision on revising the goals of the Revised Action Plan. He reported that in 2007 the Hypoxic Zone was approximately 7,900 square miles, the third largest since monitoring began. The long-term average since 1985 is 5,200 square miles and has been increasing.

J. Rester reported on the status of LNG facilities in the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf Gateway facility has been operating since March 2005 at a slow pace. The only facilities currently seeking license applications are the Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal and the Port Dolphin facility. Shell announced in March that they were dropping plans to build the Gulf Landing facility. Shell cited substantial capacity already available for importing liquefied natural gas into the U.S. market, particularly along the Gulf Coast. The DEIS for the Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal was released on July 6, 2007 and a "stop clock" letter was issued on August 2007 to gather more data for inclusion in a final EIS. **J. Rester** stated that both the Commission and Council had concerns about the project. Port Dolphin Energy LLC filed its license application on March 29, 2007 for a LNG facility located 28 miles offshore of Tampa, Florida in

approximately 100 feet of water. A “stop clock” letter was issued in August 2007 to gather more data for the final EIS.

J. Rester reported that work on the Commission’s Bottom Mapping Project was continuing. The purpose of the project was to develop a user friendly interactive system that identifies, describes, and displays resources characterizing the seabed habitat of the Gulf of Mexico. A meeting of the bottom mapping committee was held in September to review progress of the project and make final recommendations to the contractor. The contractor asked for a no cost extension until October 31 to finalize data in the database and finish the FGDC compliant metadata. The project should be completed by the end of the year.

He updated the Commissioners on his work with aquaculture activity. He is currently overseeing a sub-award to the University of Southern Mississippi/Gulf Coast Research Laboratory that provides for construction and demonstration of a copepod culture system. Another portion of the project supports a planning exercise that will lead to the development of a full-scale offshore aquaculture demonstration project in the northern Gulf. **J. Rester** will be developing a GIS model for aquaculture site selection in the Gulf of Mexico. The funding for these projects come from NOAA and the Commission will provide administrative oversight.

C. Nelson asked that the Commissioners discuss the GSMFC policy on LNG. He stated that he felt that the Commission is taking a too risk averse of a position on open loop LNG facilities and he wanted to go on record urging the Commission to take action in some form to re-assess this position that we have, which in his opinion is basically any use of water to cool anything that impacts marine life should be eliminated. He strongly urged the Commission to not take this risk averse position and to clarify where we stand with the use of Gulf water to cool things. **J. Rester** stated that he and **L. Simpson** met with Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal in late July and discussed the project in detail. This project is somewhat different from others, they will be using about 127,000,000 gallons of water and they are going to be using sodium hypochlorite, but they plan on containing that within the system to control biological growth and then transport it inland for disposal. They are going to be further offshore than other facilities so the impact to the coastal species that we have had concerns about (red drum, menhaden, and bay anchovy) are not going to be as great. After the meeting, they still had some concerns about the project, mainly because the potential impacts are really unknown. **C. Nelson** stated that the same could be said for any use of Gulf waters to cool any activities such as keel coolers on ships, outboard motors intake, near shore or onshore power plants usage of water. He wants to hear from the other Commissioners. **J. Roussel** stated that **C. Nelson’s** characterization of the Commission’s policy may not be a fair one. There are two components for issues in relation to LNG. One component being the lack of information to make an informed decision and the second is a by-product of the licensing process that exists. There is a very compressed time line in which a decision must be made and this process forces the Commission or other entity to make a decision within a short period of time with a lack of data. In that case he thought that there is merit to the position the Commission has taken. **G. Vail** stated Florida has had a couple of opportunities to comment on proposed LNG facilities. Her division has taken the position that if it is open loop, the applicants will have to provide a lot of data (sequential, seasonal, etc.) on the plankton studies and tows. If it is closed loop they still need data to determine impact, but it is not quite as rigorous. **V. Minton** stated that Alabama is gathering data and hopes they will have enough

information within 5 years to make a decision. They do not want to err and see a long term degradation of habitat resources. **M. Ray** stated that Texas has taken a hard line against open loop LNG. They do feel that a closed loop LNG is the way to go.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program

S. VanderKooy provided a detailed written report for the Commissioners. He reported that the primary activities since the March 2007 meeting are related to the Crab Subcommittee. The derelict trap manual is being revised. This document provides information on how to develop a derelict trap program. He reported the Gulf menhaden website had also been revised and was given a new look. This is available through the GSMFC website.

He reported that the sheephead Profile was published this past summer and is available at this meeting on the publications table or can be mailed on request. The 2004 Annual Report is available and the 2005 Annual Report is at the printer. **VanderKooy** noted that the GSMFC archives (minutes, publications, reports, and resolution statements) are available on DVD also on the publications table.

VanderKooy reported that the oyster FMP revision is being drafted, and the white trout profile is being developed by the Task Force. FMP's and profiles are available on CD as well as the GSMFC website under Publications.

Billfish Program Status Report

D. Donaldson updated the Commissioners on the Billfish Program. He provided summaries on progress from each of the Principal Investigators. He reported that at the request of the Commissioners at the March 2007 meeting, funding was secured from NOAA Fisheries to hold a symposium at the March 2008 meeting that will highlight some of the billfish studies conducted under this program.

SEAMAP Program Report

J. Rester reported on SEAMAP activity. He discussed increased funding of SEAMAP and future enhancements to the program. In 2007, the program received supplemental funds in the Gulf of Mexico, approximately \$3,000,000 that will be spent over several years to start up some new survey work. The new surveys will include a winter plankton survey, an inshore shark survey, Louisiana inshore sampling and a Florida trawl survey. In FY2008 it is hoped that SEAMAP will be funded at \$5 million. Not all of this will go to the Gulf. It will be shared with the South Atlantic and Caribbean. If that funding is received we will start doing database management for SEAMAP in the Gulf of Mexico.

Cooperative Data Collection Programs Report

D. Donaldson provided a written report on current program activity. He discussed efforts to re-design the Marine Recreational Information Program. A meeting was held in August 2007 with various groups to begin answering the questions of who fishes, where we go, and what we catch.

They met in work groups to develop a variety of potential projects that will help scientists answer these questions. The Work Groups focused on analysis, design, highly migratory species, for hire, and data management and standards. The Operation Team of the MRI will develop plans for each project and set priorities to be considered later this year. Hopefully funds will be available in early 2008 for these projects.

He reviewed items included for funding in the 2008 FIN cooperative agreement. The total budget was \$5,090,000, which provided funding for a variety of projects. The projects were: Coordination and Administration (\$399,000); Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (\$2,671,000); Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (\$48,000); Operations of FIN Data Management System (\$202,000); Trip Ticket Program (\$880,000); and, Biological Sampling (\$890,000). **D. Donaldson** reviewed progress and activities for each of these projects.

Executive Committee Report

W. Garner presented the FY2006 audit from the Piltz, Williams & Larosa, CPA Firm. She reported that there was an “insignificant finding” which means that the finding in no way caused the financial statements to be misleading or materially misstated. The finding was that we did not check the “excluded party listing service” website to see if any of our vendors/awardees were excluded or debarred from receiving federal funds. An action plan to correct this situation went into effect in January 2007.

She reported that FY2007 spending is on target. Interest earned is greater than expected due to several contributing factors. Meeting registration fees are exceeding targeted levels due to increased participation. These fees offset the costs of the annual meetings and do not in any way exceed the rising costs of holding these meetings.

State Director’s Reports

Vernon Minton suggested that unless the State Directors objected, in the interest of time he asked the Commissioners to submit the reports in writing for inclusion in the minutes.

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

The Blue Crab Effort Management Program has been implemented. Effective 1 October 2007 anyone commercially harvesting blue crab must have an endorsement for hard shell and/or soft shell blue crab on their commercial saltwater fishing license plus trap tags issued by the Commission. Eligibility for an endorsement was based on reported landings. The 2007 Florida Legislature and Governor approved fees and penalties necessary for implementation of the program. Those not meeting the eligibility criteria could appeal to a Blue Crab Appeals Board comprised of commercial blue crabbers; the Board heard approximately 300 appeals of which 32 were successful. Those denied an endorsement by the Appeals Board could petition for an administrative hearing; approximately 70 petitions were submitted.

The Florida Legislature also passed, and the Governor signed, a bill containing the agency's requested increase in recreational license fees. For example, the resident annual saltwater license fee increased from \$13.50 to \$17; the resident five year saltwater license increased from \$61.50 to \$79; the non-resident annual saltwater license increased from \$31.50 to \$47 and the non-resident 7 day license increased from \$16.50 to \$30. Except for the lifetime and the annual Military Gold Sportsman licenses, other recreational license fees were similarly increased.

With reference to Artificial Reef Program activities, PCB monitoring in fish (e.g., red snapper, vermilion snapper, red porgies) around the Oriskany continues; the project is conducted under contracts with Escambia County for sampling and Texas A&M University for tissue analyses. Samples from December 2006 and April 2007 have been submitted for analysis.

Preparation of the Hoyt Vandenberg for deployment in 140 feet of water six miles off Key West continues; the vessel is scheduled for towing to Key West in February 2008. On 8 October there was a major media event at the ship yard in Norfolk, Virginia; a representative of the President's Office of the Environment, the director of the National Marine Sanctuary Program, a member of Florida's Artificial Reef Program, and various media representatives attended.

Rubble from the (old) I-10 Bridge over Pensacola Bay, damaged by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, is being placed on a series of sites within Escambia County's Large Area Reef Site-west. This project is sponsored by Escambia County. To date 80 barge loads of concrete rubble, averaging 900 tons per load, have been deployed on five sites; it's anticipated that another three to seven reef sites will be developed. The University of West Florida and Escambia County monitored demolition of the bridge for the impact on fish and wildlife; the explosions had minimal impact – less than 25 pounds of fish (mostly pin fish) were killed or stunned by the blast on 25 September although blasting was delayed until several pods of dolphin had moved safely out the blast area. Fish killed or stunned by the blasts were collected for life history studies.

In 2006/2007 the program supported a socio-economic study on the benefits of artificial reefs in southwest Florida (Pinellas County – Lee County), continuation of a University of Florida study of "refugia reefs" off west central Florida, monitoring projects in Palm Beach County to compare artificial reefs with natural reefs and Dade County to compare lime rock boulders with modular units, and construction of 12 reefs.

A bill to establish a Ships-2-Reefs program was not successful in the 2007 legislative session; the program would provide funding to obtain and prepare decommissioned military vessels for deployment off Florida. Funding would be distributed in the form of matching grants to local governments to cover up to one-third the cost of deploying a vessel.

Other Division of Marine Fisheries Management actions included:

* development of a "Hot Sheet", to be posted on the Division's web site by the fifth of each month, identifying key issues and information related to marine fisheries. It may be accessed at <http://myfwc.com/marine>.

* amendment of the spiny lobster and stone crab rules to allow groups of fishers to recover each others traps after a major storm event. It is currently illegal to possess another person's traps; with the rule change a trapper can provide the Commission with a list of colleagues authorized to temporarily possess his traps if a Governor's declaration of emergency and an Executive Director's declaration of trap emergency are issued.

* retrieval of spiny lobster and stone crab traps left in the water after close of season occurred from early June through September 2007; a total of 24 trips produced 3130 traps at a cost of \$54,350. The effort is conducted under a contract to a vendor selected through the competitive bid process; payment to participating fishers is based on a per trap retrieved fee plus daily fuel allowance.

* amendment of the reef fish rule to bring state regulations for Atlantic red porgy, black sea bass and golden tile fish and Gulf vermilion snapper and red snapper into consistency with existing federal regulations.

* Commission direction to staff to proceed with amendments to the reef fish rule to bring state regulations for red snapper into consistency with pending federal regulations; a final public hearing on the proposed amendments will be held at the February 2008 Commission meeting in Panama City, Florida.

* deferral of consideration of amendments to the red drum regulations until after the next stock assessment is completed in 2008. The red drum advisory group had recommended a pro-active approach because, while the 2005 stock assessment showed the target escapement rate was being met, they were concerned that with increasing fishing pressure that would not be the case by the time the next assessment was available for review. The decision to defer amending the current regulations was based on concern that additional regulations might be necessary after review of the next stock assessment and any changes proposed now could not be in place before the next assessment was available for review.

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

Bayou St John Reef has received a total of 29 loads of material from the demolition of the Gulf State Park Convention Center for a total of 9,507.5 tons beginning on January 17, 2007 thru September 14, 2007. There are probably four to seven more loads of material that will be placed on the reef and should be completed by the end of October 2007.

Ross Point Reef had the remains of the Fowl River Bridge placed on site during 2007. This amounted to 3,500 tons of material. There still remains a small section of the reef site that remains empty and does not have any material placed on it but will be filled and the reef completed as materials become available.

Ono Island Reef had the remains of the Fish River Bridge placed on site in 2007. The total amount of material was 2500 tons. There is a large area of the reef that can be filled with additional materials as the bridge was widely scattered on the reef.

The remaining two permitted inshore reefs -- Rockpile and Bon Secour, will be completed whenever money and materials become available in the future.

All of the existing Baldwin County inshore reefs have been marked with signage and reflectors placed on the pilings surrounding the reefs.

The Upper Bay Barge was funded and constructed through the Alabama Wildlife Federation (1,600 tons of concrete rubble). MRD only acquired the USACE

Offshore reef building flourished with 53 trips made to construct 1027 reefs. 832 of these were for MRD and USA.

Three EDRP educational workshops were held to acquaint commercial fishermen with data sheets. One was held exclusively for oysters in Bayou La Batre on August 27. This meeting was well attended by several hundred oyster fishermen. The finfish, shrimp, crab and live bait fisheries were presented in Bon Secour on July 27 and in Bayou La Batre on July 30. These meetings were also well attended.

Fleet size continues to diminish - this year shrimp opening had a maximum of 100 vessels. License sales are down 30% from 2004 pre Ivan.

Catch has been good for shrimpers in 2007 because of the drought with expanded nursery area and extended season, and fewer boats and nets pursuing the final yield.

White shrimp is beginning to shape up well.

An Alabama Spotted seatrout assessment has been completed and is undergoing review.

The Alabama Oyster Farmers Association (AOFA)- Removed 21,000 sacks of large rock from Buoy reef during the summer.

The Organized Seafood Association of Alabama (OSAA) – Planted 7500 cubic yards of rock and oyster shell cultch on Heron Bay reefs from small boats in areas too shallow for the traditional planting from barges.

Also through the EDRP program, 1,767 data sheets have been returned and approximately \$353,400 paid to participants.

In addition, 20,000 cubic yards were planted in water deeper than 5 feet on Cedar Point west with Ivan funds in June/July, and up to 10,000 yards will be planted in water less than 5 feet deep on Cedar Point West (60%) and Cedar Pt. East (40%) will be planted in October and early November.

Mississippi – **D. Diaz** submitted the following report on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR).

- The Office of Marine Patrol, Marine Law Enforcement activities for April 2007 – September 2007 consisted of 8,030 boat patrol hours which resulted in 613 total citations. The most prevalent violation was Boat and Water Safety which resulted in the issuing of 305 citations. Our JEA program conducted 1,227 contacts and issued 32 notice of violations.
 - This past fall 22,594 cubic yards of cultch material was planted on two Mississippi oyster reefs, Henderson Point and Telegraph reefs. Between the two, a total of 215 acres were planted. Cultch material utilized was limestone.
 - Mississippi's oyster season opened September 6th in area I-B (St. Joe Reef located off Hancock County). The daily sack limit is 20 per vessel. As of October 9th there have been 198 trips and 3,570 sacks harvested for an average of 18 sacks per trip.
 - The Shellfish Bureau held an Oyster Stewardship Program Meeting Tuesday October 2, 2007. Sixty-three harvesters and industry representatives attended the meeting which was held to receive input on management strategies needed for the rebuilding of the oyster industry in Mississippi.
 - The 2007-2008 shrimp season opened June 6 at 6 a.m. Approximately 300 vessels were counted on opening day which was 6 less than the 2006-2007 opening, and over 300 less than pre Hurricane Katrina numbers. Preliminary reports showed a favorable catch.
 - Recovery Data Forms from fishermen for the shrimp and crab fisheries were accepted again in June. Shrimp forms were accepted for the first 15 days after the opening of shrimp season and the first 21 days in September. Crab fishermen forms were accepted for the first 10 days in June and the first 16 days in September. To date, 335 shrimp and 65 crab fishermen, respectively, have been contracted to participate in the program. Both monitoring programs will end when funds are expended. DMR staff continues to participate in verification trips to confirm participants' fishing activity mirrors trip ticket submissions.
 - There was a seven day Deepwater Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup that coincided with the first week of the shrimp season. Forty qualifying shrimp fishermen will be compensated for recovering 1078 derelict traps found outside a ½ mile from shoreline (legal shrimping grounds), bringing the total number of derelict traps removed and recycled in 2007 to over 11,000.
 - All crab fishermen that participated in the derelict trap program this past February are being given fifty new crab traps equipped with escape rings and terrapin excluder devices; distribution began in May.

- Fourteen Live Bait Shrimp Dealers were inspected and licensed. The number of licensed camps has risen from 11 last year to 14 currently. Before Katrina there were 28 camps licensed. The demand for live bait still remains high throughout the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- This past June the Artificial Reef Bureau started inshore artificial reef revitalization. Material has been placed on 23 of the total 25 sites to be developed this year. The material being used is two inch crushed concrete and # 57 limestone.
- The Mississippi Artificial Reef Rigs to Reef Program is currently working with petroleum industry representatives on 3 projects in the main pass area off the Mississippi River.
- In March and April three offshore artificial reefs were restored and enhance by deploying 240 Florida Limestone Pyramids. The pyramids were deployed at strategic distances apart for biological assessments.
- There are 51 charter boats participating in the finfish recovery program. As of August 30, 2007, 2,998 charter trips have been reported. The charter vessel fisheries recovery report program is ongoing.
- A program for the release and monitoring of hatchery raised red snapper on Mississippi's offshore artificial reef sites started March 1, 2007 and will continue for the next 30 months. Currently red snapper larvae are being reared under experimental conditions to find feeding rates for optimum growth. This program is funded by the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program.
- There were 4 new state record fish caught using conventional tackle
 - Queen Triggerfish (*Balistes vetula*) 7 lbs. 6.4 oz. Brandon Bosarge
 - Gray Triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*) 9 lbs. 7.33 oz. Matthew L. Larmore
 - King Snake Eel (*Ophichthus rex*) 30 lbs. 8 oz. Russell Gene Erbert
 - Rock Hind (*Epinephelus adscensionis*) 3 lbs. 4.8 oz. Tommy Obrien

And 1 fly fishing record

- Little Tunny (*Euthynnus alletteratus*) 12 lbs. 0.49 oz. Jordan Mathews
- Fisheries staff was also active with the 3,400 volunteer's coast wide in the MS Coastal Cleanup. The cleanup resulted in approximately 53,400 pounds of garbage.

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

The current LDWF Secretary has taken a 7 week leave of absence to run for a vacated state senate seat. He is planning to return as secretary after the election to finish the remainder of the term under our current Governor who is not seeking re-election. Louisiana will have a new Governor and LDWF will have a new Secretary by the time this Commission meets next Spring. It is also possible that Louisiana may have new Commissioners by next meeting.

We are still working towards reestablishing a permanent presence in the vicinity of the 2 field stations which were totally destroyed by the storm. The 1st phase of construction of the new Research Lab on Grand Isle to replace the Grand Terre Marine Lab is well underway without significant construction delays.

The Oyster Survey Section which was displaced by the storm to Baton Rouge had returned to the New Orleans area at a temporary location at the La. National Guard Facility at Jackson Barracks and has now relocated to leased space at the University of New Orleans on the lakefront. We hope to move the remainder of our staff which formerly worked out of our New Orleans office to that location in the coming months.

Our legislative session this Spring/Summer was a fiscal session but each legislator could introduce up to 5 non-fiscal bills. Relatively few bills related to marine fisheries were passed but some of interest include establishment of a titling system for certain vessels, creation of an “Adopt a Water Body” program to control litter and a requirement for a vessel monitoring system to be on vessels as a portion of the penalty provision for taking oysters illegally.

As most of you know our artificial reef coordinator passed away this summer but nevertheless our artificial reef program continues to be very active with dozens of oil and gas structures being donated into the program since we last met, many of which were storm damaged structures. We’ve also added couple of inshore low relief reefs funded with third party donations.

We’ve spent a significant amount of effort in the last couple of months working on issues related to MARAD’s ship disposal program, the development of some aspects of a “crop insurance program for oysters on leases”, working on the environmental aspects of a number of proposed levees and other hurricane protection proposals as well as the potential use of concrete mats to cover exposed pipelines. We’ve also completed updated stock assessments for black drum, sheepshead, mullet and flounder.

On the hurricane recovery front we’ve worked with the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) to develop a “Fisheries Infrastructure Recovery Program” utilizing \$19m of the CDBG funds made available to the state which will be rolled out shortly and the development of a second round of LRA’s “Small Firm Loan & Grant Program” which will make additional CDBG funds available to the fishing industry along with other small businesses.

A number of the major program funded with the 1st fisheries supplemental have launched and are now underway. We’ve completed two 200 acre shell plants on the public grounds, signed

cooperative agreements with approximately 600 leaseholders to reimburse leaseholders for rehabilitation work on their leases and released a RFP to develop and update our oyster lease records, including digitizing and imaging all of our historical lease records, some of which go back over a century. Under contract we've cleaned over 150 square miles of marine debris much of the work being done with sub- contracted fishermen. We are continuing to work with the LRA and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness to convince FEMA to assume this responsibility similar to how it took on that responsibility in Mississippi and Alabama. We've finally made "some progress" but have not yet received a written commitment.

A framework for dispersing funds from the 2nd fisheries supplemental has been developed and presented to industry thru 7 public hearings and we hope to incorporate the industry input into a revised framework within a couple of weeks, secure spending authority and hopefully disperse a majority of the funds by next Spring.

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

Regulatory Issues - The 80th Texas Legislature completed its 140-day Regular Session on May 28th. Perhaps the most far-reaching impact of the session was legislation to better conserve and plan for water use in Texas (HB 3, HB 4, and SB 3). The final version of SB 3 creates the Environmental Flows Advisory Group and the Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee. SB 3 also creates stakeholder groups that are tasked with developing environmental in stream flow regimes for specific-bay basins. It also includes water conservation language that creates a Water Conservation Advisory Council and requires the development of a state wide water awareness campaign. SB3 also designates that unique reservoir sites and stream segments be included in the 2007 State Water Plan.

Senate Bill 791, which took effect on September 1, recognizes oysters as "inherently unsafe" and protects restaurants and food suppliers. Basically, this bill is a continuation of the movement to limit civil lawsuits and damage judgments against Texas businesses. The idea is not to discourage consumption, but to provide an additional legal protection for restaurants and food suppliers that provide oysters to the public. It adds oysters to a list of products recognized by state law as "inherently unsafe" for human consumption. Other products Texas already recognizes as "inherently unsafe" are sugar, castor oil, alcohol, tobacco, and butter.

Resource Project - TPWD obtained a biological opinion and new TED exemption from the NMFS which allow Coastal Fisheries to continue conducting its routine fishery-independent sampling.

Harvest Project - During October through December, Coastal Fisheries will conduct nighttime rove counts to estimate effort of boat-access and wade/bank flounder gigging fishermen. Also, pre-trip interviews will be conducted at boat-access sites to assess the proportion of trailers that are associated with flounder gigging. In addition, digital cameras will be used to take nighttime and low-light photos to monitor boat-access site activities on a 24-hour basis.

Life History and Genetics Research – PRBMFRS - Coastal Fisheries' Life History Team collected and processed sand seatrout samples for a life history study. They continued collecting red drum otoliths from gill net samples for an age analysis study, and spotted seatrout otoliths, from a sex ratios study, have been processed for an age analysis study. Coastal Fisheries Genetics Team begun collecting finclip samples from southern flounder and alligator gar for genetic variation studies. Red drum fin clip and otolith collections continue for a DNA genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold at Texas A&M University.

Artificial Reef Project - TPWD has received USEPA approval to reef the Texas Clipper and its sinking date is scheduled for November 15, weather permitting, at a site 17nm off South Padre Island, in 135 feet of water. Visibility at the site should be over 100ft.

The Texas Great Barrier Reef Project is being proposed by a private group that has hired Dick Stone as a consultant. He is the author of the original National Artificial Reef Plan. After much debate, hearings, and workshops, the US Army Corps of Engineers has decided to deny the permit. That does not mean the project is totally dead, but the TGBR group must resubmit a detailed plan similar to an Environmental Impact Statement before the Corps will reconsider the proposal. Since this project had such a magnitude and covered such a large area, many organizations were concerned about permitting the project and addressed those concerns to the Corps.

Buyback Programs

Inshore Shrimp License Management Program

Round # 20 of TPWD's inshore shrimp license buyback program closed on May 4, 2007. A total of 35 bay and 45 bait shrimp licenses (includes 25 licenses purchased (13 bait and 8 bay) purchased through a cooperative agreement between TPWD and CCA and TPWD and Earl C. Sams Foundation) were purchased at a cost of \$495,176 with an average of \$8,393 and a range of \$6,500 to \$9,500.

Since 1996, 904 bay and 886 bait licenses for a total of 1,790 shrimp licenses have been purchased by this program at a cost of \$11.4 million, representing a 56% reduction in pressure (1,790 buy backs / 3,231 original licenses).

Crab License Management Program

During Round # 7 of the crab license buyback program, 3 licenses were purchased at a cost of \$13,500, with an average of \$6,750 and a range of \$6,500 to \$7,000.

Since December 2001, TPWD has purchased 29 commercial crab licenses at a cost of \$146,849, with an average cost of \$5,064. This represents a 10% reduction in pressure (29 buy backs / 287 original licenses).

Commercial Finfish License Management Program

During Round # 10 of the commercial finfish license buyback program, 6 licenses were purchased at a cost of \$36,500, with an average cost of \$6,083 and a range of \$5,500 to \$7,000.

Since September 2002, 161 finfish licenses have been purchased at a total cost of \$798,304, with an average of cost of \$4,958. This represents a 29% reduction in pressure (161 buybacks / 549 original licenses).

Enhancement Program

Enhancement Bullets, 5 October 2007, 2007 Production Totals Up-to-date:

Red Drum

Total 19,731,248

Spotted Seatrout

Total 859,317

Shrimp - Spring shrimp season opening day, Mark Fisher, 15 May 2007 - The Texas spring bay shrimp season opened on May 15th with near-perfect weather conditions, but low shrimp prices (\$0.30/lb, but few dealers are buying), small shrimp (100+ count), and high fuel prices (marine diesel is \$2.15/gallon and climbing) kept most shrimpers at the dock. Staff counted a total of 138 shrimp boats, the second-lowest spring opening day count since we started aerial surveys in 1994. The highest opening day count was 833 boats in 1995.

When the summer shrimp season opened on August 15th, aerial counts were conducted in good weather, although the lower coast was under a Tropical Storm Warning as Tropical Storm Erin made landfall near Rockport. A total of 180 boats were counted coastwide, the lowest number since TPWD began opening day surveys in 1994. The highest count recorded was 886 boats in 1995, and last year a total of 213 boats were counted.

Oysters - Lance Robinson e-mail, October 8, 2007 - Commercial oyster fishermen are voicing concerns over several issues related to the oyster fishery and are seeking discussion with TPWD on ways to address their concerns. Among them are: 1) A further reduction in the sack limit (currently 90 sacks per day; 1 sack = 110 lbs). Public reef fishermen are asking for 45-50 sacks per day; leaseholders want no reduction and since they recently compromised to the current 90 sacks per day (from 150 sacks per day). 2) Public reef fishermen are asking TPWD to close bays to commercial harvest when the number of legal oysters decline during the season. TPWD does not have the authority to close the oyster season quickly except for human health issues or for an imminent biological threat to sustainability and would need legislative approval to implement this management strategy. 3) They are also discussing a requirement that a percentage of the shell from the oysters harvested from state waters be returned to state waters.

There are also concerns among Texas oyster leaseholders who think there are too many boats participating in transplant activities, and that current transplant practices may be adversely impacting the long-term sustainability of reefs in restricted waters. As a result, leaseholders recommended an 8-day transplant season that begins on May 14. The number of days needed for transplanting activities has fallen from 84 in the mid-1980's to 15 days in 2006.

The new FDA requirement to reduce shellfish-related *Vibrio* cases and deaths among four targeted states - Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and California, by 60% (from the 1995-99 baseline period) may be difficult to accomplish. To reach this goal the combined average of the four

states for 2007-2008 cannot exceed 10 cases (and must be maintained at that level from now on). In 2006, there were 17 *Vibrio* cases reported from these four states, with 13 coming from Texas. Of the 13 Texas cases, there were 7 deaths. Another disturbing statistic is that 5 of the 13 Texas cases of *Vibrio* were reported as coming from a "cooked" product.

Sea Turtles - One hundred twenty-eight Kemp's ridleys (new record), six loggerheads (new record), and three green sea turtles nests were reported on the Texas coast in 2007. Unfortunately, the number of sea turtles strandings will be a record high (586 as of October 10, 2007) as a direct result of cold stunned green sea turtle and juvenile greens trapped in mats of sargassum that drifted onto Texas beaches.

Red Tide/ Brown Tide/ Pfiesteria/ Hypoxic Zones/ Fish Kills - In June, researchers from the National Oceanographic Institute discovered a 'dead zone' that covered 1,750-square mile area in the Gulf of Mexico, extending 30 miles offshore from the mouth of the Brazos River, near Freeport, to 70 miles along the coast to Matagorda Bay. In August, a team of Texas A&M University scientists found only a few signs of hypoxic water in an area limited to about 10 miles from the coast off the mouth of the Brazos River. The A&M research team disproved the belief that the hypoxic area was caused by rain washing nitrogen-rich fertilizer into the Gulf. The large amount of Brazos River runoff, caused by record rainfall during June and July, did not contain fertilizer since the area upriver is not primarily farmland. The hypoxic water was caused by the layering of freshwater above the seawater which prevented oxygen at the surface from reaching the lower saltwater layer.

As expected, this summer's flooding along the mid-Texas coast displaced most mobile marine species in the Guadalupe Estuary into Espiritu Santo Bay, where the salinities are higher. Oysters in San Antonio Bay, as far as 17 statute miles from the Guadalupe River, suffered extensive mortality, and this season's harvest will be meager at best. Salinities have yet to return to long-term averages.

In July, Matagorda Bay received 1.5 million ac/ft of water from the Colorado River, essentially an entire year's worth of "regular inflows" in one month. This total does not include contributions from the Lavaca, Tres Palacios Carancahua and other smaller tributaries. In the aftermath of the flood, Matagorda Bay's oyster crop was decimated - there is virtually no live reef left for harvest this fall. In the aftermath of the flood, bait shrimpers are still having a very difficult time. Salinities are still much lower than normal, but recent extreme high tides brought quite a bit of saltier water into the Matagorda system.

Other

Second Supplemental Federal Disaster Relief Funds, Mike Ray e-mail, 20 August 2007 - TPWD received \$1.2M from the U.S Congress through National Marine Fisheries Service and administered by Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission to perform infrastructure repair projects in Jefferson County, the Sabine Lake area.

TPWD Weekly Bulletin, 11 June 2007 + TPWD Weekly Bulletin, 1 October 2007 - TPWD Executive Director Robert Cook retired on 31 August 2007. He has been Executive Director since February 2002 and spent the majority of his professional career with TPWD. He returned

to TPWD on 1 October to serve as interim executive director until a permanent successor is selected.

TPWD Weekly Bulletin, 30 April 2007- TPWD completed many of the repairs to six state parks, and repair work has begun at two wildlife management areas and one fish hatchery damaged by Hurricane Rita in late 2005. All sites have reopened except one -Sea Rim State Park near Port Arthur remains closed pending electrical and water/wastewater repairs, currently projected to reopen this fall. TPWD expects to spend about \$3.2 million total on Rita facility repairs, and the department is seeking about \$2.9 million in reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Future Meetings

G. Herring reported that she had run into problems contracting a meeting in the Florida area for the week of March 17-20, 2008, due to a conflict with spring breaks and Easter vacation. The Commissioners suggested that she try to move the meeting dates either to the week prior or the week following the normal meeting week. **G. Herring** suggested that the Commission allow her to look into other areas in Florida. They agreed. (Subsequent to this meeting, it was necessary to switch meeting locations. Texas will host the March 2008 meeting and Florida will be the site of the October 2008 meeting).

R. Rayburn and **M. Ray** thought that Galveston, Texas would be a good location for the Texas meeting.

Publications List

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

Election of Officers

J. Gill nominated **R. Rayburn** for Chairman. **M. Ray** seconded. Without opposition, **R. Rayburn** was named Chairman for FY2007-2008 by acclamation.

R. Rayburn nominated **J. Gill** for 1st Vice Chairman. **C. Perret** seconded. Without opposition, **J. Gill** was named 1st Vice Chairman by acclamation.

W. Gaidry nominated **J. Roussel** 2nd Vice Chairman. **T. Gollott** seconded. Without opposition, **J. Roussel** was named 2nd Vice Chairman by acclamation.

R. Rayburn presented a token of appreciation to outgoing Chairman **Vernon Minton**.

Closed Session to Continue Executive Committee

R. Rayburn moved to approve the staff compensation package discussed in Executive Committee. **C. Perret** seconded. The motion was approved and the Executive Director was directed to notify staff as appropriate. The motion was approved.

W. Garner reviewed the FY2008 budget. C. Perret moved to approve. J. Gill seconded. The motion passed.

Other Business

V. Minton moved to have the staff look into ways to encourage more entry level biologist and other personnel to attend Commission meetings. He felt that their involvement would be beneficial. He suggested that just the host state could invite interested personnel to save on travel. J. Gill seconded. The motion passed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm.

**COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL
MEETING SUMMARY – 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Monday, March 12, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

S. VanderKooy called the meeting to order at 1:14 p.m. without a quorum for either panel. The following were in attendance:

Members

Bob Zales, Panama City, FL
John Rawlings, Colorado River Seafood, Matagorda, TX
Ronnie Luster, Texas CCA, Houston, TX

Others

Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Bob Jones, Southeastern Fisheries Association, Tallahassee, FL
Judy Jamison, Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL
Jessica McCawley, VWC, Tallahassee, FL
Allen Power, Guest
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
David Lavergne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Jack Isaacs, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Steve Campbell, NOAA Fisheries, Slidell, LA
Sandy Rogers, Hancock Bank, Gulfport, MS

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
David Donaldson, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, MRFSS Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellias, ComFIN Survey Coordinator
Teri Freitas, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS

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

Dave Donaldson gave an overview of the recreational data review and plan. The National Research Council (NRC) conducted a review of current marine recreational fishery survey methods and recommended that current surveys should be redesigned to improve: effectiveness, the appropriateness of sampling procedures, applicability to various kinds of management

decisions, and usefulness for social and economic analyses. At the regional and national level, NOAA Fisheries worked with partners to design cooperative process to reassess and redesign recreational data collection and analysis, conduct regional meetings to identify regional needs and issues, and conducted a National Workshop that identified regional and national requirements. They've reviewed possible improvements in data collection methods, identified better ways to coordinate and integrate survey programs, and generated ideas for improving communications among partners. Future plans included the evaluation of potential biases in current surveys and design a Gulf pilot study to test a dual frame telephone survey approach among other activities.

Bob Jones with the Southeast Fisheries Association presented an overview of the problems with product substitution in the Gulf specifically addressing substitution of Asian catfish and other less valuable imports as Gulf grouper in the markets and restaurants. The problem is getting a lot of media attention and resulting in many cases of substitution being brought to the public eye. Florida is leading the way in investigating and prosecuting these cases and Alabama is second in addressing the issue. **Jones** will continue to bring this issue to the Commission as it progresses.

Jessica McCawley, FWC, presented the proposed changes to red drum management in Florida. Current assessments indicate that the escapement of red drum may be declining (<30%) in coastal waters due to rapid increases in recreational fishing participation and effort. The state wants to address future populations by taking a more conservative approach to management. They are proposing to reach a 40% escapement and are investigating a narrower slot limit and possible closed season but retain the 1-fish bag.

Staff provided several programmatic updates for the panel. **Ralph Hode** gave an overview of the current activities under the GSMFC's Fisheries Disaster Program. **Ron Lukens** updated the panel members on the non-indigenous species activities and **Steve VanderKooy** went over the IJF activities since the October meeting of the panel.

Without a quorum, there was no other business.

**COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL
MEETING SUMMARY – 58th Annual Fall Meeting
Monday, October 15, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

P. Horn called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. with all members present, except Captain Randy Gros, who passed away in May from a long battle with cancer. *The panel held a moment of silence in honor of Randy.* The following were in attendance:

Members

Grey Cane III, CCA, Daphne, AL
Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS
Bob Zales II, Panama City, FL
John Rawlings, Colorado River Seafood, Matagorda, TX
Ronnie Luster, Texas CCA, Houston, TX
Scott Riley, Florida CCA, Tallahassee, FL
Bob Fairbanks, MS Power, Gulfport, MS
Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Coden, AL
Daniel Babin, Gulf Fish Inc., Houma, LA

Others

Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Gary Graham, TX SeaGrant, West Columbia, TX
Chris Denson, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Bobbi Walker, GMFMC, Orange Beach, AL
Scott Steinback, NOAA/NMFS, Woods Hole, AL
Ellie Roche, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Richard Cody, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Rick Leard, GMFMC, St. Petersburg, FL
Chris Nelson, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Bon Secour Seafood, Bon Secour, AL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Terry Cody, GSMFC/TPWD, Rockport, TX
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Ralph Rayburn, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TX SeaGrant, College Station, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kris VanOrsdel, LA Recovery Authority, Baton Rouge, LA
James McKnight, USCG, Mobile, AL

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
David Donaldson, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, MRFSS Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Donna Bellais, ComFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Doug Snyder, RecFIN(SE) Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Harris, FIN Database Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
David Rice, Sportfish and ANS Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions

P. Horn welcomed everyone and started the introductions.

Adoption of Agenda

P. Barber was concerned that the issue of artificial reefs was not included in the agenda. **VanderKooy** noted it was covered in the debris removal section. *Without objection the agenda was adopted as written.*

Approval of Minutes (March 14, 2005; October 24, 2006; March 12, 2007)

There were three sets of minutes, due to the fact that participation since the storms has been slim and quorums had not been met. The group reviewed all the minutes and **D. Babin** moved to accept the minutes as written. *The motion was seconded by P. Barber and the minutes were approved.*

Invasive Species and Artificial Reefs Update

D. Rice introduced himself as the new coordinator at the Commission and provided a short update on the recent meetings and activities of the Invasive Species Regional Panel and the Artificial Reef Subcommittee.

Waterway Debris Cleanup and Hurricane Derived Debris, Hangs, and Snags

Ensign James McKnight, U.S. Coast Guard, provided a presentation on the progress made with wet debris removal in Mississippi and answered many questions regarding additional plans for Louisiana. **McKnight** reported that the total area covered so far in the offshore component of the cleanup is 275.18 sq miles and took 90 days to complete. The contractors removed a variety of debris including vegetation, vehicles, construction debris, and some tanks that were treated as hazardous. Within Mississippi Sound/Hancock County, the contractors removed 3,037 cubic yards of debris covering roughly 64 sq miles. In Harrison County, 4,460 cubic yards of debris were removed from 100 sq miles and in Jackson County, 5,261 cubic yards from 111 sq miles.

Everyone on the Panel agreed that since the storms of 2004 and 2005, a lot of debris has ended up in the water and in the fishing grounds. There was discussion regarding artificial reef materials possibly ending up outside of their approved permit sites. **P. Barber** relayed the issue that some of the Alabama shrimpers were having with chicken transport containers or coops ending up in their nets outside the permit areas. It was suggested by the Panel that monitoring by the states of permitted reefs occur more regularly. Reef materials that don't stay in the permit

areas, are placed illegally outside the permit area, or get moved intentionally from their original permitted locations are problematic for the fishermen that place them, as well as the fishermen that get hung on them. It was pointed out by state representatives that most of the approved materials currently in use, such as the concrete pyramid structures, seemed to do very well and stay in place even after the hurricanes.

NOAA Economics Add-On Expenditure Survey

Scott Steinback, an economist with NOAA Fisheries provided a presentation on Angler Expenditures and the Economic Impact of Saltwater Sportfishing. The add-on survey to the MRFSS program was a new approach, where all coastal states were included; NOAA switched survey modes and mixed survey frames, and tried to address non-responses to the survey. This approach used the MRFSS intercepts and followed up with both mail and phone follow-ups. The survey also used the Texas license frame and the NOAA HMS permit database to identify anglers for the expenditure mail survey. Anglers intercepted were asked for both phone number and address for additional follow up. The primary function of the survey was to elicit trip expenditures, fishing equipment, and durables. The result is basically an input-output analysis, capable of tracking quantities and purchase locations of expenditures by anglers, support businesses, and employees of the directly and indirectly affected industries. NOAA hopes to have total annual expenditure estimates by end of 2007 and total annual impact estimates by beginning of 2008.

Marine Recreational Information Program Overview

D. Donaldson presented an overview of the Marine Recreational Information Initiative (MRII), which NOAA is building to eventually replace the MRFSS. The new program should improve the collection, analysis, and use of recreational fishing data. The steering committee, as well as the operations team, includes members from the fishery Councils, interstate commissions, state and federal government, and the saltwater fishing community. Priority projects include assessing the appropriateness of current estimation procedures, develop studies to account for anglers not included in effort sampling frames (non-coastal, no phone, no license), and to develop studies to account for anglers not included in catch sampling frames (private access, night fishing, tournament fishing). They will also identify better techniques to look at the For-Hire fisheries, and HMS anglers. Finally, they plan to develop a National Saltwater Angler Registry to better identify the sampling universe, although the lack of state licenses in a few states still cause problems. In addition, there are large scale exemptions which cause problems identifying anglers, such as fishing on a licensed private boat, fishing from private property, shore and public pier fishing, and exclusion of some marine waters. **Donaldson** noted the January 1, 2009 deadline for development of a plan, but pointed out that implementation would likely take longer.

Summary of 2008 FIN Funding

D. Donaldson also reported on the FIN activities planned for 2008. He summarized the planned activities identified in the cooperative agreement which includes 1) coordination and administration of FIN activities, 2) collecting, managing and disseminating marine recreational

fisheries data, 3) Gulf menhaden port sampling, 4) FIN data management system, 5) trip ticket program implementation and operations in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, 6) and recreational/commercial biological sampling. The total budget for 2008 is roughly \$5.1M, but it does not cover all the activities originally identified in the cooperative agreement. Due to the funding shortfall, the program has had to cut several activities, such as head boat port sampling in Texas and Florida, at-sea head boat sampling in Alabama and Florida, the detailed effort pilot survey and cut any increase to electronic trip ticket contractor for quota monitoring/IFQ work. **Donaldson** reported that an additional \$100K had been found to pick up the at-sea head boat sampling in Texas, but it is still short.

Fisheries Disaster Funding Update

R. Hode gave a short overview of the progress made to date on the administration and implementation of the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) by the GSMFC. The short title of this program has been changed because of recent additional supplemental funding opportunities that focus on assistance to the fishing industry. For identification purposes the two programs have been tagged EDRP I and EDRP II.

EDRP I is a five year program that was funded in the amount of \$127M by the U.S. Department of Commerce in September, 2006. The program is divided into three different categories of recovery work aimed at repairing damage to the fisheries resource and related habitat that were damaged or destroyed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The first component is for restoration and rehabilitation of oyster reefs, which was funded at not less than \$38M Gulf wide. The second component was for cooperative research, aimed at assessing the damage to stocks, re-establishing fishery data, and developing methods to mitigate recovery efforts in the future and was funded at not less than \$7M Gulf wide. The remaining funds were approved for repair and restoration to shrimp, crab, finfish and other shell fish grounds and habitat.

To date, \$20M has been spent of the \$127M total available. So far, 1,385 acres of public reefs have been rebuilt, 150,500 cubic yards of cultch material have been placed, and 94,600 sacks of seed oysters have been moved into those rehabbed areas. Since the start of the program, 240 limestone offshore reefs have been installed, 7 barge loads of concrete rubble have been placed as offshore reefs, 6 steel hull vessels have been reefed, and approximately 10,500 cubic yards of rubble has been placed to form low profile nearshore reefs. Finally, 148 sq miles have been cleaned of small debris and 11,000 abandoned crab traps have been removed from fishing grounds.

An additional \$85M was provided to the Gulf as EDRP II, which the states have split and are now in the process of developing details statements of work for their additional activities. **Hode** will keep the Panel updated as progress is made in both sections of the program.

IJF Activities

VanderKooy reviewed the IJF activities since the last Panel meeting in March. **VanderKooy** reported on the status of the Profile/FMPs currently in revision or development and requested the Panel consider from its membership, a representative or representatives to serve on the newly

formed *Arenarius* Technical Task Force. He would contact members directly in the weeks after the meeting for their interest or suggestions.

Election of Chair

After much debate, *B. Zales moved that P. Horn and G. Cane remain as chairs of the Commercial and Recreational Panels respectively. P. Barber seconded and without objection, the motion passed.*

Other Business

B. Zales had provided the Panel with a short discussion paper on marine reserves. An unknown group has found a way to bypass the normal, approved procedure for declaring a Marine Reserve. Under the Antiquities Act, the President of the U.S. can designate a reserve without any outside review. Several areas in the Gulf are identified in the paper and the concern is that the out-going President can declare a number of areas as part of his legacy. **Zales** will keep the Panel and the Commission updated as he learns more.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Thursday, March 15, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

R. Vernon Minton

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

Commissioners

Vernon Minton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Barnett Lawley*)
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)
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
Dale Diaz, MDMF, Biloxi, MS (*Proxy for William Walker*)

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
Joe Ferrer, System Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Harris, FIN Database Manager, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Heather Blough, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Chris Moore, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Springs, MD
Doug Daigle, Lower MS River Sub-basin Committee, Baton Rouge, LA

Aquatic Invasive Species Program Report

R. Lukens provided a written report on the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) on Aquatic Invasive Species. The Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species met October 4-5, 2006 in Charleston, SC. The major issues that the Panel is currently addressing include: the revision of the *Regional Rapid Response Plan* to include Georgia and South Carolina; the development of a process to input data into the National Experts Database; the development of a process to provide data to the Non-indigenous Aquatic Species Database;

and, updating and revising the Invasive Species Website. Their next meeting is scheduled for April 24-25, 2007.

Dale Diaz stated that the Regional Panel has done an outstanding job of getting information out and that in Mississippi they have been able to hire personnel to deal with this very important issue.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program

S. VanderKooy provided a written report on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF). He reported that the Sheephead Profile is complete and will be printed when 2007 funding is made available. The Oyster TTF has been meeting and several first drafts have been reviewed. The TTF will meet again in the spring or summer.

The Crab Subcommittee continues to participate in the derelict trap clean-ups in the Gulf of Mexico. They submitted a proposal to the NOAA Cooperative Research Program for the development of a technique to age crabs from the commercial catch.

He reported that in accordance with the LEC's strategic plan, they continue to work toward regional enforcement goals.

He stated that the Law Summary for 2006 is completed but will not be printed until 2007 funding is available. He reported that the GCRL library data base and over 6,800 pdf files that include publications and minutes of the Commission since 1949, are now available online.

Billfish Program Status Report

R. Lukens updated the Commissioners on the Billfish Program as of December 31, 2006. He provided summaries on progress from each of the Principal Investigators. **V. Vail** asked if the Commission planned on holding a PI conference to present the final results. Funding is not currently available, but **L. Simpson** stated that he would look into possible funding availability.

SEAMAP Program Report

J. Rester reported on SEAMAP activity. He presented a slide showing SEAMAP funding from 1985 to current day. It reflected that we have not necessarily been level funded, we have actually lost funds. The States in many cases have funded research out of their own pockets. The Gulf Program continues to work together in distributing funds. This is the only fishery independent program in the Gulf that provides important stock assessment information.

Cooperative Data Collection Programs Report

D. Donaldson provided written report on current program activity. He presented a slide show to highlight some of the areas of the program. One item discussed the improvement of recreational data collection. A National Review Committee reviewed the data collection and their report recommended that the survey be redesigned. In response to that report action some specific

action was taken. Several regional and national workshops were conducted to identify issues; the MSAR requirements were addressed; plans were made for evaluation of potential biases; plans were made for a Gulf pilot study to test dual frame telephone survey approaches; there was an independent review of economic data; and the creation of a Development Plan. This plan outlines the next steps in the process and establishes a variety of committees and teams that will be looking at a variety of issues in the near future. The redesign needs to be done by January 2009.

He presented a year in review of the two major components of the FIN program – ComFIN and RecFIN(SE). On the recreational side they conducted over 53,000 interviews and exceeded 2006 quotas for all modes by over 40%. The commercial trip tick program was implemented in FL, LA, AL and TX. MS implemented trip ticket programs in oyster, bait shrimp and finfish. Electronic trip tick reporting is being conducted with dealers in TX, LA, MS, AL & FL. This is more efficient and less time consuming. They currently have over 500 dealers on-line which represents almost 40% of the commercial landings Gulf wide.

Under biological sampling, he reported that over 39,000 otoliths had been collected from over 75 species. FIN targets red snapper, king mackerel, gulf and southern flounder, and amberjack. At-sea head boat sampling continues in AL and FL collecting catch and bycatch data.

Almost 9 million records have been loaded into the FIN data management system. This includes commercial trip ticket data from 1985 – 2006; recreational data from 1981 – 2006 (TX recreational data from 1998 – 2005); menhaden data from 1987 – 1999; and, biological data from 2002 – 2006. The system has been on-line as of July 2002.

Charles H. Lyles Award 2007 Recipient Selection

V. Minton turned the gavel over to **Vice Chairman R. Rayburn**. **V. Minton nominated Wayne Swingle for the 2007 Charles H. Lyles Award**. **Chris Nelson seconded**. **V. Minton** stated that many of the Commissioners had talked about nominating **Mr. Swingle** for quite some time. **Mr. Swingle** started his career in Alabama where he served as an entry level biologist working his way up to chief biologist and finally to Director. He then took his current position as Executive Director of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. He has been with the Council since its inception in 1977. He stated that **Mr. Swingle** was an icon in Gulf of Mexico fisheries with an encyclopedic memory. **Nominations were closed. The motion to nominate Wayne Swingle was approved.**

State Director's Reports

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

Artificial Reef Update – Ships to Reefs:

Oriskany: The state has begun the PCB monitoring required by EPA following deployment of this ship in May 2006. Reef fish species will be sampled by FWC reef program staff and Escambia County [Pensacola area] staff for the next 5 years; the County has contracted with the

Texas A&M University Geochemical and Environmental Research Group to do the analyses. In addition to PCBs, the samples are also being analyzed for heavy metals. The project, which may extend beyond 5 years depending on results from the first five years of sampling, is funded primarily by FWC.

USS Hoyt Vandenberg: the ship is proposed for placement on a site off Key West Florida. The FWC received the Certificate of Transfer from MARAD last December and will transfer the vessel to the City of Key West as soon as a Memorandum of Agreement (describing the respective responsibilities of the City and the FWC regarding the transfer of ownership) and the Acceptance of Transfer is signed and returned by the City. The vessel may be moved out of the James River Fleet to a facility in Little Creek, Virginia for cleaning and preparation as soon as March 15, with sinking as soon as January 2008, as opposed to the originally estimated May 2008. Project cost is estimated to be \$5.69 million, with funding from MARAD (\$1.25 million), the FWC (\$70,000), the City of Key West (\$1.2 million) and the Monroe County Tourism Development Council (\$3.2 million.).

A bill has been filed in the 2007 Legislature that would establish a "Ships-2-Reefs" program, wherein funding would be appropriated annually to provide matching grants to local governments wishing to secure a decommissioned military vessel for deployment as an artificial reef to enhance diving and fishing opportunities. The bill authorizes the Commission to establish a plan, a process and eligibility criteria for implementing the program. The annual appropriation to the program could not exceed \$12 million, with single grant awards not exceeding \$3 million; state funding would not exceed 33% of total project cost. The USS Hoyt Vandenberg would serve as a pilot project for the program. Ten million dollars in general revenue funds are proposed for the 2007/2008 fiscal year, but it appears that actual revenue collection may not meet prior estimated expectations, so . . . The bill also proposes to add a "military vessel" theme to Florida's existing Marine Heritage Trail, which includes lighthouses, coastal environments, historic shipwrecks, historic forts and coastal communities.

Red Tide – impact assessment

In 2005 the red tide bloom was extensive, intense, and prolonged, affecting benthic communities as well as fish throughout the water column. An assessment in 2006 showed that spotted sea trout juveniles were significantly affected in the nearshore grassbeds; a spawning area for trout in Tampa Bay was also hit hard – sonic monitoring showed spawning aggregations were present until the red tide showed up and then the fish were gone and did not return to the area in 2006. However, there has been some juvenile recruitment to the area and the population is showing a slow recovery. Juvenile snook weren't as impacted by the red tide, probably due to the low salinity nursery habitats in which the red tide can't survive.

Trap Retrieval / Debris Removal: Recovery – new concept

The Spiny Lobster Advisory Board has been participating in an evaluation of the lobster fishery and development of management options. One of their concerns is recovery of traps lost during major storm events [i.e., tropical storms, hurricanes]. The Board is recommending that fishers be allowed to help each other find missing traps by formally identifying persons they authorize to pick up their traps and filing the list with the local FWC law enforcement office. As proposed, a declaration of disaster by the Governor would initiate an Executive Order from the FWC

Executive Director that would authorize the Emergency Trap Recovery effort for a specified period of time within a specified area. Staff will present this proposal to the other trap fishery Advisory Boards and take it to workshops over the next several months for public comment.

Fisheries Updates:

The Commission is considering a rule that will prohibit anyone from recovering or attempting to recover a monofilament net from state waters without first notifying FWC law enforcement and without a law enforcement officer present to supervise removal and destruction of the net. The intent is to prevent persons from using recovery and disposal of an illegal net as a defense in court to explain or justify their possession of a monofilament net in violation of state rules prohibiting such possession.

Red Drum: The Commission's management objective for this recreational fishery is 30% escapement. A 2005 stock assessment showed the objective is being met [32% Gulf, 34% Atlantic] with abundance and recruitment stable. But fishing effort has been increasing. Thus, the Red Drum Advisory Board has recommended a proactive approach to management rather than wait to see the results of the next stock assessment [2008]. Based on the Board's recommendations and public input FWC staff recommended raising the management objective to 40% escapement and narrowing the slot limit from 18"-27" TL to 20"-26" TL while retaining the 1 fish bag and no closures. Based on public comment at the last Commission meeting, Commissioners asked staff to evaluate the effect of a 21"-27" TL slot with a 1 fish bag limit and no closures. Stakeholders also strongly recommended protecting critical habitat and requiring all anglers to be licensed.

Legislative Update: Our Legislature is now in session and several bills have been filed that affect FWC programs.

The Blue Crab Effort Management Program: this bill almost made it through last year's session; it contains fees for the blue crab hard shell and soft shell endorsements and penalties for specified violations of blue crab regulations.

Non-criminal penalties are proposed for carelessly causing damage to seagrass beds due to prop scarring or vessel grounding. The fines are progressive for repeat violators [\$50 for a first violation, \$1000 for a fourth and subsequent violations] and double if the violation occurs in an aquatic preserve or park. However, willful or wanton operation of a vessel which results in damage to seagrasses is a first degree misdemeanor and refusal to sign the citation or post a bond raises the violation to a second degree misdemeanor. These penalties were recommended by a multi-disciplinary Seagrass Working Group established to evaluate management issues and options for seagrasses in response to a 2003 FWRI report which showed prop scarring damage had increased in severity and extent since a previous assessment in 1995. For example, during that time period there was a 71% increase in prop scarring in Charlotte Harbor and a 32% increase in vessel registrations in Charlotte County.

The Commission is requesting authority to donate perishable seafood products seized from recreational fisheries violations to charitable organizations. Currently such authority exists for commercially harvested product, but evidence in recreational fisheries cases must be frozen and retained until a court disposition is rendered; such evidence has rarely been presented in court

but there is a significant cost [additional freezer space, accountability] to local governments and the FWC for its maintenance and security.

Fee increases are proposed for most of the recreational licenses and permits. For example, the cost of a resident annual saltwater fishing license is proposed to rise from \$12 to \$15. A proposal to require resident shore based anglers to also hold a fishing license was amended out of the bill during the first committee review [currently these anglers are exempt from the license/permit requirements].

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

The Gulf State Park Lodge and motel is being demolished due to damage from Hurricane Ivan and the material that is clean and suitable is being deployed at two inshore artificial reef locations. It is expected that approximately 23,000 tons of material will be used to complete a total of 16 acres on two reefs in south Baldwin County.

Since October 1, 6,174 sacks of oysters have been dredged from Portersville Bay on 527 trips. The main reef received a very large spat set last year which is progressing well but the drills are becoming an increasing threat. Since the Portersville Oyster Reefs have been re-opened to dredging the monthly CPUE's have been between 3 and 3.5 sacks per hour. The dredging has held up longer than initially expected because the number of oystermen participating has been lower than expected.

AMRD staff collected 1,769 otoliths during 2006 representing the five primary targeted species as identified by FIN. These otoliths are expected to be processed, aged according to FIN protocols and entered into the GSMFC database soon.

AMRD staff conducted 2,049 MRFSS angler and economic add-on intercepts during 2006. Some wave intercept targets were not achieved due to reduced fishing activity and additional time samplers need to complete the add-on survey.

In 2006, thirty-four head boat trips were sampled and 870 anglers were intercepted (10% and 29% increase over 2005, respectively). There were 2,220 fish kept by head boat anglers in 2006 compared to 2,910 fish in 2005. AMRD staff also associated a release condition code for as many released fish as possible. In 2005, just over 5% of the red snapper released were eaten by another fish, bird or marine mammal. In 2006, the number of red snapper eaten by a bird, another fish or marine mammal was 14%.

ESF planning coordination is progressing with projects on schedule thus far. Data sheets have been created for various fishing groups. MOU's with representative fishing organizations have been developed.

Mullet stock assessment for 2006 has been completed. Increase in mesh sizes have been recommended for both food and roe fisheries to allow for greater escapement of two year olds to spawning aggregate.

AMRD biologists participated in the Mobile Bays and Bayous Symposium hosted by Mobile Bay NEP and Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant Consortium in Mobile, Alabama. Division biologists were responsible for 4 oral presentations, 2 posters, co-authored the Living Resources Key Note Speech, and co-hosted the Living Resources session. 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.

Mississippi – **D. Diaz** reported on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR).

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Comprehensive Resources Management and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce will host the 7th Annual Smart Growth Conference in Biloxi. This conference will bring partners of Southern Mississippi together to provide information and tools to assist in Smart Growth along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The Office of Marine Fisheries primary focus has been the GSMFC/NMFS Fishery Disaster Recovery and Monitoring Program:

The Shellfish Bureau completed an oyster relay program employing licensed MS commercial oyster fishermen. This program involved moving oysters from areas of the coast that were less impacted by Hurricane Katrina to devastated oyster reefs in the western MS Sound. There were 83 total participants that relayed over 72,000 sacks.

Plans are being made to deploy over 58 thousand cubic yards of cultch material for a spring plant.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources has opened a special oyster season on March 5th in a small area in Jackson County. This is for tonging only with a 10 sack daily limit.

Shrimp, crab, charter boat, hook and line and net fishermen are provided with scanable Fisheries Recovery Report forms to record catch, effort and by-catch information. Each fishery has its own specific pay rate and size of the vessel being used is a factor for some of the programs. Participants can only be paid once within a 24 hour period and can only participate in one program within a 24 hour period. Validation of reported vessel trips for shrimp, crab, charter boat, hook and line and net programs are being achieved by onboard vessel observer trips and logs of vessels actively fishing or docked.

Shrimp and Crab Bureau worked with GCRL on crab trap cleanup protocol and signed a contract for a cooperative effort between agencies. Bids were solicited and a contract was awarded to a crab trap builder for the construction of traps equipped with TED's and escape rings for dispersal to participating fishermen. All licensed crab trap fishermen were notified of the coast wide gear closure between the dates of February 5 through February 16. The derelict trap clean up was conducted February 10 through February 16. Qualified fishermen were paid a bounty for each derelict crab trap brought to disposal sites. A total of 9,862 derelict crab traps were turned in to

be recycled during the 2007 cleanup. Additionally, all participants were given a voucher for fifty new crab traps which are equipped with escape rings and terrapin excluder devices.

Recovery Data Forms for both the blue crab and shrimp fisheries were initiated November 1. Shrimp forms were accepted through December 31, 2006 and the program will resume again with the opening of the 2007 shrimp season. Crab forms will continue to be accepted through the end of February and will resume in the active summer months. Both monitoring programs will end when allotted compensation funds run out.

The Artificial Reef Bureau has hired a contractor to build and deploy reef pyramids to restore offshore artificial reefs damaged by Hurricane Katrina. To date 120 pyramids have been deployed.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has provided a \$100,000 grant to support the restoration of Mississippi's Artificial Reefs. This money will be utilized to replace lost habitat due to Hurricane Katrina.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is distributing disposable paper placemats to restaurant owners, while supplies last. The placemats, which are illustrated with full-color depictions of valuable marine species and descriptions of their habitats, are free to restaurant owners and can be picked up at the DMR in Biloxi, MS. The placemats were designed by Texas Parks and Wildlife artist Clemente Guzman. The placemat illustration is also featured on an 18 x 24-inch poster, which is available free to the public at the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

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

The LDWF has a new Secretary, Bryant Hammett, former legislator. Two weeks ago they held a ground breaking for their new laboratory on Grand Isle. It will be a \$19 million facility, with a 22% cost overrun built in. It will be built on an 8 acre site on the Grand Isle Port Commission property. Unfortunately the Sister Lake facility which is located on an island in Terrebone Parish was lost due to a fire. The fire is still under investigation. This facility has been in existence for over 60 years. A decision has not been made as to whether or not to rebuild at this time.

The LDWF Survey Section that was moved to Baton Rouge to handle the oyster lease program, has now moved back to New Orleans. They are located in a temporary location at Jackson Barracks (a National Guard facility). They will eventually be in a permanent location near the Jackson Barracks.

Earlier this month, the LDWF Commission began the process of rulemaking to lift the oyster lease moratorium which has been in place since 2002. The initial phase will be limited to only those applications that were pending at the time the moratorium was in place. The Commission also completed rulemaking on establishing a new public oyster area. That area is under the influence of the Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Project. This area continues to be productive

despite engineering problems and storm related impacts. Other actions of the Commission include the approval of the transmission of four statutory required stocked assessments to the legislature last week.

In regards to artificial reefs, he reported that LDWF partnered with Cheniere Pipeline to construct a 16 acres oyster and finfish habitat in Calcasieu Lake, which is a public oyster reservation. Three platforms have been sited as offshore reefs since October 2006. Currently there have been 152 platforms sited as reefs since the Program's inception. Thirty seven platforms have been permitted for deployment later this year, 24 of which were damaged or downed by the Hurricanes bringing the total to 81 platforms that have been permitted since the Hurricane.

The oil industry has also realized that since the Hurricanes non-operational platforms are a huge liability. The industry is not required to remove a non-operational platform until one year after the lease is terminated. This means a non-producing platform can remain on location until the last platform in the lease stops producing. The cost to remove a damaged or downed platform is substantially higher than the cost to remove a standing one. They now realize that it is better to take a proactive course and remove non-operational platforms sooner rather than later.

Donations from Shell Oil, Sea Grant and the Louisiana Marketing Board made it possible to re-establish two ice plants. One in Cameron, which is the only ice plant in that major port, and a very large one in St. Bernard to serve both St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parish. Shell also donated an additional \$250K in the form of grants to fishermen. These grants were distributed in amounts of \$5,000 to 45 fishermen. Over 800 fishermen applied for these grants.

The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) was established to oversee most of the recovery activities in the State and also plays a role in the disbursement of Community Development Block Grants. They set-up a small business loan program and allocated \$138 million. The award grants have not yet gone out. All small businesses were eligible for these grants and about 15% (900 applicants) are from the fisheries community. In addition the LRA made a specific commitment of \$20 million to the fishing industry. That money will be used to fund some infrastructure investment as well as some additional direct aid to the fishing industry. They are also considering transferring additional funds from a previous loan guarantee program that has not been successful to aid small businesses.

The LDWF continues to gather data to quantify the impact of the 2005 Hurricane season. Data is preliminary but when comparing a 12 month average prior to the storms with the 12 months following the storm – the impact is significant.

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

Proposed coastal fisheries regulatory issues for 2007

During this year's regulatory process, Coastal Fisheries proposed reducing the daily bag limit of spotted seatrout from 10 to 5 in the Lower Laguna Madre. This proposal marks the first time TPWD has attempted a regional approach to managing a saltwater fishery. This reduced bag

limit addresses a continued downward trend in the spawning stock biomass of spotted seatrout in the Lower Laguna Madre.

Coastal Fisheries recommended increasing the minimum size for sheepshead from the current 12 inches to 15 inches, with increments of 1 inch per year for the next 3 years. Recent publications suggest a minimum size of 15 inches provides better protection for breeding sheepshead.

Coastal Fisheries is proposing a “no-take” rule for diamondback terrapins. The rule would exempt permitted non-game dealers and collectors. Sales of these turtles are prohibited over much of its range, but a growing market suggests Texas should take protective measures.

A proposal was made for a purely catch-and-lease recreational tarpon fishery. TPWD considered a proposal to raise the minimum size limit on tarpon from 80 inches to 90 inches after a 91-inch tarpon landed in 2006 broke the old record but elected to go with the more restrictive proposal.

Another proposal would require the use of circle hooks when fishing for red snapper in both the commercial and recreational fishery. In addition, the minimum size limit for red snapper is proposed to be reduced from 15 to 13 inches, provided the National Marine Fisheries Service adopts the same regulation.

Needed language was added into the Statewide Hunting and Fishing proclamation that mirrors federal rules for the red snapper commercial fishery individual fishing quota program to enhance the ability of Texas enforcement officials to prosecute cases in Texas courts. This language will allow state officials to make state cases when cases would otherwise not meet the profile or economic level needed to warrant federal prosecution.

Proposals also included minor changes to “clean-up” current rules. They include broadening the definition of what types of boats are prohibited from harassing fish; language that makes it clear that coastal and salt waters mean the same thing; and exempting offshore aquaculture operators from state bag and size limits as they land cultured fish.

Coastal Fisheries is also continuing to work within the federal process of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service to create the most flexible management options for Texas – such as separate season/bag limits in Texas waters as compared to the rest of the Gulf.

A proposal would allow the use of catfish heads as bait in crab traps by commercial crab fishermen, provided the catfish were obtained from a permitted aquaculturist in the United States. Catfish heads are good bait for crab traps, and aquaculture facilities typically have no use for catfish heads following harvest.

Legislature – 80th Regular Session (2007)

TPWD is seeking statutory changes to implement aspects of the currently proposed federal reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevenson Fisheries Management Act that would require a Texas saltwater fishing license and saltwater stamp for any recreational angler landing 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 is seeking 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.

TPWD is monitoring House Bill 3 which is a legislative proposal to set aside water to keep Texas' rivers, bays, and estuaries biologically healthy. It would establish the management of the water resources of the state, including the protection of instream flows and freshwater inflows. The bill would require the state to develop environmental flow standards to protect instream flows and freshwater inflows. HB3 calls for protection of "the biological health of our public and private lands, streams and rivers, and bay and estuary systems," and to "address ways that the ecological soundness of those systems will be ensured in the water rights administration and enforcement and water allocation processes." The bill also includes provisions to encourage and facilitate voluntary conversions of existing water rights to environmental flow protection and deposits of water rights into the Texas Water Trust.

Coastal Fisheries Programs & Projects

Resource Project

TPWD is coordinating with USFWS and NMFS to obtain permits for conducting routine fishery-independent program sampling. A biological assessment of what impact our monitoring program has on species of concern in state waters will be the basis for our formal consultation with USFWS and NMFS.

Harvest Project

Latest estimates of how many fish recreational anglers caught in 2005-2006 on Texas bays and passes show a 4 percent decline in fish harvest coast-wide. We believe much of this can be attributed to the impact of Hurricane Rita on Sabine Lake, where total fish landings decreased by 47 percent. Rita reduced fishable days by six weekend days and 13 weekdays. The data showed significant decreases in landings for several species, including Atlantic croaker (down 9.2 percent), gaff-topsail catfish (down 9 percent), and spotted seatrout (down 3.4 percent). The sharpest decline was for southern flounder, where the catch dropped by 36 percent. Harvest increased for a few species, including black drum (up 4 percent), red drum (up 1 percent) and sand seatrout (up 2 percent).

Life History Research - PRBMFRS

Sand seatrout samples were collected and processed for a life history study. A billfish research project, administered by GSMFC for NMFS, was completed and a final report has been drafted.

Routine monitoring otolith collections from gill net samples continued, as was processing and aging of otoliths collected in previous years.

Spotted seatrout otoliths from a study investigating sex ratios of fish collected by shoreline and reef gillnet sets have been processed and age analysis is ongoing. Otoliths were collected from red drum sampled for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University.

Red drum otoliths from fall 2005 and spring 2006 collections for the genetic monitoring study have been aged.

Genetics Research - PRBMFRS

A sheepshead genetic study funded by the Sport Fish Restoration program was completed and a final report was written. A summary of genetic data collected on billfish was completed and included in a final report on the billfish project. New studies on the genetic variation in southern flounder and alligator gar have been initiated.

Coordination of red drum fin clip collections for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University is continuing. This project is a multi-year fish stocking efficacy study using DNA fingerprinting technology capable of determining which brood fish in hatchery tanks produced the offspring. Early results indicate significant contribution of hatchery produced red drum in the Galveston Bay population but little contribution to the Aransas Bay population.

Artificial Reef Project

Most all Artificial Reef Project efforts have been directed at the Texas Clipper ship project. The ship was towed from Beaumont to Brownsville in early November 2006. As of early March, hull modifications and cleanups were about 45% complete. Over 500 cu yd of asbestos, 20,000 lbs of PCB containing material, and 1,100 cu yd of debris have been removed. The projected date for final cleanup is March 31, dependent on final EPA approval. A reefing ceremony is planned for 31 March at the South Padre Island convention center to honor those who have participated in the project and those who served onboard the ship during her years as the USS Queens (1944-46), SS Excambion (1948-1958), and the Texas Clipper (1965-96).

Dale Shively has been working with the Saul Steinberg Foundation (New York City) on a very special "problem" encountered on the Texas Clipper. Saul Steinberg was a very famous artist from the 1940s – 1990s eras (died in 1999) who is best known for his work as a cartoonist and illustrator for the New Yorker magazine. Around 1948 he was commissioned to do 4 murals on each of the 4-Aces Export Line of which the Clipper was one. The other 3 ships were scrapped years ago, with the Clipper being the only existing vessel. It was known that this mural (about 20ft long) was on the ship, it but disappeared in the 1970s. During the removal of asbestos and walls inside the upper decks, the mural was discovered; it had been painted and wallpapered over. Sections of the mural are visible. The mural has been removed and is awaiting a new home where it can be restored. The Steinberg foundation (a nonprofit setup from a trust in Saul Steinberg's will to promote the study of his work and other art) is interested in either acquiring the piece or transferring it an art museum that supports Steinberg's work. The value is unknown since a piece this large has never been on the market before but it is speculated that if the mural can be restored and is in good condition, it could be in the 6-figure range.)

As part of TPWD's new Public Reef Building Program, TPWD is considering accepting the donation of a steel-hulled 75ft shrimp boat. The boat would be reefed off Port Isabel. The boat has been cleaned and discussions now surround the anchoring system needed to hold the boat in position until it settles into the bottom. (The Public Reefing Program was approved by the TPWD Commission last October and regulations in are now in place. This program will

allow the general public to participate in the reefing process using their own, TPWD approved, materials at state reef sites near shore.)

Two petroleum platforms have been reefed off Texas since our last meeting, and there are several others that may be reefed in the next few months.

TPWD continues working with the Recreational Fishing Alliance on the Texas Great Barrier Reef Project which will be located 7-8 miles offshore and 0.5 mile wide, extending from Sabine Pass to Mexico, broken only by anchorages and ship channels. Recreational Fishing Alliance anticipates receiving \$5M per year to place thousands of engineered reef units to provide habitat for red snapper.

TPWD expressed its concerns with MARAD regarding two ships that were brought from San Francisco Bay to Brownsville for salvage. MARAD had planned to contract the removal of fouling organisms in or near the Texas Territorial Sea. TPWD protested that this hull cleaning or 'scamping' was an unacceptable risk for introducing exotic species into Texas coastal waters and could result in economic and ecological harm. The vessels were scamped a few miles beyond Texas waters near Brownsville where NMFS had no recourse to prevent it. U.S. Coast Guard requirements specify that hull-cleaning activities must be conducted on MARAD vessels prior to their relocation for disposal. As a result, MARAD agreed in the future all of their other vessels will go through a hull cleaning before being moved to a different water body. TPWD is in the process of organization a meeting with MARAD, NMFS, USCG, and other agencies to develop procedures that will allow for the movement of MARAD ships in an environmentally responsible manner.

Inshore Shrimp License Management Program

Buyback Round # 19 (closed January 10, 2007)

- A record 199 inshore shrimp licenses were bought back, the largest number ever accepted in any single round of the license buy-back program.

Overall shrimp buyback totals since 1996:

- 1,706 licenses purchased
- Represents a 53% reduction in pressure.
- Inshore shrimping efforts on Texas bays have declined from about 20,000 days per year in the mid-1980s to less than 10,000 days per year.

Crab License Management Program

Round # 7

- 2 applications were accepted, but both declined.

Commercial Finfish License Management Program

Round # 10 (Currently underway)

- 5 licenses were purchased and 4 applications are still pending.

Oysters One of several scoping meetings held around the country was held at TPWD's Dickinson Marine Lab on January 17, 2007 by the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference, FDA and Texas Department of Health Services to begin discussions for developing an education program for shellfish harvesters and dealers. Input was sought from local dealers and harvesters to evaluate practical measures that could be incorporated into their harvest and processing activities to reduce risk to consumers from *Vibrio*. Input from these meetings will be incorporated into a proposal to be considered at the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference meeting in August.

A recent *Vibrio* lawsuit out of Dallas may lead an insurance underwriter to deny insurance coverage to restaurants that serve raw oysters that has not been post-harvest treated. An investigative consultant working for the insurance company's underwriter indicated this recommendation would be made to the underwriter.

SB 791, filed during this legislative session, would classify oysters as "an inherently unsafe product for personal consumption." The bill, pushed by one of the larger Galveston Bay oyster leaseholders, would remove product liability from the manufacturer or seller should a consumer get sick from consuming oysters.

The Food and Drug Administration advised consumers to avoid consumption of raw oysters harvested from San Antonio Bay, Texas after 25 people in Maryland became ill during February 9th thru 11th. Testing by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene indicated they had contracted norovirus. Oyster beds in San Antonio Bay were shut down by the Texas Department of Health Services on 24 February as a precaution and remain closed while the FDA conducts its investigation. According to the Texas Department of Health, if contamination occurred, it did not appear to be widespread, and it is also unclear as to how or where the possible contamination was introduced. The Maryland health department also found that the chef had a norovirus infection, so there's some question as to the source of virus. Two seafood distributors have issued voluntary recalls of oysters harvested from San Antonio Bay on 2 February 2007, and all of these oysters have been recalled.

Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program

Art Morris email, 7 March 2007 – During mid-February's Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Project, 2,816 crab traps were removed coastwide. Most (~ 62%) came out of Galveston Bay. During the last 6 years, this program has removed 22,746 abandoned traps. To commemorate the milestone of removing the 20,000th abandoned crab trap from Texas waters, 2 lifetime fishing licenses were given away, one to an upper coast volunteer and one to a lower coast volunteer.

Sea Turtles

Coastal Fisheries Division employees worked with nonprofit, university, and government partners to recover, transport, and rehabilitate 95 cold stunned green sea turtles that stranded in the Lower Laguna Madre in late January. Sea turtles were moved from South Padre Island to the department's fish hatchery in Corpus Christi and to the Texas State Aquarium. Turtles weighing 3 to 200 pounds were held in heated indoor tanks and fed romaine lettuce, spinach, and squid. After a month in captivity, 91 healthy sea turtles were transported to Port Isabel in hatchery fish

hauling units, loaded on the deck of a Coastal Fisheries research vessel, and returned to green sea turtle foraging grounds in the Lower Laguna Madre.

TPWD Weekly Bulletin 23 October 2006

A party boat angler out of Freeport caught and landed a new state record Warsaw grouper. The fish weighed in at 302.7 pounds and measured 75 inches long. This broke the old record of 277 pounds and 72.5 inches set in 1989.

Current Status of the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Action Plan

D. Daigle reported on behalf of the Lower Mississippi River Sub-basin Committee, Baton Rouge, LA., of which he is the Coordinator. It was formed under the National Hypoxia Plan. He gave additional background info about this committee. It is cooperative effort between the States along the river, Ohio and the federal agencies. He talked to the Commissioners about their current activities. Stake holders (States and Federal agencies) are heavily involved. The agricultural interest has been strongly represented. However, the folks that have the most direct interest in this issue, the fishing industry for the Gulf has not been strongly represented. This is a Gulf problem but it can only be solved in the Mississippi River Basin. The Gulf Alliance has identified nutrient reduction as a major issue, but the localized hypoxia that the Gulf States deal with themselves is not the same as this large zone that forms from the Mississippi River into Texas waters. The Gulf States are going to play a role in helping something happen, but it is really the River States that are going to have to provide the solution. He encouraged the Commissioners to be involved in the process. He made several suggestions: 1) He proposed a letter (to Congress) being sent as we did back in 2000. The plan is in the process of being re-accessed and they have not had adequate funding to address this very important issue. Congress has been largely left out of this process. They will not get funding unless Congress acts on it. 2) The National Task Force will be meeting in New Orleans soon and he encouraged the Commission to attend and support this effort. He will keep Jeff updated on this action plan so that he can pass information onto the Commission.

W. Gaidry stated that he felt that if the high nutrient waters were filtered through the marshes in a functional delta system that it would be a beneficial effect. He asked if restoring the delta system is part of the plan to reduce the hypoxia. **D. Daigle** stated that it was an important part but he also stated that funding is limited and they still do not know what is going to be built.

D. Fruge has been somewhat involved. He has been frustrated because the people who have been most affected have not been involved (fishermen). Perhaps the Commission can explore how to get info to them or at least to find out what their concerns about this issue are.

J. Roussel asked if there was a way to become more formally involved in this issue. Perhaps through the Habitat Committee. **D. Daigle** was unsure how this could be accomplished and if it may be too complicated. He will take this back to the Committee. **B. Gautreaux** agreed that the commission should be involved.

J. Roussel moved to write a letter to Congress in support the Action Plan. He would like to see a draft letter from the staff prior to it being sent. He would also like to see the staff

involved in the National Task Force Meeting to be held this summer as a participant or as a significant vested interested. M. Ray seconded. W. Gaidry added that in writing the letter we need to recognize the fact that returning to a functional delta system is an important solution. The motion was approved. J. Roussel stated that the problem is not just the nutrient loading – that is a major contributor – but the way man has altered the physical processes of the delta is also a significant contributor. He is concerned if we just focus on one contributor we will lose sight of the fact that this is a large complex natural system that we have altered not only upstream but also downstream.

Future Meetings

G. Herring reported that she had entered into a contract with the Marriott Grand Hotel, Point Clear, AL on behalf of the Commission for October 15-18, 2007. She is currently in discussion with the Florida Commissioners on a location for the March 17-20, 2008 meeting.

R. Rayburn moved to hold a **Billfish Symposium** incorporated into the **March 2008** meeting. **V. Vail** seconded. **The motion was approved.**

Publications List

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

Other Business

V. Minton took the opportunity to again thank Ron Lukens for his 20 years of service to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

R. Rayburn thanked the Commission and the staff for their assistance with the Sea Grant Meeting.

R. Rayburn asked the Executive Director to write Robert Cook regarding the vacancy in the Texas legislative commissioner. **L. Simpson** stated that he would contact him.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:17 am.

Data Management Work Group Meeting Summary October 9, 2007

Attendance

Jeff Rester
Bob Harris
Donna Bellais
Butch Pellegrin
Mark McDuff
Joanne Shultz
Terry Romaine

The Data Coordinating Work Group (DCWG) first discussed the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) proposal to manage SEAMAP data in the Gulf of Mexico. J. Rester stated that all SEAMAP participants would still be responsible for collecting, entering, editing, and verifying data collected through their independent SEAMAP programs. The SEAMAP participant would generate a report detailing the number of records and observations entered and submit it with the data to the Commission. The SEAMAP participant would produce and submit to the Commission a cruise report and corresponding metadata. The Commission would be responsible for collecting SEAMAP data from all SEAMAP participants to include in the appropriate SEAMAP database. The Commission would edit and verify all submitted SEAMAP data to determine accuracy and compile number of records submitted. The Commission would upload the data to the appropriate SEAMAP database and generate a report detailing the number of records and observations uploaded. The Commission would also be responsible for compiling metadata submitted by SEAMAP participants and provide access to SEAMAP data through the Internet and direct data requests. Finally, J. Rester stated that the Commission would provide data entry programs to all participants that need it and provide programs to ingest SEAMAP data from participants that do not use the SEAMAP data entry program to avoid data entry duplication.

The DCWG next discussed the new SEAMAP surveys that would soon begin collecting data and their data needs. B. Pellegrin stated that he would be discussing the Deepwater Reefish Survey and the Vertical Habitat Reefish Survey with the SEAMAP Subcommittee next week. He stated that NMFS has reexamined their inclusion in SEAMAP sampling and that NMFS was proposing that these surveys not be included as SEAMAP surveys. The money for these surveys would be redirected into the current NMFS SEAMAP surveys.

J. Rester asked if NMFS would be including their shark/red snapper longlining survey as a SEAMAP survey since Mississippi had proposed an inshore survey using the same gear and the same methodology. The DCWG felt this was something the SEAMAP Subcommittee should explore. The Mississippi Inshore Shark Survey would not be collecting any data that was not already part of the NMFS Shark Longlining Survey.

J. Rester stated that the Florida Shelf Trawl Survey would be collecting the same data as the current shrimp/groundfish surveys. He stated that Alabama's Winter Trawl Survey would also be collecting the same data as the shrimp/groundfish surveys. J. Shultz stated that the Winter Plankton Survey would be collecting the same data as the other plankton surveys. J. Rester stated that the Louisiana Inshore Trawl Survey would be collecting data similar to the

shrimp/groundfish surveys and that these surveys were being resumed. M. McDuff asked about the side scan sonar work and how that data would be collected and stored. J. Rester stated that he was not sure how it would be stored, but they would be discussing the new surveys at the Subcommittee meeting next week and would find out then.

The DCWG discussed survey documentation. J. Rester stated that he had received documentation from all SEAMAP partners except NMFS. He showed examples of the various quality of documentation that he received. He then asked about what should be given to the public when they request data. M. McDuff showed an example of what NMFS had produced for their longline survey. The documentation explained the survey design and how the data was collected. It was approximately 24 pages in length and he stated that something similar should be produced for all SEAMAP surveys and distributed with data requests.

The DCWG next discussed quality control of SEAMAP data. J. Rester proposed that after any SEAMAP survey is completed, the SEAMAP participant will enter all data into the data entry program within 60 days of final sampling. The data entry program will generate a report detailing all data entered. A copy of the report and the entered data will be sent to the Commission for error checking and data verification. The Commission will review the submitted data, and if any errors exist, the Commission will contact the SEAMAP participant for corrections. Corrections will be the responsibility of the SEAMAP participant. Once correct, the Commission will upload the data into the appropriate SEAMAP database. After the Commission has uploaded the data into the SEAMAP database, a report will be generated detailing what was entered into the SEAMAP database. This report will be sent back to the SEAMAP participant for verification against the report generated from the data entry program. The Commission will generate a final load report and will be provided to all SEAMAP participants after each survey has been loaded into the SEAMAP database. A data quality meeting will be held after the data is uploaded to the appropriate SEAMAP database and the final load report is produced. Participants will evaluate identified data errors, validity of samples (i.e. ops codes and comment sections) and potential changes in data management design. During the quality control meeting, participants will also review cruise reports to ensure all relevant information is included in the metadata file. The meeting can be held through a conference call. M. McDuff felt it was important for users to have the ability to question the data. He suggested trying to develop a data issues management system that would allow users to question the data and any answer would be stored in the database for future use.

J. Shultz discussed the current project to update the plankton database. She stated that David Hanisko was compiling three databases into one and was also developing documentation to go along with the database. She stated that the project should be finished by next June.

Finally, the DCWG discussed the need for the other work groups to meet. B. Pellegrin stated that the Shrimp/Groundfish Work Group needed to review their data sheets, the Florida Trawl Survey, and also compliance with SEAMAP protocols. T. Romaine stated that she did not see a need for the Environmental Data Work Group to meet at this time, but J. Rester should send an email to the members to see if they felt there was a need for a meeting. A conference call could be sufficient to handle any concerns. J. Rester next questioned whether the Adult Finfish Work Group was composed of the correct individuals to help in the development of the Inshore Shark Survey.

APPROVED BY:
Leslie D. Hartman
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**Derelict Crab and Blue Crab Stock Assessment Workshop
WORK SESSION MINUTES
July 11 – 12, 2007
Ocean Springs, MS**

Chairman H. Perry called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.. The following attended:

Members Present

Harriet Perry, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Anne McMillen-Jackson, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Leslie Hartman, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Stephanie Taylor, Intern, Fairhope, AL

Others

Bill Richardson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Review State Appendices and Add New Materials

VanderKooy noted that the appendices in the revision to the Derelict Trap Guidelines were unable to be combined into multi-state sections and would remain separated by state and that each state would complete each of the following sections (A-L):

- A. Results (in narrative form)
- B. Planning Timeline
- C. Sample Timeline
- D. Regulations/Legislation
- E. Forms (used to collect data, sign up, and liability)
- F. Stakeholders (groups/company sponsors etc.)
- G. Program Publicity
- H. Education/Outreach
- I. Budget/Funding
- J. Specialized Equipment
- K. Disposal
- L. Program Recognition

It was agreed that in Section V. the term “Appendices” be replaced with “State Programs.” **VanderKooy** indicated that the sections should include a brief narrative, a few good examples or tables, and that it should not be a data dump, as it was before. It was agreed by all that an additional section titled “Overview” be included in the

guidelines themselves to sum up the efforts of trap cleanup Gulf-wide, to note the issues and trials encountered during development, and provide an overview/summary to explain the Gulf's experience in developing such programs. **Guillory and Hartman** did a quick draft of the "Overview" section during the morning break and the group discussed the section upon returning from lunch. **Guillory** will complete the "Overview" section and provide it to **VanderKooy** for distribution. Everyone was given a deadline of **August 31, 2007** to provide their formatted state sections for inclusion and review, prior to the October 2007 GSMFC Annual Meeting. **VanderKooy** anticipates requesting the subcommittee's approval at that time to move the revision to the TCC for their immediate review and consideration.

Review, Discuss, and Revise Lipofuscin Proposal

The members looked over and addressed the CRP reviewer's comments on the Lipofuscin and Blue Crab Rearing Proposal which had been rejected by the NOAA Cooperative Research Program last year. GCRL indicated a concern over their budget, due to the expected loss of their Maryland Grant monies. The group agreed on some revisions to the narrative and made adjustments to their appropriate states' budgets to cut unnecessary and duplicative items and staff. The biggest budgetary change discussed was the possibility of replacing Alabama's pond grow-out with tank grow-out by GCRL to cut costs. No changes will be made until Alabama has had a chance to review their other commitments and agrees to the changes. **Perry** decided to undertake the outreach/education section with specific focus on fishermen and revising the appropriate sections, adding the positive reviewer comments to the proposal, as needed, and finding more information about crab mortality from Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin. **Perry and Jackson** will edit the proposal narrative to address the concerns raised by the reviewers and provide the text to **VanderKooy** for distribution and committee review. **VanderKooy** gave an **August 3, 2007** deadline for budget adjustments and anticipates submission on **August 10, 2007**. The state directors will be apprised of any changes and revisions for their consideration prior to final submission with NOAA.

Marine Mammal Interactions Tier II Designation

VanderKooy stated that the Blue Crab Traps are remaining at a Category III instead of the proposed Category II upgrade. **VanderKooy** is working with NOAA marine mammals division to move ahead with the originally discussed education and outreach approach.

There being no further business, Perry moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm July 11, 2007.

EDRP STATE DIRECTORS MEETING

May 22-23, 2007

Atlanta, Georgia

Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. The following people were present:

Ginny Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL
Vernon Minton, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
William Walker, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
John Oliver, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MS
Gary Reisner, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MS
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Introduction and Purpose of Meeting

L. Simpson stated that it appears that the Gulf States will receive some additional disaster funding in response to damages caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. There is a bill in Congress that would provide \$85 million in disaster funds to assist in the recovery of the Gulf of Mexico fisheries. There may be more flexibility in how these funds could be used which will allow the states to better help the fishing industry. **G. Reisner** noted that although the bill has not passed yet, it appears that it will and the group should have a definitive answer by the end of the week. Therefore, the purpose of this meeting was to determine how the funding should be distributed among the states as well as determine the appropriate vehicle for distributing the funds to the states. It was suggested that these funds should be provided to the GSMFC, via cooperative agreement [like the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) monies] and then the GSMFC will subcontract with each of the states to accomplish the work. **After some discussion, the group agreed that having NOAA Fisheries distribute the funds to the GSMFC, via cooperative agreement, would be the best vehicle for distributing the funds among the Gulf States.**

MSCMA State Funding Needs

The group then began a general discussion regarding future funding in NOAA Fisheries for 2008 and beyond. It was noted that NOAA Fisheries has distributed a spreadsheet requesting funding needs for fishery-dependent activities that relate to Magnuson-Stevens Act implementation cost by the

states. There was discussion regarding if states should compile this information independently or submit something as a group. **D. Donaldson** noted that he was compiling a list of regional needs (under the auspices of FIN) and would be sending those needs to NOAA Fisheries after approval by the SFFMC. **After some discussion, it was decided that the states would provide their needs to the GSMFC by June 6, 2007 and Commission staff would compile the state needs as well as the FIN needs into the spreadsheet and send it to NOAA Fisheries.**

Overview of Activities/General Comments

L. Simpson believed it would be useful for each state to discuss the various activities they would fund with the potential disaster monies. **C. Perret** stated that the main emphasis in Mississippi will be establishing a working waterfront by rebuilding and replacing infrastructure (piers, docks, etc.) that were damaged by the storms. He was concerned about Section 115 MSCMA limitations that might be applied to these funds. Other items they want to address include, but are not limited to, vegetated wetlands, seafood promotion (includes education and outreach), economic post-storm studies, gear compensation, land acquisition, artificial reef building, and data monitoring. **V. Minton** stated that Alabama would like focus on data from fishermen extended out for 3 years from current efforts, state improvements in both recreational and commercial data collection, oyster reef development, remote monitoring, artificial reef restoration, ecosystem management, state facility infrastructure restoration, habitat development and restoration, institute check stations for oyster fishery and redevelop destroyed boat basins. He also wants these funds to be more flexible and open for interpretation than the previous disaster funds. **J. Roussel** stated he was discouraged by the lack of flexibility in the EDRP funds and would utilize these new monies for direct assistance to the fishing industry such as vessel repair, gear replacement, etc. He needs to restore resource management offices (infrastructure) lost by the storm. He wants to work in marketing with quality certification, debris mapping and removal state-wide, vessel removal, and to address significant menhaden fishery losses not addressed previously. **G. Vail** stated that there needs to be more flexibility regarding consistency with section 115 of the MSCMA, especially as pertains to recognition of TED compliance. In Florida these funds would be used to develop a scientific approach to locate the best sites for the long-term survival when restoring/enhancing oyster reefs as well as continue to monitor the status of the resources. Purchase of a barge to do oyster work is now required as the existing barge is deemed unusable after having sunk. The funds would essentially be used to expand on the work that was started with the EDRP monies. **M. Ray** stated that the money would be used to rebuild infrastructure (boat ramps, piers, etc.) as well as habitat restoration.

Discussion of Gulf Alliance Issue

W. Walker stated that the Gulf of Mexico Governors Alliance is a group consisting of representatives from all five Gulf States that is working towards a long-term partnership that can address an expanded suite of issues, culminating in a healthier Gulf of Mexico ecosystem and economy. **W. Walker** suggested that \$5 million of these funds (split equally among the states) be given to the Gulf Alliance so they can develop a plan to help in the recovery of the fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. This plan would utilize the criteria outlined in Section 115 in the Magnuson-

Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSCMA). **J. Roussel** suggested an alternative that the Gulf Alliance work with the states individually and submit projects that could be funded using the disaster funds. **Walker moved/Ray seconded that \$5 million be allocated to the Gulf Alliance and the Alliance would present a plan to the State Directors for approval within one (1) year of receiving the funds. The motion was seconded and passed with Florida, Texas and Mississippi voting for and Louisiana and Alabama voting against the motion.**

Discussion of Allocation of Funds

The group then addressed how to allocate the funds. It was noted that the EDRP funds were distributed using a percentage split among the states and the new funds could be distributed in a similar manner. **J. Roussel** stated that these funds should be allocated based on the need of the individual states as determined by NOAA Fisheries. **J. Oliver** asked how would NOAA Fisheries determine the need of the individual states. **J. Roussel** responded that as a starting point, need could be defined by the relative size of an individual state’s industry and the proportional impact of the storms on each state. **C. Perret moved/Minton seconded that the new disaster funds be allocated to the states using the same percentages employed by the original EDRP. The motion was seconded. J. Roussel made a substitute motion that the new disaster funds be allocated to the states based on the need of the individual states. The substitute motion was not seconded and the motion failed. Therefore, the group voted on the original motion and the motion passed with Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Texas voting for and Louisiana voting against the motion.** The following table outlines the distribution of funds, by state:

	Percent (%)	State portion
Texas	2.5%	\$2,000,000
Louisiana	41.0%	\$32,800,000
Mississippi	29.0%	\$23,200,000
Alabama	23.0%	\$18,400,000
Florida	3.5%	\$2,800,000
Administration	1.0%	\$800,000
	100%	\$80,000,000

Discussion of Timelines for Cooperative Agreement Submission

G. Reisner stated that the group should target getting the cooperative agreement into the system by June 30th. In order to meet that deadline, the cooperative agreement needs to be fairly general. The group identified seven major categories that the work should fall under. The categories are:

- Direct assistance
- Infrastructure

- Monitoring
- Research
- Outreach
- Habitat
- Marketing/Testing

Each state needs to utilize the same set of categories although not all states will have jobs in each category. For each job, the state needs to provide a brief description of the activities that will be undertaken (one or two paragraphs) and then the associated costs for those activities. This information needs to be provided to GSMFC staff by **June 6, 2007**. **Staff will send out an e-mail that outlines the various categories, funding allocations, and submission deadlines to the states. The cooperative agreement will be designed to be a 5-year program.**

The meeting was recessed at 5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2007

The meeting was reconvened at 8:50 a.m.

Meeting Recap

L. Simpson provided a brief synopsis of the meeting. A summary will be developed for this meeting and distributed to the group. The group began discussing the start date and pre-award costs for the program, and after some discussion **J. Roussel** noted that this was not the appropriate group to determine this issue. He asked that staff work with the state and federal grants personnel to address this issue. **It was agreed that the disaster funds would be transferred to the Southeast Regional Office-Grants Division and they will work with the GSMFC to execute the cooperative agreement.**

Other Business

J. Roussel noted that since the menhaden industry was devastated by the recent storms, it was appropriate to provide some funds to assist them in their recovery efforts. **J. Roussel moved/Perret seconded that up to \$15 million be allocated to the menhaden fishery for losses due to Hurricane Katrina and Rita. The assistance program to be developed by the GSMFC Menhaden Advisory Committee to ensure that needed areas are addressed and the program to be administered by the GSMFC. The Plan will be approved by the State Directors before implementation. The motion was seconded and passed with Mississippi, Florida, Texas and Louisiana voting for and Alabama voting against the motion.**

The following table outlines the distribution of funds, by state (based on the previously agreed-upon percentages):

	Percent (%)	State portion
Texas	2.5%	\$1,625,000
Louisiana	41.0%	\$26,650,000
Mississippi	29.0%	\$18,850,000
Alabama	23.0%	\$14,950,000
Florida	3.5%	\$2,275,000
Administration	1.0%	\$650,000
Total	100%	\$65,000,000

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

**EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 13, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

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
Alton Waldrep, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, Alabama
Vernon Minton, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, Alabama
Jim Duffy, ADCNR, Dolphin Island, Alabama
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi
Michael Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi
Scott Gordon, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi
Mike Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, Mississippi
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Marine Fisheries Division, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Robin Pilcher, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Patrick Banks, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
David Lavergne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Martin Bourgeois, LDWF, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Barbara Gregg, TPWD, Austin, Texas
Tom Wagner, TPWD Rockport, TX
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, Texas

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, Mississippi
Dave Donaldson, 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
Donna Bellais, GSMFC - Program Analyst

Others

Ellie Roche, NOAA-NMFS, St Petersburg, Florida
Sandy Rogers, Hancock Bank, Gulfport, Mississippi

Agenda

Mr. Simpson opened the meeting, thanking those in attendance for their presence, and indicating that this was an Emergency Disaster Recovery Program "Work Session." Because the agenda was informal, no formal agenda approval was required.

Introduction and Purpose

Mr. Simpson acknowledged the value of such work sessions in that it enabled EDRP Participants to network with each other and to exchange ideas and program successes. It was indicated that work progress and reimbursements to date in the various Gulf States was as expected at this stage of the grant program. He noted that all five states had been visited by himself and Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator, in 2006, and that future visits were also planned.

Additionally, Mr. Simpson addressed apparent misinformation concerning possible congressional changes to the Emergency Disaster Program. He indicated that meetings with representatives in Washington revealed no knowledge of any changes to the program but that there were pending discussion regarding wet debris removal programs. It was felt that this may have resulted in the misinformation in the EDRP. No further information concerning the wet debris program was available.

Mr. Minton of Alabama DCNR requested for the record the correct title of the Disaster Program. Mrs. Virginia Herring, GSMFC advised that the correct title was the "EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM".

Following round table introductions, Mr. Duffy of Alabama DNCR requested that an advance copy of the attendance sheet be forwarded to him so that he could contact his counterparts regarding cultch material availability.

Ms. Ellie Roche, NOAA-NMFS, was recognized and noted that even though the EDRP grant was NOAA funded, the GSMFC was the Coordinating Agency and that all changes, issues or questions regarding State EDRP projects should first be addressed to EDRP Coordinator. Significant Statement of Work changes or major budget amendments would be reviewed by NOAA and the two agencies would work together towards finding solutions and ways and means to accommodate State needs where appropriate.

Overview of Program Administration

Mr. Hode also thanked those in attendance noting that the work session was at the request of the participants and that it was purposefully created as an informal session in order to

facilitate open discussion between State Principal Investigators, Program Coordinators and Financial Personnel.

Progress Reports: It was noted that State EDRP progress reports for the period September 06 through December 06 had been received and were in order; and, that quarterly reports for the period January 07 through March 07 would be due by April 30th.

Budget and SOW Amendments: Sample budget and SOW amendment formats were provided to the States in anticipation of future changes. The format was based on one developed for Mississippi when it recently requested permission to move funding forward in several projects in order to expedite programs. States were requested to use the format in future changes in order to maintain consistency between states but more importantly for the purpose of tracking changes. The amendments would include strike-outs as well as new information; strike-outs being necessary in order to determine what the original SOW or budget contained before amendment. Mr. Hode indicated that following this format would aid immensely in the coordination process.

An expenditure report was distributed for information purposes. The report indicated that expenditures to date amounted to nearly 5 million dollars; with nearly 4.7 million of that having been reimbursed to Mississippi for pre-award and quarterly progress associated with cultch plants and relays, derelict crab pot removal programs and artificial reef installations. Mr. Gordon, MDMR indicated that Mississippi was fortunate to have been able to move forward because the State's fiscal structure allowed them begin spending immediately. Most other states were required to have Legislative budget amendments receiving and accepting the EDRP Grant and authorizing marine divisions to begin restoration efforts. Staff also indicated that because the EDRP was in its early stage, expenditures were in keeping with expectations.

Mrs. Wendy Garner, GSMFC Financial Director, indicated that all reimbursements had been made in a timely manner but emphasized the importance of having the correct mailing address for reimbursements as well as invoice numbers on each.

Minutes: Mr. Hode presented a set of the minutes from the October 06 EDRP Workshop in New Orleans; acknowledging that because the EDRP committee was in fact an ad hoc committee, there was a question of whether or not the minutes needed to be approved. It was generally concurred that the committee needed to maintain an informal atmosphere - waiving minute approval and designating Mr. Hode to act in a chair capacity.

NOAA Budget Review: A brief status report on the NOAA Grants review of the State budgets was given. It was indicated that the review was intended as a commentary and was not judgment. States were thanked for their participation in responding to the eight page commentary and advised that a twenty page response was submitted back to NOAA. Note was made also that even though no further comment has been received from NOAA similar such comments and reviews could be expected periodically and that it was staff's intention to reply in a timely manner.

Project Overviews

NOAA Marine Debris: Neel Perry of NOAA Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Program presented a power point presentation on the progress of the MDP progress to date. It was indicated that about 75% of the work had been completed and that side scan work was still being performed in the Louisiana area. Mr. Perry advised that the NOAA MDP website (Gulf of Mexico.marinedebris.NOAA.gov) was functioning well and that an additional Internet Mapping Service (IMS) was being made available to States. The IMS site would contain more technical information such as depth of objects, etc., which could be helpful to users in making decisions regarding methodologies and priorities in removing debris.

States were requested to examine the sites and respond accordingly so that the MDP group could continue to develop a product that better benefit the user.

Mr. Gordon inquired as to the availability of the raw data obtained via side scan tracts and was advised that it could likely be obtained from the people who are doing the side scan work. No information was given as to who that would be.

TEXAS:

Lance Robinson provided an overview of progress to date for the State of Texas indicating that the EDRP budget did not get to the State Legislature until it went into session in January. As a result, work has been primarily administrative and no reimbursements had been requested. Work to date included:

- An oyster habitat restoration biologist had been hired to assist in the recovery program and was expected to start in May. Additional positions are also expected to be filled.
- Ordered equipment necessary for the rehab program including vehicles and boats.
- Initiated inter-local agreements with County groups for removal of debris.
- Initiated agreements with the Water Development Board for modeling projects in the Sabine Lake area.

LOUISIANA:

Jim Hanifen provided an overview of the progress to date in Louisiana. Work included:

Oyster Rehabilitation - Job 1:

- Finalization of a contract with an auditing firm which will provide fiscal oversight for the EDRP projects and contracts.
- Development of a framework for the oyster rehabilitation program. The program and pending contracts are currently under review by the State Auditor.
- Developed and implemented a contract with the Louisiana State Hospital System for water quality analysis in the oyster beds.

- Received bids for cultch material to be placed at two locations – Mississippi Sound area south of Louisiana and in Plaquemines Parish – at a costs of 200,000 dollars each. Plants expected to be accomplished in May 07.
- Completed the design for replacing the Louisiana State Fish Hatchery which was destroyed.

Shrimp Grounds Rehabilitation – Job 2:

- Initiated requests for proposals for wet debris removal in the Lake Borgne area utilizing contractors and local fishermen. Side-scan work is being performed in part by NOAA MDP and bids for removal services are expected to be opened the end of May.

Cooperative Research – Job 3:

- Developed a framework for gathering catch and by-catch data preparatory to upcoming shrimp and fishing seasons.

A number of questions followed the Louisiana report pertaining to use of alternate cultch materials, quality control on cultch materials, deployment methods on cultch materials and use of possible anti-fouling treated materials. Patrick Banks, Oyster Recovery Coordinator for Louisiana, indicated that they have had best success with spat set utilizing crushed concrete, size 57 aggregate. He also indicated that quality control is achieved by random sampling of cultch material as it is received and that deployment by clam bucket appears to achieve more uniform coverage than water jetting of materials. Mr. Banks indicated that he was not aware of anti-fouling treated concrete but expressed concern that such materials could impact spat set if active after crushing.

MISSISSIPPI:

Corky Perret, Assistant Director Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, provided an overview of progress to date for the State of Mississippi. The presentation included comments as follows:

- Payment to contracted fishermen participating in the recovery effort was being performed via a debit/cash cards established through a local bank. It was indicated that the system appeared to be working well in that it facilitated quicker payment to the fishermen by avoiding the preparation, approval, and mailing of checks.
- Mr. Perret read a letter from Mississippi fishermen in which they thanked the MDMR for the assistance program provided through the EDRP grant, noting that many local fishermen would likely have gotten out of the business during the recovery period over the past eighteen months had it not been for the working assistance provided by DMR during this time.

Oyster Rehabilitation – Job 1:

- Mr. Perret indicated that 90 percent of the State's oyster reefs had been silted over or washed away. As a result, rebuilding efforts since September included cultch plants over nearly 175 acres of water bottom. Both tonguing and dredging areas were repaired utilizing limestone under a contract that was in place at the time of Hurricane Katrina. Materials in place costs under the initial contract were approximately \$22.00 per yard; while subsequent costs for a fall cultch plant had increased to nearly \$53.00 per yard.

New bids were received in February for a spring 07 plant and some reduction was seen at \$48.00 for limestone in place and \$58.00 for shell

- Public meetings were conducted across the coast counties resulting in 135 contracts with licensed oyster fishermen for relay work. Eighty two boats participated in the relay netting nearly 75,000 sacks of oysters harvested from restricted areas. Fishermen were paid \$20.00 per sack and were allowed not more than 40 sacks per day.
- Additionally, an Oyster Stewardship Program has been implemented involving local oystermen in an education and outreach program aimed at preservation of the resources and encouraging fishermen to remain involved in the industry.

Shrimp, Crab and other Fishing Grounds Rehabilitation – Job 2:

- A derelict crab trap program was implemented wherein nearly 9800 damaged and otherwise discarded crab traps were removed from area waters. The program involved nearly 60 commercial crabbers and included provisions for supplying up to 50 new traps containing TEDS and escape rings.
- 3751 catch and by-catch reports were received from shrimpers and crabbers participating in the recover effort during the first 6 months of the program.
- A Giant Salvinia workshop was developed and presented throughout the three coast counties in an effort to involve local fishermen in identifying and reporting the presence of invasive aquatic species. As they are reported MDMR personnel verify and treat as necessary.

Cooperative Research – Job 3:

- Artificial Reef restoration efforts included surveying and marking both in-shore and off shore reefs and the installation, under contract, of 60 pyramid reefs in Fish Havens 1, 2 and 3. MDMR continues to coordinate with Coastal Cities in replacing or repairing near shore reefs. Four piers in the Gulfport area will be enhanced with new cultch material/rubble.

- Fisheries recovery report forms have been completed and contracts are in place, and training sessions have been conducted for approximately 47 charter boat operators, 36 hook and line commercial fishermen, and 11 net fishermen who will be participating in the catch and by-catch surveys.

Mr. Perret indicated that two additional cultch plants are to be accomplished in the spring of 2007 and that shrimp trip reports will begin in the spring with the opening of shrimp season. He further indicated that an un-anticipated benefit from the assistance and recovery program along the Mississippi Coast was that area fishermen and MDMR staff appear to be working more closely together now than in the past for the benefit of all.

ALABAMA:

Mr. Jim Duffy presented an overview of program progress for the State of Alabama.

Oyster Rehabilitation: To this point most work has been primarily administrative in setting up contracts with local agencies and local fishermen to rehabilitate oyster grounds. The State anticipates having cultch available in 40 to 45 days for both near shore grounds and deep water plants.

Mapping: The State will be using the NEER protocol and local fishermen to map the locations of reefs in Alabama waters. Equipment has been purchased and more is anticipated. Plans are to pick up where NEER stops and continue the mapping project to completion for all of the States Oyster Grounds.

Habitat: Mr. Duffy indicated that the Habitat restoration project will be coordinated closely with the States Lands Division. Plans are in place for habitat restoration projects and the Division is in the process of assessing personnel and contractual needs. ADNR will be working with them for the duration.

Egg and Larval Distribution: This is an ongoing study that will be augmented with EDRP funds to assess the impact of temperature, salinity, and other changes in gulf waters will have on fish eggs and larva. The hatchery is gearing up at this time preparatory to spawning seasons in the spring to supply the necessary eggs, larva for study.

Cooperative Research:

Mr. Duffy indicated that the State is nearing completion and signing of contracts with the Organized Seafood Association Alabama and the Orange Beach Fishermen's Association to administer the data gathering process for catch and by-catch analysis. Work will be performed utilizing licensed commercial and charter boat operators and ADNR will qualify the agencies, provide data sheets/trip report forms and instruction manuals, and will monitor work and data. It was noted that as many as 700 licensed sub-contractor fishermen will be authorized to participate in the recovery effort.

FLORIDA:

Dr. Virginia Vail reported on behalf of Dr. Bill Arnold regarding cooperative research. Work to date on the Oyster Larval dispersal modeling project involved the hiring of a biologist and the establishment of temporary lab quarters. The biologist is in the process of gathering data and necessary equipment preparatory to study start-up.

Mark Berrigan, EDRP Project Coordinator FOR THE State of Florida Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture Division, reported that the State has a cultch contract in place and is in the process of locating suitable staging sites for cultch stockpiles. The State is also in the process of obtaining lease agreements for deck barges. Cultch plants are expected to begin over next few months pending location of appropriate barges; and the State will be working closely with lease holders for the planting of cultch on private holdings.

DISCUSSIONS


Pending issues and/or questions from previous meetings were briefly discussed and considered resolved. They included:

- Insurance questions/requirements for contracted fishermen
- Use of EDRP funds for the purchase of Vehicle Monitoring Systems – determined to be un-necessary as States were not requiring them for their purposes and where Federal requirements existed a funding/reimbursement mechanism was already in place
- Use of bank pay cards – all states were aware of the advantages and that use was at their choosing
- Non-duplication with reference to side scan work by NOAA MDP and individual states – determined not to be overlapping and that states were working closely with NOAA to accomplish were appropriate.

No new issues were raised; however, there were questions regarding payment schedules for contract fishermen and cultch material availability. No further staff actions were required, but it was suggested that the fall conference include an expanded work session with administrative issues being handled early in the day and the balance of a full day being set aside for more detailed networking/discussions between principal investigators.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)
MINUTES – 58th Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 16, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Fisheries Disaster Recovery Coordinator **Ralph Hode**, called the meeting to order. The following state representatives, staff and other attendees were present.

States

Virginia Vail, FWC, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Tallahassee, FL
Mark Berrigan, FL DOACS, Tallahassee, FL
Bill Arnold, FWC, St Petersburg, FL
Alton Waldrep, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Vernon Minton, ADCNR/AMRD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Gulf Shores, AL
Kevin Anson, ADCNR/AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Scott Gordon, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Ralph Rayburn, Texas Sea Grant, *GSMFC Commissioner*, College Station, TX

Others

Ellie Roche, NOAA-NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
B.G. Thompson, Orange Beach Seafood Association of Alabama, Bayou La Batre, AL
Kris VanOrsdel, Louisiana Recovery Authority, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Wendy Garner, Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Administrative Officer, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Harris, FIN Database Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Network Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS

Opening Comments

L. Simpson made opening comments thanking the states, NOAA-NMFS representatives, and the GSMFC staff for their work in expediting the EDRP II statements of work and grant application in time to meet FY 2007 budget obligations.

Agenda

R. Hode then opened the meeting and called for approval and/or amendments to the agenda. **On a motion by Diaz and a second by Vail the agenda was approved as submitted.**

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of March 13, 2007 held in Biloxi, Mississippi were presented for approval. **Following corrections by J. Hanifen, S. Gordon and D. Diaz, a motion was made by Hanifen for approval of the minutes. The motion was seconded by Diaz and the minutes were approved as amended.**

Introduction and Purpose

Special recognition was given to **E. Roche** who seconded **L. Simpson's** earlier comments regarding the expedited EDRP II grant application. It was noted that as a result of the combined effort, the \$85,000,000 second supplemental Emergency Disaster Recovery grant was obligated on September 20, 2007.

R. Hode introduced guests, recognized visitors and gave an overview of the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program as follows:

Measurable Accomplishments Gulf-wide Through September 2007

Oyster Rehabilitation and Restoration Efforts:

- 1,385 acres of public reefs rebuilt
- 150,500 cubic yards of cultch material in place
- 94,600 sacks of seed oysters in place *(both public sites and lease sites)*

Cooperative Research Efforts

Stock Recovery Assessment:

- 38,964 Stock Recovery Assessment Reports Completed

Artificial Reef Restoration:

- 240 limestone offshore reefs installed
- 7 barge loads of concrete rubble on offshore reefs
- 6 steel hull vessels installed
- 10,500 cubic yards of low profile nearshore reefs in place

Habitat Rehabilitation and Restoration – Shrimp Crab and other fishing grounds

Debris Removal:

- 148 square miles cleaned of small debris
- 11,000 abandoned crab taps removed.

Reimbursements to States - October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007

	Oyster Recovery	Cooperative Research	Shrimp and Shellfish Recovery
Louisiana	3,219,480.40	53,856.89	60,904.72
Texas			
Florida	14,185.79	23,731.31	
Mississippi	6,635,512.25	2,734,916.87	4,185,784.36
Alabama	1,012,888.90	2,188,757.30	131,170.20
Total	10,882,067.34	5,001,262.37	4,377,859.28

TOTAL TO DATE: \$20,261,169.62

A status report and overview of the second supplemental EDRP II funding program was also presented by **R. Hode**. Emphasis was placed on the final preparation of detailed statements of work and budgets preparatory to sub-award agreements. It was noted that preliminary agreement descriptions and budgets would be forwarded to each state for review and comment before forwarding them to NOAA for review. Once NOAA concurred, formal agreements would be presented to each state for execution.

R. Hode indicated intentions of submitting all preliminary agreements to NOAA at one time and that he expected it would take from two to five weeks to receive final documents and approval before final execution of sub-awards. Additionally, it was noted that the EDRP II procedures, including requirements for reporting, would be the same as those currently being followed under the EDRP I process. Reporting periods would be determined at a later date.

Overview of Projects

TEXAS

L. Robinson gave a report on recovery activities to date for the State of Texas. In summary:

- The state has hired a biologist to oversee oyster restoration efforts
- Permitting is complete on an initial 100 acre cultch site that is expected to be planted in the spring of 2008

- Bids are being taken for the purchase of side-scan equipment which is slated for use in the state's habitat mapping program
- The Department has been successful in co-venturing with Jefferson County in the removal of much of the storm related debris from area channels and sensitive habitat.

LOUISIANA

J. Hanifen gave a report on recovery activities to date in the State of Louisiana.

Oyster Rehabilitation Program

- Private Oyster Lease Rehabilitation (POLR)
 - The state has held a series of public meetings to allow stakeholders opportunities to participate in the decision making processes.
 - To date approximately 600 leaseholders have signed up to participate in POLR program.
 - Eligible participants will be reimbursed for private lease recovery costs up to \$200,000 per participant.
 - Restoration efforts began in April and by August 2007 nearly \$800,000 had been paid out by the state to eligible participants. Currently the state is paying out between \$100,000 and \$150,000 weekly for restoration efforts on private lease holdings.
- Public Reefs
 - Two public reef sites in the Black Bay area and in the Mississippi Sound area east of the Mississippi River have been restored to date; each containing approximately 200 acres and utilizing a combined 60,000 cu yards of cultch material.
 - An estimated \$3,000,000 dollars have been spent on so far on these two projects.
- Habitat Mapping Program - Data Base
 - This is an on-going program to recover and re-establish the 103 year old records pertaining to nearly 400,000 acres of lease-holdings in the Gulf waters of the State of Louisiana. At present, draft proposals are being reviewed for the development of a program for collecting, and storing, both electronically and physically, the records of oyster leases in state owned waters.

Habitat Restoration

- The state currently has a contract in place with Crowder Gulf, Inc., for the removal of debris in shallow water near shore areas covering nearly 400 square miles of the state. The Contractor has side-scan capabilities and is also utilizing data developed by the NOAA Marine Debris Mapping program to identify debris.
- To date approximately 148 square miles of water bottom have been cleaned of small debris. Large debris is being marked and the contractor will bring in heavy equipment for its removal.
- Most of the debris removed to date is in Lake Borgne; Lake Pontchartrain middle grounds around the Rigolets outlet to Lake Borgne. An estimated 1800 pieces of debris capable of damaging gear and/or causing threats to navigation have been removed. The

Department is also working with the state historical/archaeological group and qualified contractors to map potential archaeological sites for protection and further evaluation as the debris removal process.

- The LDWF continues to work with the State Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) in an effort to obtain FEMA support and reimbursement for debris removed to date.
- Additionally, LDWF and LDNR are working jointly to secure other funding for small firm grants for infrastructure and low interest loans to assist fishermen in the recovery effort.

Cooperative Research

J. Hanifen indicated that the LDWF had not yet begun to generate stock assessment data but expects to begin early in 2008. Report forms are being reviewed by staff and systems are being developed to receive, archive and analyze information once the program gets started. The LDWF expects to enter into agreements similar to those of other Gulf States to reimburse participants for providing reports.

EDRP II

Reference was made to additional assistance funding sources through the HUD Community Development Block Grant program that the LDWF is attempting to secure; noting that if successful, these funds would provide infrastructure and small firm grants and loans to impacted fishermen. As a result, EDRP II funding is being looked to for direct assistance in both saltwater and freshwater areas for both commercial and recreational fishermen whose businesses were impacted by the 2005 storms.

MISSISSIPPI

D. Diaz provided a report and PowerPoint presentation of progress to date under the Disaster Recovery Program for the State of Mississippi.

D. Diaz began his report by reading a letter from a commercial fisherman from Pascagoula in which the MDMR was commended for its broad effort to assist and include fishermen during the recovery process.

The presentation addressed impacts to resources including offshore islands and artificial reefs in the Mississippi Sound as well as deep water reefs. It was estimated that nearly 700 acres of barrier island land mass was lost; and that approximately 85 percent of inshore low profile artificial reefs and 90 percent of the offshore artificial reefs had subsided as a result of the effects of Hurricane Katrina. It was also noted that the state saw an estimated 95 percent mortality on its public oyster reefs due to subsidence.

From a reef recovery perspective, the presentation included images and comments regarding use of rubble obtained through cooperative efforts with coastal cities to rebuild offshore reefs. It also included images of the Katrina Reef south of Deer Island wherein cooperative effort with the Mississippi Department of Transportation resulted in the utilization of bridge rubble for reef

construction. It was noted that the reef was built primarily with FEMA funds but that low profile reefs built with EDRP funds combined to improve fishing habitat while the overall project provided much needed erosion control for Deer Island.

The report summarized other accomplishments as follows:

Oyster Restoration

- Estimated mortality on oysters 95%.
- The state conducted 4 cultch plants covering 945 acres; utilizing approximately 91,225 cy material at an estimated cost of \$4.4 million.
- In support of new cultch plants an oyster relay program was implemented utilizing 82 participants resulting in the relay of over 75,000 sacks of seed oysters to the new and refurbished sites.
- MDMR worked closely with the fishermen to qualify as many displaced commercial oystermen as possible and to monitor the work on a continuing basis.
- Price increases since the storm were encountered for cultch material and were attributed to equipment availability and fuel costs increases.
- Comments were made on the State's Oyster Stewardship program and brochure which is serving to better communicate with oyster fishermen and to get them to take more ownership in the oyster industry.

Cooperative Research

- In addition to comments on offshore reef restoration efforts, comments were made regarding the red snapper stocking program being coordinated with the GCRL. Brood stock is currently being strip spawned and fingerlings raised preparatory to release and monitoring on offshore reefs.
- A stock assessment program is in place aimed at determining catch and by catch data for recovery monitoring purposes. The program operates under contractual agreements with licensed fishermen to gather the necessary data. To date:
 - 332 shrimp participants provided 24,347 tickets. The program is complete.
 - 67 crab fishermen provided 5000 tickets. The program is complete.
 - 48 finfish participants provided 4,962 tickets. The program is complete.
 - 56 charter boat operators provided 3395 reports and the program is ongoing.

The report also indicated that even though licenses were down by as much as 50 percent the program has been effective in keeping many fishermen employed who otherwise might have changed professions.

Habitat Restoration

- Crab pot program – In November 2006, 45 licensed crab fishermen collected, under contractual agreements, 9000 abandoned crab traps from local waters and turned them in for recycling. Up to fifty replacement crab traps equipped with TEDS were made available to each of the qualified participants.

- During the period June 6–12, 2007, approximately 40 Mississippi licensed shrimpers participated in a deeper water derelict crab trap recovery program which removed another 1000 traps from the fishing grounds. The report indicated that program participation was less than expected because its opening coincided with the opening of shrimp season. Alternate dates would be examined for future such efforts.

ALABAMA

V. Minton provided a report on progress to date under the Disaster Recovery Program for the State of Alabama. **V. Minton** noted that Jim Duffy, former Principal Investigator of the Disaster Recovery program, had taken another job and used the workshop to introduce **K. Anson** who will take over Jim's responsibilities in the recovery effort. The report is summarized as follows:

Oyster Rehabilitation

- ADCNR has entered into contractual agreements with the Organized Seafood Association of Alabama to oversee hiring, paying and directing work under the oyster restoration program.
- Approximately 7,500 cy limestone have been placed in the shallows of Heron Bay by small fishermen under the recovery program to date.
- An area in Mobile Bay that has traditionally been productive for oysters is being renovated by the removal of large rocks (softball size) that are suitable for neither tonguing nor dredging. The rocks, nearly 21,000 sacks, are being crushed and re-cycled as cultch for additional reef restoration.

Cooperative Research

- ADCNR entered into agreements with local fishing organizations to assist in communicating and payment for services to fishermen who participated in the reporting program.
- Information and training workshops were held with participating fishermen prior to implementation of data collection activities.
- For-hire fishermen began completing reports in April 2007, resulting in 125 participants providing 2,619 completed reports.
- Commercial participation began in July 2007 with participation from all segments of commercial fisheries including oysters, shrimp, hook and line, gill net, crabs and live bait.

Habitat Rehabilitation

AMDR continues to work with the State Lands Division to develop agreements aimed at development of wave attenuators to reduce erosion and in replanting grass beds in highly sensitive areas. This program is still in the development stage.

EDRP II

- The Department is working on details for use of the second supplemental funds. Preliminary plans call for a continuation of the assistance programs implemented under EDRP I where fishermen are reimbursed for work performed.
- AMDR is also attempting to develop methods of assisting impacted business and industry for non reimbursed losses and hopes to have the details completed for this element shortly.
- Additionally, funds from the new program are expected to be used in part for the equipping of the damaged Dauphin Island Sea lab.

FLORIDA

M. Berrigan provided a report on progress to date under the Disaster Recovery Program for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services/Division of Aquaculture. **M. Berrigan** summarized efforts to date as follows:

Oyster Rehabilitation

- It was indicated that the state remains in a transition period closing out work efforts from Hurricane Ivan funding and merging into funding efforts under the EDRP I program.
- A project manager has been hired to oversee the oyster restoration effort in the Apalachicola region and measurable progress is expected to be seen in the spring of 2008.
- Contracts are in place for the supplying of cultch materials and installation is expected to be by staff on public reefs.
- On private reefs, the lease-holder will provide for both marking of approved reefs and restoration with approval and monitoring by the state and will be reimbursed up to 90 percent of costs. An assistance cap of \$200,000 per lease-holder has been established and initial agreements are in place at this time.

Cooperative Research

- **B. Arnold** gave a report on the Oyster Larvae Distribution model being developed in the Pensacola Bay area. He indicated that staff has collected data for the past five months and continues collecting data from some nineteen sample locations. At present the Department has a contract in place for analysis of circulation patterns in the Bay; and a larval dispersal contract is pending.

EDRP II

- It was indicated that the second supplemental funding will continue work begun under the EDRP I program as harvesters are reimbursed for work performed on rehabilitation of both public and private oyster grounds.
- Work will include repairing access sites to more adequately allow fishermen to get to fishing grounds.

- Plans also call for the development of a FDACS work site and purchase of a deck barge in order to implement the oyster rehabilitation program over next several years.
- A for hire monitoring program is being developed wherein eligible participants are reimbursed for providing stock assessment data. Staff is currently examining eligibility requirements and options for payment.
- Additionally, a program is being prepared by the FWC for the distribution of additional funding to shrimp fishermen who have a record of compliance with TED and BRD regulations.

QUESTIONS GENERAL

There were concerns over the necessary turn-over time it took some states to pay sub-contract fishermen for work performed; specifically as delays could discourage participation in the recovery process. States were advised that the budgets could be adjusted as necessary to assure that funding was available in the year it was needed provided that expenditures did not exceed the total funding budgeted for the five year period. It was also noted that GSMFC was dedicated to expediting reimbursements to the states within the week invoices are received; and that staff would work with the states as necessary to avoid delays in the recovery effort because of budgetary issues.

ADJOURNMENT

R. Hode 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. States were reminded that monitoring visits were required and that each state could expect at least one general visit each year in which monitoring efforts, financial management, and milestones would be examined. Additional site visits could also be expected as work in various areas of recovery progresses.

There being no further discussion or business the meeting was adjourned until March, 2008 - time and location to be announced.

**FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)
MINUTES
June 19 and June 20, 2007
Key Largo, Florida**

Chairman Page Campbell called the meeting to order on June 19, 2007 at 9:00a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

Members

Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Ken Brennan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Richard Cody, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jason Duet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (*proxy for M. Kasprazk*)
Doug Fruge, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Jim Long, NPS, Atlanta, GA (*proxy for T. Schmidt*)
Christine Murrell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Reed, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Aida Rosario, PRDNER, Mayagez, PR (*proxy for D. Matos*)
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Harris, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Brad Gentner, Gentner Consulting Group, Silver Spring, MD
Jay O'Leary, NMFS, Key Biscayne, FL
Dave Van Voorhees, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Geoff White, 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 14 and 15, 2006 were approved as presented.

Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

G. White reported on activities of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) over the past year. One of ACCSP's major efforts has been to get historical data into the data warehouse. Catch/effort data from 1980 to 2006 for North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida is complete, as well as 1994 to 2005 for states from Maine to Virginia. All web queries for commercial, recreational, and the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS) have been migrated to Discoverer. **White** reported that 100% of dealers in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Virginia are participating in SAFIS, and some dealers in Maine, Delaware, and Maryland. **White** reported that several staff positions that have been filled while some are still open.

White gave a brief explanation of the SAFIS program noting that it is a state-federal system for collecting real time commercial catch and effort data. SAFIS meets all ACCSP and federal requirements for data standards. Data entry is done online although there is a PC based version. **White** explained that the data is validated as it is entered and is automatically post-entry audited. **White** reported that the ACCSP data warehouse contains commercial catch and effort, recreational catch and effort, and biological data.

White stated that the ACCSP had undergone an external peer review in September 2006, and in May 2007 issued an RFP for FY08 funding. Priorities for 2007 – 2008 are catch/effort historical data, SAFIS deployment, biological data feeds, and outreach.

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 to the appropriate personnel.

Status of the FIN data management system - **B. Harris** of GSMFC reported on the status of the FIN DMS noting that FIN has upgraded to the latest version of Oracle Discoverer. **Harris** noted that all the Gulf States and GSMFC have entered their data into InPort. Florida has their own metadata system and will not be using InPort, but **Harris** and **R. Cody** will work on developing a link. **Harris** reported that additional reports are being created for total landings by gear, by area, and by grade. **D. Donaldson** noted that in the past, monthly reports were sent out to the states to review for accuracy. In order for effective QA/QC these reports must be reviewed when they are sent out. If this is not possible, **Donaldson** requested that an e-mail be sent to D. Bellais with an explanation.

Harris reported that the recreational fishing license module is up and data is being loaded by wave for all Gulf states. NMFS has access to the data and they are publishing their findings. After vessel data is received from the states in the correct format, FIN will attempt to link the Coast Guard vessel data to the state vessel data. The FIN database is being converted to Oracle Cluster/Grid environment. By separating the software across several servers, the FIN system will still be running in the event one of the servers crashes. This should be available by fall of 2007.

Discussion of using regional databases for FIS – **D. Donaldson** stated that he had recently attended a FIS meeting and would like for the FIN Committee to discuss methods of using regional databases for FIS. The first issue would be to identify the data that FIS requires.

D. VanVoorhees noted that in the past there was no one place on either the Atlantic or Gulf coasts to go to for information. What is being attempted is “one stop shopping” on a

regional level as well as a national level since everyone would benefit from having all data in one place. **Donaldson** noted that the data on the FIN system is also available in the SEFSC. Most users are comfortable using one site or the other, therefore it may be an outreach issue.

Lengthy Committee discussion ensued on how to get people to use FIN and ACCSP as the regional repositories. It was agreed to task the Outreach Work Group with developing a program to notify users about the availability of data in the FIN DMS.

Discussion of FIN Program Review Document

G. Bray reported that in November 2006 the Program Review panel met and were provided with documents and a presentation on the FIN program in order to conduct an external review of the Program. As of today the final report has not been received from the contractor, ICF Consulting. **Bray** stated that D. Donaldson has made repeated phone calls to ICF which have not been returned. The FIN Committee was asked for input on how to proceed.

Committee members made several suggestions from sending a Certified letter, cancelling the contract by default, contacting the review panel for feedback, or hiring another contractor since ICF has not been paid and the funds are still available. The FIN Committee agreed to have staff send a letter to ICF Consulting, as well as the Review Panel members asking for feedback. **Donaldson** noted that the FIN Administrative Subcommittee has dealt with this issue in the past and would be able to provide recommendations. **K. Anson** suggested that a timeline would be helpful.

During this discussion, the subject of whether a program review for the FIN program was necessary and worth the money. Some felt that a facilitated session every five years would be more productive. Since a review is only necessary periodically, the Committee agreed to discuss this issue at the 2008 FIN meeting.

Status of Data Collection Activities in the Caribbean

A. Rosario addressed the FIN Committee on commercial fisheries in Puerto Rico. **Rosario** noted that a new amendment for fisheries regulations had recently been approved changing the minimum size for snapper as well as a closed season for several snapper. The new fishing regulations also require that data collection be done differently. Now port agents go to fish houses to collect data on landings as well as biostatistical data which has improved the data collection.

Rosario gave a presentation which demonstrated that fishermen in Puerto Rico use traps, lines, nets, and diving as gear. Currently nets and lines are used more frequently than traps and diving. Diving gear is used primarily for spiny lobster and queen conch. **Rosario** reviewed statistics for the years 1990 to 2003 showing the pounds of fish landed for various species.

C. Lilyestrom of PRDNER works with recreational fishing and reported that data collection for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) has been going on since 2000. **Lilyestrom** noted that the PRDNER is implementing an automated recreational license system and the design has been completed.

Overview and Status of National Fisheries Information System (FIS)

D. VanVoorhees gave an overview of FIS noting that NMFS was tasked with creating an implementation plan for a nationwide fisheries information system (FIS) and a vessel registration system (VRS) as a result of the 1996 Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act. In 1998 NMFS provided a report to Congress on priorities for these systems. Some of the goals of FIS are to

adapt data collection to meet current and future needs, establish regional and national standards for data collection, and to implement and maintain partnerships to support collaboration among stakeholders.

Van Voorhees noted that FIS users will be from various state and federal agencies, fisheries scientists, fisheries managers, fishing industry, and the general public. **Van Voorhees** reported on several activities of FIS that have already been implemented, including an improved national permit system, web-based metadata system using InPort, electronic reporting system, facilitated data reconciliation, and improved recreational fishery survey methods. **Van Voorhees** also reviewed funding for FIS activities.

Presentation of FIS Trip Data Reconciliation Project

J. O'Leary explained that trip data reconciliation began with the concept of taking data from fishermen through the FIN and the ACCSP databases and linking logbooks and dealer reports in order to compare and extract the most useful data. This system originally was designed by J. Poffenberger of NMFS for use in the Southeast.

O'Leary went on to describe the data flow, the structure of the system and finished with a live demonstration of the tool.

Review and Discussion of SEDAR Recommendations Document

The FIN Committee was provided with copies of the SEDAR document and reviewed sections 7 through 12. After thoroughly reviewing and discussing the SEDAR recommendations document, the Committee agreed to have staff draft a letter addressing issues in this document and make suggestions and recommendations. The group agreed that the letter should be very specific with as much detail as possible. The draft letter will be sent to the FIN Committee for comment and when approved will be sent to the appropriate SEDAR personnel.

Discussion of Electronic Trip Tickets/Logbooks/Quota Monitoring Compatibility

D. Donaldson reported that G. Davenport has been working with the quota monitoring group at NMFS Miami and the contractor to test the feasibility of utilizing the trip ticket system for quota monitoring purposes.

G. Davenport stated that there are three ways to report using the NMFS quota monitoring system. There is web-based reporting, faxing, or mailing. NMFS is trying to devise a way to utilize the electronic trip ticket reporting system. The problem is most states have a requirement to report within ten days of the end of the month, but the NMFS quota monitoring system requires reporting within two weeks. **Davenport** stated that there are several major dealers that are not using electronic reporting. Hopefully this project will encourage them to report electronically. **Davenport** also noted that there are some problems with inconsistencies in log book and electronic trip ticket reporting but these issues should be able to be corrected.

Following Committee discussion **D. Donaldson** suggested that since FIN is trying to promote electronic reporting the FIN Outreach Work Group should be tasked with developing ways to encourage the use of electronic reporting.

Discussion of Using Trip Ticket System for For-Hire Fisheries

S. Atran of the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council (GMFMC) reported that the GMFMC in January passed a motion to develop an amendment for a trip ticket system for the recreational for-hire fishery in the EEZ. **Atran** stated that at this point the Council is gathering

information on what is available and what systems the various states are using. **D. Donaldson** noted that a trip ticket system probably would not be a viable option for the for-hire fishery since there are no checks and balances unless for-hire captains were required to go to a particular dock with a checking system. **Atran** noted that logbooks could work if observers were on board.

Donaldson stated that one of the issues to be discussed later in this meeting is the Headboat Data Review meeting. As a result of that meeting FIN will re-examine methodologies for collecting catch and effort from the for-hire fishery. **Donaldson** suggested that discussion on the GMFMC motion be held at that time.

Presentation of Recreational Social/Economic Data

R. Curtis of NMFS requested that **B. Gentner** of Gentner Consulting Group in Silver Spring, Maryland give a presentation on the preliminary results from a recent national Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) social/economic add on. This survey targeted recreational fishermen using field sampling as well as follow-up with mail and telephone calls. **Gentner** made note that preliminary findings showed 22% of anglers were on overnight trips and 51% stated that fishing was the primary purpose of the trip. **Gentner** also discussed total trip expenditures by state, for-hire results, and a comparison using the year 2000 survey results and preliminary 2006 results. **Gentner** noted that wave 5 and wave 6 mail results are still coming in therefore the results will change slightly and he also stated that the response rate has been good.

Gentner reported that even though they used an address verifier service, as much as 20% of the addresses are bad. Some of these undeliverable addresses were probably due to hurricanes on the Gulf Coast causing people to relocate.

Review and Approval of 2006 FIN Annual Report

The FIN Committee was provided with a draft copy of the 2006 FIN Annual Report. **G. Bray** requested that the Committee review this document and send any corrections or edits to M. Travis, G. Bray, or D. Donaldson prior to July 9, 2007. **D. Donaldson made a motion to accept the 2006 FIN Annual Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Subcommittee and Work Group Reports

Commercial Port Sampler Meetings (Attachment A) - A meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Commercial Port Samplers was held on May 2 and 3, 2007 in Miami, Florida.. A variety of issues were discussed. See details in Attachment A.

J. Reed questioned if the GSMFC holds state specific permit databases since they may be necessary for electronic validation as more species become included in individual fishing quota programs. The FIN Committee discussed this situation and agreed that state partners will check and D. Bellais of GSMFC will coordinate. **D. Donaldson** suggested that the GSMFC Geographic Subcommittee discuss this situation at their meeting in October 2007.

The next Gulf of Mexico port agents meeting will be held in summer/fall of 2008. Location at this time has not been determined.

K. Cuevas moved to accept the Port Samplers Meeting Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Administrative Subcommittee (Attachment B) - A conference call of the FIN Administrative Subcommittee was held on August 31, 2006. **G. Bray** reported that the Subcommittee discussed

the composition of the review panel as well as possible dates and location for the review meeting. Details of this Conference Call can be found in Attachment B.

There are no action items or motions. **T. Sminkey moved to accept the Administrative Subcommittee Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee (TCC Data Management Subcommittee) (Attachment C) - The GOM Geographic Subcommittee met in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 23, 2006, and Biloxi, Mississippi on March 12, 2007. **D. Donaldson** reported that this report is informational and the issues discussed by the Subcommittee are discussed at work group meetings and/or the FIN Committee. Details of this meeting can be found in Attachment C. There are no action items or motions.

K. Anson moved to accept the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee Report the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Headboat Data Review Meeting (Attachment D) – The Headboat Data Review Meeting was held on April 24, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to review data from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey and the FIN At-Sea and For-Hire Telephone surveys.

While reviewing the section of the report dealing with sampling intensity review and comparison, **K. Brennan** of NMFS disagreed with the statement, “.....this issue was not all that relevant...” The FIN Committee discussed this part of the Report. **D. Donaldson** explained that this issue was not relevant at the time and the Committee needs to address catch, effort, and discards data issues before focusing on sampling intensity since the differences in catch and effort may be because of sampling intensity. **Donaldson** stated that the Headboat Data Review Meeting Report accurately describes what was discussed, and indicates to the FIN Committee that there needs to be more work done in terms of comparing these two surveys. **Donaldson** also noted **that the work group recommended that FIN re-examine the feasibility of using a combination of both logbooks and at-sea sampling for the for-hire fishery to generate catch and effort estimates.** **T. Sminkey** noted that reviewing the two methodologies had been discussed at his office as part of the MRIP recreational redesign, and he would caution both groups not to go ahead with further projects, since there is likely to be additional federal monies available to support such work, and the group should involve members from both programs. This will be a key component of this redesigned task. **Donaldson** agreed and noted that the For-Hire Work Group will be addressing this issue as well. At-Sea Sampling gathers extremely useful discards information and the Miami Lab has made available an additional \$100,000 to implement At-Sea Sampling in Texas.

T. Sminkey moved to accept the Headboat Data Review Meeting Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Details of the meeting can be found in Attachment D.

In order to clarify the above discussion, **Donaldson made a motion that FIN be engaged in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) recreational redesign activities regarding development of sampling protocols for catch and effort for the for-hire fishery. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Attachment E) – The Otolith Processors Training Workshop was held in St. Petersburg, Florida in May 2007. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure consistency and comparability among the readers in various state and federal agencies.

Because of the difficulty in reading otoliths it was recommended that FIN hold training sessions for grey snapper and grey triggerfish later this year if funds are available. Details of the meeting can be found in Attachment E.

D. Donaldson made a motion to accept the Otolith Processors Training Workshop Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Biological/Environmental Work Group Report (Attachment F) – The Biological/Environmental Work Group met via Conference Call in May 2007 and reviewed the Highly Migratory Species Private Boat Characterization mail survey. **Donaldson** explained that the purpose of the mail survey is to determine the best methodology to collect HMS data in the Gulf of Mexico. The FIN Committee reviewed the mail survey, made suggestions for changes, and agreed to move forward to hire a contractor to conduct this mail survey. **J. Reed moved to secure a contractor to conduct the HMS mail survey. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

T. Sminkey moved to accept the Biological/Environmental Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Data Collection Work Group Report (Attachment G) – The Data Collection Work Group met via Conference Call in February 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the need for trip-level commercial data to meet management needs in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and to identify and compile conversion factors used for various species in the Southeast Region. D. Olsen of the USVI noted that they had implemented trip-level reporting for their commercial fisheries, therefore the group decided that no further work needs to be conducted on this topic.

Bray reported that as a result of the Conference Call staff will compile the various conversion factors that are used by each of the partners and once having been completed, the group will determine where similarities and differences are among the various factors

V. Swann moved to accept the Data Collection Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Data Collection Plan Work Group Report (Attachment H) – The Data Collection Plan Work Group met via Conference Call in April 2007. The Work Group noted that there was a lack of speciation of flounders in the commercial fishery therefore the states should continue to work with seafood dealers in order to identify flounders to the species level.

The Work Group recommended that since 2007 was the first year for a new method for determining sampling targets, FIN should continue to use existing targets for priority species in 2008.

The Work Group also discussed the issue of including biological data collected under fishery-independent activities. The Work Group decided that sampling protocols and other documentation for the various fishery-independent sampling activities should be compiled. **D. Donaldson** suggested tasking the Geographic Subcommittee with addressing this issue at their October 2007 meeting.

K. Anson made a motion to accept the Data Collection Plan Work Group Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

The meeting recessed at 5:15 p.m.

The meeting reconvened on June 20, 2007 at 8:30 a.m.

Operations Plan

D. Donaldson reported that FIN had been contacted by NMFS Headquarters regarding conducting economic work. This is a five year project for FIN to hire an economist to help coordinate some of the activities in the Statement of Work. Members of the FIN Committee were provided with a copy of the Statement of Work. FIN will be involved since guidance will be needed in certain areas when developing protocols. **Donaldson** reported that this is separate money from NMFS Headquarters.

Status of 2007 Activities – The FIN Committee was provided with a list of data management activities currently being conducted under the FIN as well as tasks identified in the Operations Plan for 2007. **Bray** reviewed the list with the FIN Committee and noted that because of budget cuts certain meetings were not held as planned.

The Committee reviewed the 2008 FIN Operations Plan. The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee will meet in August to give final approval to the Plan.

V. Swann moved to approve the 2008 FIN Operations Plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FIN Committee members were asked to forward any comments or corrections to staff by July 9, 2007.

Discussion of 2008 FIN Priorities

Committee members were provided with a list of items for funding consideration in 2008. **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 2007 and they will decide which items will be included in the 2008 FIN cooperative agreement. **Donaldson** noted that all items listed as High or Medium priority will require budgets and statements-of-work by July 12, 2007.

The Committee agreed to list as high priority all ongoing activities. The prioritized list of activities for 2008 is as follows:

High Priority

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)
Expand electronic trip ticket contract to include compilation of data for quota monitoring (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 Full Implementation and Operations in Mississippi (ongoing/new)
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana (ongoing)
Trip Ticket Program 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/ongoing)

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

Medium Priority

Pilot Study for Collection of Catch and Effort Data from For-Hire Fishery for Highly Migratory Species (new)

Low Priority

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

Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)

Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting

The next FIN Meeting will be held during the 2nd week in June in the U.S. Virgin Islands or New Orleans, Louisiana.

Election of Officers

By rotation, K. Anson of Alabama was elected Chairman, and G. Davenport of NMFS was elected Vice-Chairman.

Other Business

The FIN Committee was asked to review the Committee listing and give any corrections, additions, or deletions on contact information to staff.

There being no further business the FIN Committee adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

**Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
May 2 and 3, 2007
Miami, Florida**

Attachment A

Gregg Bray of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the Port Sampler meeting to order on May 2, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

Pete Antosh, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chuck Armstrong, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Debbie Batiste, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Jay Boulet, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Steve Brown, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Claudia Dennis, NOAA Fisheries, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Kit Doncaster, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX
Aimee Eschete, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Pamela Brown-Eyo, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Debbie Fable, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Ted Flowers, NOAA Fisheries, Mobile, AL
Michelle Gamby, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL
Linda Guidry, NOAA Fisheries, New Iberia, LA
Brett Hano, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Kathleen Hebert, NOAA Fisheries, Houma, LA
Tom Herbert, NOAA Fisheries, Fort Myers, FL
Albert Lefort, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Linda Lombardi-Carlson, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Edie Lopez, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX
Terri Menzel, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL
Michelle Padgett, NOAA Fisheries, Freeport, TX
Chris Palmer, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Gary Rousse, NOAA Fisheries, Cut Off, LA
Wes Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Brittany Breazeale, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Charlie Schaefer, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL
June Weeks, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL
Eddie Pulido, FFWRI, Miami, FL
Carlos Llull, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL
Jason Herr, FFWRI, Melbourne, FL
Matt Duffy, FFWRI, Jacksonville, FL
Steve Link, NOAA Fisheries, South Portland, ME
Corey Gabel, NOAA Fisheries, Beaumont, TX
Mandy Courville, LDWF, Lake Charles, LA
Holly Rolls, FFWRI, Marathon, FL

Rick Beaver, FFWRI, Marathon, FL
Luis A. Rivera, PRDNR, Mayaguez, PR
Hector Y. Lopez Pelet, PRDNR, Mayaguez, PR
Jesus Leon, PRDNR, Mayaguez, PR
Michelle Maki, FFWRI, Panama City, FL
Steve Turner, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Charlotte Mansfield, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
John Reed, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Willy Culpit, TXPWD, Rockport, TX
Richard Hall, NOAA Fisheries, Wilmington, NC
Edward Little, NOAA Fisheries, Key West, FL
Ching-ping Chih, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Elizabeth Brooks, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Mike Judge, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Heather Balchowsky, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Claude Petersen, Bluefindata.com, Prairieville, LA

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended.

Overview of State and Federal Commercial Data Collection Activities

Recreational and commercial port samplers introduced themselves and gave a brief description of the areas they sample, fish they commonly observe, and any interesting issues and problems they have been working with.

Electronic Trip Ticket Program

Claude Petersen gave a presentation on how his electronic trip ticket program works. Petersen mentioned that approximately 500 dealers are currently using his program. Most dealers using electronic reporting reside in Florida but Gulf of Mexico dealers from Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas also utilize his program. Petersen demonstrated how his program works using some created data with the Florida program. Petersen mentioned that every state program is slightly different since each of the states collect slightly different data elements depending on state regulations. The program is free to any dealer interested in using this technology and Petersen mentioned that he can adjust the program to meet any specific needs a dealer might have after receiving approval from the proper state representative. **John Reed questioned if the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission currently holds state specific permit databases as they might be necessary for electronic validation as more species become included in individual fishing quota programs.** Guy Davenport commented that samplers need to be aware on this technology to help answer questions dealers might have concerning the usefulness of this product. Davenport mentioned that samplers should encourage dealers to use this electronic reporting program when the opportunity is presented. More information and technical manuals can be obtained from Petersen at www.bluefindata.com.

NMFS IFQ Red Snapper System

John Reed gave a presentation on NOAA Fisheries Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. Reed mentioned the red snapper IFQ originated from Reef Fish Amendment 26 and was instituted January 1, 2007. As of Reed's presentation, currently one million pounds of red snapper have been harvested in the Gulf of Mexico. The majority of these landings have occurred in South Texas, Grand Isle, LA, and the Destin area of Florida. In this system, commercial anglers are provided a share or percentage of the commercial quota and this percentage was determined by historical landings. Shareholders are required to have internet access as data are collected in real time. Reed mentioned that currently this is the only IFQ system in the world to have real time data. Anglers are required to give three hours of notification to NOAA Fisheries as to when and where they are returning with their red snapper landings. NOAA law enforcement agents and biologists receive an e-mail notifying them when vessels give their landing notification information. This system allows law enforcement agents and port sampling agents to intercept these anglers and fish as they are being landed. Reed mentioned NOAA hopes to add an automated telephone voicemail system to help the people that have problems receiving e-mail. Reed commented that there have been some errors with boats not reporting to the facility they identified as their unloading dock. Reed commented that greater law enforcement efforts would be needed to explain to captains the regulations involved with this IFQ program. Reed mentioned that vessel monitoring systems (VMS) go online on May 6th and this will also help alleviate problems in finding vessels at the landing dock. Several port agents asked if this system will be unique to red snapper and Reed mentioned that the scoping process for a grouper IFQ has already begun.

Discussion of Stock Assessment Process

Elizabeth Brooks gave a presentation on how the stock assessment process works. Brooks discussed that stock assessment is basically an estimate of the current stock status relative to target stock level. Brooks explained that the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1996 authorizes the federal government to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks to insure conservation of stocks and facilitate long-term protection of essential fish habitats. Brooks presented three types of models that are commonly used depending on the amount and type of data you have to work with. Brooks described that a surplus production model has low data requirements but does not include age structure data. Brooks explained an age-structure production model has slightly higher data requirements and allows managers to make stock projections based on changes to minimum size limits and spawning potential ratios (SPR). Brooks presented that catch-at-age models require the greatest amount of data but allow managers to convert landed numbers of fish to numbers of fish landed for specific age categories. Brooks stated that both the age-structured production and catch-at-age models require estimates of natural mortality and stock-recruit relationships which are difficult for scientists to calculate. Brooks also mentioned that the University of New Hampshire has generated A Guide to Fisheries Stock Assessment and this document can be downloaded from <http://www.seagrant.unh.edu/newsstock.html>.

2006 Tilefish Otolith Collection Results

Linda Lombardi presented results from the tilefish otolith collections. Lombardi stated that numbers of collected tilefish otoliths have increased over the last few years and that they are continuing to collect otoliths and gonads from golden tilefish. Lombardi mentioned that 2006

was the first time tilefish were aged in the Gulf of Mexico. Lombardi explained that tilefish otoliths grow very thick and have a poor pattern of deposition, making it difficult to section and age tilefish. Lombardi mentioned scientists are still unsure when rings are deposited on tilefish otoliths. **Lombardi mentioned they have observed a good distribution of lengths from sampled fish and that more samples from the Western Gulf of Mexico would be helpful. Lombardi requested that samplers continue to collect both otoliths from golden tilefish along with gonads if possible.** Having both otoliths allows for one to be sectioned while the other otolith is sent off for chemical testing.

Lombardi also encouraged samplers to collect king mackerel gonads when possible. Over 90% of the gonad must be collected and gonad samples must be delivered within 24 hours or the tissue starts to decompose. Port agents collecting gonad tissue can contact Doug Devries for more information or supplies.

Discussion of Monitoring of Non-Native Species

G. Bray gave a presentation on behalf of Pam Fuller on monitoring non-native species. Port agents were provided with a web address for the nonindigenous aquatic species (NAS) database (<http://nas.er.usgs.gov>) maintained by the US Geological Survey in Gainesville, FL. This database tracks aquatic freshwater and marine species nationwide. Port agents coming in contact with nonindigenous species were encouraged to collect species name, detailed harvest locations, date collected, and how the species was collected. Bray mentioned that agents should save specimens whenever possible but high quality photographs are useful when specimens can not be collected. **Bray mentioned that hopefully in future meetings Pam Fuller would be able to meet with the group to discuss findings and results of the NAS database.**

NMFS Northeast Region Field agent activities

Steve Link discussed the North East (NE) Field Agent activities pertaining to biological sampling. Link mentioned the NE Region extends from Maine to North Carolina and there are 8 field offices through out this region. Link described that sampling targets are generated by the NE Fishery Science Center at Woods Hole, MA on a yearly basis. Biological samples are generated by species, market code, gear, and statistical area fished. Link explained samplers sometimes have large distances to travel to collect samples and vessel monitoring systems (VMS) are used to locate vessels that might have targeted species for sampling. Link recently produced a revised 70 page biosampling manual as a training and field guide. Link explained that most of their data is collected using Allegro handheld data loggers. Data from these handheld units are uploaded directly to their sampling monitoring database at the NE Fishery Science Center. Link explained that they monitor sampling targets every 2 weeks to ensure adequate sampling of all species of concern.

NMFS Trip Ticket Processing

Guy Davenport and Tony Cano presented the Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) Trip Ticket Review Program. Davenport described how this program assists Alabama and Louisiana in editing and quality control of trip ticket data. The primary function of this program is to analyze reported data and edit these data to improve data quality assurance and relevance. **The SEFSC is currently in the process of developing a similar program for Texas trip ticket data.** The Texas port agents were concerned that a large portion of Texas data would be arriving for review at one time since trip ticket data are being collected already but no review

program has been finalized yet. Davenport explained the SEFSC would likely only send out one month of tickets for review at any given time. Davenport explained that all edits are sent back to the states for acceptance or rejection and the review process by the SEFSC is done prior to state data being delivered to FIN.

Discussion of FIN Biological Data Collection Methodologies

G. Bray gave a brief presentation about FIN methodologies for collecting biological sampling data. Bray showed an example of the FIN biological sampling form and many samplers mentioned they had never seen that form but explained they had been collecting most of the minimum data elements. Bray explained the data elements on the form and how each of those data elements should be collected and coded. Bray presented the 2007 targets for biological sampling. Davenport helped explain how for 2007 the targets were generated using a new methodology using a scientific paper found by Gary Fitzhugh. This new methodology allowed FIN to target many additional species with the money available for biological sampling because the estimated number of otoliths collected by species is much lower than in previous years. Bray concluded by mentioning that Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission has almost completed a web based data entry program for FIN biological samples. Bray mentioned that hopefully by the end of June, 2007, this program will be available for testing throughout all Gulf States.

Other Business

Bray informed port agents that the next meeting will likely occur in the summer or fall of 2008 and the location is yet to be determined. Port agents suggested New Orleans, LA, Pensacola Beach, FL, and Tampa, FL as possible realistic destinations.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

**FIN Administrative Subcommittee
Conference Call Summary
August 31, 2006**

Attachment B

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 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
Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Daniel Matos, PRDENR, Mayaguez, PR
Ron Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Status of FIN External Program Review

D. Donaldson stated that the purposes of the call are to discuss the composition of the review panel and tentatively select dates and a location for the review meeting. **P. Anninos** discussed the general makeup of the review team members. The review team should have a wide variety of expertise and could have knowledge in multiple areas. These areas include recreational/commercial fisheries; management/technical; state/federal/regional government; geographic (Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf of Mexico); and academic/university. It was noted that the academic area should be de-emphasized for this review since the past reviews have relied heavily on the academia and the outcome of those reviews have not be particularly successful. The Subcommittee believed that all of these areas were appropriate and should be utilized in developing the review team. **P. Anninos** presented the group with a list of potential candidates for the review panel. After some discussion, the Subcommittee decided on the follow list:

Mike Slatter, State of Maryland
George Lapointe, State of Maine,
David Cupka, State of South Carolina
Wilson Laney, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The group also developed an alternate list (if one of the above people was not available):

Susan Shipman, State of Georgia
Eric Smith, State of Connecticut
Andy Manus, State of Delaware (retired)

P. Anninos stated that he would begin contacting these people to check their willingness and availability and get back to the Subcommittee in the near future.

The Subcommittee then discussed the dates and location of the program review meeting. **It was suggested and the group agreed that the meeting should be held in the Tampa/St.**

Petersburg area. The potential dates for the meeting were the week of November 27 (tentatively November 28-29) or the week of December 4 (tentatively December 5-6). The meeting will be 1½ days and include the following participants: Page Campbell/Kevin Anson, FIN Chairman/Vice Chairman; Daniel Matos, FIN Caribbean representative; Tom Sminkey/Guy Davenport/Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries representative; Paul Anninos, facilitator, Dave Donaldson, FIN staff and the review team. It was suggested that a summary of the findings from the review panel be presented to the FIN representatives at the end of meeting. The Subcommittee agreed that this would provide some preliminary results and would be useful in ensuring the success of the review.

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

Attachment C

GULF OF MEXICO GEOGRAPHIC SUBCOMMITTEE (Data Management Subcommittee)

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 Montana 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 Kasprzak will give a report to the Committee on the status of detailed effort 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.

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.

GULF OF MEXICO GEOGRAPHIC SUBCOMMITTEE (TCC Data Management Subcommittee)

MINUTES

Monday, March 12, 2007

Biloxi, Mississippi

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

Members

Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Richard Cody, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX

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

Elizabeth Fetherstone, Nature Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL
Bob Zales, II, PCBA, Panama City, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 23, 2006 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as written.

Status of Biological Sampling Activities

Review of targets and collection activities - **D. Donaldson** distributed handouts with a summary for all species collected in all states and the number of otoliths, as well as a summary for the five

FIN target species. **Donaldson** reported that almost all targets had been met. Possibly this will be the last year to use these targets, since this year began a new methodology. **Donaldson** reported that the Data Collection Plan Work Group meets on an annual basis with the main goal being representative sampling of species based on what is being landed. **Donaldson** noted that some areas of sampling are still being affected by Hurricane Katrina since docks, etc. are still being rebuilt.

Review of analysis activities – Subcommittee members were provided with a matrix detailing otolith analysis from 2002 to 2005 listing the five Gulf states. **Donaldson** noted that with the exception of 2002 the matrix was complete. **R. Cody** stated that should be complete by the end of the month.

Loading fishery-independent biological samples into FIN DMS – **Donaldson** reported that the response to the request for fishery-independent data was not good. Therefore he is recommending that at this time FIN not pursue loading fishery-independent data into the DMS. The Subcommittee agreed and this subject will be revisited at a later date. Subcommittee members also agreed to send data collection protocols to D. Donaldson.

On-line data entry program demonstration – **D. Bellais** gave a demonstration of the FIN web-based data entry system for biological sampling. This system can be downloaded onto the various agency servers. Bellais explained the use of drop-downs and an automatic correction feature. **Bellais** noted that Subcommittee members can log in to Discoverer and check their information. After the demonstration the Subcommittee discussed various features of this data entry system and agreed to give Bellais feedback and suggestions. The data entry system should be ready for trial in June. This subject will be revisited at the October 2007 meeting.

Status of Compilation of Commercial Vessel Information

D. Donaldson reported that the subject of Compilation of Commercial Vessel Information has been an issue for quite some time and a suggestion was made to develop a white paper outlining these problems. **Donaldson** noted that few problems were found. One issue is that Texas has a problem with incompatibility since their two data bases do not communicate. **V. Swann** noted that she doubted if this situation would change since the problem seems to be between the contractor and TPWD. Swann will check further and will get back to the Subcommittee with an update. Another issue is in Florida dealing with confidentiality. The Florida Dept. of Public Safety is asking the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute to sign an MOU to not share data. Bellais will send the format to R. Cody.

Donaldson stated that the subject of Compilation of Commercial Vessel Information will be an agenda item in October 2007 and perhaps these problems can be resolved so routine data can begin to be compiled.

Status of License Frame Pilot Survey

D. Donaldson reported that the License Frame Pilot Survey has been delayed until Wave 2 because of issues with funding and the telephone contractor. However, the data bases have been provided to the contractor for their review. The deadline for Wave 2 will be April 6 and Donaldson will e-mail a reminder to participants. **Donaldson** reported that NMFS may have some available money to be used on this project. One suggestion was to have the contractor do a

reverse look-up which would improve completeness for phone numbers. The other option was to include Texas in the Pilot Survey after Wave 2.

B. Zales addressed the Subcommittee and suggested that possibly using outreach as an educational tool would help participation in the Pilot Survey. **Donaldson** noted that this issue was discussed at the last State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee meeting and it was decided that a letter should be sent to each of the state licensing agencies as well as recreational fishing clubs. The Subcommittee was provided with draft letters to state licensing agencies and fishing clubs. **Donaldson** asked that they review these letters give him feedback. **Donaldson** also asked members to provide him with the addresses of state licensing agencies and a contact name, as well as fishing clubs by March 23, 2007. **M. Kasprzak** suggested drafting a news release to be distributed to fishing license outlets. The group agreed that these letters would be sent out by the end of March.

Presentation of Detailed Effort Pilot Survey

M. Kasprzak gave a presentation on the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Crab Effort Survey. **Kasprzak** described the total number of interviews by basin: Atchafalaya Rive, Barataria, Calcasieu River, Lake Pontchartrain, Mississippi River, Terrebonne and Vermillion-Tech River. She also listed the number of fishermen interviewed and the number of commercial fishing docks participating in the Survey. Bait types and average trip time were also listed. **Kasprzak** also reported that it appears there a more traps being put out in the western part of Louisiana than the eastern part and fishermen are becoming more supportive.

Kasprzak reported that the next step will be to compare the information from the Crab Effort Pilot Survey with the trip ticket data, then work with their Crab Task Force doing outreach. **Kasprzak** will report back to the Subcommittee in October with more details on the Pilot Survey.

Discussion of Species Identification for Quota Monitoring

D. Donaldson reported that this issue was raised because he and G. Davenport were considering using electronic trip tickets for quota monitoring and in considering this, also correct species identification by dealers. **Donaldson** asked the Subcommittee for their thoughts regarding the accuracy of species identification by dealers. **C. Denson** noted that most fishermen know their species, however not all dealers are as accurate. **G. Davenport** reported that NMFS samplers are trying to do some outreach with species identification and encouraged state members to have their samplers do the same.

C. Denson suggested that Subcommittee members let their state directors know that this group is working on species identification.

Demonstration of InPort Metadata Tool

D. Bellais reported that data had been gathered from the state agencies by M. Williams and imported it into the InPort system. Bellais then gave a demonstration on the use of InPort as a

metadata tool. **D. Donaldson** reminded Subcommittee members that it was their responsibility to update InPort as necessary and suggested that this should be a standing agenda item either for DMS at Commission meetings or for the FIN meetings. **Bellais** reported that at this time GSMFC and MDMR are published on InPort. A report will be given at the October meeting discussing which agencies are published, as well as fishery independent activities and progress utilizing the InPort tool.

Discussion of Opportunities to Comment on Recreational Outreach Materials

Members of the Data Management Subcommittee were provided a copy of a brochure developed by NMFS Fisheries Statistics Office which gives an overview of recreational fishing activities by state. Subcommittee members agreed that not only would they like the opportunity to have more input in developing this list, but also adequate time to respond. **D. Donaldson** will discuss this with T. Sminkey of NMFS.

Discussion of Long-Term Collection of Protected Resources Questions

Copies of the MRFSS Economic Add-On survey form were distributed to Subcommittee Members. **D. Donaldson** reported that the long-term collection of protected resources questions had been raised by the NMFS Southeast Regional Office. **Donaldson** wanted members to be aware that even though this add-on survey has been completed, this subject has been raised and possibly could become an issue in the future.

Other Business

K. Anson reported Alabama will begin its for-hire fishery program April 21. There will be workshops held for captains and crew at the end of March and beginning of April.

Donaldson requested Subcommittee members review the member list for corrections.

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

Head Boat Data Review Meeting

Meeting Summary

April 24, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 8:45 a.m. The following people were present:

Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Eric Williams, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Mike Burton, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Guillermo Diaz, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Craig Brown, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Richard Cody, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Beverly Sauls, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Adam Purdy, FWRI, Tequesta, FL
Barron Kalmeyer, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Ariel Poholek, FWRI, Tequesta, FL
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Meeting

D. Donaldson stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to review the data from the NMFS Head Boat Logbook Program and the FIN At-Sea and For-Hire Telephone surveys. Potentially, the group could develop some preliminary recommendations regarding sampling of head boats in the Gulf of Mexico. A summary of this meeting will be developed and the findings will be presented to the FIN Committee for their consideration and action at their June 2007 meeting.

Overview of Methods

At-sea and For-Hire Telephone Surveys

B. Sauls presented an overview of the methods used by FIN to collect catch and effort data from the head boat fisheries. Alabama starting sampling head boats in 2004 and is collected data from 4 vessels. Florida began sampling head boats in 2005 and is collecting data from 96 vessels. The breakdown of vessel by region is: Region 1 - 16 vessels; Region 2 - 33 vessels; Region 3 - 12 vessels; Region 4 - 22 vessels; Region 5 - 12 vessels. One of the critical elements to this survey is the sample frame. It contains all vessels that are active in the for-hire fishery. It is updated every wave (two months) where seasonal vessels made active or inactive; vessels no longer in the fishery are removed, new and replacement vessels are added and information about the owner, contact numbers, location, etc. are routinely updated. The survey consists of two complementary survey methods. The effort data are collected using For-Hire Telephone Survey methodology and the catch data are collected via the At-Sea Sampling methods. For the For-Hire Telephone Survey, a random sample of 25% of all vessels (with a minimum of 3 vessels) is

sampled on a weekly basis. The head boat operators receive a letter in advance to let them know that they have been selected to participate in the survey. Then, captains keep written records for the selected week and provide those data to the state agency either through direct telephone interviews or via FAX. The data elements collected via the survey include: number of fishing trips each day of selected week; and, for each trip: # anglers; origin (state, county); fishing area; distance from shore; trip start and stop time; time spent fishing; multi-day trip; target species (which is new for 2007); and origin of trip (state, county). If a trip originates from another region, that effort is assigned to appropriate region although this is not common for head boats. In addition to effort collections, samplers conduct field validations in order to verify a portion of reported trips. This information is used to correct for over/under reporting. She pointed out that multi-day trips are counted as multiple day trips within a sample week and provided an example. She then provided an overview of the procedures used to determine a raw angler trip estimate and noted that a variance is also calculated.

Regarding the At-Sea Sampling methods, she reviewed the vessel selection procedure and outlined the sampling trip targets for Alabama and Florida. The states use one sampler for small trips or two samplers on either side of vessel and the sampler observes all anglers within their sight. For large trips, samplers may not be able to observe all anglers. On the way out to fish, the samplers meet the anglers to explain the survey and ask if they will participate as well as establish contact with mates. During fishing, samplers ask mate or angler for the disposition of each fish. They make sure they do not influence the decision to keep or release a particular fish. For harvested fish, samplers keep a tally for each angler or angler group and record measurements, if time permits. For discarded catch, samplers obtain a length measurement and observe release condition of the fish. There are several codes that are used to describe the condition of the released fish. Between fishing, samplers conduct angler interviews and after fishing, samplers ask about any discarded catch that was not observed by the sampler. Also, samplers get harvested fish lengths and dockside weights. Some of the other information that is collected include minimum and maximum depth; number of hooks; hook type; hours fished; number of anglers; dock to dock hours; trip days (multi); and start/stop time (used for logbook comparison). The catch rates by region, wave, area fished are calculated and then those numbers are multiplied by the estimated effort in same strata to get total harvest and released catch.

NOAA Fisheries Head Boat Logbook Program

K. Brennan provided an overview of the NMFS Head Boat Logbook Program. Sampling began in North and South Carolina in 1972. The program expanded in 1976 and then 1978 to cover northeastern Florida and the Keys, respectively. By 1982, there was full-time coverage for all head boat in the area. Sampling in the Gulf of Mexico region began in 1986 and the use of electronic measuring boards was implemented in 1988. The objectives of program include bioprofile sampling (for species landed, size, ageing and life history information [lengths, weights otoliths spines, gonads, etc.], species ranges and logbook validation); catch and effort data via logbooks (includes data on species, numbers, size, discards, location, fishing time and effort expended). The sample information is combined with logbook data to characterize the head boat fishery. He provided an overview of the sampling methods for bioprofile sampling. A systematic opportunistic sampling schedule is used by the samplers. They get a count of all anglers departing the vessel. The samplers select the less common species and all fish on a stringer are measured once the measurements are started. Once a total of ten (10) measurements are reached for a particular species, the sampler can disregard that species on subsequent

stringers. The samplers also collect any logbooks the captain has completed. The reporting for the logbooks is mandatory under the Snapper-Grouper FMP (Atlantic) and Reef Fish FMP (Gulf of Mexico). The captain's ability to participate in fishery requires a permit, which is dependent upon satisfying reporting requirements and reporting is required even if the fishing occurs in state waters. However, the enforcement of these regulations is still necessary to make mandatory reporting effective. He then presented some compliance figures for the Gulf of Mexico. The samplers are also responsible for completing head boat activity reports which are used to adjust for non-reporting. The sampler's observations are used to develop a ratio of reported trips to all observations of activity (trips made as well as trips not made). That information is applied to the days where there is no information. That leads to the calculation of a "K" or correction factor, which is then applied to the reported landings to calculate estimated landings. The data collected via the Head Boat Program are used for various purposes. Bioprofile samples are used to generate average weights by species by area and time strata. The vessel trip reports are used to create reported numbers of fish landed, by species by area and time strata. And the head boat activity reports are used to provide a summary of all available information about vessel activity. Also, an estimated weight by species, by time, and by area strata is generated from these data. Some of the products produced from the Head Boat Program include annual summaries of landings, raw data for stock assessments, biological samples for life history studies, peer-reviewed publications (over 76) and data requests from many outside agencies and institutions:

Sampling Intensity Review and Comparison

The group examined sampling intensity of each of the programs. For the Head Boat Logbook program, the intensity is around 5.5% to 6.0% while the intensity for the At-sea sampling program is about 4.6% in Alabama and 1.0% to 2.0% in Florida. After some discussion, it appears that the two programs are somewhat comparable regarding this issue; however, it was determined that this issue was not all that relevant and the group does not need to focus much effort on this topic.

Response Rates Review and Comparison

The issue of response rates was examined next and for Head Boat Logbook Program, the rate is approximately 70% to 80% except for in the Keys and Southeast Florida where the rates are about 40% and 10%, respectively. For the For-Hire Telephone Survey, the rate is about 75% to 90% except for the Keys and Southeast Florida where the rates are 25% to 40% and 50%, respectively. It was noted that you are really comparing different items between the programs. It appears that the Keys and Southeast Florida are difficult areas for both programs.

Effort Data Review and Comparison

The group began examining the effort data for both programs and it appears that there are large discrepancies between programs. Table 1 shows the total number of trips and trips/vessel, by region for each program. From the table, it appears that the For-Hire Telephone Survey is routinely estimating more total trips than the Head Boat Logbook Program. The large differences points out that this issue needs to be further examined. It might be useful to look at distribution of trips by week and by month to see if this could explain the large discrepancies. **It was recommended that this issue be further explored to determine if explanations of the differences could be identified.**

Catch and Discards Data Review and Comparison

Regarding the reported catch, there were large discrepancies between the two programs. As a rule, the At-sea program has higher reported or observed catch than logbooks. One explanation for the differences could be due to the discrepancies of the effort estimates from the two programs. It would be useful to look at and compare the catch rates of the two programs to see if they are similar. Potential problems with the effort estimate should be explored first before a lot of time is spent on looking at catch. **It was recommended that this issue be further explored to determine if explanations of the differences could be identified.**

The group then looked at the discards information for both of the programs. After some exploration, it appears that very little or no discards data are being reported on logbooks. It was noted that the discards section of the logbook is still fairly new and NMFS needs to work with the captains to record these information and stress the importance of these data. There was a comparison of data where a logbook was turned in as well as an observer on board and while some records match very closely; there are others where there are large differences in species and numbers recorded. It was pointed out that these differences show the importance of some type of validation for self-reported data. **It was recommended that this issue be further explored to determine if explanations of the differences could be identified.**

Biological Data Review and Comparison

The comparison of biological data collected by both programs show that they are collecting similar data regarding biological data. The group looked at the distributions of lengths from both programs and they appear to be similar. **The collection of biological data seems to be consistent between the programs.**

Cost of Operations Review and Comparison

The group examined the cost of operation for the two programs. The cost for the At-sea sampling and the For-Hire Telephone Survey in Alabama and Florida is approximately \$300K while the cost to operate the Head Boat Logbook Program was about \$130K in Alabama and Florida. **The group did not want to come any conclusions about the cost until the group further explores the differences in catch and effort between the programs.**

Other Business

E. Williams noted that the calculation of catch per unit effort (CPUE) for individual species from the head boat fishery is currently possible by the use of the logbook records. The use of the logbook records allows for post-stratification and general linear modeling of the data at the trip level. This is particularly important when the desired outcome is a CPUE measure reflecting relative abundance. Bias and error in a CPUE's measure of relative abundance can render it useless for stock assessment. For example, the current logbook records can be used to eliminate trips with a near zero expectation of capturing the species of interest. Effort expended on trips with no potential for capturing the species of interest can induce unwanted bias and error. In contrast, calculation of CPUE from the MRFSS telephone and angler interview methodology does not allow for post-stratification of enough trips based on their targeting. At-sea observer coverage is too low and cost-prohibitive to allow for sufficient sampling to allow for post-stratification and general linear modeling of head boat trips.

The group entered into a general discussion about the for-hire fishery. It was noted that the NRC report stated that the for-hire sector should be treated as commercial fishery and FIN

might want to examine this issue. The group agreed that a key to any successful program relies on good compliance or cooperation. It is very important to have enforcement of regulations if reporting is mandatory. After some discussion, **the group recommended that FIN reexamine the feasibility of using a combination of both logbooks and at-sea sampling for the for-hire fishery to generate catch and effort estimates.** It was suggested that effort could be collected via the logbook program (assuming there is strong compliance) and catch and discards could be collected by the at-sea sampling program. Port samplers would still be needed to collect biological data as well as serve as validation of the catch and effort data. The catch could still be reported on logbooks as some type of validation as well.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Table 1. Estimated Boat Trips and Totals by Region, Florida and Alabama, 2004-2006

LOGBOOK PROGRAM

Year	Region	Area	1/2 day	3/4 day	Full day	18 hour	2 day	3 day	4 day	5 day	6 day	7 c
2004	1	23	314	1163	376	-	-	13	-	-	-	-
2004		23.5	154	282	261	-	4	12	-	-	-	-
2004	2	21,22	534	2376	1,033	9	-	53	-	-	-	-
2004	3	12,17	2305	260	538	-	-	-	53	-	-	-
2004	4	11	6693	252	21	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
2004	5	7,8	483	5	1,111	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2005	1	23	263	1083	314	-	-	15	-	-	-	-
2005		23.5	135	162	149	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
2005	2	21,22	1332	1602	614	3	-	62	-	-	-	-
2005	3	12,17	2525	248	513	-	-	-	88	-	-	-
2005	4	11	6696	96	129	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2005	5	7,8	570	1	1,019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2006	1	23	383	1196	296	-	-	30	-	-	-	-
2006		23.5	157	239	163	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
2006	2	21,22	1247	1179	100	6	13	70	-	-	-	-
2006	3	12,17	2209	204	536	-	-	-	98	-	-	-
2006	4	11	6808	84	146	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2006	5	7,8	621	5	1022	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

TELEPHONE SURVEY

Year	Region	Area	1/2 day	3/4 day	Full day	
2005	1	23	2191	834	1,076	MULTIDAY TRIP ESTIMATES YET TO BE CALCULATED
2005		23.5	408	48	96	
2005	2	21,22	7652	5167	2,248	
2005	3	12,17	2515	613	-	
2005	4	11	9617	311	59	
2005	5	7,8	981	398	1,658	
2006	1	23	2245	924	1,065	
2006		23.5	571	55	246	
2006	2	21,22	6218	4549	2,165	
2006	3	12,17	220	0	-	
2006	4	11	10465	1133	200	
2006	5	7,8	1227	935	1773	

Area

- 23 Florida Panhandle
- 23.5 Alabama
- 21,22 Florida - West. Peninsula
- 12,17 Florida Keys
- 11 Southeast Florida
- 7,8 Northeast Florida

**FIN Otolith Processors Training Workshop
Meeting Summary
May 15-16, 2006
St. Petersburg, Florida**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.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
Alison Amick, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jessica Carroll, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jamie Miller, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Jerome Little AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Kelly Brinkman, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Wes Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Debbie Belk, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Cara Hoar, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Isis Longo, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Jaimie David, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Prince Robinson, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Tonie Saylor, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Mandy Barnes, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Nick Chaplinski, NCDMF, Morehead City, NC
Felix Del Toro, NCDMF, Morehead City, NC
Laura Goetz, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Chris Palmer, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Carrie Levins, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Jennifer Potts, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Daniel Carr, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Stephanie McInerny, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Andrew Fischer, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Teresa DeBruler, MML, Sarasota, FL
Read Hendon, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
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 and New FIN Priority Species

The first part of the meeting consisted of a reading exercise where the groups read otoliths. The group split into five sections and conducted readings of various sets of otoliths for king mackerel, gray triggerfish, snappers (red, gray and vermilion), sciaenids (black drum, red drum and spotted seatrout) and inshore species (flounder, sheepshead and striped mullet). 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.

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. It was noted that not all agencies have completed the reading of this reference set so an APE could not be calculated at this time. D. Donaldson stated that the goal for each of the reference sets is to have all agencies read them and have the primary contact compile the ages and calculate an APE among the agencies. This information would be presented at the annual otolith processors training workshop each year. It was pointed out that the number of otoliths in the reference set may be too high. **After some discussion, the group agreed to reduce the total number of otoliths to 100 for red snapper. Once the existing reference set has been read by all agencies, R. Allman will randomly select 100 otoliths from the current collection and distribute to the group.** The other issue addressed by the group was the amount of reading required by experienced and new readers. It was noted that new readers must look at the entire reference set and existing readers should examine a subset of the set. It was suggested that the experienced readers work with the new readers to assist them in the methods of analysis.

Discussion of Flounder Reference Set

A. Fischer stated that the APEs for flounder were between 15-20% among all the agencies which is much higher than in past years. The high APEs might be due to the different processing methods used by the various agencies as well as having blanks (where an agency did not provide an age) in the data base. **A. Fischer will further examine this issue and distribute his findings to the group.**

Discussion of King Mackerel Reference Set

C. Palmer stated that a new reference set for king mackerel has been developed. It contains 100 whole and 100 sectioned otoliths. It was decided that the reference set would be first read by FWRI and then distributed to the east. Each agency needs to promptly read the set and provide C. Palmer with ages. He will present the results at the May 2008 otolith meeting.

Discussion of Developing Reference Sets for Other Species

D. Donaldson stated that FIN has adopted a new method for determining the sampling targets which mean that FIN is focusing on more species. Therefore, the group needs to decide which species to target for the development of reference sets. After some discussion, the following species (with responsible agency/person) were identified:

**Red drum/spotted seatrout/striped mullet
Vermilion snapper**

**Sheepshead
Black Drum**

**FWRI (Janet Tunnell)
NMFS (Robert Allman) need to
look at feasibility of developing
this set
MDMR (Wes Devers)
GSMFC (Steve VanderKooy)**

Each set will consist of 100 otoliths and each state was asked to provide 20 otoliths of each species to the point of contact. It was noted that if possible, images should be provided as well as the actual otolith. The goal for completing these reference sets is by the May 2008 otolith meeting.

Discussion of Allocating Processing Responsibility for New FIN Species

D. Donaldson stated that since there has been an increase in the number of species that are collected under FIN, the group needs to examine the possibility of distributing the responsibility for processing the various species. The reason for looking at this issue is due to concern about the quality of the processing since there will be many people reading all of the species. There are two options: 1) continue have all agencies involved in the processing of all species and 2) select an agency to be responsible for a particular species. Each species would be the responsibility of one agency. **The group discussed the pros and cons of each option and decided that FIN should continue having all agencies involved in processing all of the species. This issue should be readdressed each year by the group to determine how well the process is working.**

Status of Otolith Manual Revision

S. VanderKooy stated there are four species (gag grouper, red grouper, vermilion snapper and gray snapper) that FIN will be collecting samples so there needs to be sections developed for each of these species. He distributed drafts for each of these sections to the group and asked everyone to review them and provide him with any comments. He will compile the comments and present the revised sections at the next meeting.

Discussion of Future Training Meeting

The group decided that there was a need for a training session for some of the new species, specifically gray triggerfish and vermilion snapper prior to the annual processors meeting. It was suggested that this meeting be held at the NMFS-Panama City Laboratory since many of the experts for the species are close to the Panama City area. It was envisioned the one person from each state would attend and that person could then train additional personnel in that particular state. The time frame for this meeting would be October/November 2007. D. Donaldson stated that the concept of the training session was a good idea; the feasibility of conducting such a meeting would be contingent upon funding. He would continue to monitor the funding situation and as the meeting date nears, make a decision about the possibility of having the meeting.

The group then discussed the date and location for the next meeting otolith processors training workshop. It was decided that it should be held at Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute during the 1st or 2nd week of May 2008. It was suggested that the meeting be expanded to two (2) full days to accommodate the reading and review of all species that are being sampled. Also, the group believed it would be a good idea to have the experts provide a "how to" demonstration regarding the reading of otoliths for the various species. D. Donaldson stated that he would develop a draft agenda prior to the meeting and distribute it to everyone for comment.

The meeting was recessed at 3:00 p.m.

May 16, 2007

The meeting was reconvened at 9:00 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. The following table outlines the APEs for each species and provides a historically look (where applicable) for those species.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Black drum	--	--	--	--	0.7%
Red drum	--	--	--	--	0.5%
Spotted seatrout	--	--	--	--	2.1%
Gray triggerfish	--	--	--	--	16.8%
King mackerel	--	--	13.6%	2.4%	14.7%
Greater Amberjack	25.0%	--	16.7%	8.9%	--
Flounders	--	22.2%	9.5%	1.1%	2.9%
Sheepshead	--	--	--	--	2.1%
Striped mullet	--	--	--	--	7.0%
Gray snapper	--	--	--	--	3.2%
Red snapper	16.0%	4.9%	5.6%	3.3%	0.9%
Vermilion snapper	--	--	--	--	6.1%

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. For the species that have been read for more the one year, there appears to be a downward trend in APE which means the training sessions are doing their jobs. For gray triggerfish, the APE was fairly high but this is the first year reading spines and that is to be expected. This species needs to be examined during the proposed training session. For king mackerel, the APE continues to be high although some of the differences may be attributed to the quality of the images due to the equipment used during the workshop. The equipment used in Panama City provides a clearer image and that could explain some of the discrepancies. For vermilion snapper, the APE is fairly low for a first time read. It was noted that reflected light makes a difference from transmitted light in terms of reading. There appeared to be agreement between the groups although that differed from the actual age of the fish. This species needs to be examined during the proposed training session. For gray snapper, the APE was quite good for a first time read although there seemed to be a discrepancy between counting the core vs. not counting the core. This species needs to be examined during the proposed training session. For striped mullet, the APE was higher than the standard but still low considering it was the first time the group read these otoliths. It was pointed out that readers should not count the first ring due to the spawning time of this species. That could explain some of the differences. The rest of the species (red snapper, sheepshead, flounder, spotted sea trout, red drum and black drum) have APEs well under the standard.

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

RecFIN (SE) Biological/Environmental Work Group

Conference Call Meeting Summary

May 29, 2007

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

Ken Brennan, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Beverly Sauls, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Rob Andrews, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jason Duet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, Puerta de Tierra
David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Review of the Highly Migratory Species Private Boat Characterization Survey

D. Donaldson stated that the main purpose of this call was to review the draft mail survey questionnaire. B. Sauls provided extensive changes to the first draft and those comments were distributed to the group. The revised questionnaire represents the administrative record for this portion of the call. The revised questionnaire is attached. The group then discussed the duration of the survey. After some discussion, it was decided that the mail survey would be a one-time event and sent to all private boat permit holders on the list.

D. Donaldson stated that T. Tobias provided a copy of the questionnaire the U.S. Virgin Islands used to survey their billfish fisheries and asked if there were ways to make the two documents more compatible. After some discussion, the group agreed that USVI questionnaire and the mail questionnaire were collecting different information and there was not a need to make the two documents compatible at this time. In the future once a survey methodology was developed for the Gulf of Mexico, it might be appropriate to use the USVI survey as a template.

Being no further business, the call was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

**GULF OF MEXICO PRIVATE ANGLER HIGHLY MIGRATORY
SPECIES (HMS) MAIL SURVEY**

The *Contractor* is conducting a survey for the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) which is state/federal cooperative program to collect, manage, and disseminate statistical data and information on the marine commercial and recreational fisheries of the Southeast Region.

We are collecting information for use in conservation of coastal resources and we would appreciate your help with this important study. Before we begin, I want to assure you that your answers will be kept confidential.

SECTION 1 – SCREENER

We want to gather information about your recreational fishing activities regarding highly migratory species (HMS). Highly migratory species include yellowfin tuna, bluefin tuna, blue marlin, white marlin, swordfish, sailfish and HMS sharks. Recreational fishing means the primary purpose of the fishing is for fun or relaxation, as opposed to providing income from the sale of fish.

Q1.1 Have you been recreational saltwater fishing for highly migratory species in the last 12 months anywhere in the US or in a US territory?

_____ YES. If yes, please proceed to the next question.

_____ NO. If no, you may skip the rest of this survey and mail your response. Thank you for your participation.

Q1.2 When you go fishing for HMS, does the trip originate from (list state of residence) or do your trips sometimes originate from other states or U.S. territories?

Yes

No

If yes: what states or U.S. territories?

Q1.3 When you go fishing for HMS, what species do you target?

Yellowfin tuna ___often ___ sometimes ___ never

Bluefin tuna ___often ___ sometimes ___ never

Blue marlin ___often ___ sometimes ___ never

White marlin ___often ___ sometimes ___ never

Swordfish ___often ___ sometimes ___ never

Sailfish ___often ___ sometimes ___ never

Sharks ___often ___ sometimes ___ never

Q1.4 When you go fishing for HMS, what species do you harvest?

Yellowfin tuna	<input type="checkbox"/> often	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> never
Bluefin tuna	<input type="checkbox"/> often	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> never
Blue marlin	<input type="checkbox"/> often	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> never
White marlin	<input type="checkbox"/> often	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> never
Swordfish	<input type="checkbox"/> often	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> never
Sailfish	<input type="checkbox"/> often	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> never
Highly Migratory Sharks	<input type="checkbox"/> often	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> never

Q.1.5 When you go fishing for HMS, what other finfish do you catch and/or harvest? Check all that apply:

Blackfin tuna
 Dolphin
 Wahoo
 King Mackerel
 Large coastal sharks (such as silky, dusky, sandbar, night, tiger, hammerhead)
 Pelagic sharks (such as Caribbean reef, oceanic whitetip, mako, threshers, others)
 Unknown species of sharks
 Others: list here

Q.1.6 Does your household have the following? Check all that apply:

A landline telephone
 Cellular telephone service
 Internet telephone service
 A computer with Internet access
 An email account

Q.1.7 If you were asked to participate in future surveys for HMS fishing, which survey methods would you be willing to participate in?

Postage-paid mail surveys very willing somewhat willing never
 Internet based surveys very willing somewhat willing never
 E-mail surveys very willing somewhat willing never
 Telephone surveys very willing somewhat willing never
 Dockside interviews very willing somewhat willing never

Q.1.8. How often would you be willing to participate in future HMS fishing surveys?

Once every year
 Once every month
 Once every week
 Every time I go HMS fishing
 Never

Q.1.9. Do you belong to any fish organizations?

Organization1 _____
 Organization2 _____
 Organization3 _____
 Organization4 _____

SECTION 2 - MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to ask you a few questions about your most recent fishing trip. Of course, all of your answers will be kept confidential. This survey is conducted in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. You are not required to answer any question that you feel is an intrusion of your privacy.

Q2 On how many days in the past two months, between *{TODAY-2 Months}* and *{TODAY-1}*, did you go saltwater fishing for HMS species in a boat launched from a coastal state or territory of the US?

_____ Number of days

If the number of trips = 0, thank you for your time.

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR MOST RECENT FISHING TRIP

Q3 When did you last go saltwater fishing for HMS species?

_____ Date of departure (mm/dd/yyyy) _____ Date of return

Q4 When did you depart and return from this trip?

__:__ am or pm Time of departure _____:__ am or pm Time of return

Q5 What type of location did your last HMS fishing trip ORIGINATE from?

- _____ Personal residence or dock
- _____ Public boat ramp
- _____ Public dock or marina Name of marina: _____
- _____ Commercial dry storage facility
- _____ Private locked-gate marina
- _____ Private property unlocked marina
- _____ Something else *{specify}*

Q6 If you did not return to the same location than where you departed from, what type of location did your last HMS fishing trip RETURN to?

- _____ Personal residence or dock
- _____ Public boat ramp
- _____ Public dock or marina Name of marina: _____
- _____ Commercial dry storage facility
- _____ Private locked-gate marina
- _____ Private property unlocked marina
- _____ Something else *{specify}*

Q7 What type of vessel were you fishing from?
__ Privately owned or rented vessel <20 feet long
__ Privately owned or rented vessel 21-30 feet long
__ Privately owned or rented vessel >30 feet long
__ A chartered vessel with captain and crew

Q8 Did you pay for a hired captain or crew on your vessel?
YES
NO

Q9 Did you purchase fuel the day of the fishing trip?
YES
NO, please skip to next question
Don't recall, please skip to next question

If you answered YES, when did you purchase fuel?
__ when you departed for your fishing trip
__ when you returned from your fishing trip

If you answered YES, where did you purchase fuel?
__ a fuel station accessible only by land
__ a fuel dock at a private, locked marina
__ a fuel dock at a public facility or unlocked marina
__ Something else {specify}

Q10 Did you visit a bait or tackle shop the day of your fishing trip?
YES
NO
Don't recall

Q11 To what state or US territory did the boat return?
_____ State of return

Q12 To what **coastal** county did the boat return?
_____ County of return

Q13 How many anglers were on board the boat?
_____ Number of anglers

Q14 Were any HMS species harvested on this trip?

NO

YES. If YES, please check the HMS species that were harvested below.

Yellowfin tuna

Bluefin tuna

Blue marlin

White marlin

Swordfish

Sailfish

Sharks

Q15 Were any HMS released on this trip?

NO

YES. If YES, please check the HMS species that were released below.

Yellowfin tuna

Bluefin tuna

Blue marlin

White marlin

Swordfish

Sailfish

Sharks

Were the majority of these fish released because they were:

not legal to harvest

not legal and you did not want to harvest

legal, but you did not want to harvest

Q16 Was most of the boat fishing effort that day in the ocean, sound, river, bay or inlet?

Ocean/gulf

Sound

River

Bay

Inlet, including inter-coastal waterways and canals

Other {Specify}

IF YOUR EFFORT WAS IN THE OCEAN/GULF:

Was most of your fishing in the Ocean/Gulf in waters that were:

THREE miles or less from shore

TEN miles or less from shore (for West Florida or Puerto Rico)

Greater than THREE miles from shore in U.S. Territorial waters

Greater than TEN miles from shore (for West Florida or Puerto Rico)

International waters

Another Country's Territorial waters (list country)

Thank you for your assistance. That concludes this survey. Have a good day.

**ComFIN Data Collection Work Group
Conference Call Summary
February 6, 2007**

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

Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Steve Brown, FWRI, St. Pete, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
David Olsen, USVIDFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Purpose of the Meeting

D. Donaldson stated that the purpose of the meeting was to assess the need for trip-level commercial data to meet management needs in U.S. Virgin Islands; and identify and compile conversion factors used for various species in the Southeast Region.

Discussion of Trip-level Commercial Data in the U.S. Virgin Islands

D. Donaldson stated this was an issue that was identified during the last facilitated session as a topic that needed to be addressed by FIN. **D. Olsen stated that USVI currently has implemented trip-level reporting for their commercial fisheries. Therefore, the group decided that no further work needs to be conducted on this topic.**

Identify and Compile Commercial Conversion Factors

D. Donaldson stated that another issue identified during the facilitated session was the development of standardized conversion factors for commercial species in the Gulf of Mexico. **As a first step, staff will compile the various conversion factors that are used by each of the partners and once that have been completed, the group will get together and determine where the similarities and differences are among the various factors.**

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

**FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group
Conference Call Summary
April 25, 2007**

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. The following people were present:

Britt Bumguardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Murphy, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
Gary Fitzhugh, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Linda Lombardi, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Chris Palmer, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Review of 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 2006 (Jan-Dec) 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. 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 both the commercial and recreational side, the sampling appeared to be fairly representative although there appeared to be some problem with the flounders. It was noted that under the "flounder" group, it appears that not all of the codes have been included. D. Donaldson stated that he would work on identifying all appropriate codes for flounders. The group discussed the issue of lack of speciation of flounders in the commercial fishery. For the comparison spreadsheet, there is not a need to provide a separate gulf and southern flounder category since most of the flounders is not identified to the species level. **It was noted that states should continue to work the seafood dealers in order to identify flounders to the species level.**

Development of Targets for Biological Sampling

D. Donaldson stated that since FIN has adopted a new method for determine the sampling targets, FIN should probably utilize the same targets for several years to ensure that enough data are collected under the new sampling method. **After some discussion, the group recommended that FIN use the existing targets for the priority species for the biological sampling in 2008.** The group then discussed the issue of establishing a minimum number of otoliths to be collected per cell. It was pointed out that it might not be worth the effort to collect only 5 or 10 samples for a particular cell since the low sample size would probably not yield any useful data. D. Donaldson noted that this group has discussed this issue in the past but has been unable to determine an appropriate minimum sample size. The group agree that this issue needs

to examined in future years once enough data have been collected (per cell) to determine the necessary number of otoliths per cell. The issue of processing and analysis of otoliths was discussed by the group. Since FIN will be focusing on more species than in previous years (15 vs. only 5), there was even more emphasis on the need for QA/QC measures to ensure comparability and compatibility among the various agencies regarding analysis and reading of otoliths. It was suggested that a smaller group of readers could be utilized to analyze a particular species instead of having all states and NMFS conducting the reading. This would minimize the potential reader errors and could provide more accurate ages. D. Donaldson noted that this issue will be discussed at the Otolith Processors Training meeting which is scheduled for mid-May 2007.

Discussion of Inclusion of Otoliths from Fishery-Independent Sampling Activities

D. Donaldson stated that at a recent Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting, the group discussed including biological data collected under fishery-independent activities. During the discussion, there was no consensus on how to proceed and it was suggested that the Data Collection Plan Work Group examine this issue and provide feedback to FIN. **The work group discussed this topic and decided that as a first step, the sampling protocols and other documentation for the various fishery-independent sampling activities should be compiled.** FIN needs to focus on this topic for the near future although the inclusion of otoliths from these activities may be loaded into the FIN DMS at some later time.

Other Business

The group discussed the 2007 budget situation and how that will affect biological sampling under FIN. D. Donaldson stated the FIN had to reduce its budget by approximately 8% to cover the funding shortfalls. Each agency was asked to reduce their budgets by that amount although the agencies have flexibility regarding which tasks to reduce. It was asked what the impact on biological sampling would be (would FIN still be sampling all species?) and D. Donaldson stated that while there may be some reduction in the targets for species, sampling for all species will be conducted by all states.

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

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES
MINUTES
Tuesday and Wednesday, April 17-18, 2007
Mobile, Alabama**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman David Yeager called the meeting to order at 9:10 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
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX
Steven de Kozlowski, SCDNR, Columbia, SC
Pam Fuller, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL
Lisa Gonzalez, Houston Advanced Research Center, The Woodlands, TX
Scott Hardin, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Leslie Hartman, AL Marine Resources Division, Dauphin Island, AL
Ted Hendrickx, Georgia DNR, Social Circle, GA
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL
Herb Kumpf, At-Large Member, Panama City, Florida
Roberto Mendoza, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Pitman, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM
George Ramseur, Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, Ocean Springs, MS
David Rice, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL
Jay Troxel, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
David W. Yeager, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile, AL
Bill Zattau, USACE - Jacksonville District, Jacksonville, FL

Staff

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Arpita Choudhury, NOAA/NOS CCEHBR, Charleston, SC
Mike Eubanks, USACE - Mobile District, Mobile, AL
Susan M. Hennington, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans, LA
Ronald R. Lukens, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
James A. Morris, Jr., NOAA/National Ocean Service, Beaufort, NC
Scott Newsham, ANS Task Force, Washington, DC

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Public Comment

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

Review and Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved with the following changes:

- Remove Information Management Work Group from the breakout session and work group reports
- Lisa Gonzalez will give the Galveston Bay Activities Update for Jim Lester
- The SEAFWA Update will be combined with the South Carolina report.

At this time Chairman Yeager presented Ron Lukens with a plaque of appreciation on behalf of the Panel for his many hours of service and guidance of the Panel.

Review and Approval of Minutes (10/4-5/2006)

Steve de Kozlowski made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 4-5, 2006 meeting held in Charleston, South Carolina. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Membership Considerations

David Rice, Program Coordinator for the invasives species program at the Commission, was named as the representative for GSMFC. GSMFC is a standing member of the Panel.

Lance Robinson from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in Dickinson, Texas, was nominated as a marine member from Texas. Earl Chilton added that it would be advantageous to the Panel to add a marine member from Texas. Lukens mentioned that the Panel has the disposition to add seats as needed. **Chilton made the motion to add Lance Robinson as a marine member from the State of Texas. S. de Kozlowski seconded the motion and the Panel approved the new member.**

The next membership consideration was for a university representative, a seat which was formally held by Bruce Thompson. There were three nominations for this seat.

Harry Blanchet made the motion to nominate Marty O'Connell from the University of New Orleans. The motion was seconded by Harriet Perry.

John Teem made the motion to nominate Jeff Hill from the University of Florida. The motion was seconded by Pam Fuller.

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Earl Chilton made the motion to nominate Thomas Arsuffi from Texas Tech. The motion was seconded by Leslie Hartman.

Panel members Blanchet, Teem, and Chilton, spoke on behalf of their nominee. The Panel then took a vote by written ballot. With the majority vote, Marty O'Connell will be offered the university seat.

The At-Large membership formerly held by Jim Kruse was discussed. **Herb Kumpf made a motion to offer the At-Large membership to Ron Lukens. Earl Chilton seconded the motion and Lukens was unanimously offered the membership.**

Next the Panel discussed the Department of Agriculture seat which has remained vacant. Chilton offered the name of John Goolsby as a possibility. Scott Newsham offered his help from the national level. At this time it was decided to try to address at the regional level. Chilton and Schmitz offered to investigate some leads for this Panel member.

Kumpf brought up the vacancy of the tribal member. Lukens mentioned that he had made some contacts with a regional association but received little interest. The Panel asked Newsham to assist with the tribal member through the National Task Force.

ANS Task Force Update

Scott Newsham provided the ANS Task Force Update. He presented a "Certificate of Service" to Ron Lukens as the longest standing member of the National Task Force.

The ANSTF met May 24-26, 2006 in Hyannis, Massachusetts. The following decisions were made:

- Approved submittal of a letter from the ANSTF co-chairs in support of a proposed national invasive species merit badge for the Boy Scouts of America.
- Created an ad hoc working group to review the ANS Program document and ANSTF strategic plan.
- Recommended that USFWS funds available for state/interstate ANS management plans be allocated on an equal share basis (such as an equal amount for each plan).
- Approved the Louisiana ANS management plan.
- Supported development of a nutria NMP under the leadership of Steve Kendrot (APHIS).
- If no major problems are identified by ANSTF members during their review, approved forwarding the New Zealand mudsnail NMP to the *Federal Register* for publication for public comment once ANSTF member comments are considered.
- Approved forwarding the Asian carp NMP to the *Federal Register* for publication for public comment once ANSTF member comments are considered.
- Approved forwarding the *Invasive Species Guide to Pathway Definition and Risk Prioritization* (including pathway prioritization tools and methodologies) to NISC for action.

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- Agreed to incorporate a theme into future ANSTF meetings and devote at least one day to focused discussions on that topic. (Rapid response was selected as the theme for the fall 2006 meeting.)

The next meeting of the ANSTF was held in Arlington, Virginia on November 7-9, 2006. The following decisions were made:

- Approved definition of "rapid response," pending the addition of qualifying language about economics being part of the assessment.
- Approved cosponsorship of a symposium on genetic methods of biological control of invasive fish as the opportunity presents itself.
- Confirmed Kim Bogenschutz (Iowa DNR) as co-chair of the MRBP.
- Confirmed David Yeager (Mobile Bay National Estuary Program) as chair and Earl Chilton (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department) as vice-chair of the GSARP.
- Authorized Executive Secretary to work as necessary to amend the Intel ISEF rules to incorporate concerns about nonnative species in science fairs.

The next meeting of the ANSTF will be held May 8-10, 2007 in Erie, Pennsylvania. The meeting will focus on state management plans, which seems to be one of the biggest issues for the Task Force. There was discussion about the lack of funding in the southeast region. **Pam Fuller made a motion that a letter be drafted by the chair expressing the Panel's concerns about the lack of funding in the region for state management plans. There are 5 state plans under development which will be up for review in the near future. The draft letter should be sent the Panel for comments. After Panel approval the letter should be forwarded to the National Task Force. The motion was seconded by Herb Kumpf and approved by the Panel.**

Status of State Plans/Program Updates

The following state plan/program updates were provided (due to poor recording quality additional information can be obtained from the individual representatives).

Florida - Don Schmitz and Scott Hardin

Alabama - Leslie Hartman

Mississippi - Mike Brainard and written report from Dennis Riecke

Louisiana - Harry Blanchet

Texas - Earl Chilton and Lance Robinson

Georgia - Ted Hendrickx

South Carolina - Steve de Kozlowski

Mexico - Roberto Mendoza

Galveston Bay - Lisa Gonzalez

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Data Reporting Process

State Program Components

State members of the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasives Species (GSARP) have either developed or are in the process of developing a state management plan for aquatic invasive species. These various plans and drafts contain a variety of common components, including the following:

- Early (and other) detection
- Rapid (and other) response
- Trends analysis
- Pathways analysis
- Risk (and other) analysis
- Map creation

Federally Based Program Services

Each of the above program components is heavily data dependent, except for early detection which is a data collection effort. In addition, each of these program components has a need for services provided by the Nonindigenous Aquatic Species (NAS) Database Program and the associated Alert System. The NAS Database program is the national scale database that contains reports of the occurrence of non-native species and their locations, using data from both literature accounts and direct reports. The NAS Alert System uses the data in and reported to the NAS Database to generate alerts on species reported in new locations using point data (in some cases) and U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) designations to represent the locations. The NAS Database and Alert System should be considered integral program components for each of the state programs. In order to maximize the benefit of these two federal program services to state and federal efforts to prevent and manage/control aquatic invasive species, the GSARP has developed this document to establish a process that outlines steps for reporting new occurrences of non-native aquatic species to the NAS Database Program.

The Experts Database is another national scope service that should be included in the operations of state aquatic invasive species programs. This service, started by a joint recommendation of the Regional Panels, is housed by the ANS Task Force. Data must be put into the system, after which it can be used to assist all programs in identifying experts to provide critical information for prevention and management/control activities.

Reporting Process

1. A non-native species is reported through the state program;
2. The state agency representatives verify the report;
 - a. Obtain a specimen, if possible. If not, try to obtain a picture,

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- b. Identify species (either internally or through an identified expert,
 - c. Get location information (try to get latitude and longitude if possible. If not, try to get a geographic reference point to which a latitude and longitude, or at least a HUC, can be assigned),
 - d. Get other pertinent, associated information.
3. When verified, immediately report the observation to the NAS Database Program;
 4. At the same time, initiate internal program processes to assess the need for rapid response or other program activity.

This process is presented to the GSARP for consideration and adoption. If adopted, state programs should then formally incorporate these three federally-based services into their programs and participate in them through input and use.

If the Panel approves this process, it will be presented at the next Panel heads meeting as a process to adopt on a national level.

Herb Kumpf made a motion to adopt this process as a recommendation for state plans under construction and to incorporate into state plan revisions. The process will also be presented at the next Panel heads meeting as a process to adopt nationally. The motion was seconded by Ted Hendrickx and approved by the Panel.

Work Group Reports

Education/Outreach Work Group

Chuck Jacoby reviewed the work group's activity of developing a protocol for INTEL on invasive species regarding science fair projects. The guidelines are now posted on the ANS Task Force website "Reducing the Risk of Introducing or Spreading Nonindigenous Plants, Animals, and Microorganisms through Science and Engineering Fair Projects."

Jacoby also mentioned that he attended the ISEF meeting held in Albuquerque, New Mexico on May 15, 2007.

Other efforts include the National Sea Grant project proposal; inventory of databases; and looking at teacher organizations to form strategic relationships to get the issue of invasive species in the classrooms.

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Research/Development Work Group

GSARP Research Priorities:

1. 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 on state and not in another.
2. Increased systematic work on nonnative species that are difficult to identify, with particular emphasis on catfish and channeled apples snails.
3. 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.
4. 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 extreme meteorological events (such as hurricanes), and (3) to assess the effect of land development on the spread of invasive species.
5. Novel chemical, biological and mechanical control methods for the control of nonnative species.
6. Documentation of the current control costs and economic impacts of nonnative aquatic species in the Panel states.

A deadline of Friday, April 20, 2007 was established to submit any changes to these research priorities. After that date, David Rice can forward the list to Scott Newsham.

A deadline of Friday, April 20, 2007 was also established to submit names for the tier 1 level of the experts database.

Other activities include the list of species of concern for the Gulf region. The work group will be taking a closer look at the list and bring in states that were not included in the first list for their input.

A new topic will be to put together a list of research ongoing in the Gulf and how those projects mesh with the GSARP research priorities.

Species Update

Pam Fuller provided the Panel with the species update for November 2006-March 2007.

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Lionfish Research Update

James Morris gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled “Biological and Ecological Assessments of the Invasive Lionfish in the Atlantic.” This presentation provided a broader picture on how NOAA has responded to the lionfish issue.

Future directions include:

- Ecological and fishery impacts
- Coast-wide abundance surveys
- Passive collection methods
- Market development.

Gulf Coast-South Atlantic & the 100th Meridian

Bob Pitman, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator
Southwest Region - FWS

The goals of this Initiative are to 1) prevent the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisance species in the 100th meridian jurisdictions and west and 2) monitor and control zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisance species if detected in these areas. To achieve these goals, the following components and objectives have been developed:

1. Information and Education: Inform and educate the public about the biology, impact, and pathways for spreading zebra mussels and what actions they can take to prevent their spread.
2. Voluntary Boat Inspections and Boater Surveys: Prevent the spread of zebra mussels in the 100th meridian jurisdictions and west through voluntary boat inspections and boater surveys.
3. Involve Those Who Haul Boats for Commercial Purposes: Prevent the transport of zebra mussels on boats and related equipment hauled commercially or for professional fishing tournaments.
4. Monitoring: Establish monitoring sites on waters west of the 100th meridian to determine the presence or absence of zebra mussels and other ANS in the 100th meridian jurisdictions and west.
5. Rapid Response: Eradicate or contain zebra mussels if detected.
6. Other Pathways Identification and Risk Evaluation: Establish study/research program for identification of other pathways which could cause introductions of zebra mussels and other related aquatic nuisance species west of the 100th meridian. Evaluation of these pathways and development of specific plans of action to address these identified potential risk.

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7. Evaluation: Ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the 100th Meridian Initiative in preventing the westward spread of zebra mussels and other ANS.

National Fish Habitat Initiative

- HACCP planning protects habitat by preventing unintended spread of species and associated pathogens.
- Overlapping HACCP plans developed by agencies and organizations increases national biosecurity for fish habitat.
- Add HACCP to NFHI proposals.

SE EPPC Invasive Species Mapping Project and Incident Command System Training

Accurate, comprehensive data on the distribution of invasive weed species can be a valuable asset to assist managers, researchers, and policy makers in prioritizing management strategies, identifying leading edges of actively spreading infestations, and to rapidly responding to detections of new invasive species. Unfortunately, much of the current distribution data for invasive plants in the southeastern U.S. is very incomplete, often available only to a county level and, generally, not available online. In response to this lack of information, the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council (SE-EPPC) has initiated an invasive species mapping project designed by the University of Georgia Bugwood Network. The SE-EPPC mapping project seeks to provide more complete data on the distribution of selected invasive plant species across the South by: 1. Compiling current data from herbarium records, literature, and current on-going projects; 2. Creation of new data using volunteers from the state EPPCs; and 3. Providing user-friendly access to the data online at the SE-EPPC's website www.se-eppc.org. These data can be used to aid early detection/rapid response programs and can increase the accuracy of predictive modeling projects.

The project will compile data from existing on-line projects and data collected by the SE-EPPC project to produce species distribution maps. All data collected will be compliant with North American Weed Management Area (NAWMA) mapping standards and can be shared with most major mapping projects. Descriptive features of the infestation, such as habitat, infested area, and abundance are included within the data. To ensure data validity, herbarium vouchers for recorded infestations are encouraged for submission to a local herbarium. Additionally, identification-level images can be uploaded with the infestation distribution data. States in the Southeastern United States with an active EPPC or Invasive Plant Council (IPC) can be involved. Each state is responsible for appointing a state representative that oversees recruiting and training volunteers and reviews the data entered for that state. Invasive species currently included in the project list are from a compilation of each state EPPC invasive species list, state noxious weed list, and relevant (likely to be introduced into the Southeast) federal noxious weeds. This list continues to evolve and additions are easily added to the project list.

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The data can be viewed via an online mapping program at www.se-eppc.org/mapping. Distribution data can be graphically displayed as point-data or county-level maps. This project uses Google Maps web service to allow users to overlay the point data with road maps, satellite images, and topographic maps. With the cooperation of the state EPPCs, this project can help fill in the gaps in the distribution data and provide users with an easy to operate method of retrieving the data.

FEMA Independent Study Program: IS-100 Introduction to Incident Command System, I-100

Incident Command training is being developed and offered for a variety of disciplines, including Federal Disaster Workers, Public Works, Law Enforcement, and Public Health. All of the ICS training offered through these courses is consistent. However, the various versions include examples and exercises specific to each of these disciplines.

ICS 100, Introduction to the Incident Command System, introduces the Incident Command System (ICS) and provides the foundation for higher level ICS training. This course describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the Incident Command System. It also explains the relationship between ICS and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The Emergency Management Institute developed ICS 100, Introduction to ICS (IS-100) course, in collaboration with:

- National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- USFA's National Fire Programs Branch

Audience: Persons involved with emergency planning, response, or recovery efforts.

Update on Revision of "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers Brochure"

Dennis Riecke (MS) submitted a proposal to the Panel for funding to modify a brochure that was developed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and was reprinted with agency specific contact information and agency logos by the Mississippi River Basin Panel ANS.

The proposal specified that brochure would be modified to include the agency specific contact information and agency logos for Mexico and member states of the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. The proposal specified that 80,000 brochures would be printed assuming a cost of 6 cents per copy.

The proposal was funded via a Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Subaward for \$4,800.00. The subaward states that "Distribution costs will be borne by the individual agencies and participators." Project is to be completed before December 31, 2007.

Dennis contacted the Minnesota DNR and they granted permission for us to modify their brochure. An authorization form to do so will be sent to Dennis. Dennis secured assistance for making the

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modifications from the MDWFP printing staff. Minnesota DNR will send a disc containing the Endesign version CS2 file.

Roberto Mendoza has offered to translate the text into Spanish for use in Mexico.

Minnesota DNR staff stated that the cost per copy may be higher than 6 cents, which would reduce the number each state and Mexico receives.

Future Actions:

- If the Panel members wish to proceed with this project, Dennis will sign the subaward and mail the documents to initiate work on the modification. Dennis did not want to sign the subaward documents without first obtaining approval from Minnesota and determining whether agency printing department staff could assist to accomplish the modifications.
- All Panel members need to secure permission from their employers to submit contact information (name, address, and phone number) and agency logos for inclusion on the brochure.
- Panel members need to decide if they want to replace some or all of the brochure pictures to show plants and animals more likely to be encountered in the Panel's geographic range. If so, we need to secure permission to use these photos and they need to be supplied in a format compatible with the Endesign file.
- Panel members need to agree to provide funding for shipping their brochure to one location and handle distribution within their geographic area.

Chuck Jacoby, along with the Education and Outreach Work Group agreed to assist Dennis with the brochure revision.

Next Meeting

Miami, Florida was selected as the location and the first week in November was selected as the date for the next Panel meeting. A backup location of Houston, Texas was also chosen, as well as a backup date of the first week of October.

Gambian Rat Eradication in Grassy Key

Scott Hardin provided a PowerPoint presentation on Gambian Rat Eradication.

2001 - 8 rats escape from captive breeder

June 2004 - USFWS captures first rat

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August 2004 - Preliminary trapping by Texas A&M, FWC, USFWS

March 2005 - Multi-agency meeting to establish eradication plan

June 2006 - Pilot eradication on Crawl Key

January 2007 - Eradication initiated

600 bait stations installed; May completion target; \$150,000 spent; \$50,000 to complete Phase 1.

Public Comment

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

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

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**Tuesday, October 30 and Thursday, November 1, 2007
Miami, Florida**

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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

Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX
Steven de Kozlowski, SCDNR, Columbia, SC
Pam Fuller, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL
Leslie Hartman, AL Marine Resources Division, Dauphin Island, AL
Tom Jackson, NOAA-Fisheries, Miami, FL
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL
Herb Kumpf, At-Large Member, Panama City, Florida
Ron Lukens, At-Large Member, High Springs, FL
Roberto Mendoza, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon, Mexico
James Morris, NOAA, Beaufort, NC
Doug Nemeth, US Navy, Jacksonville, FL
Martin O'Connell, UNO, New Orleans, LA
Marilyn Barrett O'Leary, At-Large Member, Baton Rouge, LA
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Pitman, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM
David Rice, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dennis Riecke, MDWFP, Jackson, MS
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL
Jay Troxel, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
David W. Yeager, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile, AL

Staff

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Lad Akins, REEF, Key Largo, FL
Charles Ashton, COE, Jacksonville, FL
John Galvez, USFWS, Vero Beach, FL
Denise Gregoire, US Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL
Scott Newsham, ANS Task Force, Arlington, VA

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Pamela J. Schofield, US Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL
Paul Shafland, Boca Raton, FL

Public Comment

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

Review and Adoption of Agenda

With minor changes noted, Paul Carangelo made a motion to adopt the agenda. Harriet Perry seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.

Review and Approval of Minutes 4/17-18/2007)

Ron Lukens made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 17-18, 2007 meeting held in Mobile, Alabama. Don Schmitz seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Membership Considerations

The Panel's Standard Operating Procedures were reviewed. The procedures state that the Panel consists of individuals representing state and federal agencies, organizations, industries, associations, and private citizens with authorities to and/or interest in addressing non-native and/or invasive species issues. The Panel is established under the authority of the National Invasive Species Act of 1996. The Panel serves as an advisory body and reports to the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF). All seats on the Panel must be reviewed and approved by the ANSTF.

All members other than Standing Members will be selected and approved by the Panel. Non-standing members will be appointed for a period of two (2) years, at which time organizations holding non-standing member seats may be replaced. If no specific actions is taken, organizations holding non-standing member seats will continue to serve until asked to resign.

Any Standing or Non-standing Member may designate an alternate to serve on the Panel in the place of the named member. Alternates may be identified on a case-by-case basis by members who are unable to attend a specific meeting, after which time the alternate designation expires.

Chairman Yeager recognized Ron Lukens as a voting At-Large Member. Lukens was added to the Panel as a result of an email ballot election.

Two persons, John A. Goolsby and Terry H. Conger, were considered for the vacant Department of Agriculture seat.

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John Goolsby is a Research Entomologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) and the Acting Research Leader for the Beneficial Insects Research Unit in Weslaco, Texas. He was formerly the director of the USDA/CSIRO Australian Biological Control Laboratory in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia (1998-2004). His research in Australia focused on biological control of weeds of Australian and Asian origin, specifically foreign exploration in this region for biological control agents the Old World climbing fern, *Lygodium microphyllum*, an invasive weed in the Florida Everglades. Prior to his overseas assignment, John was an entomologist and National Co-Project Leader of the Silverleaf Whitefly Biological Control Program with USDA-APHIS, Mission Biological Control Center in Mission, Texas (1993-1998). Dr. Goolsby's graduate research was done in entomology at Texas A&M University. His current work in Texas focuses on biological control of the pests, glassywinged sharpshooter, *Homalodisca coagulata*; cotton mirid, *Creontiades* sp.; and on the Eurasian weed, giant reed, *Arundo donax*, which is invasive in the riparian habitats in the Southwestern US and northern Mexico.

Terry H. Conger is Louisiana's Area Epidemiology Officer with the USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services (VS), stationed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) from Colorado State University in 1972, his Master of Science (MS) in Microbiology and Immunology from Michigan State University in 1978, and his Ph.D. in Aquaculture and Finned-Fish Diseases from Brigham Young University in 2000. In his current position, Dr. Conger serves as the Designated Tuberculosis Epidemiologist, Designated Brucellosis Epidemiologist, and Area Aquaculture Coordinator. He has been in this position since January 2005. Dr. Conger has founded his career primarily with the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Programs. Dr. Conger is also serving in an advisory capacity (as the Secretary) on the Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program Advisory Committee. Prior to moving to Louisiana, Dr. Conger served as the Tuberculosis Herd Accreditation VMO in Michigan (June 2004 to January 2005), State Epidemiologist with the Texas Animal Health Commission (1998-2003), State Epidemiologist with the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission (1985-1992), Station Epidemiologist with Arkansas' Veterinary Services (1979-1985), and Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) in Michigan and Colorado (1972-79). Before and between his regulatory veterinary medicine endeavors, Dr. Conger has worked in a companion animal veterinary practice in southeast Pennsylvania and in central Utah.

Election of the Department of Agriculture seat was determined by written ballot. John A. Goolsby received the majority vote and was named the Department of Agriculture representative.

The next consideration was for the vacant tribal representative. Lisa Berrios, an environmental liaison officer with the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc., was mentioned as a tribal representative. **Ron Lukens made a motion to offer the tribal representative to Lisa Berrios. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion and the motion passed.**

Marilyn Barrett O'Leary, a former Sea Grant representative on the Panel, was also being considered for an At-Large Member position. Herb Kumpf spoke on Marilyn's behalf regarding her experience with the Panel. David Yeager also added comments about Marilyn's assistance with the state plans.

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Steve de Kozlowski made a motion to elect Marilyn as a voting At-Large Member of the Panel. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion and Marilyn was unanimously elected.

Susan McCarthy from the FDA Gulf Coast Seafood Laboratory in Dauphin Island, Alabama, was presented as the new representative from FDA. **Ron Lukens made a motion that the Panel accept the recommendation of Susan McCarthy as the FDA representative. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

There was additional discussion expressing an interest in having North Carolina represented on the Panel. Steve de Kozlowski indicated that they had been invited to the recent meeting held in South Carolina. James Morris added that the Asian tiger shrimp issue may make them more receptive to participating on the Panel. He will make some contacts when he gets back. Marilyn O'Leary added that their state plan is being developed independently.

Update on Revision of "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers Brochure"

Dennis Riecke submitted a proposal to the Panel for funding to modify a brochure that was developed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and was reprinted with agency specific contact information and agency logos by the Mississippi River Basin Panel ANS. The proposal specified that the brochure would be modified to include the agency specific contact information and agency logos for Mexico and member states of the Gulf and South Atlantic Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species. The proposal specified that 80,000 brochures would be printed assuming a cost of 6 cents per copy. The proposal was funded via a Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission subaward for \$4,800.00. The subaward states that "Distribution costs will be borne by the individual agencies and participators." The project is to be completed before December 31, 2007.

Dennis contacted the Minnesota DNR and they granted permission for us to modify their brochure. An authorization form to do so will be sent to Dennis. Dennis secured assistance for making the modifications from the MDWFP printing staff. The Minnesota DNR will send a disc containing the Endesign version CS2 file. Roberto Mendoza offered to translate the text into Spanish for use in Mexico. Minnesota DNR staff stated that the cost per copy may be higher than 6 cents, which would reduce the number each state and Mexico receives.

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Panel members need to agree to provide funding for shipping their brochures to one location and handle distribution within their geographic area.

Earl Chilton volunteered to help locate photos for the brochure. Harriet Perry also indicated that they had photos from the brochures they had produced.

David Yeager urged the Panel members to make the completion of the brochure revision a priority.

Health Risks Associated with Channeled Apple Snails (Update)

John Teem provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Health Risks Associated with Channeled Apple Snails.

Marine Ornamentals as Aquatic Invasives in Florida

Lad Akins from Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) in Key Largo, Florida gave a presentation on marine ornamentals as aquatic invasives in Florida.

Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) is a grassroots, non-profit organization founded in 1990. Volunteer divers and snorkelers are becoming actively involved in saving the marine environment gathering information in the form of fish population surveys. These data are used by the research community to protect and preserve the marine ecosystem of our own backyards and beyond.

REEF is building a program on exotic species and have formed a working group to scope out future planning for ornamental early detection and rapid response. David Yeager mentioned the possibility of adding an education and outreach component.

Visit www.reef.org/exotic to report an exotic species sighting.

The Panel discussed establishing a working group within the Panel to address marine ornamentals and the investigate possible sources of funding. **Ron Lukens made a motion to establish a subworking group of the Early Detection and Rapid Response Work Group targeted at next step rapid response capability for marine ornamental fish. That group would identify processes and available funding. The motion was seconded by Harriet Perry. The motion passed.** James Morris volunteered to chair that subworking group.

Aquatic Invasives in Louisiana (White Spot, Salvinia, etc.)

Since Harry Blanchet was unable to attend the meeting, Marty O'Connell gave his update on aquatic invasives in Louisiana.

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Aquatic Invasives in Texas (Caddo Lake, Giant Salvinia, Hull Fouling, etc.)

Earl Chilton and Lance Robinson updated the Panel on aquatic invasive activities in Texas.

Mississippi ANS Update

Distributed 10,000 bighead and silver carp WATCH cards provided by the Mississippi River Basin Panel ANS.

Reprinted 81,000 Stop Aquatic Hitchhiker! Card for inclusion when boat registration cards are mailed to boat owners.

Stop Aquatic Hitchhiker! message place in annual Mississippi Outdoor Digest of Hunting, Fishing, and Boating Regulations - 375,000 copies printed.

Coordinated future funding for continuing the development of a State Management Plan for ANS. Reviewed a draft of the plan. Submitted comments on the plan.

Plan development has been stalled since September 2006 because an MDWFP research coordinator has not submitted a State Wildlife Grant Application for funding. A new employee is assuming this position.

Recommended that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce deny the issuance of aquaculture permits for the culture of Red Claw Crawfish until a risk assessment and thorough literature review are submitted by the applicants.

Aquatic Invasives in Mexico, An Update

Roberto Mendoza gave a PowerPoint presentation on aquatic invasives in Mexico. Mendoza mentioned that they have developed a web page for invasive species which will officially be available by the end of this year.

Asian Swamp Eel Removal in South Florida

John Galvez from South Florida Fisheries Resource Office in Vero Beach, Florida, gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Asian Swamp Eel Control Project on the C-111 & C-113 Canals".

Background

- Four populations of the Asian swamp eel (*Monopterus* sp.) in the southeastern United States: Atlanta (early 1990's) north Miami and Tampa (1997), and Homestead (December 1999).

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- Unknown source of the introductions - probably aquarium trade or release of eels imported for food.
- In 2001, the Asian Swamp Eel Management Review Team (USFWS, USGS-FCSC, NPS, SFWMD and FWC) determined that electrofishing appeared to be the best tool to reduce the numbers and slow the spread into the Everglades.
- First evaluation conducted between June and December of 2001. A total of 1,425 swamp eels were removed from the C-111 and C-113 canals near Homestead.

Summary

- 905 Asian swamp eels and 82 peacock eels were removed from the C-111 & C-113 canals between July-December 2006.
- 738 Asian swamp eels and 82 peacock eels were observed but not captured. The average capture efficiency was 54%.
- 23 American eels were counted (6 captured). This number is less than 1.3% of all swamp, peacock and American eels counted (captured + observed). American eels are considered a priority species by USFWS.
- Historically, American eels have not been found in large numbers in the area. Over 10 years of electrofishing data have shown that American eels made up < 1% of the numerical standing crop (Paul Shafland, Florida FWC, Pers. Comm. October 2007). Swamp eels may not have been competing with American eels though a stomach analysis study is being planned to determine prey species being targeted by eels.
- There is a need to find out if the swamp eels are spreading beyond the C-111 canal.

Funded by USFWS.

History/Overview of FWC Work on Exotic Freshwater Fishes

Paul Shafland from Boca Raton, Florida provided a PowerPoint presentation on FWC work on exotic freshwater fishes.

Update on the ANS Task Force

Scott Newsham reported that the ANS Task Force would be meeting in Washington, DC on November 6-8, 2007. Newsham added that he expects approval of the grass carp plan at that meeting. Climate change and invasives species is the topic of focus for this meeting.

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Newsham mentioned that he will be on semi-retired status effective January 2008. This will be the last GSARP meeting he will attend.

The Panel thanked Newsham for his support of the Panel and his consistent attendance at the Panel meetings.

Managing Fish Stocking Pathways - HACCP

Bob Pitman reported on managing fish stocking pathways to public waters. Fish stockings by management agencies are valuable contributions to our resources benefitting anglers, species recovery, and economics, but these introductions are not without risks. Agencies should consider the risks of unintentionally introducing aquatic invasive species through these actions and implement appropriate control strategies. "Hitchhikers" such as other fish, diseases, parasites, plants, snails, insects, and plankton could move through the stocking pathway to new locations. Once established, they could potentially impact native species and alter habitats. Risks unique to fish stocking pathways are easily managed using a planning model from industry known by its acronym, HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points).

A national/international HACCP planning support web site for natural resource work is maintained by the Service and its partners at www.HACCP-NRM.org. The web site provides free downloads of planning forms, guidance, and references, and a database of plans being used around the country allowing planners to share best management practices.

The value of HACCP is evident when sorting through complex pathways such as fish stocking to prevent introductions, but it can also help with seemingly simple pathways such as moving boats or equipment from lake to lake. The systematic process guides planners to evaluate risks and preventions, and answers questions in sequential fashion producing a practical plan of actions. Prevention actions can then be followed by anyone using the plan with checklist precision to ensure that important steps are not overlooked.

Work Group Updates

Research and Development Work Group - John Teem

Items discussed by the Research and Development Work Group included a manual for rapid response, EPA/Gulf of Mexico Program list of concerned species, and the taxonomic experts database - current problems and possible solutions.

Dennis Riecke suggested that the Panel be given a demonstration of the database at the next meeting.

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Education and Outreach Work Group - Chuck Jacoby

Guidance related to non-native species in science and engineering fairs can be found on the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) website. Chuck Jacoby will introduce the document during a ShopTalk at the International Science and Engineering Fair in Albuquerque, New Mexico the week of May 13-19, 2007.

Marilyn O'Leary and Chuck Jacoby submitted a pre-proposal to the National Sea Grant College Program Aquatic Invasive Species Research and Outreach Program. The pre-proposal received positive reviews, and a full proposal was requested and submitted. The project focuses on schools and assesses the value of different outreach efforts in keeping with the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel outreach priority. The federal budget situation has delayed decisions on grants.

Some funding from GSARP went to projects that included education and outreach, i.e., a workshop involving Texas agencies, the live seafood industry and the pet industry; revision of the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers brochure to suit states in GSARP; and South Carolina's brochure on green mussels.

Chuck Jacoby will consolidate information on inventories and databases of educational and outreach materials, including the database being developed for the Western Regional Panel.

Bob Pitman, Jay Troxel, and Herb Kumpf will explore the structure and function of major teacher organizations as preparation for linking with them. Linking may include holding a workshop in association with a suitable conference in the United States.

Marine and Ornamentals - James Morris

Morris reported that they discussed items to get this subworking group organized as well as a list of persons to be included. They will be concentrating on sources of funding for workshops to train rapid responders and available resources to provide early detection.

Burmese Python Eradication in the Florida Everglades

Skip Snow presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Disposable Pets, Unwanted Giants: Getting a Grip on Pythons in the Glades."

Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Leslie Hartman made a motion to nominate Earl Chilton for Chairman. Marilyn O'Leary seconded the motion. Earl Chilton was unanimously elected Chairman of the Panel.

Harriet Perry made a motion to nominate Ron Lukens as Vice-Chairman. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion. Ron Lukens was unanimously elected Vice-Chairman of the Panel.

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

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Next Meeting

San Antonio, Texas was selected as the location to hold the next Panel meeting. The target date for that meeting will be the week of April 7-11, 2008. Baton Rouge, Louisiana was selected as an alternate location.

Other Business

Panel members discussed different ways to memorialize former Panel member, Bruce Thompson. Suggestions included funding a graduate student or scholarship to do taxonomic research, planting a tree with a plaque in a prominent location in Baton Rouge, creating a display of invasive species and establishing a foundation in his name to support the display. Steve de Kozlowski suggested placing a memoriam on the "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" brochure that Dennis Riecke is coordinating. A memoriam could also be added to the Panel's website.

Marilyn O'Leary made a motion to memorialize Bruce Thompson on the "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" brochure and on the Panel's website. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

On October 31, 2007, Panel members participated in a field trip which was organized by Don Schmitz. Panel members visited the Miami International Airport to view USFWS inspections of imported animal species. Panel members then took a bus tour along the Tamiami Trail and Krome Avenue to see controlled wetland melaleuca trees and them being removed. Mr. Francois Laroche, SFWMD, presented information on the bus tour about the state's melaleuca tree removal program. After lunch Panel members traveled to Everglades National Park to see Brazilian pepper removal within the park. Mr. Jonathan Taylor, NPS, discussed these efforts at the removal site. Lastly, the Panel listened to Mr. Jeff Kline's (NPS) presentation entitled "Fish Introductions into Everglades Wetlands: An Unforeseen Consequence of Restoration?".

Public Comment

Yeager provided the opportunity for public comment. Pam Schofield mentioned that she would be interested in reporting on her tilapia research at the next Panel meeting. The Panel agreed to include that as an agenda item for the next meeting.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Bottom Mapping Committee Meeting
New Orleans, Louisiana
Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Attendees

Jeff Rester
Matt Bethel
David Palandro
Stan Locker
Nelson May
Marta Ribera
Heather Warner-Finley
Chris Jenkins
Betsy Gardner

Organization

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
University of New Orleans
Florida Wildlife Research Institute
University of South Florida
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Marine Fisheries Service
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
University of Colorado
National Coastal Data Development Center

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 contractors for the data gathering portion of the project had been working for the past 18 months on gathering data sets detailing the bottom sediments around the Gulf of Mexico. The project built upon the usSEABED project that the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) started a few years back. USGS recently released the first usSEABED database for the Gulf of Mexico and it contained approximately 30,000 data points in the Gulf of Mexico. The database now contained approximately 220,000 data points, so there has been a tremendous increase in the bottom data for the Gulf of Mexico. The contractor's work was drawing to a close and he wanted the committee to review the progress of the project and learn how to operate the database. He encouraged members to ask questions.

J. Rester next introduced C. Jenkins, the main contractor responsible for data gathering. C. Jenkins proceeded to explain dbSEABED which is the software that is used to compile different types of bottom data into a single, useable database. The dbSEABED system aims to produce a unified mappable database from the multitude of data sets dealing with the seabed. The primary objective of the dbSEABED system is to produce integrated data that can be mapped, analyzed, and visualized. Datasets include legacy and modern collections, involving data from samplings, and visual inspections. Filtering routines within dbSEABED unify marine geologic data that originally may be disparate in purpose, function, style, and collection or analytical techniques. It works on data files that hold the source data in their original values (except for minor unit changes and phonetically sensible word codes) and provides standardized output data.

C. Jenkins next explained usSEABED. C. Jenkins explained that the usSEABED database is built using the dbSEABED processing software. He stated that the

usSEABED database differs from a traditional relational database because the data are processed and extended to maximize density and usability, making them more comprehensive for mapping and analysis. The usSEABED database not only treats the usual forms of numerical data but also contains a vast store of data about the sea floor in word based descriptions that can be rich in information but difficult to quantify, map, plot, or use in comparative analyses or models. The usSEABED database provides numeric values for typical seabed characteristics that are based on these descriptive data as well as numeric analytical data. C. Jenkins stated that the usSEABED database also differs from other marine databases in that it incorporates a wide variety of information about sea floor sediment texture, composition, color, biota, and rocks, sea floor characteristics such as hardness or sediment ripples, acoustic properties, and geochemical and geotechnical analyses. The usSEABED output files are produced in comma-delimited text for ease of use in many software applications and are ready for inclusion into many different GIS, relational databases, and other software applications.

C. Jenkins discussed how point data do not give a good representation of hardbottom areas due to the sampling gear used for most benthic studies. He stated that he decided to use a method that he called a point cloud method. He manually added points to the database so that they would not overwhelm the surrounding points. This enabled the database to work with polygon data as well as point data. He stated that the geodatabase also included the original polygon data if researchers were not comfortable with the point cloud method.

C. Jenkins discussed the WWD file and stated that the WWD file was main file that you should use to query the data. The WWD file holds the merged integrated results from the extracted, parsed and calculated tables. The WWD file is the primary, most comprehensive form of GIS-ready output from dbSEABED. It represents all the samples with values which have passed quality controls. C. Jenkins stated that this was the primary data product of the project.

Next, C. Jenkins discussed the gridded layers that he interpolated from the data. Four grids were produced for rock, gravel, sand, and mud. C. Jenkins also produced standardized legends that could be used when displaying the layers. He stated that the layers would be one of the items released to the public for them to query. Because of the complexity of the database, the full database would not be released to the entire public. It would only be released to researchers who understood the complexity of the database.

J. Rester stated that the final deliverable from the contractors would be a geodatabase. M. Bethel went over the construction of the geodatabase and its functionality. He demonstrated how you can create grids in ArcGIS using the spatial analyst tool. He discussed the advantages and disadvantages of using the different interpolation methods in ArcGIS. He stated that inverse distance weighting seemed to work the best for interpolating the data.

The Work Group discussed online data access options. J. Rester stated that he had discussed online hosting of the data with the National Coastal Data Development Center

(NCDDC) and that after project completion they had agreed to help host a site that would distribute the grids and other forms of data. The Work Group discussed the advantages and disadvantages of distributing the entire database and also just the grids produced from the data.

With no further business, the meeting ended at 3:35 p.m.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES - 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 13, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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

Members

John Thomas Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
G.W. "Bill" Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX
Walter Chataginer, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Karen Raines, NOAA General Counsel, St. Petersburg, FL
Elizabeth Keister, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA
Bruce Buckson, FL FWCC, Tallahassee, FL

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, GSMFC, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Bob Jones, Southeastern Fisheries Association, Tallahassee, FL
Richard Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Steve Campbell, NOAA/OLE, Slidell, LA
Chris Nelson, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Bon Secour Fisheries, Bon Secour, AL
Jay Diez, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Bob Zales, Panama City, FL
Elizabeth Fetherston, St. Petersburg, FL
Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Cindy Yocom, Ocean Springs, MS
Bobbi Walker, Orange Beach, AL

Adoption of Agenda

W. Chataginer moved to accept the agenda as written and the motion was seconded by J. Mayne and passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the October 12, 2006 meeting held in New Orleans, LA.
W. Chataginer moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by J. Mayne and passed unanimously.

Fisheries Product Substitution

Bob Jones with the Southeast Fisheries Association presented an overview of the problems with product substitution in the Gulf specifically addressing substitution of Asian catfish and other less valuable imports as Gulf grouper in the markets and restaurants. The problem is getting a lot of media attention and resulting in many cases of substitution being brought to the public eye. Florida is leading the way in investigating and prosecuting these cases and Alabama is second in addressing the issue. Bob will continue to bring this issue to the Commission as it progresses. The Committee then discussed law enforcement efforts in their individual states. **Chairman Jenkins** thanked Bob Jones for coming, the time he giving to this issue, and bringing it to the publics' attention.

Community Outreach Efforts

S. VanderKooy discussed the cataloging of the each states current community outreach efforts. The goal is to improve current activities and programs both statewide and Gulf-wide. The states are doing a good job individually but we need to think Gulf-wide. It was decided that **VanderKooy** will keep the current document internally and it will be reviewed annually for updates.

J. Mayne showed a "Cops-like" DVD which was done for LDWF as a recruit teaser on Game Wardens. It was suggested that we do something Gulf-wide like this where each state would tape a segment doing various law enforcement activities and it then it would be professionally edited. **W. Chatagner** reported that MDMR will be doing six documentaries, with law enforcement featured in two of them. The cost is about \$50K for the two thirty minute segments that will be done professionally and aired on public television and then hopefully to national television on the Outdoor Channel.

Joint Enforcement Agreement's

J.T. Jenkins reported that the JEA funding level will be \$15M and that Mike Fry is moving forward with the JEA documents and expects them to be ready in the May/June timeframe. **J. Mayne** reported that LDWF had a performance review audit with Mike Fry and Magda Hodge of NOAA/OLE last weekend. They went on patrol with LDWF and got a hands-on view of how the process works and the issues that law enforcement has with the software. It was agreed that more input is needed from the states to get on the same page on contacts and that every region will be different. The Gulf-states need to identify a baseline on the contact drop downs. The system is not perfect, but it is the best we have. The LEC was reminded that this is a nationwide program, not just Gulf-wide. It was also reported that the Pacific region is having serious issues and is about to refuse to participate.

The committee again discussed the need to standardize fuel costs for the Gulf when doing JEA work so that everybody is using the same cost.

W. Chataginer of MDMR will host the five Gulf-states at his facility on Thursday, April 19, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. to have a hands-on work session to use the system step-by-step to enter a contact and discuss state specific issues. The LEC will invite Magda Hodge of NOAA/OLE to the April LEC/Leap conference call, as well as the work session on April 19, 2007.

It was reported that the **IFQ phone system/email notifications** are improving, but there continues to be problems with the voice recognition systems and VMS. Most of the problems are contributed to growing pains and the bugs are still being worked out. Even though the electronics are not completely operational at this point, we are getting a lot the information we would not have gotten otherwise on red snapper landings, prior to the IFQ. The technology end of the system is not fully functional, and it is not perfect yet, but John Reed deserves a pat on the back for doing a great job fielding all of the ongoing issues.

ISSC Update

B. Buckson reported that the last conference call was cancelled and that there are still issues that will need a face-to-face meeting to be resolved, even though everybody seems to be on the same track.

Other Business

It was discussed and decided that no summer work session will be needed.

Adjourn

B. Robinson moved we adjourn and the motion was seconded by J. Mayne and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 58th Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 16, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

Chairman, J.T. Jenkins called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

John Thomas Jenkins, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
G.W. "Bill" Robinson, TPWD, Austin, TX
Walter Chataginer, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Karen Raine, NOAA General Counsel, St. Petersburg, FL
Elizabeth Keister, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA
Bruce Buckson, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Hal Robbins, NMFS/OLE, St. Petersburg, FL

Others

Richard Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Jay Diez, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Bob Zales, Panama City, FL
Donald Armes, Jr., MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Cindy Yocom, Ocean Springs, MS
Bobbi Walker, GMFMC, Commissioner, Orange Beach, AL
Brad Williams, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Brett Norton, FWC, West Palm Beach, FL
Mark Kinsey, NMFS/OLE, Galveston, TX
Charlotte Schiaffo, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Wayne Swingle, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

Chataginer moved to accept the agenda as written and the motion was seconded by Robinson and passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the March 13, 2007 meeting held in Biloxi, MS. **Chataginer moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Robinson and passed unanimously.**

Joint Enforcement Agreements

- a. **State Access to VMS - Buckson/Robbins** reported that full state access to real time VMS is technically available, but still need to get answers from NMFS on when it is going to be available. The U.S. Coast Guard reported that they are currently getting snapshots.
- b. **JEA database** – It was reported that the JEA database crashed last week and the system will not be back up and running again until November 15th. **Robbins** offered to check with Magda Hodge to get update and report back his findings.
- c. **Reports on JEA Cases – Robinson** reported that Texas made several big cases on red snapper; they had 206 IFQ's calls and that they are still receiving Florida and Alabama's IFQ's. **Mayne** reported that Louisiana had a shark fin case as well as oyster and tuna cases, but they have not had a lot of black market fish. **Jenkins** reported that Alabama has seen a lot activity across the board. **Armes** reported that Mississippi had a spear case, a 96 lb. goliath grouper, as well as shark and various snapper cases. **Captain Brad Williams** of FWC gave a short presentation on FWC's equipment and assets, including offshore patrol fleet, near shore patrol and aviation. He then showed some of the cases made by offshore and near shore boats. There were 672 IFQ calls, 489 IFQ inspections, 63 cases and a 91% compliance rate. **Williams** then showed an 8 minute video on Operation Joint Action with FWC/USCG.
- d. **IFQ - Robbins** presented the IFQ pilot program using an electronic Trip Declaration and Catch Reporting System, since the cell phone system is not working as well as hoped, the alternative method would cost the fisherman about 60 cents to send the report via satellite using their existing system.

IJF Program Activity

Oyster FMP – Robinson reported he would like to have all the states data before the next Oyster TTF meeting, which is scheduled for the end of November.

Arenarius Profile – Chatagner reported that the Arenarius TTF met in New Orleans last month and he requested any data LEC members have on Arenarius/ White Trout and in the meantime, **VanderKooy** will submit the boilerplate enforcement section to the LEC for updating.

EDRP TED/BRD Non-Resident Compliance

Jenkins reported that the TED/BRD compliance data for EDRP is going only to State Directors and will not be widely distributed. **Raines** said she would get NOAA's data in as quickly as possible and once **VanderKooy** receives their data, it will be forwarded to the State Directors for their use.

Artificial Reefs Update

VanderKooy had an artificial reef issue that resolved its self prior to the meeting. **Robinson** reported Texas has rescheduled the sinking of the "Texas Clipper" 19 miles off Brownsville, TX on November 15, 2007.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - Buckson reported that the FWC is trying to combat a spike in boat thefts, by urging boat owners to protect their boats and avoid boat title fraud schemes. More than 1,200 boats have been reported stolen in Florida this year. Florida is undertaking two new training initiatives directed toward supervisor development and revamping the mentoring program. Florida is also in the process of replacing shotguns with patrol rifles. Thirty-four new officers graduated from the FWC law enforcement academy. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is moving forward with implementing Marine Protected Areas; three will be off the coast of Florida. **Buckson** then reviewed the Division of Law Enforcement Succession Plan, including his promotion for Lt. Colonel effective in January, when he assumes **Lt. Colonel Jim Brown's** duties. **Buckson** then introduced **Major Brett Norton** who will assume **Buckson's** duties as South A Region Commander, also starting in January.

Alabama - Jenkins reported that Alabama legislation passed a license fee increase, smaller cases will be sent to state court and the gill netting ban issue did not pass. **Jenkins** also reported that Alabama will be making major technology investments.

Mississippi - Chatagner reported that gill netting in Mississippi has declined. MDMR had 32 JEA patrols and water safety has been beefed up, since there were five fatalities in 2007, it was determined that alcohol was involved in those fatalities. There was a legislative change to the seafood license and, the speckled trout size reduction to 13" is going out for public comment.

Louisiana - Mayne reported that the academy graduated eleven cadets this summer and will have ten more in November. Currently bids are out for a replacement radio system, four new boats, sixty-two new patrol vehicles and one bus. A lot of LDWF vehicles suffered salt water damage due to the hurricanes. It was also reported that mullet season opened on Monday and that there is a very high demand for bait.

Texas - Robinson reported that Texas has had a lot flooding this year that required several evacuations and rescues. Texas graduated twenty cadets, including two Mexican Nationals who will be returning to serve in Mexico. The new class has forty-one cadets, with fifteen cadets going to Homeland Security for border patrol and it was also reported that the border patrol has been given new M4's. General Orders have been updated, modernized and distributed to the field. The Texas legislature passed IFQ rules, small cases will go to JP court and fisherman must have a license when they land fish. TPWD Executive Director, Mr. Robert Cook has retired and they currently seeking his replacement.

USFWS - There was no representative from FWS.

NOAA General Counsel - Raine reported that she emailed her report to all LEC members.

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement - Robbins reported that McKinney's replacement will be filled in Florida not Texas. **Robbins** then introduced **Mark Kinsey**, Assistant Special Agent in Charge out of Galveston, TX and reported on other staff changes, additions, and relocations.

USCG - Kiestler reported that the U.S. Coast Guard is still resource constrained and being funded by Continuing Resolution. It was reported that the NOAA weather radio HF is ageing and will take millions of dollars to replace. They are currently investigating the actual usage, before committing to replacement. The Commission did provide comment before the close of the comment period.

Chairman and Vice Chair Elections

Jenkins gave a brief History of the LEC Chair. **Robbins** moved that the current Vice Chair, **Chatagner** be elevated to Chairman and nominated **Mayne** as the committee's next Vice Chair. **Raine** seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Other Business

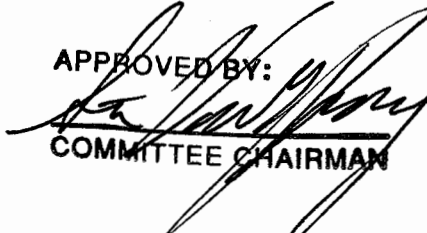
Mayne suggested that Dave McKinney would be a good candidate for a Charles H. Lyles award.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

**Oyster Technical Task Force
MINUTES
August 7-8, 2007
Corpus Christi, TX**

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following members in attendance:

Members

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
Bill Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and adopted. **VanderKooy** pointed out that it was a full agenda and it was possible that not everything would be covered.

Approval of Minutes (November 30 - December 1, 2006)

Minutes were not included in handout, so they will be approved at the next meeting.

Introduction

VanderKooy initiated a discussion on the Oyster TTF Website. He will continue to make improvements on the site, like getting email notifications when new items are posted on the site but the software is limited. He would check with the Commission's IT guy.

Assignment Status and Updates

Section 3 – Description of Stocks Comprising the Management Unit (MU)

L. Robinson said he should have a draft to **VanderKooy** by the end of the month; he has most of it done. Robinson is working on the genetics section and will be looking for guidance and will be relying heavily on the final ESA document to complete this section

Section 4 – Habitat

O'Brien had provided a draft to the group via the oyster website. **O'Brien** specifically included material from a few more recent publications. She will now go back and look at the original

habitat information in the 1991 FMP and begin to incorporate more of the historic information to complete the section. **VanderKooy** noted that the boilerplate habitat information on the Gulf of Mexico, in general, needed to be reviewed and directed specifically to oysters and their habitats.

Section 5 – Threats to Survival

Lezina ran through his working draft on threats to survival and discussed, at length, several sections. It was suggested in a few places that additional information needed to be incorporated. **Lezina** will provide a draft via the website in a few weeks. **Lezina** will spend some time fleshing out a little more on invasive species.

Section 6 – Fishery Management Jurisdiction, Laws and Policies Affecting the Stocks

VanderKooy reported that not everything in the *Laws and Policies, Treaties, and International Agreements* section pertains to oysters and there may be other Federal laws and/or acts that would only apply to oysters and have been left out of other finfish profiles and FMPs in the past. Everyone needs to look over **Section 6.1** and review those items listed to be sure they are important and complete. Any additional items should be noted and some brief text provided to **VanderKooy**. Items that were added included information on the ISSC, but actions like the Invasive Species Act, still need to be added. **Herrington** agreed to look over the FDA components and make sure they were complete.

B. Robinson reported that most of the state enforcement representatives had provided some updated state sections, but noted that several states would need to request input from other agencies who handle other portions of enforcement. **VanderKooy** will continue to work with **B. Robinson** and the Law Enforcement Committee to determine what additional input is required. The group reviewed the boilerplate Table 5.1 and added the additional agencies where needed (see attached table). Everyone should review the revised table and be sure that all the entities are included for their respective state.

Section 7 – Description of Fishery Activities Affecting Stocks

VanHoose had provided some material prior to the meeting, but each state should review its respective non-commercial and commercial components and provide missing or incomplete materials back to **VanHoose**. If there was additional division needed in the individual sections (ex. tongers vs. dredgers), each state should provide some detail on what was required. Also need to see where recreational oyster ‘gardening’ fits in the non-commercial area of this section.

VanHoose is trying to locate 1750’s evidence of how many and often oysters were shipped to the Chesapeake historically. Anyone with that information, please send to him. Also, please provide the earliest laws passed in your state regarding oysters and oyster management.

Prohibition of non-native oyster introductions currently in Section 7.6 should go into Section 5 and Section 12 Management Considerations and Recommendations. **Berrigan** and **Lezina** will decide how much actually is worthy of the Threats section. This information is essential is continuing to prohibit non-natives.

Fishery and trade associations/organizations are probably better placed in sociology or economics as they more likely relate to processing and marketing. **Weeks** will look at the old FMP more closely.

Section 8 – Public Health Concerns Introduction and History

VanderKooy had received draft materials from **Herrington**, but had included them as appendices. These sections will be moved back up into this section for the next draft. It was discussed that there may be a need to include some of the *Vibrio* risk management plan in the document; simply for the purposes of addressing how management is going to change in the future. **Herrington** will make sure that all the correct materials are included in their proper section. **Herrington** will also include text covering *parahemolyticus* and the time/temperature matrix. **Berrigan** asked for a citation related to bioaccumulation rates and **Herrington** agreed to provide the citation.

Section 9 – Description of Oyster Processing, Marketing/Distribution and Trade Organizations

There was some question regarding where the FDA's Interstate Certified Shellfish Processors and Shippers List should be included under processors section. See the revised Table of Contents for restructuring. This section was assigned to **Keithly**, even though it is only moderately related to Economics.

Section 10 – Description of Economic Characteristics

Keithly is working on and would have something to **VanderKooy** to send out for review shortly.

Section 11 – Social and Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen and Their Communities

Weeks previously provided a draft for everyone to review, but has made major changes based on the 1991 version of the FMP. **Weeks** updated much of what was written before, with some new literature, but didn't have many published papers to look at. If anyone has additional sociologic data, please provide it to her soon. There is a distinct difference between culture and ethnicity, which has been developed greatly since the previous FMP. **Weeks** added cognitive models to the section which has enhanced science-based management in recent years. Anyone with additional information on migrant labor vs. family labor would be useful. **Weeks** also expanded the gentrification information. Social and economic problems have been left alone for now. **Berrigan** will incorporate the 'perception' issues into Management Considerations, but review their relevance to today. Some of these are sociologic in nature and **Weeks** would massage them based on her section and literature review. **Berrigan** mentioned 'working waterfronts' as a current buzz word he would like to see included in gentrification section. **VanderKooy** will send **Weeks** some of the published estimated growth for the Gulf of Mexico.

Section 12 – Management Considerations and Section 13 – Specific Management Recommendations

Berrigan mentioned the holdover information from the first FMP related to MSY and Optimum Yield. **VanderKooy** will look more into the stock assessment issue and talk more with the Stock Assessment Team to review the data available. **VanderKooy** will also look at the NOAA ESA review document to see if a stock assessment or evaluation is available to use.

Berrigan noted that these two sections (12 and 13) have been combined, since it's important to provide the rationale to the management measures especially when communicating with legislative members to achieve rule changes, grants, or other programmatic issues. **Berrigan** will spend time on non-native introductions and the problem will be discussed at length here. Anyone who has information from their own state regarding legislative requirements to include input from commercial fishermen in the form of advisory groups or task forces should provide it to **Berrigan**.

Berrigan went through each section (consideration and recommendation) and **VanderKooy** made notes on the document itself. **Berrigan** will add other issues and begin to draft specific recommendations on them for everyone's review. There is no need to dilute the recommendations with too much detail, when the body of information is provided elsewhere in the document. For example, the cultch materials included in the Appendices will provide the background for the specific management recommendation related to shell stock and shell stock recovery.

Section 14 – Research and Data Needs

As data deficiencies and additional research are identified, this is where the 'wish list' for projects and future studies will be located. This section typically ends up as bulleted items with a little detail on exactly what's needed to address the specific problem or deficiency.

Section 15 – Review and Monitoring of Plan

Boilerplate that will be completed by staff.

Section 16 – References

Everyone provide your complete citations as you draft and mail/e-mail literature used to **VanderKooy** for conversion to electronic format and distribution to all.

Section 17 – Appendix

Section 17.5 - Public Education

ISSC information and all *Vibrio*'s

In addition, Herrington will include *V.v.* information as *V parahemoliticus* well and include the current time/temperature matrix. The education programs are part of the requirements under the *Vibrio* plan for the Gulf with the exception of Mississippi.

Next Meeting (November/December)

VanderKooy plans to have one more TTF meeting in 2007 and requested suggestions on location. It agreed that the Keys might be a good location considering the time of year. **VanderKooy** would look at hotels nearer to Miami rather than Key West in an effort to keep costs down and make transportation easier. **VanderKooy** would send out an e-mail with some optional dates after the meeting.

Other Business

None.

Adjourn

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

Table 5.1 The agency body responsible for each aspect of the oyster fishery within each state.

Task	Florida	Alabama	Mississippi	Louisiana	Texas
Licensing	FWC	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDWF	TPWD
Seasons	FWC	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDWF	TPWD
Harvest Limits	FWC	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDWF	TPWD
Area closures	DACS-BEA	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDHH	DSHS
Size restriction	FWC	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDWF	TPWD
Harvest Area Classification	DACS-BEA	ADPH	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDHH	DSHS
Processing Plant Certifications and Inspections	DACS-BEA	ADPH	MDMR Seafood Technology	LDHH	DSHS
Water Quality Monitoring	DACS-BEA	ADPH	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDHH	DSHS
Resource Management	DACS-BAD	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDWF	TPWD
Leasing	DACS-BAD	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDWF	TPWD
Cultch planting	DACS-BAD	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDWF	TPWD
Relaying	DACS-BAD	AMRD	MDMR Shellfish Bureau	LDHH	TPWD

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
November 27-28, 2007
Key Largo, FL**

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. with the following members in attendance:

Members

Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL
Bradley Randall, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tom Herrington, ISSC/FDA Representative-Retired, Ocean Springs, MS
Bill Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Walter Keithly, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
John Supan, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Mark Van Hoose, ADMR, Dauphin Island, AL

Guest

Bill Arnold, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, GSMFC, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Notes

- 1) All action items for Oyster TTF Members are in "***bolded italics***".
- 2) To review and comment on other TTF members sections, go to the oyster website <http://oyster.gsmfc.org/index.php>, select the section you wish to review, copy it to your computer hard drive, make changes/edits and then provide comments directly to the author, via email.
- 3) ***We are now at a point where we need to stop talking and start reading. All TTF members are to email VanderKooy their drafts prior to the next meeting, which is scheduled for March 25-28, 2008, Ocean Springs, MS.***
- 4) A copy of the latest Table of Contents is attached, please review for the latest changes to your section(s).
- 5) ***VanderKooy noted that the first TTF meeting was in July of 2006. It is time that all sections have at least an outline, if not some fleshing out.***

Adoption of Agenda

VanderKooy reviewed the agenda, Table of Contents and handouts that were provided in the folders. **Supan** moved to accept the agenda as written, **Lezina** seconded the motion and the agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes (Aug 7-8, 2007 Corpus Christi, TX & Nov 30-Dec 1, 2006 Naples, FL)

The minutes from the meeting Naples, FL (Nov. 30- Dec. 1, 2006) were approved as written. A minor correction was made to Section 8 minutes from the meeting in Corpus Christi, (Aug. 7-8, 2007). *Van Hoose moved to accept the minutes with the minor correction to Section 8, Herrington seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.*

Regional Oyster Stock Assessment

The Oyster TTF members engaged in a lengthy discussion after reviewing the minutes of the November 15, 2007 Stock Assessment Conference Call. **Berrigan** suggested that the Management Plan be emailed to the SAT for review and comment. Several comments, suggestions, and questions were raised:

- 1) Need a natural mortality model. Natural mortality is likely high (70-90%) and how does it related to sustainability?
- 2) Need a fishery model for sustainability.
- 3) *Berrigan agreed to craft the questions for the email to the SAT to stimulate more discussion on this matter and provide to VanderKooy.*
- 4) OY and MSY? Can the SAT let us know what is still useful and can OY and MSY provide help for determining disaster criteria?
- 5) Estimating MSY is near impossible; because there are too may variables.
- 6) What is the threshold level?
- 7) A number of studies have been done by Bob Allen and Gene Turner that may be helpful.
- 8) *Lezina will look at the data on models and report his findings to VanderKooy who will include the models in the email to the SAT.*
- 9) What are the environmental contributions?
- 10) Possibly do a trend analysis.
- 11) What about ecosystem, eco-path or eco-study?
- 12) Stock assessment is not the problem, what does it mean, what is a sustainability index?
- 13) Oysters are a put and take fishery.

Supan gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on "Predicting Oyster Lease Re-Investment". This was a study done in February 2004, where he visited five lease sites in a one-week period. The objective was to measure the total volume and characteristics of oyster seed and cultch returned to an oyster lease, the total volume of market-size oysters harvested from that lease and dredge harvest time during a survey of five separate daily oyster lease operations. Also, to develop a prediction statistic of reinvestment per daily oyster harvest of oyster lease operations. *Supan will pull all the data together from his study and email to it to VanderKooy for distribution to the TTF.*

Assignment Status and Updates

Section 3 – Description of Stocks Comprising the Management Unit (MU) and Description of the Habitat

L. Robinson was unable to attend, but did provide a handout of his draft for review and discussion. The TTF briefly reviewed the draft and stated that there is some overlap in Section 5. *Lezina has some literature to send Robinson for this section.*

All TTF members are to review Robinson's latest draft in detail and provide feedback directly to Lance, via email, prior to our next meeting.

Section 4 – Habitat

O'Brien's latest draft was provided as a handout for review and discussion. The following suggestions were made:

- 1) Start with the habitat boilerplate information in the striped bass or the blue crab FMP's and then pick and chose from them what would be useful in the Oyster FMP.
- 2) **Keithly and Berrigan** suggested that the pullout worksheets on Gulf Coast estuaries from the 1995 EPA Workshop Workbook would be very beneficial to O'Brien. *VanderKooy offered to photocopy and scan the workbook once he receives a copy from either Keithly or Berrigan.*
- 3) *O'Brien will prepare and email table; by state, by estuary and send it to each state representative to complete and return back to her. Leslie Craig of the biological review team may have estuary data already.*
- 4) *TTF members are to help collect GIS maps and raw data for their states and send them to VanderKooy.*

O'Brien's section is ready for review; please provide comments directly to her via email on her latest draft.

Section 5 – Threats to Survival

Lezina stated that he received some good feedback on the draft that he presented at the last meeting and should have another revision ready for comment and review by the end of the year.

Section 6 – Fishery Management Jurisdiction

B. Robinson's provided a draft for review and discussion. *VanderKooy requested that each TTF member supply the agency body contact information for the responsible agency for each aspect of the oyster fishery, within their state, per table 5.1 that was drafted at the Texas meeting (see copy of attached table).*

There was some discussion on where closures fit in this FMP. Regulatory closures are covered in section 6, section 7 covers how it impacts landings/harvest and section 8 will cover the health closures. Section 6 will also cover closures in a table, by state and number of closures by year. There are two types of closures 1) resource management or seasonal and; 2) predicted environmental.

TTF members will be responsible for reviewing the enforcement section for their state to ensure that the regulations are current and accurate.

B. Robinson announced this will be his last meeting and that he will be retiring from TPWD effective in January 31, 2008. **Kris Bishop** will likely assist the TTF as a temporary replacement. Kris is currently getting caught up on **B. Robinson's** other GSMFC related activities.

Section 7 – Description of Fishery Activities

Van Hoose stated that he had made some recent updates to his section, but is not ready yet to share a draft with the TTF members for comment and discussion. Mark will be contacting each state representative for updates of the various charts and tables. He is looking for any harvest regulation changes in the last 10 years, time and temperature data, as well as any information on recreational harvesters. NMFS data will be used for landings, but **Van Hoose** will also be looking for any trip ticket data that is available. *Keithly will email PDF's to VanderKooy on how the leasing system works in Louisiana for distribution to all TTF members.*

Van Hoose will contact each state representative for their input/information and have a draft ready for review prior to our next meeting.

Section 8 – Public Health Concerns Introduction and History

A couple of minor corrections were made to **Herrington's** draft and then the TTF had a discussion on vessel sewage discharge and no discharge zones. The background on these subjects will go in Section 8 and the rest will go in Section 12 – Management Recommendations and Considerations. *Ballast water discharge was discussed at length and it was decided that Herrington will write a paragraph in Section 8.* It will also be addressed in Section 5 under (Invasive Species) and then addressed under Section 12 – Management Recommendations and Considerations. Pre and post harvest treatments will remain in the Public Health section.

Herrington's second draft will be ready for review and comment prior to next meeting.

Section 9 – Description of Oyster Processing, Marketing/Distribution and Trade Organizations and Section 10 – Description of Economic Characteristics

Keithly presented his handout of various charts and graphs on Oyster Harvests from 1980-2006 that stimulated discussion on how *Vibrio* has impacted the market. It will be determined later, which of the slides presented will be used in the FMP. The cost/value of oyster shell has gone up substantially since the Hurricanes of 2005. It was suggested that non-value based fishing

practices be added to Section 10 – Economics. *Keithly will check with NMFS to obtain additional post-harvest data.*

Keithly will have a narrative of his sections ready for review by the TTF by the end of the year.

Section 11 – Social and Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen and Their Communities

Weeks' was unable to attend this work session and there have been no updates made to her section since the last meeting. *VanderKooy requested that the TTF read this section and provide comments to Weeks, via email, on her last draft, which is available on the oyster website.* Weeks is very familiar with Texas, but will need some assistance gathering data from the other states. It was suggested that the following be items be added to this section:

- 1) Working waterfronts
- 2) Processor dealer descriptions or characteristics
- 3) Declining industry (less passage of the family business)
- 4) Product diversification
- 5) Labor force ethnicity changes
- 6) Other fishery dependency

A paper by Andy Deseran on the effects of the hurricane may be helpful.

Section 12 – Management Considerations and Specific Management Recommendations

Berrigan stated that he is at a point now where he needs to get state input and it is now time for us to stop talking and start reading. It was agreed that a couple of new sections needs to be added:

- 1) Sustainability formula (*to be provided by Lezina*).
- 2) Add a table on the history of cultch planting by state. *Randall will write a paragraph on non-commercial reef planting.*
- 3) Container relaying.

Section 13 – Research and Data Needs

Section 14 – Review and Monitoring of Plan

Section 15 – References

Section 16 – Appendix

Section 16.1 - Glossary

These sections are being addressed as we go and need editing from boiler plate

Section 16.2 - Fishery Disaster Criteria – Needs to be fleshed out with the TTF and Leslie Craig.

Section 16.3 - Aquaculture/Mariculture

Supan reviewed the outline he as drafted so far and will have a draft for review and comment before the end of the year.

Section 16.4 - Cultch Materials

Randall reviewed his outline and will have a draft ready for review and comment before the next meeting.

Section 16.5 - Public Education

Herrington has this section under control and will have a draft for review and comment before the next meeting.

Next Meeting (March/April 2008)

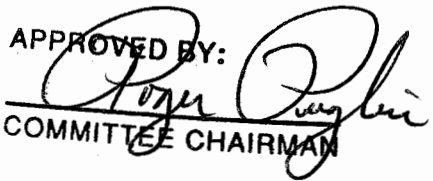
TTF members discussed when and where the next meeting will be. It was decided that the next meeting will be the March 25-28, 2008 in Ocean Springs, MS at the Gulf Hills Resort.

The agenda for the next meeting will be in reverse order, so that all participants have a fair opportunity to have their sections discussed.

Other Business

With no further business, O'Brien made the motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded by Herrington and the group adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

**SEAMAP - GULF, SOUTH ATLANTIC
AND CARIBBEAN SUBCOMMITTEES
JOINT MINUTES**
St. Thomas, VI
August 3, 2007

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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

Members:

James Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Steve Heath, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Mark Lingo, TPWD, Brownsville, TX
Katy West, NCDMF, Washington, NC
Eric Robillard, GADNR, Brunswick, GA
Elizabeth Wenner, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Roger Pugliese, SAFMC, Charleston, SC
Kathleen Okeife, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Aida Rosario, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
David Olsen, VIFWS, St. Thomas, USVI
Nilda Jiménez, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
William Tobias, VIDPNR-DFW, Frederiksted, St. Croix USVI
Mark Leiby, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL

Others:

Ellie F. Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Kelly Donnelly, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Mark McDuff, NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Jeanne Boylan, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Larry DeLancey, SCDNR, Charleston, SC

Staff:

Terry Henwood, 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

The minutes from August 3-4, 2006 were approved as submitted.

Overview of SEAMAP-Caribbean

A. Rosario reported the USVI DPNR has a new Director, Dr. David Olsen, as well as some other needed key personnel. The new USVI research vessel finally arrived in May and is currently being used to conduct two surveys using traps, and hook and line. The new vessel, named "Olewife," is 31' and has a fiberglass hull. A total of nine trips have been conducted with traps, and hook and line, and three have been completed. Inclement weather conditions prevented the completion of all of the trips. Twenty trips using traps are scheduled and 10 trips from supplemental funds for hook and line are also scheduled. The supplemental funds are also going to be used to establish a data standardization of hook fishing drifting versus anchored. These surveys will take place in St. Thomas; meanwhile, the queen conch survey will be conducted using smaller boats in St. Croix.

The start of the queen conch survey in the USVI was delayed due to the financial paperwork not being in place on time to start the sampling before the queen conch closure in July. The queen conch survey was scheduled to be conducted during the closed season of July to September but the USVI government extended the queen conch closure to a six month period, covering July to January, so the survey was conducted during the closure. They are expecting to have all of the financial paper work in place before the end of August 2007.

The personnel of DPNR are trying to finish work that was accumulated while waiting for the arrival of the new vessel and the lobster survey will be the next survey to be undertaken in the Caribbean. The DPNR needs to hire a Chief of Fisheries and a biologist.

The delay in approval of 2007-08 funds prevented Puerto Rico to start the procurement process for the lobster survey before the fiscal year closure. The grant financial clear up coincided with the FY close out. All of the requisitions have been submitted and Puerto Rico is waiting to receive approval to start sampling. Field work is expected to start in September and the puerili collectors should be in place to cover the pulse of recruitment that occurs from March to November. Juvenile habitats will be deployed at the same time as the collectors.

The Puerto Rico Queen Conch Survey was successfully conducted in 2006 with a total of 40 interviews with fishermen on the west, south and east coast of Puerto Rico. The information was plotted on maps and compared with the data collected in 1995. In some areas, the fishermen were not willing to interview. Sample stations were selected in a stratified randomized manner based on expected abundances as determined by historical fishing patterns. A diver was hired for the surveys and the gear and equipment needed was purchased.

A hundred Queen Conch visual census surveys were conducted at 42 sites on the west coast, 40 sites on the east coast, 12 sites on the south coast, and 6 sites off Mona Island. A number of logistical problems arose during the sampling period that extended the survey beyond the queen conch closure. Nevertheless, sampling of most stations was done during the closure for Queen Conch, from July 1-September 30, 2006. All stations were finished on November 17, 2006. Data entry and analysis of the surveys were performed. The annual report of this survey was sent to SERO and was accepted.

All of the SEAMAP information is currently being entered into GIS format by a student in Puerto Rico.

For the most part, PR-DNER has been managing their database themselves. They are also working closely with Mark McDuff to streamline the data entry issues. M. McDuff has provided several drafts of a new database, integrating the changes requested by Puerto Rico. PR-DNER will integrate the SEAMAP-C data into their webpage for better data diffusion and availability. They have also been working with the DNER system division to include all the data produced by the Fisheries Research Laboratory, including SEAMAP data, into the DNER website. The USVI contracted a database manager that will keep all the data management within the DPNR facilities. At this time, they are performing quality control of all the data collected in the VI.

Overview of SEAMAP-Gulf

J. Hanifen reported the Fall Plankton Survey was conducted from August 28 through September 29, 2006. NMFS and Alabama sampled 127 stations on the west Florida shelf and northern Gulf of Mexico. The objective of this survey was to collect ichthyoplankton samples with bongo and neuston gear for the purpose of estimating abundance and defining the distribution of eggs, larvae, and small juveniles of Gulf of Mexico fishes, particularly king and Spanish mackerel, lutjanids and sciaenids.

The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted from October 5 to December 15, 2006 from off Mobile, Alabama to the U.S.-Mexican border. Vessels sampled waters out to 60 fm with trawls and plankton nets and also collected environmental samples. 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.

A new SEAMAP Winter Plankton Survey took place from March 17 to March 29, 2007. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at 42 SEAMAP stations. The stations were east of Mobile Bay on the outer shelf. The objectives of the survey were 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); sample the size fraction of fishes that are underrepresented in bongo and neuston samples using a juvenile (Methot) fish trawl; 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.

The SEAMAP Spring Plankton Survey took place from April 16 to May 29, 2007. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at 125 of the proposed 194 SEAMAP stations. Mechanical problems with the GUNTER hampered the full completion of the survey. Gulf waters were sampled from the west Florida shelf to the Louisiana/Texas border. This was the twenty-sixth 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 Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey started on June 4, 2007 and is currently ongoing due to vessel breakdowns. This was the twenty-sixth 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 via mail and email and it was also available through the GSMFC website.

Overview of SEAMAP-South Atlantic

R. Pugliese reported the largest component of SEAMAP-South Atlantic is the continuing Shallow Water Trawl Survey conducted by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). The overall goal of this survey is to obtain a long-term database to facilitate management of stocks in the South Atlantic Bight. The objectives of this survey are to collect data on size, abundance, distribution, and seasonality of target finfish and decapod crustaceans; record species composition, biomass, and abundance to assess latitudinal and seasonal fluctuations; and to collect data on size, sex, and gonadal condition of white, pink, and brown shrimp and attempt to locate spawning grounds. Three multi-legged seasonal cruises were conducted between Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and Cape Canaveral, Florida, during FY 2007. The fall 2006 cruise was conducted from October 1-October 28, 2006; The Spring 2007 cruise was conducted April 17-May 16, 2007; and the summer 2007 cruise was conducted July 10-August 11, 2007. Inshore strata were sampled during each cruise. All samples were collected during daylight hours to maximize the opportunities for collecting juvenile mackerels, which are found more frequently during the day. The fall 2006 cruise completed the seventeenth full year of standardized sampling under a stratified random survey design in 24 shallow coastal strata in the South Atlantic Bight and a total of 121 species or genera were identified in fall trawls.

The next major program is the Bottom Mapping Project with the main goal being to establish a regional database that includes the location and characteristics of hard bottom resources throughout the South Atlantic Bight. The integration phase of the project has been completed and the project is moving to the distribution of habitat information through the finalization of the GIS component which FWRI is responsible. He said they are getting to the end of actually having deepwater

information available which will be valuable for regional management decisions related to identification, description and conservation of unique habitats, including deep-water coral communities and EFH, designation of Marine Protected Areas and recovery of over exploited fisheries, and locating appropriate cable routes and exploration for mineral and hydrocarbon resources. The user group should include, but not limited to, state natural resource and commerce agencies, federal agencies, university scientists, and private industry.

The South Atlantic is also involved in crustacean work group activities. The Crustacean Work Group met with the Shallow Water Trawl Work Group in June 2006 to discuss collaboration between the different groups. Subsequent to that there was participation in the Sea Grant sponsored Blue Crab Management Monitoring Work Shop in February 2007, as well as the members on the team falls within the Shrimp review panel of the South Atlantic Council in deliberations of overfished determination for pink shrimp in the South Atlantic region. That group has been active in different capacities. One of the most recent activities of the group was participating in a habitat mapping effort for golden crab in and close to the Miami areas that are being considered for habitat areas of concern.

During FY 2007, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) continued the ongoing Pamlico Sound Survey. Cruises sample approximately 52 stations each in June and September. This seasonal trawl survey is designed to provide a long-term fishery-independent database on the distribution, relative abundance, and size composition of target species of estuarine fish and decapod crustaceans for the waters of Pamlico Sound. The data are processed by NCDMF and are made available to the SEAMAP DMS. Fifty-five species of finfish and invertebrates were captured during the June cruise.

The SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Offshore Tagging Cruise was conducted from January 17-25, 2007 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 State University, North Carolina State University, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources participated in the cruise. This was the twentieth year of the cooperative project. During the course of the trip, 369 striped bass were tagged, as were 5,493 spiny dogfish, 16 horseshoe crabs, and 13 Atlantic sturgeon.

Along with the above mentioned surveys, the SEAMAP-SA had one committee meeting and one conference call in FY2007, held their annual meeting in conjunction with the joint annual meeting in August 2007, and the South Atlantic Board approved the SEAMAP 2006-2010 Management plan.

NMFS

Butch Pellegrin reported that as already mentioned by J. Rester in the Gulf component report, NMFS participated in the Fall Plankton Survey, Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Winter Plankton Survey, Spring Plankton Survey, and the OREGON II is currently completing the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish survey. He reported they are having mechanical problems with the vessels so they had to rearrange the start times for some of the surveys. He said they began the first leg of the

longline survey but then they had to finish the Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, and when they finish that they will continue the longline survey.

Status of FY2008 Funds

E. Roche stated SEAMAP should receive approximately \$5 million. She said that until the conference marks are received, nothing is definite. She believes things are moving faster this year than last year and hopes to receive the final budget in November. **R. Pugliese** stated that as a point of clarification, the way both the President's and the Senate's budgets are written, this will be programmatic increases, not ear marked for one component, it is base funding.

Proposed Activities and Budget Needs for FY 2008

Caribbean – A. Rosario reported on the Caribbean's budget priorities. She said Puerto Rico's 2008 funding priorities include restoring current projects to full utilization, increase sampling to ensure sufficient data for stock assessments/management, and starting a new whelk project. The USVI's 2008 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 requested is \$606,000.00. She said the Caribbean agrees with the breakdown from last meeting.

Gulf – J. Rester stated the Gulf discussed doing a new survey for winter plankton, expand some of the trawl surveys into the winter season, and increase coverage for the summer and fall. He said they also discussed moving some of the trawl survey work to inshore areas and including all seasons. He said the numbers they came up with are very similar to the agreed upon percentages from the last joint meeting. He said at the \$5 million level, the Gulf would like to receive 41.3% and NMFS 15.2%.

South Atlantic - R. Pugliese stated he wished to reiterate that some of their surveys will be lost if SEAMAP stays at level funding. He said the coastal survey may not continue if only level funding is received, thus losing critical information on habitat, gag grouper, red drum, black sea bass and other noncontroversial species in the South Atlantic region, as well as not being able to have age, growth, and gut contents analysis, putting the entire system at risk. He said they will continue all surveys as well as expanding on their data management responsibilities. He said the South Atlantic agrees with the 32.9 percent at the \$5.09 million level which will be \$1.674 million for the program.

NMFS – B. Pellegrin said with funding increases they will continue all current surveys, restore data management, increase funding for the Polish Sorting Center, and start new activities such as the winter plankton, inshore shark survey, longlining survey, deep water reef fish survey, vertical longlining survey, and possibly doing genetic work on some of the plankton samples.

J. Rester asked the Committee to review the budget breakdown (on screen) agreed upon at the 2006 meeting. He stated he would like a motion, just for clarification purposes, that everyone is in

agreement with this breakdown. This is the division based on the \$5.09. He reminded the committee they discussed if less than that is received; they would go back to what was discussed last year where it would be the same percentages SEAMAP currently has. If the \$5 million is received, the new percentages would go into effect.

R. Pugliese moved that SEAMAP budget allocations for 2008 at \$5.098 million be based upon the previously agreed upon percentages. Levels up to \$2.7 million would be based on current allocations. The exact breakdown is listed in the table below. A. Rosario seconded the motion and it passed. The agreed upon breakdown at the 2006 meeting is (on screen):

	2x		5 million			7.4 million		
GOM	\$1,224,858	44.8%	\$941,030	\$2,165,888	41.3%	\$988,094	\$3,153,982	41.3%
SA	\$767,962	28.1%	\$749,171	\$1,517,133	32.9%	\$786,639	\$2,303,771	32.9%
Car	\$287,500	10.5%	\$239,097	\$526,597	10.5%	\$251,055	\$777,652	10.5%
NMFS	\$451,566	16.5%	\$346,928	\$798,494	15.2%	\$364,279	\$1,162,772	15.2%
TOTAL	\$2,731,886	100.0%	\$2,276,225	\$5,008,111	100.0%	\$2,390,066	\$7,398,177	100.0%

Review of Cooperative Agreements

K. Mitchell stated that with increased funding, all proposals will need to be more detailed and standardized so it will be easier for reviewers and submitting to Grants online. She will send a template for submitting grant applications and asked everyone to follow the template. E. Roche then introduced Kelly Donnelly who is Cynthia's Binkley's replacement.

Planning for 2008 Joint Annual Meeting

The Gulf component will host the 2008 joint annual meeting. The Committee asked J. Rester to investigate prices for the following cities: Margo Island, FL; Gulf Shores, AL; San Antonio, TX; New Orleans, LA; and Biloxi, MS during the first week of August. J. Rester will contact the coordinators with meeting arrangements at the beginning of 2008.

Other Business

E. Wenner asked why there has not been a program review which was discussed at previous meetings. J. Rester said both the South Atlantic and Gulf budgeted funds for that but the Program Manager at that time, S. Nichols, cancelled the program review because he felt it was not a good ideal to have a program review while there was a possibility in receiving increased funding. He suggested that once SEAMAP receives increased funding, and new programs get online, the Committee could discuss having a program review.

The Committee thanked the PR FWS for hosting the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

SEAMAP Subcommittee Meeting
MINUTES
St. Thomas, USVI
August 2, 2007

Call to Order

Chairman **Jim Hanifen** called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

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

Others:

Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Kelly Donnelly, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Terry Henwood, *SEAMAP Program Manager*, NOAA FISHERIES, Pascagoula, MS
Mark McDuff, *SEAMAP Data Manager*, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Karen Mitchell, *SEAMAP Technical Monitor*, 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

S. Heath moved to adopt the agenda as submitted. **M. Leiby** seconded and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

S. Heath moved to approve the **March 13, 2007** minutes as submitted. **B. Pellegrin** seconded and the motion passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the winter plankton survey was conducted from March 17-29, 2007. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at forty-two SEAMAP stations, most of these being east of Mobile Bay from the west Florida shelf. The spring plankton survey was conducted from April 16-

May 29, 2007. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at 125 of the proposed 194 SEAMAP stations because the GUNTER broke down before the completion of the survey. The winter plankton survey was also delayed because of vessel trouble. The summer shrimp groundfish survey is still taking place and this is the 26th year for the survey. Mechanical problems with the OREGORN II affected the survey around July 8th. NMFS needed to finish 76 trawl stations off of Louisiana and they resumed the survey on July 26th and should finish any day now.

J. Rester said that all of the cooperative agreements were submitted and asked **E. Roche** when the supplemental funding would be available. **K. Donnelly** said the cooperative agreements were entered on July 26 and 27 and it usually takes about a month to process. They actually have 60 days to approve and process the agreements. **J. Rester** said everything on the Subcommittee's part was done and reminded the members that this was a new era for SEAMAP sampling, receiving more funding, and hopefully they will receive extra funding next year, also. He asked that the Subcommittee start doing a better job in documenting the SEAMAP surveys by filling out cruise reports which will be used for SEAMAP reporting and will accompany all data requests. He said that when he returns to the office, he will send each member a template of a cruise report and he asked that each member use the form when submitting the cruise reports.

J. Rester said the President's budget mark for SEAMAP funding is \$5.098 million dollars, the Senate mark is the same, but the House mark has not yet been received.

The GSMFC system's administrator has been working on updating the old environmental biological atlas programs. The 2002 atlas should be distributed before the end of the year with the 2003, 2004, and possibly 2005 following shortly after that. The real-time data were produced and distributed for six weeks this summer and this will be discussed further under agenda item 10.

Status of FY2008 Budget

J. Rester said, as stated in his Administrative Report, SEAMAP should receive approximately \$5 million dollars next year. The divisions were finalized at the last joint SEAMAP meeting and the Gulf, excluding NMFS, should receive around \$2.1 million dollars.

Activities and Budget Needs for FY2008

The Subcommittee discussed the activities and budget needs for each state, GSMFC and NMFS. **J. Rester** stated SEAMAP-Gulf should receive approximately \$2.1 million. Each member agreed on the proposed activities from each state and will meet via conference call after exact funding is announced to agree on the final figures for each state.

Status of Supplemental SEAMAP Funding Activities

The Subcommittee members reported on how the supplemental funding will be used and the breakdown is as follows:

	2007	2007 Supplemental
GSMFC	\$99,137	\$132,763
Florida	\$121,340	\$402,079
Alabama	\$79,600	\$154,052
Mississippi	\$118,348	\$376,490
Louisiana	\$135,200	\$638,519
Texas	\$58,804	\$184,422
Total	\$612,429	\$1,888,325
NMFS	\$225,783	\$1,108,674

The supplemental funds will be spent on personnel costs, restoration, new and expanded surveys, data management, equipment, software, gear, and species identification. **B. Pellegrin** suggested that any new surveys and all other new work be referred to the appropriate work group before it actually begins. He also suggested the Data Coordinating Work Group review the GSMFC's proposal for taking over the SEAMAP-Gulf data management.

The Subcommittee asked **E. Roche** if any of the current supplemental funding or any supplemental funding the Gulf may receive in the future can be transferred to the South Atlantic component if they are at risk of losing a survey due to not enough funding. She said that funds cannot be transferred between the components, but if the Gulf feels they cannot use the money, they can send it back to the treasury. The Subcommittee also asked that just on a one time basis, could funds be transferred from base funding to the South Atlantic. She said the Subcommittee would have to show a specific need to justify changing the historical formula and it would have to be approved by the legal department. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided to leave the distribution percentages as agreed upon at the last joint meeting because if they do change it once, it may set a precedent for future percentage distributions in the base funding.

K. Mitchell and **B. Pellegrin** stated the proposals submitted by the states for the supplemental funding were not very clear in describing exactly how each state would spend the funds. **K. Mitchell** asked questions about each proposal and **J. Hanifen** suggested she contact the individual members after this meeting with any other specific questions. He said the proposals had to be submitted quickly to meet the grants deadline so they were not as detailed as they probably should have been. The states met via email and conference calls to discuss the budget and the split for the supplemental funding and did agree on what each member submitted. In the future, **K. Mitchell** will be included in any conference calls or emails concerning the budget.

K. Mitchell also stated that the format of the proposals from each state were not uniform. **E. Roche** said grants online wants consistency on how the proposals are submitted and it would also make it easier for reviewers. **K. Mitchell** will send a template to the states for future proposal submissions. **B. Pellegrin** stated that in the future, the Subcommittee should be more consistent in terminology; for example, restoration should mean the same for each member.

SEAMAP – Gulf Data Management

J. Rester reported that he and other personnel from GSMFC met with NMFS personnel and discussed the procedures of the GSMFC actually taking over the SEAMAP database management for the Gulf. He said they discussed the status of the different databases, learned about the data entry process, and how the databases are handled. They decided that for the first year, GSMFC will mirror exactly what NMFS does with the data. NMFS will have the master database and the GSMFC will receive a copy of any changes that are made and then update their database when NMFS does. He asked the Subcommittee to start copying him all data that is sent to April at NMFS so he may begin working on and learning how to manage the database. He said that basically, nothing will change when sending the data to NMFS except they will copy him. **J. Rester** said the GSMFC hopes to take over the database management completely by July 2008. **B. Pellegrin** said that he wants to be sure that everybody involved is clear on exactly what is going on and what the long term responsibility will be as far as GSMFC managing the SEAMAP-Gulf data. He feels the GSMFC proposal needs to be referred to the Data Coordinating Work Group for their advice, recommendations, assignments, and responsibilities.

J. Rester reiterated that all of the states have not sent in the documentation that has been requested previously by **M. McDuff** to accompany the data, and asked that all members submit that before the October meeting. He will send an email reminding the Subcommittee to send the documentation and explaining exactly what needs to be submitted. He will also send each member a template for cruise reports to be completed and submitted with their data. He said he needs a cruise report for all 2007 activities and asked that if this was not submitted with any data sent this year, to please send it in as soon as possible.

B. Pellegrin moved to have the SEAMAP Data Coordinating Work Group review the GSMFC proposal on taking over the data management responsibilities for the SEAMAP-Gulf data and submit all recommendations to the SEAMAP Subcommittee. **J. Hanifen** seconded it and the motion passed.

Real Time Data Distribution

J. Rester said the real time data was distributed 6 times this summer to 152 recipients via mail and 82 via email. He said there were a couple weeks when only 3 or 4 stations were sampled so he waited until the following week to mail those stations, but they were sent via email and posted on the website. He asked that in the future, if it would be acceptable to not mail real time data when there are only three or four stations sampled. The Subcommittee said if it is significant to mail it but if not, to wait until the following week. **J. Rester** also said that the real time mailings are costly, approximately \$250.00/week, and asked the Subcommittee if they wish to continue the mailings or just have it available on the web and sending it by email. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided to continue the mailings because a large number of the fishermen do not have access to email or the internet. They did suggest sending a self-addressed postage-paid postcard to the mailing list asking if they wish to continue receiving the mail outs or if they prefer email only. Also, the post card should state that if there is no response, they will be deleted from the list.

Other Business

B. Pellegrin moved that all new work be referred to the appropriate work groups for their advice, guidance, and recommendations to the Subcommittee. **M. Leiby** seconded the motion and it passed.

J. Rester stated all of the work groups need to be updated. He will send the current listing of the work groups to each member and asked that they send all changes to him.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES - 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Monday, March 12, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Call to Order

Chairman **Jim Hanifen** called the meeting to order at 1:13 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
Mark Lingo, TPWD, Brownsville, TX
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
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Terry Cody, Guest, Rockport, TX
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

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

Adoption of Agenda

M. Leiby moved to adopt the agenda as submitted. **R. Waller** seconded and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

R. Waller moved to approve the October 23, 2006 minutes as submitted. **B. Pellegrin** seconded and the motion passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the 2006-2010 SEAMAP Management Plan was finally approved by the South Atlantic Board and is now in print. Copies will be distributed when they are received in the GSMFC office.

J. Rester reported that the GSMFC still has not been informed on the SEAMAP 2007 funding level. He has been in contact with **E. Roche** and she said NOAA has been informed of their level, but NMFS does not know theirs, so SEAMAP funding has not been decided. It is expected to be in line with the SEAMAP 2006 funding level. He said the good news is that in the 2008 President's budget, SEAMAP's mark is at \$5 million and, hopefully, the Senate and House will follow. **M. Leiby** asked if this will be a one time thing or if it will continue to be at that level in the President's budget. **J. Rester** said there is no way of knowing until it is announced each year.

J. Rester reported the 2007 cruise season has started and reminded everyone to please get their cruise reports for all SEAMAP survey activities submitted to him as soon as possible. He asked that at the very least, to send in the sampling dates and the number of stations completed. He then reminded the Subcommittee to measure **all** red snapper caught on every cruise. He said that he sent an email recently informing the Subcommittee that NMFS is working on a report of the CPUE of juvenile red snapper and it should be available soon.

J. Rester said the August meeting arrangements have not been finalized but they are expecting to meet in St. Thomas. The meeting arrangements are being handled by someone in the FWS office and that person will contact **J. Rester** with the information when it is available.

Review of the Plankton Work Group Meeting/ Winter Plankton Survey Results

J. Rester said the Plankton work group met December 6, 2006. The main goal of the meeting was to review possibly incorporating new gears into current plankton surveys that can perhaps answer some of the questions not only on LNG but for projects in the future that would need to know depth distribution, etc., for different ichthyoplankton. He said they also discussed starting a winter plankton survey that was supposed to take place in February of this year but the OREGON II was out of service. They hope to have an abbreviated survey in the eastern gulf so that can potentially be a new annual survey or at least a biannual survey that will be started.

J. Shultz then reviewed the Plankton Work Group meeting report (Attachment I) and showed the design of the Winter Survey but because it did not take place, she showed a map of the abbreviated Winter Plankton Survey that will be done in the very near future. She also showed examples of the metadata documentation they have assembled to be distributed with the data for all cruises. **M. McDuff** reminded the Subcommittee to get this metadata in for all cruises.

SEAMAP 2007 and 2008 Funding Discussion

E. Roche stated she does not know the 2007 SEAMAP funding level, but she will contact **J. Rester** immediately when she is informed. It was brought up that in the President's budget there

was wording that the Gulf would receive most of the money due to LNG and hurricane related studies. **J. Rester** reminded the subcommittee that the components agreed on a budget at the joint meeting for each funding scenario and everybody was satisfied. He said the Gulf has a plan on what will be done if more funding is received. **J. Rester** said that if SEAMAP does get an increase, the components may want to change what they agreed upon so he is planning to have graphs prepared for the joint meeting showing the Gulf versus South Atlantic commercial/recreational fisheries, LNG issues, hurricane related issues, etc.

The Subcommittee discussed funding issues for each state such as inflation, diesel prices, and mandatory salary increases which may affect what each state agreed upon earlier. **J. Rester** will re-send the 2007 Gulf of Mexico funding priority sheet to each member for changes before submitting to NOAA when they know the funding level. The Subcommittee will also meet via conference call to discuss any changes.

M. Leiby stated that papers have been published stating the planning for the Gulf of Mexico region fisheries is terrible compared to other regions. He said this alone should justify receiving more funding. **R. Leard** stated that on the recreational fisheries side, so many people contacted their congressional delegation on the red snapper and grouper issues stating the MRFSS data was not acceptable, so Congress directed the NRC to review this, thus receiving more funding for data collection. He said this may be an option for fishery-independent data collection, also. Both fishery dependent and independent data are needed for stock assessments and to manage fisheries. The right people need to be contacted showing there is a need for this information for fisheries management. It was also discussed that the Gulf of Mexico region needs more research vessels. The Subcommittee agreed that Congress trusts NRC scientists, whether right or wrong, but they are the main group that advises them. Somehow NRC needs to be contacted or get the directive to view the issue. The Subcommittee asked **J. Rester** to follow through on this. One option may be asking them to do the external review of SEAMAP or contacting the Gulf Congressional delegation asking them to have NRC review this.

Upcoming 2007 SEAMAP Surveys

J. Rester asked if each state was still planning to do the planned surveys for 2007 and they said that they were. **J. Rester** suggested a couple of the states could combine their surveys to make it more cost effective and to make sure they get ship time. He reminded the states to get their data in for the real time summaries this summer.

R. Leard informed the Subcommittee that the Council sponsored a grouper work shop, and a preliminary summary report should be out in two weeks. A major section of the report will be on collecting data and it may help the SEAMAP Subcommittee in planning collections and obtaining funding. **J. Rester** will obtain a copy of the report when available and distribute it to the Subcommittee members.

Other Business

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

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.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES – 58th Annual Meeting
Monday, October 15, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

Vice Chairman **Steve Heath** called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. **M. Leiby** announced he will be retiring in December and introduced **B. McMichael** who will either be the Subcommittee member or will appoint a new member from Florida. **M. Leiby** asked that both he and **B. McMichael** be included in all SEAMAP correspondence, conference calls and emails. The following members and others were present:

Members

Steve Heath, *Vice Chairman*, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Mark Leiby, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Gilmore “Butch” Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Richard Waller, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Richard Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Others

Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Read Hendon, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Karen Mitchell, *SEAMAP Technical Monitor*, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
James Sinclair, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

Larry Simpson, *Executive Director*, 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

R. Waller moved to adopt the agenda as submitted. **M. Leiby** seconded and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

M. Leiby moved to approve the August 2, 2007 minutes as submitted. **R. Waller** seconded and the motion passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the Summer Shrimp Groundfish survey was finally completed August 3, 2007. It was delayed due to mechanical problems with the **OREGON II**. A total of three hundred seven trawl stations were sampled during the survey. An area west of the Mississippi River mouth was not sampled off Louisiana because of the lost ship time. An end of survey real time report was distributed by email in August and is also on the website. The fall plankton survey took place from August 28 – September 29, 2007. One hundred forty-four stations on the west Florida shelf and northern Gulf of Mexico were sampled. **J. Rester** said that for this year he has only received cruise reports from NMFS, Texas and Alabama for the summer survey work. He said he needs all of the states' cruise reports using the new format that he emailed to everyone. If SEAMAP funds the survey there needs to be a cruise report on it. He said doing the reports will not take a lot of time or effort. The TCC report has been completed and is being distributed at this meeting.

Review of Data Coordinating Work Group Meeting

J. Rester reported the Data Coordinating Work Group met at the GSMFC office on October 9, 2007. Seven people were in attendance and they discussed the GSMFC's proposal to manage the SEAMAP data in the Gulf of Mexico, the new SEAMAP surveys, including the NMFS shark/red snapper longlining survey as a SEAMAP survey, the Florida Shelf Trawl Survey, survey documentation, quality control of SEAMAP data, updating the plankton database, the need for the other work groups to meet and updating all of the work groups. The complete report was submitted to the Subcommittee and is **Attachment I** to these minutes.

J. Rester asked the Subcommittee if they wished to include the NMFS longlining survey as a new SEAMAP survey even though Mississippi was the only state participating. **B. Pellegrin** stated he would like to designate SEAMAP surveys as something that all of the states participate in. He said NMFS proposes that the Deepwater Reefish and Vertical Habitat Reefish should not be designated as SEAMAP surveys because the states do not participate. He said other states may start participating in the longlining survey in the future, but until then he feels it should just be a NMFS survey. **R. Waller** said they are using SEAMAP protocols and DISL is doing similar work. **S. Heath** said DISL may be willing to participate as far as formatting their data in the same manner as the SEAMAP database. **K. Mitchell** said their protocols are the same as NMFS. **B. Pellegrin** asked if the Subcommittee wants to establish a separate Shark Work Group or use the Adult Finfish Work Group. **J. Rester** said the Subcommittee needs to decide if the correct people are on the Adult Finfish Work Group and if not, they need to recommend someone from their agency and he suggests establishing a separate Shark Work Group. **B. Pellegrin** stated **Terry Henwood** should be taken off the Adult Finfish Work Group as the leader because it would not be appropriate with him being SEAMAP Program Manager.

Status of 2008 SEAMAP Funding

J. Rester said as stated in August, the President's budget for SEAMAP has funding at \$5.09 million for 2008 and the Senate's mark is the same. He has heard the House mark will also be \$5.09 million. Unfortunately, they are operating on a continuing resolution until January. **E.**

Roche stated they should have a budget for 2008 by the end of November and the continuing resolution will not affect the supplemental funds. **L. Simpson** stated that with the House and Senate mark being the same, if a budget is passed, it will not have to go to conference, meaning SEAMAP will receive the requested amount in the budget. **E. Roche** said if the budget does come in to plan for a January 1st start date. Proposals have already been submitted for the old amount for the five year time frame but the extra funding will have to be reapplied for. The supplemental funding applications are completed and will not be affected. All new work will have to be in the new proposals and that will probably be applied for by amendment. She will inform the Subcommittee on exactly how to apply and try to make it as easy as possible. Hopefully, SEAMAP will get \$5 million every year, which will be the base. The division the Gulf will receive is 41.3%, approximately \$2,106,777 and NMFS will receive \$776,701. She said to keep in mind there will be taxes so those figures are not exact. If SEAMAP receives \$3 million or less the Gulf will receive 44.8% as agreed upon at the 2006 Joint SEAMAP Meeting.

Review of New SEAMAP Surveys in the Gulf of Mexico

Texas will not be starting any new surveys but will use the additional funding on increased costs of doing the current SEAMAP surveys. Louisiana will use the additional funding to sample inshore waters using 20 ft. trawls, side scan sonar surveys in Breton Sound, and upgrading their data management system. Alabama will upgrade their data management system, perform a winter shrimp/groundfish survey, and expand the fall plankton survey. Florida will conduct a new biodiversity exploratory trawl survey currently under development and use additional funds to continue current activities and purchase compactor shelving and computer software and hardware for the ichthyoplankton collection's use and operation. Mississippi will conduct an inshore shark survey and winter plankton survey, as well as use additional funds on increased costs of existing surveys. NMFS will start a winter plankton survey and continue ongoing surveys.

B. Pellegrin asked if the Subcommittee members can receive the Statements of Work and Program Narratives that will be submitted for the increased funding. **J. Rester** asked each Subcommittee member to please send this to him and he will distribute to the Subcommittee. He asked that everyone include the time periods and number of samples for when he writes his report.

The Subcommittee also discussed using new gears for plankton sampling. There has been a problem in the past obtaining depth data and there are now new methods to do this. The Subcommittee will direct the Plankton Work Group to meet to discuss using new gears now that SEAMAP has more funding.

Election of Chairman

R. Waller moved to re-elect **J. Hanifen** chairman and **S. Heath** co-chairman. **B. Pellegrin** seconded and it passed.

Other Business

The Subcommittee discussed the fact that some SEAMAP agencies are charging higher indirect costs rates than others. **E. Roche** said this is done because SEAMAP has no cap for indirect costs. **B. Pellegrin** moved that the Subcommittee ask NMFS to place a cap on allowable indirect funds charged by SEAMAP agencies to not exceed 25%. **M. Leiby** seconded and the motion passed with **R. Waller** abstaining from voting. **E. Roche** volunteered to write the language and it will be included in the SEAMAP SOP. The 25% cap will be effective for 2008 funds and all future funding.

B. Pellegrin said the Subcommittee needs to decide if the Adult Finfish Work Group should be updated and should the new Shark Survey fall under this work group. The Subcommittee decided the Adult Finfish and all other work groups need to be updated and the Subcommittee will start a new Shark Work Group. Each state and NMFS should appoint a member to the new group and submit it to **J. Rester**. **J. Rester** will send the current Work Group listings to the Subcommittee and he asked for changes as soon as possible. If SEAMAP is funded at the \$5.09 million level, **J. Rester** will plan meetings for the various work groups to discuss the current methods, gear, hardware/software needs and anything else that needs to be addressed.

K. Mitchell said she will be emailing the template to the Subcommittee for submitting grant applications and amendments within the next two weeks. She is also revising the SEAMAP Operations Manual and will send the changes to the Subcommittee and work groups for their input. All changes will be discussed at the March meeting and voted on for approval.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:13 p.m.

ATTACHMENT I

Data Management Work Group Meeting Summary October 9, 2007

Attendance

Jeff Rester
Bob Harris
Donna Bellais
Butch Pellegrin
Mark McDuff
Joanne Shultz
Terry Romaire

The Data Coordinating Work Group (DCWG) first discussed the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) proposal to manage SEAMAP data in the Gulf of Mexico. J. Rester stated that all SEAMAP participants would still be responsible for collecting, entering, editing, and verifying data collected through their independent SEAMAP programs. The SEAMAP participant would generate a report detailing the number of records and observations entered and submit it with the data to the Commission. The SEAMAP participant would produce and submit to the Commission a cruise report and corresponding metadata. The Commission would be responsible for collecting SEAMAP data from all SEAMAP participants to include in the appropriate SEAMAP database. The Commission would edit and verify all submitted SEAMAP data to determine accuracy and compile number of records submitted. The Commission would upload the data to the appropriate SEAMAP database and generate a report detailing the number of records and observations uploaded. The Commission would also be responsible for compiling metadata submitted by SEAMAP participants and provide access to SEAMAP data through the Internet and direct data requests. Finally, J. Rester stated that the Commission would provide data entry programs to all participants that need it and provide programs to ingest SEAMAP data from participants that do not use the SEAMAP data entry program to avoid data entry duplication.

The DCWG next discussed the new SEAMAP surveys that would soon begin collecting data and their data needs. B. Pellegrin stated that he would be discussing the Deepwater Reefish Survey and the Vertical Habitat Reefish Survey with the SEAMAP Subcommittee next week. He stated that NMFS has reexamined their inclusion in SEAMAP sampling and that NMFS was proposing that these surveys not be included as SEAMAP surveys. The money for these surveys would be redirected into the current NMFS SEAMAP surveys.

J. Rester asked if NMFS would be including their shark/red snapper longlining survey as a SEAMAP survey since Mississippi had proposed an inshore survey using the same gear and the same methodology. The DCWG felt this was something the SEAMAP Subcommittee should

explore. The Mississippi Inshore Shark Survey would not be collecting any data that was not already part of the NMFS Shark Longlining Survey.

J. Rester stated that the Florida Shelf Trawl Survey would be collecting the same data as the current shrimp/groundfish surveys. He stated that Alabama's Winter Trawl Survey would also be collecting the same data as the shrimp/groundfish surveys. J. Shultz stated that the Winter Plankton Survey would be collecting the same data as the other plankton surveys. J. Rester stated that the Louisiana Inshore Trawl Survey would be collecting data similar to the shrimp/groundfish surveys and that these surveys were being resumed. M. McDuff asked about the side scan sonar work and how that data would be collected and stored. J. Rester stated that he was not sure how it would be stored, but they would be discussing the new surveys at the Subcommittee meeting next week and would find out then.

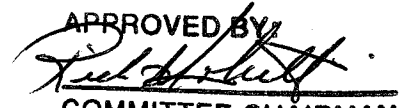
The DCWG discussed survey documentation. J. Rester stated that he had received documentation from all SEAMAP partners except NMFS. He showed examples of the various quality of documentation that he received. He then asked about what should be given to the public when they request data. M. McDuff showed an example of what NMFS had produced for their longline survey. The documentation explained the survey design and how the data was collected. It was approximately 24 pages in length and he stated that something similar should be produced for all SEAMAP surveys and distributed with data requests.

The DCWG next discussed quality control of SEAMAP data. J. Rester proposed that after any SEAMAP survey is completed, the SEAMAP participant will enter all data into the data entry program within 60 days of final sampling. The data entry program will generate a report detailing all data entered. A copy of the report and the entered data will be sent to the Commission for error checking and data verification. The Commission will review the submitted data, and if any errors exist, the Commission will contact the SEAMAP participant for corrections. Corrections will be the responsibility of the SEAMAP participant. Once correct, the Commission will upload the data into the appropriate SEAMAP database. After the Commission has uploaded the data into the SEAMAP database, a report will be generated detailing what was entered into the SEAMAP database. This report will be sent back to the SEAMAP participant for verification against the report generated from the data entry program. The Commission will generate a final load report and will be provided to all SEAMAP participants after each survey has been loaded into the SEAMAP database. A data quality meeting will be held after the data is uploaded to the appropriate SEAMAP database and the final load report is produced. Participants will evaluate identified data errors, validity of samples (i.e. ops codes and comment sections) and potential changes in data management design. During the quality control meeting, participants will also review cruise reports to ensure all relevant information is included in the metadata file. The meeting can be held through a conference call. M. McDuff felt it was important for users to have the ability to question the data. He suggested trying to develop a data issues management system that would allow users to question the data and any answer would be stored in the database for future use.

J. Shultz discussed the current project to update the plankton database. She stated that David Hanisko was compiling three databases into one and was also developing documentation to go along with the database. She stated that the project should be finished by next June.

Finally, the DCWG discussed the need for the other work groups to meet. B. Pellegrin stated that the Shrimp/Groundfish Work Group needed to review their data sheets, the Florida Trawl Survey, and also compliance with SEAMAP protocols. T. Romaine stated that she did not see a need for the Environmental Data Work Group to meet at this time, but J. Rester should send an email to the members to see if they felt there was a need for a meeting. A conference call could be sufficient to handle any concerns. J. Rester next questioned whether the Adult Finfish Work Group was composed of the correct individuals to help in the development of the Inshore Shark Survey.

**S-FFMC MENCHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 13, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

R. Schillachi called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. 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
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC

Others

Chris Nelson, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Bon Secour, AL
Tom Wittmann, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS
Richard Fulford, USM-GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Aaron Viles, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Paul Tchounwou, Jackson State University, Jackson, MS

Staff

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

Introductions

Chairman Schillachi led the introductions of the MAC. After reviewing the roster, a few changes were noted and provided to staff. **VanderKooy** will mail out the current roster to be sure all the corrections are made.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and *Guillory moved to approve the agenda seconded by Wallace and the agenda was approved.*

Approval of Minutes (10/23/06)

The minutes from the October meeting were reviewed. It was noted by **Wallace** that the information related to Daybrook relying on gas generators following the storm was incorrect,

they were diesel generators. *Perret moved to approve with the minor correction, Wallace seconded and the minutes were accepted as written.*

Overview of 2006 and Forecast for 2007 Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Fishing Season

Smith provided NOAA's summary of the 2006 Gulf menhaden fishing season. Despite still recovering from damages in 2005 from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the total landings in 2006 were 464,393 metric tons or 1,528 million standard fish. The landings were up 7% from 2005 (433,784 mt), but down 8% from previous 5-yr average (503,098 mt). Landings in April were very good, but May was a little low. Monthly landings continued to climb from June through September then dropped in October due to inclement weather. All four plants were operational by mid-June with landings comparable to recent landings prior to the hurricanes. A total of 41 vessels operated in 2006 with 39 regular steamers, 1 run boat, and 1 bait boat. **Smith** provided a summary of the nominal fishing effort. NOAA estimates that the industry had expended 367,200 vessel ton weeks in 2006 which was up 13% over 2005 [326,000 vessel ton weeks (vtwks)] and comparable to 2003 (363,200 vtwks). This is down 2% from previous 5-yr average and the third lowest value since 1965. The ages of fish harvested was nearly an equal split between age 1s (46%) and 2s (47%). Cameron and Empire were weighted heavily toward age 1s, and Abbeville and Moss Point landed predominately age 2s.

Smith also provided a Gulf forecast of 478,000 mt for 2007 based on 4 factories active, 43 vessels (40 steamers, 2 run boats, and 1 bait boat), and 375,000 vtwks of nominal effort. The forecast for 2006 was only 1% less than the actual landings.

Smith was asked to discuss some of the rumors the MAC had heard regarding the possible elimination of funding by NOAA for the Atlantic and gulf menhaden surveys. **Smith** noted that there had been some internal discussion to possibly turn the data activities over to the states since pretty much most of the landings come from Virginia on the East coast and Louisiana on the Gulf coast. The MAC suggested that a letter be sent to Dr. Alex Chester in Miami and Dr. Aleta Hohn at Beaufort regarding the funding of the surveys by NOAA. **Smith** reported that some of this discussion was related, in part, to the fact that the SEDAR process has prioritized reef fish assessments in the short term and since the next menhaden assessments are a ways off, they are likely trying to redirecting money to reef fish. **Smith** concurred that a letter from the GSMFC might help. In addition, **Smith** noted that currently the Beaufort Lab is the only entity which can track the removal of fish by area for the East coast through the CDFRs.

Perret offered a motion to have the GSMFC send a letter to NOAA expressing concern over this potential funding issue. The motion was seconded by Wallace and passed unanimously.

Atlantic Coast Update

Smith reported on the Atlantic season briefly. The landings on the Atlantic were 157,385 mt or 518 million standard fish which was up 7% from 2005, but down 13% from previous 5-yr average (180,833 mt). Omega's plant at Reedville was the only factory operating in 2006 with 11 vessels. There were also 4 bait vessels in Virginia, 5-6 in New Jersey, and 1 in New England. **Smith** also reported on the management activities on the Atlantic. In October 2006, the Atlantic

Menhaden Management Board (AMMB) approved Addendum III with the 'Compromise Cap' of 109,000 mt for reduction removals from Chesapeake Bay. Virginia codified the Cap in the legislature and the bill is awaiting their Governor's signature. Under the compromise, if the total catch from the Chesapeake were below the 109,000 mt, the underage could be applied to the next year up to 122,000 mt. The actual harvest was only about 60% of 109,000 mt cap for reduction in 2006 so the 2007 harvest can be up to 122,000 mt. A strong 2005 year class could make age-2 fish menhaden very abundant in the Bay in summer 2007.

Louisiana Forecast for 2007

Guillory provided a forecast for Louisiana waters for 2007 using historic January water temps off Grand Isle, LA and juvenile abundance indices from LDWF fishery-independent data to make predictions of year class strength and catch. Generally, a winter that is cold and dry (low temperatures, low rainfall, low tides, low river discharge, high salinities, low incidence of south winds) is favorable for recruitment. Winters that are warm and wet (high temperatures, high rainfall, high river discharge, low salinities, high incidence of south winds) typically are poorer for recruitment. **Guillory** reported that January 2007 was warm and dry. The juvenile abundance indices for 2006 were above average east of the River and average or below west of the River. Therefore, depending on effort, the 2007 Louisiana harvest should be around 382,000 mt.

Organic Designation and Sustainability

The MAC discussed the existence of several certification processes and designations for various fishery products that are labeled as 'sustainable'. **Chris Nelson**, Bon Secour Fisheries, provided some information related to the National Organics Standards Board and the Marine Stewardship Council. While the NOAA assessment indicates that the Gulf menhaden fishery is in good shape, the industry may desire to look to an independent group to evaluate the fishery in hopes of achieving some sort of 'sustainable' designation for the market place or at least the use of sustainable, wild-caught fish in 'organic' applications. The industry will continue to look at these options and determine what course they may ultimately take.

Other Business

VanderKooy addressed the need to update the Gulf Menhaden webpage housed on the GSMFC site. With the completion of the stock assessment, other items like product values should probably be updated as well. The confidentiality issue plays a role and the industry will look at the website and give **VanderKooy** some direction at a later date.

With no further business, the MAC adjourned at 11:09 am.

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 58th Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 16, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

APPROVED BY: Vince Guillory 3/11/08
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

R. Schillachi called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. 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
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC

Others

Richard Fulford, USM-GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Shaun Gehan, Washington DC
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Kimberly Thibodeaux, Omega Protein, Inc. Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, MRFSS Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions

Chairman Schillachi led the introductions of the MAC. After reviewing the roster, **B. Wallace** noted that Ed Swindell should be removed temporarily from the roster as his proxy.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and Perret moved to approve the agenda seconded by Guillory and the agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes (3/13/07)

The minutes from the March meeting were reviewed. Wallace moved to approve the minutes as written, Perret seconded and the minutes were accepted.

Update on 2007 Gulf Menhaden Season

J. Smith, NOAA Fisheries Beaufort, offered his annual review of the menhaden season. As of September, the landings for 2007 were 422,706 mt of fish, which was down 5% through this same time period in 2006. The year started slowly partly due to weather, but by June and July, landings were surpassing the previous 3 years. The Gulf season opened on April 16th with four plants active (Moss Point, Empire, Abbeville, and Cameron). The early season weather was windy and cool and was reported as "...worse start to the fishing season in years". There were poor fish oil yields and not all the vessels fished with full crews. In mid-June, the wind finally abated and catches improved across the northern Gulf. Fair weather dominated through July and catches generally good with no major weather systems affecting fishing. July was the peak of landings and fish oil yields improved substantially. Landings declined again in August and September due to weather. In mid-August Tropical Storm Erin moved into Texas and Hurricane Dean went into the Yucatan. The fleet lost almost two weeks fishing time in September as Hurricane Humberto made landfall in eastern Texas. The fleet continued to lose considerable fishing time in early October as windy conditions and several weak tropical systems prevailed in the western Gulf. A total of 42 vessels fished in 2007 (39 steamers, 2 run boats, and 1 bait boat). Fishing effort through July was estimated at 227,700 vessel-ton-weeks. The final landings could reach 466,000 mt if the weather in October doesn't hamper fishing. Coastwide ages were dominated by Age-1 fish although Moss Point seemed to fish mostly Age-2s. This abundance of young fish suggests a high abundance of Age-2 next year is possible.

The industry representatives asked **Smith** to consider looking at fishing effort based on actual days fished per week since the vessel/ton/weeks is probably a rather imprecise measure of nominal fishing effort. There are very few weeks when the fleet does not fish at least one day **Smith** would look into it and provide something at the March meeting.

Update on the Atlantic Menhaden

Smith provided an update to activities related to menhaden on the Atlantic. Landings on the Atlantic as of September were 136,700 mt which is up 25% from 2006 and up 21% from previous 5-yr average. Only Omega's plant at Reedville was active with 10 vessels. Beaufort Fisheries closed in 2004 and was sold this summer to developers. Three bait vessels were active in VA, 5-6 bait vessels were active in NJ, and 2 bait vessels were active in New England (RI, MA). **Smith** also reported that the 'Compromise Cap' or quota on menhaden removals from Chesapeake Bay was approved October 2005 and caps the reduction catch in Chesapeake Bay for the next 5 yrs at 109,000 mt annually. Any overages are subtracted from next year's catch while underages are added, up to 122,000 mt. Bill # 2082 [The Compromise Cap] was signed into law in VA in early 2007. Additionally, another bill was signed into law in NC this summer prohibiting purse-seining for menhaden within 3 miles off Brunswick County (southernmost NC county). Landings in Chesapeake Bay in 2006 were considerably less than the 109,000 mt 'cap' which means that the 2007 'cap' for the Bay is 122,000 mt. There was a very strong 2005 year class and a resulting high abundance in the Bay and Mid-Atlantic in 2007 of Age-2 fish. The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board will meet in two weeks in Annapolis at Annual ASMFC meeting.

Summary Data from the 2006 CDFR Database

Smith provided a short update on the fishing activity by set location from 2006. He was able to separate the location information by month and showed total sets on a map east and west of the River. Some areas were distinctly absent of fishing which may relate to the hypoxic zone in the mid to late summer.

Smith is receiving 'in-season' CDFRs received at Beaufort from Gulf factories monthly or bi-monthly and is providing the preliminary edits to them and collating the sets and landings by vessel and date. The key-entry of the complete forms is conducted during the winter by Beaufort staff which makes the annual database available the following spring or summer (e.g., 2006 data available in summer 2007). There is considerable lag-time from when the CDFRs are received at Beaufort, entered, and the database cleaned and made available. **Smith** suggested further revision to the CDFR form itself to move the program into scanning the data forms rather than key-entering everything. He would work up the changes to the form and get them to the industry for review. Pending their acceptance of the new forms, they may be phased in or replaced outright for the 2008 fishing season.

Hypoxia Action Plan

Doug Daigle of the Lower Mississippi River Sub-Basin Committee provided a report via phone on the National Hypoxia Action Plan, developed back in 2000 to address nutrient loads in the Mississippi River contributing to Gulf hypoxia. Daigle reported that while the Plan was adopted by Congress and began implementation, funding was never fully given to the participating states and resulted in what was really a 'non-start'. In 2005 a task force was identified by EPA to look at the science of hypoxia and review the Plan. The original intent of the Plan was to be a proactive approach to reducing hypoxia but again, without funding, the states bordering the Mississippi are now resistant to comply. Daigle will continue to update the MAC through the Commission office and keep them apprised of any changes as they relate specifically to fisheries.

TPWD's Historical Fishery Independent Data

J. Mambretti provided a retrospective analysis of the historical fishery-independent survey data from Texas compared to coastwide gulf menhaden landings over the last 20 years using TPWD gill nets, bay trawls, Gulf trawls, and bag seines. Generally, while the commercial landings have been declining over time, the fishery independent data suggests that menhaden populations in Sabine Lake and in the bays are steady and increasing. Overall, there is no biological concern at this time.

EDRP Supplemental Funding Discussion

The MAC spent considerable time discussing the Emergency Disaster Program and the recent supplement. It was pointed out that while EDRP I did not have the ability to help the menhaden industry in the Gulf, the EDRP II supplement does have a little more flexibility on how it is spent. Both Omega and Daybrook noted that the initial EDRP II discussions included a considerable amount to be directed for the menhaden industry. Since that time however, the

industry appears to be left a little short. The question was raised regarding where the 'disconnect' was, between what was originally discussed by the states and what was finally agreed upon. It was explained that NOAA did not have a mechanism to provide assistance directly to the industry, so it was left to the states to support industry out of their portion, if they so choose.

The industry representatives explained that just because they could spend their own money immediately after the storm to remove debris from waterways, feed contractors, install plumbing and electrical systems to get the economic support back into their communities, they should not be overlooked for their needs and losses. They pointed out that while many local companies and businesses have and continue to play the waiting game and still have people unemployed and no infrastructure, the menhaden industry took care of their own and others, rather than wait.

In summary, the industry is disappointed with the aid discussed so far in the EDRP II package. They feel that the original \$ 15M was fair and appropriate. The industry has done for others and the local economy more than most relief programs so far, in their communities. Finally, some 'fishery participants' will get compensation regardless of whether they incurred damage in the storms or not, just because they had landings in 2004 or 2005. The industry respectfully submits their concerns to the SFFMC and the Commission for their increased awareness and consideration.

Update on LNG Facilities in the Gulf

J. Rester provided a short presentation on the current status of LNG plants in the Gulf. In March of 2007, Shell announced that they were dropping plans to build the Gulf Landing facility which had been proposed as an open rack vaporizer. They cited substantial capacity already available for importing liquefied natural gas into the U.S. market, particularly along the Gulf Coast. The Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal which is proposed 63 miles south of Mobile Point, Alabama released their draft Environmental Impact Statement on July 6, 2007. The comment period for the DEIS closed on August 20, 2007 and a "stop clock" letter was issued on August 21, 2007 by the Coast Guard, requiring them to gather more data. They cited in their DEIS that the four representative species used in their analysis (red drum, red snapper, Gulf menhaden, and bay anchovy) were represented within the SEAMAP data used for the proposed site, but are not necessarily considered the most representative of the marine fisheries found at that location.

Port Dolphin Energy LLC filed its license application on March 29, 2007 for a LNG facility located 28 miles offshore of Tampa, Florida in approximately 100 feet of water. The proposed port would consist of two mooring areas centered on two Submerged Turret Loading Buoys, similar to those used in the Gulf Gateway Energy Bridge deepwater port. The proposed port would be capable of mooring up to two Shuttle and Re-gasification Vessels (SRV). The SRVs are vessels designed to regasify the LNG onboard the vessel in a closed loop regasification system. A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and a request for scoping comments was released in the Federal Register on June 12, 2007 and on August 10, 2007, a "stop clock" letter was issued to the owners of Port Dolphin to gather data to develop the DEIS.

Election of Chairman

Lastly, the position of chair rotated back to the states. **Guillory was nominated by Mambretti seconded by Wallace, and elected as chair by unanimous consent.**

With no further business, Guillory moved to adjourn, Perret seconded and the meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

**GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
STATE DIRECTORS' MEETING**

Chisos Mountain Lodge
Big Bend National Park
April 1-4, 2007

Meeting Participants

Virginia Vail	John Roussel
Stevens Heath	Mike Ray
Corky Perret	Larry Simpson
Dale Diaz	Steve VanderKooy

Items for Discussion

- 2007 FIN Funding
- Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel
- GSMFC Legal Committee

APPROVED BY: 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Wednesday, August 29, 2007
New Orleans, Louisiana

Facilitator Larry Simpson called the meeting to order at 9:55 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Ginny Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Steve Heath (proxy for V. Minton), ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
Bonnie Ponwith, NMFS, Miami, FL
Doug Fruge (proxy for C. Brown), USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Dave Van Voorhees, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Gordon Colvin, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD

Staff

David Donaldson, Assistant Director
Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as written.

Discussion and Final Approval of FIN Funding Activities for 2008

L. Simpson provided a brief overview regarding the status of 2008 funding for data collection and management activities. The preliminary numbers show level funding in both the GulfFIN (\$4.45M) and RecFIN (\$3.445M) line items. The Southeast Region charges FIN an administrative fee (~\$225K) to process the cooperative agreement which reduces the available amount to \$4.25M. The Gulf portion of the RecFIN line item works out to be about \$650K. That translates to about \$4.9M available in 2008. **C. Perret** noted that this figure is lower than (by ~\$200K) the information that was distributed prior to the meeting and stated that it makes it difficult to make decisions if the amount is not final. **D. Donaldson** stated that new RecFIN line item breakdown was received early in the week and there was no way to get the information out early. In subsequent years, the breakdown should be more stable and hopefully it will not be an issue. The breakdown of the RecFIN line item is as follows:

RecFIN line item	\$3,422,000	
Gulf portion of RecFIN (1/3)	\$1,140,667	
Economic surveys	(\$165,000)	
RDD phone survey	(\$126,000)	
SEFSC data collections	(\$205,000)	
RecFIN - available		\$644,667

L. Simpson noted that Roy Crabtree stated that the Southeast Region will only take \$100K for administrative fees in 2008 and the Region also provided an additional \$100K in 2007 for FIN. Therefore, the amount available from the GulfFIN and RecFIN line items in 2008 totals \$5.1M. **After some discussion, the Committee decided to use \$5.1M as the planning figure for 2008.**

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 2008 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. 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. **J. Roussel** stated that since the inception of operational activities, FIN has conducted and funded the collection of recreational data on the east coast of Florida; however, FIN has used funds from the GulfFIN and Gulf's portion of the RecFIN line items. It would seem appropriate the FIN should receive a larger portion of the RecFIN line item since FIN is conducted data collection activities on the east coast of Florida. 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. In addition, there was an increase in funds to provide monies for menhaden bailers to collect and store samples from the catches. It was noted that this activity has been occurring for the past two years but has not been a dedicated item for funding. 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 Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. 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. **D. Donaldson** noted that the electronic trip ticket contract was increase by \$15,000 to fund expansion of the program to include collection of data for quota monitoring and IFQs. **J. Roussel** asked what the cost savings to NMFS would be since dealers/fishermen would be reporting via the electronic trip ticket program. **D. Donaldson** stated that those savings have not been enumerated but he could talk with Guy Davenport to generate these numbers. **J. Roussel** is concerned that any cost savings realized by utilizing this program will not be passed onto the FIN. This has occurred in the past with other programs and he is concerned that it will occur again. Therefore, J. Roussel does not support this portion of the task. 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 and will allow for an increase in the number of species sampled. 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. And Job 9 refers to the collection, management and dissemination of highly migratory species (HMS) data from the for-hire fishery and will conduct the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS) and For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS) in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida for the for-hire mode. **D. Van Voorhees** noted that the expansion of the LPS to the Gulf of Mexico is supported by NMFS. **D. Donaldson** noted that the statement of work for the economic work in the Gulf of Mexico was also in the meeting packet. He provided a brief overview of the program and stated that this was an opportunity to provide the information to the group. **J. Roussel** stated that these funds should be incorporated into the FIN and utilize the Social/Economic module developed by FIN. As it is now, FIN does not appear to be involved. **D. Donaldson** stated that while that was initially true, the newer version of the statement of work provides for much more involvement by the FIN, via the FIN Social/Economic Work Group.

The amount proposed for 2008 for all the jobs was approximately \$6.3M which meant there was about \$1.2M deficit. Therefore, the group needed to figure out how to reduce the proposed activities. **D. Donaldson** noted that since the Marine Recreational Information (MRI) initiative is currently examining sampling methodologies for HMS, it would be premature for FIN to fund any HMS data collection activities. Therefore, **C. Perret moved to remove the collection of HMS data from the for-hire fishery (Job 9) due to the MRI initiative and the current funding constraints.** **The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** It was noted that removing this activity reduced the deficit to about \$700K. It was stated that there are two options: 1) across the board cuts or 2) removal of entire jobs. **D. Donaldson** pointed out that the current deficit (\$700K) translates

into ~12% cut across the board. **G. Vail** stated that Florida is at a critical funding level and more cuts would probably cause failure of programs. **M. Ray** stated that it would be better to conduct a handful of jobs well instead of conducting all jobs poorly and supports removal of entire jobs.

After some discussion, **C. Perret** moved the following:

- Remove funding for all head boat sampling (Job 3.1 [head boat port sampling @\$171,345] and Job 3.2 [at-sea sampling @272,396]) - \$443,741
- Remove funding for menhaden bailers under Job 4 - \$5,600
- Remove funding for increase to electronic trip ticket contract under Job 6 - \$15,000
- Remove funding for detailed effort pilot survey under Job 8 - \$78,734

Total reduction - \$543,075

In addition, each agency needs to reduce their remaining budget by 2.63% to reach the 2008 funding level (at \$5.1M). It was noted that the Proposed column is the revised total (with the outlined cuts from above taken out). The % reductions are as follows:

	Proposed	Reduction	Revised total
GSMFC	\$827,202	\$23,911	\$803,291
Texas	\$299,861	\$7,886	\$291,975
Louisiana	\$1,291,628	\$33,970	\$1,257,658
Mississippi	\$366,406	\$9,636	\$356,770
Alabama	\$426,704	\$11,222	\$415,482
Florida	\$1,835,011	\$48,260	\$1,786,751
Bluefin Data	\$81,970	\$0	\$81,970
TX Biol	\$98,352	\$2,587	\$95,765
TOTAL	\$5,227,134	\$137,472	\$5,089,662

The motion was seconded. **D. Van Voorhees** made a substitute motion to not remove funding for the head boat port sampling job (Job 3.1) and reduce the remaining budget by 5.7%. The motion was not seconded and failed. The group then voted on the original motion which passed with NMFS voting against the motion.

To address the issue of FIN funding data collection activities on the east coast, **J. Roussel** moved that the Commission send a letter to Bill Hogarth stating the FIN is currently funding recreational data collection on the east coast but only receiving funds from the RecFIN line item to conduct work in the Gulf of Mexico and to please revisit this issue. In addition, the letter should outline the cuts over the last several years to FIN. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Discussion of National Saltwater Fishing Registry

G. Colvin stated that the Registry Team met early this month in St. Petersburg to discuss the issue of the national registry. The team came up with a hybrid approach and decided to develop standards for exemptions regarding license information as well as survey data. Regarding the

licensing exemptions, they may accept the state licensing system initially and work with the state to address its exemptions. They are most concerned about categorical exemptions. Concerning the standards for survey data, the Registry Team will be working with the Operations Team to develop standards on a regional basis and states will need to meet these regional standards. The timeframe for these activities is to set the standards by October 1st and have the rule in place by early 2008. He emphasized that the Registry Team wants to have open communication with the states and will be providing information about this initiative via e-mail. If the states have any concerns or questions, they can contact him. He mentioned that the Team is compiling information about the state licensing systems and to please provide the needed information.

Discussion of EDRP2

L. Simpson provided the group with an overview of the Second Supplemental Funding Appropriation for the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP II) pointing out that the program was designed to provide assistance to fishermen, small business and industry that were impacted by the hurricanes of 2005. Reference was made to previous meetings and conference calls in which recommendations for distribution were discussed, agreed upon and subsequently forwarded to NOAA. Copies of these minutes as well as excerpts of PL 109-497, Sec. 115 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act which governs use of the funds were provided to the group as well as preliminary statements of work from each state and other related documents. The group was also advised that the Department of Commerce had finalized a distribution plan that best meets the recovery needs of the Gulf region, taking into consideration areas of damage, landings, and the level of recovery that has occurred to date. Notification was made by way of a copy of the Department of Commerce letter to Barbara A. Mikulski, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations on August 17, 2007. Copies of the letter and the distribution plan were also provided to the group. The State Directors were advised that NOAA wanted to receive the final application by September 11th in order to obligate the funding in the 2007 fiscal year. As a result, the states need to provide their final statements of work and general budgets completed to the GSMFC office no later than September 6th. The states were requested to use Section 115 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the distribution plan as approved by US DOC in preparing their final statements of work and budgets.

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

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN 2008

HIGH PRIORITY

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)

Expand electronic trip ticket contract to include compilation of data for quota monitoring and IFQs (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 Full Implementation and Operations in Mississippi (ongoing/new)

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama (ongoing)

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana (ongoing)

Trip Ticket Program 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/ongoing)

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

MEDIUM PRIORITY

Pilot Study for Collection of Catch and Effort Data from For-Hire Fishery for Highly Migratory Species (new)

LOW PRIORITY

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

Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Wednesday, March 14, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

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

D. Fruge, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS (*proxy for C. Brown*)
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS (*proxy for C. Perret*)
Vernon Minton, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
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, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
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
Bob Harris, FIN Database Manager, 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

Heather Blough, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, St. Petersburg, FL
Steve Campbell, NOAA Fisheries, Slidell, LA
Chris Moore, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted with one addition and one deletion.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 25, 2006 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as presented.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

S. VanderKooy gave the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) report for Chairman R. Schillachi. Despite recovering from the 2005 hurricanes, the total landings in 2006 were 464,393 metric tons. Landings were up 7% from 2005, but down 8% from the previous five year average. All four menhaden plants were operational by mid-June and a total of 41 vessels operated in the Gulf. **VanderKooy** reported the NOAA 2007 forecast for the Gulf is projected to be 478,000 metric tons.

VanderKooy then reported on the Atlantic menhaden season noting that 157,385 metric tons were landed which was up 7% from 2005, but down 13% from the previous 5 year average. Management activities included approval of Addendum III with a "compromise cap" for the Chesapeake Bay. In Virginia this bill is awaiting the Governor's signature.

VanderKooy reported that J. Smith was asked to discuss rumors that members of the MAC had heard regarding the possible elimination of funding by NOAA for the Atlantic and Gulf menhaden surveys. Smith noted that there had been some internal discussion to turn data activities over to the states since most of the landings come from Virginia and Louisiana. The MAC suggested that staff draft a letter to Alex Chester in Miami regarding funding of surveys by NOAA. **C. Perret made a motion to have GSMFC staff send a letter to NOAA expressing concern over this potential funding issue. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

VanderKooy reported that V. Guillory of LDWF provided a forecast for Louisiana waters for 2007 predicting 382,000 metric tons.

VanderKooy reported that the MAC discussed several certification processes and designations for various fishery products labeled as sustainable noting that the industry may seek an independent group to evaluate the menhaden fishery in order to gain a sustainable designation for the market place.

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

Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel Report

S. VanderKooy reported that the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel met without a quorum. **VanderKooy** reported that D. Donaldson gave an overview of activities for the review of current recreational survey methods being conducted by the National Research Council.

VanderKooy reported that Bob Jones of the Southeastern Fisheries Association gave a presentation on the problems associated with product substitution in the Gulf area. The product of most concern is an Asian catfish-like species which is being substituted for other more valuable products from the Gulf. These products are showing up in fish markets as well as restaurants. There has been a lot of media attention particularly in Florida and Alabama. Florida is leading the way in investigating and prosecuting these cases. This issue will be brought to the Commission by Jones as it progresses.

VanderKooy reported that Jessica McCawley of FFWCC gave a report on the proposed changes to red drum management in Florida. The state wants to address future populations by taking a more conservative approach to management of red drum.

VanderKooy reported that R. Hode of the GSFMC staff gave the Panel an update of current activities of the fisheries disaster program. R. Lukens gave an update on non-indigenous species activities, and S. VanderKooy reviewed IJF activities for the Panel.

L. Simpson addressed the S/FFMC and discussed the issue of not having a quorum for the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel noting that the Commission has tried to make travel easy by paying expenses and asking panel members for input on agenda items, but there seems to be difficulty reaching a quorum. **J. Roussel** noted that one Louisiana member often has a conflict because of a trade show on the same dates and suggested that this group could meet at another time, not necessarily in conjunction with the GSMFC meeting. **V. Minton** noted that the Alabama legislature is in session and there are fishery issues being decided. **Simpson** asked that S/FFMC members contact the Panel members from their state to determine interest and availability and to encourage attendance.

D. Fruge 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 reported that the cooperative agreement for 2007 had been submitted and includes a variety of activities, including recreational data collection, head boat sampling, menhaden sampling, detailed effort in Louisiana, trip tickets, etc. **Donaldson** noted that FIN is working with Claude Peterson, electronic trip tickets, and NOAA Fisheries in an attempt to utilize trip ticket data submitted by dealers for quota monitoring.

Donaldson reported that there was still no budget from NOAA but FIN had been partially funded. Funding for this year will be at last year's level and the budget may have to be reduced as much as \$500,000. **Donaldson** reported that to reduce the possible shortcoming, there were some options. A new methodology for biological sampling was implemented focusing on 15 species. The number of species could be reduced to 5 instead of 15 there reducing to overall budget by about \$500,000. The other option would be to have a 10% across the board cut for each agency. The S/FFMC discussed the budget situation and when funding would be available.

L. Simpson asked Committee members if they would prefer to discuss this situation now or wait until early April for the State Directors meeting. **J. Roussel** stated that he would like to be able to review the minutes of the August 2006 State Directors meeting prior to making any decision. The Committee agreed to await the State Directors meeting in April 2007 and would like to review the minutes of the August 2006 meeting prior.

Fisheries Disaster Funding

L. Simpson addressed the S/FFMC and noted that a meeting had been held earlier in the week concerning Fisheries Disaster Funding. **R. Hode** reported that a very successful work session was conducted to discuss common issues and problems associated with bidding, costs, reporting, etc. **Hode** reported that attendees at the work session would like to meet again during the next Commission meeting and devote a full day to issues regarding disaster funding.

J. Roussel asked if the topic of compatible/comparable rates among the states for similar work was discussed. **Hode** responded that although there were many thought provoking discussions, this was not among them. **Roussel** noted that he is concerned that when an audit is conducted in the future there needs to be backup and justification. **Simpson** stated that this could be discussed at future work sessions. **D. Diaz** of MDMR thanked Commission staff for their assistance in working through the Fisheries Disaster Funding process.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy gave an overview of IJF Program activities since the last meeting. The sheephead profile was finalized in October and is at the printer awaiting funding. **VanderKooy** reported that the Oyster Task Force is currently working on the Oyster FMP Revision. The Task Force met in November, designing an interactive web site for sharing articles, documents, data, as well as providing members with draft copies. The Task Force hopes to meet again by early summer.

VanderKooy reported that the Crab Subcommittee continues to participate in the derelict crab trap removal in the Gulf. Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas have held their cleanups already this year. A small scale cleanup will be held in upper Mobile Bay in April. Mississippi and Texas have surpassed the 20,000 trap mark this year.

VanderKooy reported that the Law Enforcement Committee continues to work toward the goals of the Strategic Plan. The Operations Plan for 2007-2008 has been distributed. Monthly conference calls continue to be held by the Law Enforcement Committee.

VanderKooy reported that the Law Summary for 2006 is at the printer awaiting funding and the 2004 Commission Annual Report is complete and awaiting bids.

D. Diaz made a motion to accept the InterJurisdictional Fisheries report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

VanderKooy noted that in the past the S/FFMC has identified species that have potential for plan development. Committee members were provided with a list of species for fishery profile and future FMP's. After Committee discussion, the S/FFMC selected white trout for development. ***V. Minton made a motion to begin the process of developing a Profile/FMP for white trout (Cynoscion arenarius). The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*** VanderKooy will assemble a Technical Task Force to begin this process.

J. Roussel asked that staff encourage NOAA to publish the Oyster ESA paper even though the ESA was withdrawn.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester gave a brief report on the Habitat Program and will give more details at the Commission Business Session. **Rester** reported that the Habitat Program has been involved in the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP) developing their Southeast Habitat Plan. This Plan has undergone user group review, work group revision, and will undergo another user group review in April. The Southeast Habitat Plan should be finalized later this year.

Rester reported that he had been assigned to the GMFMC Interdisciplinary Planning Team for Aquaculture. **Rester** also reported that the data gathering work for bottom mapping should be finished in the next month and a GIS contractor will be hired later this year.

J. Roussel made a motion to accept the Habitat Program Report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

There was Committee discussion on LNG facilities. **Rester** noted that inshore LNG facilities are being licensed rather quickly, are less expensive to build than offshore, and operate at higher capacity. **J. Roussel** noted that Louisiana has an artificial reef planning area next to an LNG facility and the Coast Guard is now concerned with LNG traffic in the vicinity of an artificial reef. **Roussel** discussed possible impacts and stated that he encouraged the Coast Guard representative to become engaged with the artificial reef community in the Gulf through the GSMFC Artificial Reef Subcommittee.

Other Business

Heather Blough of NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office gave a summary of a judgment on Amendment 22 to the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fishery Management Plan. The plaintiffs were the Coastal Conservation Association, The Gulf Restoration Network, and the Ocean Conservancy. **Blough** stated that NOAA must complete a final rule amending the red snapper rebuilding plan. This new plan must be developed and implemented by December 13.

Blough reported that regulations now in place will not be affected by this ruling however it will affect the development of future amendments.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 58th Annual Meeting
Wednesday, October, 17, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

Chairman John Roussel called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. Facilitator Larry Simpson conducted the meeting. The following members and others were present:

Members

Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
Vernon Minton, AMRD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Gulf Shores, AL
Corky Perret, MDMR, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, TPWD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
John Roussel, LDWF, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Baton Rouge, LA
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Buck Sutter, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL (*Proxy for R. Crabtree*)
Virginia Vail, FFWCC, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Tallahassee, FL

Staff

Gregg Bray, RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Harris, FIN Database Manager, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, Disaster Program, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
David Rice, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, FIN Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Grey Cane, Daphne, AL
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Wilson Gaidry, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LA
Joe Gill, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MS
Chris Nelson, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AL
Ralph Rayburn, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TX
Pete Sheridan, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, SC
William Walker, MDMR, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Biloxi, MS
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Empire, LA

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on March 14, 2007 in Biloxi, Mississippi were approved as presented. The minutes of the meeting held on August 29, 2007 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as presented.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

L. Simpson gave the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) report for Chairman R. Schillachi. **Simpson** noted that J. Smith of NOAA Fisheries in Beaufort gave his annual review of the menhaden season noting that as of September, the landings for 2007 were 422,706 metric tons of fish which was down 5% from the same time period in 2006. The menhaden fishery had 42 vessels fishing in 2007 and final landings are projected to reach 466,000 metric tons if the weather in October is good.

Smith reported to the MAC that the Captain's Daily Fishing Report (CDFR) forms should be revised in order for them to be scannable for Optical Character Recognition (OCR) which does not require manual data entry. Smith will make changes to the forms and provide them to industry for review.

Simpson reported that Doug Daigle of the Lower Mississippi River Sub-Basin Committee gave a report to the MAC via phone on the National Hypoxia Action Plan that was developed in 2000 to address nutrient loads in the Mississippi River contributing to hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. Daigle noted that the Plan was adopted by Congress, however funding was never provided to participating states. In 2005 a task force was identified by the EPA to review the Plan. Daigle will continue to update the MAC and keep them apprised of any changes as they relate to fisheries.

Simpson reported that the MAC discussed the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program II (EDRP) noting that there are opportunities to direct money to various fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico including the menhaden fishery. Immediately after the hurricanes the menhaden industry spent their own money on debris removal, fed contractors, installed plumbing and electrical systems, etc. MAC members would like their industry to be considered for EDRP funding. The menhaden industry submitted their concerns to the S/FFMC and the GSMFC for their consideration.

Vince Guillory was elected as Chairman of the Menhaden Advisory Committee.

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

Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel Report

G. Cane, Chairman of the Commercial Fisheries Advisory Panel gave the C/RFAP report. **Cane** noted that there was discussion on artificial reefs placed off the coast of Alabama and the types of materials being used. There is concern that some of the materials being deployed may have a tendency to shift after storms and are possibly being moved with assistance. There was also discussion on the location of some permitted reefs, perhaps being deployed outside of the permitted zones.

Cane reported that the U.S. Coast Guard gave a presentation on the progress of debris removal in Mississippi.

Cane reported that Scott Steinbach of NOAA Fisheries gave a presentation on Angler Expenditures and the Economic Impact of Saltwater Sportfishing. This is an add-on survey to the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). This survey used the MRFSS intercepts and followed up with mail and phone contacts. The survey also used the Texas license frame and the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) database to identify anglers. NOAA hopes to have total annual expenditure estimates by the end of 2007 and total impact estimates by the beginning of 2008.

Cane reported that D. Donaldson gave an overview of the Marine Recreational Information Initiative (MRII) which is a program being developed by NOAA to replace the MRFSS. This program should improve the collection, analysis, and use of recreational fishing data. **Cane** also noted that R. Hode gave an overview of the progress made to date on the EDRP I funds.

Cane reported that S. VanderKooy provided a review of the Fishery Management Plans currently in review and development. VanderKooy requested that the C/RFAP consider for membership representatives to serve on a newly formed task force. VanderKooy will contact members for their suggestions.

P. Horn will remain Chairman of the Commercial Fisheries Advisory Panel and G. Cane will remain Chairman of the Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel.

C. Nelson asked if any action items or motions during the discussion on artificial reefs. **Cane** answered that there were no action items or motions and explained that there had been concern expressed regarding the materials deployed since they could move or deteriorate. Another matter for concern was that artificial reefs may be deployed outside of the permitted area. **Cane** also noted that there had been discussion that hangs or snags outside a permitted zone need to be identified or mapped. **Nelson** noted that Alabama and the Gulf in general have come a long way since the artificial reef building program began. Although shrimpers have spoken to him regarding materials being used, most of them are very supportive of artificial reefs. There are still some concerns about the types of materials being used. **V. Minton** noted that he recently had a meeting with a group of shrimpers which was very productive and positive. As a result some areas outside the permit zone will be mapped. A study has been undertaken to learn more about "chicken transport cages" as well as who is going to be eligible to take out reefs. The

group agreed that the pyramid reefs which are built professionally seem to stand up well, do not move in storms, and do not snag nets.

C. Perret moved to accept the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FIN Data Program Update

D. Donaldson updated the S/FFMC on current funding levels by reporting that next year FIN will continue funding a variety of activities including recreational data collection, menhaden port sampling, hosting the Data Management System (DMS), trip ticket implementation for all Gulf states as well as biological sampling. The FIN budget is \$5.1 million, but the proposed budget was \$5.7 million. **Donaldson** noted that several activities had to be cut, including the head boat sampling in Texas and Florida, the at-sea head boat sampling in Alabama and Florida, a detailed pilot survey being conducted in the Louisiana blue crab fishery, and some quota monitoring and IFQ work. However the NMFS Miami Lab provided \$100,000 to hire at-sea samplers in Texas and Florida. NMFS Miami Lab is hoping for an additional \$70,000 to fully restore that activity.

Donaldson reported that since there is now a continuing resolution, there is no way of knowing what the final budget for FIN will be. Hopefully by November or December the final budget will be available and Donaldson will request that FIN partners submit revised budgets.

Invasive Species and Artificial Reef Update

D. Rice gave a presentation on the Artificial Reef Program noting that the joint Artificial Reef Subcommittee of the Gulf and South Atlantic states met in September. One of the primary items discussed was artificial reef monitoring. There is interest in determining the amount of activity on these reefs as well as reef movement. Another issue discussed was an Artificial Reef website which will be hosted by the GSMFC. Basic information for all participating states will be included. The issue of funding was also discussed. The next joint Artificial Reef Subcommittee meeting will be in the Fall of 2008.

Rice then reported on the Aquatic Nuisance Species Program. The last meeting was held in April. Some issues discussed were revising a regional rapid response plan for aquatic invasives to include Georgia and South Carolina. The Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force created a taxonomic experts database where an individual is able to obtain help in identification of unknown species. Another topic of discussion was funding for research, outreach, and educational activities involving aquatic invasives. **Rice** reported that the group agreed to continue to develop and maintain the non-indigenous aquatic species database.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy reported that the primary activities since the March 2007 meeting are related to the Crab Subcommittee. The derelict trap manual is being revised. This document provides information on how to develop a derelict trap program. **VanderKooy** reported the Gulf

menhaden website had also been revised and was given a new look. This is available through the GSMFC website.

VanderKooy reported that the sheepshead Profile was published this past summer and is available at this meeting on the Publications Table or can be mailed on request. The 2004 Annual Report is available and the 2005 Annual Report is at the printer. **VanderKooy** noted that the GSMFC archives (minutes, publications, reports, and resolution statements) are available on DVD also on the Publications Table.

VanderKooy reported that the oyster FMP revision is being drafted, and the white trout profile is being developed by the Task Force. **L. Simpson** noted that FMP's and profiles are available on CD as well as the GSMFC website under Publications.

C. Perret suggested that since the derelict trap program was so successful in the Gulf of Mexico it would be appropriate to prepare a press release for distribution in the five Gulf states explaining the program and the success it has had. **L. Simpson** directed staff to develop and distribute this information.

ASMFC Shark FMP Discussion

S. VanderKooy reported that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) recently sent a letter to GSMFC asking if the Gulf states would consider participating in the development of an inshore FMP for sharks to complement the shark FMP in the EEZ. **VanderKooy** explained that Amendment 2 to the federal shark plan is in the final stages of development and in 2008 the regulations will be implemented.

Committee members were provided with information on each state with federal commercial and recreational shark limits as well as regulations for sharks in state waters. **VanderKooy** asked if development of an inshore shark FMP is necessary for the Gulf or are the Gulf states already in compliance or intend to be in compliance when Amendment 2 is implemented.

V. Minton noted that the federal plan has some inconsistencies and Alabama is already compatible with federal regulations. **J. Roussel** stated that his office is in the process of drafting comments on NOAA's plan since Louisiana has been managing sharks since the late 1980's. **C. Perret** questioned how federal shark regulations can be enforced in state waters when it has not been done for many other species. **L. Simpson** suggested that the response to the ASMFC should be that we have discussed their request and many questions remain. Ask the ASMFC to keep us informed as this process moves forward while the Gulf states discuss whether or not they want to get involved in a state waters shark FMP.

Staff was directed to draft a letter of response to the ASMFC request. This letter will be sent to S/FFMC members for their approval. Staff will also arrange a conference call for state S/FFMC members to discuss this situation.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester gave a brief report since he will be giving a detailed report at the Commission Business Session. Rester gave an update on several meetings that had been held, LNG issues, the re-assessment of the 2001 Action Plan for addressing hypoxia, aquaculture, and work continues on the bottom mapping project.

Election of Chairman/Facilitator

V. Vail was elected Chairman of the S/FFMC and D. Donaldson was appointed as Facilitator.

Other Business

Committee members were provided with a brochure on marine reserves. **L. Simpson** explained that Bob Zales brought this to the attention of the GSMFC. There is no author listed and it is unknown where this originated. **Zales** is concerned that the President, through executive order, can create a marine reserve without going through the normal process. Some of the areas mentioned in this brochure are in the Gulf of Mexico. **Simpson** reported that the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council is also aware of this literature. **B. Sutter** noted that NOAA had not been asked for any input and he was unaware of this issue. **Zales** stated that he is more concerned about the method or lack of public process than the activity itself. Zales will keep the GSMFC apprised of any new developments.

S. VanderKooy reported that Pat Burchfield of Texas won first place for the individual category of the Gulf Guardian Award for his work with Kemps Ridley sea turtles as well as invasives.

J. Roussel noted an error in the S/FFMC draft minutes from the March 2007 meeting in Biloxi and the S/FFMC approved revisiting those minutes.

In the draft minutes the statement, "*D. Frugé made a motion to accept the Menhaden Advisory Committee report*" was changed to, "*D. Frugé made a motion to accept the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel report.*" Without objection the S/FFMC approved the correction. The clerical error will be corrected in the final version of the minutes.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

APPROVED BY:
Traci Floyd
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Monday, March 12, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman T. Floyd called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. with the following in attendance:

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, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Gilmore “Butch” Pellegrin, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Catalina Brown, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bill Richardson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Darcie Dennis, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Richard Fulford, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Ronnie Luster, CCA, Houston, TX
Ralf Riedel, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Cindy Yocom, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions

Chairman Floyd led the introductions of the TCC Crab Subcommittee. **VanderKooy** requested that the subcommittee review the roster and make any corrections. Several members stated that they have made changes repeatedly and that changes do not appear. **Freitas** assured that all corrections would be made and a corrected list would be sent out to all the committee members in a few weeks.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed *Hartman moved to accept the agenda as written, Perry seconded. The agenda was approved.*

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the October meeting were reviewed *Hartman moved to accept the minutes as written, Wagner seconded. The minutes were approved.*

Presentation

Catalina Brown, FWC, gave a presentation on the Morphology of the Ovaries and Testes of *Callinectes sapidus*. Brown's research is looking at histological evidence of early maturation using thin section techniques in both male and female crabs. Her research is showing primary oocytes that develop prior to morphologic maturation. In addition, immature males showed primary and secondary spermatocyte development, but in both sexes, it is not known when the proliferation cycle begins or if it is a continuous process and she is still working on the relationship between follicular cells and germinal cells.

State Updates on Post Hurricane Effects on Blue Crab Population

The states provided updates on post hurricane effects on blue crab populations. **Guillory** stated that the Louisiana infrastructure took the greatest hit, but the blue crab population has exploded. Fortunately, most of the processing plants had moved inland so dealers are still buying large crabs but not the smaller factory crabs for picking. **Floyd** reported that in Mississippi there are lots of crabs and fewer fishermen. **Hartman** reported that in Alabama there have been fabulous catches of large crabs, but the price is down. Alabama recovered nicely and the crabbers that could get out did very well ("The Gump" effect). Shops were down initially, but most are back up and running now.

Blue Crab Aging Project – Biochemical Lipofuscin

VanderKooy reported on the blue crab ageing proposal for the CRP program. He spoke with NOAA last week, but they are not sure of the final funding level and have not released the approved projects. A conference call will be conducted between the state mericulture folks to prepare for possible funding.

Gulf Crab Abundance by State

Pellegrin, NMFS presented each states fishery independent data and his trend updates. Each states sampling data was used, but was not segregated by size. **Pellegrin** requested the subcommittee send him their latest data. So far, the data does not show all gloom and doom as some have predicted and impart because recruitment and habitat play a big role in the abundance and landings.

Ralf Reidel, GCRL presented a few slides on Blue Crab abundance in Mississippi and Alabama, peaks in spring and early summer and again late fall early winter. They are seeing a decline in Mississippi and Alabama per his fishery independent sampling data.

Derelict Trap Guidelines Document Revision

VanderKooy reported on the status of the Derelict Trap Guidelines revision. He has most of the states data through 2006, but the format for the appendices would not work easily. Considering the disaster relief program and the use of fisherman bounties to remove traps this year, the subcommittee agreed to compile their 2007 data and submit the additional information to VanderKooy for inclusion by August, for approval at the October 2007 meeting.

Derelict Trap Cleanups

Each of the states reported on their derelict trap cleanups.

Louisiana – Guillory thanked the other state representatives for their help with Louisiana's derelict trap cleanup. Two areas were worked this year and they recovered 1,513 traps (759 in Lake Pontchartrain 754 in Barataria Bay), substantially lower than previous years. Approximately 74% of traps were picked up by LDWF employees and volunteer participation was very low. Louisiana may use disaster money next year to remove traps using crab fishermen.

Mississippi – Bill Richardson gave the derelict trap results. Mississippi used disaster relief money and paid a \$30.00/trap bounty (\$285K) and paid \$200.00/day (\$45K) with 20 trap minimum. This was held February 11-16, 2007 at three (3) sites and they collected a total of 9,962 traps. Out of 53 crabbers, 45 participated in the program. The value to recycler was \$3,500, who provided sixteen (16) cubic yard dumpsters and got 70K lbs. of tin. MDMR will try to do the same program again next year, if funding is available.

Perry handed out a diamondback terrapin brochure.

VanderKooy announced that the Discovery Channel's Dirty Jobs would likely be coming to the coast in September t 2007 o film an episode doing a derelict trap cleanup. Lake Shane, Louisiana was suggested. Dirty Jobs will give the coast a lot press and it was asked if we could have any editorial license, so that it does not have a negative impact on the crab industry. The focus should continue to be on storm cleanup and our efforts to help the environment. VanderKooy will get more information as the date draws closer.

Alabama - Hartman reported that Alabama did not plan doing trap removal this year, but they are doing a restricted removal with community participation, and it is planned for March 24, 2007. AMRD is not soliciting volunteers. Data reporting is being stressed. The upper end of Mobile Bay is the targeted area.

Florida - McMillen-Jackson reported that Juli Dodson left derelict trap work. Florida has had 3 cleanups since our last meeting. 10 traps were removed from Tampa Bay and 30 traps from Apalachicola. A new program was announced that gives permission to fishermen to have another fisherman remove their traps, as long as they specify the numbers of traps in a specified area. Laws are very strict on violators and the crabbers are trying to avoid loss of traps.

Texas - Wagner reported that Texas had a ten (10) day closure February 16-25, 2007 that resulted in 2,816 traps being removed using 93 vessels, 62% were from Galveston Bay. Texas passed the 20,000 trap milestone. On March 1, 2007 TPWD had a drawing for two (2) lifetime licenses for the volunteers. Future removals will use more volunteers with less TPWD staff. In 2008 they expect to do another 10 day closure with only volunteers.

State Reports

Each state provided a report on their fisheries and activities since the last meeting.

Louisiana - Guillory reported that landings increased 41% in January to September 2006 timeframe with more fishermen out crabbing. Louisiana Crab Task Force has discussed putting revised size limits on crabs because dealers and buying as many of the larger crabs as possible, due to the demand, and there is a good market for them. The smaller legal crabs go the processors. Price of processed crab meat has been very low and there is also the issue of the competition from foreign imports. An attorney in Baton Rouge (Max Turnipseed) is trying to get a legal petition going Gulf-wide against foreign imports. **Guillory** asked if anyone has a Federal contact for the processing sector. In November, a coast wide fishery-dependent survey was done that complemented the trip ticket system. The new survey collected information about soak time, bait, number of traps run, total number of traps in the water, etc. A summary of that survey included: average number of baited traps ranged from 55-1000; average number of traps by estuary 270-400 per fisherman, the number of traps run per day were 55-600, soak time averaged from 50-85 hours. More information will be available in the fall.

Mississippi - Floyd reported that they have been working on fishery disaster monitoring reports. MDMR paid out close \$500,000 to crab fishermen for bringing in derelict traps. License sales are pretty low from 137 in 2005-2006 down to only 64 licenses sold so far in 2007. Individually the crabbers are doing well, but having the problem of where to sell their catch. No updated landings data were available.

Harriet Perry reported on an ongoing study looking at achieving better estimates of catch and effort for the Mississippi commercial blue crab fishery. The study is looking specifically at addressing catch per trap, fishing effort, commercial catch sex and size composition, areas fished, and parasite load and disease. Darcie Dennis is utilizing bi-weekly trips with contracted fishermen and examining the sex composition determined for each trap and recording crab size for every other trap. CPUE is being calculated as pounds per trap standardized to a 24-hour soak. The study started prior to Hurricane Katrina, so not all the counties had complete datasets, but they are continuing to sample into 2007.

Darcie Dennis, GCRL, presented preliminary results from her thesis research looking at fecundity and egg size of primiparous and multiparous blue crabs from Mississippi. Previous research on egg size in blue crabs indicate that eggs are generally 18.3% larger in sponges in early development and 6% larger during the spring spawning peak than the later. Recent work in North Carolina indicates that female blue crabs typically produce 7 broods over 18 weeks. Work in Florida reported that there could be a total of up to 8 broods over the entire blue crab spawning season, suggesting that a single female could have the potential to produce up to 18 broods over lifetime leading to significant management implications.

Dennis' research is examining blue crab fecundity and egg size in Mississippi by season (spring vs. summer/fall), brood type (primiparous vs. multiparous), and brood development (early vs. late). To date, Dennis has worked up 15% of her spring samples so far. Her study should improve the knowledge of spawning biology of blue crabs in the northern Gulf of Mexico and determine the contribution of primiparous and multiparous females to the reproductive output of the Mississippi population. Finally, it should establish a size-fecundity relationship for blue crab management applications.

Alabama - Hartman reported landings were lower than previous year, but crabbers did exceptionally well in terms of abundance, even though it is not reflected in the landings. AMRD saw that this past winter that shrimpers were out crabbing. License sales were down in 2006, but as of January 2007, they have sold 103 resident licenses. While there are plenty of crabs, there are still not enough processors.

Florida – McMillen-Jackson reported preliminary 2006 blue crab landings were slightly lower than 2005, but slightly higher along Florida's Gulf coast. While all the data will not be processed for another couple of months, so far, hard-shell blue crab landings are up a bit from the previous year along the Gulf and down on the Atlantic. West/Gulf coast landings were 7.5M pounds collected. A trapping study done in Tampa Bay concludes that while the catch in 2000 is lower compared to the 1980's, there are smaller crabs indicating a population that is slowly increasing. Florida is seeing a recovery from drought, and an increase in juveniles and sub-adult crabs in traps. Fishery-independent data shows big peaks of juveniles during the spring and a smaller peak in the fall, but in the traps we get our peak juveniles in the traps in the fall and low spring peak which is opposite of what is captured in the trawl data.

Texas – Wagner reported that the preliminary landings for 2006 are 1.7M down from 3.1M million pounds in 2005 and the decline continues. Texas instituted the trip ticket system voluntarily in January 2006, and full time in September 2006 and the TPWD has started to get better effort data through the system. An abstract for internal use has been submitted for review titled "Texas Data Management Series Stock Assessment for Texas Blue Crabs". Texas blue crab stocks were assessed using fishery-independent and fishery-dependent data. All of the indices were down; from catch per effort, bag seines, trawls, and landings. While the preliminary results do not look great, TPWD is not going to panic right away. Once it is published, Wagner will copy the subcommittee. There are some crab related proposals before the TPWD Commission: 1) prohibit the taking or retaining of diamondback terrapins 2) allow the use of catfish heads as bait in crab traps by commercial fisherman, provided that the catfish were obtained from a permitted aquaculturist in the United States. Texas has a prohibition against the use of game fish as trap bait and is now looking to liberalize that law to allow catfish head use, which would have been disposed of otherwise.

Other Business

With no further business Hartman moved to adjourn and it was seconded by Wagner. Meeting was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

Leshie D. Hartman
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 58th Annual Meeting
Monday, October 15, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

Chairman T. Floyd called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. with the following in attendance:

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

Others

Gilmore “Butch” Pellegrin, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Darcie Dennis, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Richard Fulford, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Bill Richardson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Guillermo Sanchez, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Virginia Vail, GSMFC Commissioner, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Ronnie Luster, CCA, Houston, TX
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Gary Graham, Texas Sea Grant, West Columbia, TX

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

There were two changes to the agenda: 1) the Derelict Crab and Blue Crab Stock Assessment Workshop minutes will be approved at next meeting and 2) Pellegrin’s data set progress report was moved after the Sanchez’s presentation. **Wagner moved to accept the agenda with changes and the motion was seconded by Guillory.**

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the Subcommittee Meeting 3/12/2007 were approved with changes. Guillory moved to accept the minutes and the motion was seconded by McMillen-Jackson. The Derelict Trap/Ageing Workshop 7/11-12/07 – Minutes were inadvertently omitted from meeting folder and will be provided at the next meeting for approval.

Blue Crab Ageing Project – Biochemical Lipofuscin

VanderKooy reported that the CRP proposal was re-submitted on August 20, 2007 to NOAA and it was acknowledged as received. A response to the proposal is expected by February of 2008.

Gulf Stock Assessment Data Set Progress

Pellegrin reported that he has all the stock assessment data sets, but has not had time to work on them, due to his other lab duties. **Pellegrin** also reported that he has obtained new software on the Collie-Sisserwine method and will start working on the data sets starting in November. Butch asked for assistance with the new software from Richard Fulford and Ralf Riedel at GCRL, once he gets started on the assessment data.

Derelict Trap Guidelines Document Revision

VanderKooy reported that he had received everyone's guidelines and that they were included in the handout. It was agreed that Florida's section set a very high standard and they did an excellent job. Members discussed and agreed that they need one last opportunity to make revisions their sections, so **VanderKooy** will email everyone the document next week to make their final changes/revisions. Deadline for all changes is Wednesday, October 31, 2007. **VanderKooy** will then make final edits and send it out to the TCC for review and hopefully have out by the March 2008 meeting. The Derelict Trap Guidelines will be a good resource for other regions to start a derelict trap program in their area. The Derelict Trap Guidelines Document will be printed in-house and put in a 3-ring binder.

Mississippi Blue Crabs

Guillermo Sanchez, of GCRL, gave a presentation on a study that will contribute to an understanding of how oceanic-atmospheric modes of variability affect blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*) populations in the north central Gulf of Mexico. The objectives of the study are to establish the effect of Oceanic-Atmospheric Modes of Variability on: 1) Mississippi and Pascagoula River Discharge, 2) blue crab recruitment in the north central Gulf of Mexico and 3) the relationship between river discharge and blue crab recruitment. The conclusions: 1) There is an effect of Oceanic-Atmospheric Modes of Variability on the Mississippi and Pascagoula river discharge. 2) The Oceanic-Atmospheric Modes of Variability influence river discharge according to the river basin location and extension. 3) Three areas (Terrebonne Bay, Barataria Bay, and Mississippi Sound) showed blue crab abundance that corresponds to those modes of variability that influence Pascagoula River Discharge. 4) Four areas (Calcasieu Lake, Vermillion Bay, Breton Sound, and Lake Bourne) showed blue crab abundance that corresponds to those modes of variability that influence Mississippi River discharge. 5) There is a possibility of predicting blue crab abundance according to the Oceanic-Atmospheric Modes of Variability, however, the location and extension of each tributary basin of an estuary must be considered.

Derelict Trap Cleanups

Louisiana – Guillory reported that a total 15,950 traps have been removed from Louisiana waters and that the number of traps and volunteers has declined over the years. In the last 4 years a total of 1,498 traps have been removed. Louisiana plans a nine day closure February 23 through March 3, 2008 to clean up Terrebonne Bay. In 2009, Louisiana is considering trying the bounty system and using disaster funds.

Mississippi – Richardson reported that Mississippi used the bounty system and did two cleanups: a shallow water and a deep water. The shallow water cleanup - a trap closed season was held February 5-16, 2006. The cleanup period was February 10-16. Mississippi resident commercial crab fishermen received \$200 per day for each day they participated and brought in 20 derelict traps. Fishermen also received \$30 per trap, for up to 300 traps turned in to be recycled. This was MDMR's biggest trap cleanup ever, with 11,150 traps recycled. Participating fishermen also received 50 new traps equipped with escape rings and turtle excluder devices. The Deep Water Trap Cleanup was done in conjunction with GCRL and coincided with the opening of shrimp season on June 6, 2007. All licensed crab pot fishermen, both resident and non-resident were notified of the closure. All crab pots were to be set inside, one half-mile of the shoreline. Any traps left outside this line were considered derelict. Through the first week of the 2007-2008 shrimp season, registered resident commercial shrimp fishermen were allowed to pickup any derelict crab pots and the MDMR recycled them. The fishermen were compensated \$800 for 20 traps and an additional \$400 for 40 or more traps. 40 participants brought traps into a staging area in Gulfport. The 1,078 derelict traps that were turned in, were recycled as scrap metal.

Alabama – no report available.

Florida – McMillen-Jackson reported that Kyle Miller took over derelict trap program from Julie Dodson. Florida passed legislation that allows another fisherman pickup their traps with authorization. The stone crab and lobster derelict trap programs use a contracted bounty program.

Texas – Wagner reported that the 2008 Texas clean up is scheduled for February 15-24. The 2008 clean up was set by the legislature and will be done with mostly volunteers and a few TWPD staff. The number of traps retrieved has declined, as well as the number of volunteers.

State Reports

Florida – McMillen-Jackson reported that calendar year 2006 blue crab landings were slightly higher and hard shell blue crab landings were up 17% from the previous year on the Gulf coast and down nearly 24% on the Atlantic coast. Peeler/soft-shell landings were also down compared with 2005, by about 25% and 27% on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, respectively. The FWC approved to make it easier to recover or remove lobster and crab traps from state waters under certain conditions. The FWC also passed a rule to allow recreational fishers to use fold-up traps of any shape to harvest blue crabs. A new program to prevent overcapitalization of the commercial blue crab industry, by managing the number of participants in the fishery and the

number of traps they can use is under way. The FWC established the Blue Crab Effort Management Program, and the Florida Legislature and Governor Charlie Crist approved provisions to implement the program. The program establishes separate endorsements for the hard and soft "peeler" crab fisheries, and blue crab traps must be marked with trap tags issued by the FWC to be legal, in an effort to prevent overcapitalization and management of participants.

Alabama – VanderKooy presented Alabama's report and it showed a there was decline in license sales, noting that a total of 104 have been sold so far in 2007. Ex-vessels values declined in 2005 and increased in 2006. Alabama landings are down, but values are up in 2007.

Mississippi – Richardson reported that license sales are only up by 2 licenses. Landings are down from last year. Disaster money spent this far is around \$1M. **Richardson** also reported that he attended at diamond back terrapin meeting in Maryland and they were very impressed how well we handle the communication with the crab fishermen, as well as the use of TED's. The use of vertical vents was discussed as a possibility. MDMR is doing a survey on new trap recipients regarding the turtle capture. MDMR went with a sole source vendor on new crab trap providers and if they were to do it again, they would use multiple vendors. Currently the cost is between \$17-20 per crab trap. **Perry** reported that 1,000 tagged crabs were released a few weeks ago into a Davis Bayou; to date none have been recaptured. **Perry** also noted that spring hatches are more successful than late summer. The crab tagging program will continue to be funded through 2008.

Louisiana – Guillory reported that Louisiana led the coast in commercial blue crab landings and value from 2004 to 2006. The data showed that Louisiana is seeing adequate recruitment. Guillory then reviewed the 2006-2007 Crab Effort Survey Data, the data was compiled from Trip Ticket and Crab Effort Data Survey information. The basins reported included: Atchafalaya River, Barataria, Calcasieu River, Lake Pontchartrain, Mississippi River, Terrebonne, and Vermilion Teche River Basins. The Louisiana Crab Task force continues to meet on a regular basis.

Texas – Wagner reported that Texas bag seine CPUE has fluctuated since 2004 with a steady decline, as well as, a steady decline in bay trawl CPUE. 2006 landings in Texas were 2.0M lbs. at a value of \$1.5M, the lowest since 1960. It is anticipated that all the heavy rainfall in Texas will increase crab landings in late 2007 and 2008. Texas has been in a drought since the mid 90's. Texas started the trip ticket system on a voluntary basis in January 2006 and it became mandatory in September of 2006. **Wagner** and Sutton's abstract Stock Assessment of Blue Crabs in Texas Coastal Waters has been through and in-house review and should be printed by the March 2008 meeting. Texas passed two new regulations 1) allowing the use of catfish heads as bait and 2) prohibit the taking of diamond back terrapin turtles.

Election of Chairman

Wagner nominated Leslie Hartman for Chairman and Guillory seconded the motion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Other Business

No other business.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
 MINUTES – 57th Annual Spring Meeting
 Monday, March 12, 2007
 Biloxi, Mississippi**

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

Members

Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
 Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
 Richard Cody, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
 Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
 Guy Davenport, NMFS, Miami, FL
 Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
 Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
 Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
 Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX

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

Elizabeth Fetherstone, Nature Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL
 Bob Zales, II, PCBA, Panama City, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 23, 2006 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as written.

Status of Biological Sampling Activities

Review of targets and collection activities - **D. Donaldson** distributed handouts with a summary for all species collected in all states and the number of otoliths, as well as a summary for the five

FIN target species. **Donaldson** reported that almost all targets had been met. Possibly this will be the last year to use these targets, since this year began a new methodology. **Donaldson** reported that the Data Collection Plan Work Group meets on an annual basis with the main goal being representative sampling of species based on what is being landed. **Donaldson** noted that some areas of sampling are still being affected by Hurricane Katrina since docks, etc. are still being rebuilt.

Review of analysis activities – Subcommittee members were provided with a matrix detailing otolith analysis from 2002 to 2005 listing the five Gulf states. **Donaldson** noted that with the exception of 2002 the matrix was complete. **R. Cody** stated that should be complete by the end of the month.

Loading fishery-independent biological samples into FIN DMS – **Donaldson** reported that the response to the request for fishery-independent data was not good. Therefore he is recommending that at this time FIN not pursue loading fishery-independent data into the DMS. The Subcommittee agreed and this subject will be revisited at a later date. Subcommittee members also agreed to send data collection protocols to D. Donaldson.

On-line data entry program demonstration – **D. Bellais** gave a demonstration of the FIN web-based data entry system for biological sampling. This system can be downloaded onto the various agency servers. Bellais explained the use of drop-downs and an automatic correction feature. **Bellais** noted that Subcommittee members can log in to Discoverer and check their information. After the demonstration the Subcommittee discussed various features of this data entry system and agreed to give Bellais feedback and suggestions. The data entry system should be ready for trial in June. This subject will be revisited at the October 2007 meeting.

Status of Compilation of Commercial Vessel Information

D. Donaldson reported that the subject of Compilation of Commercial Vessel Information has been an issue for quite some time and a suggestion was made to develop a white paper outlining these problems. **Donaldson** noted that few problems were found. One issue is that Texas has a problem with incompatibility since their two data bases do not communicate. **V. Swann** noted that she doubted if this situation would change since the problem seems to be between the contractor and TPWD. Swann will check further and will get back to the Subcommittee with an update. Another issue is in Florida dealing with confidentiality. The Florida Dept. of Public Safety is asking the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute to sign an MOU to not share data. Bellais will send the format to R. Cody.

Donaldson stated that the subject of Compilation of Commercial Vessel Information will be an agenda item in October 2007 and perhaps these problems can be resolved so routine data can begin to be compiled.

Status of License Frame Pilot Survey

D. Donaldson reported that the License Frame Pilot Survey has been delayed until Wave 2 because of issues with funding and the telephone contractor. However, the data bases have been

provided to the contractor for their review. The deadline for Wave 2 will be April 6 and Donaldson will e-mail a reminder to participants. **Donaldson** reported that NMFS may have some available money to be used on this project. One suggestion was to have the contractor do a reverse look-up which would improve completeness for phone numbers. The other option was to include Texas in the Pilot Survey after Wave 2.

B. Zales addressed the Subcommittee and suggested that possibly using outreach as an educational tool would help participation in the Pilot Survey. **Donaldson** noted that this issue was discussed at the last State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee meeting and it was decided that a letter should be sent to each of the state licensing agencies as well as recreational fishing clubs. The Subcommittee was provided with draft letters to state licensing agencies and fishing clubs. **Donaldson** asked that they review these letters give him feedback. **Donaldson** also asked members to provide him with the addresses of state licensing agencies and a contact name, as well as fishing clubs by March 23, 2007. **M. Kasprzak** suggested drafting a news release to be distributed to fishing license outlets. The group agreed that these letters would be sent out by the end of March.

Presentation of Detailed Effort Pilot Survey

M. Kasprzak gave a presentation on the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Crab Effort Survey. **Kasprzak** described the total number of interviews by basin: Atchafalaya Rive, Barataria, Calcasieu River, Lake Pontchartrain, Mississippi River, Terrebonne and Vermillion-Tech River. She also listed the number of fishermen interviewed and the number of commercial fishing docks participating in the Survey. Bait types and average trip time were also listed. **Kasprzak** also reported that it appears there a more traps being put out in the western part of Louisiana than the eastern part and fishermen are becoming more supportive.

Kasprzak reported that the next step will be to compare the information from the Crab Effort Pilot Survey with the trip ticket data, then work with their Crab Task Force doing outreach. **Kasprzak** will report back to the Subcommittee in October with more details on the Pilot Survey.

Discussion of Species Identification for Quota Monitoring

D. Donaldson reported that this issue was raised because he and G. Davenport were considering using electronic trip tickets for quota monitoring and in considering this, also correct species identification by dealers. **Donaldson** asked the Subcommittee for their thoughts regarding the accuracy of species identification by dealers. **C. Denson** noted that most fishermen know their species, however not all dealers are as accurate. **G. Davenport** reported that NMFS samplers are trying to do some outreach with species identification and encouraged state members to have their samplers do the same.

C. Denson suggested that Subcommittee members let their state directors know that this group is working on species identification.

Demonstration of InPort Metadata Tool

D. Bellais reported that data had been gathered from the state agencies by M. Williams and imported it into the InPort system. Bellais then gave a demonstration on the use of InPort as a metadata tool. **D. Donaldson** reminded Subcommittee members that it was their responsibility to update InPort as necessary and suggested that this should be a standing agenda item either for DMS at Commission meetings or for the FIN meetings. **Bellais** reported that at this time GSMFC and MDMR are published on InPort. A report will be given at the October meeting discussing which agencies are published, as well as fishery independent activities and progress utilizing the InPort tool.

Discussion of Opportunities to Comment on Recreational Outreach Materials

Members of the Data Management Subcommittee were provided a copy of a brochure developed by NMFS Fisheries Statistics Office which gives an overview of recreational fishing activities by state. Subcommittee members agreed that not only would they like the opportunity to have more input in developing this list, but also adequate time to respond. **D. Donaldson** will discuss this with T. Sminkey of NMFS.

Discussion of Long-Term Collection of Protected Resources Questions

Copies of the MRFSS Economic Add-On survey form were distributed to Subcommittee Members. **D. Donaldson** reported that the long-term collection of protected resources questions had been raised by the NMFS Southeast Regional Office. **Donaldson** wanted members to be aware that even though this add-on survey has been completed, this subject has been raised and possibly could become an issue in the future.

State/Federal Reports

Alabama – **K. Anson** reported that Alabama was unable to make any quotas in any modes of Wave 1 of the MRFSS. Two training sessions for Alabama samplers were held in January. There is a gill net regulation now being reviewed by the Alabama state Legislature. This regulation is to ban commercial gill netting and the Legislature also is considering a recreational fishing license. **Anson** reported that one day is scheduled for crab trap removal in Upper Mobile Bay. **C. Denson** reported that the trip ticket program is going well but the licensing data is incomplete. Alabama is going to conduct a dockside survey for spanish mackerel fisherman for all modes, and a roving creel component to get a better idea of beachside fishing. This survey will start in late March through Memorial Day.

Louisiana – **M. Kasprzak** reported that Louisiana trip ticket landings reports have been processed through November 2006. Landings are rebounding compared to post Katrina/Rita, but still have not reached historic levels. Landings through November will be transferred to the FIN DMS next week.

The MRFSS quota has been exceeded in each wave, despite several sites in the Eastern and Western part of the state still being closed. TIPS sampling is still slow in the New Orleans area, but is on target in the rest of the state.

Kasprzak reported that they started collecting all the target species for FIN biological sampling. There has been some trouble collecting the commercial gray triggerfish spines. The dealers are concerned that it disfigures the fish. All other sampling is proceeding on schedule. Crab effort sampling is going well and cooperation is good.

Kasprzak reported that for the SALT grant they have developed a supplemental trip ticket for fishermen to report trip level economic information and effort. It has undergone in-house review and meetings with focus groups are planned to get industry input. A survey for the charter-boat industry is being conducted to determine how the hurricanes impacted their industry and if they have any unmet needs.

Mississippi - **K. Cuevas** reported that the MRFSS started off slowly. In Wave 6 they missed charter boats by three and again in Wave 1. Wave 2 has improved and they have already gotten a number of charter boats and hopefully this will continue through Wave 5. Biological sampling appears to be doing well working with spotted sea trout, black drum, red drum, red snapper, etc. The 2006 biological data is close to being finished reading.

Cuevas reported that derelict crab trap removal was done from February 11 to February 16, 2007 with 9,862 derelict traps removed coastwide. Hurricane Katrina grant money was used for this project as well as for an oyster relay project which began in November. The oysters were moved from prohibited areas to public open reefs. Oyster fishermen were paid for this work with 82 boats involved in this project. 75,000 sacks were transferred. **Cuevas** also reported that 175 acres of oyster reefs will be planted this spring. Katrina grant money is also being used to pay charter boat, hook and line, and net fishermen to report discards.

Cuevas reported that 120 limestone pyramids were purchased for artificial reefs and were deployed in late February and early March. Next month Mississippi should be getting a gas platform for use as an artificial reef.

Texas - **P. Campbell** reported TPWD Coastal Fisheries proposed reducing the daily bag limit of spotted seatrout from 10 to 5 in the Lower Laguna Madre only, and recommended increasing the minimum size for sheepshead from 12 inches to 15 inches over the next three years. Also language is being added which will mirror federal rules for the red snapper commercial fishery individual fishing quota program. This language will enable Texas enforcement to prosecute cases in Texas courts. Coastal Fisheries is continuing to work on a licensing system that will allow party and charter boats to easily license fishermen who will be required to have a state saltwater fishing license when landing fish caught in federal waters.

Campbell reported the latest estimates show a 4% decline in fish harvest for recreational anglers in 2005-2006. This can be attributed to the impact of Hurricane Rita which reduced fishable days by six weekend days and 13 weekdays.

Campbell reported on the Texas shrimp license buy-back program noting that since 1996 there has been a 53% reduction in licensed shrimp vessels in Texas. In February 2,816 abandoned crab traps were removed coastwide. The for-hire survey and biological sampling will continue through 2007.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council – **S. Atran** reported the Gulf Council is still awaiting the final decision from NMFS on the interim red snapper rule which will be before the opening of the recreational red snapper season on April 21. The Gulf Council is currently reviewing venting tools. The Sea Grant device is now being sold by a private corporation. The Council is planning on holding public hearings in the middle of May on Reef Fish 27, Shrimp 14 for red snapper bycatch reduction.

Atran reported the red snapper IFQ system went into effect in January 2007. 2.55 million pounds was allocated under the IFQ system. One provision in the IFQ system is the requirement for VMS systems. This requirement has been delayed twice due to technical problems and is now due to start May 6. **Atran** reported that the Council is working on a grouper IFQ program with an ad hoc Advisory Panel dealing with recommendations. Tilefish will be included in the grouper IFQ.

Atran reported that the Council has gotten reports on the goliath grouper from the NMFS Science Center and Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission in order to be able to conduct a stock assessment.

The red grouper stock assessment was completed earlier this year and found that red grouper have completely recovered. The SEDAR Steering Committee has asked for a review of gag and red grouper assessments. Therefore, as a result of these reviews there could be some changes in one or both species assessments.

Atran also reported that from May 8th to May 10th the Gulf Council will hold a three day ecosystem monitoring workshop with invited guests as well as the general public. This will be held at the FFW/FMRI in St. Petersburg, Florida.

National Marine Fisheries Service – **G. Davenport** reported that TIP data entry is progressing well. Trip ticket reviews are ongoing in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas.

Davenport reported that NMFS has been asked to provide a report on the effects of the hurricanes last year. This information will be included in a report to Congress which is due this June. Davenport is also working on a data acquisition plan.

In reply to a question, **Davenport** stated that information on shark identification classes for fishermen and dealers is available on the HMS website.

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission – **D. Donaldson** reported that a head boat data review meeting will be held in April. This will compare at-sea sampling with NMFS logbook data. Stock assessment and data collection personnel will attend this meeting to insure the information being collected will meet everyone's needs. The MRFSS and Texas recreational data will also be reviewed.

Donaldson reported that regarding trip tickets, partners must be diligent about routinely loading these data. Also, Donaldson asked Subcommittee members to be sure dealers have the capability of reporting species under quota monitoring on trip tickets. Since Florida commercial data in the FIN and the ACCSP are different from the NMFS website, **Donaldson** said it would be beneficial for the members from Florida, NMFS, and GSMFC staff to get together and correct this. Over 500 dealers are reporting electronically Gulfwide. This represents about 40% of all landings.

Donaldson reported that the FIN will be operating on FY06 funding levels which equates to a \$500,000 cut. One option will be to reduce biological sampling using 5 species, or take a 10% cut for all agencies. Once actual allocations are known, the S/FFMC will decide.

Other Business

K. Anson reported Alabama will begin its for-hire fishery program April 21. There will be workshops held for captains and crew at the end of March and beginning of April.

Donaldson requested Subcommittee members review the member list for corrections.

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

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Monday, March 12, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Heather Warner-Finley 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
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
Jan Boyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jeff Clark, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Ric Ruebsamen, NMFS, Panama City, FL

Staff

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

Others

Jack Isaacs, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Cindy Loeffler, TPWD, Austin, TX
Steve Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Steve Campbell, NOAA

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the October 23, 2006 meeting were adopted with one minor change.

Administrative Report

J. Rester stated that work continued on the bottom mapping project. He reported that the data gathering contractor will make one more trip to the Gulf region to collect data. This portion of

the project should be completed in the coming weeks. After the data gathering portion was completed a GIS contractor would be hired to produce habitat maps using the data. The entire project should be completed before the end of the year. **J. Rester** stated that work on developing the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP) Habitat Plan was progressing. A user group workshop to solicit input on the plan was held last year. An additional workshop has been scheduled for April and the focus would be to try and solicit more input from coastal and marine groups. He reported that he and Ron Lukens had been drafting sections detailing coastal concerns over freshwater inflow. **J. Rester** stated that he was recently appointed to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's IPT team for drafting the Council's Aquaculture Amendment. He reported that he would be drafting the habitat section and developing potential siting criteria for offshore facilities.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Ecosystem Management Plan

S. Atran started off by discussing the species the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) manages and their economic value. He then stated that the Council only has the ability to manage fishing and not other users of the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that the move towards an ecosystem approach to fisheries management began several years ago. He stated that Council was one of four Councils that received funds to begin to conduct ecosystem management pilot projects. He reported that an ecosystem approach to fisheries management would supplement existing management and not replace it. The Council began the process by conducting public meetings with stakeholder groups to identify and prioritize ecosystem related issues. The Council then conducted a survey to gain additional public input. He stated they were now in the process of developing goals and objectives for ecosystem management in the Gulf of Mexico. A workshop has been scheduled for May 2007 to demonstrate the feasibility of using ecosystem modeling as a tool to address fishery management issues and to expose the capabilities and gaps in ecosystem model applications. **S. Atran** stated that the primary issues of discussion at the meeting would be red snapper/shrimp interactions, multi-species marine protected areas effects on snapper and grouper, and the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic area and its effects on demersal and pelagic ecosystems. Other issues to be discussed included role of menhaden as a forage base in the Gulf of Mexico, impacts of red tide on the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, and impacts of artificial reefs on the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. Finally, he stated that future steps included development of a document to demonstrate how an ecosystem based approach to fisheries would fit into the current fisheries management regime and begin the process of integrating components of an ecosystem based approach into the existing FMP process.

Protecting Environmental Flows to Texas Estuaries

C. Loeffler stated that freshwater inflows were necessary to maintain appropriate nutrient, salinity, and sediment budgets in estuaries. **C. Loeffler** reported that in Texas freshwater inflow recommendations were based on the biological needs of a group of target species expressed as a statistical relationship between harvest or catch per unit effort and inflow. She stated the target species were blue crab, eastern oyster, red drum, black drum, spotted seatrout, brown shrimp, and white shrimp. She stated that TPWD and the Texas Water Development Board have jointly developed freshwater inflow recommendations to maintain the health and productivity of Texas estuaries. **C. Loeffler** stated that a Governor's Executive Order in 2005 created the

Environmental Flows Advisory Committee. The Committee was directed to establish a process that will achieve a consensus-based, regional approach to integrate environmental flow protection with flows for human needs. The Committee formed in 2006 and released a report in late 2006 containing 32 recommendations. **C. Loeffler** explained that the Texas Legislature created the Environmental Flows Committee that appoints the Texas Science Advisory Committee and Bay/Basin Stakeholder Committees for selected basins. The Bay/Basin Stakeholder Committees establish Bay/Basin Expert Science Teams that conduct environmental flow analyses and recommend flow regimes. Each Bay/Basin Committee reviews environmental flow analyses and recommends environmental flow standards and strategies to meet those standards for submission to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality who conducts a rulemaking process to adopt appropriate environmental flow standards and establishes an environmental flow “set aside,” if unappropriated water was available. Environmental flow standards and implementation strategies were subject to “adaptive management,” meaning that the success and/or failure of management measures would be assessed and adjusted as new science and information becomes available. **C. Loeffler** stated that environmental flow standards were also subject to temporary suspension if water emergency arose.

D. Frugé asked if the model incorporated seasonality. **C. Loeffler** replied that it did. **F. Courtney** stated that the recommended flows seemed lower than historic flows. **C. Loeffler** stated that they were limited to the 75th percentile on the upper flow recommendations. **P. Cook** stated that the process began 20 years ago. He asked if the needed fishery data were there already. **C. Loeffler** stated that at the time the time series was not long enough, but that is no longer the case. **D. Frugé** asked about instream flows and who was in charge of calculating them. **C. Loeffler** stated that the inland fisheries people from TPWD were in charge. **D. Frugé** also asked about how the model incorporated climate change. **C. Loeffler** stated that the state water plan downplayed the threat of climate change, but it acknowledged that higher temperatures would increase evaporation from lakes and reservoirs.

Economic Changes Associated with Freshwater Diversions

J. Isaacs stated that the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) began in 1990 at approximately \$70 million to restore wetlands in Louisiana. The Coast 2050 project needed \$14 billion to restore coastal Louisiana with only minor amounts of funds actually being obligated. **J. Isaacs** stated that the time to restore coastal Louisiana was now. He stated that there was a connection between the economic and ecological well being of Louisiana. He reported that the Caernarvon and Davis Pond freshwater diversions have not been operating at designed capacities. **J. Isaacs** stated that freshwater diversions would have several economic impacts on fisheries. Species distributions would be changed. Therefore, to pursue the same species fishermen would be required to travel greater distances. Species production could be negatively impacted. **J. Isaacs** reported that recreational saltwater fishing in Louisiana had an \$800 million total economic impact in 2003. He stated that 80% of recreational saltwater fishing trips targeted red drum or spotted seatrout. If these fisheries were impacted by freshwater diversions, license sales could be negatively impacted along with the other associated businesses involved in saltwater fishing.

D. Frugé asked if oil companies were concerned about coastal wetland loss. **H. Warner-Finley** stated that they were concerned. **D. Frugé** asked why the current freshwater diversions were not operating at designed capacities. **J. Isaacs** stated that lawsuits held up the opening of Caernarvon and that a housing development could be affected by the Davis Pond facility if it operated at maximum capacity. **H. Warner-Finley** stated that these facilities were not designed as sediment diversions. **P. Cook** stated that the sediment load of the Mississippi River was not as large as it used to be.

Subcommittee Discussion of Freshwater Inflow Issues

R. Lukens stated that freshwater inflow was one of the most important issues in the Gulf of Mexico. He wanted to know what the Habitat Subcommittee could do to help in dealing with the issue. **R. Ruebsamen** stated that the issues were not uniform across the entire Gulf of Mexico. He stated that the states should push the ecosystem aspect of freshwater inflow in the Council's ecosystem management plan. **R. Lukens** wanted to make everyone aware that the situations across the southeastern United States were similar, but the solutions to the problems would be different. **C. Loeffler** stated that TPWD would be holding an international conference on freshwater inflow in 2008. She stated that the people granting water rights need to understand the need for ecological flows of water. **H. Warner-Finley** suggested having a fisheries session or panel discussion at the meeting. **R. Ruebsamen** stated that it would be nice to have a fishery person on the conference steering committee. **R. Ruebsamen made a motion to have the GSMFC offer someone to participate on the TPWD international freshwater inflow conference steering committee in order make sure that fisheries personnel and issues are included in the planning of the conference.** **D. Frugé** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. **D. Frugé** made a motion that in partnership with SARP, explore the possibility of developing an educational brochure targeted towards water and natural resource policy makers discussing the importance of instream and environmental flows. **R. Ruebsamen** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Habitat Issues of Interest From Each State

Texas – **R. Adami** stated that Texas produced 25 million red drum fingerlings last year. He reported that over 22,000 crab traps have been removed in six years of removal efforts. He stated that 62% of the traps were removed from Galveston Bay. Total effort represented 14,000 man hours. **R. Adami** stated that the Texas clipper would be sunk in April. Under the new Texas public reefing initiative a shrimp boat will be reefed off of Port Isabel. The Recreational Fishing Alliance has proposed the Texas Great Barrier Reef Project in Texas state waters. **R. Adami** stated that they have not had any disease problems with shrimp aquaculture facilities. **R. Adami** reported that Texas was drafting rules and regulations for offshore aquaculture. **C. O'Brien** stated that Texas was still reviewing impacts from the deepening and widening of the Matagorda Ship Channel. **C. O'Brien** reported that Texas would be using CIAP funds for land acquisition.

Louisiana – **P. Cook** stated that two LNG facilities were being built in southwest Louisiana. He reported that the Sabine Pass facility would be operational in 2008 and that the Creole Trail facility would be operational in 2009. He stated that the natural gas pipelines associated with the

facilities would impact hundreds of acres of marsh. **P. Cook** reported that debris clean up was taking place in Calcasieu Lake. He stated that NOAA had developed a marine debris web site. **P. Cook** stated that effort in the crab trap clean ups has dropped tremendously since the first year. In 2004, ninety volunteer boats participated while only four volunteer boats participated in 2007. **H. Warner-Finley** stated that the Coastal Impact Assistance Program's Comprehensive Coastal Master Plan for Louisiana was currently out for public comment.

Mississippi – **J. Boyd** reported that MDMR was collecting the concrete from the Highway 90 Bridges over Bay St. Louis and Biloxi Bay to use beneficially as breakwaters and artificial reefs. He stated that the Corps would soon be starting the second phase of the Deer Island restoration project. The purpose of this phase would be to close the gap on the west end of the island. **J. Clark** stated that they were currently developing a comprehensive plan for Deer Island.

Florida – **F. Courtney** stated that derelict trap removals took place in Apalachicola Bay and Tampa Bay. Approximately 300 traps were removed from each bay system. **R. Mezich** stated that Florida was currently reviewing the impacts of the proposed Magnolia Bay development in Taylor County. In addition to wetland impacts, the project would involve dredging a two mile channel through the Big Bend Aquatic Seagrasses Preserve. **R. Mezich** reported that Florida now has better authority to enforce fines for prop scarring of seagrasses.

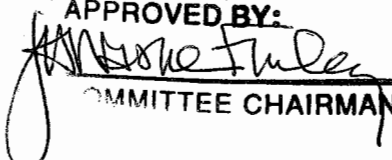
USFWS – **D. Frugé** stated that the National Fish Habitat Initiative has developed guidelines for Fish Habitat Partnerships. **D. Frugé** stated that SARP was currently applying to become a Fish Habitat Partnership. **D. Frugé** reported that the assessment for the American eel found that endangered species status was not warranted at this time.

NMFS – **R. Ruebsamen** stated that NMFS was still dealing with LNG issues. He stated that there had been delay in releasing the draft EIS for the TORP facility off Alabama. He reported that a LNG facility off Tampa had been proposed and that they had submitted a deepwater port license application to the Coast Guard. The facility would be closed loop, but the vessels would be using large amounts of water for cooling. He also stated that he was helping gather information for a report to Congress on the habitat impacts of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. He stated that he had contacted most states, but if anyone had any new information to provide it to him for inclusion in the report.

Other Business

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 58th Annual Fall Meeting
Monday, October 15, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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

Members

Frank Courtney, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Ron Mezich, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
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
Ric Ruebsamen, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Kevin Anson, ADCNR MRD, Gulf Shores, AL

Staff

Jeff Rester, Habitat/SEAMAP Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

James Sinclair, Minerals Management Service, New Orleans, LA
Pete Sheridan, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the March 12, 2007 meeting were adopted without changes.

Administrative Report

J. Rester stated that the National Fish Habitat Board approved the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership's (SARP) application for official fish habitat partnership status at their Board meeting in October. There were now 4 official fish habitat partnerships around the nation. **J. Rester** stated that SARP was in the final stages of developing their Habitat Plan for the southeastern United States. He stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel met in early October. The AP discussed Texas Senate

Bill 3 and freshwater inflow issues in Texas, the Texas Great Barrier Reef Project, the cleaning of retired MARAD vessels before salvaging them, a beneficial use project using dredged material from a LNG facility, seagrass protection zones in Texas, and the reopening of Cedar Bayou. **J. Rester** reported that Shell announced in March that they were dropping plans to build the Gulf Landing facility. Shell cited substantial capacity already available for importing liquefied natural gas into the U.S. market, particularly along the Gulf Coast. The DEIS for the Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal was released on July 6, 2007. **J. Rester** stated that both the Commission and Council had concerns about the project. Port Dolphin Energy LLC filed its license application on March 29, 2007 for a LNG facility located 28 miles offshore of Tampa, Florida in approximately 100 feet of water. **J. Rester** stated that the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force was in the process of updating their 2001 Action Plan. The Nutrient Task Force will be meeting in late October to seek comment and concurrence on the draft Action Plan to be released for public comment and to seek a Task Force decision on revising the goals of the Revised Action Plan. **J. Rester** stated that the proposed Texas freshwater inflow conference committee held a conference call in early May. The conference will 1) identify water management questions to be addressed regarding providing freshwater to estuaries, 2) update participants on the current scientific knowledge on the role of freshwater inflows in protecting estuaries and 3) identify management approaches and scientific work Gulf states should undertake to address the relevant water management questions. Texas had originally planned the meeting for May 2008, but it has been postponed until later in 2008. **J. Rester** stated that he helped develop the habitat section and potential siting criteria for offshore facilities for the Council's Aquaculture Amendment.

Ecosystem Modeling in the Gulf of Mexico

J. Rester stated that Jim Cowan had not arrived; therefore the agenda item would not be discussed.

Review of the Freshwater Inflow Brochure

J. Rester stated that the freshwater inflow brochure idea arose at the March meeting and was an effort to educate water managers about the need for environmental flows for estuaries and marine fishery resources. The brochure would be a joint publication by the Commission, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and SARP. He stated that draft language for the brochure was distributed to everyone to review before the meeting. He suggested that the Subcommittee review the current language. The Subcommittee reviewed the document and made several changes. **J. Rester** stated that he would send the document out to everyone for them to review again before he forwarded the document to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council for their review.

Update on the Commission's Bottom Mapping Project

J. Rester stated that work on the Commission's Bottom Mapping Project was continuing. The purpose of the project was to develop a user friendly interactive system that identifies, describes, and displays resources characterizing the seabed habitat of the Gulf of Mexico. A meeting of the bottom mapping committee was held in September to review progress of the project and make

final recommendations to the contractor. The contractor asked for a no cost extension until October 31 to finalize data in the database and finish the FGDC compliant metadata. The project should be completed by the end of the year. **J. Rester** stated that USGS was looking to use the data to update their usSEABED project. The data will be imported into the Priority Habitat Information System (PHINS), a state/federal partnership intended to provide users with habitat information and foundation geospatial data supporting implementation of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan. **J. Rester** stated that the data will be distributed online through an Internet Map Server (IMS) hosted by the National Coastal Data Development Center.

Habitat Subcommittee Representation on the Commission's *Arenarius* Technical Task Force

J. Rester stated that the Commission was forming a Technical Task Force to begin a fishery profile for the *Arenarius* or seatrout fishery. The representative would be responsible for the habitat section of the document. He stated that they could use habitat sections from other FMPs to provide most of the information for the document. **R. Mezich** volunteered to serve on the Technical Task Force.

Habitat Issues of Interest From Each State

Florida – **R. Mezich** stated that the Magnolia Bay project permit was denied by the Army Corps of Engineers. The project has been revised and resubmitted with about 60 acres of freshwater wetland impacts. He stated that it appears that the original project will be implemented in sections and might be approved that way. **R. Mezich** reported that the Florida Artificial Reef Program was undergoing a program review. He stated that two new large area permits were being developed. There was some concern over one of these permits because it would allow private reef zones.

Alabama – **K. Anson** stated that the Bayou St. John Reef has received a total of 29 loads of material from the demolition of the Gulf State Park Convention Center. The Ross Point Reef received the remains of the Fowl River Bridge, about 3,500 tons of material. The Ono Island Reef had the remains of the Fish River Bridge placed on site. **K. Anson** stated that offshore reef building flourished with 52 trips to construct 1,027 reefs. The Alabama Oyster Farmers Association removed 21,000 sacks of large rock from Buoy Reef during the summer. The Organized Seafood Association of Alabama planted 7,500 cubic yards of rock and oyster shell cultch on Heron Bay reefs in August 2007. In addition, 20,000 cubic yards of material were planted in deeper waters on Cedar Point with Hurricane Ivan funds.

Louisiana – **H. Warner-Finley** stated that work continues on the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Plan. She stated that the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet will be closed. She stated that the LDWF was currently dealing with regulatory authorities wanting to use concrete mats to cover oil and gas pipelines that have been exposed. Guidelines were currently being developed to cover concrete mat usage.

Texas – **R. Adami** stated that Texas stocked 20.2 million red drum fingerlings and 1 million spotted seatrout and flounder fingerlings. He reported that Texas would be holding a derelict

crab trap removal in February 2008. He stated that the Texas Clipper is scheduled to be sunk on November 15 off Brownsville. The permit for the Texas Great Barrier Reef Project was withdrawn. He reported that farm shrimp production had declined to approximately 1,600 acres. **C. O'Brien** stated that TPWD was still reviewing the Matagorda Ship Channel project and the dredged material management plan.

NMFS – R. Ruebsamen stated that NMFS recently released their hurricane impact to habitat report. He stated that NMFS was currently involved in a Gulf wide sediment management plan that would be looking for sources of sediment for barrier island restoration. He also stated that NMFS was also involved in reviewing LNG projects.

USFWS – D. Frugé stated that SARP was recognized as a fish habitat partner by the National Fish Habitat Initiative. He reported that the Panama City Office was involved in water issues concerning the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint Rivers. The Corps was using habitat needs of endangered animals to justify water levels in the rivers.

J. Sinclair stated that MMS had conducted hurricane impact studies on several offshore banks off Louisiana. He stated that Sonnier was the most impacted with corals being toppled due to the hurricanes and a disease outbreak that affected 20-30% of the corals after the hurricanes. He also stated that the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary was examining revising their operations and also expanding to include several areas east of the Flower Gardens.

Election of Chairman

The Subcommittee elected Heather Warner-Finley as Chairman with Doug Frugé serving as vice-chairman.

Other Business

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 57th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 13, 2007
Biloxi, Mississippi**

[Handwritten signature]
10/16/07

Chairman Corky Perret called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Bill Balboa, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Richard Cody, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Jim Duffy, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL

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
Bob Harris, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Bill Walker, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Sarah Turner, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
David Lavergne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Christopher Moore, NMFS, Silver Springs, MD
Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Martin Bourgeois, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Benny Gallaway, LGL Ecological Research Associates, Bryan, TX
Bill Gazey, Victoria, BC, Canada

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance presentation being moved to the first item.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on October 24, 2006 were approved as written.

State Agency Participation in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance

B. Walker stated that Jeb Bush started the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (Alliance) in 2004 as a governor's alliance between the Gulf States. The Governors recognized the importance of state partnership in response to the Ocean Commission Report. **B. Walker** reported that the Alliance was a state driven alliance with support from federal agencies. The Alliance emphasized common Gulf-Wide and local issues and recognized the possibility to influence Congressional resources. In March 2006 the Alliance's Governors' Action Plan was released. The Action Plan identified regional priority issues and state leads. Five priority issues were identified. Florida has the lead for water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds. Louisiana has the lead for coastal wetland restoration and conservation. Alabama has the lead for environmental education. Texas has the lead for identification and characterization of Gulf habitats, while Mississippi has the lead for reductions in nutrient loading. The Alliance has also tried to engage the six Mexican Gulf States. **B. Walker** stated that it was now time for the states to take control of the Alliance and success of the Alliance was dependent on effective state leadership.

D. Frugé stated that the Chesapeake, Great Lakes, and the Everglades have identified similar problems and now have funding to address those problems. **D. Frugé** stated that fisheries was not a focus area. **V. Vail** stated that fisheries should be recognized. **B. Walker** stated that the Commission and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council needed to participate in the Alliance. **L. Simpson** stated that he now understood the Alliance and how it operated better than before and he would like to be more active in the Alliance.

State/Federal Reports

Florida - **V. Vail** stated that Florida has begun the PCB monitoring required by EPA following deployment of the Oriskany in May 2006. Reef fish species were being sampled by FWC reef program staff and Escambia County staff for the next 5 years. In addition to PCBs, the samples were also being analyzed for heavy metals. The USS Hoyt Vandenberg was being proposed for placement on a site off Key West, Florida. The FWC received the Certificate of Transfer from MARAD last December and will transfer the vessel to the City of Key West as soon as a Memorandum of Agreement and the Acceptance of Transfer was signed and returned by the City. **V. Vail** stated that a bill was proposed in the 2007 Legislature that would establish a "Ships-2-Reefs" program, wherein funding would be appropriated annually to provide matching

grants to local governments wishing to secure a decommissioned military vessel for deployment as an artificial reef to enhance diving and fishing opportunities. In 2005 the red tide bloom was extensive, intense, and prolonged, affecting benthic communities as well as fish throughout the water column. An assessment in 2006 showed that spotted sea trout juveniles were significantly affected in nearshore grass beds. A spawning area for spotted sea trout in Tampa Bay was also hit hard. However, there has been some juvenile recruitment to the area. **V. Vail** stated that the Spiny Lobster Advisory Board has been participating in an evaluation of the lobster fishery and development of management options. One of their concerns was recovery of traps lost during major storm events. The Board was recommending that fishers be allowed to help each other find missing traps by formally identifying persons they authorize to pick up their traps and filing the list with the local FWC law enforcement office. Non-criminal penalties were proposed for carelessly causing damage to seagrass beds due to prop scarring or vessel grounding. The fines were progressive for repeat violators [\$50 for a first violation, \$1000 for a fourth and subsequent violations] and double if the violation occurs in an aquatic preserve or park. **V. Vail** stated that fee increases were proposed for most of the recreational licenses and permits. **R. Cody** stated that spotted sea trout abundance levels were down. He stated that the recreational fishing surveys were continuing and doing well. This was the second year of the pilot head boat survey, and 18,000 samples from discards were obtained.

Alabama – **J. Duffy** reported that 412 pyramid reefs would be deployed soon. He stated that the Gulf State Park hotel was being torn down and that the concrete was being used for artificial reef purposes. He reported that Pensacola Naval Air Station had donated material to be used in inshore reefs. **J. Duffy** stated that the oyster dredging in Portersville Bay was working well. Sack limits limited the dredgers and 6,200 sacks of oysters have been harvested since October 2006. In 2006, Alabama collected 1,800 otoliths for sampling. Alabama sampled 34 head boat trips in 2006 looking at discard condition. Alabama had recently completed a mullet stock assessment. The stock assessment showed that the population was healthy, but Alabama may ask to increase the net mesh size to increase escapement.

Mississippi – **D. Diaz** reported the 7th Annual Smart Growth Conference would soon be held in Biloxi. This conference would bring partners in south Mississippi together to provide information and tools to assist in smart growth along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The Shellfish Bureau completed an oyster relay program employing 83 licensed commercial oyster fishermen. This program involved moving over 72,000 sacks of oysters from areas of the coast that were less impacted by Hurricane Katrina to devastated oyster reefs in the western Mississippi Sound. Plans were being made to deploy over 58,000 cubic yards of cultch material for a spring plant. **D. Diaz** stated that shrimp, crab, charter boat, hook and line and net fishermen were provided with scanable Fisheries Recovery Report forms to record catch, effort and bycatch information. Each fishery had its own specific pay rate and size of the vessel being used was a factor for some of the programs. Participants could only be paid once within a 24 hour period. Validation of reported vessel trips for shrimp, crab, charter boat, hook and line and net programs were being achieved by onboard vessel observer trips and logs of vessels actively fishing or docked. A derelict trap recovery was recently held. All licensed crab trap fishermen were notified of the coast wide gear closure between the dates of February 5 through February 16. The derelict trap clean up was conducted February 10 through February 16. Qualified fishermen were paid a bounty for each derelict crab trap brought to disposal sites. A total of 9,862 derelict crab traps

were turned in to be recycled during the 2007 cleanup. Additionally, all participants were given a voucher for fifty new crab traps which were equipped with escape rings and terrapin excluder devices. The Artificial Reef Bureau has hired a contractor to build and deploy reef pyramids to restore offshore artificial reefs damaged by Hurricane Katrina. To date 120 pyramids have been deployed. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation provided a \$100,000 grant to support the restoration of Mississippi's artificial reefs. **D. Diaz** stated that the MDMR was distributing disposable paper placemats discussing the importance of fish habitat to restaurant owners while supplies lasted.

Louisiana – **V. Guillory** stated the LDWF was still recovering from the 2005 hurricanes since all Marine Fisheries facilities sustained damage. The LDWF received three grants for approximately \$53 million for fisheries disaster. **V. Guillory** stated that with the exception of oysters, all landings increased in 2006 from 2005 levels. He reported that there was a strong oyster spat set after the storms. In early 2007, Louisiana held crab trap clean ups in Lake Pontchartrain and upper Barataria Bay. The total number of traps collected was 1,513. **V. Guillory** stated that volunteer turn out has declined dramatically since the first clean up. In 2006, the availability of seed and sack oysters on the public oyster grounds throughout the state decreased nearly 18%. In February 2007, updated stock assessments for black drum, sheepshead, southern flounder, and striped mullet were presented to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. The Louisiana Artificial Reef Program provides for special artificial reef sites which aim to establish artificial reefs under unusual circumstances. During 2006, 10 projects with 37 platforms were approved as special artificial reef sites.

Texas – **J. Mambretti** stated Coastal Fisheries proposed reducing the daily bag limit of spotted seatrout from 10 to 5 in the Lower Laguna Madre. This reduced bag limit addresses a continued downward trend in the spawning stock biomass of spotted seatrout in the Lower Laguna Madre. In addition, Coastal Fisheries recommended increasing the minimum size for sheepshead from the current 12 inches to 15 inches. Coastal Fisheries implemented a "no-take" rule for diamondback terrapins. **J. Mambretti** reported that TPWD was seeking size and bag limit exemption authority for its Executive Director. This authority would exempt members of the public from select regulations while they are volunteering or involved in Department sponsored research, procurement, or propagation activities. **J. Mambretti** reported that TPWD was monitoring House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 3 which were legislative proposals to set aside water to keep Texas' rivers, bays, and estuaries biologically healthy. These bills would establish the management of the water resources of the state, including the protection of instream flows and freshwater inflows. The Texas Clipper was towed from Beaumont to Brownsville in early November 2006. As of early March, hull modifications and clean ups were about 45% complete. **J. Mambretti** reported that two petroleum platforms have been reefed off Texas since the last meeting, and there were several others that may be reefed in the next few months. **J. Mambretti** reported that TPWD continued working with the Recreational Fishing Alliance on the Texas Great Barrier Reef Project which will be located 7 to 8 miles offshore and 0.5 mile wide, extending from Sabine Pass to Mexico. TPWD expressed its concerns with MARAD regarding two ships that were brought from San Francisco Bay to Brownsville for salvage. TPWD protested that this hull cleaning or 'scamping' was an unacceptable risk for introducing exotic species into Texas coastal waters and could result in economic and ecological harm. The vessels were scamped a few miles beyond Texas waters near Brownsville where NMFS had no recourse

to prevent it. U.S. Coast Guard requirements specify that hull cleaning activities must be conducted on MARAD vessels prior to their relocation for disposal. As a result, MARAD agreed, in the future, all of their other vessels will go through a hull cleaning before being moved to a different water body. **J. Mambretti** reported that Texas SB 791, filed during this legislative session, would classify oysters as "an inherently unsafe product for personal consumption." The bill, pushed by one of the larger Galveston Bay oyster leaseholders, would remove product liability from the manufacturer or seller, should a consumer get sick from consuming oysters. During mid-February's Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Project, 2,816 crab traps were removed coastwide. During the last 6 years, this program has removed 22,746 abandoned traps.

USFWS – D. Frugé reported that Randall Luthi recently became the Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) new Deputy Director. A new Deputy Regional Director has been appointed for the FWS's Southwest Region, headquartered in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In a message to FWS employees, FWS Director Dale Hall outlined a new strategic vision and priorities resulting from a year-long process to determine the agency's direction for the coming years. The six priorities identified were: conserving lands and resources, primarily through the National Wildlife Refuge System; working with others in landscape conservation efforts; conservation and management of migratory birds; recovering and preventing extinction of threatened and endangered species; the National Fish Habitat Initiative and conservation of trust aquatic species; and ensuring the future of conservation through connecting people with nature. The President's 2008 FWS budget request contained \$2.1 billion in discretionary funds for the FWS. The request for the Fisheries Program was about \$124.8 million, which was about \$7.3 million above the FY 2007 request, including an increase of approximately \$6 million for Fish Passage and \$2.25 million for the National Fish Habitat Initiative. The FWS remains a key partner in the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI). The NFHI on January 17 announced criteria for organizations to be recognized by the NFHI as fish habitat partnerships. The Southeast Aquatic Habitat Partnership (SARP) was one of five "pilot" partnerships, as termed by the NFHI that are expected to be among the first to seek formal recognition as fish habitat partnerships. The NFHI stated that only recognized fish habitat partnerships would be eligible to receive funding specifically appropriated to fund National Fish Habitat Initiative projects. Funding to implement the National Fish Habitat Initiative this fiscal year was expected to be approximately \$1 million due to the FWS being level funded this year. **D. Frugé** stated that the status review on whether the American eel should be proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act concluded that listing the species was not warranted at this time, despite significant population declines in some eastern US rivers.

Estimation of Potential Impacts from Offshore Liquefied Natural Gas Terminals on Red Snapper and Red Drum Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico: An Alternative Approach

B. Gallaway stated that offshore LNG facilities were being opposed due to using large volumes of seawater that could impact fish populations due to loss of fish eggs and larvae. He stated that a review of the EIS assessment models identified some significant problems. He reported that he had developed an alternative model that would soon be published in Transactions of the American Fisheries Society that addressed those problems. His approach was to first calculate egg and larvae losses. Then, where possible, it assessed the significance of those losses using the same stock assessment models used to manage fisheries. **B. Gallaway** stated that if the LNG

facility impacted life stages after density dependant mechanisms have had their effect, then the forward-projecting model was appropriate. If the LNG terminal impacted life stages before density dependant mechanisms have had their effect, then the fecundity hindcasting model was appropriate. **B. Gallaway** reported that the 2,870 million red drum eggs lost annually to LNG entrainment from all seven facilities combined represented 0.0136% of the estimated mean stock size of 21,054,760 million red drum eggs produced annually in the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that the 2,488 million red snapper eggs lost annually to LNG entrainment from all seven facilities combined represented 0.0072% of the mean estimated stock size of 34,774,835 million red snapper eggs produced annually in the Gulf of Mexico. **B. Gallaway** reported that the forward projecting model was inappropriate for red drum and red snapper. The fecundity hindcasting model was more appropriate. **B. Gallaway** reported that the red drum lost yield from all seven facilities was estimated to be on the order of 1,087 pounds, an estimate 387 times lower than the USCG/MARAD estimate of 420,000 pounds. Red snapper lost yield from all seven facilities was estimated to be 192 pounds, which was about 19 times lower than the USCG/MARAD estimate. He stated that overall impacts on these species was minor and insignificant.

J. Roussel asked if the researchers tried to evaluate the adequacy of the plankton data that were used in the analysis and whether enough samples were available to draw any real conclusions. **B. Gallaway** stated that while the data might not be adequate, this alternative approach may be the best way to determine potential impacts. **B. Gallaway** stated that the review would be published in May.

Subcommittee Reports

Crab – **H. Perry** stated that Catalina Brown from FWC gave a presentation on the morphology of the ovaries and testes of blue crabs. Brown's research was showing primary oocytes that develop prior to morphologic maturation. In addition, immature males showed primary and secondary spermatocyte development but in both sexes, it was not known when the proliferation cycle began or if it was a continuous process. **H. Perry** stated that the states provided updates on post hurricane effects on blue crab populations. Louisiana infrastructure took the greatest hit, but the blue crab population has exploded. Mississippi reported lots of crabs and fewer fishermen. Alabama reported large catches of large crabs but the price was down. She reported that Butch Pellegrin and Ralf Reidel had both examined fishery independent data from around the Gulf. Using different methods and models, both researchers found a decline in the number of small blue crabs. Finally, she stated that the states reviewed the derelict crab trap retrievals that took place this year.

SEAMAP – **J. Rester** stated that a Plankton Work Group meeting was held last year to discuss current SEAMAP plankton sampling, future plankton sampling, new plankton sampling gear, and a winter plankton survey. If SEAMAP received increased funding, the Subcommittee would like to supplement current sampling with additional gears and institute a winter plankton survey targeting grouper and mullet. This would provide much needed plankton information on these species and on additional winter spawners. He reported that a Winter Plankton Survey was to be held this year starting in February, but vessel troubles prevented them from doing so. A shortened survey would begin this weekend. Finally, **J. Rester** stated that due to the continuing

resolution for the 2007 fiscal year, SEAMAP will probably not realize any increased funding this year. The President's 2008 Budget had an increase of almost \$4 million for SEAMAP.

Data Management – **M. Kasprzak** reported that the pilot recreational license frame survey was reviewed and the states were reminded to submit their recreational license data. The Subcommittee was briefed on the NMFS contract to use reverse look up to help find phone numbers for licensed anglers. The Subcommittee will be sending letters to the state's licensing agency to stress the importance of obtaining phone numbers during license sales. Letters will also be sent to recreational fishing groups to ask their members to please provide phone numbers when purchasing recreational fishing licenses. The Subcommittee discussed the importance of correct species identification by dealers especially with regard to those species under quota management. NMFS was also working to use the electronic trip ticket program for quota monitoring purposes.

Habitat – **D. Frugé** stated that the Subcommittee mainly discussed freshwater inflow issues during their meeting. The Subcommittee heard about the development of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Ecosystem-based Management Plan that the Council hopes would supplement existing single species management plans. The Subcommittee discussed how Texas calculates environmental flows in Texas' rivers to insure adequate freshwater inflow to estuaries. Finally, the Subcommittee heard about potential economic changes associated with freshwater diversions. As a result of these topics, the Subcommittee passed two motions. The first was that the Subcommittee would like to have the GSMFC offer someone to participate on the TPWD international freshwater inflow conference steering committee in order make sure fisheries personnel and issues were included in the planning of the conference. The second motion dealt with partnering with the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP) to explore the possibility of developing an educational brochure targeted towards water and natural resource policy makers discussing the importance of instream and environmental flows. This effort would be to remind them how important environmental flows were to fish and wildlife resources. The TCC approved both motions.

Other Business

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

3/11/08

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 58th Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 16, 2007
Point Clear, Alabama**

Chairman Corky Perret called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Bill Balboa, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Virginia Vail, FWC, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Tallahassee, FL
Richard Cody, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Corky Perret, MDMR, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Biloxi, MS
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
John Roussel, LDWF, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Baton Rouge, LA
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Jim Duffy, ADCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Steve Heath, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Columbus Brown, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

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, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Bob Harris, FIN Database Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS
David Rice, Sport Fish and Aquatic Invasives Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Doug Frugé, USFWS, Ocean Springs, MS
Fred Cross, FFWC, Panama City, FL
Joe Gill, Joe Gill Consulting LLC, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Ocean Springs, MS
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Bon Secour, AL
Rick Wallace, AUMERC/Sea Grant, Mobile, AL
Mike Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Ellie Roche, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Vernon Minton, ADCNR, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Gulf Shores, AL
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Mike Ray, TPWD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX

Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Pete Sheridan, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Michael Jepson, Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Bob Zales, Panama City Beach, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted with no modifications.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the meeting held on March 13, 2007 were approved as written.

State Federal Reports:

Florida – **V. Vail** stated that the Blue Crab Effort management program had been approved and implemented. This program was made effective October 1, 2007. Informal administrative hearings for blue crab program are also planned. Sampling of PCBs in fish on the *Oriskany* is proceeding with samples being taken from red snapper, red porgy and vermilion snapper. Data has not yet been received for samples taken in April and December. The *Vandenberg* project is proceeding and is scheduled to be sunk in 2008. It will be located 6-7 miles off of Key West. The Escambia County I-10 bridge over Pensacola Bay is also being reefed. Barge loads of bridge material are being collected and placed in strategic locations. Explosions to take the bridge down are also being monitored. These efforts have had minimal impact on the fish and wildlife resources. However, blasting was delayed when several pods of dolphins were found feeding in the area. Time was taken to allow the dolphins to move out of the area. The Ships to Reef bill, proposed last year in the state legislature, did not pass. However, it is anticipated that this bill will be reintroduced later this year. Completed projects in the reef program include a socio-economic study on the benefits of reefs in southwest Florida, a study comparing refugia reefs on 37 different sites, and a monitoring project comparing artificial reefs with natural reefs. Crab trap retrieval was also successful for this year. A total of 3,100 traps were retrieved and fuel allowance was also added. An amended trap retrieval rule was established that would allow traps to be recovered after a storm event. **V. Vail** also reported that resident saltwater recreational fishing license fees had been increased to \$17. Furthermore, non resident fees went from \$30 to \$47. A final public hearing on proposed federal regulations on red snapper is scheduled for February. The reef fish rules were amended to provide consistency with federal regulations on red porgy, black sea bass, golden tilefish, etc., in the Atlantic and the vermilion snapper, etc., in the Gulf. The Commission also deferred consideration of amending the red drum regulations in order to be proactive in management until after the 2008 stock assessment. The Division of Marine Fisheries management produced a hot-sheet to identify key issues. This sheet will be made available every month at www.myfwc.com. **R. Cody** (FWRI) stated that Florida is trying various ways to reduce coding errors and has upgraded the data system. A state level group which includes Division of Marine Fisheries and FWRI personnel and industry

representation has been formed to address certain proposed changes to the trip ticket program. Finally, the monthly SEDAR is in the process of being wrapped up.

Alabama – **S. Heath** stated that Alabama had a successful time period since the last meeting. The state deployed 3 new inshore artificial reef sites and that additional materials were being made available through coastal bridge debris. A couple more permitted areas have been added inshore as well. A total of 1,027 private and public reefs have been deployed offshore. The brown shrimp season was also good and white shrimp are beginning to show up. However, license sales were down 30 percent from the pre-storm time period. Work on the spotted sea trout is proceeding and a document should be available soon. EDRP funds were used to move 21,000 sacks of large rock and distribute them on reefs in cooperation with seafood organizations. To date 2,000 data sheets have also been collected from fishermen as part of the EDRP program. Furthermore, an additional 20,000 cubic yards of cultch material was planted in the deep areas of the reefs.

Mississippi – **K. Cuevas** stated that Marine Patrol logged 8,030 boat patrol hours with 613 total citations; 305 citations were on boat safety. This past fall saw 22,594 cubic yards of cultch material planted. Mississippi opened an oyster area, 1-B in the western part of the state, on September 6 with a daily sack limit of 20 per vessel. 63 harvesters were also represented at the oyster stewardship program meeting to discuss management strategies for the oyster fishery. Recovery data forms have been gathered with 335 shrimp and 65 crab fishermen participating. Over 11,000 derelict crab traps have been collected to date. Participants were also given new crab traps beginning in May. Fourteen live bait dealers have also been inspected and licensed. The artificial reef bureau used crushed concrete and limestone to construct inshore reefs. A total of 3 offshore artificial reefs were restored by developing or enhancing limestone pyramids. These pyramids were then deployed in strategic places. A total of 51 charter boats participated in the finfish recovery program. Red snapper larvae are also being reared to study conditions for optimum growth. Finally, Mississippi coastal cleanup efforts have resulted in 53,400 pounds of garbage removed from coastal waters.

Louisiana – **V. Guillory** stated that site preparation work for the new marine lab at Grand Isle was completed in the summer of 2007. Facility construction has begun with completion forecasted for the fall of 2008. As of the end of September 2007, 114 of 156 recreational facilities and 110 of 135 commercial facilities were fully operational. Also, the number of commercial fishing vessels has not yet returned to pre storm levels. Sales of commercial fishing licenses are also down. The recreational fishery seems to have recovered, but sales of recreational licenses have also decreased. However, landings and trips are above pre-storm levels. The charter boat fishery experienced an initial decline in sales but now sales are above pre-storm levels. The first EDRP project in reseeded and rebuilding oyster reefs is underway and includes public and private components. Two 200 acre public reefs have also been completed this year. Additional cultch plants are planned for the spring of 2008. Private oyster lease rehabilitation activities are also being implemented. A total of 300,000 acres were eligible for this program. Additionally, about 560 lease holders had participated in this program. Each lease holder has a \$200,000 cap on reimbursement. This program should be completed in July of 2009. Oyster monitoring data is also about to be digitized and debris cleanup contracts have been put on hold since FEMA may be conducting the cleanup. Underwater debris log books are also being used. A joint enhancement of waterfowl and marine organisms is underway. A second

habitat project which involves cultch in shore stabilization is underway. An RFP is also being developed for a new data management system. Cooperative research projects are being pursued as well. A second appropriation of 41 million dollars in EDRP funds is available for direct assistance to individuals in the seafood industry for seafood testing, TED development, and other uses. The Department recently held a series of meetings to obtain input from the commercial and recreational fishing sectors on the allocation of these monies. However, specific allocations are pending. Five bills had passed that related to marine fisheries. These bills dealt with defining legal gear to harvest blue crabs, establishment of a titling system of certain vessels, creation of an adopt-a-water body program to control litter, transplanting of oysters and oyster cultch from Vermillion Bay and requirements for oyster monitoring systems to be used on vessels. The derelict crab trap removal program has recovered 15,950 traps, but has had volunteer participation decline each year. A 9-day crab trap closure is proposed for February 23 to March 3 of 2008 for a portion of Terrebonne Bay. The Louisiana Crab Task Force also continues to meet. The Task Force decided that limited entry was not needed at this time and that a crab meat imports petition would not be favored. A hurricane protection levee system is proposed to cover the area from Morgan City to east of New Orleans. Several environmental groups have submitted plans and criticism. Another controversial issue is the potential use of concrete mats to cover exposed inshore pipelines.

Texas – **J. Mambretti** informed the TCC about Senate Bill 3 (SB3) which contains water conservation language and promotes a water awareness campaign. Also, Senate Bill 620 was passed and contains language related to the marking of oyster beds. Both of these bills were signed in June of this year. He also mentioned Senate Bill 997, related to commercially operated party boats, Senate Bill 1829, related to fees for licenses, and Senate Bill 791 which recognizes oysters as inherently unsafe in order to protect oyster sales. Also, a new TED exemption given by NMFS allows Coastal Fisheries to continue fishery-independent sampling. Coastal Fisheries also conducted various counts related to the flounder-gigging fishery. The Coastal Fisheries life history team collected and processed sand trout samples for a life history study and continued collecting red drum and spotted seatrout otolith data. The genetic team also collected fin clips from southern flounder and alligator gar for genetic variation studies. In April, artificial reef staff hosted a meeting for the *Texas Clipper*. This ship has undergone many environmental remediation efforts. A sinking date is set for November 5. The ship will be sunk 17 miles off of South Padre Island. Also, four other rigs were reefed this year along with 16 oil platform jack up legs. The Texas Great Barrier Reef Project has been denied by the Corps. The Great Barrier Reef team must now resubmit a detailed proposal to the Corps. **J. Mambretti** also gave an update on the license buy-back program. Texas' enhancement project also stocked around 20 million red drum and 1 million spotted sea trout. The Texas spring bay shrimp season opened on May 15. However, most shrimpers did not participate and shrimping is down for the state. Commercial oyster fishermen are also concerned about getting a sack limit reduction. Public reef fishermen are asking for 45-50 sack per day limit but leaseholders want no reduction. Commercial oyster fishermen are also discussing a requirement that a percentage of oyster shell, if harvested from state waters, must be returned to state waters. Oyster leaseholders have also recommended an 8 day transplant season for oyster reefs. The number of days needed for transplanting activities has fallen. The new FDA requirement to reduce deaths due to *Vibrio* may be difficult to accomplish. The combined average deaths of the four states cannot exceed 10. Last year, however, Texas had 13 cases and 5 of the 13 cases in Texas came from oyster as a cooked product. A record number

of nesting turtles was also recorded this year. There was also a record number of turtle strandings. Most strandings were of stunned green turtles. In June a dead zone was discovered in the Gulf of Mexico from the mouth of the Brasco River. Hypoxic water has been caused by the layering of freshwater above seawater. Furthermore, salinities have not yet returned. Bay shrimpers are also impacted by salinity. In August, a dinoflagellate bloom was reported 1 mile off of Mustang Island. A large fish kill near Galveston was also caused by a dinoflagellate. Hurricane Umberto had little impact on marine resources. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Executive Director has retired. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department continues to make repairs to its parks. U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson announced 39 water projects have passed as part of a water resources management act. The bill includes language for navigation, flood control, ecosystem restoration and habitat restoration projects. The Parks and Wildlife artificial reef staff working on the *Texas Clipper* are involved with preserving and perhaps archiving a Sal Steinberg painting found onboard the ship. This mural has been taken to Austin. Curators from Houston are now assessing the mural's value.

USFWS – **D. Frugé** stated that the agency had some personnel changes. The FWS Deputy Director is now head of MMS and Mamie Parker is retiring from USFWS. The 2008 request for the fisheries program may include 125 million in funding. FWS is also still a partner in the national habitat initiative. Funding to implement this initiative is still uncertain due to pending action on the budget. The European eel was listed as an endangered species. This could help in trade issues with the American eel due to its similarity of appearance with the European eel. NOAA and USFWS partnered together to conduct genetic testing studies to ID shark species. This research will be used to help stop finning activities. A Florida seafood dealer was charged with conspiracy to smuggle queen conch from the Caribbean in violation of the LACEY Act. Also, a draft Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle Recovery Plan is still under review by NOAA and the USFWS. A public comment period will be announced through the *Federal Register*. A 5 year status review of all 5 sea turtles was completed in August. The document recommends maintaining the current listing of all five species. A national survey found that more than 38 percent of the US population over the age of 16 has pursued hunting, fishing and wildlife observation activities in 2006. An endangered mussel species (the fat three-ridged mussel), the Gulf sturgeon and another mussel (the purple bankclimber) have also become controversial in the issue over water use in the Chatahoochee River system. This issue is related to downstream flow needs of these species. The Corps continues to release more water down stream than is being provided upstream. However, political and legal pressure is being put on the Corps to reduce those water releases. Continued operation of a power plant is also jeopardized if flows are decreased.

NOAA - **E. Roche** stated that she spoke with Dr. Crabtree and on behalf of NOAA Fisheries he wanted her to apologize for Mr. Sutter not being at the meeting as he was delayed on his flight. On behalf of Dr. Crabtree she informed the TCC that NOAA had published the proposed rule for the bycatch reduction device criteria for the Gulf. NOAA is in the comment period right now. NOAA will also probably have a budget by the end of November.

Subcommittee Reports

Crab – S. VanderKoooy stated that the Subcommittee drafted a proposal and submitted it to NOAA in the Cooperative Research Program. They hope to hear something from NOAA by March of 2008. The Subcommittee continued to work on the derelict crab trap guideline revision. This document is almost finished and should be available for review by the TCC in 30 days. Guillermo Sanchez presented data on La Nina and El Nino effects on crab populations in the Gulf. A total of 15,950 traps have been removed from Louisiana waters. The number of traps and volunteers have also been declining over the years. Louisiana plans another clean up in 2008. Bill Richardson reported that Mississippi used a bounty system and held two cleanups in 2007 with 11,150 traps being recycled. This was the largest single effort in Mississippi's history. There was no report for crab trap cleanup efforts for Alabama. Anne McMillen-Jackson reported that Florida passed legislation that allows designated fishermen to pick up other fishermen's traps with proper authorization through a contracted bounty program. Tom Wagner reported that a derelict trap clean up is scheduled for February 15-25 of next year and that the number of traps retrieved and the number of volunteers participating has declined for this year. Blue crab landings for 2006 were slightly higher with hard shell landings up 17 percent from 2005 for the Gulf and down 24 percent for the Atlantic. The FWC established the Blue Crab Effort Management Program. The Florida Legislature and Governor Charlie Crist approved provisions to implement the program. The program establishes separate endorsements for the hard and soft "peeler" crab fisheries, and legal blue crab traps must be marked with trap tags issued by FWC. Alabama experienced declines in license sales. Ex-vessel values also declined in 2005 but increased in 2006. Alabama blue crab landings are down but the values are up in 2007. Mississippi reported that license sales are only up by two licenses. Landings are down from last year. New crab traps with TEDs are now being surveyed for their success in excluding turtles. Harriet Perry reported that 1,000 tagged baby crabs were released recently into Davis Bayou. To date, none have been recaptured. The crab program will continue to be funded through 2008. Louisiana led the coast in commercial blue crab landings and value from 2004 to 2006. Adequate recruitment was noted. The 2006-2007 Crab Effort Survey Data was reviewed. This survey was compiled from trip ticket and crab effort data survey information. Texas reported that bag seine CPUE has fluctuated since 2004 but with a steady decline. Bay trawl CPUE has been in a steady decline as well. 2006 landings in Texas were 2 million pounds more at a value of \$ 1.5 million which was the lowest since 1960. Heavy rainfall will most likely increase the blue crab landings in late 2007 and 2008. Texas passed two new regulations. One allows the use of aquacultured catfish heads as bait and the other prohibits the taking of diamond back terrapin turtles. Leslie Hartman was elected Chairman of the TCC Crab Subcommittee.

SEAMAP – J. Rester reported that SEAMAP activities since the past meeting included the Spring Plankton Survey, the Reefish Survey, the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, and Fall Plankton Survey. The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey is now underway. SEAMAP funding for FY2008 may include an increase in funding. The current funding level of \$1.385 million may be increased to \$5.09 million. This assumes that Congress will pass a budget for FY2008. In FY2007, SEAMAP received a one-time supplemental funding award of \$3 million for work in the Gulf of Mexico. The new survey work will include a Winter Plankton Survey, a Louisiana Inshore Trawl Survey, an Inshore Shark Survey, and a Florida Trawl Survey. The Commission will be taking over SEAMAP data management responsibilities for the Gulf of Mexico as well.

Jim Hanifen was elected Chairman of the TCC SEAMAP Subcommittee and Steve Heath was elected Vice-Chairman.

Data Management – **C. Denson** reported on the status of biological sampling activities. At the meeting, Doug Snyder presented a summary of the number of lengths and otoliths collected this year along with yearly targets. The group noted some difficulties in gathering biological data for greater amberjack, vermilion snapper, gray triggerfish, and grouper. The Subcommittee discussed difficulties in obtaining triggerfish spines from the commercial sector due to perceived fish mutilation. Commercial data collection for striped mullet and sheepshead is expected to pick up as they are entering the primary harvesting seasons for these species. Biological data from Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas from 2002 through 2006 has been loaded in the FIN data management system. FIN is currently awaiting data from Florida for 2005 and 2006 and from Mississippi for 2006. Dr. Sandra Diamond with the University of Western Sydney submitted a request for the collection of eye lenses with the collection of otoliths. Her group is examining the possibility of using eye lenses to age fish. She is requesting that lenses be forwarded to her along with age data from the corresponding processed otolith. The group requested that Dr. Diamond submit more detailed information addressing collection procedures, targeted species and the quantity of lenses needed per species. The Subcommittee was asked to examine the feasibility of loading metadata concerning fisheries-independent data collection programs within each state. The GSMFC gave an update on the biological online data entry program. A beta version is expected to be in place by November for testing. The Subcommittee continues with the compilation of Commercial Fishermen, Dealer and Vessel Information, but problems with data access between state agencies continue to hinder the development of this project. The Subcommittee continues to discuss coding issues regarding trip ticket data. It was agreed that a meeting would be held at the beginning of next year to review the submitted data and address the coding issues of each state. The pilot survey for the collection of recreational fishing effort using state fishing license data is ongoing. Missing or invalid telephone numbers have slowed the progress of this program. Funding for this pilot survey has been extended through December 2008. Michelle Kasprzak presented preliminary results for the detailed crab effort pilot survey conducted in Louisiana. The results indicated that when coupled with trip ticket data, the detailed effort data proved to be a useful tool to fisheries managers. The Commission asked each state to explore the feasibility of adding a link on each state's web site directing users to the FIN data management system. The idea is to increase public usage of the FIN DMS as a centralized data repository for the Gulf of Mexico. The Subcommittee reviewed the current status of metadata entry into the system using InPort. Only metadata for the Commission and Mississippi have been published for public access at this time. Chris Denson was elected Chairman of the TCC Data Management Subcommittee and Vicki Swann was elected Vice-Chairman.

Artificial Reef – **D. Rice** stated that the Joint Artificial Reef Subcommittee of the Gulf and Atlantic states met September 11-12, 2007 in Panama City Beach, Florida. At that meeting the Joint Subcommittee addressed the issue of drafting an Artificial Reef Monitoring document (or annotated bibliography) to highlight basic monitoring strategies and practices for the Gulf and Atlantic states, to create and update an Artificial Reef Program website hosted by GSMFC, and to synthesize basic information for each states artificial reef program to be included in the website. The next meeting of the Subcommittee is scheduled for September or October 2008. Tentative issues addressed at that meeting will be: to establish a Monitoring Working Group, to

continue revising the artificial reef program website, to discuss footprint delineation standards, and to identify funding sources for state artificial reef programs.

Habitat – **J. Rester** reported that the Subcommittee discussed a freshwater inflow brochure that would be produced in conjunction with the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The brochure would target water managers and discuss how water managers far upstream can have impacts on downstream estuaries. Jeff Rester provided an update on the Commission's bottom mapping project. This project is in its final stages. The project should be completed by the end of the year. Heather Finley from Louisiana was elected as Chairman of the TCC Habitat Subcommittee and Doug Frugé was elected Vice-Chairman.

Anadromous – **D. Frugé** reported that the Anadromous Subcommittee did not meet at this meeting and has not met since last fall's meeting in New Orleans. They anticipate meeting in February of next year. However, the Subcommittee did deal with an issue, in the interim, involving a preliminary proposal by the State of Florida to change their striped bass bag and size limits in the Florida Panhandle. The regulations currently mirror the GSMFC striped bass FMP recommendations, but the proposal was to make the rules more liberal. The Subcommittee voted by e-mail on a motion that the GSMFC send a letter to the state reiterating the FMP recommendation. However, subsequent to that time the state decided not to pursue the changed proposal pending further discussions with other Gulf states, the FWS, NOAA Fisheries, and the GSMFC regarding the issue. So no further action was needed on the Subcommittee's motion. The next meeting is scheduled for February 2008 in Apalachicola, Florida.

Election of Chairman

S. Heath nominated C. Perret for TCC Chairman. C. Perret was elected Chairman with J. Roussel serving as Vice-Chairman.

Other Business

B. Zales brought to the TCC's attention a move by the Center for Environmental Quality (CEQ), who reports directly to the President of the United States and the Sanctuaries Department under NOS to create a network of sanctuaries in the Gulf of Mexico by a single act of the President. It has created concern for fisheries managers in the Gulf with regard to the process.

Many were concerned that this process may be used to circumvent the normal process of establishing marine sanctuaries.

C. Perret stated that this issue will be brought to the full Commission.

With no other business the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.