

ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

OCTOBER 1, 2009 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2010

SEAMAP Subcommittee

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October 8, 2010

GSMFC No: 187

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INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) is a State/Federal/university program for collection, management, and dissemination of fishery-independent data and information in the southeastern United States. The program presently consists of three operational components: SEAMAP-Gulf of Mexico, which began in 1981; SEAMAP-South Atlantic, implemented in 1983; and SEAMAP-Caribbean, formed in 1988.

Each SEAMAP component operates independently, planning and conducting surveys and information dissemination in accordance with administrative policies and guidelines of the National Marine Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office (SERO).

Federal programmatic funding for SEAMAP activities and administration was appropriated in Federal Fiscal Years 1985-2010 (October 1 through September 30). State and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) funding allocations for FY1985-FY2010 were handled through State/Federal cooperative agreements, administered by SERO and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

In FY2010, SEAMAP operations continued for the twenty-ninth consecutive year. SEAMAP resource surveys included the Fall Plankton Survey, Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Winter Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Spring Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Winter Plankton Survey, Spring Plankton Survey, Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Reefish Survey, Inshore Longline Survey, Vertical Longline Survey, and plankton and environmental data surveys. Other FY2010 activities included SEAMAP information services and program management.

This report is the twenty-seventh in a series of annual SEAMAP Subcommittee reports to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. It is intended to inform the TCC of SEAMAP-Gulf of Mexico activities and accomplishments during FY2010 and proposed SEAMAP activities for FY2011.

Appreciation is gratefully extended to the staff of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission for their considerable assistance in the preparation of this document.

FY2010 SEAMAP RESOURCE SURVEYS

The surveys conducted during the year address distinct regional needs and priorities and provide information concerning the marine resources in the Gulf of Mexico. Other activities included SEAMAP information services and program management.

Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey

The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted from September 22 to November 20, 2009, from off Tampa, Florida to the U.S.-Mexican border. Five hundred forty-one stations were sampled

during the survey. Vessels sampled waters out to 60 fm with trawls and plankton nets in addition to environmental sampling. The objectives of the survey were to:

- (1) sample the northern Gulf of Mexico to determine abundance and distribution of demersal organisms from inshore waters to 60 fm;
- (2) obtain length-frequency measurements for major finfish and shrimp species to determine population size structures;
- (3) collect environmental data to investigate potential relationships between abundance and distribution of organisms and environmental parameters; and
- (4) collect ichthyoplankton samples to determine relative abundance and distribution of eggs and larvae of commercially and recreationally important fish species.

NMFS and Louisiana vessels collected ichthyoplankton data with bongo and/or neuston nets at sample sites occurring nearest to half-degree intervals of latitude/longitude. The Polish Sorting and Identification Center will sort the samples. Once sorted, the specimens and data will be archived at the SEAMAP Archiving Center.

Winter and Spring Shrimp/Groundfish Surveys

The Winter Shrimp/Groundfish Survey took place from February 1-28, 2010. One hundred nineteen stations were sampled by Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas during the survey that used protocols similar to the other shrimp/groundfish surveys. A new Spring Shrimp/Groundfish Survey also took place from April 16-19, 2010 collecting data at 33 stations.

Spring Plankton Survey

The SEAMAP Spring Plankton Survey took place from April 3 to May 23, 2010. NMFS collected ichthyoplankton samples at 87 SEAMAP stations. This was the twenty-ninth 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.

Plankton samples were taken with standard SEAMAP bongo and neuston samplers. The bongo sampler consisted of two conical 61-cm nets with 333-micron mesh. Tows were oblique, surface to near bottom (or 200 m) and back to surface. A mechanical flowmeter is mounted off-center in the mouth of each bongo net to record the volume of water filtered. Volume filtered ranges from approximately 20 to 600 m³ but is typically 30 to 40 m³ at the shallowest stations and 300 to 400 m³ at the deepest stations. A single or double 2x1 m pipe frame neuston net fitted with 0.947 mm mesh netting is towed at the surface with the frame half-submerged for 10 minutes. Samples are taken upon arrival on station regardless of time of day. At each station either a bongo and/or neuston tow are made depending on the specific survey. Preservation protocol called for the right bongo samples to be preserved in 10% formalin and then transferred to fresh 95% ethanol after 36 hours. The

original standard SEAMAP method of initial preservation in 10% formalin for 48 hours was changed to 36 hours in order to improve long term storage for genetic analysis. The left bongo and neuston samples are initially preserved in 95% ethanol and then transferred to fresh 95% ethanol after 24 hours. In addition, hydrographic data (surface chlorophylls, salinity, temperature and dissolved oxygen from surface, midwater and near bottom, and Forel-ule color) were collected at all stations.

Right bongo and neuston samples collected from SEAMAP stations were transshipped to the Polish Sorting and Identification Center. Left bongo samples were archived at the SEAMAP Invertebrate Plankton Archiving Center (SIPAC).

Inshore Longline Survey

This nearshore survey complements an existing long-term fisheries independent survey currently being conducted by NMFS, by targeting shark species within the shallow waters of the north central Gulf of Mexico. The objectives of the survey are to collect information on coastal shark abundances and distribution with a 1-mile longline and to collect environmental data. During FY2010, Mississippi sampled twelve stations in October 2009. Mississippi also sampled thirty-four stations from March to September 2010. Texas sampled 25 stations from March through September 2010, while Alabama sampled 20 stations during the same period.

Vertical Longline Survey

In 2010, Alabama started a new vertical longline survey to sample reef fish over artificial reefs and other areas. A total of 12 grids are fished per survey. Two structure and two non-structure areas are randomly chosen and equally allocated across three depth strata. Vertical longline reels are randomly baited with either Atlantic mackerel or squid. Soak time is five minutes. Fish may be retained and processed for age and fecundity. All fish are sacrificed for otoliths at stations deeper than 60 m. In water depth less than 60 m, stations may be assigned as tag and release or collection sites. Two hundred thirteen sets were completed in April, May, and June of this year.

Reeffish Survey

The primary purpose of this survey was to assess relative abundance and compute population estimates of reeffish found on natural reeffish habitat in the Gulf of Mexico. Video stereo cameras were used during the survey since they enabled the measurement of length frequencies. Each stereo camera contained paired black-and-white Video stereo still cameras along with a color mpeg camera in a cylindrical pressure housing. Four of these were mounted in a camera array and were positioned orthogonally with the center of the camera mounted 51 cm above the bottom of the array. A chevron fish trap, that measured 1.83 x 1.83 x 0.75 meters with 3.81-cm mesh, was used to capture fish for ageing and other life history studies. Both the fish trap and camera array were baited with squid. The camera array was allowed to soak on the bottom for 30 minutes, and the fish trap soaked for one hour. In August 2010, Florida sampled 32 stations on the west Florida shelf. NMFS conducted reeffish sampling in March through June 2010.

Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey

The overall sampling strategy during the 2010 SEAMAP summer survey 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. The Survey was conducted from May 31 to August 26, 2010. Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and NMFS sampled 457 trawl stations during the survey. This was the twenty-ninth year for the survey. In addition, NMFS and Louisiana vessels collected ichthyoplankton data.

Objectives of the survey were to:

- (1) monitor size and distribution of penaeid shrimp during or prior to migration of brown shrimp from bays to the open Gulf;
- (2) aid in evaluating the “Texas Closure” management measure of the Gulf Council's Shrimp Fishery Management Plan; and
- (3) provide information on shrimp and groundfish stocks across the northern Gulf of Mexico from inshore waters to 50 fm.

Fall Plankton Survey

The Fall Plankton cruise took place from August 24 through September 29, 2010. NMFS sampled 159 stations, Mississippi sampled 13 stations, and Louisiana sampled seven stations. 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.

Plankton samples were taken with standard SEAMAP bongo and neuston samplers. The bongo sampler consisted of two conical 61-cm nets with 333-micron mesh. Tows were oblique, surface to near bottom (or 200 m) and back to surface. A mechanical flowmeter is mounted off-center in the mouth of each bongo net to record the volume of water filtered. Volume filtered ranges from approximately 20 to 600 m³ but is typically 30 to 40 m³ at the shallowest stations and 300 to 400 m³ at the deepest stations. A single or double 2x1 m pipe frame neuston net fitted with 0.947 mm mesh netting is towed at the surface with the frame half-submerged for 10 minutes. Samples are taken upon arrival on station regardless of time of day. At each station either a bongo and/or neuston tow are made depending on the specific survey. Samples are routinely preserved in 5 to 10 % formalin and later transferred after 36 hours to 95 % ethanol for long term storage. During some surveys selected samples are preserved initially in 95 % ethanol and later transferred to fresh ethanol. In addition, hydrographic data (surface chlorophylls, salinity, temperature and dissolved oxygen from surface, midwater and near bottom, and Forel-ule color) were collected at all stations.

Right bongo and neuston samples collected from SEAMAP stations will be transshipped to the Polish Sorting and Identification Center. Left bongo samples will be archived at the SEAMAP Invertebrate Plankton Archiving Center (SIPAC).

INFORMATION SERVICES

Information from the SEAMAP activities is provided to user groups through the program administration and three complementary systems: the SEAMAP Information System, SEAMAP Archiving Center, and SIPAC. Products resulting from SEAMAP activities can be grouped into two major categories: data sets (including broadly, digital data and collected specimens) managed by the SEAMAP Information System, SEAMAP Archiving Center and SIPAC; and program information. Program information is discussed in the *PROGRAM MANAGEMENT* Section of this report.

SEAMAP Information System

Biological and environmental data from all SEAMAP-Gulf surveys are included in the SEAMAP Information System, managed in conjunction with NMFS-SEFSC. Raw data are edited by the collecting agency and verified by the SEAMAP Data Manager prior to entry into the system. Data from all SEAMAP-Gulf surveys during 1982-2009 have been entered into the system and data from 2010 surveys are in the process of being verified, edited, and entered for storage and retrieval. Verified, non-confidential SEAMAP data are available conditionally to all requesters, although the highest priority is assigned to SEAMAP participants.

Requested SEAMAP data were used for a multitude of purposes in 2010:

- Evaluating the abundance and size distribution of penaeid shrimp in federal and state waters to assist in determining opening and closing dates for commercial fisheries;
- Evaluating and plotting the size of the hypoxic (Dead Zone) area off of Louisiana;
- Assessing shrimp and groundfish abundance and distribution and their relationship to such environmental parameters as temperature, salinity, and dissolved oxygen;
- Identifying environmental parameters associated with concentrations of larval finfish;
- Assessing the potential impact the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on marine fish stocks;
- Compiling the 2010 SEAMAP Environmental and Biological Atlas; and
- Comparing catches of shrimp and groundfish captured by 40-ft versus 20-ft trawl nets.

Real-time Data

A major function of the SEAMAP Information System is the processing of catch data from the Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey as near-real-time data. Data were transmitted to the NMFS Mississippi Laboratories from the NOAA vessel, while the states' data were entered into the system weekly. Plots of station locations and catch rates of shrimp, squid and dominant finfish species were prepared, edited, and processed by GSMFC for weekly distribution to management agencies,

fishermen, processors and researchers. SEAMAP real-time data plots were produced during the 2010 Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. Six weekly mailings were produced and distributed to approximately 150 interested individuals. These plots were also available through the SEAMAP web page.

SEAMAP Archiving Center

Larval fish and fish eggs are sorted to the lowest taxa level possible at the Polish Sorting and Identification Center of the Sea Fisheries Institute in Szczecin and Gdynia. The specimens are then returned to the SEAMAP Archiving Center (SAC) for archiving and loan to researchers. Over the last year, 28,116 lots of specimens were returned from the Polish Sorting and Identification Center and 21,897 new lots have been added to the SEAMAP Access database. The specimens cataloged this year represent 18 orders, 126 families, 235 genera and 245 species.

The SEAMAP Archiving Center is managed in conjunction with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) in St. Petersburg, Florida. The SAC processes specimen loans, requests for associated plankton data, and requests for data clarification. Sixty-nine requests have been accommodated this year to forty-three different researchers at both the state and federal level.

SEAMAP Invertebrate Plankton Archiving Center

The SEAMAP Invertebrate Plankton Archiving Center (SIPAC) is in its twenty-sixth year of operation. Sara LeCroy at the USM/GCRL Museum currently serves as the SIPAC curator. The overall mission of the SIPAC is to archive and manage the large collection of plankton samples acquired during SEAMAP cruises and to obtain specimens and/or data on selected invertebrate larval stages from those samples.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf coast, severely damaging the building at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in which the SIPAC samples were housed. The room containing these samples was breached by the storm surge and many samples were washed out into the surrounding area. Although some samples were destroyed, many were not, and as a result of post-Katrina recovery efforts, 4,896 of the 9,010 archived samples (54%) have been reclaimed and re-archived. An additional 4,147 small vials containing partially or completely identified invertebrate plankton material have also been recovered, representing 58% of the original 7,177 samples archived prior to Katrina. These have all been cleaned, inventoried, provided with fresh alcohol, and re-archived.

During the past year, an additional 264 bongo samples have been added to the archive, which, combined with the 4,896 recovered samples and the 960 samples deposited since Katrina, brings the total number of plankton samples currently housed at the SIPAC to 6,120. The number of samples on loan remains at 975. The 197 boxes of plankton samples that were acquired last year remain in temporary storage in the invertebrate prep room and visitor's office space. These samples will be transferred to smaller jars and recorded, and the remaining dehydrated samples will be discarded, as time permits. The useable samples will then be incorporated into the SIPAC collection.

In an effort to keep the space required to house the SIPAC collection of unsorted plankton samples to a minimum, samples that have been in the collection for over 10 years and duplicate samples sorted and received from the Polish Sorting and Identification Center, are aliquoted to ¼ their original volume and placed into 100 ml vials, as necessary. When possible, the remaining ¾ aliquots are donated to educational institutions for use as teaching materials. If the remaining sample must be discarded, sample jars are cleaned and returned to NMFS-Pascagoula for reuse. To date, approximately 2,264 samples collected from 1982-1988 have been aliquoted and prepared for long-term storage; of these, at least 900 (40%) were recovered post-Katrina. Because there is very little free space in the area currently being used to store the samples, further aliquoting of older samples to reduce the space required for storage will be necessary.

During the next year, the SIPAC will continue to manage SEAMAP invertebrate plankton collections, accession samples, and provide available samples, data, and specimens from the collection to qualified researchers as requested. As the Katrina recovery process nears completion, the focus of the SIPAC personnel is shifting to participation in a multi-institutional project funded through the Northern Gulf Institute, entitled “Identifying linkages between zooplankton dynamics, fishery resources, and climate change in the northern Gulf of Mexico.” Part of this project entails the use of SIPAC samples to develop scanning protocols for the analysis and digital archiving of zooplankton samples (LSU) and the identification of the larvae of commercially important decapod crustacean taxa from selected SEAMAP cruises (GCRL/SIPAC). This information, as well as data obtained from archived partially identified decapod material in the SIPAC collection, will be added to the SEAMAP plankton database maintained by the NMFS Pascagoula Laboratory. In addition, during the course of the project, plankton samples previously sorted for fish larvae and archived at the Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia, Poland, will be returned to the U.S. and used to fill gaps in the SIPAC holdings caused by losses sustained because of Hurricane Katrina. The first shipment of these samples has arrived in Pascagoula and will be delivered to the SIPAC in October 2010.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The SEAMAP program is administered by the SEAMAP Subcommittee of the TCC through the SEAMAP Coordinator, who is under the technical direction of the Subcommittee Chairman and administrative supervision of the GSMFC Executive Director.

Personnel associated with SEAMAP program management include the Coordinator, Data Manager, SEAMAP Archiving Center Curator, SIPAC Curator and the Program Monitor from NMFS-Pascagoula Laboratory.

Planning

Major SEAMAP-Gulf Subcommittee meetings were held in October 2009 and March 2010 in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the GSMFC. All meetings included participation by various work group leaders, the Coordinator, the Program Monitor, and other GSMFC staff. Representatives

from the Gulf program also met with the South Atlantic and Caribbean representatives in August 2010 to discuss respective program needs and priorities for FY2011.

Coordination of program surveys and distribution of quick-report summaries of a Gulf-wide survey to management agencies and industry were major functions of SEAMAP management in 2010. Other important management activities included coordinating data provision and specimen loans, preparing publications and documents and assisting in the preparation of State/Federal cooperative agreements, including amendments to permit extension of activities previously not detailed in the agreements.

Information Dissemination

The following documents were published and distributed during this reporting period:

- *2010 SEAMAP Marine Directory*. Inventories of marine agency contacts (State, Federal and university) concerned with fishery research in the Gulf of Mexico, and summaries of information provided by these organizations: target species, types of fishery-independent sampling gear and platforms, annual sampling effort, and other materials.
- *SEAMAP Subcommittee Report to the GSMFC Technical Coordinating Committee - October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009*. A detailed summary of program accomplishments, emphasizing survey design, material collected data dissemination, budget information, and future survey activities.
- *Annual Report of the SEAMAP Program - October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009*. A summary of FY2009 activities and proposed FY2010 events for the SEAMAP-Gulf, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Programs.
- *SEAMAP Environmental and Biological Atlas of the Gulf of Mexico 2004*. A summary of the 2004 SEAMAP surveys.
- *SEAMAP Environmental and Biological Atlas of the Gulf of Mexico 2005*. A summary of the 2005 SEAMAP surveys.
- *SEAMAP Environmental and Biological Atlas of the Gulf of Mexico 2006*. A summary of the 2006 SEAMAP surveys.
- *SEAMAP Environmental and Biological Atlas of the Gulf of Mexico 2007*. A summary of the 2007 SEAMAP surveys.

Proposed 2011 Activities

Preliminary 2011 SEAMAP-Gulf budget allocations are shown in Table 3. Last year, total program allocations for all three SEAMAP components, Gulf, South Atlantic and Caribbean, was approximately \$5.09 million. At the August meeting, the SEAMAP components based their

allocations for 2011 on level funding. At this level, the share to be allocated for SEAMAP-Gulf activities (including GSMFC) will be \$2,068,331. Proposed FY2011 activities for all Gulf participants are shown in Table 4.

FY2010 Financial Report

Total allocations for FY2010 program administration were \$259,474. The GSMFC has arranged and paid for all expenses associated with personnel, meetings, travel, and operating expenses to date. The remaining balance will be used to provide administration of the SEAMAP-Gulf program through December 31, 2010.

TABLE 1.

SEAMAP REPRESENTATIVES FOR FY2009

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Gulf Coast Research Laboratory

Myron Fischer
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John Mareska
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Bob McMichael
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Fernando Martinez-Andrade
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Butch Pellegrin
National Marine Fisheries Service
Pascagoula Laboratory

John Froeschke (non-voting)
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

TABLE 2.

SEAMAP WORK GROUP MEMBERS FOR FY2010

ADULT FINFISH WORK GROUP

Terry Henwood
National Marine Fisheries Service
Pascagoula Laboratory

Robert Shipp
University of South Alabama

Leslie Williams
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Rick Leard
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
Council

Bob McMichael
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
Commission

Eric Hoffmayer
University of Southern Mississippi
College of Marine Sciences
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Suzanne Delaune
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and
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Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz
National Marine Fisheries Service
Pascagoula Laboratory

DATA COORDINATING WORK GROUP

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SEAMAP Data Manager
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Butch Pellegrin
National Marine Fisheries Service
Pascagoula Laboratory
Shrimp/Groundfish Work Group

Mike Murphy
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Red Drum Work Group

Terry Henwood
National Marine Fisheries Service
Pascagoula Laboratory
Adult Finfish Work Group

Read Hendon
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Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz
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Pascagoula Laboratory
Plankton Work Group

LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
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ENVIRONMENTAL DATA WORK GROUP

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Bill Balboa
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Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz
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PLANKTON WORK GROUP

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Kim Williams
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Sara LeCroy, Curator
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Harriet Perry
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Mark Benefield
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RED DRUM WORK GROUP

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Bruce Comyns
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Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz
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Natural Resources

Mark Fisher
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REEF FISH WORK GROUP

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Gulf Coast Research Laboratory

Perry Trial
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Bob McMichael
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Commission

Chris Gledhill
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Doug Peter
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SHRIMP/GROUNDFISH WORK GROUP

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Bob McMichael
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
Commission

TABLE 3.**PRELIMINARY 2011 PROGRAMMATIC BUDGET**

	FY2010 Funding
GSMFC	\$259,474
Alabama	\$195,000
Florida	\$530,000
Louisiana	\$447,420
Mississippi	\$469,681
Texas	\$166,756
Total	\$2,068,331

TABLE 4.**PROPOSED SEAMAP-GULF ACTIVITIES, 2011**

	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
Resource Surveys:				
Winter Plankton Survey		X		
Spring Plankton Survey			X	
Shrimp/Groundfish Surveys	X	X		X
Fall Plankton Survey	X			
Plankton & Environmental Data Surveys	X	X	X	X
Inshore Longline Surveys	X		X	X
Florida Trawl Survey				X
Louisiana Inshore Survey	X	X	X	X
Information Operations:				
Biological and Environmental Atlas				X
Marine Directory			X	
Joint Annual Report		X		
Data Input and Request Processing	X	X	X	X
Specimen Archiving and Loan	X	X	X	X
Real-time Data Summaries				X
Program Administration:	X	X	X	X



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