

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
FISHERIES
INFORMATION NETWORK IN
THE SOUTHEAST REGION
(FIN)

JANUARY 1, 2025 - DECEMBER 31, 2025

SEPTEMBER 2026

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WHO WE ARE

The need for a comprehensive and cooperative data collection program has never been greater because of the magnitude of the recreational and commercial fisheries and the differing roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved. Many southeastern stocks targeted by anglers are now depleted, due primarily to excessive harvest, habitat loss, and degradation. The information needs of today's management regimes require data, which are statistically sound, long-term in scope, timely, and comprehensive. A cooperative partnership between state and federal agencies is the most appropriate mechanism to accomplish these goals. The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) is a state-federal cooperative program to collect, manage, and disseminate statistical data and information on the marine commercial and recreational fisheries of the Southeast Region. The scope of GulfFIN includes representation from seven state agencies in the region, NOAA Fisheries, Gulf of America Fishery Management Council, Caribbean Fishery Management Council and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Program Organization

The organizational structure consists of the GulfFIN Committee, two geographic subcommittees (Caribbean and Gulf), standing and ad hoc subcommittees, technical work groups, and administrative support (Figure 1).

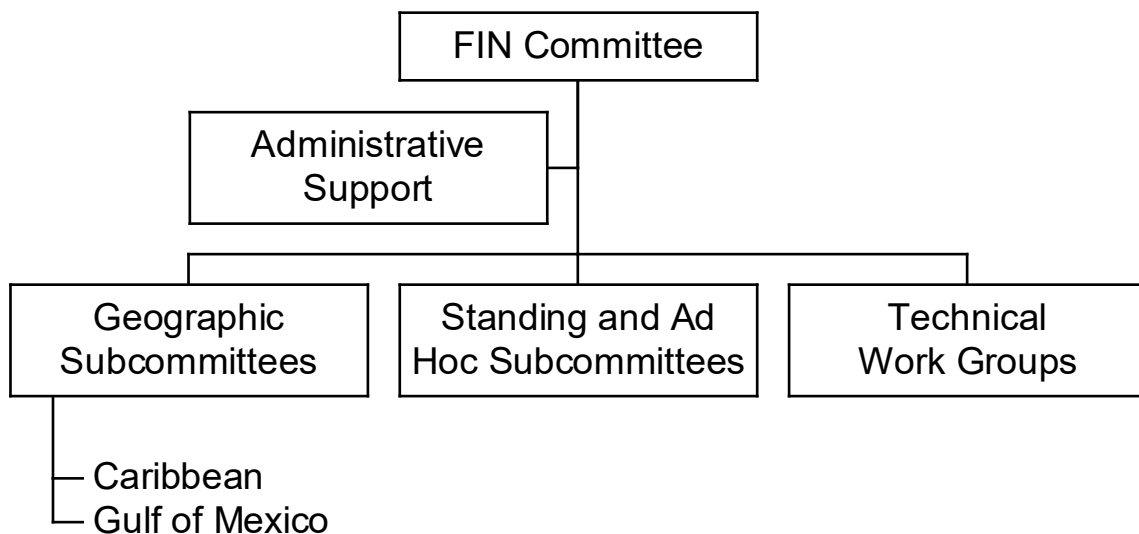


Figure 1. Organizational structure of the FIN.

WHAT WE DO

GulfFIN is a comprehensive program comprised of coordinated data collection activities, an integrated data management and retrieval system, and procedures for information dissemination. Activities during 2025 were associated with addressing issues and problems regarding data

collection and management and developing strategies for dealing with these topics. In addition to committee activities, FIN was involved in various operational activities concerning the collection and management of marine commercial and recreational fisheries data. These activities were conducted by the various state and federal agencies involved in FIN. Each type of activity is discussed below.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data

Marine recreational landings data often provide a direct measure of the effectiveness of management efforts and are important inputs in the stock assessment process. These datasets can also be extremely useful in assessing mortality that results from recreational angling effort. GulfFIN recognizes this need and supports the conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) survey in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. GulfFIN provides coordination of the surveys, an access-point intercept survey (AP AIS) of shore, for-hire and private boat anglers to estimate angler catch using the existing MRIP methodology which is conducted by state biologists. GSMFC staff oversee the quality control of electronic data that is uploaded from port sampler tablets. These data are combined with the NMFS Fishing Effort survey data to allow for estimation of total catch and landings for all species encountered along with total fishing effort estimation as well. The states also conduct weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (east and west coast) charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. GulfFIN also provided partial support for Louisiana Creel field surveys which have been implemented to replace MRIP in Louisiana. GulfFIN also provided financial support to collect enhanced recreational samples in Texas along with supporting Alabama Snapper Check to support ACL monitoring of red snapper. The table below shows the number of dockside assignments and angler interviews the state samplers conducted for each mode.



2025 Numbers of Dockside Assignments and Interviews						
State	Assignments			Interviews		
	SH	CH/PR	Total	SH	CH/PR	Total
Florida - East	263	1041	1304	2256	9114	11370
Florida - West	521	1630	2151	5682	13601	19283
Alabama	123	428	551	2276	5932	8208
Mississippi	97	346	443	183	2005	2188
				CH	PR	Total
Louisiana				7512	17080	24592
Texas (red snapper trips sampled)				244 vessel trips		

2025 For-hire Telephone Survey Response Rates

RESPONDENTS					NONRESPONDENTS					
State	Active eligible	Inactive eligible	Ineligibles	Subtotal	Refusal	Non-contacts number	attempts	No contact possible	Subtotal	Total
Florida										
Region 1	1355	63	162	1580	270	532	5.0	2	804	2384
Region 2	1987	151	92	2230	421	1194	4.8	21	1636	3866
Region 3	791	47	5	843	79	1269	5.0	18	1366	2209
Region 4	725	54	56	835	157	646	4.6	9	812	1647
Region 5	1029	57	93	1179	188	898	4.9	14	1100	2279
FL totals	5887	372	408	6667	1115	4539	4.9	64	5718	12385
Alabama	1140	63	157	1360	161	292	6.1	0	453	1813
Mississippi	291	0	0	291	0	131	6.0	3	134	425
Total	7318	435	565	8318	1276	4962	5.0	67	6305	14623
RESPONDENTS					NONRESPONDENTS					
State	Active eligible	Inactive eligible	Ineligibles	Subtotal	Refusal	Non contacts		No contact possible	Subtotal	Total
Florida										
Region 1	56.8%	2.6%	6.8%	66.3%	11.3%	22.3%		0.1%	33.7%	100.0%
Region 2	51.4%	3.9%	2.4%	57.7%	10.9%	30.9%		0.5%	42.3%	100.0%
Region 3	35.8%	2.1%	0.2%	38.2%	3.6%	57.4%		0.8%	61.8%	100.0%
Region 4	44.0%	3.3%	3.4%	50.7%	9.5%	39.2%		0.5%	49.3%	100.0%
Region 5	45.2%	2.5%	4.1%	51.7%	8.2%	39.4%		0.6%	48.3%	100.0%
FL totals	47.5%	3.0%	3.3%	53.8%	9.0%	36.6%		0.5%	46.2%	100.0%
Alabama	62.9%	3.5%	8.7%	75.0%	8.9%	16.1%		0.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Mississippi	68.5%	0.0%	0.0%	68.5%	0.0%	30.8%		0.7%	31.5%	100.0%
Total	50.0%	3.0%	3.9%	56.9%	8.7%	33.9%		0.5%	43.1%	100.0%

Southeast Region Headboat Sampling

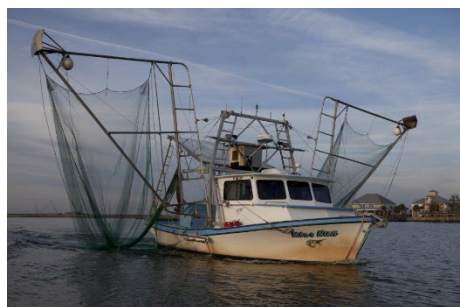
The Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) is administered by the Beaufort Laboratory of the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). The survey has operated along the southeast U.S. Atlantic since 1972 and in the Gulf of America since 1986. Although not directly supported with GulfFIN funding, monies are provided to assist with the port sampling portion of this project. The GSMFC was unable to subcontract with individuals to sample headboat catches in the states of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi due to lack of funding. GSMFC did subcontract with the state of Florida to hire personnel as port agents to intercept headboats and sample their catches dockside. These port agents collect various data such as, length/weight observations on fishes in the headboat catches; otoliths, gonads, and other biological materials from selected species as prioritized. Collectively these port agents sampled 335 trips, measured 11,627 fish and collected 2,905 otoliths and spines from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. Along with dockside sampling duties, port agents

QA\QC vessel trip reports and monitor reporting compliance for each headboat in their area of responsibility. This information is summarized in bi-monthly landings estimates and annual estimates that are used for monitoring Annual Catch Limits (ACL) and stock assessments analyses. The port agents submitted all data, weekly reports, sampling schedules, and other pertinent information to NMFS-Southeast Fisheries Science Center on established deadlines.

STATE	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	NUMBER OF FISH MEASURED	NUMBER OF HARD PARTS
AL	35	1781	351
WFL	300	9846	2554
TOTAL	335	11627	2905

Trip Ticket Program Operations

To fully characterize marine fishery removals, it is necessary to have accurate landings data from the commercial fishery. GulfFIN supports full operation of a commercial trip ticket program to census the commercial landings in the Gulf of America using the data elements and standards developed by the GulfFIN. In addition, GulfFIN provides funding to contract for implementation and operation of an electronic reporting system as well as reporting of data for the quota monitoring and IFQ programs. For 2025, there were approximately 1,496 commercial dealers and processors in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas who were utilizing this program. The new web based VESL system is in production for four Gulf states and Louisiana has begun development of a new system to replace PC Trip Ticket for LA dealers. GulfFIN received approximately 364,687 commercial dealer reports totaling 1,010,359,641.91 million live pounds of commercial product totaling over \$838,445,093.42 million in dockside value in 2025.



Development and Implementation of FIN Data Management System (DMS)

Storage and dissemination of data are a vital component to GulfFIN. Creating a system of secure storage and easy access for state and federal partners to access GulfFIN databases is critical to increasing the amount and quality of data available for science and management. Funding is utilized to support a GulfFIN Data Base Manager and ComFIN Survey Coordinator who will, in conjunction with the ACCSP, work on developing more data modules for the FIN and ACCSP data management systems. This also supports all the hardware and software requirements needed by GulfFIN to implement necessary information technology infrastructure. Responsibilities of staff include further development of data modules structures; routine loading of state commercial catch effort data, Gulf biological data, Gulf recreational data and maintenance of DMS. More information regarding the GulfFIN Data Management System can be found at <https://www.gsmfc.org/fin-dms.php>.

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities

Working closely with the Committee in all aspects of program coordination, administration, and operation was a major function of FIN coordination and administrative support. Other important coordination and administrative activities included but were not limited to: providing coordination and logistical support, including communications and organization of meetings for the Committee, subcommittees, and work groups; serving as liaison between the Committee, other program participants, and other interested organizations; preparing annual operations plans under the direction of the Committee; preparing and/or supervising and coordinating preparation of selected documents, including written records of all meetings; and distributing approved FIN information and data in accordance with accepted policies and procedures.

In 2025 FIN also assisted in the administration of funds to support:

- *Alabama Snapper Check Implementation* – This task provides funding support through GulfFIN to support red snapper monitoring in Alabama. Funding was used to support vessel operator reporting tools along with the implementation and support of an electronic application for collecting dockside validation surveys. Alabama Snapper Check is used to collect data for monitoring the red snapper annual catch limit for Alabama waters. For 2025, ALDCNR estimated 623,029 pounds of red snapper harvested by private boats and state permitted charter vessels. Their annual catch limit was 664,552 pounds of red snapper. They interviewed 1,068 vessels (54.5% with one or more targeted reef fish species) through a dockside survey of sites with offshore fishing activity and received 8,288 landing reports from vessels harvesting red snapper.
- *Early Adopter Shrimp eLB Project* – The objective of this project is to establish an early adopter project for the federal shrimp fishery that responds to efforts for developing modernized shrimp effort data collection program. The hope is to get shrimp vessels equipped with new electronic monitoring devices that provides shrimp fishing effort data back to NOAA Fisheries for the purpose of monitoring the shrimp fishery. Current devices are being phased out due to 3G cellular technology no longer being supported. GSMFC published an RFP and subsequently awarded a subcontract to LGL Ecological Research Associates to administer this project. LGL began the first major campaign to install cVMS on vessels in February 2024, starting in the east and working westward across the Gulf. As of March 2026, LGL has made 186 installations (29 Florida, 9 Alabama, 12 Mississippi, 29 Louisiana, and 107 Texas). There at least another 100 volunteers on a waitlist LGL fully utilized phase 1 funding and has also utilized over 70% of the phase 2 funding. The combined costs for outreach, industry engagement, coordination with cVMS vendors and NOAA Fisheries, the purchases of cVMS units, installation and travel costs resulted in an average cost of ~\$2,896 for each vessel equipped with a cVMS. LGL indicates there are more volunteers than funding to accomplish installations. GSMFC have obtained additional federal funding for a phase 3 program that will likely start once phase 2 funding is

expended in 2027. The possibility exists that LGL could equip between 500 and 800 shrimp vessels depending on the amounts of funding in FY27 and FY28.

- *Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Infrastructure Agreement* – The objective of this work was to 1) hold two workshops focused on investigating novel approaches to collecting recreational effort and released catch data and 2) hold a workshop to develop GulfFIN recreational data standards and develop a pathway toward developing a data warehouse for state survey data at GSMFC. The two workshops involving novel improvements to recreational data collection efforts were held in 2024 and an RFP was published that was seeking roughly \$7M in proposed spending to deploy research in these key areas. GSMFC received 11 projects totaling \$14M in requested funding. Seven proposals were selected by the steering committee. Those projects began January 1, 2026 and will be completed on December 31, 2027. GulfFIN also has funding to support Commission and state data management system improvements. Several proposals were received and are currently being implemented. MDMR is developing a call center for MS Creel effort survey calls, Florida is testing an electronic survey option for their Florida SRFS program, and Texas, Alabama and Florida are working to develop mobile data collection applications for dockside surveyors. All of this work is set to be completed on or before December 31, 2027.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

FIN Committee

The GulfFIN Committee met in October 2025 in conjunction with the GSMFC Annual Meeting. There were a variety of important issues addressed. This meeting fell during the 2025 federal government shutdown so several topics were tabled with no federal staff members present. The issues discussed during the meeting included:

- An update on the AL and MS Creel survey transition research
- Update on the development of a state recreational survey data warehouse at GSMFC
- An update on SEFHIER Development Discussions from Gulf Council staff;
- Discussion about the need and mechanics for developing a deepwater grouper reporting application
- Updates on the progress of VESL commercial trip ticket reporting program development including a presentation on the LA Wallet Trip Ticket project;

Subcommittees and Work Groups

The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee met in October 2025 in conjunction with the

October GSMFC Fall Meeting to determine the activities for inclusion in the 2026 FIN cooperative agreement; to discuss and approve 2026 SEAMAP funding; to receive an update on the IJ State Research Funding for 2026; to discuss and approve the next IJF species for profile development; to receive the Menhaden Advisory Committee report; a presentation on the young fisherman's program helping get new participants in the commercial fishing industry; and an update on GSMFC state recreational data warehouse. The committee also reviewed and approved their standard operating procedures document.

Information Dissemination

Committee members and staff provided program information via a variety of different methods such as distribution of program documents, presentation to various groups interested in the FIN, and via the Internet:

- FIN Committee. 2025. *GulfFIN Recreational Data Standards and Data Warehouse Workshop (FIN) February 4-5, 2025*. No. 334 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 24 pp.
- FIN Committee. 2024. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024*. No. 333 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 14 pp.
- FIN Committee. 2024. *Red Snapper Recreational Discard Data Quality Improvement Workshop (FIN) July 30-August 1, 2024*. No. 332 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 22 pp.
- FIN Committee. 2024. *Recreational Fishing Effort Estimation Improvement Workshop (FIN) January 4-6, 2024*. No. 331 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 20 pp.
- FIN Committee. 2023. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023*. No. 324 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 29 pp.
- FIN Committee. 2022. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022*. No. 323 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 30 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2021. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021*. No. 315 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 37 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2020. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020*. No. 309 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 38 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2019. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019*. No. 303 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 34 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2019. *2019 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 290 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 20 pp + appendix.

- FIN Committee. 2018. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2018*. No. 289 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 43 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2018. *2018 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 273 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 26 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2017. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2017 - December 31, 2017*. No. 277 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 51 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2016. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016*. No. 272 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 51 pp + appendices.
- *Current Issues Facing Recreational Fisheries Management*. No. 271 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 13pp.
- FIN Committee. 2017. *2017 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 252 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 26 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2016. *2016 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 251 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 26 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2015. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2015 - December 31, 2015*. No. 250 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 53 pp + appendices.
- FIN Committee. 2015. *2015 Operations Plan for Fisheries Information Network (FIN)*. No. 232 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 29 pp + appendix.
- FIN Committee. 2014. *Annual Report of the Fisheries Information Network for the Southeastern United States (FIN) January 1, 2014 - December 31, 2014*. No. 248 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Ocean Springs. 22 pp + appendices.
- Variety of informal discussions occurred throughout the year during ASMFC, GSMFC, NMFS, and other participating agencies meetings and workshops.
- The FIN has developed a data management system that provides access to commercial and recreational data for the Gulf States. There are two levels of access: confidential and non-confidential and users can request access via the FIN DMS web site (www.gsmfc.org/data.html)
- NMFS provides a user-friendly data management system (DMS) for the MRIP that is accessible via the web (www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/index.html)

- GSMFC has developed a home page that provides programmatic and operational information regarding FIN.

If you are interested in any of the documents, they are available upon request from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission office.

TABLE 1. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR GulfFIN IN 2023 – 2025

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
Planning, Management, and Evaluation			
Operations plans			
B1-Development of annual operations plans	X	X	X
B2-Development of Funding Initiatives to Establish Marine Recreational Fisheries Surveys	X	X	X
Information dissemination			
B3-Disseminate Program Information	X	X	X
B4-Coordinate with ACCSP and NMFS to develop outreach/education materials	X	X	X
B4-Use Internet communications	X	X	X
Program review			
B5-Conduct periodic FIN strategic planning	X		
Data Collection			
Operational activities			
A1-Operation of Trip Ticket Programs	X	X	X
A2-Design, Implementation, Maintenance of Data Management System	X	X	X
A3-Collection of Recreational Fisheries Data	X	X	X
Quality control/assurance			
B7-Otolith Processors Training Workshops	X	X	X
B8-Review of commercial QA/QC standards	X	X	
B10-Expand approach for validating commercial conversion factors	X	X	X
B11-Review of recreational QA/QC standards			X
Coordination of data collection			
B9-Evaluate biological sampling strategies	X	X	
B11-Development of recreational data standards	X	X	X
B13-Explore Strategies for In-Season Quota Monitoring	X	X	X
B14-Improve Timeliness of Data to Support Quota Monitoring	X	X	X
Innovative collection technology			
B12-Evaluate innovative data collection technologies	X	X	X
Data Management			
Hardware/software capabilities			
B15-Review hardware/software capabilities	X	X	X
Innovative data management technology			
B12-Evaluate innovative data management technologies	X	X	X
Development of National Program			
Long-term and coordination with other programs planning			
B16-Implementation of Long-Term National Planning	X	X	X
B17-Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X

TABLE 2. FIN COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2025

Nicole Beckham
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Alan Lowther
NOAA Fisheries
SEFSC Miami

Chris Bradshaw
Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Marie Head
Alabama Marine Resources Division

Gregg Bray
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Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

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