

2020 Operations Plan
for the
Fisheries Information Network
in the Southeastern United States
FIN

by: FIN Committee

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**2020 Operations Plan for the
Fisheries Information Network in the
Southeastern United States (FIN)**

January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020

I. INTRODUCTION

The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) establishes a state-federal cooperative program to collect, manage, and disseminate statistical data and information on the commercial and recreational fisheries of the Southeast Region. The FIN is comprised of a commercial fisheries component and the recreational fisheries component.

The FIN is a cooperative state-federal marine commercial and recreational fisheries data collection program. It is intended to coordinate present and future marine commercial and recreational fisheries data collection and data management activities through cooperative planning, innovative uses of statistical theory and design, and consolidation of appropriate data into a useful data base system. This operations plan implements the FIN Framework Plan for 2020. All tasks will be completed dependent upon availability of funds.

II. MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of the FIN is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial and recreational fisheries statistical data and information for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Southeast Region and to support the development and operation of a national program.

The goals of the FIN are:

- To plan, manage, and evaluate data collection and management activities;
- To implement data collection activities;
- To establish and maintain a data management system; and
- To support the establishment of a national program.

The goals and objectives of FIN are found in Appendix A.

III. OPERATIONS

A. Operational Activities

The tasks below cover all 2020 objectives (see Appendix A). A “C” denotes a commercial activity; an “R” denotes a recreational activity; and an “F” denotes a commercial/recreational activity.

Task A1: Operation of Trip Ticket Programs (Goal 2, Objective 4) (C)

Objective: Operation of trip ticket program for the Southeast Region.
Team Members: Gulf States and Commercial Technical Work Group
Approach: For Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, this task will provide funding for the operation of their trip ticket programs. In addition, GSMFC will contract with Bluefin Data to implement and maintain electronic trip ticket reporting for Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Accomplished by meetings, telephone, and mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.
Resources: Operational and implementation costs, telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.
Product: Gulf-wide trip ticket program
Schedule: Operations of trip ticket will continue in 2020 for Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

Task A2: Design, Implementation and Maintenance of Data Management System (Goal 3, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: To design, implement, and maintain a marine commercial and recreational fisheries data management system to accommodate fishery management/research and other needs (e.g., trade and tourism).
Team Members: FIN and ACCSP program partners, GSMFC Systems Administrator, SEAMAP/FIN Oracle DBA, and ComFIN Programmer/Survey Coordinator
Approach: The FIN will continue to develop the Data Management System (DMS) including the development of standard protocols and documentation for data formats, input, editing, quality control, storage, access, transfer, dissemination, and application. The ComFIN Programmer/Survey Coordinator will continue to receive routine delivery of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida trip ticket data into the FIN DMS. The Oracle DBA will also maintain the historical data in the system and provide support of outside users of the system. In addition to the commercial data,

regular loads of recreational and biological data into the DMS will be accomplished. FIN will continue to work in conjunction with the ACCSP to ensure compatibility and comparability between the programs.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.
Product: FIN data management system
Schedule: Routine delivery and loading of data will continue in 2020.

Task A3: Collection of Recreational Fisheries Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)

Objective: Collection of recreational fisheries data in the Gulf of Mexico.
Team Members: Gulf States, GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries
Approach: This task will provide for the conduct of the MRIP survey in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida for shore, for-hire, and private modes. This task will provide for coordination of the survey, an intercept survey of shore, for-hire and private boat anglers to estimate angler catch using the existing MRIP methodology, and entry of the data. The states will also conduct weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. NOAA Fisheries will produce expanded estimates using cleaned data provided via GSMFC of catch and effort by wave using the existing MRIP methodology. This also provides partial support for LA Creel Program which was implemented to replace MRIP in Louisiana. Where possible, the Committee will work with the ACCSP to ensure comparability and compatibility between the two programs.

Resources: Operational costs, travel/meeting costs, mail costs, and staff time.
Product: Collection of recreational fisheries data for the Gulf of Mexico.
Schedule: This is an on-going task.

B. Committee Activities (see Section E for Committee and Work Group membership)

The tasks below cover all 2020 objectives (see Appendix A). A “C” denotes a commercial activity; an “R” denotes a recreational activity; and an “F” denotes a commercial/recreational activity.

Task B1: Development of Annual Operations Plan, 2020 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Develop 2020 Annual Operations Plan including identification of available resources that implements the Framework Plan.
Team Members: FIN Committee
Approach: Through meetings and email, the Committee will develop and complete an Annual Operations Plan for 2020.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.
Product: 2020 Annual Operations Plan.
Schedule: Annual Operations Plan will be drafted by fall 2020 and addressed by the Committee at the March 2020 meeting.

Task B2: Development of Funding Initiatives to Establish Marine Recreational Fisheries (MRF) Surveys (Goal 1, Objective 3) (R)

Objective: Support the establishment of long-term, comprehensive MRF surveys in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.
Team Members: The Recreational Technical Work Group/NOAA Fisheries/GSMFC
Approach: The Work Group has been working on this issue for several years. In 2000, the MRFSS was re-established in the U.S. Caribbean, although there were severe problems with attracting and retaining reliable intercept interviewers in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Sampling in Puerto Rico began in 2001 however this only lasted for the 2001 sampling season. In 2012, the GSMFC reinstated the coordination and administration of the recreational data collection activities in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately in 2014 GSMFC discontinued coordinating recreational data collection due to difficulties in obtaining support staff from Puerto Rico DNER and inability of PRDNER staff to adhere to new MRIP methods. An MRIP Implementation Team for the Caribbean was established in 2016 and the GulfFIN Program Manager participated in those discussions to develop sampling priorities for that region.
Resources: Travel, copy and mailing expenses and staff time.
Product: Develop a long-term MRF surveys for the Caribbean.
Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B3: Dissemination of Program Information (Goal 1, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Distribute program information to cooperators and interested parties.
Team Members: FIN Committee and staff
Approach: The Committee will distribute program information to cooperators and interested parties. Each committee member is responsible for maintaining a list of information distributed and providing that list to the staff. In addition, the MRIP staff has developed a home page where users are able to access the MRIP data for their use. The user is able to specify the area, species, gear, etc. that he/she is interested in obtaining. Also, the GSMFC has developed a home page that includes information concerning the FIN. The GulfFIN Committee has identified creating more effective outreach materials for FIN

stakeholders as a priority for 2020.

Resources: Copy and mailing expenses and staff time.

Product: Improve and update information being disseminated through GSMFC website specific to GulfFIN. Results-oriented tables were included in the FIN Annual Report in 2009 and will continue in 2020. GSMFC Program Manager will look for ways to further improve the annual report.

Schedule: This task will be an ongoing activity.

Task B4: Implementation of Outreach Program (Goal 1, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Implement an outreach program for FIN.

Team Members: FIN Outreach Work Group/FIN Committee

Approach: The FIN Committee has identified improved program outreach as a high priority task. FIN Committee members have identified improved website information, more frequent presentations at commission and council meetings summarizing current FIN actions, and producing joint press releases between partner agencies.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: FIN outreach program

Schedule: The FIN Committee will be holding quarterly conference calls in 2020 to discuss specific changes and improvements.

Task B5: Define Partner Needs and Requirements (Goal 2, Objective 1) (F)

Objective: Survey state and federal GulfFIN partners to determine current needs for data collection, quality control, and data management.

Team Members: State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee/FIN Committee

Approach: To promote improvements in data collection activities and improve the GulfFIN Data Management System, GulfFIN needs to survey its state and federal partners to determine and define each partner's data needs. Recent strategic planning sessions were a good method for obtaining input on needs from state and federal partners. It's likely that continuing that approach every 3 years would be the most successful way to obtain this information.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Develop a list of partner needs and research focus for data collection, quality control, and data management that can be used to guide future improvements.

Schedule: FIN Committee subgroup is working on this topic in 2020 to begin discussions on approach and timeline.

Task B6: Port Samplers Workshops (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Convene workshops of state and federal port samplers to discuss commercial data collection activities

Team Members: State and federal commercial port samplers and GSMFC and NOAA Fisheries

Approach: In an effort to provide a forum for discussing various issues concerning commercial data collection activities, the FIN Committee decided to convene workshops of state and federal port agents. The Gulf of Mexico workshop will be attended by the state and federal port agents from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, NOAA Fisheries and GSMFC staff as well as other interested personnel. In addition to commercial issues, the group will also dedicate some time to discuss biological sampling issues. Some of the suggested topics for these meetings include species identification workshops, trip ticket information, sampling and sub-sampling techniques and other pertinent topics.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Provide a forum for field personnel to discuss problems and issues related to commercial data collection activities. Develop a list of recommendations regarding commercial data collection activities.

Schedule: The need for a 2020 meeting will be evaluated based on available funding and the amount of essential agenda topics.

Task B7: Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Convene an annual workshop of state, federal, and university otolith processors to discuss issues related to analyzing hard parts (otoliths, spines, etc.)

Team Members: State and federal processors and GSMFC and NOAA Fisheries

Approach: In an effort to provide a forum to ensure quality control and quality assurance for otolith processing, the FIN Committee decided to convene workshops of state and federal processors. Processing personnel from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and NOAA Fisheries, GSMFC staff as well as other interested persons will attend the workshop.

Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, and staff time.

Product: Provide a forum for processing personnel to discuss problems and issues related to analysis of age structures.

Schedule: The meeting will be scheduled for early to mid-2020 if the states and NOAA Fisheries continue to request attending this workshop.

Task B8: Review of Commercial QA/QC Standards (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Review the existing FIN commercial quality assurances/quality control (QA/QC) standards.

Team Members: Commercial Technical Work Group, Data Management Subcommittee

Approach: The current development of a unified Gulf Trip Ticket program coupled with a planned redesign of the FIN Data Management System will aide in reviewing and editing the Commercial QA/QC standards also. The Commercial Technical Work Group will be involved with development of the new unified trip ticket system. The Data Management Subcommittee will be provided several presentations regarding progress of the new system development. This task will be accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail. New standards resulting from the new unified trip ticket system will be included in GulfFIN QA/QC standards documentation.

Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Updated FIN QA/QC standards

Schedule: The FIN Committee will be updated by the Commercial Technical Work Group and keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B9: Evaluate and Standardize Biological Sampling Strategies (Goal 2, Objective 3) (R)

Objective: Update GulfFIN biological sampling strategies to meet needs of stock assessors.

Team Members: Recreational Technical Work Group

Approach: Current biological sampling methods prioritize sampling for specific species. Methods likely need to switch to focusing on trip types instead of specific species. An analysis to provide recommendations on proper sampling methods for complete fishery coverage is a necessary step. We plan to contract with an analyst to support this work.

Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.

Product: Updated FIN Biological Sampling Standards and Methods

Schedule: The FIN Committee will be updated by the Recreational Technical Work Group and keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B10: Expand Approach for Validation Commercial Conversion Factors (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Expand approach for updating commercial conversion factors.
 Team Members: Commercial Technical Work Group
 Approach: Previous work has shown that many of the conversion factors used in commercial data are outdated and have no details as to how they were generated. Many states have questioned the accuracy of conversion factors for several key species. A method has already been tested by FL FWC in conjunction with ACCSP that appears to be suitable. GulfFIN has selected shrimp as the first species for data collection and analysis and received FIS funding to support this work in 2020. The Commercial Technical Work Group will be involved with the Gulf of Mexico research and will work to identify next priority species and methods for obtaining funding.
 Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.
 Product: Updated commercial conversion factors
 Schedule: The FIN Committee will be updated by the Commercial Technical Work Group and kept abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B11: Review and Update of Recreational Standards (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Review and modify the existing FIN recreational standards documentation.
 Team Members: Recreational Technical Work Group
 Approach: The current Recreational Standards document is outdated and in need of improvement. Each state has developed specialized recreational surveys to try and obtain more accurate estimates of harvest for reef fish or specifically red snapper. Work is ongoing to implement logbook electronic reporting in the for-hire sector and this standards document needs to include these types of data collection programs. This task will be accomplished by meetings, conference calls, and mail.
 Resources: Meeting/travel costs, telephone costs, mail costs, and staff time.
 Product: Updated FIN QA/QC standards
 Schedule: The Recreational Technical Work Group will reconvene in 2020 with the goal of providing a revised FIN Standards document to the FIN Committee in 2020.

Task B12: Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies (Goal 2, Objective 6) (F)

Objective: Evaluate and recommend innovative data collection technologies
 Team Members: FIN Committee and other appropriate personnel.

Approach: Communicate results of evaluation and recommendations regarding marine commercial and recreational fisheries surveys to the appropriate personnel.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time
Product: Communication and presentation of recommendations to ongoing programs.
Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B13: Exploration of Strategies for In-Season Quota Monitoring (Goal 2, Objective 6) (R)

Objective: Explore strategies for implementing in-season quota monitoring for the recreational fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.
Team Members: Recreational Technical Work Group
Approach: In the past, FIN has recommended that in-season quota monitoring for recreational fisheries not be implemented; however, it appears the in-season quota monitoring has become an important recreational issue with shorter seasons for many key species. Some work has been accomplished specific to red snapper data collection pilot programs in each Gulf State. The FIN will continue to work in conjunction with the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) to explore this issue.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time
Product: Potential strategies for implementing in-season quota monitoring.
Schedule: The MRIP will provide periodical reports to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B14: Improve Timeliness of Data to Support Quota Monitoring (Goal 2, Objective 6) (C)

Objective: Improve timeliness of commercial data to support quota monitoring for the commercial fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.
Team Members: NMFS and FIN staff
Approach: NMFS instituted a rule in 2011 that all federally-permitted dealers are required to report their commercial landings via electronic means. In 2016 GulfFIN contractor began creating a new electronic trip ticket program to meet evolving dealer technology needs. In 2018 GulfFIN started working on developing new QA/QC processes to provide cleaner data in a more timely fashion. The goal of this work is to better address this task.
Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time
Product: Increased electronic reporting.

Schedule: NMFS, Gulf States and FIN staff will continue to increase the number of commercial dealers who report via electronic means and improve the reporting system to meet scientific needs.

Task B15: Evaluation of Information Management Technologies (Goal 3, Objective 6) (F)

Objective: Evaluate and recommend innovative, cost-effective information management technologies.

Team Members: FIN Committee and industry personnel

Approach: Committee members will report any new technologies, which will aid in the management of marine commercial and recreational fisheries data.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, conference call costs, report costs, and staff time.

Product: Progress reports.

Schedule: This is an ongoing activity.

Task B16: Implementation of Long-term National Program Planning (Goal 4, Objective 1) (F)

Objective: Provide for long-term national program planning.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ASMFC staff will attend Pacific RecFIN, PacFIN, ACCSP Operations Committee, and other pertinent meetings and coordinate activities as appropriate. This task will be accomplished by mail and meetings.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.

Product: Record of coordination activities.

Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B17: Coordination, Consistency and Comparability with Other Cooperative Marine Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Programs (Goal 4, Objective 2 and Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Coordinate FIN with other regional cooperative marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs and encourages consistency and comparability among regional programs over time.

Team Members: FIN Committee

Approach: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ACCSP staff will coordinate activities with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission as well as attend the national Fisheries Information System (FIS) meetings. The FIN and ACCSP staffs periodically

meet jointly to discuss the activities that each program is involved in and where the two programs can work together. This task will be accomplished by mail and meetings.

Resources: Travel/meeting costs, report costs, and staff time.

Product: Ensure adequate information exchange, consistency and comparability between all regional fisheries programs and compilation of a record of information exchange.

Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

C. Administrative Activities

Coordination and administrative support of FIN will be accomplished through The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. Major tasks involved in the coordination and administration of the various levels of FIN include but are not limited to the following:

- Work closely with the FIN Committee in all aspects of program coordination, administration, and operation;
- Implement plans and program directives approved by the FIN Committee;
- Provide coordination and logistical support, including communications and organization of meetings for the FIN Committee, subcommittees, and work groups;
- Develop and/or administer cooperative agreements, grants, and contracts;
- Serve as liaison between the FIN Committee, other program participants, and other interested organizations;
- Assist the FIN Committees in preparation or review of annual spending plans;
- Prepare annual operations plans under the direction of the FIN Committee;
- Prepare and/or supervise and coordinate preparation of selected documents, including written records of all meetings;
- Distribute approved FIN information and data in accordance with accepted policies and procedures as set forth by the FIN Committee;
- Assist in the identification of regional and geographic needs that can be satisfied through FIN activities;

- Conduct or participate in other activities as identified.

D. Time Table

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Planning, Management, and Evaluation			
FIN Committee			
Maintenance of FIN Committee	X	X	X
Framework Plan			
Review of Framework Plan			
Operations Plans			
Development of annual operations plans	X	X	X
Define approach for assessing partner needs and requirements	X		
Information dissemination			
Coordinate with ACCSP and NMFS to develop outreach/education materials	X	X	X
Use Internet communications	X	X	X
Program Review			
Conduct periodic FIN strategic planning			X
Data Collection			
Quality control/assurance			
Review of commercial and recreational QA/QC standards	X		
Expand approach for validating commercial conversion factors	X	X	
Coordination of data collection			
Development of recreational data standards	X	X	
Evaluate suitability of new data sources and integrate FIN data system	X	X	X
Evaluate biological sampling strategies	X	X	
Innovative collection technology			
Evaluate innovative data collection technologies	X	X	X
Data Management			
Hardware/software capabilities			
Review hardware/software capabilities	X	X	X
Data maintenance	X	X	X
Integration of databases			
Identify appropriate databases for integration in DMS	X	X	X
Innovative data management technology			
Evaluate innovative data management technologies	X	X	X
Protect data confidentiality	X	X	X
Development of National Program			
Long-term and coordination with other programs planning			
Coordination with ACCSP and Pacific RecFIN	X	X	X

E. Committee, Subcommittee, and Work Group Membership

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APPENDIX A

FIN Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To plan, manage and evaluate a coordinated State/Federal marine commercial and recreational fishery data collection program for the Region.

- Objective 1 To establish and maintain FIN Committee consisting of MOU signatories or their designees to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the program.
- Objective 2 To develop and periodically review a Framework Plan that outlines policies and protocols of the program
- Objective 3 To develop annual operation plans, including identification of available resources that implement the Framework Plan.
- Objective 4 To distribute program information to the cooperators and interested parties.
- Objective 5 To conduct an internal program review at least every five years of operation to evaluate the program's success in meeting needs in the Region.

Goal 2: To implement and maintain a coordinated State/Federal marine commercial and recreational fishery data collection program for the Region.

- Objective 1 To characterize and periodically review the commercial and recreational fisheries and identify the required data priorities for each.
- Objective 2 To identify and periodically review environmental, biological, social and economic data elements required for each fishery.
- Objective 3 To identify, determine, and periodically review standards for data collection, including statistical, training and quality assurance.
- Objective 4 To identify and evaluate the adequacy of current programs for meeting FIN requirements.
- Objective 5 To coordinate, integrate and augment, as appropriate, data collection efforts to meet FIN requirements.
- Objective 6 To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection methodologies and technologies.

Goal 3: To establish and maintain an integrated, marine commercial and recreational fishery data management system for the Region.

- Objective 1 To periodically review and make recommendations regarding the location and administrative responsibility for the FIN data management system.
- Objective 2 To periodically evaluate the hardware, software and communication capabilities of program partners and make recommendations for support and upgrades.
- Objective 3 To implement, maintain, and periodically review a marine commercial and recreational fishery data management system to accommodate fishery management/research and other needs.
- Objective 4 To develop, maintain, and periodically review standard protocols and documentation for data formats, inputs, editing, storage, access, transfer dissemination, and application.
- Objective 5 To identify and prioritize historical databases for integration into the marine commercial and recreational fisheries database.
- Objective 6 To evaluate and recommend innovative, cost-effective information management technologies.
- Objective 7 To protect the confidentiality of personal and business information, as required by state and/or federal law.

Goal 4: To support the development and operation of a national program to collect, manage and disseminate marine commercial fisheries information for use by states, territories, councils, interstate commissions and federal marine fishery management agencies.

- Objective 1 To provide for long-term national program planning.
- Objective 2 To coordinate FIN with other regional and national marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs.
- Objective 3 To encourage consistency and comparability among regional and national marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs over time.